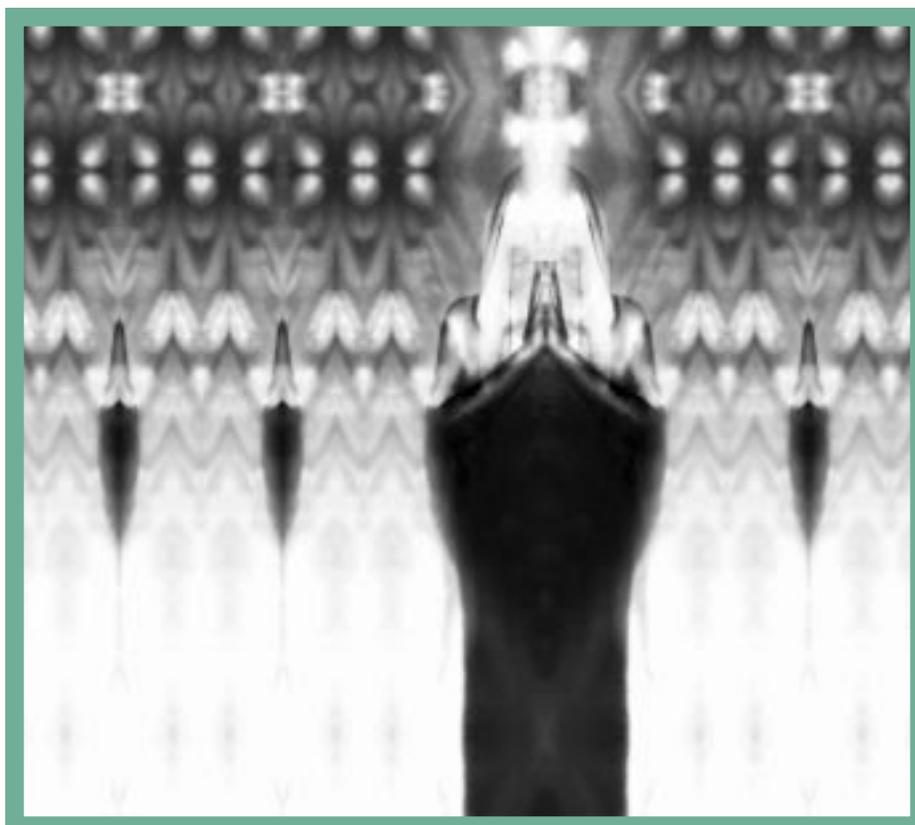


CRITERION

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DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS—

Opening this spring 2004 issue of *Criterion* is the 2003 John Nuveen Lecture by Tanya Luhrmann, which explores how the changing role of trance in American religion may influence the expression of dissociative disorders in psychiatry as a result of trauma.



Tanya Luhrmann is Professor in the Committees on Human Development and the History of Culture, and Associate Faculty in the Department of Anthropology and the College at the University of Chicago.

Following this lecture is an article by Noah Salomon on the debate in contemporary Sudan over whether or not Islamic law is an appropriate mechanism for the governance of a religiously diverse society.

At the center of the issue is the first installment in a new feature entitled “Perspectives,” designed to bring you a variety

of opinions on “hot” topics at the intersection of religion and public life. It offers four commentaries on Mel Gibson’s controversial film *The Passion of the Christ*. The first, by Margaret Mitchell, addresses the use of language in the film, suggesting that Gibson’s decision to omit Greek and Hebrew reveals an orientalist agenda. The following pieces, reprinted from the Martin Marty Center’s twice-weekly e-mail editorial, “Sightings,” consider the impact the film may have on Jewish and Christian relations (Pawlikowski and Sandmel), the difference between black and white viewers’ reactions to the film’s use of violence (Franklin), and the use of language as a mystical device in the film (Sanders).

Concluding this issue are a Bond Chapel sermon by Franklin Gamwell on the idea of God’s kingdom, based on Mark 1:14–20, and a speech by Director of Ministry Studies Cynthia Lindner on preaching as an ethical activity.

I hope you enjoy this issue,

JENNIFER QUIJANO SAX, *Editor*



Robert M. Franklin is Presidential Distinguished Professor of Social Ethics in Emory University’s Candler School of Theology.



Franklin I. Gamwell is Shailer Mathews Professor of Religious Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, and Theology in the Divinity School.



Cynthia Lindner is Director of Ministry Studies and Senior Lecturer in the Divinity School.



Margaret M. Mitchell is Associate Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature in the Divinity School.

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Father John T. Pawlikowski is Professor of Ethics and Director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies Program at Catholic Theological Union.



Noah Salomon is a Ph.D. student in the History of Religions program in the Divinity School.



Seth Sanders is Writer for Humanities, Religion, and Arts at the University of Chicago.



David Sandmel is Rabbi of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation and Crown-Ryan Professor of Jewish Studies at Catholic Theological Union.

TRAUMA, TRANCE, AND GOD:

HOW THE NEW STYLE IN AMERICAN RELIGION MIGHT BE
CHANGING THE PSYCHIATRIC SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

Tanya Luhrmann

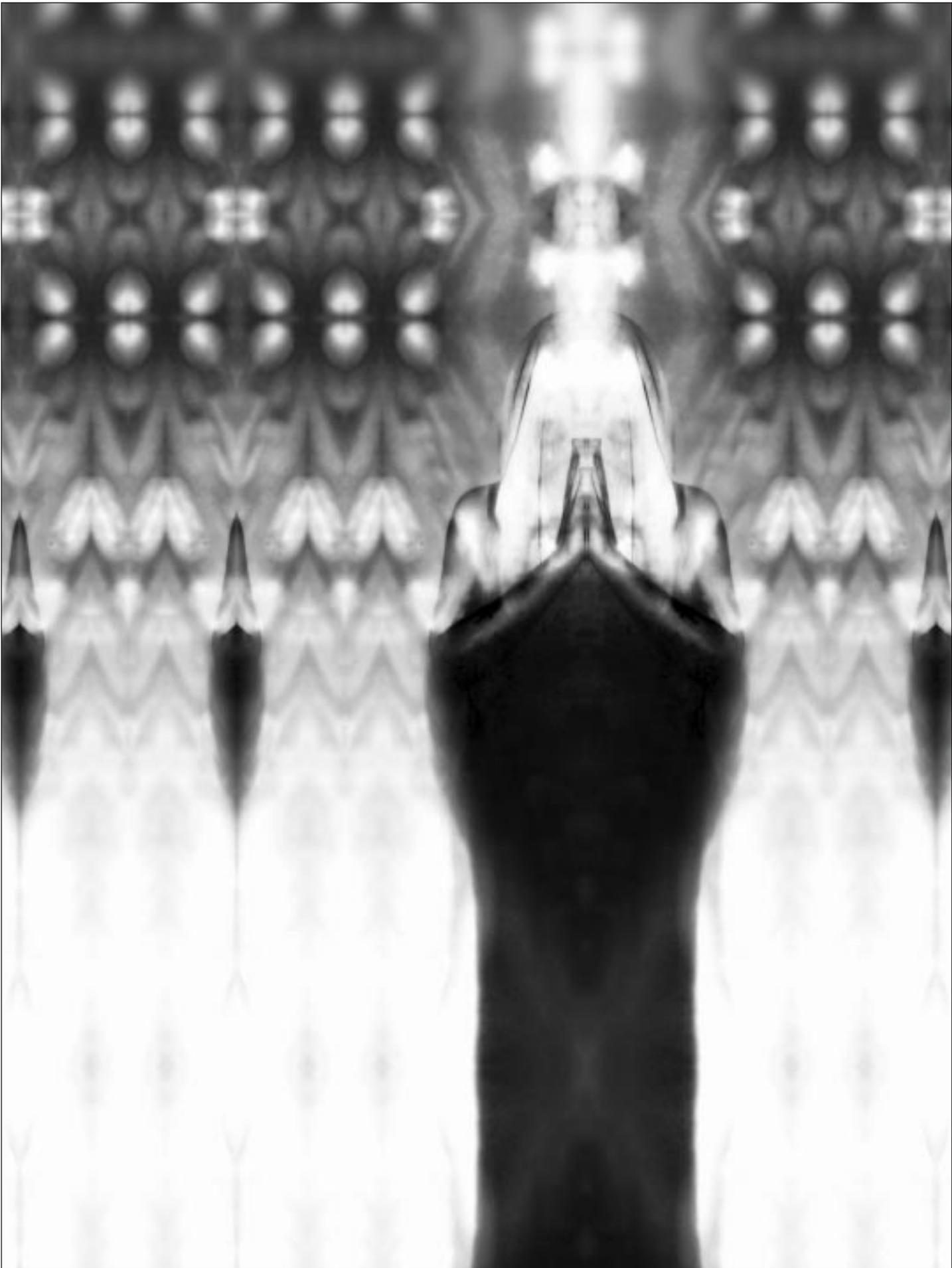
Subjectivity is a fussy topic. That societies have different emotional moods seems obvious. To an Utku child, attuned to an emotional register as muted as the winter tundra, a mother's glance can be as searing as an outraged Greek lament. And yet any explanation for what is different about those Eskimos—the setting-out of those differences in clean, clear, prediction-producing propositions—can rapidly evaporate under scrutiny. One generation of scholars earnestly demonstrates that the self is a bright new invention of early modern

Europe, and the next just as earnestly tears down the claim. One generation proves that Americans are individualists and the Japanese are sociocentric, and the next writes about communalistic Californians and individualistic Tokyo entrepreneurs. Anthropologists, as Kim Hopper has noted, tend to be cranky when it comes to making specific comparative claims about cultural difference because they want, with some justice, to believe that cultures are remarkably complex and relatively unbounded. My own approach to the problem is to focus on learnable psychological skills, not on categorical social differences, to identify elements of common psychological processes that can be shaped through learning, and then to identify what is learned. My goal today is to persuade you that there are attentional processes that may be more or less emphasized in different times and places, that there is a skill component to these processes—they are learnable—and that they may affect both the symptoms of psychiatric illness and the experience of God when they are incorporated into learned emotional patterns.

I will begin with a puzzle: there is a group of psychiatric disorders, called dissociative disorders, which disappear in America in the early decades of the twentieth century and reappear in that century's last few decades. Most people who work with or on these disorders do not pay attention to the puzzle because they are locked in a battle over

whether patients currently diagnosed as dissociative are legitimate in the first place. The critics—among them Paul McHugh, Ian Hacking, Frederick Crews, Elizabeth Loftus, and Elaine Showalter—say that the disorders are imagined by highly suggestible individuals, whose complaints are as legitimate as those of the early modern witches, and attribute the disorders to a misguided feminism, then and now. The clinicians—among them Frank Putnam, Colin Ross, Judith Herman, and David Spiegel—believe that the illness has the stark reality of cancer. They think that the gap in diagnosis arose because mid-century clinicians were blinded by the arrogance of psychoanalysts who interpreted incest as fantasy and by the new and capacious diagnosis of schizophrenia, introduced by Eugen Bleuler in 1908. Today I would like to offer another explanation, based on the observation that the anomalous experiences which are such a striking part of dissociative disorders also rise and fall in their prominence in the history of American religious practice, and that, at least in the last 150 years, the importance of those unusual experiences in religion seems to have paralleled the importance of dissociative disorders in psychiatry.

This essay is based on the John Nuveen Lecture Professor Luhrmann delivered on February 12, 2004, in Swift Lecture Hall.





. . . dissociation is understood to be a wall within awareness, so that the integrated sense that this is my body, my mind, my self is somehow split.

Let me first describe the diagnoses and the controversy that surround the disorders. In the last thirty to forty years, mental health professionals have identified patients with an array of symptoms called “dissociative.” Loosely defined in psychiatry’s formal diagnostic handbook as “a disruption in the normally integrated functions of identity, memory and consciousness,” dissociation is understood to be a wall within awareness, so that the integrated sense that this is my body, my mind, my self is somehow split. The classic dissociative symptom is amnesia: you cannot remember, but memory is not gone; it is only rendered temporarily inaccessible. Another dissociative symptom is depersonalization: you feel detached from your mind or body, as if it is not yours, as if you are in a dream. Multiple personality disorder (MPD), now called dissociative identity disorder (DID), is a more elaborate and organized condition in which individuals experience themselves as occupied—possessed—by more than one state of awareness, each with different memories, emotions, and behaviors. When dissociative patients come to the consulting room, they report that they have blackouts—they cannot remember where they were or what they did for hours at a time, and then they discover that they own shoes they have not bought and know people they have not met. At times they speak in different voices, not always nicely. One therapist told me that she knew she was treating a multiple when her patient shifted in her chair, lowered her voice, and said, “you stupid bitch.”

Dissociative identity disorders are thought to be caused by unbearable fear, which we now call trauma, and particularly by sexual experience in childhood. Powerless and terrified, a young girl protects herself from horror by escaping into a trance-like state as her father rapes her. When she returns to her normal state, she can no longer remember the experience, but it remains in some way active in her psychic life. She may reenter that state if the trauma is repeated, or recreate it in a new form: it is not uncommon for such a patient to report in therapy that she has upward of a hundred “parts” associated with particular memories, each wreaking havoc with the “host” personality’s attempt to live a normal life. Clinicians have presumed that dissociation is a biologically

driven response to overwhelming events, and that cure depends upon making the dissociated memory accessible and tolerable to the patient. Particularly in the 1980s, clinicians used hypnosis as a technique to bring the memories forward, and while they no longer do so, there is a close psychological kinship between hypnosis and dissociation. As the diagnosis became recognized within the clinical literature, more and more patients were identified. By 1992, an article in the American Psychiatric Association’s newsletter stated that 25,000 patients had been diagnosed with multiple personality disorder, and researchers had established a prevalence rate of roughly 3 percent of the general population.

The critics have pointed out that there are scientific problems with this story. It is clear from current research that we apparently can forget horribly upsetting experiences and that these moments may nevertheless haunt us like aggressive ghosts; it is far less clear, though not impossible, that we can repress completely the memory of events that were frequently repeated, routine, and familiar, even if deeply distressing. It is clear that incest is far more common than was thought in 1955, when one study estimated the rate at one in a million; it is far less clear that sexual experience in childhood is inherently traumatic and necessarily pathogenic. It is clear that repressed memories can be recovered under hypnosis; it is also clear that memories can be implanted. Under hypnosis, people may remember events that did not take place, and these new, false memories may be believed even after the deception has been revealed.

In fact, the social location of the epidemic seems damning to skeptical eyes. The multiple personality diagnosis became prominent in the 1980s in the context of the women’s movement and in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Psychiatrists had already identified a syndrome they called post-traumatic stress disorder, which helped to make sense of why so many Vietnam vets had been incapacitated by their war experience. Female psychiatrists, emboldened by the women’s movement, saw in incest the survivors of a war between men and women, and laid down for all feminists the responsibility to identify the ways in which men had hurt women, and then to heal those women. In *Trauma and Recovery*, Judy Herman is



*The doubt cast upon the claims of satanic ritual abuse
was devastating to these patients' credibility.*

blunt: "There is war between the sexes. Rape victims, battered women and sexually abused children are its casualties." *The Courage to Heal* was published in 1988 as a manifesto in this war. It set out to help women identify whether they had been sexually molested, telling them that it was normal to have completely repressed the memory, and providing guided imagery and hypnotic techniques to help them uncover the truth. The book sold three-quarters of a million copies in its first two editions. Its authors estimate that one in three women has been abused.

All this was conceivable, if appalling, and many clinicians, scientists, and academics discovered the importance of trauma as an explanation for social ills. In the late 1980s, however, many patients—perhaps a quarter of those diagnosed with MPD—remembered that they had been forced to participate in satanic cults. They remembered being raped in the center of pentagrams, giving birth to babies at cult meetings, and being forced to eat babies' flesh, told that if they gagged another child would die. They drew pictures of the fires used to roast the babies and the dark cloaked men who ringed the flames. They recalled large groups of fathers, uncles, friends, neighbors, sometimes mothers and other women, who gathered regularly and frequently for cult sacrifice and ritual. With each new assault, the self further fragmented, and patients drew for their therapists elaborate maps of the self, with child parts and cult parts and sadistic parts and even animal parts, which could hold memories so horrible they could never be spoken. And yet a formal FBI investigation around 1990 found not one piece of corroborating evidence that these cults existed. There were no robes, no hidden altars, no photocopied lists of meeting participants with phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Moreover, there were no bones. Despite thousands of alleged murdered and cannibalized babies, not a single police report had been filed at the time of the purported deaths.

The doubt cast upon the claims of satanic ritual abuse was devastating to these patients' credibility. Even before the formal investigations, the stories seemed implausible; the emergence of people with similar symptoms who attributed their distress to alien abduction hardly helped. The False

Memory Syndrome Foundation was founded. Patients and their parents began to file suits against therapists, claiming that the therapists had induced false memories, destroyed their families, and defrauded insurance companies of millions of dollars. The patients began to win those suits, and evidence acquired under hypnosis was ruled invalid in many states.

It would be easy to infer from this, as many of the critics have done, that the patients are not ill. And yet it is clear clinically that something is wrong with many of them. They have been in the mental health system for an average of seven years by the time of their MPD, or now DID, diagnosis. On average, they have had four prior diagnoses of psychiatric illness, like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, which suggests that ordinary clinicians thought that something was seriously amiss. The patients also clearly believed what they were saying about these events. This is a non-trivial point. Most therapists have listened to hundreds of people talk about their pasts and feel confident that they can detect lies and evasions. Even if they cannot, it is apparent that these patients came to them in great emotional pain, and therapists responded to that pain with the conviction that to disbelieve would be a kind of reenacted rape. Whatever one thinks of the remembered trauma—and it is important to point out that at least some cases of incest have been confirmed—the emotional distress about some kind of psychological damage is real. And when the patients displayed their symptoms to their shaken, trusting therapists, they switched in and out of personality states that looked a lot like trance.

Moreover, patients like this have been around before. At the turn of the last century, Charcot, Janet, Freud, and James all wrote about and worked with dissociative patients. It was Janet who coined the word "dissociation," using the model of unintegrated, unremembered trauma that has become the current explanation of these patients' ills. The patients of Janet and his colleagues in Europe and America were not multiple per se, but they did go into odd, trance-like states in which they might have hallucinations or pseudo-hallucinations; Anna O. called them her "absences." These patients' symptoms could be removed or exacerbated by hypnosis; they also could be removed by identifying the



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distress which the patients had forgotten but which, when remembered, seemed to lie at the root of their malady. Janet and the early Freud thought that these patients' symptoms were caused by trauma, most likely sexual experiences in childhood, although Charcot did not. Unlike those diagnosed with MPD, these patients were more likely to have physical symptoms: they were blind or deaf or could not move their legs, for no apparent physical reason. Doctors found them noticeable, dramatic, and intensely interesting. And in America, at least, they disappeared from the medical record between the early 1920s and the late 1970s. During that time, less than one paper per year was published on dissociation. By 1970 the rate began to rise; between 1980 and 1990, over eighty clinical papers on dissociation and multiple personality disorder appeared each year.

Why the gap? It seems implausible to me that the rate of incest changed dramatically enough to explain the gap; it also seems implausible that such interesting patients could have gone unnoticed for so long. I think a more reasonable explanation is that the way people respond to trauma may change with the different religious practices of different historical contexts, an argument which would be in line with the general observation, on the part of psychiatric anthropologists, that the symptoms of even the most apparently biological of disorders, like major depressive disorder and schizophrenia, may be expressed by at least somewhat different symptoms in different cultural and historical settings.

This is a bold and new claim about dissociative disorders. Anthropologists like Erika Bourguignon have long recognized that there are dissociative phenomena in religious practices and have, in fact, suggested that individuals who suffered childhood trauma are more likely to become priests or priestesses in spirit possession religions, although they have also argued that not all such priests and priestesses have been traumatized. No one, to my knowledge, has suggested that the changing role of trance in religion may influence the expression of dissociative symptomatology as a result of trauma, and that this may explain the apparent absence of dissociative patients in the mid-twentieth century. Such an argument can never be definitive. One cannot prove that

trauma symptoms were actually different in 1950, rather than overlooked. To make such an argument merely plausible one would need to demonstrate that childhood and adult trauma did not decline precipitously between 1910 and 1960, and that the expression of trauma symptoms in response to similar insults (in combat, for example) had indeed differed across various cultural settings. One also would need to decide whether certain religious practices emerged arbitrarily and then influenced the rise in dissociative symptomatology, or whether both emerged in response to other social changes—I am tempted to believe the latter. Finally, one would need to carry the argument beyond the American context, or to understand its cultural specificity. In short, a plausible argument would be ethnographic, psychological, and historical. I hope, with time, to develop such an argument.

At the moment, I will simply explore the tantalizing historical correlation. What no one seems to have noticed is that these disorders rise and fall with the religious enthusiasms of our country. We are, of course, a most religious country. About 95 percent of us have said that we believe in God, or in a power higher than ourselves, with placid consistency for more than fifty years. But every so often, our religious enthusiasm seems to crest. Those moments of intensity match almost exactly the appearances of these remarkable patients.

Historians have called these periods of religious excitement "great awakenings." They appear (more or less) from 1730 to 1760, 1800 to 1840, 1890 to 1930, and 1965 to the present. During these decades, Americans were more likely to have had unusual spiritual experiences in which they fainted, spoke in tongues, saw visions, and so forth, and they were more likely to seek out and publicly celebrate these changes in consciousness as proof of God's living presence in their lives. These are not, of course, the only times when God has inflamed the American senses. Throughout the twentieth century, there were American churches that encouraged, and even relied on, strange phenomena. Pentecostalism was born in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century, but continued to grow through the period when psychiatrists saw no dissociative patients.



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from the external to the inward.*

Southern Baptist churches encouraged richly unordinary experiences well before the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, America does seem to have periods when great spiritual passion enters many humble homes. We are in such a period now, and because time is short and my research young, I will focus my attention on the current situation.

The demographic shift in American religion since the 1960s is remarkable. Two-thirds of the generation quaintly called “baby boomers” stopped going to churches and temples as adults. Half of them have now returned to religious practice, but not to the mainstream, well-behaved, forty-five-minutes-and-you’re-done services of their childhood. These baby boomers have joined churches, temples, and odd little groups that put intense and personal spiritual experience at the center of what it is to believe in the divine, as Wade Roof has documented. The 1960s gave birth to the so-called New Age. Millions of Americans tried meditation, bought tarot cards, and learned to use crystals to attune their inner energies. They bought how-to manuals on astral travel, spiritual cleansing, and “practical” Egyptian magic. By 1996, a whopping 39 percent of Americans said that they were born again, and for most of them evangelical piety meant having a direct, personal, and vividly felt relationship with their Creator. Even in Judaism, the orthodox rabbis of which look askance at intense spirituality because it distracts the faithful from the obligations of their faith, the immediate spiritual experience of divinity has generated a significant rise in interest. There are new institutions, like Los Angeles’s Kabbalah Center, that teach the mystical kabbalah as accessible to all, even to Madonna, and new Chabad and Hasidic shuls that teach an experience-near religiosity to ever-expanding crowds. There are many explanations for this shift and many anxieties about its social and political implications. But its behavioral consequences are clear: these practices encourage their followers to experience the divine vividly, immediately, and through unusual moments of altered consciousness.

This new emphasis has, I believe, had two effects. First, it encourages people to attend to the stream of their own consciousness like eager fishermen, scanning for the bub-

bles and whorls that suggest a lurking catch. And perhaps because memory is adaptive and perception obliging, they begin to note the discontinuities that are natural to our state, and actually to interpret them as discontinuous, rather than smoothing them over with the presumption of a single integrated self. Second, they engage in practices that help them to go into trance. Trance is an ominous-sounding word, but I mean something relatively straightforward by it: that one can become intensely absorbed in inner sensory stimuli and lose some peripheral awareness. All of us go into a light trance when we settle into a book and let the story carry us away. There are no known bodily markers of a trance state, but as the absorption grows deeper, the person becomes more difficult to distract, and his sense of time and agency begins to shift. He lives within his imagination more, whether that be simple mindfulness or elaborate fantasy, and he feels that he is not the agent of his experience, that he is a bystander to his own awareness, and he feels both more himself than ever before, and at the same time not the person he ordinarily is.

Trance is the consequence of shifting the streetlamp of our focal awareness from the external to the inward. We do this naturally when we daydream, play, or read, and we seem to vary somewhat in our spontaneous ability to ignore the distracting world. But for many, probably most of us, that ability is a skill we can hone like a blade. In fact, that ability is the spine of spiritual disciplines, most of which involve attentional techniques to help the worshipper focus inward. Those techniques work, probably because they dampen the response to external stimuli and heighten internal focus, either by inhibiting external sensory responsiveness or by intensifying internal stimuli that, in effect, drown out external reality. The techniques can be learned because mental concentration responds to practice.

The ethnographic record also makes clear that trance can be learned. At least 90 percent of the world’s societies have some culturally elaborated form of trance practice, though the practice may wax and wane and its form range from tribal shamanism to demonic possession. When the trance is part of a religious system, it is usually treated as a skill that



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arises from the psychiatric sequelae of war.*

is difficult to learn properly and that requires apprenticeship. The record is clear as well that there are many anomalous psychological experiences—mystical experiences, out of body experiences, hallucinations—that have some bodily, psychological reality, are widely distributed around the world, and respond in part to training. Of these anomalous experiences, trance is the most reliably responsive to practice. In no setting can one deliberately and genuinely hallucinate on command (without the aid of drugs) or predictably generate the Jamesian mystical experience, though trance practice may make each more likely. But ethnography and history tell us that at least some people can, with practice, shift reliably into a trance state.

It is also true that one can go into any of these anomalous states as a defense, although for obvious reasons this is the kind of knowledge collected anecdotally and not by randomized controlled trials. When surgery fails in anesthesia, for example, people report floating on the ceiling, watching the procedure on their bodies below. When revived after cardiac arrest, they give accounts of shooting through a tunnel into a blissful suspension of light. More commonly and casually, people in emotional shock go through their days in a daze. This insight is at the heart of the clinical instrument most commonly used with dissociative patients, the Dissociative Experiences Scale. The scale consists of twenty-eight items that measure amnesia, depersonalization, and absorption. Most dissociative patients score highly on items like the following: “Some people find that they become so involved in a fantasy or daydream that it feels as though it were really happening to them.” The trance that these patients experience is psychologically the same as that experienced in a religious setting—but it is used for defense rather than some other purpose and, like all defenses, can become automatic and thus feel out of one’s control.

The best evidence for the role of trance and dissociation as a defense arises from the psychiatric sequelae of war. Roughly 10 to 20 percent of the casualties of war in Britain and America in the twentieth century have been psychiatric, and, in some broad sense, the wounds of war are the same across the decades. Men return from the front unable to

see with functional eyes and unable to walk with unparalyzed legs. They go into fugue, have blackouts in which they become different people, and are unable to remember their names or what happened before they were wounded. Nightmares destroy their sleep and their days are broken by trance-like hallucinations and flashbacks, where they relive a dreadful moment as though it were present. All these symptoms can be found in every war, but while the nightmares remain constant, the rate of the dissociative and hypnotic symptoms seems to vary, with trance-like flashbacks more prominent at the end of the twentieth century and conversion disorders more prominent at its start. We seem to have the bodily capacity to use trance as a defense; only sometimes do trance phenomena become dominant symptoms of distress.

Let me turn now to the way in which the new practices in American religion encourage trance and anomalous experience. In my last three years in California, where I taught for eleven years, a colleague and I carried out fieldwork on the growing points of religiosity in the United States. In four churches, we participated in services for months, attended classes for new converts, purchased and read the material intended to lead new members to competence, and conducted semi-structured interviews with group leaders and at least ten congregants. I could use any one group to illustrate my argument, but because of the increasing importance of evangelical Christianity, I will use the Horizon Christian Fellowship.

Horizon is one of the “new paradigm” Christian churches, so called because they pair conservative theology with liberal conventions. Such churches meet in gyms; they use rock bands, not choirs; most people, including the pastors, dress casually; and they target the young, often deliberately planting seedling churches in college communities. They are Bible-based, by which is meant that the written Bible is taken to be literally true and the only decisive authority. They are also entrepreneurial, well organized, and extremely effective at gaining converts. Horizon is an offshoot of the fundamentalist Calvary Church, started in southern California in the 1960s by appealing to young



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people known as “Jesus freaks.” It is, on the surface, an unlikely place to explore the cultural importance of trance. People do not speak in tongues or faint during the service, and neither services nor Bible-study groups teach the classic techniques of meditation and visualization in any explicit way.

Yet the singular point of the services, sermons, Bible-study groups, and prayer manuals is that one should build a personal relationship with God through prayer. “Prayer” is a commonplace word, tinged with the mystery of the sacred but ordinary in a way that words like “meditation,” “visualization,” and “trance” are not. And still the act of prayer demands that we focus our attention inward and resist distractions. Most of us remember the prayer of our childhood services. I would bow my head, and my mind would wander to my dress’s scratchy collar and what I would do that afternoon. In mainstream Christian and Jewish services, that is what prayer often is: a dutiful, close-eyed silence to be maintained while the leader intones, followed by a period of quiet in which it is all too easy to remember items you need to add to the shopping list. Horizon sets out to change those habits by modeling a relationship with God as the point of life—and, incidentally, of going to church—and modeling prayer as the practice on which that relationship is built. And with this emphasis, prayer becomes the conduit of anomalous psychological experience it was for the nineteenth-century reformers, the medieval ecstasies, and the early pastoralists who sought to be still and hear the voice of God.

The many prayer manuals and books about prayer at the Horizon bookstore, the sermons, and the home fellowships insistently and repeatedly assert that none of us prays as seriously and as effectively as we can or should; they insistently and repeatedly offer testimonies on the real-world power of prayer and the importance of not only believing that God exists but also that prayer works in the everyday world. Even their practical theology, despite its fundamentalism, its literal interpretation of the Bible, and its overt hostility to charismatic phenomena, in fact leads the congregant to assume that truth is found within, and

not from external experts. This shift to internal authority can be seen throughout new religious practices in America. At Horizon, one sees it in the unrelenting scorn of a world “out there,” full of rubbish, where people are deluded by fast-talking politicians with fancy educations who may even style themselves as Christian. Even more, one sees it in the insistence that God is to be found in personal experience, as He speaks to you directly in your prayers and through His text. Pastors hasten to say that anything He says to you in private must be confirmed through His word—but, in fact, the Bible is learned not as a text to be memorized but as a personal document, written uniquely for each. As one congregant explained, “I went [to church] for several weeks in a row and I heard the Bible and it was addressing me and speaking to me personally. . . . It’s a love story,” he continued, “and it’s written to me.”

So the congregant prays. He closes his eyes, and he yearns for God. His songs of worship, whether in home fellowship accompanied by a guitar, or led by a rock band in a weekend service, are simple lyrics of love and longing. In either, he sings for perhaps half an hour, swaying back and forth, eyes shut, hands held up, palms outward, his face content or wet with tears. These are meant to be moments of prayerful ecstasy: in one service, the pastor bounded up onto the platform and said, “Sorry, we get you into the throne room and then some buffoon like me comes up on stage and brings you down.” That’s church; at home congregants learn to talk to God as if He were present, in person, a buddy you might go fishing with rather than an abstract first mover, and congregants do so by concentrating on the words they speak and the way they feel as they yearn. And they do so day after day for months upon months upon years. They pay attention to the way they feel because at Horizon, as in the rest of evangelical America, God speaks to believers often without words but through the way they feel, through the sensations of their bodies.

Through the practice of prayer, congregants come to reap the fruits of trance. They experience personal bodily states that they recognize as the signs of God’s presence in their lives. They name those states, look for them in their



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daily lives, remember what happened, and build them into a history of their relationship with Christ. I call this process *metakinesis*, a term I take from dance criticism to describe the way in which a dancer experiences an emotion in her body. As the dancer dances, she formalizes and refines a unique expression of that state so that the feeling and the movement become fused. Words like “peace,” “grace,” “falling in love with Jesus,” and “being filled with the Holy Spirit” model specific ways of experiencing the body. No doubt they are felt differently by different individuals; but those individuals learn to recognize in themselves a mind-body state that becomes their reference for a word like “peace.” And while congregants do not need to be in trance to experience such states, during prayer they pay attention to these inner sensations, learn to recognize them, and return to prayer seeking to find them again.

People do report unusual experiences in prayer. In addition to feeling the Holy Spirit enter their bodies through prayer, some congregants also speak of having hallucinations. Oddly, we know very little about hallucinations scientifically, but because the Society for Psychical Research was eager to prove the existence of life after death, and tried to do so statistically in 1897, we do have an epidemiological baseline that was replicated by the Society in 1947 and again by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in 1991. Based on this data, we know that roughly 10 percent of Americans and Britons say that they have had at least one hallucination; the rate is higher for West Africans and lower for South Asians, but in all cases it is higher than the rate of psychiatric illness can explain. And while one does not need to be in trance or ill to have hallucinations, trance practice increases the chance that they will occur spontaneously, as they do for dissociative patients. They did occur spontaneously and unambiguously to at least four out of ten formal Horizon interviewees. These congregants talked about “speaking” with God, but were very clear about moments when this verb was not a metaphor. They were proud of these moments, which to them meant that God was present, as if in person. One of the interviewees said: “Everyone I talk to has some oddball supernatural experience

that sounds crazy, unless you’re a Christian.” He illustrated his point with the following story:

So I was listening to this tape series—I’m pretty much a new believer at this point—and I’m driving, and I hear the evangelist say on the tape: “Dennis, slow down. You are going too fast.” It certainly wasn’t something on the tape; it was something I heard. So, I slowed down, and immediately a cop passed me and pulled over another guy who was also speeding, in front of me. I thought, “God is really doing something here.”

At Horizon, hallucinations rarely have the grandeur of the burning bush.

During my fieldwork, I also found what seems to be spontaneous trance at the beginning of the new believer’s journey. At the heart of the community’s service is the altar call, the time after prayer when the music grows soft and those who have not yet committed themselves to God are asked to come forward to be saved. For those who do come forward, it is a moment of tremendous emotion, and will be remembered and celebrated and retold. Typically it is recounted as a kind of trance. One congregant recalled: “It was like someone had lifted me up out of my seat . . . It was like it wasn’t me—it was kind of like He was pushing me up there. It was kind of cool. And . . . I was weeping. . . . I was so happy.” There is a sense in moments such as these that God, not one’s self, is in charge of the body, takes control of it, moves it to where He wants—and, afterwards, one cannot remember how one got there.

To someone raised, as I was, in the tepid liturgy of the mainstream church, what is most remarkable about Horizon is the close personal intimacy felt in the relationship with Jesus. In my conversations with congregants, God was a person one had to meet, someone almost to date, to gossip with, to invite over for a beer. As one person remarked: “The closer you get to a human being, the better you can get to know them. It’s the same with Jesus: the more time I spend reading the Bible, the more time I spend praying, the closer I get to Him, and the better I get to know Him.”



We live in a culture of spiritual adventure; I think that dissociative patients can best be understood as part of its ethos.

It seems to me that the attention people pay to their awareness, particularly in prayer, helps to create this intimacy, and becomes its frame and cross-weave. Dramatic moments like hallucinations become flag-waving proof that God is real in congregants' lives. More subtle and far more common moments of peace and grace, gradually identified, recognized, and sought for, become the markers of a dialogic exchange. In the quiet expectancy of prayerful surrender, one waits for God to speak. The new believer learns gradually how God makes His presence known to him. Over time, he grows more confident at recognizing God's interventions in his life. And slowly and steadily, the memory and reinterpretation of those moments gives to his God the concreteness of an old and trusted friend.

Let us now return to the dissociative patient. How do practices such as those I witnessed during my fieldwork at Horizon help to produce the symptoms of dissociative disorder? We simply have no data on whether dissociative patients are religious, although in my experience more patients are religious than secular therapists have noticed. It is also true that childhood sexual abuse and the evangelical concept of spiritual warfare are entangled in a way that I do not yet understand. So I am making a cultural argument, rather than an argument on the level of the individual. I suggest that the intense interest in unusual spiritual experience in our culture—and in trance phenomena in particular—may provide an environment in which people who have been traumatized—either by actual childhood sexual abuse or simply by chaotic families—are more likely to pay attention to anomalous experiences. Such people are more likely to report these experiences to clinicians, and more likely to elaborate them into rich inner lives, which can be understood as a response to the trauma and may in fact cloak the actual trauma with fantasy.

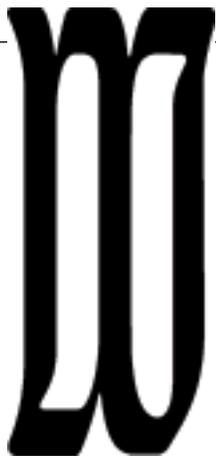
In the religions that have come to dominate the American spiritual landscape since the late 1960s, people are taught, sometimes not explicitly, to look for and to generate anomalous experiences, and these experiences are incorporated into a complex behavioral practice in which the unperceived becomes real—a real relationship which will heal their

sorrow, end their loneliness, and make them whole. To put it bluntly, these new religious practices not only encourage unusual experiences, they suggest that having unusual experiences and using them to develop relationships with companions others cannot see is the most effective way to respond to hurt. This is precisely what dissociative patients do in response to their hurt: they attend to unusual experiences within themselves; they identify those experiences as associated with particular memories and often particular personality parts; they develop relationships with these parts and often begin talking about themselves as a collective, signing their letters and books as "the group" or "the troops." We live in a culture of spiritual adventure; I think that dissociative patients can best be understood as part of its ethos. □

THE KHARTOUM DILEMMA:

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND THE LAW IN CONTEMPORARY SUDAN¹

Noah Salomon



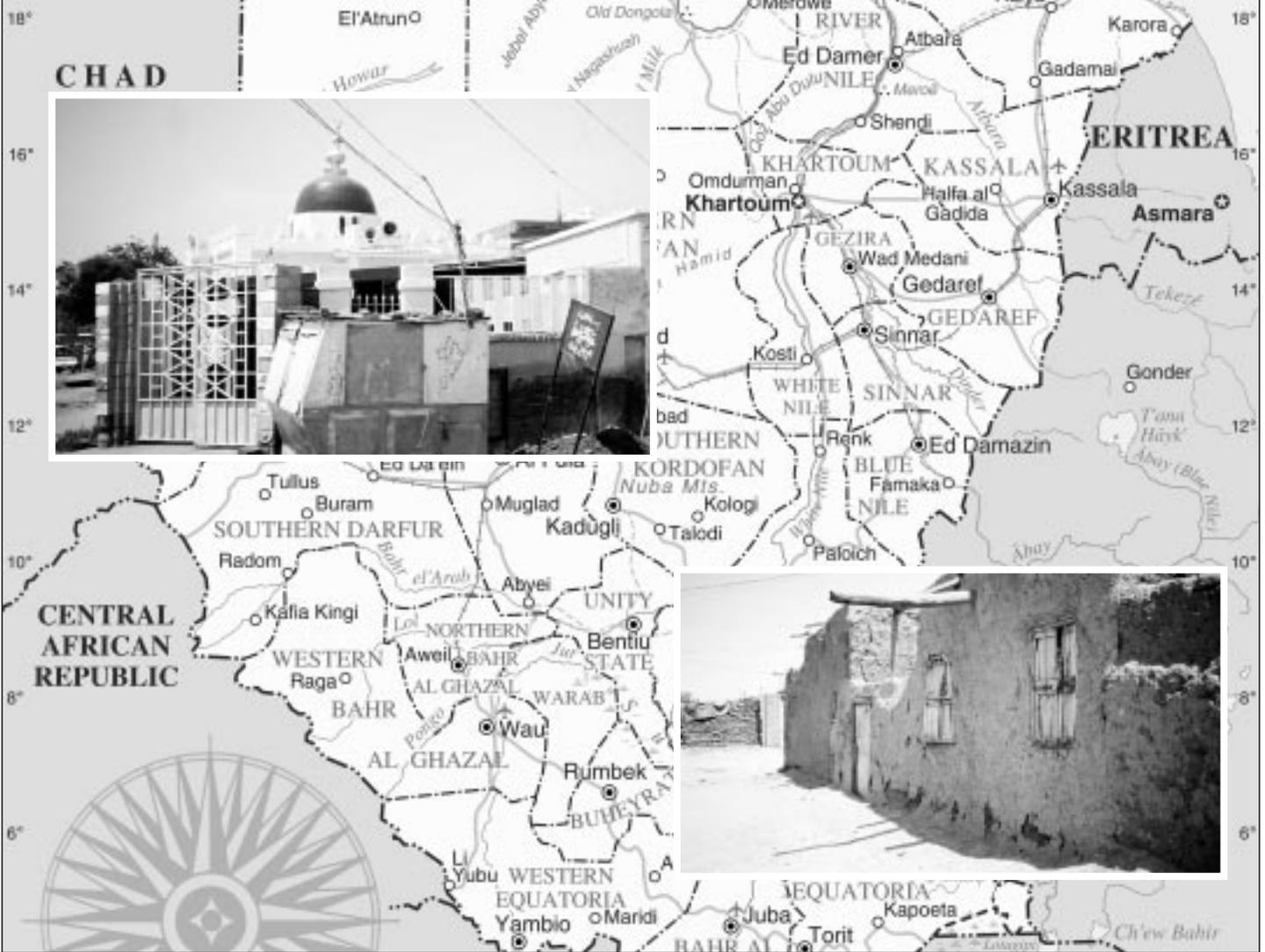
When the National Islamic Front (NIF) took power in Sudan in a nearly bloodless coup in 1989, it initiated several key reforms with which the nation has struggled to the present day. The NIF government, which called itself “the salvation” (al-inqādh), aimed not only to secure the reins of political power, but also to save Sudan from dissolution from civil war, economic instability, and what it saw as the nation’s lack of moral direction. In light of this latter goal, the inqādh

government introduced its “Civilizational Project” (*al-mashrū‘ al-ḥaḍārī*), a comprehensive effort to reform public institutions to be in line with Islamic legal and social norms and to define a unified national character (pronouncedly Arab and Islamic) in this highly diverse country. On the surface, the Civilizational Project resulted in the reinforcement of the national Islamic legal system, put into place in 1983 by then President Jafar Numayri, the Islamization of banks and finance, and the establishment of provincial public morality laws (such as the Public Order Law—*qānūn niẓām al-‘ām*—in Khartoum State in 1996), along with special police to enforce them. Yet beneath these reforms of the identity of the Sudanese state lay a deeper agenda, what the government described as the “restoration and shaping of the Sudanese character” (*ī‘ādat ṣiyāghbat al-shakhsīya al-sūdānīya*). The goals of this effort were achieved through the implementation of new school curricula and official print and visual medias, in addition to the institutional reforms that I mentioned above. Such tactics were employed to redirect Sudanese people who had “gone astray” toward a normative Islamic ethos, supported by the Islamists who held power in the Sudanese state.

In this essay, I will explore one aspect of the NIF’s reform campaign, which encompasses both the goals of the Civilizational Project and the underlying endeavor to restore

and shape the Sudanese character: the Islamization of the Sudanese legal system. In particular, I will focus on the publication of the Sudanese criminal code of 1991 and the struggles that surround its implementation.² Throughout this paper, I use the term “Khartoum Dilemma” to refer to a contemporary debate occurring in Sudan among political parties and common people alike—between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as among Muslims themselves—over whether or not Islamic law is an appropriate mechanism for the governance of a religiously diverse and modern society. The debate concerns the religious identity of the capital, and thus, as a symbolic extension, of the nation as a whole, and turns upon whether Sudan is to be a state based on the principles of Islam or secular liberalism, or rather on some combination of the two. Further, the debate concerns issues central to contemporary Islamic thought, focusing on the effects of the interaction of Islamic forms of governance, education, and worship with the political and social conditions relevant to postcolonial modernity, especially regarding the relative compatibility of normative Islamic

The following essay is based on a lecture Mr. Salomon delivered on January 28, 2004, at a Wednesday Lunch in Swift Common Room.





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remains an integral part of the conflict.*

practice with secular forms of governance. The debate is significant for students of religion because it concerns not only questions of legal practice, but also, as I hope to show in the following pages, the nature of religion and its proper place in the modern nation-state.

Before delving deeper into the complexities of the Khartoum Dilemma, let me first say a few words about the contemporary Sudanese political situation, for only within the context of the nation's rather fraught politics can we truly understand the full significance of the debates that emerge out of it.

Sudan is a land drowning in the horrors of civil war. Though a ceasefire and cautious optimism over ongoing peace talks between the northern government and the rebels who hold much of the southern third of the country has paused the killing in the south, new, equally brutal civil conflict has opened up in the west of the country, which has, in only one year, displaced over half a million people and killed thousands. Thus just as one problem seems to be coming to a resolution, another leak is sprung—testament to the sad fact that the container of the postcolonial nation state, in which the geographic territory of Sudan was placed forty-eight years ago, has proven too weak to hold in all of the pressures that have built up since colonial times. These pressures are the result of the unequal distribution of resources, poverty, and ethnic and religious rivalry.

The war that directly concerns the Khartoum Dilemma is the one taking place in the south, the latest chapter in the long-standing feud that began even before independence in 1956, pitting the northern government against the Southern People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A). War-related deaths from this conflict range between 1 and 2 million, and the fighting has directly contributed to the displacement of nearly 4 million people, 2.2 million of whom live in shantytowns ringing the outskirts of the capital. While this southern conflict is often attributed to "religious and ethnic" divisions, since it pits an Arab and Muslim government against a non-Arab and primarily non-Muslim militia, scholars have recently begun to recognize the com-

plexity of this war, which also concerns oil and the sharing of wealth, inequalities in regional development, and political self-determination.³ Nevertheless, religion, and a struggle over the religious identity of the nation, remains an integral part of the conflict.⁴ The Islamization of the law, in particular of the Sudanese criminal code, has played a crucial role in perpetuating this conflict, and it is in terms of religion that the language of this war is often articulated.

Yet to paint such a stark picture would greatly distort the Sudan I saw in the three months I spent there in the summer of 2003. Though Sudan's present situation is indeed tragic, underneath the political struggles in which the nation is embroiled, there is also another Sudan: one of daily lives, of joy and struggle, of rivalries, but also of cooperation between diverse peoples that transcends the divisiveness perpetuated by government and opposition parties alike. The debate over the status of the law is so central because it spans the gap between the horrific political situation I described above and the daily lives of Sudan's inhabitants that I observed in my time there last summer. For while the law emerges out of the institutions of the nation-state, over whose control the wars of Sudan are waged, it ends in the daily lives of people, regulating what they believe,⁵ how they dress,⁶ what they eat and drink,⁷ who they may love and how.⁸ It is perhaps its direct relevance to the daily lives of the people I encountered in Sudan that explains why the Islamization of law, rather than the more immediate causes of the conflict, such as oil and the distribution of political power, was such a present theme when both Muslims and non-Muslims alike would talk to me about the war.

The "September Laws," the Islamic criminal and civil codes instituted in September of 1983 under former President Jafar Numayri, were the result of several interacting historical factors. Among them were the rise to prominence of the Muslim Brotherhood as a viable political force and the concurrent downfall of the Sudanese Left, which had initially supported Numayri's rise to power. The process that began in 1983, and was paused for a few years after the fall of Numayri in 1985, was rectified and even strengthened after



Beginning with the September Laws, the government introduced civil and criminal codes based on Islamic sharī'a norms.

the advent of the NIF government, which published a new set of *sharī'a*-based norms in 1991. This Islamization of law represents a significant departure from the legal context in which Sudan lay before 1983. Beginning with the September Laws, the government introduced civil and criminal codes based on Islamic *sharī'a* norms. Prior to this, these codes had been based on common law, a leftover inheritance from British colonial rule (for the time being we will bracket the personal status codes, as they represent a totally different domain of legal practice). *Sharī'a*, referred to somewhat inaccurately in the West as "Islamic law," consists of a body of norms for worship (*ʿibadāt*) and social transactions (*muʿamalāt*) derived from the scriptural sources of Islam (*qurʾān* and *sunna*)⁹ and applied to practical situations through a particular jurisprudential methodology unique to Islamic thought (*uṣūl al-fiqh*).¹⁰ While in the Sunni tradition four major schools of jurisprudence arose, along with their consequent textual incarnations, *sharī'a* remained in practice an uncoded body of jurisprudential opinion (*fiqh*) across the Islamic world, until the introduction of the Ottoman civil code, the *majalla*, in 1876.¹¹ In Sudan, *sharī'a* norms regarding criminal and transactional matters did not go through a major process of statutory codification until the institution of the September Laws, a process that the jurists termed *taqnīn*, literally "the making of law." Indeed, this characterization was apt, as codification of the *sharī'a* transformed a body of jurisprudential opinion into a statutory code of laws, a textual form particular to the governmental technologies of the modern nation-state. Although a full discussion of the process of codification is beyond the scope of this paper, I should mention that codification was not merely a matter of translating Islamic norms into a European legal idiom; it greatly affected the content of *sharī'a* itself, often foreclosing its interpretive flexibility with rigid instructions for the judge.

These new laws were viewed as a significant contribution to the reformation of public morality, and thus played an important part in the government's project to restore and shape the Sudanese character, enforcing a certain kind of Islamic moral order through legal sanction. Most contro-

versially, the laws meted out a series of fixed punishments derived from the *qurʾān* and *sunna*, termed the *ḥudūd* (or boundaries) in Sunni jurisprudence. The *ḥudūd* impose corporal punishment for a limited number of crimes, including illicit intercourse (*zināʾ*), the drinking of alcohol (*shurb al-khamr*), and theft (*sariqa*). Most notably, though, in the 1991 criminal code some *ḥudūd*-style punishments, such as lashings, were extended to apply to some non-*ḥudūd* crimes,¹² such as disgraceful dress (*ziyy fādih*) and obscene actions, sexual and otherwise (*afʿāl fāḥishā*). These punishments were placed in the jurisprudential category of *taʿzīr*, or discretionary punishments (referring to the fact that they are derived through human discretion, and not explicitly mandated in *qurʾān* and *sunna*). Further, these punishments were supplemented in a series of *sharī'a*-based provincial public morality codes, which in the state of Khartoum, for example, extended and specified certain provisions that are part of the criminal code.¹³

Two issues relevant to the topic of the legal regulation of religious diversity stand out in the government's move to Islamize the criminal code. First, while personal status law for Muslims (i.e., the law that regulates family matters, such as marriage and divorce and the custody of children) had been *sharī'a*-based even prior to this, the publication of the September Laws marks the first time since the nineteenth century that the criminal law was made self-consciously Islamic.¹⁴ Second, while *sharī'a* personal status codes did exist throughout the British period, they applied *only* to Muslims; non-Muslims were governed by tribal and customary law. This was thus the first time, at least since the colonial invasion, that Islamic law was to be applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike (though in significantly different ways for each).¹⁵ The application of Islamic law to non-Muslims (as well as to Muslims who preferred to be governed by the common law) caused a great deal of consternation, especially among the southern peoples who already were feeling marginalized by the Arab north.

In the years since 1983, successive governments have made various concessions regarding the criminal code to the south, where the bulk of non-Muslims traditionally resides.



. . . *demands to abolish shari‘a in the capital have been met with vociferous denouncements from the northern government.*

In 1991, under the current government, a new Islamic criminal code was published, including provisions exempting southern states from certain articles, such as those on alcohol and apostasy.¹⁶ Further, in the groundbreaking Machakos accords in 2002 between the northern government and the Southern People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), the southern states were offered full exemption from the 1991 criminal code, which would go into effect with the signing of the comprehensive peace accords. Yet even after these concessions were made, the debate about the law still raged on. Owing to massive population displacements caused by this brutal civil war, federalist solutions to the problem of the status of the law, such as the one posed at Machakos, wherein each state decides by which type of laws it will be governed, could no longer adequately address the challenge of religious diversity. Khartoum, beginning in the mid-1980s, had become a very diverse place. While the Arab Muslim northerners could still claim a majority, they now had to share the city with non-Arab, non-Muslim southerners, who are mostly holed up in camps for displaced persons around the outskirts of the city, but who flow into the city proper during the day to look for meager work. Thus a problem that could have been solved by federalism in the early 1980s was, following the displacement of southerners to the capital, no longer open to such a solution. There were no clean geographic spaces on which an idealized demography could be mapped. Muslims, non-Muslims, Arabs, and southerners were now blended together in one geographic space. (I should note here that this is not a problem peculiar to Sudan, or even to Africa. As population movements reach unprecedented levels across the world, with the radical diversification of urban spaces from Pretoria to Paris, the solution of federalization, wherein groups are governed according to their geographical distribution, becomes increasingly untenable.)

The SPLM has argued that while in the north of the country the government may apply whatever criminal code it likes, in the capital, owing both to the religious diversity of its people and its symbolic value as the identity of the nation, secular law should prevail. Such demands to abolish *shari‘a* in the

capital have been met with vociferous denouncements from the northern government. Only a few days before I submitted this article for publication, Sudanese President General Omar al-Bashir was quoted as saying, “there will be only one law in the capital, there will never be more than one law in the capital, but we will provide guarantees [for non-Muslims].”¹⁷

The SPLM argues that secular law is the best mechanism for the governance of a religiously diverse society, since secularist principles are universal rational norms that are the property of all peoples. The northern Islamist parties retort by attempting to debunk the claims to secularism’s universality, pointing out the historical genealogy of secularism, with its links to Europe and Christianity, and arguing that they want to be ruled by a law that emerges out of their own intellectual and religious traditions. In the Sudanese peace talks currently underway in Kenya, where security, wealth sharing, and the status of some disputed lands have already been decided, the problem of the status of law in the capital, what I have called the Khartoum Dilemma, still remains to be solved.

In an interview with a southern judge who has practiced in the Khartoum area, I had the opportunity to engage a member of the opposition on the topic of the Islamization of law. The judge, to whom I will refer as *maulānā* John for the purposes of this essay (*maulānā* being an honorific term given to judges), brought out some of the ways in which the Islamization of the law affects the daily lives of citizens of the capital:

Every tribe has its own traditional dress, but according to [the law] all women have to wear Islamic dress.¹⁸ Even traditional celebrations mix men and women, and under [the law] this is forbidden [*ḥarām*] . . . Southerners have different marriage customs. If the parents [of a couple] say no to a marriage, traditionally [the young man] is supposed to run away with the girl and elope . . . but Islam says no . . . Also a traditional way of marriage in the south is to impregnate the girl, but according to Islam this is adultery. . . . The capital of Khartoum is for all Sudanese, regardless of religion,



*For mawlānā John, law is a repressive force
that obstructs free religious expression . . .*

race, or culture. Now the question is, can you accommodate all these diverse cultures into one capital or not?

The judge and I spoke at length about different solutions that might work as a compromise between the position of the government and that of the southern minority residing in and around the capital. I suggested having separate criminal codes for each community, as is the case with the personal status codes, which are applied according to the parties' religious or tribal affiliations. But he quickly revealed the practical problems with such a proposition: the issue of conflict of laws would bog down a court system in endless procedural wrangling. What about exemptions for minorities, I wondered? This, he explained, has been ruled out by those who argue that a person's religious beliefs cannot be determined in court, and that anyone wanting to avoid punishment might just claim non-Muslim status. Instead, *mawlānā* John argued forcefully for the all-out abolition of Islamic law in the capital, contending that, under this law, it is impossible for non-Muslims to be free. Attempting to argue against the Islamists' position that secular law is an affront to their tradition, he said to me:

There are principles in the common law system that are shared with Islam. It is like democracy: you can't say that just because it came from the Western world it is not suitable . . . or like technology: you cannot refuse it. . . . If you say that law should not be based on religion, you are not depriving anyone of his religion. With secular law everyone has the right of practicing his religion however he sees fit: those who want to drink can, those who don't, don't. . . . All Arab countries use [secular systems of law]. The continental system: *this is human heritage*.

Embedded in *mawlānā* John's arguments are some clear ideas about the nature of religion. And it is to this subject that we must now turn, for it is upon the definition of religion that the dilemma of the legal regulation of religious diversity in Sudan so precariously rests. For *mawlānā* John, law is a repressive force that obstructs free religious expression, rather than being the fulfillment of religious expression, as

the Islamists see it. For him, law is not a necessary part of a religious tradition; rather it is up to individuals to govern themselves within the constraints of a secular legal system. *Mawlānā* John argues that secularism embodied in public life, for example in criminal law, is blind to religion, unconcerned with it. For him, religion is about private practice. It is interesting to note that since he defines the private as the realm of the family, he does not argue that personal status codes should be secularized, for this might constitute an interference in the realm proper to the religious. *Mawlānā* John expresses confidence that the secular state does not infringe upon religious freedom. He argues that secular law is the best tool for governing a diverse public because it belongs to all peoples; it is "human heritage."

Yet *mawlānā* John's theory of religion is not shared by the Islamists in power. Let us now turn to the writings of Dr. Hasan al-Turabi, the architect of both the 1991 criminal code and the Sudanese constitution of 1998.¹⁹ Turabi was widely regarded as the intellectual force that drove the NIF regime from 1989 until his falling out of favor with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in the late 1990s and subsequent jailing. At the time of publication, Turabi is again in prison, following a short period of freedom, as a result of the ongoing power struggle with Omar al-Bashir. Yet, regardless of Turabi's incarceration, his ideas live on, most notably in the legal system. Turabi presents a view of religion quite different from that advocated by *mawlānā* John. In a piece entitled "The Islamic State," he writes:

The ideological foundation of the Islamic state lies in the doctrine of *tawḥīd*—the unity of God and of human life—as a comprehensive and exclusive program of worship. This fundamental principle of belief has many consequences for an Islamic state: first, it is not secular. All public life in Islam is religious, being permeated by the experience of the divine. Its function is to pursue the service of God as expressed in a concrete way in the *sharī'a*, the religious law.²⁰

For Turabi, arguments such as those of *mawlānā* John are untenable. The fulfillment of religion can only come about



*According to Turabi, law is . . . the ultimate
fulfillment of religious duty.*

when public life, the life of the state, is in unity with God. According to Turabi, law is not a repressive force that constrains religious expression, as it is for *mawḷānā* John, but rather its enactment is the ultimate fulfillment of religious duty. The Sudanese constitution, which Turabi, among others, drafted in 1998, enshrines his concept of religion into law. Article 1, section 18, states:

Those in service in the State and public life shall envisage the dedication thereof for the worship of God . . . and all shall maintain religious motivation and give due regard to such spirit in plans, laws, policies and official business . . . in order to prompt public life towards its objectives, and adjust them towards justice and up-rightness to be directed towards the grace of God in The Hereafter.²¹

Thus for Turabi and the other drafters of this article of the constitution, civil service and the policies enacted through it are a way of worshiping God. Imposing secularism would greatly interrupt this worship.

Turabi puts forth a view of secularism that is vastly different from the one to which *mawḷānā* John subscribes. While *mawḷānā* John sees secular law as human heritage, Turabi links secularization not only with the European heritage in which it was born, but also with the imperialism of colonialism. He argues that “the real secularization and de-Islamization of public life in Islam came about through western imperialism. [Colonial governments] physically disestablished Islam and destroyed the public institutions which were left behind. They established, in the place of *sharīʿa*, positive laws: French, English, or whatever, and secular institutions: army, civil service, and economic system. . . . And, of course, the reaction is that Islam tends to be revived in cycles, for every fall there is a revival.”²² For Turabi, secularism is not blind to religion; rather, it enforces new concepts of religion and makes others impossible.²³

I must admit that I am not able to offer any easy solutions to the Khartoum Dilemma. Indeed, juxtaposing the positions of *mawḷānā* John and Hasan al-Turabi only highlights the difficulties each poses for dealing effectively with the chal-

lenges generated by a religiously diverse society. I leave the difficult task of resolving the Khartoum Dilemma to the Sudanese people, and truly hope that the creativity, generosity, and intelligence that I experienced in all sectors of Sudanese society will prevail over the divisiveness of political ideologies, so that the diversity of Sudan becomes, as one scholar has framed it, not a problem to be solved, but a source of strength for the nation.²⁴

Nevertheless, in conclusion, I would like to offer some suggestions as to the roots of the Khartoum Dilemma. It is my hope that through isolating the structural conditions out of which the dilemma arose, we might be able to distill some lessons out of the quandaries in which Sudan finds itself today, as well as open up avenues for further research.

It is interesting to note that the modern era is not the first time that an Islamic state has dealt with the question of religious diversity. For example, in Ottoman times, certain religious groups were given a great deal of self-governance, under the various guarantees given to *dhimmi* (protected) communities.²⁵ Yet legal mechanisms that allow for this degree of autonomy for minority communities are extremely difficult to institute within the framework of the modern nation-state. Governments today conform to international norms in an unprecedented manner. Establishing membership in multinational bodies and signing on to structural readjustment policies are no longer a choice, but rather have become a necessity if a developing country wants to enjoy prosperity in the modern world. These international pressures (to the degree that they are felt) and the legacy of colonialism have left Sudan with a European-style legal system, and thus with statutes, a constitution, courts of first instances, and courts of appeal, that imposes novel constraints on the Islamic experiment.

As I hope to have demonstrated in this paper, the statutory codification of *sharīʿa* as national law has serious consequences. When adjudication occurs through the application of a legal code, rather than through the traditional Islamic method of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), a certain degree of interpretive flexibility is lost. In order to arrive at the roots of the Khartoum Dilemma, and others like it, it would be useful for scholars to explore, as Brinkley Messick has so



*The translation of Islamic law into statutory codes
provides new challenges for Sudan . . .*

cogently stated, the “connections between the literary processes behind the constitution of authority *in* texts and the social and political processes involved in articulating the authority *of* texts.”²⁶ In the Sudanese case, it is precisely the connections between the literary processes involved in the construction of the Islamic legal code and the articulation of this code in the courts that adjudicate the daily lives of the religiously diverse populace of Khartoum that need to be examined. The translation of Islamic law into statutory codes provides new challenges for Sudan, as such law must be rethought in order to reason itself into the constraints of this novel textual form. Thus a more radical reexamination of the way in which the institutional forms of the modern nation-state interact with Islamic models of governance and adjudication is necessary if the Khartoum Dilemma is ever to be solved. In the coming months and years, it will require great courage, innovation, and flexibility to imagine not only a legal system but also state and institutional forms that can accommodate religious diversity in Sudan with justice for all. □

ENDNOTES

1. I would like to thank Wendy Doniger, Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, Olaf Köndgen, Rudolph Peters, Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, and Jeremy Walton for their careful readings and helpful suggestions on this paper at various stages of its development. I would also like to thank audiences at the University of Chicago, Reed College, and Oberlin College for stimulating discussion and responses to earlier versions of this paper. Finally, I extend my sincere gratitude to the lawyers, judges, and legal experts in the Khartoum area who so generously gave their time to help an often clueless and stuttering student understand the complicated legal and cultural landscape of Sudan.
2. The official title of the document to which I refer as “the 1991 criminal code” is: *al-qānūn al-jināʿi li-sana 1991m., Jumbūriyat al-sūdān, wazārat al-ʿadl* (“The Criminal Law of 1991 CE,” Republic of the Sudan, Ministry of Justice).
3. Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).
4. Francis Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in Sudan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995).
5. I.e., provisions on *ridḍa* (apostasy), article 126 of the criminal code.
6. I.e., provisions on *ziyy fāḍīb* (disgraceful dress), included as a subset of the *afʿāl fāḍība* (disgraceful actions) regulated by article 152 of the criminal code.
7. I.e., provisions on *shurb al-khamr* (the drinking of alcohol), article 78 of the criminal code, and provisions on *ʿarḍ ṭaʿām aw sharāb maḥram* (the tendering of forbidden food or drink), article 86 of the criminal code.
8. I.e., provisions on *zināʿ* (adultery), article 145 of the criminal code, and provisions on *afʿāl fāḥisha* (obscene actions), article 151 of the criminal code.
9. *Sunna* are precedents set by the Prophet Muhammad through his actions and counsel during his lifetime; they are represented in written reports termed “*ḥadīth*.”
10. *Uṣūl al-fiqh* is a jurisprudential methodology that relies not only on the textual sources of *qurʾān* and *sunna*, but also on analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), scholarly consensus (*ijmāʿ*), and, at least in some renderings, public interest (*maṣlaḥa*).
11. I thank Professor Rudolph Peters for bringing to my attention that the *majalla* itself was never implemented in Sudan. Rather, scholars have observed that the codification of *shariʿa* into statutory codes in Sudan was a gradual and incomplete process, which has its roots in the reforms enacted during the Turco-Egyptian occupation (1820–1855) (Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, *Islamic Law and Society in the Sudan* [London: Frank Cass, 1987], 29–47).
12. See also Rudolph Peters, “The Islamization of Criminal Law: A Comparative Analysis,” *Die Welt des Islams* 34 (1994): 264.
13. Here I am referring to the *qānūn niẓām al-ʿām* (Public Order Law) for the state of Khartoum, published in 1996 and then repealed a few years later and replaced by a similar document entitled *qānūn amin al-mujtamaʿ* (Security of Society Law).
14. The nineteenth-century situation to which I am referring is the period of the *mabḍiya* (1881–1898), when Sudan was ruled by a messianic regime that had risen up against the incompetence and oppression of the Turco-Egyptian administration. While punishments based on Islamic foundations were indeed meted out here, there was no European-style statutory code in place (Fluehr-Lobban, *Islamic Law and Society*, 31–35).
15. While there are many exceptions written into the criminal code on the basis of religion, non-Muslims are subject to Islamic law in the Sudanese legal system in three key ways. First, some of the *ḥudūd* punishments, for example those associated with theft (chapter 17 of the 1991 criminal code), are applied to non-Muslims without

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PERSPECTIVES ON MEL GIBSON'S *PASSION*

In the following pages, Criterion is pleased to offer four commentaries on Mel Gibson's controversial film *The Passion of the Christ*, released in the U.S. on Ash Wednesday (February 25, 2004), in this first installment of "Perspectives," a new feature designed to bring readers a variety of opinions on "hot" topics at the intersection of religion and public life. The first piece, by Margaret Mitchell, appears here for the first time in print. The following three pieces are reprinted with permission from the Martin Marty Center's twice-weekly e-mail editorial, "Sightings," the archive of which can be accessed online at <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/sightings/index.shtml>—the first of these, by Father John Pawlikowski and Rabbi David Sandmel, was published on February 12, 2004; the second, by Robert Franklin, was published on February 19, 2004; and the third, by Seth Sanders, was published on April 8, 2004.

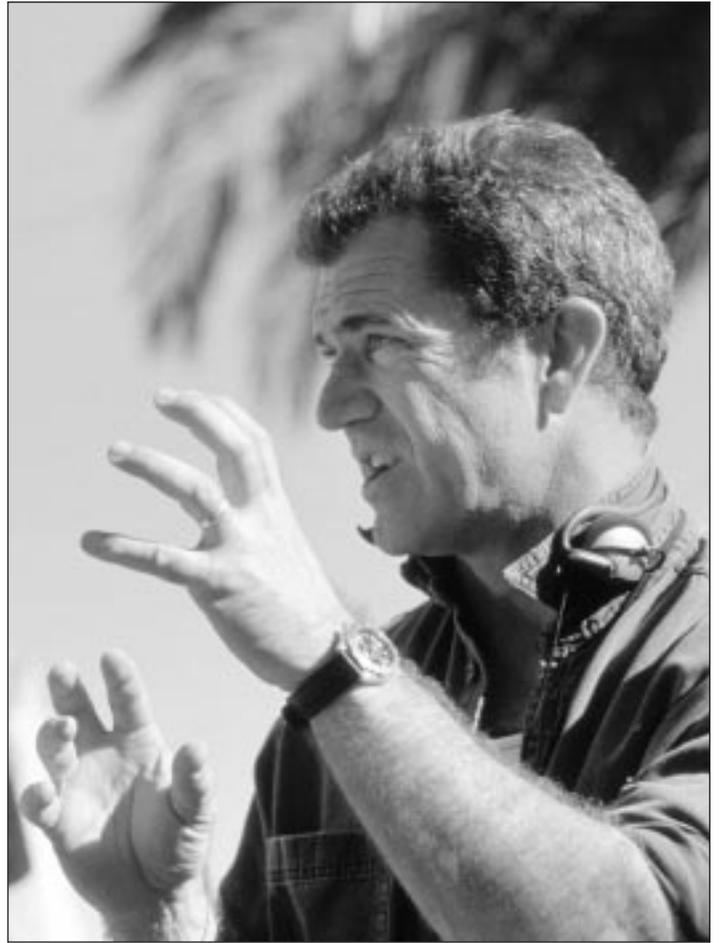
ARAMAICA VERITAS AND THE OCCLUDED ORIENTALISM OF MEL GIBSON'S *PASSION OF THE CHRIST*

Margaret M. Mitchell

In one of the most telling additions Mel Gibson has made to his reading of the Gospels in his film *The Passion of the Christ*, Jesus appears in a flashback set in Galilee, sweaty from his woodworking. After strenuous efforts he produces a table one might find in the weekend rustics section of a Crate and Barrel catalogue. For this exertion, Jesus is rewarded with a cup of water, a loving glance, and a query from his mother: "What is this?" He tells her (in the Aramaic with which she addressed him) that it is a table, and pantomimes how he will build chairs on which people can sit erect to eat their

meals. "It will never catch on," she replies, with a cheerful grin to her beloved, odd son.

This throwaway scene encapsulates in miniature the agenda of Mel Gibson's *Passion*. The Christ, though he might have walked around in some hazily distant East, is not "one of them." He is the inventor of Western culture, a world in which people know that it is much more civilized to eat while sitting upright rather than lying on the floor or on benches. The vignette is emblematic of the misleading, half-turn orientalism¹ that drives the film. In telling the story of the death of Jesus, Gibson traveled, not to Israel, but to Italy (the whole movie was filmed in Cinecittà Studios outside Rome and in Matera), not to the roots of Christianity in the East, but to its late medieval heritage in Europe. Gibson's vaunted choice to have the actors speak only Aramaic and Latin can be seen as the linguistic counterpart to the table the Christ supposedly



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. . . *why was Gibson so resistant to the use of Greek,
the language of the Gospels?*

produced on his workbench in Nazareth: Gibson's gospel moves directly from the Christ's purportedly "authentic" Aramaic into later Latin and the roots of Western culture, circumventing entirely its actual early history among Jews and Greeks in the East.

Yet the film pretends to be, and many viewers think that they are having, an authentic experience of actual events on a night and day in Roman Judea. The filmmaker has encouraged such conclusions, by claiming that his script stands in fidelity to "the four Biblical Gospels" (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), which he regards as historically accurate and fully consistent with one another. That the claim and the procedure in fact contradict one another—in that none of these documents was written in Aramaic or Latin, but all four were written in Greek—does not appear to trouble him.

Could he not have known? The official Web site (<http://www.thepassionofthechrist.com>) astonishingly defends this choice by broadcasting an outright falsehood: "Greek, which was commonly spoken among the intellectuals of the period, was not quite as relevant to the story." The unwary visitor to film or Web site would hardly guess that *Greek was in fact the language in which the story was told*. Having brushed Greek aside (as though only the language of Plato), the Web site later offers as justification a half-scholarly-looking statement (which tellingly has an opening but no closing quotation mark, and no footnote identifying its author or source): "Once, however, Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of its time, the language of education and trade spoken the world over, rather like English is today." That statement is entirely accurate to the first-century Roman Empire, except for one word—a rather important one—the subject.² Substitute "Greek" for "Aramaic" and you have a correct articulation of the indisputable linguistic and cultural fact that the Romans, annexing the Hellenization policies of Alexander and his successors, used Greek to unite their far-flung empire, including such eastern provinces as Judea and Syria (run by Rome since 63 BCE). Greek was also the language of a widespread and numerous body of "Hellenistic Jews" in urban centers throughout the empire, which produced (in addition to a large corpus of literary and apologetic literature) the Greek

translation of the Hebrew scriptures. Called the "Septuagint," for the seventy or seventy-two legendary scholars who translated it some time in the second century BCE, this Greek work was the Bible of the early Christians. There were even some Greek texts and fragments among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bar Kochba archive. The earliest Christian documents we possess—the letters of Paul—were written in Greek, as were the four Gospels and the rest of the twenty-seven documents later included in the canonical New Testament. This much one can find on the first two pages of any introductory textbook on the New Testament. Hence Greek is inescapably "relevant to the story." Indeed, even Catholics—relative latecomers to critical biblical scholarship—can find as stern a call to attend to this information as Pope Pius XII's 1943 encyclical, *Divino afflante spiritu*. "Moreover there are now such abundant aids to the study of these languages [Hebrew and Greek] that the biblical scholar, who by neglecting them would deprive himself of access to the original texts, could in no wise escape the stigma of levery and sloth."

So why was Gibson so resistant to the use of Greek, the language of the Gospels? Why did he exclude it entirely from his movie, even removing it from the *titulus* over the cross of Jesus, which, according to John 19:20, was "written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek"?

Rather than an occasion of "levery and sloth," Gibson's "*Aramaica veritas*" is a calculated new spin on an old melody line in Christian apologetic history: the move to ground new/old versions of the faith in a supposedly more primitive, more original past. Audiences of Gibson's film are promised an authentic picture of the death of the Christ almost two thousand years ago, as carried out in the native tongues of the actual participants. Viewers of the film who speak only English (most of whom have a familiarity with some version of the story they are about to see) are, by the favor of the filmmaker, graciously accommodated for their linguistic deficiency by subtitles that follow the dialogue in languages they cannot comprehend.³ The cinematic message, as learned from years of American imbibing of foreign films from Bergman to *National Geographic*, is unmistakable: you are experiencing the "real life" of another culture firsthand. Again, the Web



*Jesus probably did speak Aramaic, but also
surely Hebrew and likely Greek . . .*

site informs us: “For Gibson, too, there was something inef-
fably powerful about hearing Christ’s words spoken in their
original language.”

But this is entirely an illusion. Indeed, it is a virtual
inversion of actual linguistic affairs. Viewers of this film do
not hear Jesus’ words uttered in their original language. The
Aramaic and Latin spoken in the film are not the “originals” to
the subtitles, but are, *au contraire*, more like retro-translations
of the subtitles. The movie *script* (hardly *scripture*) was written
in English and based upon an English Bible—i.e., a trans-
lation of the Gospels, not the originals. Given Mr. Gibson’s
Tridentine-rite tradition, one would expect him to have
used the Douay-Rheims Translation, published in 1582 to
constitute the definitive Roman Catholic response in Eng-
land to the Protestant Reformers. The Douay-Rheims was
a literal translation—not of the original Greek of the New
Testament, but of Jerome’s late-fourth-century Latin called
the Vulgate (“common”) Bible. Tridentine, or “traditionalist,”
Catholics such as Mel Gibson only recognize the Vulgate,
which the Council of Trent declared the sole authoritative
version to undercut the Reformers’ recourse to the original
Greek and Hebrew. Whether or not Gibson used the
Douay-Rheims,⁴ he has certainly appropriated its historically
discredited methodology: of producing a translation, not of
the original languages, but of a secondary translation, and,
by fiat and avoidance of philological realities, proclaiming it
the more authentic. And, like the defenders of the Vulgate,
Gibson invoked the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (though
not for the translation, per se, but for film direction) to
authenticate the enterprise.

Gibson’s traditionalist Catholic rejection of historical-
critical biblical scholarship (he would not recognize as
authoritative the statement by Pius XII, quoted above, or
the documents of the Second Vatican Council, which also
call for Catholics to learn and teach critical methods of bib-
lical scholarship) has made him a profitable ally of Protestant
biblical literalists, united in the call to fidelity to “The Holy
Scriptures” alone. But what appears to be a unifying appeal
belies reality, for those groups do not agree on what “The
Holy Scriptures” actually are, or which translations give

them access to the unalterable truths they believe reside
therein. Perhaps this is why it is impossible to find any public
statement by Gibson about which English translation was
the basis for his script; to have done so would have alienated
at least one segment of his tenuously and only temporarily
united target audience. That none of these admiring viewers
or reviewers has, to my knowledge, even thought to ask
which translation he used is equally astounding. Without
public acknowledgement of the fact, the “official companion
volume” of *The Passion* exists in two different English Bible
translations,⁵ marketed separately to the discrete ecclesiastical
publics momentarily united (though in parallel rather than
convergence) in their common commitment to the film’s
insistence on “biblical truth.” The book marketed to
Catholics places portions of the Douay-Rheims alongside
pictures from the film; the one marketed to Protestants
sports the New Living Translation.⁶

Gibson’s steadfast conviction that Latin and Aramaic were
the “original languages” of Jesus and the Gospels was also
likely mediated to Gibson by the authority of the Vulgate as
found in the Douay-Rheims. Since he rejects critical biblical
scholarship, this would likely be his only source for such a
“historical” judgment. In the famous revision of the Douay-
Rheims made in the eighteenth century, Bishop Challoner
wrote in the preface to the Gospel according to Matthew
that the book was written “in Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic
which the Jews in Palestine spoke at that time.” The idea
that Matthew was originally written in Aramaic goes back
to an ancient tradition of Papias of Hierapolis in the early
second century. But it has long since been disconfirmed by
most critical scholarship, which concludes that Matthew
was composed in Greek, since the author relied on Mark,
an uncontestedly Greek document (as even Papias acknowl-
edged), as his source. Jesus probably did speak Aramaic,
but also surely Hebrew and likely Greek (Latin seems less
historically certain). But words of Jesus, with the exception
of a few possible exclamations like “Abba,” simply do not
exist in Aramaic. So where did the words now being mar-
keted as “Christ’s words spoken in their original language”
come from?



*The linguistic choices of this film involve
more than historical inaccuracy . . .*

Having written a script that was a pastiche of the Douay-Rheims (or some other English Bible) and free composition (such as the carpentry scene with which we began), Gibson asked Father William Fulco, S.J., to be his Septuagintal soloist and render his script into Aramaic and Latin (two rather different languages). The credits also list the same Italian dialect coach, Ms. Evelina Meghnagi, for both, very different languages. Although the Web site claims some consultation was made with “native speakers of Aramaic dialects,” the film lists no credits to that fact, and, given that the movie was made in Italy rather than anywhere in the region of the Middle East, it is hard to imagine where this moving encounter with what the Web site calls a “dead language” and the living Aramaic and Syriac of the East might have taken place. At any rate, the choice of Aramaic instead of Hebrew, which was alive and well in first-century Palestine (as it is in modern-day Israel and elsewhere), also has the benefit of relegating Hebrew to the “dead languages” pile. To retro-translate into Aramaic, Father Fulco, a scholar trained in Northwest Semitics, drew on his own knowledge of biblical and non-biblical Aramaic and Hebrew. He was on his own there, except to the degree that the known vocabulary of ancient Aramaic is largely (though not exclusively) “biblical,” which surely helped, and which accounts for the Shakespearean quality of the diction and the inclusion of many Hebraisms. But for the Latin (including a surprising interlude of lines spoken by Jesus to Pilate), he also had the *Vulgate* as a crib sheet, so famous lines like Pilate’s “*ecce homo*” would not disappoint.⁷ What a long, strange trip this line of dialogue has taken: from Jerome’s *Vulgate* into the Douay-Rheims’s English to Gibson’s English script and back into Fulco’s Latin.⁸ Most sentences would not have emerged from the telephone-line translation process so unaltered. The purportedly original words of Jesus and his contemporaries currently available in Cineplexes the world over are at the very least three or four translations away from the original Greek Gospel accounts of what happened at the death of Jesus.⁹

The linguistic choices of this film involve more than historical inaccuracy, however. The message they convey is

unmistakable: Aramaic replaces Hebrew as Christianity will replace Judaism (as symbolized by the earthquake Mr. Gibson directs with smart-bomb precision against the temple in Jerusalem at the death of Jesus),¹⁰ and Latin replaces Greek as “Western” Christianity eclipses “Eastern.” The “original” languages are stage dressing for this orientalist project, a bid for *veritas* via retro-linguistics.

It was Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus, ca. 347–420), the translator of the *Vulgate*, who coined the phrase “*hebraica veritas*” to denote his insistence that a reliable translation of the scriptures of Israel (what Christians call the “Old Testament”) must be based on their original language of composition. This self-styled *vir trilinguis* (“trilingual man”) engaged in a sort of revisionist project that made him and his products enormously controversial in his own lifetime. This was especially because his Latin translation (by no means then “common”) was thought (and was intended) to challenge the authority of what for many Christians was the Bible—the Greek translation of the scriptures of Israel (the “Septuagint”)—and replace it with his retrieved Hebrew, now rendered by him into Latin. However, for his translation of the Gospels, Jerome, like everyone else, depended upon the *Greek* originals. Indeed, his first big assignment was a commission from Pope Damasus to draw upon his Greek skills, gained from extensive travels in Greece and into Syrian Antioch, to correct the Latin version of the Gospels then in use in Rome against the Greek manuscripts. There were, unsurprisingly, no “Aramaic” originals extant, and neither Jerome nor his papal patron sought to look beyond the Greek. After all, Greek was still the living, indeed in most places in the empire the predominant, theological language of Christians, as it had been since the earliest days of the movement. Later (after the death of Damasus), Jerome left Rome for the East—the real East, not Tuscany!—where he lived as a monastic in a cave in Bethlehem and, he claimed, sought out native speakers from whom to learn Hebrew. How much facility Jerome actually did gain in Hebrew is a matter of dispute, but he was occupied night and day with the task of producing translations for his Latin-speaking compatriots back at home from what he regarded



*The historical Jesus will be found reclining at table, not out back
fashioning the props of Western Christian culture.*

as the only secure foundation: the original language of composition. That in Western Catholicism Jerome's Vulgate would one day supplant the original Hebrew he sought to champion is a long-standing irony challenged by the Reformers, and even in Catholic circles finally overturned in the last century by Catholic critical biblical scholarship. That the Vulgate should be the inspiration for a Hollywood film, and, even more, earn the praises (and proceeds) of Protestants for its biblical accuracy, stretches irony into incredulity.

Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*, in its pretense to historical veracity, goes halfway from Hollywood to Golgotha. In geographic terms, Gibson got as far as the Italian peninsula; in chronological terms, as far as the late Middle Ages of the Latin West. He wished to go no farther, for this Jesus-film is a cinematic cult legend for his brand of Catholicism, which has its roots and reality in medieval Europe, as mediated through the sacramental blood of Christ. Mr. Gibson has every right to do this as an expression of his religious faith and artistic vision, and viewers should be utterly free to judge for themselves if it is a genuine representation of their own piety and cinematic preferences. But this occluded orientalism should not be confused for historical reality, no matter how it is marketed. To get closer to the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the earliest Christians' narratives about him, a full trip to the East, including immersion in the Greek and Hebrew languages and eastern Mediterranean culture, would be required. The *historical* Jesus will be found reclining at table, not out back fashioning the props of Western Christian culture. □

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THE PASSION: CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Father John T. Pawlikowski and Rabbi David Sandmel

With all the praise being heaped on Mel Gibson's soon-to-be-released movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, some people may be wondering why many Christians and Jews are unhappy. Who can complain when a major movie star invests \$25 million of his own

money to make a historically accurate cinematic portrayal of Jesus' last hours? Here are some reasons.

According to all four Gospels, after Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is taken by the (Jewish) guards to the High Priest. In the movie, the guards escorting Jesus brutally beat him, and, at one point, throw him over a bridge. The only reason he does not crash into the earth below is that his chains excruciatingly wrench him to a halt inches from the ground.

This episode appears nowhere in the New Testament. None of the Gospels provides any information about what, if anything, occurs on the way from Gethsemane to the High Priest. It is conceivable that those who arrested Jesus might have abused him. But it is no less plausible that the guards were sympathetic, even reluctant, to carry out their duty, and escorted Jesus to the High Priest gently and with dignity.

Gibson has embellished the Gospel text in order to intensify Jesus' suffering. But in so doing, he draws on his own imagination and a variety of non-canonical sources, including the visions of a nineteenth-century German nun who lived at a time when anti-Semitic homilies were a common tool for rallying mobs against the Jews.

The Holocaust compelled many Christians to examine the historic role of churches in fomenting anti-Semitism. Christian sensitivity in these areas has fostered significant changes in traditional church doctrine and practice on the part of both Roman Catholics and Protestants, such as those stemming from the Second Vatican Council's landmark *Nostra Aetate* (1965), and the Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community (1994).

A primary focus of this investigation is a single verse in Matthew (27:24–25): "So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'" (NRSV).

In the history of Christian anti-Semitism, this verse serves as biblical warrant for holding all Jews at all times responsible for the death of Jesus. Augustine, John Chrysostom, Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Luther all use it in this way. Yet the verse



*I think the movie will offend many mainstream white religious audiences
and resonate deeply with most blacks.*

occurs only in Matthew. It is not found in Mark, Luke, or John, and is thus not essential in depicting Jesus' death.

After a group of Catholic and Jewish scholars objected to the presence of the verse in an early script, Gibson said he would take it out. But the film, as screened on Tuesday, January 21, 2004, here in Chicago, and the following night in Orlando, includes the verse, thus repeating for millions of moviegoers around the world a classical indictment of the Jewish People for deicide.

Gibson claims to have been guided by divine inspiration in making *The Passion*. That may be so. But by clear intent, Mel Gibson has chosen to fill the screen with stereotypical religious imagery that had virtually disappeared in this country, super-heated by extreme violence, which, as *The New Yorker* magazine's Peter Boyer puts it, is Gibson's "cinematic language."

It may be that the thousands of good Christians who have seen the film in invitation-only screenings have been deeply touched by it without being at all influenced by its portrayal of Jewish brutality and accusations of Jewish complicity in the Crucifixion. But one cannot be sanguine about what will happen when the film is released for wide distribution during Lent, especially in Europe and Latin America, where anti-Semitism continues to thrive in societies bereft of the blessing of authentic religious pluralism.

Important Christian leaders, such as Pope John Paul II, have forcefully condemned anti-Semitism as a sin. The release of Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* challenges Christians to address this topic frankly from the pulpit. Christians, especially, must confront honestly the history of anti-Judaism that is tied to the Passion. This challenge must be at the forefront of any evaluation of Mel Gibson's film. □

BLACK THEOLOGY AND *THE PASSION*

Robert M. Franklin

The *Passion of the Christ* will be seen by millions of people. Many will view it reverently, as movie theatres become houses of worship. Others will condemn the director's interpretive spin in portraying Jews as unre-

pentant Christ killers or imposing a unified narrative on the numerous and varying biblical portraits of Jesus. Already, legitimate worries about rousing anti-Semitism have been expressed by Jewish and Christian leaders, and I hope the filmmakers have taken this concern seriously. Indeed, it would be an unfortunate irony to use a film about Jesus to inspire hate and harm toward anyone.

I am intrigued by another possible response. Based on the excerpts that I have seen, I think the movie will offend many mainstream white religious audiences and resonate deeply with most blacks. The icons, art, and Passion plays in most white churches present Jesus as the subject of a radical makeover. The rugged, sun-baked Palestinian Jew of the Bible gets morphed into a manicured, middle-class model citizen, just like one of the neighbors. The theology that underwrites this sanitized Jesus avoids the brutal manifestations of oppression and violence he experienced. Even when Crucifixion scenes appear in Anglo-American religious art, you may see a little blood and a wound or two, but almost never the dirty and broken body that endured torture for several hours. This film's lingering gaze upon the grotesque will be difficult for viewers unaccustomed to such art.

But most black audiences will see things differently. Since the slave period, blacks have understood and portrayed Jesus as a Suffering Savior and a grassroots leader who was the victim of state-sponsored terror. Black theology has focused on the humanity and socially marginal status of Jesus. More than that, blacks have been attracted to the Jesus who experienced unjust victimization by the authorities and the community, but found empowering comfort in the conviction that a just God would someday even the score. This spirituality and faith generated Negro Spirituals, gospel music, prayers, sermons, and religious art that embraced the graphic reality of political death and dying.

In his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Christian mystic and black theologian Howard Thurman said that whenever we sanitize the grotesque image of the Suffering Servant, we again inflict violence upon his identity and mission. He endured each moment of that suffering; we dare not minimize it to



. . . *the experience of the movie may best be analyzed
as that of a revival ritual* . . .

suit our sensibilities. Not surprisingly, Dr. King always carried Thurman's book in his briefcase.

Black viewers may also find themselves revisiting painful memories of young men from our communities who were hanged from trees with drenched, bloodstained clothes as the local townspeople looked on with satisfaction. Billie Holiday captured the horror of these scenes in her heart-breaking song, singing "southern trees bear strange fruit." When African-Americans revisit the Passion scene, we know what that young Jewish mother Mary felt. We know the agony of those disciples who yearned to avenge their leader but were too powerless and afraid to try. We feel this grief and indignation deep in our guts.

Although white and black viewers may sit in the same theater and feel many of the same emotions, there will be some differences in the meanings they attach to what they see. If the film inspires conversation across the color line, it could open windows of understanding into the varying religious perspectives and sensibilities that animate our wonderfully diverse nation. □

MYSTICALLY CORRECT¹

Seth Sanders

The *Passion of the Christ* has jolted Aramaic from peaceful senescence to play for the largest audience in the language's history. As a Semitic philologist who studied with the same teacher as the movie's translator, Father William Fulco, I wondered how Aramaic worked in the film. Listening for Palestinian dialects, I encountered a stark linguistic mysticism instead.

Scholars have attacked the claim of authenticity the film stakes on its script: audiences are to believe that Aramaic was used by the common folk, Latin by the colonizers, and that these may have been the precise words Jesus spoke. Robert Alter, Geza Vermes, and others criticized its Aramaic as a bastardization cobbled together with Hebrew, and its Latin (which we have no evidence Jesus, or the soldiers, spoke) as a theological hoax on the order of the Donation of Constantine.

But to understand the role of language in a religious artifact like *The Passion*, it is not enough to correct its grammar. Its very claim to be in the "original" Aramaic and Latin is, linguistically and theologically, most remarkable. And the experience of the movie may best be analyzed as that of a revival ritual, the point being to draw on the past to produce realities that never before existed.

Contemporary texts paint a bracingly cosmopolitan linguistic picture of first-century CE Jerusalem: Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek, with two of the three sometimes together, are inscribed all over the city. Latin was a foreign language, found in names and official terms but alien to speech. Jonas Greenfield, the great Aramaist from whom Fulco and I learned, compared the synagogues of Jerusalem to those of the old Lower East Side: both were packed with Diaspora Jews, moving from language to language to find a common tongue.

This is not what the philologist hears in the film. The problem is not that the Aramaic is tainted with Hebrew—mixture is what readers of Galilean inscriptions, the Palestinian Talmud, or early Midrashic texts like *Genesis Rabbah* would expect. Nor is it that the actual dialogue sometimes sounds like it is read by first-year students—this is probably about as well as actors can manage. The problem is the pretense of purity: the presentation of the languages of Palestine as Aramaic, on the one hand, and Latin, on the other.

What's behind this? Why does the movie represent a linguistically hybrid reality "in" one language—and why Aramaic? Christological Aramaic is an old theological project. Dating at least as far back as Johann Albrecht von Widmanstadt's 1555 translation of the Syriac New Testament into Latin, the tradition claims that Aramaic (not Hebrew or Greek) is the key not merely to Jesus' cultural background, but to his *ipsissima verba*, and thus an unmediated experience of him. The attempt to paint the "Semitic" background of the New Testament as exclusively Aramaic, and Hebrew as a moribund, strictly liturgical language, corresponds to a theological polemic against Judaism as a "dead" religion serving the "letter of the law," not its living spirit.

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OF TIME AND PURPOSE

Franklin I. Gamwell

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.” :: As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fisherman. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

MARK 1:14–20

— I —

Of the many, seemingly countless, memorable epigrams in the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., my favorite is this: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” This declaration appeared often in King’s speeches, typically as one of several rhetorical drumbeats proclaiming the encompassing grounds for hope that would sustain those committed to the civil rights movement, despite the principalities aligned against it. But I associate the saying especially with the 1965 speech King delivered from the steps leading to Alabama’s state capitol in Montgomery, the Confederate flag aloft from its dome, where the four-day, forty-mile march from Selma and, with it, the campaign for voting rights culminated. As he spoke, political success was uncertain and could easily seem to require many more marches down many more hostile roads. In retrospect, however, the civil rights movement was at the peak of its power and consequence there on those steps. Within the year, a

sweeping, federal voting rights law was enacted, preceded by the nation’s president endorsing it before a joint session of Congress and sealing his commitment by claiming as his own the movement’s irrepressible refrain, “We shall overcome.”

Through those events of the 1960s, life together in this country turned a corner, changed irrevocably, and we live in debt to those whose courage and sacrifice gave us all a new measure of freedom. Still, we today, in our own social and political context, have our own need to hear King’s words of hope. It is not simply that racism in the intervening years has shown a persistent power to evade censure, to emerge in new forms and be justified in new ways. That evil, insidious as it is, is yet one expression of the enduring human capacity,

Professor Gamwell delivered this sermon in Bond Chapel on February 18, 2004. It later appeared in the electronic newsletter of the Chicago-based organization Protestants for the Common Good, The Common Good Network, Vol. III, no. 5 (March 2, 2004).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speaks in front of the Alabama State Capitol, addressing an estimated 30,000 civil rights demonstrators who followed him on the last leg of the Selma-Montgomery civil rights marches on March 25, 1965. © Bettmann/CORBIS





The idea of God's kingdom, we know, did not originate with Christianity.

all too evident again in our generation, to corrupt our common life by directing it or allowing it to serve narrow privilege and profit while others are debased. Whether by stigmatizing difference or exploiting the poor or suppressing and incarcerating the “unwanted” or defiling the habitat we leave to our children’s children, our communal order, wherever we shed light on it, appears disfigured to any who see with eyes sensitive to injustice—and the fault lines transparent in our own nation become the more glaring when the focus expands to the human community as a whole. And the unrelenting power of social and political inequity to command the heights—“right forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne,” King would cite—easily saps the will to protest and resist. We, too, can repeat the plaintiff cry of the Psalms that King echoed in Montgomery: “How long, O Lord, how long?”

And we pray, “Thy kingdom come.” In the New Testament witness to Jesus, the import of God’s kingdom includes much more than a call to justice, but, as William Sloane Coffin says, it surely includes no less. Hope for this kingdom—where the leopard shall lie down with the kid and the crooked shall be made straight and they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain—has sustained many among our predecessors in the religious community whose witness has followed the moral arc of the universe. So we, as they, have reason repeatedly to hear and ponder the scripture’s proclamation of the kingdom, as in the text for today: “After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.’”

— II —

The idea of God’s kingdom, we know, did not originate with Christianity. It belonged to religious space formed by the ancient Jewish apocalyptic movement, within which the Christian community began as a Jewish sect. That movement arose some two centuries prior and was, as one scholar has it, a child of both hope and despair. The Jewish

people firmly believed that God created and ruled all the world, but their experience in the world had been horrific. Having suffered Babylonian captivity, they returned to the Holy Land at the pleasure of Persian kings, soon to be followed by Roman conquest and rule. One response to this desolate situation was the vision that God must have a purpose, in which the present age is prelude to another when the kingdom will be established. Where this view took hold, it was typically introduced by a visionary or seer, who claimed a revelation of God’s imminent re-creation, often foreseen to occur through the return from heaven of Moses or Enoch or someone else who earlier had “walked with God.” The seer then delivered good news to the people: God will soon arrive, will make all things new, and the torments and tribulations of this present age will pass away and final felicity will be secured. With this sure anticipation also came an urgent warning: There is no other hope; nothing in the present order has any power to make life more than a mess of pottage, and the time is short. So the people must make themselves ready to live with the full presence of God.

Against this religious backdrop, the preaching of Jesus begins: “The time is fulfilled.” But how strange is this saying. The image, one commentator suggests, is like an hourglass whose sand has entirely dripped through. “The time is fulfilled” proclaims now to be the appointed moment, and “the kingdom has drawn near” appears to be a parallel way of publicizing the report. Really? This is it? Those present might be excused for looking around, expecting to see the start of cataclysmic change, the revolution of the spheres, and, finding none, taking this word as a counsel of dismay. Where is the transformation, the re-creation? Where are the powers of this world shaken and evil erased and suffering no more? And where is the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, the kingdom of God? Is this really all there is? If Jesus’ hearers retained some note of wry humor, they might appreciate the drawing New Yorkers love of the beaten man who sought escape through the Holland Tunnel only to discover that the light at the far end was New Jersey.

Still, some were attracted to Jesus because they heard in his preaching the best of news. Simon and Andrew and



The very best of news is that God is present now.

James and John left their nets to follow him, and we today repair to their witness. So, what is it that they, and we with them, believe?

— III —

Many years ago, one story has it, the late Joseph Sittler, esteemed professor of theology at this school, spoke at a Divinity School reception in honor of the late Bernard Meland, also a cherished theologian here. “Reading a book of Meland’s,” Sittler reportedly said, “is a unique experience. One settles in comfortably but, before long, a fog begins to descend and envelops the room. Dimness and haze remain throughout most of the book, but just before the end, lo and behold the fog lifts, and all the furniture is rearranged.” When a thinker seeks to advance understanding by introducing a novel set of ideas, success, it is worth noting, depends on rearranging the same furniture. Communication could not be effective if the room became entirely new, because the reader would not know where she or he is. On a wider stage, the general rule is secure that individuals through whom history turns a corner typically sway the future by using commonly inherited cultural and symbolic space to introduce an uncommon point—maybe a new meaning, or one for too long suppressed or lost—much as King himself called the nation back to the true measure of its own political ideals and, perhaps, poured new wine into those principles by taking them to foreshadow the beloved community he envisioned. Something like this provides the setting for one reading of our text.

Clearly, early Christians, possibly Jesus himself, shared with other apocalyptic sects belief in a kingdom yet to come, which God would install, and they anticipated the more or less imminent arrival of this dramatic event. Mark’s Gospel later speaks of “those days” when “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light. . . . Then they will see ‘the Son of man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. And he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven” (Mark 13:24–27). And Paul,

to choose one example, declared in First Thessalonians: “The Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them” (I Thess. 4:16–17). While apocalyptic views, both in Judaism and Christianity, began to decline in the second century of the Common Era, their characteristic expectation left an enduring mark on Christian speech in the symbol of the Second Coming and the various understandings of last things in which it is construed.

But friends, this belief in a future, however distant, when God will make all things new belongs, I am persuaded, to the transient symbolic furniture where original Christian witness occurred, not to its permanent import—to the mythological context of that time and place, not to the abiding content of the good news. The vital moment in that witness recasts common religious ideas of the future to make an uncommon point about the present. “The time is fulfilled”—here, at this time. The entire point of the Gospel is a present point. Jesus reveals not what God will do but what God does. The very best of news is that God is present now. No need to wait, no need to make ready, no need to become acceptable; God is fully present now, presenting without condition the gift of God’s boundless love and its promise to cherish us forever, and asking only that we receive what is ours for the taking and, thereby, embrace the only thing worth having. “Repent and believe in the good news.” To repent, one reader has noted, means simply to turn around. Stop facing away from God; turn toward God and enter now into full communion with the One without whom nothing in the world could be other than “a passing whiff of insignificance.”

Of the future, then, there is truly blessed assurance: Whenever it becomes present, God will also be present—again and again and again, without end—just as God was ever-present, whether we saw clearly or not, in every moment of the past. So, as a friend showed me, even the Second Coming can be a symbol for the vital point. When we withdraw from

Continued on page 38

CLAIMING POWER TO SPEAK TRUTH:

RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF TERROR

Cynthia Lindner

B

efore returning last year to this divinity school, which launched me into pastoral ministry, I was for many years pastor of a Disciples of Christ congregation in a small, blue-collar community in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Alongside my parish responsibilities I worked as a psychotherapist on the staff of a community counseling center. When I try to give voice and content to the experiences and concerns of a good many of my colleagues in pastoral ministry, the visage that returns to mind is not actually of any one of those pastors,

but of Kelly, a young woman who was my client at the counseling center for nearly two years. Kelly and I had our first appointment shortly after she had been discharged from the local hospital, suffering from an encroaching paralysis that was seemingly without physical cause or medical remedy. Despite batteries of tests over some months, the doctors had no diagnosis, but the debilitation of the young woman was unmistakably real. Unable to use her arms or legs, she sat at the initial interview slumped in a wheelchair, and during our conversation she spoke in such a quiet, strained voice that I had to lean forward to hear her at all. She had come to therapy in order to have a chance to talk, she said, before the paralysis that seemed to be advancing by the day made it impossible for her to speak.

It seemed like little enough to ask, so we proceeded; week by week we met, and Kelly talked about the tiny, nearby town in which she had been raised, the close-knit and highly conservative church community to which her family belonged, the marriage which had been arranged for her at age fifteen. Kelly talked about her two young children, her husband's alcoholism and drug abuse, and his physical "disciplining" of her and their children. Kelly talked about the assurances of her family and her church that suffering was what marriage meant, what family meant, and what

faithfulness required—"what God required." As we continued to meet and she continued to talk, the young woman began to ask questions in a voice that grew increasingly strong. Kelly was puzzled by the overwhelming cost that this faithfulness exacted from her. She was confused by her own desires and longings—to leave the marriage, to go to college, to become a nurse—desires that were largely dismissed as wanton and self-serving by her family and her church. Finding no way to reconcile the truth she kept about herself, heretofore in silence, with the truths her family and church maintained, Kelly had become literally immobilized. She was physically, emotionally, and spiritually stuck.

But almost as soon as the questions began to be spoken aloud, there were weekly improvements in Kelly's physical capacities. The week after Kelly wondered aloud why God would create someone with her sensibilities and interests, and then forbid her to use or enjoy them, she *walked* into my office—the wheelchair gone, never to reappear. A few months after Kelly had decided it was time to read some of her community's beloved scriptures for herself and to share her insights aloud in our sessions, she regained the feeling

The Reverend Lindner delivered these remarks at the Divinity School's Visiting Committee Dinner on February 10, 2004.

in her fingers and toes, and she regained her sense of self and direction. When I last spoke with Kelly, she was a lively nursing student with a part-time job in the local hospital and an apartment of her own. She had formed a babysitting cooperative among the young women in her new church community; they shared childcare responsibilities, prayed for one another, and read the scriptures together, for themselves.

One of the prime motivations for my return from the parish ministry I loved to a life preparing ministers in the academy was a growing perception of a very similar depression and paralysis among many of my clergy colleagues. It is not news that ministers often find parish life constricting and church politics disheartening—those are perennial complaints, and indigenous, I am guessing, to any human institution. But increasingly over the last several years, I have become aware of a more disturbing trend—my preacher friends are losing their voices. While I do not mean this literally, I do mean that preachers have noticeably less to say in their sermons—and no one is more disturbed by this than the preachers themselves. They tell me about heavy administrative schedules that do not allow them time to prepare thoughtful sermons. They tell me about congregations that expect entertainment but do not want content, about members who will leave the church if the sermons are too scriptural, too theological, too political, too critical, too demanding.

They tell me of doctrinal and political litmus tests among congregations and denominations. They are saddened by the fights and threats in their denominational families. They worry about the soul of a nation embroiled in a constant, numbing “war against terror.” They are confounded when they hear politicians invoking the faith community’s own language to bless ethically ambiguous actions. There are factions everywhere; there are “sides” to be taken or avoided; there is a low-grade “orange alert,” an omnipresent “threat,” that has the effect of muting questions, immobilizing

discourse, hushing dissent, and attempting to restrict even the movement of the Word of God.

There is a surfeit of speech in our culture, to be certain, and a plurality of meanings—there is no denying that the value and valence of the spoken word in our public square is cheapened by its sheer volume. But communities of faith and their religious leaders must not allow themselves to be marginalized by either cynicism or fear. The traditions of the Peoples of the Book remind us that Word is essentially and inherently powerful, creative, life-giving, and transformative. The preaching of the prophets in the Hebrew scriptures, the preaching of Jesus in the Gospels, the preaching of the apostles in the Book of Acts, and the preaching of Paul as recorded in his letters is about more than words alongside other words. Rather, it is in itself understood and embraced—chosen deliberately, even, as an act of nonviolent resistance directed against the terrors, the principalities and powers, as Paul liked to call them, of the preachers’ cultures and contexts.

Much of our contemporary homiletics has embraced, for some very good reasons, a deeply pastoral focus, devoting itself to communicating in the vernacular and toward the interests of particular faith communities. Increasingly, though, another imperative is being sounded. Charles Campbell, among others, calls preachers to recast their understanding of the preaching task for these times in his recent work on the ethic of preaching, *The*

Word Before the Powers. He quotes William Stringfellow,

... the monstrous homiletical heresy of recent years is the assumption that the whole drama of the gospel takes place between God and human beings. The aggressiveness of the powers and the moral captivity of the people have received inadequate attention. As a result, preaching becomes ethically naïve and simplistic, unable to address the countless powerful forces that shape and destroy human life in the world.¹



Preaching, Campbell argues, is itself ethical activity. Conceiving of preaching as a fundamental ethical option reclaims the real power of the Word as an alternative to the means and implements of fear and violence so common in our culture and our world. Preachers must make the initial effort to speak the truth because not to do so, as my friend Kelly seemed to intuit, would be to languish and to lose consciousness and, ultimately, to die.

It is difficult, risky, and probably a bit naive to say something as simple or subversive as “preachers must claim the power to speak the truth” in a fifteen-minute after-dinner speech and then sit down—especially when I know that the process of learning to speak the truth, in Kelly’s case, took two years of weekly disciplined conversation. If I had more time here, I would tell you much more about what I believe sermons might look and feel and sound like when preachers begin with the basic trust that the Word is powerful, that speaking the truth is possible, and that preaching is, first and foremost, an ethical activity. I do not have that time, and so will end with one caveat and one assignment.

The caveat is this: when I say that preaching is an ethical activity, I am not plugging for social action sermons in particular. You and I have both sat through sermons pitching some political position or other that felt much more like oppression than liberation, that were much more stump speech or commercial message than creative or transformative word. Preaching as ethical activity means that the *what* and the *how* of our preaching are informed by our commitment to non-violent resistance every bit as much as the *why*, and that means that ethical preaching has no room for messy political harangues. Kelly was not healed of her incapacitation because a therapist imposed her own political or social agenda on her life or experience, but because truth was honored and space was made, and she was invited to speak what she knew. Ethical preaching, as Campbell reminds us, must function in this way, empowering communities of faith to speak the truth they know, redeeming congregations from their moral captivity and fear, and building up communities of ethical discourse, where the truth might be listened for, apprehended, claimed, and spoken aloud.

And that is where you come in, those of you who preach, or teach, or sit in the pews and listen. For preaching to be an ethical activity, preachers must function from within ethical communities. For Kelly’s truth to be spoken aloud, there had to be a hearer, and the quality of that hearing had to be such that truth was encouraged, honored, hungered for—sometimes questioned, clarified, or cajoled—but always vitally *engaged*. During a recent preaching class, one of the students was objecting to my insistence that we offer a deep and pointed critique after each student’s sermon. An experienced pastor himself, this student told me that he had never

expected his congregations to talk back. Speaking the truth is a mutual responsibility—pastors and their congregations must engage in the enterprise together in a committed, long, slow partnership, with speaking and listening taking place on both sides of the pulpit—not just in the church but also in the classroom and the boardroom, the law office and the public square.

In my Disciples tradition, we speak too comfortably and fondly of that notion of “the priesthood of all believers.” Sometimes, I’m afraid, what we mean by that is that we are under no obligation to lend anyone the authority to teach us anything! More rightly, I think, what the founders of our movement intended was to create communities of theological and ethical discourse, where believers might invest one another with credibility, authority, and power to see and to name and to bear witness to the truth they experienced during a period of history when cultural change was rapid, institutions seemed increasingly irrelevant, and there was deep human hunger for some word from the Lord—a period not unlike our own. May we come together, preachers and hearers, ordained and lay, as partners claiming power to speak truth in these days. □

ENDNOTES

1. Charles L. Campbell, *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 70.

ALUMNI NEWS

JOHN BARBOUR, M.A. 1975, Ph.D. 1981, is the inaugural appointee to the Martin E. Marty Chair in Religion and the Academy at St. Olaf College, where he has served on the faculty since 1982 in the Department of Religion, teaching an array of courses, particularly in the areas of religion, literature, and ethics. The chair provides the opportunity for its holder to be active on campus as an emblem of what it means to live and work at the intersection of faith and reason, the opportunity to address significant religious issues within the church and the academy at large, and the opportunity to respond in a thoughtful and faithful way to wider cultural issues. Mr. Barbour published the book *The Value of Solitude: The Ethics and Spirituality of Aloneness in Autobiography* (University of Virginia Press, 2004), and the essay "Judging and Not Judging Parents" in *The Ethics of Life Writing*, edited by Paul John Eakin (Cornell University Press, 2004).

JEREMY COHEN, former Regenstein Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies in the Divinity School, published *Sanctifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Mr. Cohen is professor of Jewish history and director of the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center at Tel Aviv University.

PAUL R. DEKAR, M.A. 1973, Ph.D. 1978, professor of evangelism and missions at Memphis Theological Seminary, published *Holy Boldness: Practices of an Evangelistic Lifestyle* (Smyth & Helwys, 2004).

ROBERT D. DENHAM, M.A. 1964, Ph.D. (English) 1972, John P. Fishwick Professor of English at Roanoke College, retired after thirty-seven years of teaching in May 2004. Later in 2004, he will publish *Northrop Frye: Religious Visionary and Architect of the Spiritual World* (University of Virginia Press). Recent books also include *Northrop Frye Unbuttoned: Wit and Wisdom from Frye's Notebooks and Diaries* (House of Anansi Press, Canada, 2004), and *Northrop Frye's Published Writings: A Bibliography, 1931-2004* (Iron Mountain Press, 2004).

REV. RANDALL DOUBET-KING, M.A. 1976, received the Reverends Betsy M. and Thomas R. Davis Distinguished Service Award from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) on April 23, 2004, for his outstanding work as an advocate for healthy sexuality and reproductive rights.

MICHAEL G. EPPERSON, M.A. 1996, Ph.D. 2003, adjunct professor in the Department of Theology at Loyola University in Chicago, published *Quantum Mechanics and the Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (Fordham University Press, 2004).

KATHLEEN FLAKE, Ph.D. 2000, assistant professor of American religious history at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, published *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Sealing of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

ANNA M. GADE, M.A. 1992, Ph.D. 1999, assistant professor of religion at Oberlin College, published *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'an* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

WESLEY A. KORT, M.A. 1963, Ph.D. 1965, professor in and chair of the Department of Religion at Duke University, published *Place and Space in Modern Fiction* (University Press of Florida, 2004), which studies the importance of narrative discourses for spatial orientation and place-relations, as well as the contributions that modern fiction makes to current theories of human spirituality and sacred space.

REV. RONALD E. HOPKINS, M.A. 2000, has been working with the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in Washington, D.C. In March 2003, he was called to pastor First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Petersburg, Virginia, a congregation of about eighty. He has started his D.Min. program at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and expects to graduate in May 2006. His dissertation will address how to create effective multicultural and multi-generational worship in the life of the church.

MARC KOLDEN, M.A. 1969, Ph.D. 1976, completed seven years as academic dean at Luther Seminary as of June 30, 2003, and returned to full-time teaching following a sabbatical leave during the fall semester 2003. He also coauthored and coedited *By Faith Alone: Essays on Justification in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde* (Eerdmans, 2004). His book *Called and Ordained: Lutheran Perspectives on the Office of the Ministry*, coedited with Todd Nichol and originally published with Fortress Press in 1990, has been reprinted in 2004 by Wipf and Stock Publishers.

BRUCE LONG, M.A. 1963, Ph.D. 1970, was appointed associate professor of Buddhist Studies and History of Religions at the University of the West (formerly His Lai University)—a Taiwanese-founded university—in Rosemead, California. He was formerly director of the Blaisdell Institute for the Study of World Culture and Religions in Claremont, California, and professor of Asian religions at Cornell University. He is currently at work on a book comparing the concepts of ethics and salvation in the teaching of Jesus and the Buddha.

NADINE PENCE FRANTZ, Ph.D. 1992, was appointed full professor of theological studies at Bethany Theological Seminary on March 26, 2004, having served on the faculty of that institution since 1992. She also edited a forthcoming book, *Hope Deferred: Theological Reflections on Reproductive Loss* (Pilgrim Press).

GEORGE W. SHIELDS, Ph.D. 1981, 2000–2001 University Distinguished Professor and professor of philosophy at Kentucky State University, has been appointed interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at that institution. His invited essay “Process and Universals” appears in *After Whitehead: Rescher on Process Metaphysics*, edited by Michel Weber (Ontos Verlag, 2004), with a reply from Nicholas Rescher. On March 25, 2004, Mr. Shields presented the Sophia Lecture at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, entitled “‘Out with a Whimper’: Cold Death Physics, Evil, and Process Philosophy.” At the annual business meeting of the American Academy of Religion Southeast on March 6, 2004, in Atlanta, Georgia, he became vice president elect for 2005, entailing service as president elect/AAR program chair in 2006 and as president in 2007. He has served for the past three years as chair of AAR Southeast philosophy of religion programs. During March and April, he participated as commentator or moderator at three events of the U.S. Department of State-funded “Islamic Life in the United States” national touring project, directed by University of Louisville colleague Riffat Hassan, including a panel symposium with Islamic scholars from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh at the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. This fall 2004 term

marks a span of thirty calendar years that Mr. Shields has taught in the Department of Philosophy and Division of Humanities at the University of Louisville, where in the past five years he has taught courses in graduate-level health care ethics and law (Health Sciences Campus), logic, philosophical anthropology, and Islamic thought and culture.

HERBERT VETTER, B.D. 1952, is director of Harvard Square Library (<http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org>), which features illustrated biographies of notable American Unitarians, such as Emerson and Wieman, as well as nine articles by Charles Hartshorne, which can be found in an online manuscript, edited by Vetter, entitled *A New World View* (<http://www.finman.com/Hartshorne>).

TED VIAL, M.A. 1987, Ph.D. 1994, associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Virginia Wesleyan College, published *Liturgy Wars: Ritual Theory and Protestant Reform in Nineteenth-Century Zurich* (Routledge, 2004).

LOSSES

JOHN W. HUNT, Ph.D. 1961, has been reported deceased by a friend, Sherman Shapiro.

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exception. Next, the *ta'zir* (discretionary) punishments, both at the legislative and the adjudicative levels, are derived through a jurisprudential method that relies heavily on Islamic sources. Finally, judges often have recourse *either* to the religion of the offender or “the custom of the country in which the action takes place” (*urf al-balad aladbi yaqa' fihi al-fi'i*) in defining whether or not an action constitutes a crime (see, for example, article 152 of the 1991 criminal code). If, in the case of a non-Muslim offender, a judge chooses to define the crime on the basis of the custom of the country in which the action took place, and then defines Sudan as a Muslim country, an Islamic yardstick is used to judge a non-Muslim person (for a parallel discussion of the status of non-Muslims under the 1983 penal code, see Aharon Layish and Gabriel Warburg, *The Reinstatement of Islamic Law in Sudan under Numayri: An Evaluation of a Legal Experiment in the Light of Its Historical Context, Methodology, and Repercussions* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002], 255–263).

16. Chapter 5, article 3, of the criminal code lists laws from which the southern states have been exempted.
17. Mohamed Osman, “Sudanese President Says Peace Deal May Be Signed in Couple of Days,” *Associated Press*, April 13, 2004.
18. It is important to note that nowhere does the law explicitly mandate that “all women have to wear Islamic dress,” as suggested here. Nevertheless, article 152, to which I have referred above, requires modest dress, which has often been interpreted by judges to mean Islamic-style dress and enforced in this regard.
19. John Esposito and John O. Voll, “Hasan al-Turabi: The Mahdi Lawyer,” in *The Makers of Contemporary Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 142; Layish and Warburg, *The Reinstatement*

of Islamic Law, 284; Abdel Salam Sidahmed, *Politics and Islam in Contemporary Sudan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 219.

20. Hasan al-Turabi, “The Islamic State,” in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, edited by John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 241–242.
21. Emphasis mine. The Sudanese constitution can be read in its entirety on the Web site of the Embassy of the Sudan in Washington, D.C. (http://www.sudanembassy.org/default.asp?page=documents-reports_constitution).
22. Hasan al-Turabi, “Presentation by Dr. Hasan Turabi,” in *Islam, Democracy and the West: A Round Table with Dr. Hasan Turabi*, edited by Arthur Lowrie (Clearwater, Fla: World and Islam Studies Enterprise, 1993), 34.
23. See Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1–17, for a scholarly position (on very different premises) which also argues that secularism presupposes and enforces new concepts of religion that have serious impact on the people who live under its dominion.
24. T. Abdou Maliqalim Simone, *In Whose Image?: Political Islam and Urban Practices in Sudan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 78.
25. Chafik Chehata, “Dhimma,” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam (CD Rom version, 1.0)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999).
26. Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 1.

Seth Sanders, *Continued from page 27*

In the movie, the only two prominent lines spoken in Hebrew are quotations (though not in order) from the fixed Passover liturgy. This view avoids conclusive evidence for strains of spoken Hebrew in this period, found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Bar Kokhba documents, and early rabbinic literature. Sadly, since Moshe Segal's groundbreaking grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew, the scholarly debate on this topic has split neatly along ethnic-religious lines. Most major studies of the continuing life of Hebrew are done by Jews, and the “Aramaic approach” to the original words of Jesus is the province of Christians.

But the movie's final irony and real religious novelty is how blood trumps language via language itself—a quintessentially mystical move. Like anyone transformed by a religious ritual whose words he did not understand, Gibson says he experienced the Latin Mass as communicating not

information but visceral religious experience. Thus, rather than the code-switching mixture of Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek the texts present, the film gives us a combination of Latin and Aramaic that actually serves to produce, in Gibson's words, an experience that “transcends language” through sheer incomprehension.

Language here does not transmit true or false statements but disorients and disarms. It is part of a phantasmagoria of “authentic” detail designed to create a paradoxically authentic religious experience now, by projecting a modern vision into a fictional linguistic form. This attempted mystical union of filmed blood and written gospel is a bold, complex, and strange form of ventriloquism. □

ENDNOTES

1. For a fuller version of this article see <http://home.uchicago.edu/~sanders>.

ENDNOTES

1. This is, of course, Edward Said's famous designation of the "West"'s construction of the "East" for its own ideological purposes (*Orientalism* [New York: Vintage, 1979]).
2. Also, the initial word, "once," may in the original context of this quotation (whatever it was) have referred to the fifth or fourth century BCE, rather than the time of Jesus, which it is meant to represent here.
3. Though, with some distant high school or church Latin, or siddur [prayer-book] Hebrew, they will surely pick up familiar words here and there, adding to the "authentic" flavor for the novices.
4. If he did not, it would certainly represent a surprising break with his fellow Tridentine Catholics, which would itself require some explanation.
5. The book, entitled *The Passion: Photography from the Movie "The Passion of the Christ,"* by Ken Duncan with a foreword by Mel Gibson, although it apparently has a single ISBN number, is published by two different publishing houses, both coincidentally located here in Illinois. Tyndale Publishing House, in Wheaton, presents the official photographs of the film accompanied by passages from the New Living Translation (a paraphrastic, "dynamic equivalence" translation). It is also published, with the Douay-Rheims Translation, by TAN, a publishing house founded by Thomas A. Nelson (hence the acronym) in 1967 to promote "the truths of the Catholic faith," at a point in time when, its Web site Tanbooks.com explains, "the problems in the Church were just getting into high gear." It is no accident this traditionalist, anti-Vatican II publisher trumpets as his highest accomplishment reissuing the Douay-Rheims Bible in 1971.
6. The "official Website" for the film provides a link to a Catholic bookstore which sells only the TAN/Douay-Rheims version (found also at other online Catholic sites); if one looks for the book on Amazon.com or Christianbook.com, however, one finds only the Tyndale Publishing House New Living Translation.
7. Indeed, the trailers for the film feature that line, perhaps to assure viewers who lack linguistic self-confidence that they will be able to follow this "foreign language" film.
8. Audiences may think this authentic on the assumption that Roman soldiers would speak Latin, but the historical reality was different: many soldiers in the Roman army were local recruits, not denizens of Italy; in Pilate's Judea, they would much more likely have spoken Greek.
9. Even the Gospels were written decades after the actual death of Jesus.
10. Matthew has added an earthquake to Mark's account of the death of Jesus, but just says "the ground was shaken" (Matthew 27:51).

the multiplicity of false gods and prophets we so easily credit, from our worldly fears and investments, from the fleeting rewards and vicissitudes of our mortal days, and ask about our station within the great mystery from which we all come and to which we all go, we can be assured: Nothing lies before us that is not already behind us through our experience of Jesus. No turn of events can prevent God's full return in every season. Our one sure and certain hope, alone sufficient and abundant to sustain our courage and zest, is this: "Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:38–39).

— IV —

But what, then, of the kingdom that may be far more, but is no less than, justice, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, and the poor are not trampled nor the needy turned aside at the gate, and there is no more war? Is this not an abiding moment of the good news Jesus preached after John

was arrested? It surely is, but not as a forecast of what God will do for us. The vision we are given displays what we are privileged to do for ourselves and, thereby, for God. The kingdom as a new order is the purpose we are divinely ennobled to choose. When we turn toward God, we are wedded to this purpose because embrace of God's love can only be embrace of all God loves and, thereby, commitment to our common humanity. We can no more accept God's love without a passion for justice than we can open a window without letting in the wind. Living for the beloved community is, in fact, the chance of a lifetime—the chance given to us again and again in every present moment to receive God's abiding presence. This is why, I like to think, King evoked the arc of the moral universe, the future that waits on what we decide. And, with him, we may also have the hope—although not sure and certain—that its course, however long, bends toward justice. For God is ever-present throughout the human community, never ceasing to give each and all their only chance for life ultimately worthwhile, and we may hope that this divine power in the balance will call forth the better angels within the human adventure. □

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