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Introduction

The purpose of the Biennial Conferences on Religion and American Culture is to bring together scholars in the humanities, social sciences, seminaries, and professional schools who study religion in America in order to continue working on big questions and themes we face in our fields. In 2009 we spent considerable time talking about the promise and challenges of interdisciplinary research. In 2011 we moved on to discuss the changing definitions of religion and culture, and what this means for the types of work we do. Conversations about changes in our understanding of religion—informed by various disciplines—can promote greater cross-fertilization of ideas and best practices in several fields. Our third meeting, in 2013, presented us the opportunity to think anew about old topics, as well as consider new developments in the field.

This year we addressed many of the “big questions” in the field, ones that shape our conceptions, no matter what disciplines we call home. What does religion mean in an era of “spirituality”? How does globalization affect our research and teaching about American religion? In what ways do markets, class, and labor shape religion, and how does religion shape them? How has an era of constantly being at war influenced our thinking about civil religion and cults and sects? And what do we make of the seemingly competing models of pluralism and secularization? As previously, you will see in these Proceedings, the speakers heeded our call to be provocative, to push further, to debate, to learn together. The highly-participatory audience threw itself into each session with that same spirit. Each session was spirited—animated by the shared desire to move the conversations that develop slowly in our books and journals to new levels of frankness and cross-disciplinarity.

We continue to believe that a biennial conference dedicated to new perspectives informed by various disciplines will reinvigorate the broader field of American religious studies. We can and should learn from one another. These meetings help to lay the groundwork for future conversations about how to break down the disciplinary walls that have been erected when cross-disciplinary work is clearly needed as well as to identify when the discrete disciplines offer better understandings of some topics. It is our hope that these conferences will aid serious and sustained conversations among the disciplines and that they help to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, we believe the annual meetings of the national disciplinary-based societies are enriched by this conversation.

The Fourth Conference on Religion and American Culture was held in Indianapolis in June 2015, consisting of a series of roundtable discussions through presentations by top scholars from a variety of perspectives. Nationally known scholars from different backgrounds participated in each session. The panelists sat, quite literally, at a round table in the center of the room, surrounded by scholars on risers so everyone could not only learn from the conversation but also participate in it.

These Proceedings include the papers that were read at the conference. What is always missing in these pages, however, are the lively and spirited conversations that marked each session. Indeed, the discussions continued over coffee breaks, lunches, and dinners. New friends were made and fresh ideas were discovered. We look forward to continuing those conversations in 2017.

A word of thanks is due to a number of people and institutions. First, I am grateful to the panelists who wrote such thoughtful pieces. I asked them to be direct and provocative, and they responded wonderfully. I am also indebted to my colleague Art Farnsley, who helped put together the panels and moderate several of the discussions. Amanda Friesen, Brian Steensland, and Peter Thuesen also helped to facilitate the sessions. Eric Hamilton assisted in each session and took photographs throughout the conference. Conversations with Katherine Carte Engel and Mark Silk aided considerably in piecing together the sessions in which they spoke. Finally, and most importantly, Becky Vasko, the Center’s Program Coordinator, again provided altogether unflappable and constant support in the planning and execution of the entire conference, as well as the publication of these Proceedings. Without her, there would have been no meeting. As with previous Biennial Conferences, we are grateful for the support of Lilly Endowment Inc., which contributed generously toward the costs of the meeting, along with the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute.

Philip Goff
Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture

**What do we mean by “religion” in a time of “spirituality,”
“lived religion,” and “non-religion”?**

The very term “religion” is contested, not least by concepts such as “lived religion,” “spirituality,” and various forms of contemporary “non-religion.” Is “religion” now primarily about institutions, practices, and ideas that self-define as such? Is religion, on the other hand, everything that contributes to individuals’ identities and meanings (including their corporations)? How do recent legal decisions clarify or complicate matters? Is the question being raised in the same way by social scientists, historians, and theologians? If so, or even if not, are their conversations moving along parallel tracks or are the terms being contested in different ways in different fields?

Kathleen Flake
University of Virginia

Next month, the First Church of Cannabis will hold its first service under protection, it hopes, of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Led by founder and self-titled "Grand Poohba and Minister of Love," adherents will give "testimonies about positive things" and "will enjoy cannabis, because it's how we enjoy life." "I'm very faith-driven," Levin stated. "I'm very spiritual and I'm filled with love."¹

Meanwhile, in Nashville, Tennessee, a "swingers sex club" has relocated to suburbia and seeks protection from zoning laws by becoming the United Fellowship Center.² For them, this means turning the sexual game room into a "fellowship hall" on Sundays and professing "some tenets of the church sort of like the Ten Commandments." The reporter takes all this at face value, of course, but challenges the reader to disagree by adding: "What defines a 'religion' anyway?"

What, indeed?

My assigned role on this panel is to comment on whether the courts have anything to offer our discussion of this question. I think they do. Let me mention two possible lessons. The first relates to the exercise of judgment; the second, the burden of history on it.

If the Church of Cannabis and United [Sexual] Fellowship ever make it to court, they are likely not to survive the "sincerity" test applied to religious liberty claims. Since deciding that the definition of religion is de facto establishment of it, courts have—as in conscientious objector cases—limited themselves to asking whether the claimant is sincere. Even so, the court shows considerable scrupulosity about judging motive and appears to rely tacitly on the familiarity of the belief in question.

An example is provided by the recent *Hobby Lobby* decision, which recognized a challenge to the Affordable Care Act's requirement that corporations subsidize "morning after" types of contraception.³ The petitioners claimed the Act impermissibly burdened their belief that life begins at conception. The Court's decision showed little interest in the petitioner's sincerity, invoking the term only eight times in a 95-page set of opinions and always in summary fashion. The petitioner's church affiliations and the general "Christian" values in their corporate documents were briefly described and, it was noted, "no one has disputed the sincerity of their religious beliefs."⁴ No further test was given; notwithstanding petitioners' admitted they had funded some of the questioned contraceptives, prior to filing suit. In short, their claim, both as to its sincerity and religiosity, was taken at face value.⁵ No wonder Church of Cannabis and the United [Sexual] Fellowship think they have a justiciable claim. Religion appears to be what the petitioners say it is.⁶

In short, American courts function much like the religious studies academy. We, too, very carefully avoid judging religious claims for fear of defining anyone out. Stated in terms more familiar to our guild, we prefer to understand, not explain religion. You will recognize this as Robert Segal's complaint that we think of what we do too descriptively—as a "conversation"—and ought to think more diagnostically. "Scholars of religion are," he admits, "beholden to believers to tell them about their religion, but it is up to scholars to assess the veracity of what they are told."⁷

In inviting you to reevaluate our discomfort with judging what is and is not religion, I am not advocating an ahistorical, essentialist, idealistically Platonic definition. This is not possible; neither is it necessary or desirable. Religion is and will remain in the eye that beholds it, or externalizes it in the social field, which may be why sociologists appear to be most engaged with this question. And, it is likely to remain the case that Religious Studies will always be more experimental in its approach and properly err on the side of inclusiveness. Nevertheless, if we would have something to say, especially as public intellectuals, we share with the court a need to have a test or tests for the object of our study that can be failed and is not ruled by marginal cases be they fellowshipping sex clubs or other "way[s] of enjoying life," coupled with assurances of being "faith-driven," "spiritual" and "filled with love."⁸

Speaking of the ahistorical and historical, let me note quickly a second analogy to the law's discomfort with setting limits. Legal dictums notwithstanding, the Supreme Court's current posture on religion cases is deeply affected by its history of Christian hegemony, and so are we.⁹ Just as the Court has been an instrument of the State in shaping a "Protestant Nation," the study of religion qua religion arose in service to colonial powers, was conceived on the Procrustean bed of European Christianity, and dedicated to constructing alterity. Thus, Religious Studies is committed to religion meaning anything but "Church History" and should probably even be uncomfortable with "History of Religion."

Our capacity for cultural critique and insider-outsider sensitivity has been hard-won and is worthy of the attention we give it. Nevertheless, our subject today has caused me to wonder if we are now confident enough in these capacities that we can undertake again more traditional objects of study—even the old "standing" churches in their modern incarnations—and in the same fashion as our colleagues study Buddhism and Afro-Caribbean religions, for example. Or, using the terms given us, let me ask you "Do the American Academy of Religion and the American Society of Church History "mean [the same thing] by religion?"

Flake

Luckily, I do not have answers to any of these questions, even my own, but I look forward to the diagnostic possibilities in your conversation.

1. Steven Nelson, “Indiana Church Plans Pot-Smoking Worship Service in Test of Religious Freedom,” *US News & World Rpt* (May 12, 2015).

2. Jeff Guao, “This Swingers Sex Club has Re-branded Itself as a Church,” *Washington Post* (Apr. 23, 2015).

3. See, *Hobby Lobby* at 29, n. 28: “To qualify for RFRA’s protection, an asserted belief must be ‘sincere’; a corporation’s pretextual assertion of a religious belief in order to obtain an exemption for financial reasons would fail. Cf., e.g., *United States v. Quaintance*, 608 F. 3d 717, 718–719 (CA10 2010).”

4. *Hobby Lobby*, 29. Note also this observation is added at the end of a paragraph and a sentence whose chief point is the Court need not consider the effect of its decision on corporations that are not closely held. The Court uses “Christian” eleven times, including when calculating other ways in which the petitioners have shown other kinds of religious commitment See, e.g., “Hobby Lobby’s statement of purpose commits the Greens to ‘[h]onoring the Lord in all [they] do by operating the company in a manner consistent with Biblical principles.’” *Ibid.*, 14.

5. Note the dissent’s caution in *Hobby Lobby*, 134 S. Ct. at 2805 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) (quoting *United States v. Lee*, 455 U.S. 252, 263 n.2 (1981) (Stevens, J., concurring in the judgment)). See also, Adams and Barmore, “Questioning Sincerity: the Role of the Courts After Hobby Lobby,” 67 *Stan. L. Rev Online* 59 (Nov. 7, 2014) (*Int’l Soc’y for Krishna Consciousness, Inc. v. Barber*, 650 F.2d 430, 441 (2d Cir. 1981). (“These practical difficulties, combined with the different limits that constrain First Amendment claims, see *Emp’t Div. v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), may well mean that courts should avoid questioning the religious sincerity of First Amendment claimants. This issue is beyond the scope of this Essay.”) http://www.stanfordlawreview.org/online/questioning-sincerity#footnote_45.

6. For example of possible limits, see Ginzberg’s dissent in *Hobby Lobby*: “I would confine religious exemptions under that Act to organizations formed ‘for a religious purpose,’ ‘engage[d] primarily in carrying out that religious purpose,’ and not ‘engaged . . . substantially in the exchange of goods or services for money beyond nominal amounts.’” Citing *Spencer v. World Vision, Inc.*, 633 F. 3d 723, 748 (CA9 2010) (Kleinfeld, J., concurring).

7. Robert Segal, “How to Study Religion, Religion Compass (Mar. 1, 2008) <http://religion-compass.com/2008/03/01/how-to-study-religion/>

8. Steven Nelson, “Indiana Church Plans Pot-Smoking Worship Service in Test of Religious Freedom,” *US News & World Rpt* (May 12, 2015).

9. See, e.g., *Reynolds v. U.S.*, *Davis v. Beason*, and *Late Corporation v. U.S.*

Deborah Dash Moore
University of Michigan

The growth of religious studies in the United States in the past half century has greatly expanded our understanding of “religion” as well as challenged whether the concept itself constitutes a form of practice of Christian, and specifically, Protestant versions of being, behaving, and belonging in the world. Nevertheless, despite its limited ability to explain Jewish life in the United States, “religion” remains the term of choice and operative analytical framework among social scientists studying Jews. Unlike Talal Assad’s vigorous rejection of previously widespread definitions of “religion,” including those by anthropologist Clifford Geertz,¹ scholars of Jews and Judaism have not rushed to dethrone “religion.” Rather, they have consistently struggled to fit American Jewish social and cultural patterns into some recognized form of “religion.”

As the 2013 Pew survey “Portrait of American Jews” demonstrated, sociologists certainly have not given up on “religion” despite difficulties.² They continue to ask American Jews about their beliefs and their observance of mitzvot (commandments). Even when American Jews rank being intellectually curious ahead of caring for Israel as an essential component of being Jewish, this information about Jewish identity formation does not lead to efforts to jettison “religion” as an analytical category. Nor does the fact that American Jews consider having a good sense of humor just about as important in defining what it means to be Jewish as caring about Israel. Instead, two complementary categories divide American Jews into those “with religion” and those “without religion.” (This might be similar to the “nones” in other Pew surveys of Americans’ religious preferences except that these American Jews all consider themselves to be Jewish.)³

Most American Jews when asked to define themselves still rely on the notion of a religion despite their lack of engagement with and consciousness of what we call American Judaism. Why, we might ask, do American Jews hold on to this concept rather than turn to alternative categories, such as ethnicity? What is it about “religion” that seems normative and comforting to American Jews, even those with nominal attachments to religious beliefs and behaviors?

I would suggest that “religion” has become a fallback position for American Jews, on occasion a conversation ender, especially among Jews who do not want to participate in an extended inquisition about their Jewish identities. It is a convenient way to explain themselves to others and to each other. It certainly is difficult to get undergraduates to use any other language, even after one has spent weeks discussing ethnicity, social patterns, economic niches, cultural proclivities, and urban and suburban residential distribution. Even after one has proffered the term “Jewishness” as

an alternative to “Judaism,” students still want to describe anything “Jewish” as “religious.” This situation produces frustration, at least for this academic. Yet such conservative linguistic and conceptual bias endures among students as American society and certainly American jurisprudence is moving to redefine what constitutes “religion” so that corporate “persons” can espouse “religious beliefs” to justify actions against their employees.⁴

The underlying reason that American Jews stay attached to “religion” to define themselves and their collective identity is because it still legitimates difference in American society in ways that other modes of categorizing do not. “Spirituality” can be combined with “religion” or can come to replace it; “spirituality” often blurs boundaries. Jews can be Buddhist and Jewish (JUBU), for example, or they can just practice yoga and meditation and discard their Jewish identity. By contrast, “religion” allows Jews to exist in American society in ways unlike ethnicity, which tends to subsume Jews into an undifferentiated mass of Euro-American ethnic whiteness.⁵ When Jews affirm a Jewish label, even if they don’t practice Judaism, they are speaking about a measure of clear and legitimate difference from a majority society, which is Christian, either Protestant or Catholic. Although Jews readily talk about “non-Jews,” they would shun using the label “non-Christians” to refer to themselves. Lila Corwin Berman in her first book, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals and the Creation of an American Public Identity*, deftly explored the multiple ways Jews sought to explain and justify their difference from other Americans, even as they often also claimed to exemplify ideal American virtues.⁶

When I think about my own work, I have come increasingly to use and contend for expanded understandings of “religion” rather than discarding the term. (I am aware, however, that scholars of Jewish antiquity increasingly contend that Judaism is of relatively recent origin, emerging not in the Roman Empire but only much later, in the Middle Ages.) My recent book, *Urban Origins of American Judaism*, argues for religious change shaped by multicultural, multiethnic, and socioeconomically stratified city living.⁷ I contemplated speaking about Jewishness rather than Judaism, but I decided to invoke Judaism or “religion” as it is usually understood.⁸ My book moves from a focus on congregational developments as expressed in architectural innovations, a relatively conventional understanding of urban religious life, to a chapter that looks at city streets as sites of lived religion. Here I draw upon more recent acceptance of public culture as a matrix of religious behaviors, whether one is considering funeral parades or political rallies, weekly shopping for the Sabbath or capitalist-stimulated consumption of food associated with specific holidays. Such an ex-

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panded view of “lived religion” helped me to make claims about pluralism and alternative Jewish practices beyond a congregational framework.

But probably my most surprising gesture involved my final chapter on photographs. Here I present a visual dimension to Judaism that pictures Jews, mostly on city streets but also in transit as immigrants or inside studying and observing Jewish sacred time at meals. These images and the contexts of their creation and apperception, I suggest, expand yet again our understanding of Judaism because of the ways that Jews and others have viewed and interpreted (and misinterpreted) them. Looking at photos of immigrant Jewish life has not only become part of American Jewish culture but also a dimension of Jewish religious ways of being in the world, especially when those images are sacralized in museum exhibits. Photographs summon and create collective memories and religious consciousness, even when the pictures are not personal. Religious images, gestures, texts and sounds get “remediated” via print, stage, film, video, even e- and i-media.⁹ (How many times did I hear Gershwin’s “It Ain’t Necessarily So” without realizing that it is a commentary, shall we say, on the *Bor’chu* prayer chanted before reading from the Torah.) Still, adding a material dimension (that’s often understood as secular) to Judaism (considered as a religious culture) allows me to confront some limitations of “religion” as a category of American Jewish life, even as I rely on the respect and recognition the concept evokes.

Given our personal and professional “subject positions,” how might we understand the reach of religion among American Jews as they exist within the complex Christian hegemony of our national life? Many Jews feel a certain comfort that they are widely recognized as legitimate Americans on religious grounds. Unlike Muslims, they have been granted a place to stand. The historically contingent nature of this pedestal makes our job harder as we strain to perceive the lineaments, many hiding in plain sight, by which Judaism remains an active part of American Jewish life.

2. For a varied discussion of the survey by social scientists of American Jews see, “Forum on the Pew Survey: ‘A Portrait of Jewish Americans,’” in *American Jewish Year Book 2014*, ed. Arnold Dashevsky and Ira Sheskin (New York: Springer, 2015): 3-90.

3. The full report is available on line but a good summary can be found at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>. Accessed June 9, 2015.

4. For a thoughtful discussion of the Hobby Lobby case referred to here, see Ronit Stahl, “The Burdens of Conscience: Thoughts on *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*,” <http://nursingclio.org/2014/07/04/the-burdens-of-conscience-thoughts-on-burwell-v-hobby-lobby/>. Accessed June 9, 2015.

5. On Jews as “white” see Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

6. Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

7. Deborah Dash Moore, *Urban Origins of American Judaism* [The George H. Shriver Lecture Series in Religion in American History] (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2014).

8. I should note that Shari Rabin, who received her PhD from Yale in 2015, specifically argues against this interpretation and in favor of mobility in the 19th century as an engine of Jewish religious innovation.

9. See Jay David Bolton and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

1. Talal Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993): 27-54; and “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999): 178-96.

Omar M. McRoberts
University of Chicago

In May 2015, the Pew Research Center began releasing the results of its second Religious Landscape Survey. Between 2007 and 2014, it reported, the Christian share of the population declined from 78.4% to 70.6%. The loss of share was largely among the Christian mainline and Catholics. Evangelical Christianity fell slightly as a share of the American population, but grew slightly in absolute numbers. Meanwhile, non-Christian religions, particularly Hinduism and Islam, gained proportionately. The most dramatic shift, however, was among people identifying as religious “nones.” These are the respondents identifying as atheist, agnostic, spiritual but not religious, or otherwise unaffiliated with a religious institution. Their share grew a striking 6.7 points from 16.1% in 2007 to 22.8% in 2014.¹

These trends have, will, and should give rise to many interesting interpretive debates. Observers have already begun considering, for example, their implications for interfaith dialogue, given an apparent generalized hostility among religious liberals, conservatives, and nones.² Racial dynamics also lurk in the data as potentially meaningful. The Pew report notes that all of the Christian formations, except the historically African-American ones, are becoming more racially diverse. That is, non-whites are gaining population shares within the denominations, even as most of these denominations lose shares within the American populace. Could the diversification of American Christianity be ushering in a time when it is no longer true that, as Martin Luther King, Jr. famously averred, that eleven O’clock on a Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week? Or, is the influx of non-white populations into various Christian folds triggering a “tipping effect,” where white disaffiliation follows on the very heels of racial diversification, thus explaining the overall loss of Christian shares?

While interesting and worthy of pursuit, issues such as these hover just above a deeper set of questions about the framing of our concern about religious growth and decline, and the impact of religious nones and their mysterious nonery. It is significant in this regard that the discussion is framed as a matter of shares, as in market shares, betraying the influence of neo-classical economic thinking in the study of religion. In the sociology of religion, economic perspectives have gained great traction. “Supply side” religious economies scholars document thriving religious pluralism and explain why religious bodies win or lose “market shares” in the competition for adherents.³ Their fascination with the vicissitudes of religious thriving is understandable, as such thriving represents an empirical refutation of a prior view that secularization and religious pluralism in modern society would lead to the decline of formal, or at least mainline, religious institutional life.⁴ With religious nones and

non-Christian adherents on the rise, and even evangelicals losing market shares, religious economists have plenty of work for their models.

Market framing, however, may lead us to ignore systematically other ways of thinking about the meaning of religion and spirituality in the age of nones. We are led to conceive of religion itself as a field of firms, competing for members who are, if not perfectly rational, at least calculating with regard to the satisfaction of individual needs and tastes. Religious loss is understood as loss of market shares. Religious nones, especially those calling themselves “spiritual but not religious” are individualistic to the degree that their needs and tastes cannot be satisfied in any corporate context. They are Robert Bellah, et al.’s idiosyncratic “Sheila Larson.”⁵ Economic and market metaphors atomize the ontology and psychology of religious institutions and adherents (or non-adherents) in a way that obscures questions about the broader impact of religion and spirituality on society, and vice versa. These impacts may not proceed entirely through the competitive dynamics of religious firms and the personal calculus of religious shoppers (this assumes, of course, that there are social impacts beyond the undulating numerical fates of religious institutions themselves).

The reality of such impacts calls for alternate understandings of religion and spirituality. An historical example will help to demonstrate why this is so. The Civil Rights movement in the United States is commonly understood to be a fundamentally religious movement. Its institutional infrastructure was composed largely of churches networked together to fund various campaigns and organize individuals into a mass movement that included many non-religious actors.⁶ Its ideology rested upon a particular black interpretation of the Social Gospel that called for the salvation of American democracy through the moral transformation of society, state, and economic markets alike. Churches connecting in this fashion were not operating as atomized firms, competing with each other for members or market shares. Their main competitor, indeed their cosmic foe, was American social injustice and inequality.

The Civil Rights movement also engendered a spirituality, but it was no Sheilism. Far from reflecting and justifying any sort of individualism (although it did elevate the value of individual dignity), its organizing incorporated technologies intended to make participants feel the truth of the protest strategy, and to connect the subjective worlds of individual protesters to the intersubjective matrix of the movement and the process of social change. In “Letter from a Birmingham City Jail” Dr. King described this spirituality as purification. After gathering facts on the reality and extent of oppression in that city, and after trying to negotiate

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with members of its white elite, King and others “had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community. We were not unmindful of the difficulties involved. So we decided to go through the process of self-purification. We started having workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions, “are you able to accept the blows without retaliating?” “Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?”⁷ King’s workshops, which were repeated in various forms at many campaigns and movement fronts, did not merely offer direction—if the police do this, then you do that—although they did certainly include these kinds of instructions. Purification meant aligning the wills of the protesters together in an experience of the necessity of non-violent direct action, including the psychic and physical fortification necessary to endure violent repression and imprisonment. Insofar as it aimed to transform and unify a multitude of individual subjectivities, including decidedly secular ones, this technology can be called spiritual. And again, this was no individualism.

What transpired during the Civil Rights movement is what religion sometimes looks like when it is acting less as a market, and more as a movement. It is what spirituality has looked like when it is turned not irrecoverably inward, but outward toward some form of social change. Market thinking is not irrelevant here, though. Many churches did not join the civil rights movement, arguably because their concern over the potential loss of market shares among a sympathetic but timid public overrode considerations of the cause’s timeliness. Clerical movement leaders themselves feared that the churches’ failure to act decisively at that time would result in a decline in the relevance of the churches, which could lead to a decline in overall black church market shares. King and others ultimately left the National Baptist Convention to form a new denomination, or firm (The Progressive National Baptist Convention), that could accommodate activities that they thought were relevant for black people. But the peculiar way in which market logics may have mattered here would be invisible without first noticing that churches were acting as a movement, and that spirituality was construed as a collective, world-oriented enterprise that transcended countable religious affiliation.

The “age of nones” may not pose any particular crisis for the meaning of religion and spirituality if we are concerned with the mutual influence between religion and society. When movement goals of social transformation are in the foreground and market goals are in the background of the religious gestalt, new forms of religious impact, beyond winning or losing shares, appear. New spiritual technologies, including collectivist ones that are not specifically reli-

gious, emerge. It will be vital to sustain our consideration of these, even as the demographics of religiosity and irreligiosity churn on.

1. Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/05/RLS-05-08-full-report.pdf>.

2. Joseph DeMott, “Religious Conservatives, “Nones,” and Interfaith Dialogue,” *Sightings* May 14, 2015. <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/religious-conservatives-nones-and-interfaith-dialogue>

3. L. R. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 5 (1994); Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

4. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, [1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967).

5. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

6. Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984).

7. Martin Luther King and James Melvin Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1991). P 291.

Robert Orsi
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Underlying everything I am about to say this morning is the assumption that all of us in this room are at once scholars of American religions, in the present and in the past, and of “religion,” meaning “religion” as both a historical construction and as a word that names something in the world. But everything I am about to say this morning also immediately raises questions for further consideration, beginning with what I have just said. Do we all think of ourselves as scholars of American religion and scholars of “religion”? Is it necessary, or even possible, simultaneously to study both lived religion and the genealogy of “religion”? Does religion name anything in the world? There are many different ways of answering these questions, each of the answers having specific implications for practice and theory. So there will be a tidal movement to what follows, a casting up and immediate washing away of assertions, assumptions, and conclusions about the study of “religion” and religion—and it is necessary that readers pay attention to the difference (if there is one) between “religion” and religion.

Let me begin then, a second time: the one thing I believe everyone in this room would agree on is that the Protestant Christian roots of the concepts “religion,” “modern religion,” and “modernity” have been fully excavated by now. We recognize that Judaism, for example, had to “become” or “be made” a “religion” in the modern world; it was not a “religion” before this. (But then what was it?) Likewise, we know now that “Buddhism” is a fiction of the imaginations of nineteenth century European and American rationalists, who created “the Buddha” as their ally in the victory of science and reason over superstition and irrationality. (But then to who did the people of Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia direct their petitions when they prayed to the figure mistakenly called “the Buddha”?) It seems to follow that the study of religion from the later sixteenth century forward is necessarily the study either of assent to or dissent from the imperatives of modernity within particular religious milieu. Is this so? Has “religion” as the concept has developed over the past two decades become the necessary paradigm for the study of religion, or is it a kind of intellectual finger-trap, a construct that cannot be escaped, no matter how much one may want to? ¹

If you see this as a problem, then the next question is how to move beyond the consensus that “religion” is derived from “Protestantism.” This is clearly an issue for those of us whose primary focus is other than Protestantism. But it may also be a problem for scholars of Protestantism. After all, are all Protestants “religious,” simply by virtue of being “Protestant”? Is there a way in which Protestantism, like Judaism or Buddhism, has had to be “made into” a “religion,” in which it had to “become” a religion, or is Protestantism the only “religion” truly given as such at its inception? If so,

are some “Protestants” “religious” while others are not, and what is the difference?

In all historical accounts of the making of “religion” as the object of critical inquiry in modernity that I am familiar with, modern “religion” is racialized as white; gendered male; a matter of free and rational choice, not of inheritance; democratic and non-hierarchical in polity; developmentally graded as adult; “religion” is universal, not local; rational and ethical, not emotional, abundantly imaginative, or morally transgressive. Out of the historical dynamic that created “modernity” and “religion” in inseparable relation to each other—so inseparably that we recognize secularism itself as a religious project—was generated as well the various others of “modern religion,” such as “magic,” “superstition,” and “enthusiasm.” These others were not by-products of the making of “modern religion,” and by extension the secular; they were fundamental to it. To say “religion” is at the same time to say, “this is ‘religion,’ that is not ‘religion’” “this is an acceptable form of religion, that is an intolerable form of ‘religion’ not to be countenanced by law or custom.” The “that is not religion” was absolutely necessary to create the category of “religion.”

If you are with me this far, then turning our attention away from “religion” to the various forms the “that is not religion” has taken over time may be the answer the question of how to liberate religion from “religion.” Leaving the study of “religion” to scholars of law or politics, and to the historians and sociologists of the secular, the study of religion would become the study of the religious practices and ideas of women, children, dark-skinned peoples, non-Protestants (or the non-Protestantized); of religion beyond law; of the local, emotional, imaginative, and the queer. This would be our agenda as scholars of religion. But immediately we encounter the dreaded matter of the “*sui generis*.” What would these “religious practices and ideas” consist of apart from the normative discursive and political frameworks that gave rise to them? Is there not a naïve epistemology or ontology at work in claims that there is a religion that may be approached apart from “religion,” a kind or pre- or anti-social scientific approach to reality? And yet, on the other hand, is there not a dreadful politics in the assertion that all religion is “religion,” that “religion” is the creation fully of modern discourses? After all, those men and women in pre-Buddhist East Asia were doing something in relation to their gods before “Buddhism,” as were Jews before the Pittsburgh Platform. If so, then it may be precisely the challenge of the current moment in the field to develop an approach to religion beyond the limits of reason, as the “minor champions of the Enlightenment,” in Rudolf Otto’s tart phrase, have identified the limits to historical and cultural reason, and as they police them, and beyond the mantra, “it’s a social construc-

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tion,” which by the very fact of its endless repetition has ceased to mean anything.²

Finally, there is the question of “American religion” or American religions,” the subject everyone in this room ostensibly studies. “Religion” was thoroughly implicated in the construction of modern nation-states and empires, or so some might say, although others might query the usefulness of terms like “empire” or even “nation” in relation to the study of religion. Nevertheless, it is the case that when the rulers and bureaucrats of modernizing states set out to extend the authority of the new centers of power over the peripheries, they established governmental offices, zoning regulations, educational institutions (including medical and scientific schools), legal codes, and customary law, aimed at uprooting local religions within the borders of the emergent state and instituting and enforcing instead some version of modern religion.³ Is this how the “American” and “religion” in “American religion” function? Do phrases like “America’s God,” “America’s preacher,” “America’s theologian,” and so forth designate realities on the ground or are they assertions of national or nationalist identity that serve to exclude and parse at the very moment that they pretend to designate the whole? Is it really possible any more to talk about “American religion” without being conscious of the violence the term does, or do we agree that “American religion” is simply the modern world’s only real and good religion, as the State Department and evidently the American Academy of Religion seem to hold?

1. This paragraph obliquely references Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) and Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

2. Rudolf Otto, “How Schleiermacher Re-Discovered the Sensus Numinis,” in *Religious Essays: A Supplement to ‘The Idea of the Holy,’* trans. Brian Lunn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 68-77, quote on 71.

3. Two excellent accounts of this process are Jason Ānanda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012) and David M. Engel and Jaruwat S. Engel, *Tort, Custom, and Karma: Globalization and Legal Consciousness in Thailand* (Stanford Law Books; Redwood City, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010).

Whither New Religious Movements?

Compared to the 1980s and 1990s, there is less discussion about cults, sects, and new religious movements in the broader discussions of American religious studies. What accounts for this? Are new rubrics of analysis replacing that approach or terminology, or have our scholarly interests waned with the lack of what the public perceives as “dangerous” homegrown groups in our midst?

Marion Goldman
University of Oregon

M*ad Men*, the award winning TV drama, ended its final season with an “Om,” not a bang or a whimper. It was 1970 and Don Draper, the main character, discovered his spark of inner divinity at Esalen Institute in Big Sur. He responded empathically to someone in an encounter group and took baby steps toward spiritual transformation while meditating as the sun rose over the Pacific Ocean. In the 70s, thousands of visitors characterized the isolated spiritual retreat in terms of their own desires: an esoteric think tank, a sacred space, a spa, a center for humanistic group psychology, a place for psychedelic trips, a massage school, and a small intentional community (Back 1970; Bart 1971; Goldman 2012). It was also a gateway to new religious movements such as Arica and the Rajneeshees.

Esalen combined otherworldliness with humanistic psychology and the Institute briefly became the epicenter of the Human Potential Movement because of workshops and seminars that featured well-known leaders with diverse approaches to personal and spiritual growth. It was a harbinger of America’s twenty-first century spiritual marketplace, where thousands of alternative groups beckon seekers and where self-transformation has become a multi-billion dollar business (Melton 2007; Newman 2008).

The fictional Don Draper was unlikely to wholeheartedly join one or a succession of different alternative religions in order to satisfy his longings for religious guidance, intense personal ties, and ultimate salvation. Instead, he was portrayed as a consumer of alternative spirituality who sampled beliefs and practices that offered him immediate rewards. His choices were neither rationally calculated nor illogical, but were instead almost non-rational, a combination of intuition and immediate reasoning.

If Don were real, his interests would probably change as he learned about new faiths and practices and he might someday have brought together a bewildering variety of beliefs from different religions to construct a personal religious *bricolage* of alternative and mainstream practices that did not meld together in a syncretic whole (Levi-Strauss 1962; McGuire 2008: 195-99). In 1970, he belonged to an emerging category of spiritually privileged Americans with weak ties to established faiths or no religious affiliations at all. While nonaffiliated individuals who still believed in something supernatural beyond them had not yet been given a name, Don could be called a religious “None,” a believer but not belonging (Wuthnow 1988).

Forty-five years after Don’s fictional epiphany, the Pew Research Center once again issued an Easter message bemoaning Americans’ blossoming irreligiosity. According to its data, close to a quarter of all adults have no formal religious affiliation (Smith 2015). But it is important to re-

member the young adults without marital ties contributed substantially to the swelling category of “Nones” and that this group has always had high rates of no affiliation that may change as they age.

In contrast to the ostensible escalation of irreligiosity that Pew described, there are numbers to remember: only four to six percent of Americans identify themselves as atheists and over the past *seven* decades their share of the religious market has barely increased (Newcombe 2015). There is a highly publicized Atheist Movement (Zuckerman 2008) and an Atheist “church,” the Sunday Assembly, that have somewhat reduced stigma associated with atheism. However, most people believe in some supernatural power and want to explore and possibly explain their relationship to something beyond themselves. Their affiliations with established faiths may ebb and flow and so will their religious attendance. They are still religiously active in their own ways, just as Don Draper was when he found bliss during morning meditation.

The Pew report failed to capture the fluidity of contemporary spirituality and the possibility that with or without tenuous affiliations to mainstream faiths, increasing numbers of Americans create their own spiritual mosaics that include cults/new religious movements. They sample different religious options throughout their lives, move from faith to faith, and often tread several complementary spiritual paths at the same time.

This religious exploration is grounded in *spiritual privilege: the ability to devote time and resources to select, combine and revise one’s religious beliefs and practices over the course of a lifetime*. Because of America’s vital, pluralistic spiritual marketplace people from every race, ethnicity, and social class have opportunities to exercise some degree of spiritual privilege, if only by watching Oprah or taking workshops at local community centers. However, members of the upper and middle classes who are separated from or nominally affiliated with liberal faiths are most likely to exercise their privilege and have access to a wider range of choices. They hunger for new spiritual and emotional possibilities because they need not worry much about their material survival (Brooks 2001; Stark 2003).

New religions/cults are central to the marketplace for religious goods and services that attract privileged spiritual *bricoleurs*. In the late 1960s, new religious movements first came to widespread public attention because a small number of entitled young adults forsook their earlier commitments to join them and offered testimonials to the media (Dawson 2006: 83-86). These groups, often led by Asian teachers, were in high tension with widely accepted religious and social norms. Public perceptions about their inherent deviance were amplified by the relatively few instances of

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violence associated with new religions and persistent, albeit ungrounded accusations of “brainwashing.”

However, beginning in the mid-1970s, many groups like Erhard Training Seminars, est, or the San Francisco Zen Center offered plausible religious philosophies and spiritual practices to outsiders who never became full members (Downing 2001). Moreover, despite the efforts of the anti-cult movement in the wake of the Jonestown tragedy, exposures of Reverend Moon’s high-pressure recruitment tactics, and the conflagration at Waco; alternative religions continued to appeal to seekers in subsequent decades.

Stark and Bainbridge’s (1985: 26-30) typology of new religions/cults facilitates better understanding of the dynamic marketplace for alternative spirituality that has continued to grow. They identify three categories of people associated with cults: full members, clients, and audiences. Clients or audience members who merely associate with a group, but never become full members rarely experience high tension with the surrounding society. However, they may be somewhat marginalized by the surrounding culture when the wider public is privy to the group’s most extreme beliefs and practices.

Those who know a movement’s secrets and organize every aspect of their lives around it are core members, who sustain one and only one affiliation and make visible sacrifices for their beliefs. However, core devotees are usually a far smaller proportion of an enduring group than its clients and audiences.

Nones may actively flirt with a group and avail themselves of friendships and a variety of activities, but they rarely join (Galanter 1999: 133-36). Some Nones become clients who pay core members or the group itself for services such as psychotherapy, therapeutic massage, instruction in mindful meditation, cooking classes at cult-run restaurants or yoga lessons. While they participate in sustained interaction with core devotees and come together with them to practice accessible rituals such as sun salutations or get advice about their intimate relationships in private consultations, they never place alternative spirituality above all else in their lives.

In the last century, committed clients engaged in regular face-to-face interaction with core members over weeks, months or years, without ever joining a group. Recently, sustained interaction also unfolds on the Internet, as people take extended Webinars together or receive spiritual guidance via Skype.

Finally there are cult audience members who confine their association to one-way communication: reading blogs or books or attending large meetings. People move among the categories of client and audience, but only a few, less than five percent, ever become fully committed to a new religion, although they may have long periods of contact with

it (Barker 1995). While the core of a group whose lives are organized around its most cherished secret beliefs may still be in high tension with the surrounding society, nominal members and bricoleurs generally avoid social marginalization or formal penalties.

Active clients exert their spiritual privilege by exploring a number of groups, often at the same time. And some new religions are flexible and spiritually inclusive, permitting professed devotees to be bricoleurs, until they are unable to fulfill the group’s escalating demands for their time and money. Second and third generations raised in new religious movements, may keep their nominal affiliation and their childhood friendships, but also become religious bricoleurs (Van Eck van Twist 2015).

Since the 1970s, new religious movements have become part of the wider culture in terms of spiritual activities and material goods. They introduced ordinary Americans to foods like chai, tofu, and Kettle Chips; yoga and associated clothing options like Lululemon’s; and Aveda cosmetics. Cults also brought religious innovations to liberal churches: new musical styles, mindful meditation, and pastorally led encounter groups. Contemporary American cults may be local, global, or Internet based, but whatever their forms, they continue to contribute to America’s vital spiritual marketplace.

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The study of new religious movements (NRMs) emerged into prominence in the 1970s as a replacement for the study of fringe religious groups, previously labeled “cults,” that operated either outside Christianity, or on the edge of the Christian community in a way considered unacceptably deviant by the mainstream. The term filtered into the academy in the church-sect-cult typology adopted by sociologists of religion.

NRM studies appeared in direct response to a set of simultaneous events—the surge in Asian religions following the 1965 immigration law changes, the coming of age of the Baby Boom generation, the spread of psycho-active drugs, and the development of new psychological disciplines with marked religious implications—humanistic, transpersonal and para-psychology. The initial interest in the exotic nature of the new religions soon turned dark as parents began to complain about their offspring adhering to some of these new groups while often forsaking their pursuit of a financially rewarding and high-status career. Parents formed support groups with the goal of discovering a means of getting their kids back on track to a “normal” life, and discovered a means in the practice of deprogramming.

As deprogrammings multiplied, the practice found intellectual underpinning in the theory of brainwashing presented in court most persuasively by psychologist Margaret Singer. Through the 1980s the issue galvanized scholars, who quickly saw the flaws in Singer’s brainwashing hypothesis, but found it hard to handle in court. Brainwashing offered a simplistic theory of why unpopular groups were bad, and juries responded favorably to it. Through the mid-1980s, literally dozens of cases yielded multi-million dollar judgments against the various new religions. The 1978 event at Jonestown was immediately integrated into the anti-cult rhetoric, and though the Peoples Temple was a congregation of a mainstream American denomination, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), it was quickly transformed into the epitome of the dangerous cult.

Meanwhile, in 1985 the American Psychological Association asked Singer and her colleagues to present a report laying out the rationale of brainwashing. Submitted in 1987 and given peer review, it was denounced as methodologically unsound. The American Sociological Association and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion issued concurring statements. These three statements were subsequently presented in 1990 in a Federal court case in San Francisco, *US v. Fishman*. In a written decision, the court found that the brainwashing hypothesis had insufficient scientific support to be presented at trial. The Fishman case proved to be the key event ending the 1980s “cult wars,” and led directly to the 1995 case involving Pentecostal believer Jason Scott that destroyed the Cult Awareness Network.

By this time, NRM studies had become an integral part of the AAR, the SSSR, and the ASR, but even as NRM issues were

being resolved in the United States and Canada, they were heating up in Europe. Here the issue was government intervention in the life of NRMs. Two new organizations, the Information Network Focus on Religious Movements (INFORM) in London and the Center for Studies of New Religions (CESNUR) in Turin, Italy, took the lead, and CESNUR began to hold an annual international conference for NRM scholars.

Meanwhile, in North America, with the deprogramming/brainwashing issue largely settled, another issue now came to the fore—violence. A series of events in the 1990s lifted cult-related violence out of the background into which it had faded and again gave it center stage—the deaths of the Branch Davidians in Texas (1993), the Heaven’s Gate suicides (1994), the Aum Shinrikyo murders (1996), and the Solar Temple murder/suicides in Switzerland and Canada (1996). The evolving quest to understand religious violence would be further energized by the possibility that millennialism might inspire new violence as the century concluded.

While the Branch Davidian incident had the positive effect of initiating a dialogue between NRM scholars and the FBI, the Solar Temple incident galvanized anti-cult forces in Europe, and prompted the issuance of a string of reports by different European countries. The earliest (France, Belgium) tended to be quite negative, but later reports (Sweden, Germany) offered a more thoughtful response in light of Europe’s emerging religious diversity.

It is hard to say what direction NRM research might have taken in the new century. Major issues had been put to rest; “cults” disappeared in the news media; and having lost the ideological battle, the remaining leadership of the anti-cult movement shifted to a personal attack on NRM scholars whom they labeled “cult apologists.” Searching for a new issue, they began to explore child abuse in the new religions, but their concern was completely overshadowed by the scandal that burst upon the Catholic Church.

While the Catholic scandal pushed the anti-cult movement to the fringe, the events of 9/11 almost destroyed NRM studies. What might have been a new beginning, given that al-Qaida shared numerous traits often assigned to new religions, was lost as hegemony on the subject was seized by Islamic scholars. Law enforcement reorganized to deal with terrorism and dropped contact with NRM scholars (only recently reestablished). Even in Europe, 9/11 refocused government attention, and those politicians who had championed the anti-cult model moved to other issues.

Catching its breath in the wake of 9/11, NRM studies has persisted, though hobbled by the absence of an overarching issue like brainwashing that previously drew so many into the field. And with the aging of those of us so active in the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation of capable young scholars has ap-

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peared. The annual CESNUR conference remains a substantial event, and the NRM Group at AAR has had no trouble each year filling its program slots or generating new ideas for future programming. This persistent interest has come even as the field has been redefined, with primary concern for Hindu and Buddhist groups having been passed to specialists in Asian religions, resulting in an increased concern for Esoteric/New Age groups, especially in Europe.

Amid the spectrum of interests in the redefined field, which issues/topics still grab attention and motivate discussion among NRM scholars? Three stand out. Certainly, (1) legal and legislative issues remain at the forefront as several countries have passed brainwashing laws and annual proposals to limit religious freedom appear in different countries, the most recent (2015) in Argentina and Russia. (2) Scientology is a perennial issue, as almost a case study in the definition of "religion," though many scholars remain hesitant to study the church due to lingering fear of legal attacks. And (3) with the aging of the NRMs of the 1970s, examination of their second generation has produced new insights into the transfer of charismatic power. Meanwhile, what has been most surprising, given the continued emergence of new new religions year-by-year, has been the almost complete lack of interest in those dozens of NRMs formed over the last two decades and how they might resemble or differ from their counterparts of the 1970s.

Judith Weisenfeld
Princeton University

We gather for this session on the study of “new religious movements” in the wake of the thirtieth anniversary of the Philadelphia Police Department’s May 13, 1985 bombing of the MOVE organization’s Osage Avenue row-house compound. Responding to complaints from neighbors and fearing violence on the part of what government officials had labeled a terrorist cult, police acted with the aim of eviction. They eventually dropped a military-grade bomb, lighting an inferno that killed six adults and four children in the compound, destroyed 62 homes and left 250 people homeless. The media refrain as reporters and residents marked the anniversary was: why doesn’t anyone remember this tragedy? One explanation that emerged in these recent discussions is that MOVE is difficult to categorize.¹ Most scholars have engaged it with interest in its political character, generally labeling it a “black nationalist” organization because of the various invocations of Africa, particularly as the surname each member took. The generic black nationalist description erases and obscures more than it clarifies, however, particularly given that one of MOVE’s early theorists was white, that the group’s social and political vision may not be easily contained within a nationalist frame, and that the goals were not solely political. For their part, members described it as “a deeply religious organization,” as “nature,” as “the truth” that would free people—not just black people—from the corruption of “the system.”²

Where is the analysis by scholars of religion 30 years later, I thought? Why doesn’t this group have a place in the conventional narratives of African American religious history or American religious history?³ My goal is not to make a case for MOVE in particular as central to the narrative of African American religious history, but to take the occasion of the anniversary and attendant questions about public memory to think about the forces that have shaped scholarship on “new religious movements” in African American history. I approach the topic not as a specialist in this field, but from the vantage point of working a project on the co-construction of religious and racial identity among blacks in the early twentieth-century U.S in which I take Father Divine’s Peace Mission, the Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, and congregations of Ethiopian Hebrews as cases. I begin with a few thoughts about the shape of scholarship in this field with regard to African American religious history and end with a few questions that have emerged from working in primary sources, early secondary sources examining black “sects and cults,” and reading recent works on black new religious movements of the period.

Much early scholarship on “black sects and cults” represents a debate about the public image and political utility of religion in African American life. Black Protestant clergy,

political leaders, and scholars worried that the theologies, practices, political attitudes, and social organization of these groups undermined the case for African American fitness for full citizenship. Especially concerning was the possibility that the rise of such groups would provide ammunition for whites to characterize “black religion” writ large as necessarily irregular religion—emotional, excessive, primitive. In fact, these fears were justified. The author of a 1935 study of psychosis among followers of Father Divine described poor and uneducated African Americans as “not far removed from their savage ancestors with their primitive, tribal interest in the unnatural, voodooism, witchcraft, and the more bizarre portions of religion.”⁴ Contact with Father Divine, he argued, simply activated the predisposition to religious frenzy, bringing about a state of dementia praecox. Similar assessments by white psychiatrists and sociologists abound.

Responses from black social scientists and historians of religion sought to dispel the idea that such movements revealed the character of black people’s innate religiosity. Many invoked class or gender arguments about the appeal of the groups to particular sectors of marginalized black people and indicted American society for the racism that marginalized them in the first place.⁵ Many early black interpreters of these movements were invested in excluding them from the normative core of black religious life, which they understood to be black church Protestant, and this exclusion took on urgency in light of hopes that black churches and their male clerical leaders would serve as vehicles for political activism.⁶

Political investments in the story of African American religion as primarily one of freedom struggle and theological commitment to Protestant Christianity have relegated non-Christian and unconventional Christian movements to the margins. This interpretive framework continues to shape traditional narratives of African American religious history and guides the rare appearances of African American religion in broader American religious history narratives. The Nation of Islam represents an exception, despite the fact that a great deal of scholarship about the group emphasizes its political nature, presenting it as a black nationalist movement that happens to deploy a religious frame.⁷ While the terms of black liberation in the Nation of Islam are not those of the Civil Rights Movement model, it fits more easily into a black freedom struggle narrative than do the other groups. Moreover, the popularity of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as a classroom text provides the opportunity to teach about the Nation of Islam and do so in the course of a narrative of its rejection in favor of Sunni Islam.

There has been a recent revival of interest among historians of African American religion in some of the groups that have their origins in the early twentieth century.⁸ In par-

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ticalar, a number of scholars have worked to make black religious movements previously labeled “sects and cults” legible within the frames of religious traditions that hold the status of “authentic” religions. Such works argue for a more capacious understanding of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity such that non-normative versions can be taken as themselves authentic iterations of these traditions and their founders and adherents more than simply pretenders.

A few brief questions for discussion:

1. The approach scholars in the recent wave of work on early twentieth-century black religious movements in the U.S. have taken strikes me as having the potential to concede too much analytical ground to a traditional religious core. Nevertheless, I appreciate the questions these studies raise about what constitutes the “new” when we talk about new religious movements. Do we use the label to note temporal newness in the American context and, if so, what then is its analytical utility? How can we attend to both continuity and innovation in our histories and interpretations of these movements?

2. The question of terminology has been the most vexing for me in formulating my project. Early in my work I used the hedging phrase, “the groups I’m interested in,” followed by “groups that promoted alternative religio-racial identities” with alternative modifying identity rather than religion. Currently, I’m calling them “religio-racial movements,” focusing on the characteristics that unite them in the context of my study but leaving open the possibility of other configurations into which they might also fit. Would it be useful to let go of the “new religious movements” label in favor of a more flexible set of descriptors?

3. I’m struck by the dominance of single movement studies not only with regard to African American religious groups, but in the broader field of “new religious movement” studies. What accounts for this? What effect does it have on the place of scholarship about these movements in the broader field? What might we gain by thinking thematically and comparatively more regularly?

4. All of the groups I examine in my study were founded by men and almost all of the scholarly accounts focus on the theologies and practices male leaders propagated. Having spent a number of years scouring archival collections, reading the black press, and working through vital records, I can attest to the fact that there were women in these groups and, in some cases, many more than one might imagine given the masculinist theologies and leadership structures. What impact would attending more carefully to women’s experiences in black religious movements have on our understanding of their place in African American religious history?

5. The fact that so many of the black movements that have captured scholars’ attention have their origins in the early twentieth-century northward migration of black southerners

and immigration from the Caribbean has focused attention almost exclusively on northern urban environments. What might emerge from using a longer historical lens—not just forward, as in the case of recent ethnographic work on African Hebrew Israelites and the Five Percenters, for example, but backward in time—and a broader geographic scope to the South and West?⁹

1. Philadelphia-native Gene Denby of NPR’s Code Switch provided excellent coverage the anniversary. Gene Denby, “Why Have So Many People Never Heard of the MOVE Bombing?” May 18, 2015, <<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/18/407665820/why-did-we-forget-the-move-bombing>> ; “I’m From Philly. 30 Years Later, I’m Still Trying To Make Sense Of The MOVE Bombing,” May 13, 2015 < <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/13/406243272/im-from-philly-30-years-later-im-still-trying-to-make-sense-of-the-move-bombing>> *Code Switch: Frontiers of Race, Culture and Ethnicity*.

2. *Let the Fire Burn*, dir., Jason Osder (Zeitgeist Films, 2013).

3. A notable exception is J. M. Floyd-Thomas, “The Burning of Rebellious Thought: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism,” *The Black Scholar* 32:1 (Spring 2002): 11-21.

4. James A. Brussel, “Father Divine: Holy Precipitator of Psychoses,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 92:1 (July 1, 1935): 215-223. See also, Lauretta Bender and Zuleika Yarrell, “Psychoses Among Followers of Father Divine,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 87: 4 (April 1938): 418-449, among others.

5. Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944).

6. See Barbara Dianne Savage’s Foreword to the 2002 edition of Fauset’s *Black Gods* for a discussion of his approach to these questions and Savage, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

7. C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961); E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

8. For example, Jacob S. Dorman, *Chosen People: The Rise of Black Israelite Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Marie W. Dallam, *Daddy Grace: A Celebrity Preacher and His House of Prayer* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Edward E. Curtis IV and

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Danielle Brune Sigler, eds., *The New Black Gods: Arthur Huff Fauset and the Study of African American Religions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Edward E. Curtis, IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

9. John L. Jackson, *Thin Description: Ethnography and the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), Michael Muhammad Knight, *The Five Percenters: Islam, Hip Hop and the Gods of New York* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007); Julius H. Bailey, "The Final Frontier: Secrecy, Identity, and the Media in the Rise and Fall of the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors," *JAAR* 74:2 (2006): 302-323.

American Religion and Global Flows

Where once we talked about missions, immigration, or hybridization, the field is increasingly putting those and other topics under the larger umbrella of “global flows.” Network societies exchange and interact among actors in religious realms right alongside economic and political. With structural logics made up of nodes that link together social, cultural, and physical places, how are we to understand American religion, both presently and historically? What traditional interpretations are sloughed off with this global interpretation and with what are they being replaced?

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Conference organizers suggested the phrase “American Religion and Global Flows” as an innovation, an “umbrella term” that can encompass traditional subjects of global religion, missionary work and immigration, for example, as well as newer strands of analysis—such as tracing religion as a social network mediated by a variety of communications technologies. “Global Flows,” “Globalization,” and even “Glocalization” are the concepts de jour, and they represent our collective scholarly efforts to understand our place in the world, and the sense that the things we thought were (often regrettably) stable—namely the strength of the nation state, the borders between cultures, and the dominance of Christianity and the West in that system—are not quite as stable as we thought.

Generally speaking, we assume that the era concerned with “real” globalization dates back roughly two hundred years. As José Casanova succinctly put it, “Historically, globalization is a process continuous with modernity, with the capitalist world system, and with the world system of states.”¹ I’d like to remind us to do what historians do best, however, and ask us to look farther back in time. Today’s scholars are hardly the first to envision religion in global terms, and coming from the bailiwick of the Christianity of the early modern Atlantic world, the vision conjured up by the phrase “global flows” is not the intentionally capacious language of the post-secular academic, but rather the prophetic voice of seventeenth century English poet George Herbert in the “Church Militant.”

Religion stands on tip-toe in our land,
 Readie to passe to the American strand.

This couplet is part of longer poem, itself attached to an even longer poetic work, that traces the course of Herbert’s “religion” in its flight from sin. The plot is both Biblical and historical, but “religion,” (Herbert tells us) “like a pilgrime,” is “westward bent.” Herbert’s reference to America, which nearly kept the work from being published, sounded a warning to his English compatriots: without care to protect “religion” from the threats of sin, the evil force that had already chased religion around the globe, “then shall Religion to America flee.”²

Herbert framed his history in terms of states. His premise, that states have a religion and ought to work for its advancement, will be familiar to early modernists. It marks not just our sources, but also our scholarship, as we trace what Lauric Hennenon has termed the “spiritual geopolitics” of the age. Protestant and Catholic empires squared off to compete for New World territory, for domination over the international system in Europe, for wealth and power and

military might. As they did so, they created a system within which individuals, even those as far removed from power as enslaved peoples in the new world, or sailors captured by or escaped from Barbary pirates, could manipulate confessional identity as a means to personal advancement and protection.³ From the courts and treaty tables of Europe to small plantations in Mexico or tiny towns in New England, religion shaped political possibilities for individuals. As Susan Juster and Linda Gregerson have commented about the concepts of empire and religion, “whichever term comes first, and in whichever direction one draws causal and affiliative links, religion and empire were the constitutive forces of nation building, economic expansion, and identity formation in the early modern era.”⁴

The discontinuities between the early modern and the modern eras are easy enough to find, but Juster and Gregerson’s words are striking in that they might just as well be applied to our current era of globalization, in which economic and political forces span the globe, and religion is often conceived of as a mechanism through which individuals negotiate modernity and post-modernity, secularity and post-secularity. For that reason, I’d like to emphasize the continuities rather than the discontinuities between these two eras, and there are two in particular that I’d like to highlight.

The first is the inter-penetration of the global and the local in terms of religion. The second is the awareness of our subjects of the global nature of the religious world in which they operated or operate. Narratives of globalization, in other words, play a key role in global flows. These two issues are inextricably linked. For Herbert the sins of individuals in one place could only be saved by the virtues of those in another. Their ties to one another, and the meaning gleaned from those ties, were the substance of Christianity, which for him was the only true religion. A century and a half later, evangelical hymnist John Newton described the American Revolution that divided the Protestant fellowship in similar terms, writing “This Nation is like a ship in a storm, a storm which sin has raised, we are in jeopardy & the Lord if not asleep has seemed to stand at a distance, so that the storm has increased & things gone from bad to worse.” Yet, “If He be pleased to speak the word, we shall have a calm, & if his true disciples unite in fervent prayer, then there is yet hope.”⁵

In a very different mode, but to similar effect, Robert Wuthnow pointed out in his 2009 work, *Boundless Faith*, most of what we imagine under the term religion operates locally: congregations, rituals, worship, local pastoral leadership. Yet local congregations operate on the international stage as missionaries and in a wide variety of other ways. Wuthnow quotes a nineteenth century literary character who

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complains, "I must be all the time away from home a workin' for the heathen and missionary societies. And I must at the same time be [at] home all the time a workin' and a takin' care of my family."⁶ The interdependency of the global and local has, in other words, been a hallmark of American religion for centuries, as has the awareness of historical actors that this was so. Neither globalization, seen in this way, nor the awareness of globalization, is new.

The differences between global narratives of Christianity, let alone religion, in the seventeenth century and the present are legion, and we could fill an conference with references to the unprecedented scale of twenty-first century globalization, the new opportunities it provides religious individuals and actors, and the new challenges it presents.

But as long as there have been global flows, there have also been narratives of the meanings of global flows, some of which have already been beautifully excavated by scholars. Those narratives have played a powerful role in shaping the kinds of actions that followers of Herbert, or Newton, or countless others, have taken on the global stage, and on the "global flows" of religion they created. These narratives represent, I think, important counter narratives, correctives, and complexity to the drumbeats of Christian nationalism of the reflexive effort to understand "American" religion in its many forms. Moreover, they represent, in this global moment, a common theme that connect very different kinds of faith communities. Attention to not just global flows, but also religious communities' global narratives suggests that part of being "religious," no matter what one's relationship to privilege and power was or is, is the capacity to imagine religious lives in both global and local ways.

6. Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), quote p. 9. Wuthnow explains the force of another such narrative in terms of scholarship in his second chapter, esp. p. 36-37.

1. José Casanova, "Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization," *Sociology of Religion* 62 (2001), 415-441.

2. *The English Poems of George Herbert*, Linda Wilcox, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), entry 181; Raymond A. Anselment, "The Church Militant: George Herbert and the Metamorphoses of Christian History," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 41(1978), 299-316.

3. For a wonderful example of scholarship that draws out these connections, see Kristin Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean: Religion, Colonial Competition, and the Politics of Profit* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

4. Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster, eds., *Empires of God: Religious Encounters in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 3.

5. Newton to Thornton, December 19, 1776. CUL, Ms. Add. 7826/1/A

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I am going to address the question of how to study American religious global flows from my own scholarly vantage point in the overlapping fields of American Studies and Religious Studies, specifically the emergent scholarly trends in the relatively young subfield of American Islamic Studies.¹ A generation ago the term American Islamic Studies could have only meant philology, textual studies of the works of pre-modern Arab (or Arabophone) thinkers written by U.S. based scholars. The notion that Islamic Studies proper could be undertaken by studying the religious practices of Muslims in the U.S., diasporas, convert populations, and their subsequent generations, was dismissed out of hand, and in fact, continues to be in many “traditional” Islamic studies departments, journals, conferences (such as the American Oriental Society) which remain wedded to a territorial bias (ie they construct the Middle East/Orient as the authentic core of the “Muslim World.”)

Yet we are also witnessing a post-Orientalist de-territorialization of Islamic studies as well as a growing inclusion of Islam in discussions of American religions, such as this conference. By “post-Orientalist” I mean, first, that Said’s argument is widely (but not unanimously) taken as an analytical point of departure; Edward Said’s *Orientalism* demonstrated that, far from amassing objective and definitive knowledge about distant peoples and lands, the Western study of Islam and the Orient was largely a method of producing knowledge about the cultural essences of others in service of a narrative of European racial superiority and imperial rule.² Second, a post-Orientalist position recognizes his critics who have challenged and amended Said’s unrippled account of how the Orient operates in the Western imagination. For example, the Middle East has meant and continues to mean very different things to Americans in different political moments, and these American interests are not identical with European colonial interests. Furthermore, the American national subject is neither as white nor as male as the so-called “universal” European one of the nineteenth century.³ Whiteness and maleness are important to the fashioning of American identity but in the age of Obama whose favorite show is *Homeland*, in which Claire Daines plays a mentally unstable CIA agent, racial, gender, and sexual minority status are also incorporated into imagining the nation as a vulnerable superpower and in constructing the Muslim as the Other and Islam as fundamentally foreign.

Concurrent with the pervasive representations of Islam as the antithesis of the American way of life in the mainstream U.S. media are the increasingly public claims of American Muslims that Islam, as a universal tradition, is an American religion and Muslims, as a historical presence beginning with African Muslim slaves, are *not* a new reli-

gious minority. Even as they make such claims, American Muslims simultaneously struggle to maintain their political, devotional, charitable, familial, and intellectual ties to Muslims outside of their national borders, ties rendered suspect by the state in the context of the War on Terror. American Muslims’ competing desires to be recognized both as authentically American and as an authentic part of the global *umma* of believers is the subject of my book, *Islam is a Foreign Country*.⁴ I must admit my editor loved my title but that Muslim readers hate it and that I regularly have to (defensively) explain is not prescriptive. Based on multi-site fieldwork in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, my ethnography tracks the global flows of Muslim intellectuals and ideas that connect US mosques to the intellectual centers in the Middle East. As the American Muslim seekers I interviewed studied Islamic law and theology abroad, they wondered if their ties to the Muslim world undermined their earnest efforts to make Islam an American religion. *Islam is a Foreign Country* breaks with the persistent territorial bias that maps “true” Islam to distant, eastern lands and brown (rather than black or white) bodies but it does so not by turning away from the Middle East but by mapping the changing religious and political significance of the Middle East in the eyes of American Muslims. My focus on the wide range of meanings and political and religious usages of the moral geography of the “Muslim World” for American Muslims allows me to sidestep the sectarian, racial, and class divisions that obscure important continuities across Muslim communities. Furthermore, the transnational framing of the Muslim world de-naturalizes the nation-state, modernity’s most powerful moral geography, and destabilizes the loaded questions of Americanization that have dominated the sub-field of Islam in the United States.

As an Americanist interested in global Islam, I am in good company as there are a number of excellent models of transnational, multi-sited, multi-lingual ethnographies such as Zain Abdullah’s *Black Mecca*, Hisham Aidi’s *Rebel Music*, Sunaina Maira’s *Missing*, and Junaid Rana’s *Terrifying Muslims*. These transnational works push against disciplinary boundaries that have limited the kinds of questions scholars have asked about American Muslims, deepening our understanding of transnational Islamic flows and American culture in a global age. For example, one generation ago, scholars writing about American Muslims were locked in cyclical debates in which 1965 figured as a fault line: religious studies scholars delineated whether African-American Muslim communities such as the Nation of Islam (the majority of black Muslims before 1965) were as authentically Islamic as Sunnis (who became the majority of black Muslims after 1965, many inspired by Malcolm X’s final conversion) and

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social scientists determined how to tell the story of Muslim migration to the U.S. in terms of intrusive, aquatic metaphors like “waves,” “flows” or “floods” that are presumed to be benign; such imagery contrasts with the nation as stable ground. 1965 is also significant to the history of American Islam because of the passing of the Immigration Act, a direct outcome of the Civil Rights Act, which triggered the immigration of large numbers of Muslims primarily from the Middle East and South Asia. In the context of the Cold War, this generation of highly-educated and upwardly-mobile immigrants was attractive to the U.S. government as a way to keep ahead of the USSR in technical and scientific fields. These Cold War Muslim immigrants radically transformed the demographic picture of U.S. mosques and some of the pan-Islamists among them reshaped the terms of religious authority and the political priorities of American Muslim institutions: shifting focus from domestic social justice issues towards unjust U.S. foreign policy in Muslim-majority countries. Thus, 1965 marks several periods of the history of Islam in the U.S.—as a demographic turning point, as the end of Malcolm X’s charismatic and global leadership, and as the beginning in a shift in American Muslim religious and political cultures. However, historical accounts of Islam in the twentieth-century U.S. too often treat 1965 both as a temporal *and analytical* marker. In such cases, 1965 is used to separate and oversimplify the stories of (separatist) Black Muslims from (integrationist) Immigrant Muslims and (black) Heterodox Islam from (immigrant) Orthodox Islam, as well as (transient/working class) urban immigrants from (model minority/middle class) suburban immigrants. The complex relationships between the African Muslim and African American Muslims of Harlem allows Abdullah to upend the categories of the (presumed brown) immigrant Muslim and the (presumed convert) black Muslim that have become shorthand in scholarly and lay discussions of American Muslims.⁵ By foregrounding the transnational radical politics and aesthetic musical and film tastes of working class Arab and South Asian youth Aidi and Maira provide a counter-narrative to the model-minority and American Dream narrative of the Americanization literature.⁶ Rana reverses the focus of much of the literature on American Muslim immigrants by examining the flows of labor and capital rather than the assimilation process; he walks readers through the step migration of Pakistani migrant workers who dream of the U.S. from Lahore and Dubai in the context of the nightmarish realities of the War on Terror.⁷

De-territorializing American Islamic studies requires us to account for how global flows of people, capital, ideas, practices, films, and music have shaped communities on both sides of the Atlantic and Islam itself in all its diverse, continuous, and discontinuous forms. These anthropologists provide thick descriptions of complex processes and

patterns that are global and de-territorial, with a keen eye to how these spaces are imbued by religious practice, social relations, and the imprint of what is American. Such a de-territorialized American Islamic studies also produces the space to envision a post-Orientalist philology; for example, Sherman Jackson’s imaginative work *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* brings the pre-modern theologians of Islam in conversation with William R. Jones over the question of theodicy: do black lives matter to Allah?⁸ If one of the legacies of the cultural turn in the humanities is a pervasive, anti-elitist preference for the history of movements, practices, habits, and affects over the history of ideas, American Islamic studies is moving towards expanding the U.S. history of ideas to include those typically left out of intellectual histories and Islamic studies.

1. Juliane Hammer and Omid Safi, *Cambridge Companion to American Islam*, New York Cambridge University Press, 2013.

2. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York Vintage 1978

3. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture Media and US Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, Berkeley University of California Press 2001.

4. Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press 2013

5. Zain Abdullah, *Black Mecca: The African Muslims of Harlem*, New York Oxford University Press 2010.

6. Sunaina Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2009. Hisham Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire and the New Muslim Youth Culture*, New York, Vintage 2014.

7. Junaid Rana, *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*, Durham Duke University Press, 2011.

8. Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering*, New York Oxford University Press 2009.

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Scholars are only beginning to address the challenge of conceptualizing Catholicism in the United States within global perspective. While a steadily growing body of literature on transatlantic and Vatican connections examines essential elements of this new perspective, the intersections between U.S., Asian, and Latin American histories have received less scholarly attention. The latter intersections began with the Spanish colonial presence in lands from Florida to California that are now part of the United States. Subsequent U.S. political and economic expansionism led to the conquest of nearly half of Mexico's national territory at the midpoint of the nineteenth century, consolidated U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico five decades later, fueled economic shifts that led to the origins of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century immigration from Mexico, resulted in a U.S. presence throughout the Caribbean and Central America that helped induce migrations from those regions, and has driven the globalization process that in recent decades fed an even larger immigration pattern from throughout Latin America. This latter process further blurred the border between Latin and North America, accelerating the development of previous links between Catholicism in the United States and Catholicism in the rest of the hemisphere.

Since the early 1990s the geographic dispersion of Latinos across the United States and the growing diversity of their national backgrounds, a number of them immigrants whose Catholicism is rooted in formative years spent in their native lands, has brought the historical perspectives of Catholics from Latin America and the United States into unprecedented levels of daily contact. Latinos and their fellow Catholics encounter in the quotidian relations of ecclesial life not just unfamiliar customs and languages, but also the intersection of different histories. More broadly, Latinos are altering U.S. church and society through their responses to demands that they become "Americanized" and adopt the English language; their advocacy for Hispanic ministry and for immigration rights; their participation in parishes, apostolic movements, and denominational switching; their voting patterns and proclivity for public ritual and devotional traditions. At the same time, the lives and faith of Latino Catholics are being refashioned in dramatic ways: through the multiple pressures of assimilation, English-only movements, civil rights struggles, conservative political forces, the fact of religious pluralism and growing secularization, the rise of small faith communities and of Pentecostal and evangelical religion, and the ongoing controversies over immigration and clergy sexual abuse of children.

Of course the hemispheric movement of peoples is not unidirectional, nor does it solely influence the United States. To cite but one example, consider how during the 1990s and

early twenty-first century Mexican immigrants to the United States from Nuestra Señora del Rosario parish in Coeneo, Michoacán transformed religious practice in their native land. For generations the ritual calendar of parish life in Coeneo had revolved around traditional devotions and feast days that marked the passing of each year. Mass immigration facilitated an unexpected but noteworthy shift in this local ritual calendar. The numerous baptisms and marriages émigrés came home to celebrate during the extended Christmas holiday replaced the traditional devotional cycle with a concentrated succession of sacraments and family gatherings that primarily revolved around the schedules of returning immigrants.¹

While the quantity of immigrants from the north to the south of the hemisphere has been comparatively low, in the last half century migratory flows have encompassed a growing group of U.S. Catholics who have visited Latin America or served in church ministries there. Often their experiences transform their understanding of Catholicism, as well as their attitudes toward the foreign policy of the United States. Women religious, priests, and lay missionaries have established significant and vital links between the United States and the rest of the Americas through missionary institutes, most notably Maryknoll. Other Latin American links include U.S. Catholics' awareness and involvement with liberation theology, the civil wars in Central America during the 1970s and 1980s, well-known incidents like the 1980 murders of Archbishop Oscar Romero and four U.S. church women serving in El Salvador, and the numerous delegations of students, scholars, and church leaders who have visited and established contacts in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

One implication of a perspective that considers such hemispheric movement of peoples is the need to reconsider the standard narrative of U.S. Catholic history. In broad strokes this narrative is typically depicted as a tale of a fledgling church in a Protestant land that expanded exponentially with the arrival of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European immigrants, whose descendants subsequently achieved acceptance and prosperity, an ascent often presented as symbolically culminating in John F. Kennedy's presidential election. While this narrative encompasses the transatlantic experience of many European émigrés, it occludes the history of Catholics whose stories cannot be subsumed into a saga of immigrants: enslaved Africans and their descendants, freed former slaves, vanquished Native Americans, and conquered Hispanic Catholics in Florida, the Southwest, Puerto Rico and other locales who were incorporated into the United States during the nation's territorial expansion. Thus, rather than a story of thirteen original colonies

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and their westward expansion, a hemispheric perspective accentuates the encounter and conflict of peoples, primarily the southward moving French, the northward moving Spanish, the westward moving British, the varied groups of native peoples who already lived on the land, and the slaves and immigrants who settled among them. Moreover, the Americanization of European immigrants' descendants in the course of the twentieth century occurred simultaneously with another crucial historical and ongoing trend: the significant new immigration of Catholics to the United States from Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, and particularly Latin America.

Taken even more broadly, a hemispheric approach situates U.S. Catholicism within the context of global Christianity. Along with the Reformation—both Protestant and Catholic—arguably one of the most momentous events of Christianity's second millennium was the conquest, evangelization, and struggles for life, dignity, and self-determination of the peoples of the Americas. It is striking that the nations that eventually comprised the hemisphere, including the United States, have passed through parallel historical epochs such as conquest, society building, racial mixing, independence, revolution or civil war, and the demands for justice of marginalized groups. Despite the uniqueness of each national history, from this broader lens the nations of the Americas have more in common than is usually acknowledged. As Felipe Fernández-Armesto has noted, even the United States is “in some respects, a Latin American country, with more features in common with most of the rest of the Americas than mainstream opinion has so far conceded.”² The historical similarities between the United States and other American nations underscores the need to study U.S. Catholicism and North American religion more generally within the context of the global migration of peoples to, from, and within the Western hemisphere. Such comparative and hemispheric studies of religion in the Americas are necessary to increase our understanding of North American Christianity and indeed of global Christianity in its modern period of missionary and colonial expansion.

1. Luis E. Murillo, “Tamales on the Fourth of July: The Transnational Parish of Coeneo, Michoacán,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19 (Summer 2009): 137-68.

2. Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Our America: A Hispanic History of the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 352.

“Religion in the Americas” as an Organizational Paradigm

Some religious studies departments are organizing tracks around the theme of “religion in the Americas,” while others retain traditional tracks but try to find ways to include transnational themes. How does this move redefine our topics for research as well as teaching? What, if anything, is left out by organizing in this fashion?

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The Cable Network News channel CNN recently covered a story on birth tourism. With much fanfare, a few talking heads explained the “crisis” of mothers from China traveling to the United States to give birth so that their newborn children will have U.S. citizenship. The story focused on the fact that many of these expecting parents need to travel only as far as four hours away from mainland China by air to give birth in the Mariana Islands, one of many U.S. territories. There was much ado about this so-called crisis. But I was struck by the fact that the United States is only four hours away from China. Who knew?

Well, technically, I did know this, but it was instructive to have it presented unwittingly in this manner by CNN. From the time we are children, most of us are repeatedly told that the United States lies strictly in North America, along with Hawaii of course (I will avoid the temptation to make an Obama “birther” joke). This is not true, of course. Rather, the United States is literally all over the world. The United States is at every one of the more than 1,000 military bases. This is why mail sent to an Army Post Office address for a U.S. military base near Berlin, Germany, for instance, is classified as domestic mail—because it is being sent to the United States, not to Germany. The United States is also located throughout the numerous territories, possessions, and colonies administered by the U.S. government. Thus, children born in the Mariana Islands must be recognized as citizens of the United States.

I’ll return to this point later. But for now, I want to make a few formal comments about American Religions versus Religion in the Americas. For many years now, a slew of PhD programs have begun training students as scholars of Religion in the Americas. This is certainly the case at Indiana University. In fact, I was among the faculty teaching there at the time the program was restructured as such. But many other universities have implemented this structure.

Among them are Princeton University, Florida State University, Harvard University, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Yale University, the University of Texas-Austin, and the University of Florida. With programs across public, private (including Ivy League) universities, this is now an established trend.

This development has not been without controversy, however. Skeptics abound, sometimes for reasons of inertia. But there are also philosophical objections that range from viewing religion-in-the-Americas as a rejection of regional specificity to claiming that only Americans proper (meaning certain populations of the United States) constitute the rightful subjects of study for the field.

There are two major principles that might guide our understanding of this question over what properly constitutes

the field of American religions and academic training. One is that empires (including that of the United States) must remain visible in the study of American religions. The other is that transnationalism as a method is properly perceived not as diametric opposition to the study of nation-states but as an empirically and analytically appropriate means of accounting for nation-states, for understanding the religious constitution and behaviors of national populations.

In light of these two principles of empire and transnationalism, I want to proffer five observations concerning the study of religion-in-the-Americas as a distinctive and promising approach to training future scholars of American religions and executing scholarship in the field.

1. First, this religion-in-the-Americas approach moves us beyond the model of the nation-state and thereby enables us to appreciate or perceive the challenging and productive complexities of empire-states. The United States is among the many empire-states that have profoundly shaped religion, politics, and culture more broadly on a global scale. Although I recognize that its status as such is contested and vigorously denied by many, I think this denial is actually rooted in the peculiar formation of the U.S. as an empire-state. There is one corollary to this that I shall phrase more crassly: empires, for all their problems, have the virtue of not being provincial. They are highly networked and constituted through thick assemblages that are not delimited by nation-state boundaries. So, the very status of the United States as an empire should compel scholars of American religion to move beyond the 48-contiguous states approach.

2. Second, approaching the study of American religions as religion in the Americas enables us to engage with the multiple empires and imperial geographies that have shaped the actual means whereby American religions have formed. These include the Spanish, French, British, Aztec, and Incan empires. Even something so simple as including Christopher Columbus’s voyages and conquests in a survey of American religion becomes more legible in this light.

3. The scholarship on Indigeneity must become a central factor in conceptualizing the intellectual rationality for executing research in the field. Most succinctly, engaging with Indigeneity immediately foregrounds the fact that the United States is a racial state rooted in genocidal practices of settler colonialism. We should recognize that the making of the United States has always been transnational because it has involved Anglo-American settlers attempting conquest against hundreds of Indigenous nations. Transnationalism is already inherent to the literal formation of the 48-contiguous states as Anglo-American entities. The fact that the U.S. government administers control over more than three Native American reservations as this very moment, moreover,

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demands that we recognize the deep architecture of empire at the very heart of American religious formation.

4. The U.S. Religion-only approach is by designed exclusive, chiefly as a racial project. Its true foundation is not intellectual but political because it is a distinct product of the racial state and the rationalities of settler colonialism. The Religion in the Americas approach, by contrast, is inclusive. Contrary to popular objection, this transnational approach does not marginalize regional specialists. Aside from the fact that the transnational is constituted through regional, specific entities, this objection is similar to claiming that the nation-state model marginalizes those whose focus is religion in New York or California or the South.

5. There are multiple benefits that might accrue through the Religion-in-the-Americas approach, as I have indicated in an earlier blog essay for the Center's online forum (<http://www.raac.iupui.edu/forum/>). Implementing this hemispheric paradigm will create new conversations and affiliations among scholars publishing research in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. It will institutionalize the ability of Religious Studies departments to become a home for the study of indigenous American religions as well as other American religions like Yoruba, Candomblé, and Vodun. It will mitigate the marginalization of Catholicism in American religion programs (Christianity in the Americas has always been and continues to be overwhelmingly Catholic). It will richly enhance subfields such as African American religions (most Black American Christians have been Catholics, and African-derived religions have a more robust presence in Latin America). Last but not least, it will broaden the job prospects for American religion PhDs.

Finally, I close with a return to the global presence of the United States. I am increasingly persuaded that we must train students in global methods of study. Many of us are haunted by the superstition that humans can learn about only one region of the world and that our brains are not big enough to transcend that, especially in a PhD program. So, here is a lesson from theological tradition, which shaped the methodology in universities throughout northern Africa, the Middle East, the European cape of Asia for many centuries. In my doctoral studies at Union Theological Seminary, I was expected to develop expert knowledge of the Christian tradition. Of course, this was because Christianity is not a country or a nation. It is not confined to one region. It even transcends things like the temporality of so-called modernity. For most of the history of the university (i.e., since the founding of Morocco's University of al-Qarawiyyin in the 800s), scholars have undergone training and have executed their research through global, transnational methods. It is still done this way in theological schools. For all the critiques of theology that issue from Religious Studies, this

global, transnational orientation certainly seems like an exemplary methodology.

The United States is a bit like these religious traditions. True, it is a nation-state. But it is not only a nation-state. It is also an empire, and it is literally all over the world. If we are really going to study it, we will require global, transnational methods. The history of U.S. missionary religion alone is a powerful demonstration of this point. Rigorous methodology, not nationalism, should guide our approach to executing research in American religions.

Kristy Nabhan-Warren
The University of Iowa

As I read through the *Proceedings* from the past three meetings to prepare myself for our gathering, I was left impressed with the brilliance of the essays. From thoughtful treatises on secularism to defining “religion” and the academic study of it, the *Proceedings* can be interpreted as a touchstone of contemporary debate and dialogue on what it is that we study and why it matters. I am excited to be a part of this. I come to this session as a scholar trained as an historian of American religions and as an anthropologist, and so my methodological approach to the study of religion is deeply informed by both disciplines. I have always appreciated the discipline of Religious Studies’ interdisciplinary bent; indeed the field encompasses scholars from a wide array of disciplines and subdisciplines. Even the most cursory read of the annual AAR Program Book reveals the ever-expanding discipline and an ever-widening of the tent—and this is good. The field has expanded in fruitful ways in the past twenty years.

At my son Declan’s second grade end-of-the-school-year picnic last week, I had an unexpected and highly engaging conversation with Layan and Danya, two bright-eyed second graders. They both knew I taught religion—they apparently learned it at “share time” in class—and they asked me what I knew about the religion of Islam. I replied that I probably didn’t know as much as they did (which is true), as they are both Muslims, and I asked them to tell me about what it is like to be a Muslim girl. Layan, Sudanese, talked at length about when she would cover her hair (around age 12—in four years) and what this would be like (she said she really looked forward to the event) and Danya, who identified herself as “an Iraqi and a Muslim,” talked about when she’d start covering her arms and legs—no more shorts, she said, once she turned 12 or 13. Layan was preparing to travel to Sudan for the summer and was very excited about getting her hair done for the first time at a beautician and was deciding which head wraps to take with her to wear when she was in her home country. Both girls are ambitious and talked about their desires to attend Harvard and Stanford. They talked about living in multiple cultural worlds and the challenges of living in Iowa City—and also how much they liked it. They emphasized continuity much more than contestation in their narratives and felt comfortable growing up in the Corn Belt. These are girls whose educational aspirations are encouraged and supported by their families and they are girls who speak proudly of and are knowledgeable about their faith—they do not espouse a tepid “moralistic therapeutic deism” in the least.¹

I came away from this wonderful and unexpected conversation at a park picnic bench thinking about how our identities as scholars and teachers are occasions for the

gifts of grounded and real conversations and to learn about gendered, religious, and racial-ethnic identities. This was honestly one of the most honest and engaged conversations I’d had in a while—and it was with eight-year olds! I came away from our time together energized. It is here that Sue Ridgely’s work on children and religion comes to mind as she stresses the importance of listening to children and what a child-centered approach can add to our understandings of religious experience and expression.² As Sue notes in her work, stories are important and we must listen to stories to get the pulse on religion in the Americas—or anywhere else. In her 2013 talk at this very conference, Kathryn Lofton emphasized the necessity of *listening*—how we scholar-teachers need to listen to our interlocutors and how they understand and make religious worlds—and we also need to listen to each other.³ I couldn’t agree more. Whether we identify ourselves as historians, ethnographers or as hybridized in our methods and approach, our craft is dependent on the cultivation of listening.

So what do these young girls, and the cultivation and craft of listening have to do with this session’s focus on “Religion in the Americas as an Organizational Paradigm?” They do because they send out a note of caution: be wary of paradigms as they make broad quantitative statements that may or may not be supported by qualitative, more humanistic research. Big statements, bold pronouncements need to be situated in stories and the stories must not be lost in our rush to make such bold statements. Layan and Danya are strong girls and are not inhibited by their faith and they seem quite comfortable in the public sphere. They and their families are the future of religion in the Americas. The Corn Belt region of the United States is rapidly changing and more and more “minority majority” cities and towns are being declared as African, Latino, Middle Eastern, Burmese, and Latino residents stake their claim on the American landscape.

Ever since I was a graduate student learning about *the* history of U.S. religions, paradigms have always made me a bit nervous. Paradigms are powerful statements; they put forth predictions and make assumptions. Now don’t get me wrong, paradigms aren’t all bad—they give us clarity and assurance. They provide a sense of order and discipline to what we study. Funding agencies seem to like them, Board of Regents like them—when we make scientific-sounding claims we seem to fit more clearly in the STEM fields and are less humanistic sounding. Yet rather than cultivating a new paradigm what I’d like to see is an opening up of how religion is researched and studied in the Americas. If there has been a paradigm of religion in the Americas, it has been one that has reified the historical method in a strict sense. For a long time the paradigm has been Eastern Sea-

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board centric, Protestant-focused, and heterosexual-male oriented. And in Catholic Studies, one of the subdisciplines in which I write and teach, Catholics have been—until recently—studied apart from other groups. Many studies that have supported the paradigm have been quite good. (Sydney Ahlstrom, Sydney Mead, Jay P. Dolan—the “greats.”) But it is time for a new, more experimental approach and rendering of religion in the Americas where history is one way—not the only way—of studying religion. If we are talking about organizing new paradigms here today, what I’d like to see are studies of religion in the Americas that are more experimental, more blended in their methodological approaches and sensibilities. Let’s make our field broader and more inclusive. And this isn’t to “diss” history—to the contrary. Scholars like Emma Anderson, whose *The Betrayal of Faith*, and *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, and Paula Kane’s *Sister Thorne and Catholic Mysticism in America*, are exquisite histories that engage in an ethnographic imagination.⁴ Other fine histories like Ava Chamberlain’s *The Notorious Life of Elizabeth Tuttle*, use an ethnographic imagination to uncover the complexities of Elizabeth’s complicated life.⁵ And Brett Hendrickson’s *Border Medicine: A Transcultural History of Mexican American Cutanderismo*, is an ethnohistorical study that provides curanderas’ and curanderos’ perspectives to both complement and challenge a historical rendering of curanderismos’ history—and scholars’ interpretations of it.⁶ What Anderson, Chamberlain and Hendrickson share is a gift of listening—they listen to their interlocutors—living and dead—to find out what matters to them and how they crafted religious identities, as well as how those identities were sources of hurt and healing.

Opening up a strictly historical paradigm that has had a strong hold in our broad field “Religion in the Americas” can make what we study and teach more relevant. Lately I have been thinking a lot about the issue of *relevance* and the state of the Humanities—and the need to be public intellectuals and to make our voices heard in the public sphere. The departments to which we belong: History, Religious Studies, and American Studies are part of our institutions’ humanities and liberal arts. Other sister disciplines in which many of us teach and cross list our classes: Anthropology, Political Science and Sociology, are part of the social sciences and at my institution they are part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. What links all of our disciplines is that we are faced with the need, especially if we are at a state institution, to show how what we research and write about is relevant to our students and their lives. And in the state of Iowa where I live and teach—we are increasingly called upon to show how what we study (and teach) is relevant to the Board of Regents, the group that provides

funding to state institutions and that trickles down into our salaries and research budgets.

One of the ways we can show that what we teach and write is relevant and meaningful to our students and members of the towns and cities in which we live—as well as to those who provide funding—is to show that we are *deeply engaged and invested in important issues of our time*. Religious Studies scholars have something to say about religious and spiritual histories, migration, ethnic and racial identities, and how religion informs politics. We are armed with information, critical discourse, and empathy and we need to put ourselves out there in the public sphere and claim our space. And we need to partner with our historical interlocutors as well as living interlocutors to stake our claims in the public sphere.

So what kind of space do we claim? What kind of history? Ethnography? How do we reimagine American religions as an organizing paradigm? I think that the historian Elizabeth Cohen gets it right in her recent essay “Re-viewing the Twentieth Century Through an American Catholic Lens,” in which she calls for a “broadband transnational history,” one that includes the local, the national, and the global.⁷ In our courses and in our research on American religions, we can attend to this trifecta of place, movement, and identity formation by looking at patterns of migration to and from the United States and how—as Tom Tweed has asked us to—to look at how religions move, cross, and dwell. And in our aim to study and to understand the complexities and intricacies of the local-national-global work of religious people and communities we must be excellent listeners and draw on our historical knowledge base to stake a public claim on what is happening on the American religious landscape. Our studies of American religions need to address religion as forms of relationships between the human and divine—as Bob Orsi has famously asked us to do. These relationships—lovingly crafted as well as contested—cross local, national, and transnational lines. If we don’t have our ears attuned to what our interlocutors are saying (whether living or dead) than we miss what matters to the very people we are studying and at worst we fail to make what we study and what we teach relevant. I am personally not very comfortable establishing a new paradigm when it comes to religion in America—or anything else for that matter—because I think we need to have more humility as scholars and as teachers. Returning to *listening* and being better listeners—how can we take what we learn from listening from the people we study in archives, their homes, their churches, yoga studios, synagogues, temples, and woods, and have it organize our research and teaching? We need to place stories at the center and branch out from there. Let’s start with peoples’ stories, not theories. Let’s not worry about grand narratives

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or constructing paradigms. Let's take the time to sift through archives collecting stories and sitting on park benches listening to girls like Layan and Danya with big dreams. Stories resonate with our students and our readers—not grand theories or paradigms—because they want to see themselves in the stories they read and hear. And if we start with stories then we can say something important and relevant about religion in America in what we teach and write.

1. Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

2. Susan Ridgely, *When I was a Child: Children's Interpretations of First Communion* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005); "Introduction" and "Maybe the Picture Will Tell You": Methods For Hearing Children's Perspectives On Religion" in *The Study of Children in Religion: A Methods Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

3. Kathryn Lofton, "The Future of Study of American Religion," *Proceedings of the Third Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture*, 56-57, 2013 (<http://raac.iu-pui.edu/publications/conference-proceedings/>).

4. Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), and *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). Paula Kane, *Sister Thorne and Catholic Mysticism in North America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

5. Ava Chamberlain, *The Notorious Elizabeth Tuttle: Marriage, Murder, and Madness in the Family of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

6. Brett Hendrickson, *Border Medicine: A Transcultural History of Mexican American Curanderismo* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

7. Lizabeth Cohen, "Re-viewing the Twentieth Century Through an American Catholic Lens," in *Catholics in the American Century*, ed. R. Scott Appleby and Kathleen Sprows Cummings (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 43-60.

Thomas Tweed
University of Notre Dame

It's a pleasure to be back in Indianapolis and an honor to be on this panel. We've been asked to ponder the geographical reach of our work, in particular the possible benefit of framing our field as the study of Religion in the Americas. I've written about this, arguing that we should expand the field's spatial scope, framing it in terms of the Atlantic World, the Pacific World, and the Western Hemisphere.¹ I also have been invited to discuss this topic at conferences. I think this is the fourth time. That's the good and bad news, since apparently I've done a terrible job, convincing almost no one that a wider framing might be helpful, though, I take some comfort in thinking that perhaps I haven't been so unconditionally awful that the organizers of such panels feel the issue has been *completely* settled. Some of you, perhaps, are secretly wishing that we'll hammer the nail on this coffin today, that you'll hear only the dying gasp of hemispheric hopes. If so, I'll try to disappoint you—but only a little, because I'll offer a deceptively simple, and perhaps annoying, answer to the question of whether to frame our work in terms of the Americas. The short version: *It depends*.

But before I return to that annoying answer let me say something about the history of the scholarship and the source of objections. As for the historiography, there were reasons to expect that some of the first specialists in U.S. religious history, Peter Mode and William Warren Sweet, might have framed things hemispherically—Mode was Canadian and Sweet wrote about Latin America—but they kept their eyes focused on U.S. terrain.² That focus has endured. Unlike the transformative effects of the “transnational turn” in American Studies and U.S. history, it seems to me that most of the scholarship in U.S. religious history has shown less interest in comparative and transnational approaches, though there are wonderful exceptions among scholars of Latinos, Asians, slavery, and missions, and among my colleagues on this panel. But that seems to be the historiographical pattern—a continuing national focus and a mild but principled resistance to expanded frames.

That resistance seems to be grounded in reasonable concerns and firm convictions. Some worry about gaining the expertise—linguistic and cultural—to do it well. Some wonder if expanded narratives can identify causal links and provide satisfying explanations. Can we foreground individual agency, and not just the global flows of social forces? Can we connect with the topics and use the categories that define the subfield? Will transnational histories relativize, even diminish, the significance of the people and processes that constitute the standard national story? Is the U.S. as special—not to say exceptional—if colonialism had distant parallels, if 1776 emerged from transoceanic developments, if Ellis Island immigration, which has defined *American-*

ness for so many, was part of a worldwide process? Those unconcerned with safeguarding U.S. distinctiveness have other worries: transnational histories seem to obscure national borders. For analysts of politics, war, indigeneity, and immigration, those boundaries seem irrevocably real. The border's power, for example, can be brutally vivid for the undocumented who try to cross and for the indigenous who remember their homeland's pre-colonial boundaries. Finally, some point out—and I agree—national histories are inevitable for all sorts of reasons, including curricular demands and market forces.

But don't hammer the nail in the coffin just yet. There are also good reasons to expand—and sometimes contract—our stories' scope. Sometimes the hemispheric frame can help. The drastically different—almost inverse—historiographies provide illuminating contrasts, since most scholarship on North American religion has highlighted Protestant power and most scholarship on Latin American religion has centered on Catholicism's clout.³ Shifting our attention from historiography to history, connections between North and South America appear in every historical period. Those links started long ago: for example, genetic analysis of the remains of a Late Pleistocene infant in western Montana who died about 12,500 years ago shows that he is most closely related to contemporary native groups from Central and South America, especially the area that is now Brazil.⁴ And there is genetic, linguistic, and archaeological evidence of connections up and down the Americas, so a history of the pre-Columbian period must traverse the hemisphere. The same for studies of the colonial era, when multiple complex maps emerge as we think about the Iberian Americas, the French Americas, the Anglo Americas, the Dutch Americas, the Yoruba Americas, and so on, framing transhemispheric connections in terms of messy linguistic-cultural regions that stretch from Canada to Chile. And we could go on, attending to later periods and, for example, tracing pentecostalism's and liberation theology's movement up and down the hemisphere as well as the emigration—and sometimes return migration—of Latin American migrants since 1965.⁵

But does this mean that we *always* must frame things hemispherically? I don't think so. Our work demands that we're agile, doing multi-scalar analysis, and contracting and expanding our frame as the aims and tasks require. There is no single perfect scale for a graduate program concentration or for an individual's research project. We shouldn't presume the nation-state as the unit of analysis, since the interpretive frame of what we're actually teaching or studying might be either larger or smaller than that. Never global—nothing uniformly touches everywhere and everything—and not always transnational, since that term makes no sense before the rise of the nation-state. I prefer the clunky

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term *translocative* to describe the sort of analysis I intend, a commitment to follow the flows wherever they lead.⁶

So once again my short answer to the question of whether a hemispheric frame is best?: *it depends*. As for whether a graduate program should frame things hemispherically, it depends on the geographical location, demographic profile, guiding interests, and institutional resources. As for individual scholars, it depends on what you're studying. Cartographies change over time and reconfigure with the topic. In other words, there are overlapping grids and shifting frames, and none of them should be taken as the whole. A lack of epistemic humility and comparative vision sometimes has hampered our work: we still sometimes fail to acknowledge the arbitrariness and limitations of our own mental maps—and the ways that our interests and values are enacted in the choice of geographical scale.⁷

So what does this conditional answer amount to? I'll translate it into four guiding methodological claims.

1. There is no single or inevitable geographical frame for our research and teaching.

2. There are no omnispersive maps that represent the whole; each interpretive frame illumines some things while obscuring others.

3. Each chosen frame serves particular interests and enacts particular commitments; geographical frames aren't value-neutral.

4. We should acknowledge the limits of our mapping, articulate the values we're enacting, and explain the choices we're making.

We will discuss those choices more in our conversation today, but if I've done a terrible job yet again and some of you have heard only the death rattle of the hemispheric, I'll hope that at least the issue of scope is now settled, at least for you. If not, and I've managed to be not *totally* unpersuasive, I'll ready myself for the honor of the next invitation. In the meantime, perhaps you can help me find more satisfying, and less annoying, ways to make my deceptively simple point about whether to expand the geographic frame: it depends.

1. Thomas A. Tweed, "Expanding the Study of U.S. Religion: Reflections on the State of a Subfield," *Religion* 40 (2010): 250-58. From the start of my career, I chose frames that cross borders. My first book, on *The American Encounter with Buddhism*, traced the transpacific and transatlantic circulations of ideas and framed that story in terms of "Victorian culture in America," using a cultural periodization taken from British history. My study of diasporic religion in Miami, *Our Lady of the Exile*, framed the account

in terms of the movements back and forth between Florida and Cuba. For my edited volume, *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, I originally had commissioned chapters that dealt not only with the Pacific World and the Canadian border but also had hoped to include perspectives from the vantage of Latin America and the Atlantic World.

2. The editor of the first sourcebook on U.S. religious history, Peter Mode, was born in Canada and only became a U.S. citizen in 1921, the same year he published the collection of primary sources that helped define the emerging subfield. Like all of us, Mode was constrained by what he could see from where he stood, but that transnational migrant's work showed no signs of his own experience of border crossing. Peter G. Mode, ed., *Source Book and Bibliographical Guide for American Church History* (Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1921). Peter G. Mode, *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1923). I found biographical information on Mode in varied sources, including census records, border crossing lists, World War I draft registration cards, naturalization records, and ships' passenger logs. He was born in Van Kleek Hill, Ontario, and taught in Brandon, Manitoba, in 1911, the year before he entered the U.S. He eventually got his PhD from the University of Chicago, where he taught until a scandalous marital affair ended his brief scholarly career. See "Peter G. Mode," *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Wheaton Ward 1, DuPage, Illinois (Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1920). "Peter George Mode," *Selected U.S. Naturalization Records*, 7 October 1921, Northern District of Illinois and Immigration and Naturalization Service District 9, 1840-1950 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, nd). Mode's successor at the University of Chicago, Sweet, became the first scholar to hold an academic position in "the history of American Christianity" in 1927, and those who followed Sweet's early career also might have had reason to think that he might expand the field's geographical frame. After all, before he published his 1930 *Story of Religion in America*, Sweet had taught and written about Latin America. The first edition of his *History of Latin America* appeared in 1919, and he even traveled to Chile in 1925, the year the Chilean legislature passed a new constitution safeguarding religious freedom. But no trace of a transhemispheric approach marked the 1929 edition of Sweet's narrative about the United States. William Warren Sweet, *History of Latin America* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1919). Reviewers were mostly unimpressed. For example, accurately noting counterexamples in Brazil, Uruguay, and Mexico, one critic questioned his mastery of the Spanish language sources and pointed to Sweet's erroneous claim on page 236 that "church and state are not separated in Latin America." Percy Alvin Martin,

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Rev. of *History of Latin America* by William Warren Sweet, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 3.1 (Feb. 1920): 56-59. That error went uncorrected in the 1929 edition; Sweet also failed to note Chile's 1925 constitutional separation of church and state. That was all the more surprising since he had traveled there the year that new constitution was publicly debated and approved. That legal document guaranteed "freedom of conscience" and "free exercise," though there was a qualifying phrase—for religions that are not contrary to "morality, good customs, or public order:" *Constitución política de la República de Chile : promulgada el 18 de setiembre de 1925* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta universitaria, 1925). I found evidence of his return from Latin America aboard the ship, *El Salvador*, from Chanaral, Chile, to New York City in 1925 in "William W. Sweet," *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, 1897-1957*, National Archives Microfilm Publication T715 (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1957).

3. Tweed, "Expanding the Study of U.S. Religion," 251. Compare Sweet's Protestant-centered narrative of the U.S., *The Story of Religion in America* (1930), which stood as the standard account for a generation, with the most influential scholarship on Latin American religion at the same time—Robert Ricard's *La 'conquête spirituelle du Mexique* (1933) and John Lloyd Meachem's *Church and State in Latin America* (1934). Despite the increasing presence of Protestantism in Latin America, the continuing emphasis has been on Catholicism's role, as this assertion in a recent historical overview reveals: "But the evidence suggests that for five centuries this defining religion of Latin America has been Catholic and this is the assumption on which the book has been written." John Lynch, *New Worlds: A Religious History of Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), location 157 in the Kindle edition.

4. Morten Rhagavan et al., "Upper Paleolithic Siberian Genome Reveals Dual Ancestry of Native Americans," *Nature*, 505 (2014): 87-91.

5. On migration see Thomas A. Tweed, "Religious Identity and Emigration from Latin America." In *The Cambridge History of Religions in Latin America*, eds. Virginia Garrard-Burnett and Paul C. Freston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in press). On pentecostalism's hemispheric circuit, there has been some scholarship, but I am especially indebted to the ongoing historical research of one my students, Justin Doran, a PhD candidate at the University of Texas.

6. I have tried to lay out the implications of this methodological approach in "Following the Flows: Diversity, Santa Fe, and Method in Religious Studies." In Peter C. Phan and Jonathan Ray, eds., *Understanding Religious Pluralism: Perspectives from Religious Studies and Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 1-19.

7. On the ways that scholars' interests shape the choice of scale I am indebted to my colleague, Julia Thomas, and conversations with the other participants at an April 2015 conference at the University of Chicago on "New Directions in Global History: Rethinking Scale and Temporality," especially Dipesh Chakrabarty, Kenneth Pomerantz, and the late Sir Christopher Bayly. Ken Pomerantz was kind enough to also send me a copy of his remarks, which I consulted as I recounted above the objections to histories that expand the temporal or geographical scale. Julia Adeney Thomas, "History and Biology in the Anthropocene: Problems of Scale, Problems of Value," *American Historical Review* (December 2014): 1587-1607.

Religion and Market

Globalization is, in large measure, about the globalization of trade. Market processes stand alongside large, bureaucratic states as the defining feature of contemporary life. How has religion shaped, and been shaped by, market forces or, more specifically, by capitalism? For instance, what role did business play in forging links between free-market economics and certain strands of American religious thought and practice?

Kate Bowler
Duke Divinity School

Churches are larger than they have ever been in American history. Their pastors are celebrities. Their properties are campuses. Their lobbies serve lattes. As the sociologist Mark Chaves has demonstrated, the rise of these Christian goliaths spans Protestant denominations, gathering more and more believers into fewer and fewer houses of worship.¹ Quaker megachurches. Baptist megachurches. Christian Science megachurches. And, much to Duke Divinity's Wesleyan dismay, even prosperity-preaching United Methodist megachurches.

Today I'd like to add to this conversation about Christianity and the marketplace with a few conclusions drawn from my misspent youth studying the prosperity gospel and my new book project on women and power in American megaministry. I say megaministry—sprawling churches, televangelism, Christian media, music and publishing—because I believe that size opens an angle of vision into the marketing strategies of popular Christianity and the production of celebrity that fosters and sustains them.

To illustrate a few trends in megaministry and the marketplace, let's start with America's largest church, Lakewood Church, and consider the timeless questions, existential questions like: why is Victoria Osteen famous? No, really, why *is* she famous?

To the 40,000-member Lakewood Church, Victoria was the statuesque blonde beside her leading man, the ever-smiling Joel Osteen, and she spearheaded their megachurch's ministry for women. To the seven million weekly viewers of their television show, she was a celebrity, life-coach, and author of spiritual chick lit. If she fell, she fell hard. Her recent Lakewood message that churchgoers obey God for the sake of their own happiness ignited a media firestorm, as did the 2005 accusation—later ruled false—that Victoria assaulted a Continental Airlines flight attendant over a stain on her first-class armrest. But when she sat down for an interview with Oprah in their Texas mansion there was little doubt that, loved or hated, she ruled as one of megaministry's first ladies.²

Forbes recently appraised the collective income of America's pastor-personalities like Victoria's at an eye-popping \$8.5 billion a year.³ So humor me for a moment while I break down a single ministry—called Joel and Victoria Osteen—as a cluster of products. As I mentioned, they lead America's largest church where the Houston Rockets once played, a 14,000-seat arena with two waterfalls, and a \$70 million dollar operating budget. Joel and Victoria's sermons are broadcast in all 210 American markets to seven million weekly viewers. These sermons are subsequently re-sold in a dizzying number of ways: they are streamed online, marketed as DVDs, CDs, and downloaded as podcasts for the car ride home. They air all day, every day, on Joel Osteen

Ministries SiriusXM satellite radio to 30 million subscribers.⁴ They are also diced into tiny pithy pieces and posted online twice a day to Victoria and Joel's 13 million Facebook followers, and the Osteen smartphone app, and then again on Twitter, where Joel trails only the Pope and the Dalai Lama as the most followed religious figure in the world.⁵ And, of course, people who are the ancient of days who only read books nowadays can read Victoria and Joel's respective *New York Times* bestsellers, one of the many products on sale at the church. (This problematic relationship between a non-profit church and for-profit products was not lost on critics like Michael Fletcher, a 30-year old man who, in the name of the Jesus who threw the moneylenders out of the temple, marched into the Lakewood bookstore last year and began to topple Joel and Victoria's book displays before he was arrested by security.)⁶

What we see here is that Victoria or Joel each stands at the intersection of multiple streams of media. Radio. Music. Books. Television. Internet. In fact, so significant is the association between a ministry's reputation and their mastery of media that, over the last ten years, the largest churches in the country trumpet it in their names: lifechurch.tv, cedar-creek.tv, crosspoint.tv.

The most-watched, tweeted, read, downloaded, streamed, listened to, purchased, attended and even parodied ministries in the United States and Canada are run by a man or woman (or, increasingly, a husband-and-wife team) who stand at the helm of sprawling ministries. Ministries that traffic in live audiences are no longer simply interested in filling seats; they must promote a branded pastor-celebrity who provides the glue between multiple spheres of media and who directs people to a wide range of interactions and products. As we saw with Victoria Osteen, her identity actually reflects a deep bench of production staff. As the sociologist of celebrity Joshua Gamson has argued, celebrity itself represents a flurry of industrial production and consumption.⁷ Pastoral stars, like all celebrities, are professional brokers of their own reputations.

In charting the role of pastor's wives in the 500 largest megachurches, I have come to the conclusion that the degree to which ministries can mobilize celebrity is one of the most obvious markers of organizational sophistication. As ministries evolve from 2,000-person local players to 5,000-member regional destination centers and then to sub-national and then national ministries, the emphasis on the pastor's personality grows as the coagulant for a growing and diversifying ministry.⁸

This is perhaps most obvious in the way that the pastor's wife, by association with her star husband, absorbs his reflected glory. The pastors' wives of the ten largest churches

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in America, for example, find they cannot escape public glory. If they have a personal Facebook page or even a fleeting interest in Pinterest, they gain thousands of followers. But more significant is the parallelism between the pastor's wife and the organizational evolution of the church to foster her public image. The Osteens are so famous that they have effectively branded the *entire family* through wings of their ministry. While Joel mans the pulpit, his wife is the face of women's ministry, his mother (healing ministry, as a result of her famous healing from cancer), his doctor brother (medical missions), and even his children (young adult services.)⁹

The more famous the senior pastor, the easier this fame-by-association becomes. In the most influential tier of megachurches in North America, those 92 churches with 10,000 plus, I have found a tight connection between church structure and the branded family. The vast majority of pastors' wives fall into the following pattern no matter what the theological persuasion: if a woman chooses a life in the ministry, the church creates an organizational wing dubbed the "women's ministry" and advertises her as its head; this arrangement mirrors a domestic arrangement with sex-segregated spheres and her husband as overseer, or, in its most liberated form, as co-pastor. The fate of the women's ministry and the wife are tied. If she falls from grace, as in the case of one megachurch co-pastor's much publicized affair, she is exiled and the women's ministry folds. Now, conversely, if a wife chooses not to enter public life, the church will not create a women's ministry at all. A man with a quiet wife will not have a women's ministry. A divorced man in the pulpit will have no one to play Eve to his Adam.

Celebrity has become a driving force in the branding of ministries, and guides how many spiritual commodities are produced. And since markets are imitative, we learn a great deal by looking on a national level at megaministries, the agile trendsetters and tastemakers of the ministerial world who inspire a long lineup of aspiring Victorias, smiling just a step back from their husbands, waiting for their place in the spotlight.

"Jurors: Attendant 'Exaggerated' Osteen Conflict." *Houston Chronicle*. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/Jurors-Attendant-exaggerated-Osteen-conflict-1777790.php>. "Joel and Victoria Osteen's Vision for Their Ministry." *Oprah.com*. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.oprah.com/own-oprahs-next-chapter/Joel-and-Victoria-Osteen-Share-the-Vision-for-Their-Ministry>.

3. "America's Biggest Megachurches." *Forbes*. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/26/americas-biggest-megachurches-business-megachurches.html>.

4. "Joel Osteen," Joel Osteen Ministries Website. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/AboutJoel.aspx>

5. Twitter is still an emerging tool for mass ministry, and these numbers reflect my own calculations based on a list of the 1000 most-followed people in the world as of May 2015. See "Twitter Counter," Accessed May 15, 2015. <http://twittercounter.com/pages/100>

6. "Man Arrested after Causing Disturbance in Lakewood Church Bookstore While Reciting Matthew 21:12." Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/man.arrested.causing.disturbance.lakewood.church.bookstore.reciting.matthew.2112/40126.htm>

7. Joshua Gamson, celebrity Gamson, Joshua. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. University of California Press, 1994.

8. The argument that megachurches are divided into local, regional, sub-national, and national ministries reflects collaborative work with Joshua Young, doctoral candidate in American religion at Duke University.

9. See "Leadership Team," Lakewood Church Website, Accessed June 11, 2015. <https://www.lakewoodchurch.com/pages/new-here/leadership-team.aspx>

1. Chaves, Mark. "All Creatures Great and Small: Megachurches in Context." *Review of Religious Research* 47, no. 4 (June 1, 2006): 329–46.

2. See Alex, Heather, and er. "Critics Assail Recent Sermon by Lakewood Co-Pastor Victoria Osteen." *Houston Chronicle*. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Critics-assail-recent-sermon-by-Lakewood-5738922.php>;

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“**A**specter is haunting university history departments: the specter of capitalism.” This provocation opened a 2013 *New York Times* op-ed that its author titled “In History Departments, It’s Up With Capitalism.” “After decades of ‘history from below,’ focusing on women, minorities and other marginalized people,” Jennifer Schuessler mused, “a new generation of scholars is...turning to what risked becoming the most marginalized group of all: bosses, bankers and brokers who run the economy.” Why the revolution, she asked this generation’s stars? “Earlier, these topics would’ve been greeted with a yawn,” responded Stephen Mihm. “But then the crisis [of 2008] hit, and people started asking, ‘Oh my God, what has Wall Street been doing for the last 100 years?’” “The worse things are for the economy,” Sven Beckert, Mihm’s peer, quipped, “the better they are for the discipline.”¹

The fortunes of U.S. religious history have skyrocketed alongside those of the juggernaut we now call “the history of American capitalism.” Neither haunted nor cowed by the capitalist apparitions of our age, scholars have tapped the trickle-down benefits of our discipline’s fiscal turn and eagerly written born-again CEOs into the historical mainstream. Indeed, it’s impossible to overstate the sweeping impact of religious and capitalist histories’ collaboration, particularly on our renderings of twentieth century U.S. history. A peek at the corporate side of the equation, my focus, underscores this fact. Thanks to a proliferating literature we now know that corporate America not only has a soul, but also a theologically-informed politics that has shaped the way we think about everything from citizenship to tax credits, where we shop (Wal-Mart, Hobby Lobby) to what we eat (Quaker Oates, Tyson Chicken), who we vote for to how we see our nation in the world.

Several notable books published in the past few months underline the traction that this line of inquiry now enjoys. Working in conjunction with business historians like Kim Phillips-Fein, scholars have mapped out the rise of Protestant libertarianism in opposition to New Deal liberalism. Kevin Kruse’s *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* is an excellent capstone for a historiography that’s made it clear just how much mid-twentieth-century Christians melded pocket-book with culture-war concerns when politicking for power. Thanks to Timothy Gloege’s outstanding book, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism*, we see the deeper roots of this development in the re-constructions of capitalism and Christianity in the Gilded Age. Modern evangelicalism itself, we learn, was an endeavor in corporate branding as much as a defense of Biblical orthodoxy. Modern business, in turn, drew energy and purpose from the doctrinal struggles for “purity” that divided Protestants along “modernist” and “fundamentalist” lines.²

Evangelicalism looms large in other recent texts that seek to explain the roots of the late-twentieth-century’s neoliberal order, yet emerging studies are also revealing the complexities of this faith community’s enterprising spirit. Pentecostal miners, Methodist mid-management types, radical localists and reticent farmers: these characters didn’t necessarily wear top hats, or agree with the politics of the look, but we’re learning that they too encountered and empowered their own brand of “corporate” evangelicalism. Darren Grem’s forthcoming study will do much to thread these stories into one compelling whole.³

Meanwhile, historians continue to produce fine studies that use the interior lives of book, radio, print, and phonograph businesses, and other market mediums, to highlight the role of under-represented constituents (even liberal Protestants!) as both consumers *and* corporate actors. And even as early Americanists such as Kate Carte Engel and Mark Valeri are producing splendid books that remind us how American religion’s market logics were conceived in a much earlier time, emerging studies of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector, supported in part by the work of David King here at IUPUI’s Lilly Family School of Philanthropy (and Lake Institute on Faith & Giving), are asking scholars not to forget the remarkable scope—historic and current—of capitalism’s charitable side.⁴

Working arm-in-arm with the revolutionaries behind the new study of capitalism, religious historians, in other words, have helped make Bible-carrying “bosses, bankers and brokers” the hip subjects of investigation in history departments across the country, and helped prove to a perplexed reading public that “it really is the economy, stupid.” Fresh interrogation of religion and labor (our subsequent panel) is starting to nudge us away from stuffy powerbrokers to historical actors who shunned silk stockings, yet the corporate side is sure to stay active in the coming years (globalization and ongoing legal battles over business and religious “freedoms” will help ensure it). In light of shifting but sustained interest, what possible next steps can we take to freshen and widen this area of inquiry? How might a more expansive and inclusive treatment of corporate Christianity add texture and breadth to renderings of modern U.S. history?

I’d like to raise a few prompts, derived from my ongoing study of American Christianity’s (Protestantism’s especially) ties to the petroleum industry. Utilizing a range of corporate and church records, personal and political papers, and local archives scattered across North America and abroad, I try to chart this nation’s enchantment with the black stuff, and in a sense, tell the religious biography of oil. At its highest altitude, this religious biography of oil explores the ways that Americans sacralized oil’s spectacular potentials, and attached them to a politics of exceptionalism. The very

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concept of the “American Century,” I suggest, cannot be understood without paying heed to this reciprocity: big oil and big religion were the twin-pillars of America’s identity in the twentieth century, and the lifeblood of its global aspirations. At its lower altitude, this biography examines the sacred space of continental oil patches, which cohered around hard-and-fast fundamentals of God and black gold as omnipotent. There, amid jungles of derricks and the glow of refining fires, countless citizens interpreted petroleum as *their* special providence, to be used to advance a Kingdom of *their design*. Their politics bore the imprint of this confidence, and all Americans felt the effects.

While tracking this story over time I’ve been struck by the exciting progressions as well as limits of recent histories of religion and corporate capitalism. Here, then, are my prompts, which I hope serve as fresh reminders and perhaps fodder for further discussion:

Corporate capitalism is a divided Church.

Too often in punditry and scholarship, corporate interests are presented as a homogenous whole fueled by single-mindedness for *laissez-faire*. When zeroing in on Wall Street, writers have leaned on motifs that exaggerate united fronts. “How Corporate America Invented Christian America” (Kevin Kruse’s subtitle, meant to be provocative, of course) illustrates a tendency to brush over subtleties of ultimate concern that divide as much as unify “Corporate” (and “Christian”) America. Corporate capitalism has always been animated by internal give-and-takes, a collision of ideas as well as collusions of intent.

With that in mind, religious historians would do well to portray boardrooms as sites of theological testing. Consider, for instance, the struggle between two competing corporate sectors of oil—majors and independents, which concerned the proper standing of the individual before God and the market, the value of combination (ecumenism) versus autonomy (evangelicalism), and the need to protect founding principles. Starting in the nineteenth century and accelerating through the twentieth, the battle between the Rockefellers’ Standard Oil and independent companies with names like “Pure Oil,” “Union Oil,” “Sun Oil” (catchy labels used to win hearts by claiming an authentic pristine capitalism) had major ramifications not just for oil’s politics, but for that of churches as well. Case in point, of course, is the struggle between the Rockefellers and Stewarts (Union Oil), which boiled over the corporate realm into the fundamentalist-modernist crisis of the 1920s, and the battle between missionary agencies that were vying for control of Chinese markets.

Large or small, oil companies, moreover, endured their own internal theological trials. Such was the case with Sun Oil (Sunoco), the Pew-family’s company, whose head office regularly erupted in heated exchange between chief executives J. Howard and his cousin J. Edgar. Armed with their

Bibles, training in Reformed theology, and proof texts, the two held little back when debating the merits of state-regulated conservation and responsibilities of a godly management to limit the ill effects of oil’s cruel cycles. (Howard usually won.)

There is more than one Protestant work ethic, more than one spirit of capitalism.

Corporate oil’s wrestling with itself raises another reminder, and potential for our renderings of religion and business’ recent pasts. Amid the buzz of the history of capitalism, Weber’s name is being whispered again. Rightly so: evidence of his Protestant ethic is everywhere. Yet Weber’s was a sector-specific assessment of Protestantism’s capitalist drive, one that prioritized the rational, industrious, and bureaucratic—the Presbyterian—over the emotive and speculative Pentecostal.

In the religious biography of oil we see both types (and in varying degrees). Occupying prominent positions next to and against the stern Baptists (Rockefellers) and Presbyterians (Pews) were wildcat oilmen of Protestant *and* Catholic persuasion, whose exploits clashed with Weber’s ethic. In contrast to the puritan entrepreneur who through disciplined labor sought to stand before God as a redeemed soul, petroleum’s risk-takers—freaks of fortune like the evangelical-minded Sid Richardson and devout Catholic layman Ignatius O’Shaughnessy, (deemed by his brethren the “King of the Wildcatters”), believed that God smiled on those who accepted the volatilities of chance and pursued extravagant profits (and often gave just as extravagantly) as if there were no tomorrow.

They were “warrior heroes,” the label Weber applied to a class of capitalists he saw as antithetical to a true “spirit of capitalism.” In oil—in the late twentieth century as much as the late nineteenth—the antithesis has often been the rule.

It’s the economy (and geography), stupid!

The joint investment of Protestants and Catholics in the construction of a wildcat Christianity hints at a third take-away from the abiding relationship of oil and religion. The ties that bind these spirits of capitalism together are soil- as well as sector-specific. As Richard Callahan has so beautifully shown in his book, *Work and Faith in the Kentucky Coal Fields*, topography matters when trying to make sense of religion’s definition and impact in a particular kind of place. Stark denominational divisions, and clear divides between capital and labor, work and faith, tend to diminish in locales where human encounter with a hardscrabble earth and its terrestrial (and subterranean) mysteries are all-encompassing, and profoundly direct.⁵

The sphere in which I spend considerable time is oil’s volatile extraction zone, home to a distinctive cosmology. Western Pennsylvania, Southern California, Texas, and Alberta: through time these boom-bust lands have nurtured

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idiosyncratic Christian capitalisms that reflect the totalizing dimensions of crude's terrain. On these dreamscapes, where blessings inexplicably rise and fall, appealing to the supernatural when summoning subsurface wealth, training roustabouts and engineers in absolutes (technologies of extraction *and* exegesis), and puncturing the earth with eschatological haste are the norm, patience with time, bureaucracies, and planning far less so.

As is abundantly evident in some of the continent's hot energy zones—Cushing, Oklahoma, Wasilla, Alaska, and Fort McMurray, Alberta—the proximity to extraction and the violent cycles of crude are indeed profound for everyone's lived faith. No smooth progression, modernity unfolds in these places rife with manifold disruptions, resulting in a moral geography of crisis. Existence on this turbulent terrain, in this hydrocarbon age, in turn generates a fierce, almost desperate, politics of custodianship over nature and resource management, one that privileges the profit-motive (“drill, baby, drill”) and a preference for strong states (no true anti-statism here!) that grant them that privilege.

Rooted in the local, cosmologies of corporate capitalism are global phenomena.

A critical feature of the new history of capitalism has been its sharp recognition of international contexts. The standard-bearer is Sven Beckert, whose Pulitzer-winning *Empire of Cotton*, uses the illustrious life of a commodity to chart global capitalism over millennia. The successor to white gold as earth's most bountiful commodity, black gold deserves the same treatment, though with more attention to religion. Commodities (cotton, oil, sugar, etc.) are, after all, valuable for their values-making weight: besides lending wealth to some, burdens of labor to others, they also elicit millennial dreams, stir up notions of exceptionalism, drive religious laborers to and from distant shores, and offer reason and means for institutional expansion.

Moreover, through its imperative for multidirectional exchange, oil has also immersed its constituents and their faiths in a horizontally integrated world system. You could say that it has created its own “carbon religion” of human and economic interdependence, and universal experience. The life and career of Louisa MacKinnon (Lady Dundonald), a Scottish Presbyterian woman forced after her husband's death to run the family oil business and missionary base in the Caribbean during the early twentieth century affirms this. Based in Scotland, contracted with New York investors, reliant on her missionary informants abroad, she helped link hinterlands, Christian and corporate ambitions, and literally remap not only her church's influence, but also that of a thriving trans-Atlantic industry.

This reciprocity defined many other migrations of religious-minded oilers: Texas Baptist engineers who moved to Saudi

Arabia in the 1950s, for instance, and Nigerian roustabouts who arrived in Houston in the 2000s and populated its rigs and Pentecostal pews. In both cases, migrants encountered foreign but familiar oil-saturated soil where the temporality of everything nagged at the soul, bursts of wealth were seen as from God, and praying to an all-powerful being who giveth and taketh, but always persists, made sense.

White Protestant men in pinstripe suits aren't the only capitalists worth studying.

As suggested in Louisa MacKinnon's story, our histories of corporate capitalism shouldn't ignore the ways that “marginal” members of society have driven (not just been subjected to) the mechanisms of an advancing market. To be sure, the advancing market has done irreparable damage to the marginalized, and the specter of neoliberalism is tough to shake: in our boom-bust climate, true freedom and power are mostly unobtainable things, particularly for citizens already excluded by race, class, and gender. Bottom-up histories of the dispossessed are more vital today than every before, at very least as correctives to a world and a scholarship dominated by the machinations of white male corporate giants.

Yet corporate capitalism's history itself should embrace a bottom-up feel, particularly where faith is concerned. After all, joining the ranks of the “bosses, bankers, and brokers” who have run America's economic and religious establishments are countless “dispossessed” men and women whose own journeys through business have created alternative or adjusted existing paths.

One example from oil—a final one—is Jake Simmons, Jr. Simmons was an African-American Oklahoma oilman who, with his partner, Reverend L.W. Thomas, made it big in 1930s Texas. A protégé of Booker T. Washington, Simmons believed in the beauty of unfettered capitalism and racial uplift through hard work. He didn't simply preach this boots-strap philosophy; he lived it. In the 1930s, he used his fortune to relocate black Texans, from whom he purchased leases, to Oklahoma, where they could live and farm in a less dangerous environment. In Oklahoma, meanwhile, he sponsored the first legal challenge to Jim Crow in public education (the case made it all the way to the Supreme Court before being dismissed). By 1960 he was one of America's wealthiest black entrepreneurs, a man personally responsible for negotiating deals with Nigeria that opened oil exploration in Africa, and a key financier of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In all that he did, Simmons both reflected and challenged the trajectories of religion and oil—of faith and corporate capitalism—in the twentieth century, which makes him such a fascinating figure. A wildcatter with roots in the oil patch and its teachings on faith and economy he nevertheless adopted the ecumenical outlook of a Rockefeller when

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crisscrossing oceans, navigating transnational networks, and connecting the globe's oil patches to each other. Conservative in his theology of money, he still devoted his philanthropic outreach to a progressive movement for societal reform. Though exceptional, perhaps, in its reach and impact, his story of chasing capital with Christian conviction, and breaking boundaries along the way, is hardly an isolated or insignificant one. It is testament, rather, to the rich multiplicity of pathways that have shaped the course of modern religion and economics, and to the value of a scholarship that follows them and their travelers along.

1. Jennifer Schuessler, "In History Departments, It's Up With Capitalism," *New York Times*, April 6, 2013.

2. Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); Timothy E.W. Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

3. Some publications of note (released or in process) include Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), Kate Bowler, *A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), and Darren Grem, *Corporate Revivals: Big Business and the Shaping of the Evangelical Right* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press). Daniel Vaca's manuscript (in process), *Book People: Commercial Media and the Spirit of Evangelicalism*, will add necessary depth to the study of this movement and the market, as will forthcoming texts by Jarod Roll, Christopher Cantwell, Heath Carter, and Sarah Hammond.

4. Although they do not necessarily focus on corporate capitalism's ties to religion, the following shed light on this relationship from broader perspectives. See Matthew S. Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Elesha J. Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), Lerone A. Martin, *Preaching on Wax: The Phonography and the Shaping of Modern African American Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), Kathryn Lofton, *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011). Among the stellar books about early American religion and commerce are Mark Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan*

America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), and Stewart Davenport, *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon: Northern Christians and Market Capitalism, 1815-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). A forthcoming volume that promises to encapsulate the field is John Corrigan, Darren Grem, and Amanda Porterfield, eds., *The Business Turn in American Religious History* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press). For one of the most recent and insightful overviews of the expansive scholarship on the topic, see the Introduction to Jan Stievermann, Philip Goff, and Detlef Junker, eds., *Religion and the Marketplace in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

5. Richard J. Callahan, *Work and Faith in the Kentucky Coal Fields: Subject to Dust* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

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These biennial conferences are about stock-taking—“where are we now in the study of religion?”—and suggesting new directions—“where should we go from here?” Along with that regular enterprise, this year’s gathering seems to have something of a substantive theme as well. That is, we are doing this stock-taking, summarizing, and projecting during an historical moment of rapid change and uncertainty. And the root of all these considerations of change seems to be processes that are understood to be “global.” So we have a session on “global flows”—of people primarily, but not exclusively. And the “religion in the Americas” session mentions the conceptual challenges posed by “transnationalism.” Our concluding session on liberalism and pluralism is at least in part occasioned by the social and cultural changes resulting from global processes of migration, immigration, economic, political, and demographic transition, and how best we should think about this.

The paragraph set-up blurb for this session reflects some of this logic as it reads on a number of analytic levels. The opening theme is about “globalization” as a worldwide phenomenon—or a set of phenomena—which is largely about markets. Markets are then posited as what is perhaps the characteristic of “modernity” as it is central to the development, within nation-states, of market-based economies—including capitalism in its various forms. These stand alongside the bureaucratic administrative structures of the state as the main organizing institutions of contemporary life, and imply the attendant debate as to whether the market is part of civil society or whether there is a “third sector” of some type of formulation that has a distinct institutional logic from the state or the market. Finally, the paragraph transitions to the question of causal implications of economics and religion in their interactions, and asks about the relevance to the history and shape of American culture. I want to mirror that general analytic scheme, with a focus on how larger, global-level flows interact with religion and religious communities, particularly in the U.S.

Along with “global flows” of persons there are flows of ideas and cultural content, of trade, markets, and capital. The wide-net concept that has the potential to capture all of this is “globalization.” The term is fraught, of course, since its unitary use masks many different meanings—partly conceptually and partly politically. Sociologist Keri E. Iyall Smith notes that “global capitalism—the internationalization of economies and corporations—is not the same as globalization” (2013: 3), as more than just production, distribution, consumption, and profits are international and often integrated. Others use the term “globalization” to primarily mean “Americanization”—the export and developing hegemony of American culture and cultural products around

the world. Many scholars, however, object to thinking of globalization, whether in economics or culture, as a one-way, hegemonic process (e.g., Robertson and Chirico 1985). They note the localization of global products and processes, and the particularization of the universals that characterize the global. While goods may rocket all over the world, they note, the meanings ascribed to them, and the roles they may play in different regional or cultural settings, may be quite distinct. Further, there is good reason to question whether contemporary globalization is actually “Americanization.” Surely in geopolitical terms, the U.S. is the reigning, if not unchallenged, hegemon. But as I will argue below, there are good reasons not to think that any particular nation-state actually controls global capitalism, much less globalization.

Capitalism has been described as a world-system—most famously by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974)—that has been developing a global reach since the sixteenth century. Its fundamentally cross-national character was analyzed persuasively by Karl Marx in the 1850s as he noted how it knocked down national boundaries; it was the basis for his call for “workingmen” of all countries to unite. And yet, it is also clearly true that capitalism as we know it—at least in the form Weber analyzed it—was coterminous with the rise of nation-state. With the institutional development of the nation as an economic, political, and military unit, the national state became the protector and regulator of markets, both of trade and labor. National militaries emerged to protect natural resources, enforce internal rule, capture external markets/colonies, etc.

Similarly, while Weber may not have specified adequately the causal mechanisms between Protestantism and the origins of capitalism, there is no denying the concomitant rise of Protestantism along with nation-state capitalism in Western Europe. Churches organized at the nation-state level, in England, or Sweden, or Prussia helped integrate the country culturally as the state was politically and the capitalist market was religiously. Contemporary American Protestantism has a number of what Weber would have called “elective affinities” with the demands of contemporary “neoliberal” capitalism—its atomistic individualism, its suspicion of governmental structures that have the potential to be redistributive, and the shared valuing of material success. Indeed, when I teach Weber’s (1904/2008) famous book, I generally spend only a little time on the front half of the title, *The Protestant Ethic*, and the ensuing controversy over origins, as I think the back half, *the Spirit of Capitalism*, is more persuasive. Like Marx’s analysis of the economic dynamics of capitalism, I believe Weber’s analysis of the cultural dynamics of capitalism is perhaps more persuasive now than when he wrote it.

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I make that claim because I am persuaded by much of the recent writing on the concept of “neoliberalism”—and especially because what I think neoliberalism as an institutional and cultural formation has done to undermine the nation-state, and the resulting impact on religion. Let me first define what I mean a bit by neoliberalism.

Precise operational definitions of neoliberalism vary, but for my purposes today they are less important. I use neoliberalism to categorize the current ideological and institutional trends that describe the relationship between the economy and structures of governance (including, but not limited to, the nation-state). Neoliberalism’s advocates support economic liberalization, free trade and open markets, privatization, deregulation, and decreasing the size of the public sector while increasing the role of the private sector. I note that the term actually arose in the 1930s, especially in Europe, as a ‘middle way’ between the untrammelled free-market capitalism of classical liberalism and the centrally planned economies of state socialism and National Socialism. Neoliberal theory at that time was at odds with complete laissez-faire doctrine, and promoted instead a market economy under the guidance and rules of a strong state, a model which came to be known as the “social market economy.”

The meaning has shifted, however. The term neoliberal is now associated with laissez-faire economic policies, and is a label used for those policies and people who are critical of attempts to reform or regulate markets by governments, especially policies that may involve redistribution of economic or social goods, and any type of protectionism against the movement of goods, capital, trade, and for some, even labor, across economies and national boundaries. (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009).

A reasonable question to ask is what makes this “neo” liberalism—what is new here? Hasn’t liberalism, even in its classical version, been built on principles of private productive property and its individual disposition, with government’s only task the protection of it? Isn’t the relative role of the state in regulating the market a debate that goes back to John Locke and Adam Smith, and the relative social benefit of redistributive policies a point of contention when Marx argued with David Ricardo?

Indeed. But, I would argue two things make this new and put the “neo” in neoliberalism—one of them social structural and the other ideological. At the structural level, the expansion of transportation and communication technologies have produced globalized markets and economies like never before. Money flows around the world with unprecedented speed. Capital investment can be instantaneous, and can “shop” for favorable conditions, tax rates, labor markets, and the like (I note a recent report that indicates that Greece banks have lost twenty per cent of their deposits in the last

thirty days—something impossible in the last century). Connected with this, international economic governance structures—most significantly the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank—have a reach into the internal economies of nation-states like never before. Internal “structural adjustments”—which mostly involve dismantling social spending in favor of the privatization of the public sector—have been long directed at the global semi-periphery such as Latin American countries, but are reaching closer to the core, as the recent events with Greece, Spain, and other parts of the European Union attest. Goods also move faster and farther than ever, with advances in refrigeration and expansions of warehousing systems making many products that were once regional into worldwide commodities.

In a parallel manner, although not to the same extent, transportation has made the migration of labor wider and faster than before. While people have always moved to find work or a way to make a living, their ability to go back and forth—and to make remittances to home countries—is unprecedented. We speak of the “transnational” now to discuss the ways in which immigration, identities, and labor markets are not confined by the nation-state and physically residing in a particular nation-state does not shut off active participation in—and identity-formation connections to—other nation-states. All of this may not be purely “new” but one can easily argue that the change in degree is so significant as to be a qualitative change in kind.

The ideological dimension of neoliberalism is equally significant in making this new. The rationale of neoliberal capitalism has expanded to include all institutions and forms of social organization. Adam Smith paired his *Wealth of Nations* with *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, working on the assumption that society needed to foster moral people to participate properly in civic, social, and economic life. Market processes, he believed, would discipline greed by making it ultimately unprofitable, but moral people needed to engage in trade in order to ensure the proper workings of contracts, etc. That nod toward what might be termed civic republicanism is largely absent now in much neoliberal thinking. The market itself is thought to be “moral.” Churches, universities, philanthropies, even governments themselves, are all judged based on a bottom-line, productivity-efficiency calculus.

For example, at my university, a Jesuit school that prides itself on its “green” orientation, its liberal arts core, and its commitment to social justice through Catholic Social Teachings, we have a new Institute for Environmental Sustainability—with a primary mission of solving environmental “problems” and finding ways that green, “sustainable” practices can still be profitable. The first major endowed chair is being hired in conjunction with the Business School. And

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our university president said publicly (in the Q&A after a “State of the University” address) that we couldn’t depend on government or “people” to solve our environmental problems—but rather needed to depend on “ethical” businesses. Moreover, our faculty are now assessed by the number of publications, which are themselves assessed by quantitative Impact Scores and Rejection Rates, by the number of students they teach for the amount of money they are paid, and by the quantitative scores that come from student evaluations of how much they learned/enjoyed the class—reducing students to customers (see a general critique of these developments in Ginsberg, 2013). If there is one institution that should be, at least philosophically, resisting the “audit culture” (Kleinman 2010), standardization and quantified “performance” metrics, and the valorizing of individualized “entrepreneurialism,” one would think a liberal arts Jesuit university would be it. Alas.

The classical liberalism of Locke, Smith and Mill has been reconstructed and re-conceptualized in terms of individual and political freedom. Rhetorically, in the discourse of American political culture, the crux of the case for neoliberalism has shifted from what might be called “market success” propositions to what are “government failure” propositions with the attendant idea that government is always the problem. (Reader 2013). Privatization of profit, the socialization of “negative externalities” of production, the privatization of risk for individual/family health and well-being, and the privatization of the essence of what constitutes the public good, has made neoliberalism pervasive.

Globalization, in this neoliberal mode, is thus a collection of institutional and ideological developments that are producing a crisis in the modern nation-state. Nation-states are of declining substantive significance, as they are increasingly less able to organize their internal economies, less able to regulate flows of capital and labor, and less able to engender a convincing and enforceable sense of national collective identity. Borders are definitional and constitutive of the nation-state—and borders are becoming increasingly irrelevant. NAFTA, the new proposed TPP, the European Union, the reach of the IMF and World Bank, the immediacy and fluidity of population movement are all eroding the power and importance of national borders.

This increasing inability to organize and enforce a convincing collective identity has helped facilitate, in many places, an increasing virulent assertion of ethno-national or ethno-racial religion. These religious expressions emphasize blood and land and can be a type of “tribalism” (see Williams 2013). One can see this in the anti-immigrant nativist politics in the United States, with Greece’s Golden Dawn movement, France’s National Front, England’s National Defense League, and the like. The liberal nation-state,

with its secular and democratic legitimations, is being discarded for an assertion of primordial connection, based on consanguinity and a divine gift of territory.

Beyond these ethno-religious responses, with their exclusionist identities and implications of violence, what are the implications of these developments for religion and the study of religion, particularly in the U.S.? I see three basic responses—both conceptually and in the literature. One approach is to treat religion as the “dependent” variable in all this—either to focus on how neoliberalism is affecting religious identities, practices, and institutions, or to take a step further and treat religion as largely epiphenomenal—or a cloak or veil for economic realities. For example, Kevin Kruse (2015) has recently been getting much attention with his new book on the “corporate invention” of an ideology he calls “Christian libertarianism” that was the product of some conservative (mostly Evangelical) clergy and businessmen in the late 1930s–early 1940s. Concerned about New Deal economic policies and the potential for a more collectivist civic culture, they pushed a notion that economic freedom (which meant unregulated markets)-political freedom-Christian faith all went together in making American national identity—to the place that anything but *laissez-faire* economic policies were un-American. Religion in this case is the tool, used by economic and political actors. Kruse does not treat all involved as cynical manipulators, but there is no question that businessmen and their economic interests are driving the bus.

An alternative approach is to focus on the ways in which religious actors use economic ideas, processes, and behaviors for their own ends. For example, Giggie and Winston’s edited collection is predicated on the idea that religious groups use the market—in the form of commercial culture—to express themselves, to mark their identities, to spread their messages to diverse audiences. They are particularly interested in the processes as it was occurring in American cities in the early twentieth century—as urbanization was quickening, mass consumer markets were developing, and economic affluence was allowing greater leisure time and discretionary spending. Thus, rather than seeing this period as the crux of the “secular revolution” as Chris Smith (2003) did, they see this period as one where religious groups adapted to a new urban social and cultural order by adapting to it and profiting from it.

In a similar mode, but with a distinctly different politics, it is important to recognize that religious communities are often trying to be sites of resistance to the changes represented by neoliberalism. In a way, of course, the ethno-national religious groups I mentioned above are resisting the new organization of the world’s populations—particularly its disregard for borders and boundaries—that comes with

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neoliberalism. And in the world of philanthropy and the “third sector” there are attempts to articulate institutional logics that are not predicated on profit (although an emphasis on “efficiency” has produced a recent ideology of “strategic philanthropy”; Brest and Harvey 2008). But there are “progressive” religious responses as well, groups that fight for the inclusion of the immigrant, that resist the monetization of all relationships, and that privilege community for its own ends. While it is difficult to point to any mass movements of this sort, the collection of essays in a forthcoming book I am co-editing discuss several such local efforts in different parts of the U.S. among different faith traditions (Braunstein, Fuist, and Williams Forthcoming).

Finally, Jeff Wilson’s (2014) recent book examines both the ways in which religious practices can penetrate an economy and often sacralize some of its practices, even as it is often commodified and coopted in other ways. Wilson is interested in the spread of Buddhism in the United States, especially as it moves beyond the immigrant groups who brought their religious practices and orientations with them. He does this with a focus on the spread of the concept of “mindfulness” and the various meanings and practices that get considered “mindful.” His purpose is to show how this dispersion and diffusion has in many ways radically altered the concept—and how easily American consumer capitalism has commodified it—but at the same time how many areas have been touched by Buddhism in ways that are significant. It is, as he notes in his subtitle, a “mutual transformation.” Whether this is the just way Buddhism in particular travels—and has travelled since its origins in India—or whether this is a bellwether for religion in a neoliberal world is a key question.

My implicit answer is that this is something new. Perhaps not a radical break with the past, as historians can almost always find precedents that show some similar dynamics at work at a time before the period that social scientists claim the revolutionary change is happening. But the pace of neoliberal change is gobbling up institutions, their justifying logics, and the cultural objects around which they have organized themselves. Resistance is evidence, but seems increasingly organized around small communities and can too often be exclusionary. Our job, I think, as we study religion in the lives of nations, or neighborhoods, is to unpack these processes and show some of their consequences.

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Religion, Class, and Labor

Alongside recent studies of religion, capitalism, and markets have been new studies on religion, class, and labor. How do these differ from earlier social histories? What concerns dominate this area now and what topics still need analysis? How do studies in religion, class, and labor contradict, complement, or complicate studies of religion, capitalism, and markets?

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I recently read an article online about how overworked Americans are.¹ The story, about white collar workers, described the toll that such work takes on families and, especially, on gender equality. I also read an article about how many hours a person would need to work at minimum wage in each state to afford the rent on a two-bedroom apartment.² These articles tell different stories, about different classes of people, and illuminate different problems. Yet both articles call attention to work as a prominent and central concern in American lives. When we first meet somebody we often ask, “*what do you do?*” Our work is central to our identity, our social location, our orientation.

Work and labor form the basis of some of the key narratives of American history and society. The American Dream, a plot about social mobility and individual self-making underlining the rewards of hard work and persistence, is one of our enduring myths. It is also part of the story we tell ourselves about why immigrants have flocked to our shores on the promise of a better life (thus playing in to the metaphor of *flows* that has already been discussed here earlier). The term itself was coined by James Truslow Adams in 1931, but it described something that had a longer history in the country. From the earliest appearance of Europeans on American shores, the relationship of this land to *work* has been central. That word, though—*work*—has signified different things to different people at different times, and has been entangled in webs of religious, economic, and social formation. If some of the first Europeans recorded tales of abundance and plenty, a paradisiacal scene where hard labor was unnecessary, others described a howling wilderness where a new world would be created only from the sweat of hard labor. And the two combined in the history of slavery, where the abundance of some was produced by the endless toil of others, driven by systems of violence both physical and metaphysical. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Americans and visitors from overseas described a land of ceaseless toil. Yet, for the most part, work and labor have not found much of a toehold in scholarship on religion and American culture. Americans are a religious people. Americans are a working people. But in scholarship on American religion, as if embodying the assumptions of secular ideology, these two aspects of American identity and experience and mythology have often run on parallel tracks, rarely intersecting. Indeed, Max Weber described this the history of their relationship as a story of the *secularization* of work—fueled by Calvinist roots but ultimately ripped from its transcendent significance. Yet historical examples of, for instance, the central role of religion in labor struggles suggest that the secularization of work has been uneven, incomplete, or an inaccurate narrative. I am reminded here of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s writing about labor

in India: labor is not a universal category like we tend to think it is. It is a secular concept that doesn’t really make sense in the context of the Indian weavers or the jute-mill workers, and perhaps doesn’t totally make sense in the lives of many working Americans.³

Recent scholarly interest in the intersections of religion with capitalism and with labor has been an exciting development. When I first began being interested in these areas in the mid-1990s, it seemed that there was not much work being done here. As it turns out, that was actually a fairly productive time for studies of religion and labor. The past decade has also seen a host of creative, rigorous, and impressive scholarship on these subjects. Given my own research interests, today I want to focus on some of what I don’t see in this recent work. There are three areas I want to pay attention to, one having to do with class, another having to do with work and labor, and the third having to do with how a focus on work might contribute to the study of religion.

So, my first observation: much of the excellent attention being paid to labor recently has been focused on the working classes, and most of that has been focused on organized labor with a concern for social and economic justice. Works like Jarod Roll’s *Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* tell a compelling story of the religious sources for labor unrest and the power of religious idioms in the struggle for workers’ rights.⁴ They share a history with Herbert G. Gutman’s important 1966 essay “Protestantism and the American Labor Movement,” Jama Lazerow’s *Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America*, and Teresa Anne Murphy’s *Ten Hours’ Labor: Religion, Reform, and Gender in Early New England*, three texts that were instrumental in waking me up to this neglected history.⁵ While this history is important, we should remember that there is also more to the history of work and labor—and religion—than this. I am reminded of a talk that I heard labor folklorist Archie Green give at a conference on folk music and politics at UC Santa Barbara in the 1997. Most of the presentations had focused on the role of music in progressive political movements like the anti-war movement and the civil rights movement. Archie, speaking at the end of the conference, noted that most folk music didn’t share those political leanings, and most writers and performers of folk songs wouldn’t necessarily share those politics. The conference presenters let their own romantic ideas about folk music and politics shape the focus of their work. Similarly, studies of religion and labor tend to focus on instances of progressive politics shared by the scholars who write them.

Mentioning Archie Green also allows me to note his important contribution to the study of folklore, that being the notion of “labor lore” or “occupational folklore.” This is

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the folklore of working people, born out of their work environments and shared experiences as a community sharing a particular occupation. I've been interested in this idea insofar as it might be imported into religious studies. Some occupations have specific cultures associated with them, what I have called "cultures of work." Examples might be coal miners, lumberjacks, or whaling men. We might also consider Silicon Valley coders, doctors, or police officers. So one avenue into exploring the entanglements of religion and labor that is not solely occupied with issues of social justice or organized labor might be to study the religions of particular cultures of work, focusing on how those occupations shape and are shaped by religious idioms, practices, and concerns. How do the experiences of that occupation give rise to particular religious formations? How do people take up elements of their occupational world and make them religiously significant? For instance, for coal miners, the dangers, the dust, and the gendered nature of the work shape religious signification.

A focus on cultures of work also helps us to see the other side of the history of capitalism. Histories of capitalism document how this system came to be, how it changed, and so forth. A focus on work, and cultures of work, illuminates how people grappled with the transformations of their world as their daily lives and relationships were transformed by the structures and desires of capital and industry. This focus also requires imaginative and innovative uses of sources, since it is largely an invisible history—the experiences of working people are recorded in songs, stories, folklore, and material culture.

The study of cultures of work may or may not emphasize issues of social class. In some cases, it might be that class consciousness is a concern of the members of a particular culture of work. In other cases, it may be that this is not the top thing on their mind. So it is important, in bringing together histories of working people and histories of capitalism to be attentive to *scale*. Moving from capitalism as a system and structure of power to working people in their daily working lives is a matter of moving from a larger scale to a smaller one. They are related, but not always evident to each other. Like the study of globalization, the study of capitalism can easily become abstracted from its local impacts and interactions.

The second point I want to make has to do more directly with class. Scholars of religion in the United States have not only neglected working people. We have also left out the fact that those studies that seem *not* to be about class are in fact about class—about middle and upper classes, let's say, typically—but those class locations remain unmarked, invisible, seemingly inconsequential. And by leaving these unmarked, "class" comes to signify "working class," and working class

is treated as separate from other classes—when in fact class is a relational concept. So we ought to start paying attention to how class works in those places where we see it least, where it goes unmarked and unremarked.

We also should be attentive to the fact that scholars have a class location ourselves, and our perspectives on class are informed by that location. So, for instance, middle class folks—like ourselves—seem "normative" and our class level is unremarkable. Those who are unlike us—working class, elites—suddenly need their class location marked and accounted for in its relation to their religious ideas or practices. We unwittingly erase class from the middle and highlight it at the ends, again without getting into the relationships that create these structures of difference. There is no middle class in the U.S. without a working class, and if we can write about middle class religion without having to notice its relationship to the working class then there is a problem worth exploring—that is, it shows that somehow middle class people are able to live lives without having to deal with issues of class enough for us to feel the need to talk about that aspect of their lives, which itself says something about class formation and awareness and experience.

My final comment has to do with what a focus on work might contribute to the study of religion more generally. And it is simply this: religion is itself a form of work, a mode of engaging with the world and making something of it. The labor of religion is entangled with physical labor in the making of worlds, of selves, of civilization, of nature, of technology, and so on. Our self-making is tied to our world-making, and both to our cosmos-making. I'm not the first to suggest this, of course. Jonathan Z. Smith has written that "*homo religious*" is "preeminently, *homo faber*." Robert Orsi noted, in his introduction to the second edition of *Madonna*, "Rethinking religion as a form of cultural work, the study of lived religion directs attention to institutions and persons, texts and rituals, practices *and* theology, things and ideas—all as media of making and unmaking worlds." And Edward Linenthal, at the last Biennial conference, noted that he and David Chidester argued, in their introduction to *American Sacred Space*, "that human work... was crucial to [the] understanding of sacred space. The Eliadian approach to the sacred—that it 'irrupts or manifests' is, Chidester wrote, 'a mystification that ... erases all the hard work that goes into choosing, setting aside, consecrating, venerating, protecting, defending, and redefining sacred places.'"⁶ And we have heard in several conversations here comments about the constructed nature of religion.

A focus on the work—the labor—of producing, practicing, and disseminating religion, alongside and through and against our daily labors, attends to the vernacular, the material and discursive conditions through which the world is

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made and maintained and challenged. These realms—material and religious labor—are deeply and densely entangled.

So I am enthusiastic about the recent interest in religious entanglements with labor and capital, but even more so about moving those interests into an exploration of the histories, experiences, and significations of both the physical and religious labors of people engaging the forces and structures of their worlds to make something of them on a local, daily, experiential scale.

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2. Megan Bolton, et al., *Out of Reach 2105* (Washington, D.C.: National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2015). http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2015_FULL.pdf

3. Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Time of History and the Times of the Gods,” in Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 35-60.

4. Jarod Roll, *Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

5. Herbert G. Gutman, “Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age,” *The American Historical Review* 72 (1966): 74-101; Jama Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Teresa Anne Murphy, *Ten Hours’ Labor: Religion, Reform, and Gender in Early New England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).

6. Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Unknown God: Myth in History,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 89. Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem*, Second Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. xix. Edward T. Linenthal, in *Proceedings: Third Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture*, June 2013, p. 29 (<http://raac.iupui.edu/files/3013/7606/9381/Proceedings2013.pdf>)

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I found my way to the study of religion, class, and labor as an extension of my own biography. When I began graduate school in the late 1980s, I was immersed in what still existed as the American evangelical left spurred on by the likes of Ron Sider and Jim Wallis. I was also a punk rocker, engaging the protest and political themes and issues of the time through that scene. And, I was a budding sociologist, claiming my intellectual identity within neo-Marxism. But it was at a talk given by Ron Amizade that these issues were brought together in my mind in his recounting of the symbolic use of the image of Jesus as a carpenter for organizing workers in the early labor movement.

In the late 1980s, scholars were just beginning to free themselves from the constraints of the binary that framed the relationship between religion, class, and labor as reflecting and channeling either the power of the elite or the powerlessness of the working classes and poor. In general, this binary also focused on the ways in which religion was an ideological tool of social control used by the dominant classes to maintain the social order. The cultural turn in sociology as well as sociology's rediscovery of historical analysis contributed to new studies of class and religion in which attention to religion, rather than being dismissed as irrelevant to class analysis, was slowly "brought back in."

In a session such as this, however, it is important to remember that while questions of religion and labor can be subsumed under the umbrella of religion and class, these two sets of relationships have their own unique issues and concerns. My focus in this presentation will be in the former of the two.

When I think about religion and labor, my attention is drawn specifically to two key dimensions of this relationship. First, there is the place of religion in working class life. In this context, to study religion and labor is to study the lived religion or lack thereof of individuals from the industrial and post-industrial working classes, their beliefs, practices, and experiences as distinct from individuals from middle and upper classes. This is not a new area for sociologists. As early as the 1890s, papers published in sociology have examined a diverse range of links between religion and the American labor movement. Several early papers attempted to explain the alienation of working class people from organized religion.¹ Others, especially in the area of labor history, looked at the role of religious identity in motivating labor reform efforts and the religious bases for labor activism.²

Second, there is also the historical and contemporary relationship between religion and the organized labor movement. This dimension involves the examination of the role of faith in facilitating or obstructing organized labor's efforts at union organizing, winning labor conflicts, and

legislatively enacting an array of industrial reforms. Like studies of religion and class, the scholarship in this area has remained fairly consistent in its focus on examining both of these dimensions. Interestingly, if you look back several decades, you can identify work in this field emerging sporadically with waves of studies being published over three or four years about every 6-7 years since the late 1960s. So there were a host of studies in the late 1980s-early 1990s ... then again around 2000 ... 2009-2010 ... and now we seem to be in this period once again.

The field of labor history has been a rich source for evidence on the links between religion and working class life and activism. While a lot of early historical scholarship focused on how religion reinforced class inequality, more recent work is built around the theme that religious beliefs and practices could and did create "cultures of solidarity" among workers.³ Contemporary labor history also highlights the many ways that clergy, religious activists, and American workers themselves, often in coalitions, use religious values and symbols to articulate broader calls for social and economic justice.

Most contemporary social science analyses of religion and labor draw from social movement theory. Those of us who have done so initially have relied heavily on Chris Smith's *Disruptive Religion* in which he details twenty-one "religious assets for activism," the ideological, rhetorical, and practical resources potentially available to social change movements of all kinds.⁴ Union activists continue to see the religious community as a strategic source of resources not only because these individuals hold religious worldviews themselves but also because they believe religious resources and frames can and do help them win tangible goals. This is what much of this literature, including my own, demonstrates: religious resources being mobilized to help workers win a strike, keep factories from closing, enact living wage ordinances, pass some other kind of labor reform law or block legislation that would undermine the labor movement.⁵

While studies are new in their detailing of working class religious life and the labor movement, many haven't challenged or pushed the boundaries of early approaches to religion and labor. We continue to have descriptive monographs that do not make use of more critical analysis. For instance, while social movement theory certainly helps understand the mobilization and solidarity-building aspects of a movement, other equally important concepts such as the nature of organizational structures, political opportunities and constraints, and the outcomes of cycles of protest are all significant for understanding what happens when religion is employed strategically within labor movement activities.

In thinking about what we need to know more about, let

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me identify several things. First, for all of the attention to the lived religion of working class people in both the past and present, and despite the attention paid to religious dimensions to the labor movement, to my knowledge, there has been no comprehensive analysis of the religious affiliation, beliefs, or practices of members of organized labor to date. Why is this important? It leaves us without a religious context for much of this work. What is the religious affiliation and identity of the fast-food workers currently organizing across the country? Are they Baptists, Catholics, Pentecostals, or maybe Nones? Without knowing who workers are in religious terms, we can't know whether the religious appeals of Mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish leaders typically seen publically supporting labor causes has any resonance for those they are trying to assist. Alternatively, though scholars document the religious rhetoric of labor leaders, we don't know how much this correlates with the individual faith commitments of the rank and file. Is mobilizing religious support as labor strategy an instrumental convenience or does it represent the emergent, lived-religious perspective of working people themselves?

Likewise, there has not been a great deal of systematic examination of Christian denominations' (much less other religious traditions') views of organized labor and how these formal views relate to who from the religious community is likely to show up to support labor when called upon to do so. Only one systematic attempt has been made to do so and that was by the closest thing Indianapolis has ever had to a contemporary labor pastor in recent years, the Reverend Darren Cushman Wood. His book, *Blue Collar Jesus*, provides an important overview of how the diverse array of Christian traditions has thought about trade unions and the labor movement.⁶ Again, more attention to the organizational context of faith helps shed light on ways in which individuals build on, modify, or reject formal religious teachings on the labor movement.

A second area of work needs to address how we define religion, an issue that has already been raised, and what is it that we are measuring when we analyze "religion's" involvement with labor? We read a lot about clergy and also about religious rhetoric in the literature but there is more to "religion" than that, right? Religious resources includes theologies and beliefs, ritual practices and behaviors, organizations, leadership, power and authority structures, and the mundane resources that are under their auspices, such as meeting space, financial support, copiers, and so on. Moreover, what do we know about the relative effectiveness of mobilizing different kinds of religious resources? We don't do a good job being systematic in pinpointing which religious resources are being mobilized by labor or by religious groups involved in labor disputes and campaigns and im-

portantly the relative effects of them being mobilized by one group or the other. Is there a differential impact when a labor leader invokes the divine justice of labor's cause as compared to when a Rabbi, priest, or other minister does it? Also, in assessing the impact of religious resource use, we might consider whether these religious resources are necessary, necessary and sufficient, or perhaps simply convenient (with no measureable impact) in explaining successful or unsuccessful outcomes to labor activism.

Third, in moving this field forward, it remains imperative that we remember that the relationship between religion and labor is local and so local contexts have consequences for both the labor movement and for congregations themselves. At times of labor conflict, it is the relationships between actual congregations and union locals that are the organizations trying to work together. It is rarely the United Church of Christ and the AFL-CIO. So our focus needs to be trained to look at how these histories and contemporary dynamics work themselves out within specific communities.

On a related point, people of many faiths are once again finding themselves joining picket lines in support of immigrant labor rights, challenging corporate efforts to minimize the power of unions, and working with local campaigns to enact Living Wage Ordinances. In some congregations, leaders and rank and file union members find themselves in pulpits for "Labor Sunday," the Sunday of Labor Day weekend to discuss the religious dimensions of contemporary labor rights and reform to people who otherwise wouldn't think to pay attention to such things. But what is the result either for local labor movements or for local congregations? Does more teaching and preaching about economic structures, global capitalism, labor, and economic justice occur in these congregations? Are members of these congregations subsequently more likely to engage in individual and collective efforts in support of the labor movement? What happens religiously to the members of unions, especially those who fight bitter battles like those in Decatur and Detroit in the 1990s or the Hyatt workers here in Indianapolis more recently? Do they tend to join the congregations that supported them? Do their personal religious beliefs and practices change as a result of their experiences with religious supporters during these times of conflicts? We just don't know enough about these outcomes.

Finally, what I see from the vantage point of actual instances of religious activists and labor movements working together is the challenges faced by those trying to build these coalitions. Labor leaders/strategists often see the involvement of outsiders in instrumental terms what can we gain and how can we maximize their impact? Religious activists in contrast often are looking to expand an economically-just social order where communitarian values, rooted

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in theological ideals of solidarity, equity, and reconciliation, are reasserted on the local level—in other words, employers will respect employees and vis-versa. These definitions can and do conflict. Clergy can feel used by the experiences of “dial-a-collar” (when union organizers call them at the last minute to ask for someone to open a demonstration or Labor Day parade with prayer) and religious lay activists made uncomfortable in the warzone experiences and profanity-laced banter of highly charged labor conflicts. Likewise, labor activists can feel let down when appeals for help result in tepid verbal responses or signatures on resolutions but no other practical supports.

In conclusion, this is a call to continue this work, pushing the boundaries of these traditional narratives. We are living in bleak or exciting times depending on how you look at it. Things seem bleak as those of us with strong commitments to the labor movement see the older trade unions lose members and political power. Things may seem more exciting as we witness the emergences of new worker organizing drives mobilized by rank and file workers who are using the support of community institutions, especially religious organizations, to work for a more economically just world. This is a perfect time to expand our thinking and our scholarship on religion and labor.

1. See for instance, Frances H. Perry, “The Workingman’s Alienation from the Church,” *American Journal of Sociology* 4 (1899): 621-629.

2. See for example E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (New York: Vintage, 1966); Fones-Wolf, Ken. 1989. *Trade Union Gospel: Christianity and Labor in Industrial Philadelphia, 1865-1915*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Clark D. Halker, *For Democracy, Workers, and God: Labor Song-Poems and Labor Protest, 1865-1895* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Herbert Gutman, “Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age.” *American Historical Review* 72 (1966), 74-101; Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Jama Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); William A. Mirola, “Asking for Bread, Receiving a Stone: The Rise and Fall of Religious Ideologies in Chicago’s Eight-Hour Movement.” *Social Problems* 50 (2003): 273-293; Theresa Murphy, *Ten Hours’ Labor: Religion, Reform, and Gender in Early New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); William R. Sutton, *Journeymen for Jesus: Evangeli-*

cal Artisans Confront Capitalism in Jacksonian Baltimore, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

3. Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

4. Chris Smith, *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism*, (New York: Routledge, 1996).

5. See for example William A. Mirola, “Religious protest and economic conflict: possibilities and constraints on religious resource mobilization and coalitions in Detroit’s newspaper strike.” *Sociology of Religion* 64(2003): 443-462; Bruce Nelson, “Revival and Upheaval: Religion, Irreligion, and Chicago’s Working Class in 1886.” *Journal of Social History* 25 (1991): 233-253; Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*; Thomas G. Fuechtman, *Steeple and Stacks: Religion and the Steel Crisis in Youngstown* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

6. Darren Cushman Wood, *Blue Collar Jesus*, (Santa Ana: Seven Locks Press, 2004).

Evelyn Sterne
University of Rhode Island

As I sat down to prepare my remarks, I realized this conference had provided a really nice opportunity for some bookending. It was twenty years ago that I started thinking about how to write a dissertation that would integrate labor and religious history, something relatively few scholars were doing at the time. It was ten years later that *Religion and American Culture* suggested new directions for the field when it published its forum on “American Religion and Class.” And today, another ten years down the road, we’ve come together to talk about where we’ve been and where we might go in exploring connections between religion, class, and labor in American history.

1995: The Early Years

I started graduate school in the early nineties intending to study labor and immigration history, but I became interested in religion too when I noticed it was missing from most of what I was reading. If religion did enter the story, it usually did so as the conservative villain that discouraged workers from being “radical” or “political.” I had been moved by British historian E.P. Thompson’s call to “rescue” the working class “from the enormous condescension of posterity,” yet I detected that condescension in many scholars whose work I otherwise admired.¹ I was troubled by the pervasiveness of deprivation theory and the assumption that workers who embraced, say, Catholicism instead of communism were victims of false consciousness.

I was convinced the story was more complicated. Surely working people who belonged to faith communities had good reasons for doing so. Why did so many of them don their finest attire and attend services every week? What did they do when they got there? Whom did they encounter, what did they talk about, and what were the political implications of those encounters? And what could I read to prepare myself to answer these questions?

By the mid-nineties, antebellum labor historians like Jama Lazerow and Teresa Anne Murphy were challenging Paul Johnson’s influential *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium* by arguing religion was far more than a tool wielded by employers to control their workers. Historians of the industrial era seemed more reluctant to recognize that religion held political potential for working-class activists, but scholars such as Ken Fones-Wolf and Earl Lewis were leading the way. Paula Kane addressed the issue from a different angle, exploring how class affected religious culture in Boston. And many of us were inspired by Robert Orsi’s pioneering work on Italian Catholics, which set the stage for studies of lived religion by looking at “religion in the streets.”²

2005: The Middle Period

By 2005 the field had made some progress. William Sutton and Mark Schantz had published intriguing studies on the antebellum period, and scholars such as William Mirola,

Leslie Woodcock-Tentler, and myself had done more work on the industrial era. Most of this scholarship sought to lay deprivation theory to rest by proving religion could indeed have a progressive or radicalizing effect on working-class politics.³

A forum on religion and class, published that year in *Religion and American Culture*, proposed more complex approaches. Laurie E. Maffly-Kipp suggested we “subjectivize class, to see it not as a matter of objective distributions of material inequality but as a function of the way people . . . symbolically locate themselves and others in relation to one another.” E. Laurence Moore proposed studying Pentecostals as a way of addressing the issues across cultural lines and with a broader conception of what constitutes “politics” and “protest.”⁴

2015: Where Do We Go From Here?

The last decade has been really exciting. Scholars have moved beyond a focus on Catholics and mainline Protestants in the Northeast and Midwest to study Holiness folks, Pentecostals and other evangelicals in the Sunbelt. Intriguing studies by Richard Callahan and Jared Roll bear mention here, as does theoretical work by Sean McCloud. An exciting collection about class and Christianity in the industrial age, edited by Christopher D. Cantwell, Heath W. Carter, and Janine Giordano Drake and coming out next winter, brings together case studies from a cross-section of religious, ethnic and racial groups, and, as its editors note, moves beyond “an either-or assessment, in which Christianity is seen only to foment or to assuage working-class dissent.”⁵

Where might we go from here? From where I stand, it seems that labor historians have done more to blend religion into their work than religious historians have to integrate class into their analyses; yet both fields have a ways to go. Let me suggest a few directions.

Matthew Pehl has written that religious historians have “eschewed a forthright engagement with religion as a class phenomenon. The typical practice of demarcating religious history by denomination . . . has consistently suggested that boundaries of belief rather than economic structures were most important in shaping communities of religiously oriented workers.” Pehl’s work on Detroit’s pluralistic working class demonstrates the potential of a cross-denominational analysis.⁶

Another approach is to explore ways in which class has shaped religious choices. Here I’d like to mention one of my favorite books, Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz’s *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America*. This wonderfully titled tale of a tiny religious cult in 1830s New York uses a small story to unveil a much larger narrative. In uncovering the history of a man who sunk into poverty and madness and responded by forming his own patriarchal religious utopia, the authors

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tell a significant story about how individuals dislocated by a modernizing economy used religion to restore order to their lives. (Spoiler alert: one of Mathias' converts is none other than Sojourner Truth.) Few of us are fortunate enough to stumble upon this kind of archival gem, or be blessed with the storytelling gifts to bring it to life, but I propose this approach as a model for seeking the "big story" in working people's everyday economic trials and religious choices.⁷

This brings me to some very sage advice given at this conference six years ago, when Robert Orsi observed that "historians take religion seriously in its social and public forms, but a deep anxiety about religious experience persists among them."⁸ Studying religious experience or "lived religion" is where labor historians stand to learn most from historians and sociologists of religion. Let us look not only at how Pentecostals, for example, drew inspiration from their faith to challenge employers or improve their material status, but also at what speaking in tongues meant to them as individuals and as a community. Going further, let us heed advice given by Nancy Ammerman at this forum two years ago, when she suggested we look for lived religion not only in "extraordinary experiences or exotic rituals" but in "everyday action." For those of us intrigued by the intricate connections between religion and class, this kind of work could be our next opportunity and our next challenge.

1. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1966).

2. Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1978); Teresa Anne Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor: Religion, Reform and Gender in Early New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Jama Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Ken Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel: Christianity and Labor in Industrial Philadelphia, 1865-1915* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989); Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Oakland, CA: U. of California Press, 1993); Paula Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), xv.

3. William R. Sutton, *Journeyman for Jesus: Evangelical Artisans Confront Capitalism in Jacksonian Baltimore* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press,

1998); Mark S. Schantz, *Piety in Providence: Class Dimensions of Religious Experience in Antebellum Rhode Island* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); William Mirola, "Asking for Bread, Receiving a Stone: The Rise and Fall of Religious Ideologies in Chicago's Eight-Hour Movement," *Social Problems*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May 2003): 273-84; Leslie Woodcock Tentler, "Present at the Creation: Working-Class Catholics in the United States," in Rick Halpern and Jonathan Morris, eds., *American Exceptionalism?: US Working-Class Formation in an International Context* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997); and Evelyn Savidge Sterne, *Ballots and Bibles: Ethnic Politics and the Catholic Church in Providence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

4. Forum, "American Religion and Class," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 2005): 12, 22-23.

Richard J. Callahan, Jr., *Work and Faith in the Kentucky Coal Fields: Subject to Dust* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009); Jared Roll, *The Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Sean McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies: Class in American Religion and Religious Studies* (Chapel Hill, NC: U. of North Carolina Press, 2007); and Christopher D. Cantwell, Heath W. Carter and Janine Giordano Drake, *The Pew and the Picket Line: Christianity and the American Working Class* (Champaign, IL: U. of Illinois Press, 2016).

5. Matthew Pehl, "'Apostles of Fascism,' 'Communist Clergy,' and the UAW: Political Ideology and Working-Class Religion in Detroit, 1919-1945," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (September 2012): 441.

6. Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994).

7. Robert Orsi, *Proceedings: First Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture, June 4-7, 2009*, Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, Indianapolis, IN; and Nancy Ammerman, *Proceedings: Third Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture, June 6-9, 2013*, Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, Indianapolis, IN.

What is the currency of “civil religion”?

We are approaching the 50th anniversary of Robert Bellah's seminal essay in Dædalus. What is the state of studies in civil religion today? Having been introduced at a time of war, how is it faring today in our constant state of war? How does civil religion add to or complicate our understanding of religion and American culture, which has undergone many changes since 1967?

Penny Edgell
University of Minnesota

I approached this panel keeping in mind that “currency” has two meanings—is the concept “current”? And “does it have value” (which I translated as “what does the concept buy you in the way of analytical or descriptive pay-offs?”).

I think the concept of civil religion is relevant to both descriptive analysis of American public life, and also to normative debates. I’ll comment briefly on both. Ultimately, while I think civil religion is thriving in both discourse and in practice, I do not agree that it can continue to be a unifying force—and in fact, I have some serious concerns about how civil religion works to exclude some people from feeling represented in our common public life, and some ideas from being voiced there.

First, I want to note that the concept of “civil religion” is subject to a definitional ambiguity that has been noted by other scholars. Robert Bellah used the term initially to signal the non-denominational “god talk” of public leaders and the use of “generic” religious symbols in civic rituals. For Bellah, civil religion sacralizes American identity, political institutions, and civic life by association with a (religious) sacred realm. Civil religion “works” because it resonates widely with American citizens’ own experience of religion—an experience summed up well by the idea of the “common creed,”—a shared, non-sectarian, pragmatic, morally motivating, civically-oriented religiosity (as described by Theodore Caplow, among others, drawing on the Middletown studies). Phil Gorski updates the “civil religion” concept by specifying it as a discourse combining (Christian) covenantal theology with civic Republicanism. It poses an “ideal” relationship between church and state in contrast to the alternatives spelled out in secular liberal and nationalist discourses. He argues that it does not exclude the non-religious or create division because a) historically, prominent non-religious thinkers and leaders have accepted civil religion as legitimate, and b) most non-religious Americans are not politicized and don’t embrace a militant secular liberalism.

There is another civil religion, too—the sacralization of American symbols, founding documents, founding fathers (and the occasional founding mother), and founding stories. This includes stories about Paul Revere’s ride, small-town Fourth of July parades, images of the Stars and Stripes superimposed over rows of headstones in Arlington Cemetery (a picture widely shared on Facebook this Memorial Day weekend). This civil religion is the Constitution set under glass, to be viewed as a holy relic at the sacred center of power in Washington, DC. This civil religion is “religious” in the Durkheimian sense; it is not dependent upon “borrowing” a sacred aura from god-talk.

Normative Debates

For today’s comments, I’ll focus on civil religion that infuses public life with “god talk.” The normative debate, here, is whether this civil religion is inclusive or exclusive. And in one way, Gorski’s re-definition is not so helpful for answering that question. While it may be that the idea of America as in a special, covenantal relationship with God was historically important in originating civil religion as a discourse (and as a civic practice), it seems to me that the power of civil religion today—its “currency” in the public arena, its “value”—is that it resonates far more widely. This is how it is inclusive.

Why can civil religion be inclusive? First, *both* kinds of civil religion can be inclusive because they have the power to transmute *citizens of the state* (a cold, bureaucratic, impersonal and legal relationship) into *members of a people* (a warm, substantive, and particular relationship that actually matters to people, that evokes a shared identity and fate).

When a political leader invokes the idea that America thrives “under God,” or asks that “God Bless the United States of America”—she understands that such talk resonates with the large set of Americans who experience lived religion as an active relationship with a God from whom life and hope and morality flow and who can be petitioned for good things (that last part is a very quick recap of Theodore Caplow’s “common creed” argument). Through evoking a shared experience, civil religion includes many Christian Americans—not only Protestants, but also Catholics and Jews who have historically assimilated to Protestant religious forms (congregation-like organizations, pragmatic and pluralistic faith statements instead of dogmatic ones).

However, while civil religion draws on a widely shared form of religious experience it is not one that is universally shared by all Americans—in this sense, civil religion also excludes. Those who prefer civil religion to other discourses generally turn a blind eye to the way that “generic” god-talk is in fact dependent upon Protestant cultural forms, and what often remains unexplored is the way that civil religion proponents are personally comfortable with the pragmatic, morally-oriented, pluralistic Protestant civic style which is not universally shared. I’ll close by pointing out two specific ways in which civil religion is an exclusionary force in American life.

First, *civil religion excludes (not small) groups of Americans—that is, real people*. Several studies show that Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and members of other non-Christian minorities feel that their patriotism is questioned, feel pressured to adopt Protestant cultural forms, and feel uncomfortable with “god talk” in the public arena. Taken together, these three facts suggest that the “generic” civil religion is

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understood by members of these groups as Christian—and as actively excluding them being understood as *authentic* (good, moral, civically virtuous) Americans. Also, the growing numbers of “nones” feel, and are, excluded by civil religion. By any reliable source, the nones are a growing segment of the American population, this growth is concentrated among younger generations, and this trend is not going to reverse itself. Yes, not every “none” endorses a coherent secular and political worldview and yes, we are not going to become a majority-non-religious country any time soon (if ever). But civil religion is actually off-putting to most of the nones (that is part of why they choose not to identify as religious). And it is off-putting to many younger *religious* Americans. We know this because we have survey data from 2014 that show that being younger, being a “none,” and being non-Christian are all significant predictors of expressing discomfort with the symbolic forms of public religious expression that constitute civil religion. These exclusions seriously undermine claims that civil religion be a unifying discourse.

Second, *civil religion can exclude critiques of American civic life and public institutions as fundamentally constituted by relations of power and inequality*. Civil religion makes it easier for conservatives to promote fear-based talk about a lack of religious freedom as the defining threat facing religious Americans today (many liberal religious activists think it's unchecked corporate power). Civil religion paints the civic realm as a sacred space of free expression and the state a place where one's own valued identities are respected and valued—I wonder if African-Americans feel that way, post-Ferguson? Civil religion fosters a preference for private solutions to public problems and a moralizing discourse about poverty that blames the poor for their problems.

In short, I believe that civil religion does have currency. But we can no longer accept the claims of civil religion's proponents that god-talk in the public sphere can ever be truly universal; it is rooted in a particular history, social location, and set of power relations, and it expresses particular sets of interests that intersect with racial, gender, and class-based privilege. In this way, its proponents' claims to universal representation and consensus ring false.

Mark Silk
Trinity College

Forty-nine years ago, Robert Bellah wrote “Civil Religion in America” for a Daedalus conference on American religion, and I’m delighted to be given this opportunity to offer a few thoughts on how to commemorate the 50th anniversary of a little article that not only created an academic cottage industry but also inspired, and continues to inspire, both appreciation and considerable annoyance.¹ Besides participating in the industry, I have over the years wavered between appreciation and annoyance; although since receiving a nice note from Bellah a few months before he died about an article I wrote for the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* on the idea of civil religion in the West, I’ve found myself, perhaps not surprisingly, on the appreciative side.

But whence the annoyance? After all, Bellah was building on an idea well known in political theory from Rousseau, and a few years before explored in scholarly practice by Lloyd Warner, both of whom the article cites. The difference, however, is that Bellah considered the American civil religion not merely a phenomenon worthy of sociological scrutiny, but a genuine apprehension of the divine—as the article says, “an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality.” It was, in a word, the testimonial of a believer; Bellah went so far as to write at one point, “I am not at all convinced that the leaders of the churches have consistently represented a higher level of religious insight than the spokesmen of the civil religion.” Such stuff transgressed against the code of the practitioners of *religionswissenschaft*. It also offended adherents of the sectarian faiths, who saw it as little more than a jumped-up version of American culture religion. And, of course, the article appeared at just the moment when the trappings of American civil religion, rhetorical and material, were becoming objects of contention in the culture war brought on by Vietnam.

That was hardly by accident. Indeed, Bellah’s whole point was that the American civil religion now faced a third great “time of trial” after independence and slavery, this one having to do with how to take “responsible action in a revolutionary world.” He thus envisioned the emergence of a “world civil religion,” which, he asserted, “has been the eschatological hope of American civil religion from the beginning. To deny such an outcome would be to deny the meaning of America itself.” Whoa!

To the end of his life, Bellah found it distressing that so many of his American readers had misunderstood him. As he wrote to me two years ago:

In spite of the fact that my article is profoundly critical of America and came out of a period of deep opposition to the Vietnam War, it has been widely interpreted as a hymn to religious nationalism, some-

thing I above all hate. I discovered in some of my journeys of the last two years that I am understood in such places as China and Germany as exactly the opposite, that is my use of the civil religion idea is seen as an alternative to religious nationalism, not a form of it, and that, since it is based on civil society and not the state, is seen as democratic and open to ongoing argument and criticism. Some (intelligent) Americans have seen that, but far too many put me together with Pat Robertson, to my horror.

Well, as they say, no good deed goes unpunished. But I am here neither to praise nor to bury Bellah, but to think about how his contribution might be useful to the study of American society going forward. That’s not to say it hasn’t been put to good use already. Without supplying a catalogue, I would point to its utility in understanding particular regional cultures—not only in the South, where the legacy of Civil War has provided lots of grist for the civil religious mill, but also, for example, in the Pacific Northwest, where an ecological civil religion has shaped public policy as well as self-understanding. On a smaller scale, particular states can be seen as having developed their own civil religions. In my own state of Connecticut, we have what I call Charter Oakism, a belief system developed in the nineteenth century that once mattered more than it did then but which you can see still celebrated today on the state quarter.

But looking forward, I’d say that Bellah’s conception of American civil religion falls short as an analytic tool because it represents the thing as aboriginal and timeless. As he put it, “The words and acts of the founding fathers, especially the first few presidents, shaped the form and tone of the civil religion as it has been maintained ever since.” I’m not so sure of that, nor of the way Bellah, his eye on the religious-secular divide in nineteenth-century European politics, could explain the emergence of an American civil religious consensus with the words, “It is certainly true that the relation between religion and politics in America has been singularly smooth.” American anti-Catholicism and anti-Mormonism, anyone? What’s needed is a less essentialist understanding of American civil religion, one that admits of different ways in which our national symbols and spiritual constructs have been deployed over time.

Here, I propose that we make use of the distinction between civil and political religion advanced by Emilio Gentile, the great student of Italian Fascism. In his book *Politics as Religion*, Gentile defines civil religion as

the conceptual category that contains the forms of sacralization of a political system that guarantee a plurality of ideas, free competition in the exercise

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of power, and the ability of the governed to dismiss their governments through peaceful and constitutional methods. Civil religion therefore respects individual freedom, coexists with other ideologies, and does not impose obligatory and unconditional support for its commandments.

By contrast, political religion is, for Gentile, “intolerant, invasive, and fundamentalist, and it wishes to permeate every aspect of an individual’s life and of a society’s collective life.” This involves the sacralization of the kind of political order that the Italian Fascists as well as the Nazis and the rulers of the Soviet Union contrived for their revolutionary states. As far as the United States is concerned, Gentile’s twin formulation may be seen as an exercise in ideal typology.² Bellah allowed as how, “Like all religions, [the American civil religion] has suffered various deformations and demonic distortions.” I would prefer to say that American society has operated sometimes in a more civil religious mode, and has sometimes been subject to the harder-edged enterprise of political religion.

In that regard, it seems to me that, not long after Bellah wrote his article, the American civil religion of the earlier postwar period gave way to something more like a political religion, under the auspices of the Republican Party. And since then, we have found ourselves in a culture war that resembles, in fact as well as in name, the *kulturkämpfer* of nineteenth-century Europe, with a national politics divided between a more explicitly religious and a more identifiably secular party. In the last presidential election cycle, aspirants for the Republican nomination campaigned in a vocally Restorationist mode, and I mean that in a pretty precise way, for those of you who know about American religious restorationism.³

That’s not to say that the rhetoric and ideology of (let’s call it) Traditional American Civil Religion have been entirely abandoned by the Democratic Party or what passes for the American Left. But the liberal causes of the day—here in Indiana I will mention same-sex marriage—are no longer advanced under the banner civil religion, the way Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, advanced the cause of civil rights in his “I Have a Dream” speech (today, the best known piece of American civil religious discourse). These days, equality, as in “marriage equality,” must stand on its own two feet, without benefit of civil religious rhetoric. And it is its opponents who insist on the need to keep faith with American traditions by ensuring that they can opt out of the equality game. That this kind of spiritual libertarianism is alien to actual American history is beside the point. The point is that the American Civil Religion of which Bellah wrote is, these days, much less in evidence than it was fifty years ago. To be sure, President Obama made a pretty good stab at it in the speech he gave back in March commemo-

rating the 50th anniversary of the Selma march. But that speech, to me anyway, points less to an active, living civil religious faith than to something we have lost.

1. Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus*, Vol 96, No. 1, *Religion in America* (Winter, 1967), pp. 1-21.

2. Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. xv.

3. Mark Silk, “How Mormons and Evangelicals Became Republicans,” *Religion in the News* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2012).

Wendy L. Wall
Binghamton University, SUNY

When I was asked to be a part of this panel, one of the first things I did was to search for the term “civil religion” in Google’s Ngram Viewer. Obviously, this tool is an imperfect way to track scholarly trends, but it was nonetheless suggestive. A quick search of works in American English showed a steep rise in usage of the term between the publication of Bellah’s famous essay in 1967 and the end of Ronald Reagan’s presidency. Usage declined fairly steadily thereafter, although it ticked up slightly after 2005. (Interestingly, the pattern in British English was quite different; use of “civil religion” in that corpus peaked in 2002.)

The drop-off in the use of Bellah’s term has been even more dramatic among U.S. historians, at least historians of twentieth-century political culture. This is particularly striking when one considers the recent explosion of interest in precisely the arena to which “civil religion” would seem most relevant: the intersection of religion and politics. In the last decade or two, a host of scholars—including some we heard from this morning—have shown that we can’t understand topics like the labor, civil rights, and antiwar movements, the political role of corporate America, or the rise of the New Right without reference to religion; yet the term “civil religion” almost never appears in these works. Jonathan Herzog’s *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex* recounts the efforts of secular leaders during the early Cold War to sacralize American values and institutions, yet he uses “civil religion” only once in the text. In his recent opus *One Nation Under God*, Kevin Kruse traces the origins of many rituals and rhetorical practices that Bellah would certainly have considered “civil religion”—yet Kruse prefers the terms “religious nationalism” and “public religion.” I wrote an entire book on *Inventing the “American Way,”* the phrase that Will Herberg used to denote civil religion. Yet I too used Bellah’s term only once. Why?

(Before I offer a tentative answer to that question, I should note the one big exception to the trend I’ve just described. Works on American foreign policy by Andrew Preston, Raymond Haberski, William Inboden, and others still make ample use of the term.¹)

One reason for civil religion’s fall from favor is undoubtedly the term’s definitional fuzziness. Over the years, it has been used to refer to just about any national ritual, reference to God, or mention of America’s place in the world. One wonders how much explanatory power a term has when it is invoked to discuss everything from radio Westerns and McGuffey Readers to the “Church of Baseball” and the Monica Lewinsky affair!

At a deeper level, however, I think “civil religion” has been haunted by its origins—both chronological and disciplinary. Bellah published his *Daedalus* article at the end

of an historical moment marked by what I have called the “politics of consensus.” This era began in the late 1930s, when Americans of diverse backgrounds and divergent agendas grew alarmed by the economic and political turmoil of the Depression years, as well as by the rise of fascism and communism abroad. To many, “alien” ideologies seemed to threaten the U.S. not only externally, but internally as well. Over the next few decades, Americans across the political spectrum worked overtime to define a unifying set of national values—a distinctive “American Way”—and to convince their fellow citizens of its merits. Collectively, they promoted the notion of national consensus, even though they often disagreed on the specific values and attributes their fellow citizens shared.

Many of those who took part in this cultural project suggested that America’s unifying creed rested on a vague, but shared, monotheistic belief. Certainly, conservative corporate leaders and their political allies tried to legitimate their version of America’s political and economic rights by arguing that these rights rested on a shared and “fundamental belief in God.” But corporate and political leaders were not alone. Interfaith activists and civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. also appealed to a consensual American faith. Given this, it’s hardly surprising that this era produced two of the first, and most important, formulations of civil religion. In 1955 Will Herberg published *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, in which he argued that a unifying creedal system—the “American Way”—existed alongside of what he called the “three major faiths.” Twelve years later, Robert Bellah recast Herberg’s “American Way” as “the American civil religion.” Herberg and Bellah had different agendas and different emphases: Herberg was centrally concerned with positioning Jews and Catholics as part of the American mainstream; Bellah, by contrast, saw civil religion as a “universal and transcendent religious reality” that could be used to advance civil rights or critique the nation’s involvement in Vietnam.² For all their differences, however, both men rooted civil religion in consensus. Herberg described it as Americans’ “common faith.” Bellah insistently used the singular, referring to “the American civil religion.” He also dismissed both Christian defenders of slavery and the “overt religiosity of the radical right” because “their relationship to the civil religious consensus is tenuous.”

That Bellah could dismiss a group—the religious right—that historians now see as central to the story of late twentieth-century American politics suggests one of the problems with his vision of civil religion. In recent decades, scholars have questioned whether Americans indeed share a common moral framework (or ever have) and have emphasized the many who—because of their politics, religion, class or

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race—are left out of Bellah’s vision. Some scholars have dealt with this problem by arguing that the U.S. has not one, but two or more, civil religions. This is the approach taken by the sociologist Robert Wuthnow in *The Restructuring of American Religion* and by the religious studies scholar Arthur Remillard in *Southern Civil Religions*.

Historians have been slow to follow this lead, which brings me to the second “origins problem” I mentioned: the one of disciplinary approaches. Both Herberg and Bellah were Durkheimian sociologists. As such, they were more concerned with exploring broad societal patterns than with the human actors behind the drama. Rereading Bellah’s famous essay a few weeks ago, I was struck by both the plethora of passive constructions and by the degree to which “the civil religion” itself is the protagonist in his essay. To give but one example, Bellah wrote that “... the civil religion serves to mobilize support for the attainment of national goals.” Bellah was referring here to President Johnson’s 1965 speech asking Congress to pass a voting rights bill. Yet civil religion, not Johnson, was the agent in the passage and Bellah never questioned who defined the “national goals” or how widespread they were. (I find Wuthnow’s discussion of civil religion to be deeply insightful, but also deeply frustrating for the same reason.)

Historians are centrally concerned with human actors, and thus are intensely aware that civil religion does not simply settle like a sacred canopy over the land. If there is such a thing as “civil religion,” it is shaped and deployed by human actors for particular ends—to encourage support for war, to curb certain forms of prejudice, to shore up support for the existing corporate order, or to mobilize Americans on behalf of civil rights. It is also true—and essential to remember—that some Americans have more power than others in shaping public discourse.

Thus far, I’ve talked about civil religion as an analytical category, but I don’t want to close without acknowledging that it is also—and often—prescriptive. (I think both Herberg and Bellah had an unspoken prescriptive agenda.) Five years ago, I was on a panel with the sociologist Philip Gorski and the intellectual historian Wilfred McClay. Both argued passionately, not only for the existence of an American civil religion, but for the *need* for one. And I have a confession to make. At some level, I agree with them. I believe some common ground is necessary in a pluralist society—that some level of consensus or solidarity is the precondition for tolerance, harmony, and the achievement of something approaching the “common good.” I understand the yearning of the left-liberal intellectual Lewis Mumford who wrote in 1940: “One cannot counter the religious faith of fascism unless one possesses a faith equally strong, equally capable of fostering devotion and loyalty and commanding sacrifice.”

I believe that what Bellah called “American civil religion” has at times helped to extend a canopy of inclusion over more of this nation’s diverse people. (The postwar notion that America was “one nation under God,” for instance, did not just promote Christian libertarianism, but also opened a door for Catholics and Jews.) And I understand the powerful lever that an appeal to supposedly transcendent “American” values can give to prophetic outsiders who invoke it on behalf of social change. Yet the historian in me is exquisitely aware of the obverse of all these claims: that what appears to be consensual is often hegemonic; that civil religion excludes some, even as it includes others; and that even as some versions of civil religion can be used to promote racial and economic justice, others can be used to legitimate war, cultural imperialism, and economic oppression. That may be an unsatisfying place to leave this reflection, but on that note—and with a keen awareness of my time constraints—I will turn the discussion over to all of you.

1. Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Knopf, 2012); Raymond J. Haberski, *God and War: American Civil Religion Since 1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012); William Inboden III, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

2. For an insightful discussion of these differences, see Ronit Y. Stahl, “A Jewish America and a Protestant Civil Religion: Will Herberg, Robert Bellah, and Religious Identity in Mid-Twentieth Century America,” *Religions* 6, no. 2 (2015): 434-450.

Liberalism vs. Pluralism as Models of Interpretation

In the 1970s, after the publication of Sydney Ahlstrom's Religious History of the American People, the creation of a post-Puritan, liberal Protestant culture was the dominant model for interpreting American religious history. The 1980s saw the beginning of the "de-centering" of American religion, with important contributions coming from various fields. Pluralism and diversity became the watchwords of courses and textbooks. Recently, a new model that again underscores liberalization, even secularization, has arisen—placing the story in a literal marketplace where religion lives alongside other aspects of American culture. Are these competing models? If so, which should be preferred? If not, how are they reconciled?

Pamela Klassen
University of Toronto

My panel at the Biennial Conference was asked to compare “secularism/liberalism” vs. “religious pluralism” as models for interpreting American religious history, and to consider their role in “decentering” the dominance of Protestant narratives of that history. Based on this question, I took my task to be a consideration of how these words operate as categories of analysis, political projects, and historical processes. As such, to compare them requires thinking about their interrelation, and how they are not only theoretical tools but also words that shape the world historically: it requires considering our models of interpretation as words with complicated histories, genealogies, and effects. My main point, in the end, was to underline the importance of critical reflection on the power of visibility—and invisibility—that our conceptual frames bestow on particular people, groups, and stories.

I’ll turn to my comments below, but first, I’ll note that the conversation following the presentations in our panel was both lively and unsettling. One contention that elicited spirited discussion in the room (and on Twitter) was Stephen Prothero’s insistence that genealogical approaches to the study of American religion included no stories of living, breathing, crying people (he took John Modern’s recent book as an example). He counselled that we as scholars needed to choose between two doors: one leading to a genealogical approach that deadened the religious lives of others or a second that led to stories that gave us flesh and blood people in their religious interactions.¹ This dichotomous approach to the study of religion is not one that I share. A genealogical approach—whether we take Foucault, Modern, or Winnifred Fallers Sullivan’s work as examples—can be rich with both category critique and historically detailed stories. As scholars of American religious history—and religion in the Americas—we have plenty of examples to draw upon to see how categories—in legal, scholarly, and popular versions—shape the lives and stories of the people we study. Whether “religious freedom,” “Indian,” or what Judith Weisenfeld called the “religio-racial” during the conference, categories and their deployment, resistance, and transformation must be at the center of the stories we tell as scholars.²

For my part, my presentation to the scholars gathered in Indianapolis, who represented a healthy mix of scholarly generations, stayed close to a question posed by our hosts: the comparison of secularism/liberalism and religious pluralism as models of interpretation. Thinking of the powers of visibility that accompany these models, I asked: does secularism/liberalism focus our attention on people and groups whose “public appearances,” to adapt Hannah Arendt, are more articulate, more vociferous, or more adeptly engaged with highly-mediated political speech?³ Alternatively, does

religious pluralism provide a vantage point on groups that are more marginalized from the “public sphere,” whether for reasons of sovereignty claims, legal or citizenship status, language, education, class, gender, sexuality, racialization, or something else? In common scholarly talk, I’d hazard, secularism is more often framed as a hegemonic force generated through law, state authority, elite intellectual traditions, and majority cultures.⁴ Liberalism, which requires a different genealogy than secularism, also carries the scent of hegemony with it, but is often deployed as a vaguely historicized religious or political tradition or often an insult from both left and right.⁵ By contrast, pluralism—qualified by the adjective “religious”—often functions as a way to name, and often valorize, a “grassroots” reality of difference calibrated with religion as the measure. As I have argued with Courtney Bender, however, religious pluralism is a concept that is prescriptive and descriptive all at once, and also carries whiffs of hegemony.⁶

Critiquing secularism and liberalism as forms of domination and celebrating religious pluralism as empowerment would ignore that all three terms are categories of analysis at the very same time that they are political projects and historical processes. As categories of analysis, secularism, liberalism and religious pluralism are inherently comparative frames of interpretation that do the work of placing “varieties” of religion in relation to “non-religion” or to “other” religions.⁷ As concepts with historicity, these terms must be localized within particular lives, histories, and communities, including those of scholars. I recommend that as scholars of religion we learn from women’s historian Jeanne Boydston, who, when afflicted with “category of analysis” fatigue, argued that gender is, yes, a category of analysis, but that it also needs to be understood as an historical process.⁸ This kind of doubled vision also allows us to see how our work is always seeing from somewhere, even when we are looking at a particular someone, or something.

Once we consider the historicity of our categories of analysis, we open ourselves to finding “religion” in unusual places, bodily experiences, or human transactions, while acknowledging the construction of the category itself. Once we consider “secularism” not only as a category deployed in theoretical analysis, but also as a mode of practice, we see that it looks (and smells and sounds) different in the U.S. than it does in Canada, or Mexico, or Germany.⁹ Even within each of these nation-states, with their differing histories of settler-colonialism, immigration, democratic deliberation, and religiously-based violence, there is internal diversity about what secularism, or liberalism, or religious pluralism might be.

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Interestingly, two books that had the biggest influence in “de-centering” the study of American religion, *Mama Lola*, by Karen McCarthy Brown, and *The Madonna of 115th Street* by Robert Orsi, contain virtually no reference to secularism, liberalism, or pluralism.¹⁰ Ethnographic and historical accounts rich in stories of power, ritual, material culture, and racialized and gendered bodies, these books—in multiple editions—are still widely read inside and outside the study of religion. One might then ask, if Karen Brown and Robert Orsi didn’t need secularism, liberalism, and religious pluralism to decenter the field, why do we need them now?

I’m sure each reader has her or his own answer to this question, but here is mine. *Mama Lola* came out just before I arrived at Drew to work with Karen Brown as a PhD student. I recall wondering as a grad student why there was not more explicit theorizing in her book. In articles and lectures, Karen had a very sophisticated engagement with feminist and anthropological theory, and she articulated powerful critiques of racism and Christian privilege. So it was all the more frustrating when I found myself defending *Mama Lola* to those who considered Karen naïve, or worse, for not addressing the politics of a middle-class white anthropologist of religion writing a book about her relationship with an immigrant Haitian Vodou priestess in Brooklyn.¹¹ 12Karen’s book was not an exercise in comparison that placed Vodou in the pluralistic mix of religions of New York or in the secular orbit of the state. The role of state power, colonialism, and racial and religious discrimination, however, were characters in the narrative. As a compelling story of the life of a Haitian woman living in Brooklyn, that wove together genres of historical non-fiction and ethnography, Karen’s book was in itself an intervention into a category of analysis that has had dramatic effects in the lives of many. That category was Vodou (aka Voodoo), which had long been a term of fear and exoticization used to diminish, repudiate, and colonize the people of Haiti, at the same time that it was an active tradition for these same people, with all the contest and creativity that traditions entail.¹²

Can telling a new story about an old category decenter the privileges that whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality, or Christianity have bestowed on certain people and not others in North America? To invoke more feminist scholarship, I’d say that if there is to be any hope for decentering as a scholarly practice (it might be worth thinking again about the concept of “decentering” too), we need more intersectionality. This is not a pretty word, I admit, but it is one that allows us to hold multiple categories of analysis aloft at once in order to help us to think more fluidly with and about religion in its intersections and overlaps with other categories with their own historicity: medicalization, whiteness, settler-colonialism, securitization.¹³ But perhaps cre-

ative, critical juxtaposition of categories with power might be even better—think invented tradition, social imaginary, or even biopower. Or, closer to our home field, new metaphysicals or consumer rites.¹⁴ Juxtaposing concepts give us the ability to see new relations of power and vulnerability; working those concepts into our storytelling gives us the capacity to make new stories audible and visible.

Creative, critical juxtaposition is an approach I find helpful, whether thinking about the postbiomedical bodies of the home birth movement or the supernatural liberalism of liberal Protestant healers.¹⁵ These days, I’m thinking about the “colonial secular” in relation to missionary-Indigenous encounters on the northwest Coast, as the nation was invented—politically and spiritually—through laws, stories, media, and even real estate.¹⁶ Most recently, I argued that “civic secularism” is itself made out of stories that acknowledge and celebrate pluralism, religious and otherwise, while selectively forgetting the settler nation’s violent origins. As a white Canadian woman researching Indigenous nations, the concept of secularism and its historical uses has helped me to see how both settlers and Indigenous people have called on Christian versions of authoritative knowledge to participate in the spiritual-political invention of nations. But what I’m really hoping to do with my current book is to tell a good story. As I write, the book is starting to look more like *Mama Lola* every day, only with an Anglican Archbishop in place of a Vodou Priestess.

I’ll opt then, for the reconciliation model proposed by our hosts: “secularism/liberalism” and “religious pluralism” need to be considered together as models of interpretation that are also interrelated historical processes. Considering them genealogically—by which I mean in terms of their histories, narratives, and conceptual uses—would allow us to expand what we can see with these models of interpretation, including ongoing contests over sovereignty, gendered embodiment, and other sites of power. In using these models of interpretation, however, we need to carefully assess two things: One, when do these words operate as categories of analysis (or models of interpretation)? And two, when do these words operate as characters in a story that prompt remembering, forgetting, making visible, erasing, and resisting?

Categories such as religion, secularism, liberalism and pluralism are, to borrow from Northrop Frye, “words with power.”¹⁸ They accrue this power in law, in media accounts, in scholarly writing, in textbooks, in everyday life, and, as Frye would note, sometimes even with intertextual reference to books such as the Bible. I see a big part of our task as scholars of North American religion to carefully and critically observe and analyse how these—and other—words with power take shape in the worlds we study. This means considering their roles in our own methods, theories and

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analyses, but also understanding how they are deployed or ignored by the people and institutions that we are studying.

Categories of analysis are not all there is to critical thinking or transformative learning, however. As most of us would likely agree, new insights come not only from reading books and going to conferences, but also from paying attention to being in the world. I learned a good deal from sitting in the circle in Indianapolis, and was grateful to be there. A couple weeks later in northern Ontario, I learned in a different way, sitting in a different circle, as I watched girls and women dance in their jingle dresses around the drums at the Rainy River First Nations Annual PowWow. This visit also led me to think in new ways about one of the most powerful models of interpretation shaping our work: America. Walking among ancient burial mounds on the banks of the river that the Ojibwe call Manidoo Ziibi and speaking with Ojibwe elders, I reconsidered our Indianapolis conversations about borders, flows, and what it means to pluralize America into Americas. Looking across the river, which is now a Canada-U.S. border less than half a mile wide—and which was still being staked and demarcated in 1914—I saw a land now called Minnesota. Before it was America, it was differently contested territory, as with pressures from the French and British fur trade, the Ojibwe moved in, pushing the Sioux further west. But through it all, the mounds remain.¹⁹

As scholars who write, words and not mounds are our tools and our legacy. Through them we bring visibility to stories and concepts that have real force in the world. We must handle them with care and be responsible and accountable for what we write and what we say, knowing that we are in a long line—or a permeable circle—of people who have complicated stakes in the very categories and stories that we hope to critique and tell.

1. John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America* (University of Chicago Press, 2011). When using the collective we, I mean to include anyone who counts her or himself as a student of North American religion, of whatever ilk.

2. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, 1st edition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); Michael D. McNally, “Native American Religious Freedom Beyond the First Amendment,” in *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*, ed. Courtney Bender and Pamela E. Klassen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 226–51; Tisa Joy Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy*

and *American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009); Judith Weisenfeld, “Spiritual Complexions: On Race and the Body in the Moorish Science Temple of America,” in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 413–28; for a broader discussion that includes the U.S. see David Chidester, *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2014).

3. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

4. Courtney Bender, “Pluralism and Secularism,” in *Religion on the Edge* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 137–58.

5. I discuss this in more detail in Pamela E. Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

6. Courtney Bender and Pamela E. Klassen, eds., *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); see also Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

7. For a helpful summary of recent discussions of the perhaps infelicitous term “nonreligion,” see Ryan Cragun, “Time to Name a Movement?,” *Nonreligion and Secularity*, 2015, <http://blog.nsrn.net/2015/05/01/time-to-name-a-movement/>, accessed June 14, 2015.

8. Jeanne Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (November 1, 2008): 558–83.

9. Isaac Weiner, *Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Monique Scheer, “Hopes, Fears, and the Impact of the New Centers of Islamic Theology at German Universities” (Harney Lecture Series in Ethnicity, University of Toronto, December 1, 2014); Roberto Blancarte, “Laïcité au Mexique et en Amérique latine,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, no. 146 (June 1, 2009): 17–40; Pamela E. Klassen, “Fantasies of Sovereignty: Civic Secularism in Canada,” *Critical Research on Religion* 3, no. 1 (2015): 41–56; see also, Hussein Ali Agrama, *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2012).

10. Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*, Third Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, Third Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

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11. For an excellent recent discussion of these tensions from another remembered perspective, please see Gina Athena Ulysse's blog post, "Karen McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola*, or the Book that Kept me in Grad School" Gina Athena Ulysse and Carole McGranahan, "Karen McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola*, or That Book That Kept Me in Grad School," *Savage Minds*, accessed June 1, 2015, <http://savage minds.org/2015/03/18/karen-mccarthy-browns-mama-lola-or-that-book-that-kept-me-in-grad-school/>.

12. See the work of Elizabeth McAlister, including Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister, *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

13. On securitization as a topic for the transnational study of religion in the Americas, see Kevin Lewis O'Neill, *Secure the Soul: Christian Piety and Gang Prevention in Guatemala* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

14. Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 2010); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

15. Pamela E. Klassen, *Blessed Events: Religion and Home Birth in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism*.

16. Pamela E. Klassen, "Mentality, Fundamentality and the Colonial Secular; or How Real Is Real Estate?," in *The Postsecular Condition*, ed. Rosi Braidotti, Bolette Blaagaard, and Eva Midden (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 175–94.

17. Klassen, "Fantasies of Sovereignty."

18. Northrop Frye, *Words With Power: Being a Second Study of "The Bible and Literature,"* ed. Michael Dolzani (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

19. William E. Lass, *Minnesota's Boundary with Canada: Its Evolution Since 1783* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1980); Grace Lee Nute, *Rainy River Country: A Brief History of the Region Bordering Minnesota and Ontario* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1950).

Stephen Prothero
Boston University

I met Sydney Ahlstrom because I wasn't very good at math.

I started college as an astrophysics major. Eventually I realized I couldn't do the math, so I hunted around for another major. I ended up in a U.S. history course that friends of mine were taking. There I learned from Richard Wightman Fox that history is replete with conflict. I also learned that religion mattered throughout U.S. history—that religious people and religious ideas played important roles in events I had assumed could be explained in wholly secular terms. So I became an American Studies major, signed up for Ahlstrom's two-semester sequence in U.S. religious history, and started to work my way through his 1158-page *A Religious History of the American People* (1972).

Was Ahlstrom the last great exemplar of the old Protestant paradigm or the first of the pluralist paradigm? This question works because Ahlstrom was a transitional figure. At least as I read it, his book shows that the United States has always been both Protestant and pluralistic. His story focuses on Protestants, perhaps because he was a Lutheran, perhaps because Protestants have long commanded an outsize share of public power and as a historian in a history department he cared about public power. But his book also attends to Roman Catholics and Jews, harmonial religion and Buddhism. And before he really gets going, Ahlstrom makes the startling admission that, if he were to do it all over again, race would be the master key to his metanarrative. "Any history of America that ignores the full consequences of slavery . . ." he writes, "is a fairy tale."¹

Ahlstrom's effort to twin Protestantism and pluralism has informed my own work, from my first book on Henry Steel Olcott and "Protestant Buddhism," to *American Jesus*, which argues that Protestants have had the public power to turn Jesus into a national icon but that non-Protestants seized the authority to interpret Jesus on their own terms and in their own image. So what happened as the field of American religions turned "from Protestantism to pluralism"? How to evaluate the "pluralist turn" and its methodological enabler: "the ethnographic turn"?

One key book here was obviously Karen McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola*. Another was Bob Orsi's *Madonna of 115th Street*, which as Peter Williams so rudely reminded us yesterday appeared 30 years ago. Bob was a student of Ahlstrom's, and his book, too, was transitional. It marked a shift of emphasis: from Protestantism to Catholicism, from theology to practice, from the church to the street. Methodologically, it drew on both ethnographic and historical methods. Yes, Bob engaged in participant observation, but he also did archival research. (Later the ethnographic turn would turn more sharply—away from history altogether.)

Another important book in my retelling of this historiography is Tom Tweed's edited volume, *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (1997), which included (among other contributions) Ann Braude's now iconic essay "Women's History Is American Religious History."

Three quick observations here:

First, this book was still about history. "Anything does *not* go" in this "retelling," Tom wrote. "Historians have a role-specific obligation to be accountable to the past."

Second, as the title indicates, *Retelling U.S. Religious History* was still about the United States. The frame had not yet expanded to the Americas or shrunk down to individual communities.

Third, it did not give up on metanarrative. Some would read this book as a nail in the coffin of that genre, but Tom at least did not criticize metanarratives per se but rather those that "focused disproportionately on male, northeastern, Anglo-Saxon, mainline Protestants and their beliefs, institutions, and power."²

Another touchstone volume was *Lived Religion in America* (1997), edited by David Hall. This book included essays on Catholics and evangelicals and theologians and Native Americans, but it is remembered for its methodological contribution—for consolidating and announcing under the rubric of "lived religion" a new kind of "radical empiricism" (William James does U.S. religious history).

This book also anticipated later turns in the study of U.S. religions by expressing skepticism about the divide between religion and secularity. As Bob observed, my own essay, on the first public cremation in the United States, read that event as "neither 'Christian' nor 'secular'" but a demonstration of the fluidity of those two realms. What we call "religion," Bob wrote, "cannot be neatly separated from the other practices of everyday life."³

So what is going on here?

The site of the production of knowledge about "American religions" was shifting in the 1980s and 1990s from history departments to Religious Studies departments.

With this shift came:

1. A transition from historical to anthropological methods and, with it, a shift away from explanation toward "thick description."

2. The rise of the keywords *religion* (and its doppelgänger *secular*) and the relative decline of such keywords as *America* and *United States*.

3. A reorientation from public power to personal experience, which entailed *both* greater attention to the complex lives of religious actors and relative neglect of the exertion of Protestant hegemony—in law, in publishing, in education, in riots.

4. Suspicion of metanarrative.⁴

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Finally, some concluding observations on a more recent development: the genealogical turn, influenced by such thinkers as Nietzsche and Foucault and J.Z. Smith and Talal Asad. To get at the work this work is doing on the study of American religion I want to take up, by way of example, John Lardas Modern's *Secularism in Antebellum America* (2011).

There are elements of this book that are continuous with the lineage I am tracing from Ahlstrom through Brown and Orsi and Tweed and Braude. One is a desire to blur the once sharp lines between religion and secularism. This is *not* new with Modern or other genealogists of religion. As I said, Orsi takes this up in his introduction to *Lived Religion*. It is there in Pamela Klassen's discussions of "supernatural liberalism" in her *Spirits of Protestantism* (2011). It is there in *Sacred Canopy* where my colleague Peter Berger muses over whether "the Western religious tradition may have carried the seeds of secularization within itself."⁵ And if I recall correctly, a book I read in college approximately 100 years ago, Carl Becker's *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (1932) discusses how secular utopias in that century were driven by what we might now call spiritual imaginaries. Lurking behind all these books is Hegel's determination to melt away supposed dualisms. And a long line of later Continental Philosophers (and French deconstructionists) glorying in dissolving the dividing line between A and not A.

There are discontinuities, however, between *Secularism in Antebellum America* and the scholarship I have outlined, visible in: a return to a focus on dead white men of the Protestant persuasion (many of them evangelicals); a return to consensus history, in which evangelicals, mainline Protestants, and secularists agree on almost everything that matters; and the functional negation of human agency and, with it, the ability of individuals to affect history.

But most important is Modern's focus on what he calls the "genealogical excavation of the categories evangelicals used to understand themselves and others."⁶ It should be noted that this element is not as distinctive as one might imagine. Many historians include this sort of work in their writing. In my own books, I have found occasion to trace the emergence of the term *Hinduism* back not to Orientalists in the 1820s but to Protestant missionaries in the 1790s; and in *American Jesus* I took issue with my friend Mark Silk's genealogy of the Judeo-Christian tradition by tracing that concept back to Jewish literary figures in the 1930s.⁷

But in the hands of Modern and other genealogical excavators, this sort of prologue becomes the play itself. The result is a radical shift in focus away from the lives of religious people to their "discourse" and even to the "discourse" of religious scholars. In this way we are transported from the foot traffic of festas of the Madonna of 115th Street to the

footnotes of holders of PhDs.

The last line of Modern's chapter, "Toward a Genealogy of Spirituality," refers to "lives," but in this chapter (as in much of the rest of the book) human "lives" and human experiences are occluded by a preoccupation with discourse analysis—in this case the discourse of Protestant elites. Here we are worlds away from "the religious history of the American people." In fact, we have effected an about-face from Wilfred Cantwell Smith's hope, in *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1963) to replace the study of "religion" and its attendant "isms" with the study of religious persons. If the author goes missing in Derrida, here "the American people" disappear. And with them religious experience itself.

Orsi has argued that the modern Catholic imagination is marked by presence, rooted in its understanding of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, while the Protestant imagination is marked by absence.⁸ From this perspective, *Secularism in Antebellum America* is a deeply Protestant project. Here all the stuff scholars of American religion have struggled since Ahlstrom to make present in our work—his awe in the presence of the apparition of Mary; her relief in the presence of a deceased spirit in a séance cabinet; the bend of a body davening in the presence of "The One True God"—have gone missing. As Modern's title itself confesses, his is a book about the term *secularism*. It is not about secularists.

All this is to say that there is a rupture in this genealogical turn that I don't see in the earlier turns in our field.

I have concerns about the ethnographic turn, including its tendency to make the nation state disappear and with it the power federal and state governments exercise via law, taxation, custom, and sentiment over against religious minorities. And surely many of you in this room have criticisms of my work. But these are in my view family squabbles, debates about how "we" ought to proceed in "our" field.

As we move to "genealogical excavations," however, we seem to be doing something almost wholly other. I may be reading the book incorrectly, but *Secularism in Antebellum America* seems to me to be a literary enterprise, signaled by Modern's obsession with *Moby Dick* (an obsession, I should say, I share). More, it reads as an exercise in esotericism of the sort I witnessed in college in the doggedly inscrutable Paul de Man. Things are seldom what they seem. The modern is not so modern after all (including, of course, Modern himself).

Modern (the author) writes that antebellum Protestants exhibit "anxieties over invisible . . . powers."⁹ But these powers are only invisible because Modern is determined not to see them. In a world in which humans lack agency—in the world between the covers of this book—causes must be traced to the real protagonists in this book (apart, of course, from Modern himself): specters, haunts. But to conjure ghosts is not to engage in historical work. It is to refuse it,

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and in the process to erase not only the anxious Protestants of the antebellum period but also the Catholics, Mormons, and secularists whose very presence activated their anxieties: Mother Superior Mary Ann Moffatt of the Ursuline convent torched outside Boston in 1834; Joseph Smith Jr., yanked from a jail and assassinated by a mob ten years later; and Thomas Jefferson himself, whose sideways faith provoked such anxiety among the Federalists that it took 35 ballots in the House to finally cede to him a presidential election he had plainly won in 1800.¹⁰

Any reorientation in an academic field—any shift in method or focus or frame—illuminates some things and obscures others. If you focus (as Leigh Schmidt) did on “hearing things” you might miss what is sitting right in front of you. If you focus on lived religion and the ethnographic method, you risk neglecting the dead.

Yesterday Bob gave a helpful list of what genealogical work in “religion” sees:

- How “religion” is a historical construction
- How “Buddhism” was “invented” in the 19th century.
- How the category of “world religions” was an instrument of empire.
- How the project of defining religion (as white, democratic, universal, private, rational) created all sorts of “others” (including magic and superstition)

But this approach misses *people*. Their *history*. Their *religion*. And it misses America as well. Gone, in other words, are all four keywords in Ahlstrom’s magnum opus.

To be clear, I am not objecting to the working hypotheses of the “genealogical excavators.” I am convinced that the categories scholars use are socially constructed. And that those categories have histories. And that those histories are often sordid tales of the uses and abuses of power. I know that. I think everyone in this room knows that.

During my college years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Derrida and Wittgenstein baptized me into what Berger and Luckmann had referred to more than a decade earlier as “the social construction of reality.” In my first year of grad school I marveled as I witnessed the 14th century Tibetan Buddhist philosopher Tsong Khapa perform many of the same moves. From the ultimate perspective of *sunyata* (emptiness), he observed, there is no unchanging and independent self. The words “I” and “me” conjure up a phantom. In fact, every category we use to shape experience is socially constructed. But Tsong Khapa found a way to wriggle out of this “intellectual fingertrap” (as Bob put it so evocatively yesterday).

In Tsong Khapa’s famous formulation there are two truths: ultimate Truth with a Capital T (in which the self is empty of own being) and conventional truth (in which the words *I* and *me* make perfect sense—indeed, are indispensable—in the day-to-day experiences of ordinary people).¹¹

Once you understand that categories such as “religion” and “secularism” and “culture” and “race” and “gender” are not natural but are (in the Buddhist sense), empty, two doors present themselves to you. One door takes you deeper into non-dualism—into esoteric gestures toward the ineffably Real. This is the deconstructive route taken by some of my undergraduate friends and teachers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is also the route of some scholars of American religion today. Behind this door religion appears primarily on the lips of scholars, marked by scare quotes that spell danger. When religious people do appear, they are made to ape the preoccupations of these scholars, not least their preoccupations with discourse itself.

The other, post-critical door takes you back into the world and into the vernacular—away from the Ultimate Truth of philosophers and theologians toward the relative and conventional truths of ordinary life. Here we are confronted not with “isms” but with flesh-and-blood persons. Here we explore not the categories of scholars but what Ahlstrom called “the religious history of the American people.” “With a respectful patience for the arcane,” Leigh wrote in *Hearing Things*, “the historian follows the devout to those bodily thresholds where the senses themselves seem to lose their very sensuousness.” That’s my door. That’s where I choose to go.

1. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 13.

2. Thomas A. Tweed, *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 8, 3.

3. Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion,” in David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 11, 6.

4. This reluctance to hazard narratives of the full range of U.S. religious history is visible in the syllabi produced in IU-PUI’s Young Scholars in American Religion program. Until the 1997-99 cohort, most of the Young Scholars’ courses were about “American religion” in general. Since that time, the overwhelming majority of these courses have narrowed the frame, either topically (“Sexuality and American Religion”), regionally (“Religion in the American West”), denominationally (“Varieties of American Evangelicalism”), or temporally (“Religion in America: 1900-1941”).

5. Peter Berger, *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 110-29.

6. John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 63.

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7. Stephen Prothero, *God Is Not One* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 354; Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003), 333-34.

8. Robert Orsi, "When 2 + 2 = 5," *American Scholar*, March 1, 2007, <https://theamericanscholar.org/when-2-2-5/#.VYmHPqTF8fM>.

9. Modern, *Secularism*, 44.

10. On these anxieties and these culture wars they spawned, see my forthcoming *How Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even as They Lose Elections): America's Culture Wars from Jefferson's Heresies to Gay Marriage* (New York: HarperOne, 2016).

11. Here I am relying on Robert Thurman, *Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence: Reason and Enlightenment in the Central Philosophy of Tibet* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

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“Liberalism vs. Pluralism as Models of Interpretation” is our announced topic for this session. It is safe to say that if we were to take as our baseline the scholarship of William Hutchison, one of the great interpreters of American religious liberalism and pluralism for a half century from the time of his Yale PhD in 1956 to his death in 2006, we would have to question seriously the *versus* in this panel title. Among the things Bill Hutchison’s work made plain was how much liberal Protestantism shaped the way religious pluralism was conceived, accommodated, and idealized. In studying American Protestant liberalism one was also studying the ecumenism and cosmopolitanism that it fostered or, conversely, failed to foster. To formulate the study of liberalism and pluralism in oppositional terms, Hutchison’s work suggests, would be to miss their dense entanglement with each other. That remains an incontrovertible point of departure in my view. To study American religious pluralism hardly requires de-centering liberal Protestantism; instead, it requires attention to how liberal Protestant norms recurrently set the terms for the invention of cultural pluralism as an ideal, both its expanses and its limits. (This is a point that has been amplified in more recent scholarship as well, including Matthew Hedstrom’s *The Rise of Liberal Religion*; Amy Kittelstrom’s *The Religion of Democracy*; David Mislin’s forthcoming *Saving Faith* as well as David Hollinger’s broad-ranging and generative work on twentieth-century ecumenical Protestantism.)

When Hutchison recognized the liberal Protestant bases of pluralism, he did so in part out of a filial affection for that inheritance—a corrective to the Neoorthodox critiques of its naivety and theological flimsiness. He was a card-carrying pluralist because he was a liberal Protestant—a natal Presbyterian who had cut his intellectual teeth on Unitarian Transcendentalists and who had eventually settled denominationally into the Religious Society of Friends. Those filial ties in our guild are rapidly disappearing, though there are certainly traces of them still. Now, far more often, the naming of liberal Protestantism (often seen as hiding out in unmarked secular forms) is intended to break up its continuing hegemony and finally actually to pluralize the study of American religions, cultures, secularisms, and sexualities. I am thinking here particularly, of course, of Tracy Fessenden’s acute and influential work, *Culture and Redemption*, from 2007. I suspect Hutchison would have been in sympathy with that discursive critique, should he have lived to see its emergence over the last decade. It is a quirk of the liberal Protestant character, especially so in the second half of the twentieth century, to take delight in its own undoing, to relish the subversion of its own cultural dominance, to applaud the exposure of its own privilege, if not quite to find relief

in its own decline. Hutchison, as a religious pluralist, might even have registered a lament that all this attention to an unmarked Protestantism in the guise of an imperial secularism kept recurring to a controlling consensus—one so all-enveloping in its atmospheric effects that difference and variety seemed to disappear at the very moment of their ostensible liberation from this Protestant-secular continuum.

There should be no one centering device, no singular model of interpretation, for studying something as pluriform, polyglot, and unpredictable as religion in American culture and history. That is certainly all the more evident once the words *American* and *religion* are critically interrogated as well. Ecumenical Protestantism deserves ample attention, to be sure: but, and I hardly need to say this, it should not be turned into a liberal paradigm for the field. Pluralism, as a construct, is implicated enough in the liberal Protestant world as not to constitute a distinct model of its own; indeed, its very interconnectedness with liberal Protestant and post-Protestant ecumenism marks its limitations. These propositions, I realize, are of little help for writing a textbook or organizing an introductory course or for distinguishing a field. They are fragmenting—not so much by design, but as a forthright recognition of the variegated, motley domain we take as ours to study. I harbor no mystical or scholarly longing for any kind of oneness beyond that multiplicity.

If liberalism and pluralism are not controlling frameworks, then what might be? I am left not with a model, but a method (though that might be to over-dignify it): namely, the kind of ethnographic approaches, embodied in cultural anthropology and cultural history, which produced the study of lived religion in the first place. Cast in both anthropological and historical terms, that mode of inquiry is culturally particular; it trades not in embedded discourses or sweeping ages, secular or otherwise; it potentially attends to everything from Holiness Wesleyans to Reform Jews, from Latino Catholics to Czech freethinkers, from Presbyterians to neopagans, from Jehovah’s Witnesses to fastidious atheists. It is unafraid of nominalism. It suspects Big History is overrated and biography underrated. It has an appetite for idiosyncrasy. History might be just one damn thing after another—it prefers the buzz of that confusing detail to grand theory. It is unimpressed by the secular, by secularization, by secularity I, II, and III; it is equally unimpressed by the postsecular—unless it has happened to take for its ethnographic work a tribe of critical theorists. It bristles at jargon; it is a humanistic art with aspirations to see vast formations—of power or race or sexuality or economy or revelation—in miniatures of close observation and meticulous detail. Out of it comes what? Not consensus, not a model or a paradigm or a watchword, but, on a good day, a little clari-

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ty about some corner of American religious life, some depth of understanding of the social and political vicissitudes shaping religious movements and actors, a grasp—however frail—on the lived experience of our subjects, a measure of insight into the ritual patterns, legal quandaries, doctrinal symmetries, or condensed hatreds of our focal characters. With enough discipline, with enough patience, and with enough ethnographers in the field and in the archives, larger patterns and bigger pictures may emerge or reemerge. Liberal Protestantism might come back into view, strangely altered or strangely familiar, when seen in an ethnographic mirror that no longer presumes its model importance or its sinister power. We might even catch a fleeting glance of just how diverse, how miscellaneous American religions are and have been—how uncontained they are by liberal pluralism itself. On a good day, too, secularism would be part of that miscellany, and secularists, taken down from their cloudy dominion, would be seen as the embattled minority they all too typically have been.

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