Full Issue
1–12  Kierkegaard & Religious Pluralism
       BROCK BAHLER

13–32  Islamic Political Thought of Tahir-ul-Qadri
       ZOFSHAN TAJ

33–58  Feminine Images of Jesus
       JENNY BLEDSOE

59–74  Kierkegaard & Weil
       TIMOTHY ROTHHAAR

75–82  Book Reviews
The Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies is designed to promote the academic study of religion at the graduate and undergraduate levels. The journal is a student initiative affiliated with the Religious Studies Program at Utah State University and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Our academic review board includes professional scholars specializing in the religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Mormonism, as well as specialists in the fields of Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology of Religion. The journal is housed in the Intermountain West, but gladly accepts submissions from students throughout the United States and around the world.
Submissions


All manuscripts should be submitted as an attachment to: imwjournal@aggiemail.usu.edu.

The standard deadlines for inclusion in the journal are June 1 for the winter issue and January 1 for the summer issue.

All manuscripts accepted for publication are subject to editorial modification.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced, using a 12–point serif font and 1-inch margins, including footnotes, and must include an abstract of no more than 150 words. Manuscripts should be between 10 and 25 pages, although shorter articles will be considered.


Website

http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/imwjournal
Contents

KIERKEGAARD'S VIEW OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT  
Brock Bahler  
1

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF TAHIR-UL-QADRI IN ITS ISLAMIC CONTEXT: UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF KHILAFAH AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MODERN SOCIETY IN LIGHT OF MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC TEACHINGS  
Zofshan Taj  
13

FEMININE IMAGES OF JESUS: LATER MEDIEVAL CHRISTOLOGY AND THE DEVALUATION OF THE FEMININE  
Jenny Bledsoe  
33

THE OUTCAST INDIVIDUAL: ABRAHAM AND AFFLICTION IN THE BROADER SOCIETY  
Timothy Rothhaar  
59

BOOK REVIEWS  
Cory Fritch, Daniel C. Dillard, Kendall Marchman  
75
Brock Bahler is a PhD student at Duquesne University where he also works as an editor at Duquesne University Press. His expertise is primarily continental philosophy and philosophy of religion and he has published articles addressing the work of Levinas, Derrida, and Augustine, respectively. Recently, he presented a paper at the Kierkegaard Society at the APA, entitled, “Kierkegaard’s ‘Greatness’: Human Subjectivity as an Ordinary Impossibility.”
Kierkegaard’s View of Religious Pluralism in Concluding Unscientific Postscript

INTRODUCTION

While the issue of religious pluralism, or inclusivism, seems implicit throughout the Postscript,¹ perhaps even constantly lingering on the fringes, it is not the central question of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus.² This should make us pause in raising the issue. Before asking whether one can insert any other religion in Climacus’s account of subjectivity, or pointing to Climacus’s existentialist structure as a metatheory that can be found in any way of being or God-relation,³ it is critical to consider what Climacus himself writes on the subject. Of course, since he suggests that everything he writes “is to be understood in such a way that it is revoked” (CUP 619), we should be

2. Out of respect for Kierkegaard’s own request to view the pseudonymous authors as the author of each text, I will refer to Johannes Climacus, rather than Kierkegaard, throughout this essay. For more on this matter, see Kierkegaard’s “A First and Last Explanation,” CUP 625–30.
wary of concluding we have arrived at an authoritative account. Indeed, anyone who references the text as an “authority,” according to Climacus, “has *eo ipso* misunderstood it” (618).

Nevertheless, in reading the text, one is constantly tossed between Climacus’s many statements that seem to offer varying views on the issue of pluralism. On the one hand, he bespeaks an openness to multiple faith-practices, stating that “whether Christianity is in the right, I do not decide” (CUP 369). He claims to represent a departure from the objective introductions to Christianity which tout the “superiority of Christianity over paganism, Judaism, etc” (383). And he famously asks: “If someone who lives in the midst of Christianity enters, with knowledge of the true idea of God, the house of God... and prays in untruth, and if someone lives in an idolatrous land but prays with all the passion of infinity, although his eyes are resting upon the image of an idol—where, then, is there more truth?” (201). At the same time, in other passages Climacus pushes for the uniqueness of Christianity, stating: “Christianity is the *only* historical phenomenon that... has wanted to be the single individual’s point of departure for his eternal consciousness” (15, my emphasis). “Christianity wants to lead the subject to the *ultimate point* of his subjectivity” (57, my emphasis). And finally, “To understand oneself in existence is also the *Christian principle*” (353). In light of these seemingly conflicting statements, I suggest that an ear to Climacus’s account of Socrates—leading to his account of Religiousness *A* and Religiousness *B*—provides a basic hermeneutic for handling the question of religious pluralism in the *Postscript*.

Before arriving at this point, however, I must reemphasize that the question, does this understanding of subjective truth open the door for other religions? is simply not a question Climacus would ask, for it elevates the objective over the subjective or single individual. Climacus is not concerned with the fate of other individuals, but states that he should only focus on himself: “I believe it would be appropriate discourse for a truly religious person if he said:
I do not doubt anyone's salvation; the only one I have fears about is myself” (*CUP* 389n). The question of the God-relation is always one's personal “affair” (561), and “the religious person does not allow himself to be disturbed by comparison with others” (582). He “forbids all comparison between individuals” (598), whether it concerns the question of one's adherence to Christianity or the God-relation of other cultures. While he criticizes the System for reducing China and Persia to a mere paragraph (133, 150–51, 150n, 154)—this reference to the “System” being a specific reference to Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, where ancient China and Persia are allotted a few pages in comparison to the heightened emphasis Hegel places on the German philosophy of his day—his response is not to try to do a better job of incorporating other cultures, but rather, to leave the question undecided, and like Socrates, to refrain from speaking about what he does not know.⁶

Second, clearly Climacus’s deep interest in the religious, in the passionate God-relation that constitutes true human subjectivity, is situated within the confines of (Danish and Lutheran) Christianity. It is a response to Christendom, which had made being a Christian just as natural as being human⁷—“as a

---

4. The religious individual is “not at all concerned whether everyone else is regarded as being religious” (*CUP* 508; cf. 436–37).

5. No doubt, Kierkegaard/Climacus is quite critical of what passes for “Christian” throughout Denmark, but that does not negate the fact that it remains the issue of the single individual: “Of course, to become a [cheap] edition of a Christian in all comfort is much easier, and just as good as the highest—after all, he is baptized, has received a copy of the Bible and a hymnbook as a gift; is he not, then, a Christian…? But that remains the business of the person involved” (*CUP* 557). This remained Kierkegaard’s (attempted) position throughout his career, writing in his late, self-authored work, “But I have attacked no one, saying that he is not a Christian; I have passed judgment on no one.” Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 15.

6. The human “must not go to the trouble of switching over to China and Persia…since it knows that the task is not to move from the individual to the race but from the individual through the race (the universal) to reach the individual” (*CUP* 428; cf. 464). This, according to Climacus, is also the way of Socrates (469). Clearly, Climacus has the Socrates of the *Apology* in mind, who narrates how he goes around from the poets, the craftsmen, and the orators only to find that all of them speak on subjects outside their areas of expertise.

7. At the same time, while Climacus disagrees with those trying “to naturalize Christianity, so
matter of course” (*CUP* 368, 373, 379, 588; cf. 367n)—a plea that those who are ‘Christian’ no longer settle for a “baptized paganism” and truly become a Christian (368; cf. 366). Thus, the *Postscript* only considers two positions—Christianity and paganism—and it is from paganism that Climacus takes Christianity’s “point of departure” (361–62). Here, interestingly enough, in a book heavily focused on critiquing Hegel’s System, we find an intriguing affinity between Climacus’s and Hegel’s respective projects.8

**SOCRATES**

Climacus suggests Christianity finds its “point of departure” from paganism through Socrates, whose passionate inwardness serves as a “[quasi-]analogue” to faith, or the absurd (*CUP* 205; cf. 503, 566). Paganism’s pantheism fails on two counts: (1) by annulling human existence through Platonic participation in Being (*ousia*), it leads to a “debauched contempt for individual human beings” (355),9 and thus, (2) claims to offer the human a direct relation to God, which is idolatry (243, 245, 246, 599, 600). Socrates, so it seems, is able to rise above that in the end to be a Christian and to be a human being are identical” (*CUP* 367n), some of his own statements about the relation between Christianity and subjectivity are equally problematic. Climacus writes, “It is really the God-relationship that makes a human being a human being” (244; cf. 353). So then, one is not born a Christian, but is it fair to say that one can only truly become a human being by becoming a Christian, to oppose a naturalized Christianity and yet condone a Christianized natural state as the *only* true natural state? Kierkegaard, no doubt, would admit that the God-relationship can be observed outside of Christianity—Socrates in paganism and Abraham and Job in Judaism serves as some of his chief archetypes throughout his pseudonymous works—but as we shall see later, it still seems he establishes a hierarchy between the Christian God-relation and all others.

8. H. S. Harris comments that Hegel developed his system as an “answer to the problem that troubled him from his schooldays onwards: ‘Why did Christianity triumph over paganism?’” H.S. Harris, *Hegel: Phenomenology and System* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 251.

9. Cf. *CUP* 122, 313. Climacus appears to be referring to Platonic participation when he speaks of “pantheism, the taking of oneself out of existence back into the eternal through recollection, whereby all existence-decisions become only shadow-play compared with what is eternally decided from behind…. The pantheist is eternally reassured backward” (226). Again, this should also be seen as a criticism of Hegel, whose *Phenomenology of Spirit* ends in a sort of pantheism where the history of human consciousness, or Spirit, turns out to be the “biography of God.” Harris, *Hegel: Phenomenology and System*, 81.
these criticisms, representing the “most decisive heterogeneity possible” within paganism (368). Climacus praises the “Socratic secret” that truth involves an inner, subjective “transformation” (38), the “Socratic ignorance” that does not speak directly to God “for fear of talking a lot of nonsense” (202; 90n), and the “Socratic wisdom” that is to know one is an “existing person” (204). “Socrates’ infinite merit is precisely that of being an existing thinker” (205; cf. 208), which makes him “in the truth in the highest sense within paganism” (204).

Critical to his praise of Socrates is the scene at the end of Plato’s Apology where he fearlessly accepts death in light of his positing the possibility in a positive afterlife, staking everything on the “if there is an immortality” (CUP 201). He “dares to die, and with the passion of the infinite” (201). He banks all of his eternal happiness on an “objective uncertainty” (205), a leap, a decision, which is what makes it analogous to faith. Climacus goes so far even to call it the “Socratic paradox,” namely “that the eternal truth [i.e., immortality] was related to an existing person [i.e., Socrates, the finite human]” (207). Yet, Climacus suggests we must “go beyond” Socrates and obtain a “more inward expression” of subjective truth (207). But this is not fully explicated until he famously distinguishes between Religiousness A and Religiousness B.

**RELIGIOUSNESS A**

Both Religiousness A and B “have passed through the ethical” (CUP 388), and thus, represent instances of subjectivity, express one’s “relation to an eternal

---

10. Once again, we must note the tension here between Kierkegaard/Climacus and Hegel, for in Hegel’s account of Socrates, this is precisely why Hegel is critical of the ancient sage. For Hegel, Socrates represents “the principle of subjectivity—of the absolute inherent independence of Thought. ...He taught that man has to discover and recognize in himself what is the Right and Good....Socrates...posited the Individual as capable of a final moral decision, in contraposition to Country and to customary Morality, and thus made himself an oracle, in the Greek sense. He said that he had a [daimonion] within him, which counseled him what to do.... The rise of the inner world of Subjectivity was the rupture with the existing Reality.” As a result, Hegel writes, “Many citizens now seceded from practical and political life, to live in the ideal world,” and Socrates’ questioning of the “Custom Morality” of the state turned out to be the “ruin of the Athenian state.” Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 269–70.
happiness” (559), and serve as examples of a God-relation. However, there are key differences between the two. Religiousness A is chiefly described as a kind of God-relation “not conditioned by a something but is the dialectical inward deepening of the relation, consequently conditioned only by the inward deepening” (556). In other words, it entails an awareness of oneself as an existing individual who seeks to “know thyself” through inwardly “reflecting upon existing” as an effort to connect the [finite] self with the infinite (570). Clearly, Climacus has Socrates in mind, and Climacus maintains this “pathos-filled” life is obtainable by anyone, regardless of religious affiliation, who “venture[s] everything upon the ‘if’ of immortality” (429; cf. 278–79; 557), for its basic premise is simply “universal human nature” (559; cf. 584).

This is the religiousness observed in paganism, not to mention certain positions within Christianity. Climacus has in mind here those who reduce the Christian life to spiritual trial or suffering—the Christian ascetic, mystic of the Middle Ages, or monk. They commit to a kind of Christianity saturated with Platonic participation and believe only certain lifestyles and activities are acceptable for a God-relation. This kind of Christianity is thoroughly pagan and is marred by a “split” in thought, a dualism between the sacred and the secular (cf. CUP 461, 473–74, 492). And while Religiousness A is surely better than much of the esthetic and ethical ways of living Climacus observes—especially of Hegelians who forget to exist at all (305–06)—it suffers from simultaneously remaining in the sphere of “immanence” and only having a negative relation to the eternal (560). Without any external polestar, its subjectivity only reflects on itself and its own understanding. Thus, in order to reach the eternal, this turn inward requires a “self-annihilation before God” (572). The individual must set “himself aside in order to find God, since it is the individual himself who is the

hindrance” (560). In other words, Climacus’s concerns with pantheism remain, as the individual is “cleared out,” and ultimately “sinks” or is “swallowed” by the eternal (560, 561, 573).

**RELIGIOUSNESS B**

Religiousness B also espouses an inwardness and even claims to be the “greatest possible” level of inwardness (CUP 572). Here, Climacus speaks of the “knight of hidden inwardness” (499, 500)—a clear reference to Kierkegaard’s earlier pseudonymous works but claiming certain differences. Climacus views the “knight of faith” in *Fear and Trembling* as “only a rash anticipation” of the religiousness set forth in the *Postscript*. He finds problematic that the knight of faith is depicted in a “state of completeness” and that there is a contradiction in that Johannes de Silentio is able to observe the knight of faith, which should be impossible if faith is subjective or inward (500–01n).

The inwardness of Religiousness B is not a sheer immanence, but is paradoxically related to “something outside the individual.” This gives the impression of a mere “esthetic relationship,” but in actual fact, it is “the absolute relationship with God.... The paradoxical upbuilding therefore corresponds to the category of God in time as an individual human being” (CUP 561). In other words, Religiousness B, or the “paradoxical-religious” (570, 573), goes beyond both paganism and reason—representing a “break with all thinking” into “the sphere of faith”

---

12. This one footnote strikes at the very heart at the question in this paper. For, it would be easy if looking at Kierkegaard’s entire pseudonymous corpus to, at the very least, include Judaism as an option for achieving the proper [paradoxical] God-relation, as Abraham and Job are given as chief examples. The implication in this footnote, however, is that just as the knight of faith is an “anticipation’ of the knight of hidden inwardness, Climacus views the external, law-based [though nevertheless still capable of paradox] faith observed in the Old Testament as an anticipation of the inward, subjective faith of the New Testament, or Christianity (a common view of the Old Testament by thinkers as varied as Aquinas and Luther). It would be hard to imagine, however, that Climacus would place Judaism within the same structure as paganism. If Christianity is “the sharpest contrast to paganism” (369), perhaps Judaism is another contrast, but not as extremely juxtaposed to paganism because it is not as paradoxical (perhaps, then, Judaism would be Religiousness A.2 or Religiousness B-Beta Version?).
(579)—precisely because it makes the paradoxical claim to relate to the eternal “in time” (570).

Climacus is actually making two claims here. First, there is the obvious reference to the God-man. Here what is paradoxical or “absurd” is the claim that God, who “according to its nature cannot become historical” does indeed come into existence, a “fact” which is precisely the essence of Christianity (CUP 385; cf. 326).13 Second, in contrast to the pagan’s self-annihilation, Climacus is making the (absurd) claim that one can have a relation with the eternal in time—that one can be eternal in time (cf. 573). Rather than annulling individual existence (as in A), this paradoxical God-relation “is connected essentially with being a human being, and qualitatively with each human being in particular” (566). Instead of the sheer immanence in paganism, “Christianity indeed paradoxically accentuates existing” and “breaks with immanence and makes existing the absolute contradiction—not within immanence but in opposition to immanence. There is no immanental underlying kinship between the temporal and the eternal, because the eternal itself has entered into time and wants to establish kinship there” (572–73).

Here, then, we see why Climacus views Religiousness B as going beyond the religiousness found in Socrates. The existence of the “Greek philosopher… yields passion, but existence accentuated paradoxically yields the maximum of passion” (CUP 354). The pagan can lead a “pathos-filled” life and emphasize the importance of being a particular individual, banking everything on the “‘if’ of immortality,” but Religiousness B requires more, namely that the individual also “risk his thought, venture to believe against understanding” (429).

---

13. That Christianity is based on a “fact,” would imply that some level of content is important for Climacus’s account of subjective truth. However, one is left fumbling in trying to understand the difference between a “doctrine” and a “fact” in his account.
CONCLUSION

There remain plenty of questions we could ask Climacus: Is Christianity the only religion to boast the importance of a subjective inwardness? Is the God of Christianity the only one concerned with the particular individual? Could it be that other religions are based on an absolute paradox? But Climacus will not give an ear to such questions. He is infinitely, passionately interested in his question, his life, his religiousness, his relation to God. We may fault him for not having eyes big enough to consider the religions of the rest of the world; but, perhaps, to ask the question of other religions is to annul the subjective viewpoint.

Climacus’s intense focus on the single individual, in contradistinction to the emphasis on the concept, the abstract, and the universal, then, should cause us to question if the appropriation of Kierkegaard’s religious views into some kind of meta-theory or structure of religious experience as really just a return to Hegel. Derrida, for example, once claimed that “it is Kierkegaard to whom I have been most faithful.” Yet, Derrida’s concept of a “religion without religion” as a general structure or “axiom of impossibility” requires a removal of any particularistic or determinant aspects of Kierkegaard’s category, “the religious,” and thus, would involve a complete removal of any connections it may have with Christianity. For Derrida/Caputo, “God” is conflated with “the impossible,” resulting in “the endless translatability and substitutability of these names” and “a wall of undecidability.”

While such a move may have some linguistic merit—although it seems to result in a bit of a tautology—as well as reflecting the contemporary desire for a

16. Ibid., 21.
17. For example, Caputo states early on in the essay, “We must be driven to the point … where we see the impossibility that without God we cannot so much as take a walk in the Deer Park” (Ibid.,
more inclusive and pluralistic attitude toward religion, it must be acknowledged that such a turn reflects a betrayal of Kierkegaard’s understanding of the God-relation and the particularistic nature of the existential condition. Conflating God to an abstract concept like “the impossible,” is a Hegelian movement that Kierkegaard (at least here in the Postscript) would most certainly criticize, just as much as he would be critical of Hegelian movements which reduce the God-relation to one’s duty to love thy neighbor—which is precisely how the Phenomenology of Spirit ends, where “Reason’s Law is the law of universal Charity”\(^{18}\)—a move which removes any notion of transcendence and limits human activity to the political/ethical realm.\(^{19}\) Kierkegaard/Climacus would be staunchly opposed to any of the philosophical movements which locate the telos of Christianity in a secular modernity and reduces all the claims of Christianity to the imperative of love for one’s neighbor, which reflect not only the position of Derrida/Caputo\(^ {20}\) but also Žižek’s “Christian atheism”\(^ {21}\) and Vattimo’s secular nihilism.\(^ {22}\)

For Climacus, if the single individual has not banked his entire life and eternal happiness on Christianity, if he has not taken the particular leap of faith that constitutes Christianity, is it not a bit disingenuous? To hold back and lay

---

13–14). If we are to agree with him that “the impossible” can be a suitable replacement for the name of “God,” the above quotation would be reduced to saying “we see the impossibility that without the impossible we cannot so much as take a walk in the Deer Park,” and one of the integral verses to which Kierkegaard often alludes to throughout his corpus would then read “for with the impossible nothing will be impossible” (cf. Luke 1:37).

19. Cf. Fear and Trembling, 96, where Johannes de Silentio begins his Problema II with this very point.
claims to multiple faith-traditions simultaneously would not be to embrace any one paradox, be in subjective relation to the God, exhibit any kind of devotion or pathos, or take any risk—and, “Without risk, no faith” (CUP 204)—but, rather, would appear to objectively keep one’s options open, like increasing one’s odds of winning a gamble in a horse race by betting on every horse. In contrast, Climacus concludes: “Religiousness B is isolating, separating, is polemical. Only in this condition do I become blessed, and as I absolutely bind myself to it, I thereby exclude everyone else. This is the impetus of particularism in the ordinary pathos” (582).
Zofshan Taj originated from the small town of Slough in southeast England. She received her B.A. in History and Politics at Queen Mary University of London and has begun her M.A. in Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) this September. This, she hopes, will enable her to pursue her desire of becoming a lecturer and forming a career in the field of academia. Upon completion of her M.A., she intends to continue towards PhD studies; her main subject interest being the Islamic State, its political and historical dimensions, and Islamic theology with a particular interest in the 11th century theologian Al-Ghazzali. She takes a keen interest in Middle Eastern religion and society and is also interested in the history of the region, especially regarding the early development and formative period of the medieval Islamic world. Her studies, thus far, have enabled her to gain an insight into the existing political situation of the Islamic world within the Middle East, and how or to what extent history has molded contemporary events.
Zofshan Taj

The Political Thought of Tahir-ul-Qadri in its Islamic Context: Understanding the Concept of Khilafa and its Relevance to Modern Society in Light of Medieval Islamic Teachings

Introduction

Juda ho deen siyasat se, tau reh jati ha changazi (If governmental rule becomes devoid of religious righteousness then that which remains is changazi [ruthlessness/tyranny, referring to the time of Genghis Khan’s rule]). The above aphorism, as expressed by the distinguished Pakistani poet and philosopher Allama Iqbal, accurately summarizes the political thought of Tahir-ul-Qadri, a leading Islamic thinker from Pakistan, whose work I intend to critically explore within this paper. The present work is therefore essentially an analysis of the Islamic political thought of Tahir-ul-Qadri on the concept of Islamic khilafa (rule/government) and its relevance to modern society, in comparison to medieval Islamic political thought.

The need for an Islamic state within the modern era emerged due to the

1. Righteousness here means moral and ethical justice.
dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Arab nationalism, which triggered a galvanizing reaction across the Muslim world especially in the Indian subcontinent, thus introducing the idea of establishing an Islamic state which would solely cater for Islamic ideals of social justice. The impact of expansionist Europe was pivotal in how it shaped the thoughts and aims of both Islamic modernism and fundamentalism, for both were driven by the same experience of Europe’s technical and military superiority. The negative impact of colonialism created fertile ground for the growth of radical Islamist movements such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood.

This development within the Islamic world has summoned modern Muslim intellectuals like Tahir-ul-Qadri to explore the debate over the future role of the Islamic state, that is, how Islam has become a state-centric political ideology fit for radicals to exploit by dispossessing Islam of its moral content and disdaining its role as a din (a system of life which encompasses both religious and secular aspects). What makes Qadri’s political thought unique from that of any other modern thinker such as Sayyid Qutb (who also has much to contribute on the topic of khilafah and Islamic rule), is the unyielding and resolute austerity of his viewpoint and his ability to deploy a vast array of traditional Islamic authorities across the spectrum of medieval Islamic political thought, to legitimate his notion of Islamic rule, and yet simultaneously hold the ability to portray Islam as a progressive religion able to effectively function in the modern era. Qadri is engaging in an intellectual debate not only with Muslims of Pakistan and Muslim youth in the West, but also with Western academia. In doing so, he has challenged their views on the out-datedness of khilafah and its inability to adapt to contemporary society.

This paper shall seek to relate Qadri’s modern political thought on the Islamic state to the historical view of khilafah and assess how the socio-political

context, which he was exposed to in Pakistan, influenced his political thought, and to what extent Western political thought has affected his view on the future role of the Islamic state. To this extent, the present work may challenge the notion that modern Islamic political thought on *khilafa* is solely based on medieval Islamic teachings. To the contrary, it may be the present global world order and influence of the Western state system which has more so affected modern Islamic political thought.

**A MODERN INTERPRETATION OF KHILAFA: UNDERSTANDING TERMINOLOGY AND ERADICATING MISCONCEPTIONS**

There is no one specific vision of the Islamic state and this is very much apparent in the views of both medieval and modern Islamic political thinkers, most obviously because there is no common consensus among them on the general structure and role of the Islamic state. The reason for such disparity may be due to the nature of Shari’a (Islamic law based on the Qur’an and Sunnah), which is perceived to be like a vast ocean that knows no bounds, and the Islamic state itself is alleged to be an ideological state; its main purpose being the implementation of the will of God. How one goes about fulfilling this task will vary because Shari’a is an open system of law which has no conceptual or theoretical closure; it is constantly evolving due to the use of *ijtihad* (a methodological term within the context of Shari’a which describes the process of independently
interpreting the Qur’an and Sunnah in order to make a legal decision or ruling.

Consequently it may be argued that Shari’ā takes the role of an overarching umbrella which determines the characteristics of the Islamic state. The advantage of this is that the Islamic state can change and adapt to circumstance. A plausible disadvantage may be that within the same time period, more than one concept of the Islamic state could arise. Such discrepancy is evident in the writings of many medieval Islamic thinkers. Analyzing the thoughts of thinkers like Mawardi, Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Taymiyya upon the concept of khilafa will consequently enable one to understand the affect medieval Islamic political thought has had on modern scholars such as Tahir-ul-Qadri, thereby forming a comparison between modern and medieval Islamic political thought on the Islamic state.

Before moving on to explore Tahir-ul-Qadri’s view of the Islamic state, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider and briefly shed some light on his political career (essentially based in Pakistan), for this, to some extent, would have influenced his thoughts on khilafa and the role of the Islamic state in the contemporary era. Qadri’s political career began in 1989 when he founded the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), his own political party, and was elected as a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, representing his constituency of Lahore, Pakistan. However, after many years of working as an opposition leader in the National Assembly, Qadri decided to issue his resignation from the As-

---


6. While there are many medieval Muslim scholars who have written on the Islamic state, the focal point of interest for the present work shall lay in the teachings of the above mentioned three scholars, essentially because they reflect the broad spectrum of varying opinion on the Islamic state which was prevalent within the tradition of medieval Islamic political thought, and all three scholars were from different time periods within the medieval era and thus reflect the changing trend of Islamic political thought.
This resignation was issued in the form of a comprehensive critique of the Pakistani political system. He declared in his resignation statement that “in my understanding, this Assembly is no longer an assembly. The role which the Pakistani constitution has given to the Assembly is not exercised by it. This Assembly does not have its own agenda; it works for the personal agendas of the originators of this Assembly.”

It was not made clear during his interview with the Pakistani news channel PTV of whom precisely Tahir-ul-Qadri was referring when he spoke of the “originators.” Yet as Qadri explained in his resignation statement, the essential function of an assembly is to discuss the domestic and international issues of a nation and make decisions in accordance with the needs of that nation. Such functions, according to Qadri, are not being carried out by the Pakistani government. He makes a very important point regarding the internal functioning of the Pakistani government in stating that there has been no significant discussion on important geopolitical and regional issues such as eliminating terrorism or Pakistan’s international relations. What has been discussed is the simple and meaningless drafting of legislation which will inevitably be passed without one’s consent; in other words, handling small issues of no affect. No doubt the obvious implication which Qadri has made here is a lack of sovereignty.

One of the fundamental root causes, as noted by Tahir-ul-Qadri, which has led to such situations as described above and has hindered so-called modern Islamic states like Pakistan from effectively governing their populace is a basic inability to understand the very nature of Islam as a dīn as opposed to a religion.

---

9. Ibid.
in the Western sense of the term. On being questioned regarding his motive behind the formation of the Minhaj-ul-Quran movement in 1980, Tahir-ul-Qadri mentioned in an interview, that the fundamental reason for his establishing this organization was a need to address and correct the misconception of Islam as a religion, in the Western sense of the term’s meaning, as opposed to *dīn.*

*Dīn* is a concept alien to Western political policy due to the almost uniform separation of state and church. Many Islamic organizations, in Qadri’s view, make the mistake of limiting their aim to focusing only on the religious aspects of life. There is consequently no emphasis on secular education or development. Thus, the global perspective of Islam is seen as being grounded in religious aspects of Shari’a only. This has caused problems in understanding what Islamic knowledge consists of and what the basic role of the Islamic state should be. Those who have extensive knowledge on Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and other religious aspects of life are sometimes ignorant of modern subjects such as political science, economics, and so on. They are, therefore, often unqualified for providing the direction and leadership necessary to resolve political or socio-economic predicaments, even in light of their knowledge of Islam. This evaluation can also be applied in the case of those who do possess secular knowledge and are aware of today’s political issues and circumstance, but are ignorant of the Islamic position in such matters. They do not know how to view current issues from a religious point of view; their knowledge is based in non-Islamic, Western teaching.

Tahir-ul-Qadri believes that *deenī taleem* (*dīn* education) and *mazhabi taleem* (religious education) are two different concepts. *Mazhabi taleem* essentially concentrates on education which concerns the study of classical Islamic texts, Hadith and Quranic studies, Islamic theology, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and so forth, without placing much emphasis on the implications of such studies upon the secular aspects of life. *Deeni taleem*, on the other hand, is an all-encom-

---

10. Ibid.
passing totality which incorporates both *mazhabi taleem* (religious education) and *dunyavi taleem* (secular education).\(^{11}\) It implements Shari’a into one’s practical life by integrating teachings taken from classical Islamic texts and making them applicable to present social, economic, and political circumstances. In this way, Qadri argues that Islam is unlike Christianity and Judaism; it is a *dīn*. This is important to take into consideration when contemplating the fundamental format and functions of the Islamic state. The message which Qadri is trying to convey is plain: a true Islamic state cannot be formed with a misconception of the basic nature of the Islamic system. Islam must first be understood for what it truly is – a *dīn* as opposed to a religion.

In viewing the modern perception of Islam, that is, how the Islamic state would function in modern society, in light of this concept of *dīn*, Tahir-ul-Qadri emphasizes the practicality of Islam as a functioning system, applicable to all times. He views Shari’a as a system with no conceptual closure due to its constant evolution over time. Qadri explains that there are two aspects to Islam: First, the basic structure and fundamental principles of Islam, which are constant and unchanging. In this he makes reference to the Qur’an and Sunnah, which are an *abadi hidaayat* (eternal guidance). The second, he claims, is man-made law which, with the graduation of time, becomes outdated due to man’s inability to perceive and envision the changes which society shall face.\(^{12}\) In society, man-made laws change with circumstance in order for man to survive and meet the changes encountered. He thinks Islamic knowledge has been able to fulfill man’s needs to date due to *ijtihad*, the adaptable element in Islamic law. Legislation through *ijtihad* permits new interpretations according to changing circumstance, which is supported by the Qur’an and Sunnah.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

Qadri gives the example of the “four schools of thought,” each of which lays its foundation in Shari’a. Consequently, any rules made within the different schools will not conflict the integral law of Shari’a. Hence the same basic principles can be used and interpreted in different ways to seek and fulfill the different needs in society according to the philosophies of each school. Qadri describes *ijtihad* as a device which allows for a “reconstructive spirit” to be prevalent within Shari’a, while preventing Islam from becoming an outdated *dīn* in the future.

Explaining this concept of *dīn* and its relevance to modernity is vital for understanding Qadri’s definition of *khilafa*, since the latter could only be made clear when explained in light of the correct understanding of *dīn*. When explaining the true concept of *khilafa*, Tahir-ul-Qadri clarifies that “the political authority of the Muslim Ummah (community) whatever the shape or form has been given the nomenclature of *khilafa*. So, *khilafa* denotes Islamic rule or government. However, when taken in its most literal sense the term *khilafa* may be defined as *niyaabah* (trusteeship) and *amaanah* (vicegerency).

This form of vicegerency is not restricted to the political sense, as is evident in the varying references made to the term *khilafa* within the Qur’an. In Surah Hadid (Qur’an 57:7), the economic sense of the term is used: “Believe in Allah and His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) and spend (in His cause) out of that (wealth) in which He has made you His vicegerents (and trustees).” This, according to Tahir-ul-Qadri, is “*istikhlaaf fil-‘maal*” (economic vicegerency); being a trustee or *khalifa* of God’s wealth or *maal* (to spend it in the right way and use it for good deeds). In Surah Nur (Qur’an 24:55) reference to the political sense of leadership and government is made, which Qadri refers

13. These are the four schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) within Sunni Islam (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi‘i and Hanbali); each named after a medieval scholar who began that specific school of jurisprudence.
to as “*istikhlaaf fil-Siyasah*” (political vicegerency): “He will surely bestow upon them Khilafa (the trust of right to rule) as He granted (the right to) rule to those who were before them.”

*Khilafa* in relation to government (political vicegerency) would therefore indicate the rule of man on earth as God’s vicegerent. The varying economic and political usages of the term *khilafa* confirm that the underlying concept of *khilafa* as vicegerency is applicable in all aspects of life; hence, supporting the definition of Islam as an all-encompassing *din*.

In agreement with the medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyya, Qadri views *khilafa* as an underlying concept with no specific form. Although Ibn Taymiyya did not express concern over the need to establish an ideological Islamic state, he did however disagree with the belief that the Qur’an has issued a given constitution which outlines the precise format of the ideal Islamic state. In doing so, Tamiyya removed Quranic legitimacy from the traditional claim of the theory of *khilafa*. The state was only significant in that it institutionalized the preeminence of Islam by establishing religious norms in society. For Ibn Taymiyya, the Islamic state need not be visualized in a specific form with particular physical characteristics, on the condition that the state put into practice the fundamental principle of implementing God’s will.

Likewise, Qadri agrees that there have been many changes over time in the basic nature of political rule (monarchic, aristocratic, democratic) and this has resulted in many political developments in human society (federations, unitary governments, presidential systems, parliamentary systems, and so on). In light of this, any state can be an Islamic state, on the condition that the policy made by the state and the principles upon which it is governed are positively in accordance with Shari’a law. In pursuit of this, all state policies must be made under

18. Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328 CE) lived in the time period during which the Mongols invaded the Muslim world. Having to flee his homeland as a refugee Ibn Taymiyya naturally felt hostility towards the Mongol rulers who eventually embraced Islam. He however denounced the Mongols as unbelievers by asserting that they still followed parts of the Yasa code, which were non-Islamic, and had therefore not adopted Shari’a in its entirety.
the shade of Islamic supremacy, and must be subservient to Shari’a. Qadri explains that “the different forms of government are just various mechanisms and suitabilities.” These are *ijtihaadi*, that is, matters with no specific law or ruling on them, which may change with circumstance.

Qadri thus defines *khilafa* as a system with an open structure, and refers to this system of Islamic rule as “*khilafat-e-Ilahi,*” for which the English equivalent is *theocracy*. However, he also notes that there is a fundamental difference between Islamic theocracy and the Western theocracy of the past. The form of theocracy which is known to Islam is fundamentally different from the theocracy of medieval Europe, wherein a religious priestly class exercised unchecked authority by implementing and legalizing laws in God’s name. Islamic theocracy, on the other hand, is not governed by a particular group of religious elites; the input of the entire Islamic community is required for it to function. The Islamic state system can, therefore, be termed a ‘theo-democracy’ due to the element of divine legislation, which attributes the Islamic state with a limited popular sovereignty. The Islamic government is a democracy in the sense that all such issues, in which there is no direct ruling of divine law, can be resolved through *ijtihad*. However, on those issues for which there is a specific law, it must be obeyed. This mandate reveals its theocratic nature in the sense that this rule or law either in the Qur’an or Sunnah cannot be repealed or overruled by man-made law, whether the latter is formed by a learned jurist or a common man.

While this may be seen as an infringement upon one’s freedom and liberty, one may argue that God has taken the right to legislate law not to restrict man’s freedom, but to safeguard and protect it. Hence God has imposed divine limits in certain cases which may be regulated according to circumstance, but not overruled. The commonality between Islamic *jamuriyya* (democracy) and non-Islamic *jamuriyya* is that the majority opinion is respected in both cases. The difference is that in Islamic *jamuriyya* the majority opinion cannot amend,
appeal, or abrogate Shari’a law. Sanctity of the vote does not mean abrogation of Shari’a. This is the condition; this is khilafa.

The deliberate ambiguity in the structural nature of Islamic government and rule is further reflected in the example of the prophet, Muhammad, who decided to leave the appointment of the next khalifa (leader of Islamic community) open to the ummah rather than nominating the next leader himself. This, according to Qadri, was so that the opportunity for political development would not be lost and the doors opened to ijtihad would not be closed. This also shows that the specific format of leadership was not so important for Muhammad to give a precise one; he left this open to the ummah, and consequently declared this to be an “ijtihaadi matter.”20

Tahir-ul-Qadri sees this as evident in the different methods of election or appointment experienced during the time of rule of the Khulfa-e-rashideen (four rightly-guided khalifas)21. In a similar manner to the medieval theologian Ibn Khaldun,22 Qadri attributes a democratic significance to the medieval methods of election and nomination, by introducing the concept of bay’a as a form of vote.23 Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddimah explained the concept of bay’a (an oath of allegiance to the ruler) as a means to formalize one’s contract with one’s ruler; “they put their hands into his hand to confirm the contract.”24 In a similar way, taking the example of the election of Uthman (the third khalifa), Qadri describes how there was a difference of opinion on who should be the next khalifa and many had directly approached Ali to do bay’a on his hands, yet he refused,

20. Ibid.
21. The four rightly-guided khalifas were the successors of the Prophet Muhammad and representatives of the Muslim community after him; namely Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib.
22. Born in 1332 CE, Khaldun was a medieval Islamic scholar and theologian who lived in a North African tribal society during a period of decline for Islam.
23. Tahir-ul-Qadri, The Islamic State, DVD.
stating that this matter is the right of the shura (Parliament) to decide.

Two points are to be noted here: First, bay’a is giving your opinion, casting your vote, consenting to choose or appoint someone as your representative or as head of the state. At that time there was no procedure involving ballot papers or ballot boxes. So the people would express their opinion and consent in the form of bay’a, which was not just a process or part of khilafa, but rather was a common method of declaring your intention, will, and commitment to something or someone. In the political sense, bay’a was an expression of opinion on a potential leader. Qadri thus considers voting to be the modern form of bay’a.25

Secondly, the shura during the life of Muhammad was a parliament consisting of representatives for the community, from the community, who discussed issues related to the community. It was divided between two houses: shura-e-khaas (special house) and shura-e-a’am (general house). Of course, one must mention here that parliament is an English word, which cannot be found in any translation of the Qur’an or Sunnah. The fundamental point to remember is that the shura is a house of representatives comprised of senior community members who have been elected or appointed by the community.

In the case of Uthman’s election, both the shura-e-khaas and shura-e-a’am seemed to be equally divided on the issue of whether to elect Uthman or Ali. Hence, a final decision was to be made by the general approval of the community. This, according to Qadri, was done in the form of a referendum by the “chief election commissioner,” Abdul Rahman bin Auf. Again, although this specific title is not mentioned in any Hadith,26 Qadri explains that one might find the title chief election commission helpful considering the responsibilities of Abdul Rahman bin Auf, which were to conduct the election, get the opinions of the people, and obtain their votes by consulting them. It is important to place

25. Tahir-ul-Qadri, The Islamic State, DVD.
26. Hadith are narrative compilations of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, and are extensively used within Islamic jurisprudence and to get a better understanding of the teachings of the Qur’an.
emphasis upon the function, not the specific term itself, for the difference in Arabic and English cannot render the concept Islamic or un-Islamic. He was appointed for *istikwaab-ul-a'am*, which Tahir-ul-Qadri interprets to mean ‘general election’ or referendum, since every sane and senior member was consulted from the community. Through this referendum, Uthman was appointed as the third khalifa. He was not appointed with the *bay'a* of the *shura*, he was appointed by the direct vote and opinion of the citizens, on the basis of adult franchise (common vote of the people).

This interpretation of Qadri’s can be seen as contrasting that of Mawardi’s, whose theory of *khilafa* required that only those authorized to elect could do so, for Abu Bakr was initially elected only by five persons. It is interesting to note that Mawardi has used Abu Bakr’s election method as a means to condone the need for popular consent. In contrast to Mawardi, Tahir-ul-Qadri sees the elective method of Uthman as signifying how important it was to consult the *jamhoor* (majority opinion). Qadri has therefore used the very same examples of the elective methods of the *khulafa-e-rashideen* to support approval of the use of popular consent.

Regarding the notion that there should be one khalifa and Islamic head for the whole world, Qadri agrees with Ibn Khaldun who approved of the simultaneous existence of more than one imam (who need not be of *Qureshi* descent), on the condition that they administer in different and vastly separated

27. Mawardi, a native of Basra, born in 972 CE, was a judge by profession in Baghdad. He belonged to the Sunni Shaf’i School of jurisprudence, although he was often known to play the devil’s advocate when disputes arose between the Shi’ite Buwayhids and the Abbasids. The bulk of his Islamic political thought is found in his *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah* (Ordinances of Government), which were written with the intent of re-asserting the lost authority of the Abbasid Khilafa. About this latter point, see Erwin, I.J. Rosenthal, *Political thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1958), 27.


29. The Qureshi people were members of the Qureish Tribe, the leading tribe of Makkah during the appearance and rise of Islam.
geographical territories, thus making communication difficult between provinces. One may thus conclude that Ibn Khaldun approved of the *nation-state*: an independent territorially bound province consisting of a community bound by the unifying force of *asabiyya*.

Similarly, Qadri also explains that if the Muslim ummah unite anywhere, create a society and install a head from among them, this would be *khilafa*. He further explains that the inability of Muslims to establish *khilafa* is due to their persistence on wrongly interpreting the concept of ummah. For Qadri the basic reason for the establishment of the Islamic state is so as to maintain *iltizam al-jam’mah* (organized collectivity), be it one state or a plurality of states. To this extent he again agrees with Ibn Khaldun on the necessity of maintaining *asabiyya* within the community to keep it intact, for which a social contract—although established in theory by Western thinkers such as Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke—is a common need for all humans, be they citizens of a Muslim or non-Muslim country. An organized society fulfilling certain conditions with certain characteristics is a state.

Muhammad is purported to have said that if there are three Muslims traveling together, they should appoint one of them as their *amir* (leader). This hadith was used by Ibn Taymiyya to legitimize submission to tyrannical rule, for despite his antagonism towards the Mongols, Ibn Taymiyya believed in the importance of obeying a ruler in order to maintain stability in society. He granted

---

30. See Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, 372. Khaldun describes *asabiyya* in his *Muqaddimah* as a cohesive force or a feeling of group solidarity which is narrowed into one particular person from that group, who takes the position of authority and moves towards kingship. He saw dynasties as having a cycle of growth and decline which lasts for three generations. Dynasties are strongest when the feeling of *asabiyya* is at its peak in the first generation. In the second generation this group feeling is diluted to some extent due to “proud superiority” on the part of the ruler, who is living under the illusion that the conditions of *asabiyya* are the same, yet a gradual shift of loyalty is noticed. In the third generation, the dynasty faces complete annihilation due to the absence of *asabiyya* and the reliance on external support rather than support from within the group or community itself.

31. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Islamic State*, DVD.

his approval for the need to follow the ruler no matter what his political temper-
ament and reasons for holding power may be and defended this rather despotic
view by exploiting the hadith that “sixty years of rule under a tyrant Imam is
better than a night without an Imam.” He also supported this claim by making
reference to the above mentioned Hadith regarding the three travellers.

Qadri on the other hand, uses this Hadith to make an altogether different
claim: that by stating this, Muhammad never declared that there should only be
one amir, imam, sultan or khalifa in the entire world. In light of this interpreta-
tion, Muhammad’s philosophy was the establishment of khilafa wherever one is.
Since the basic reason for the state is to protect its citizens, neither law nor order
could be established if all Muslims, who live thousands of miles away from one
another, were under worldwide leadership; that is, the basic needs and necessities
of citizens could not be fulfilled. Practically, there should be one khalifa in
each place, and one khalifa for each society, thus providing an alternate meaning
of the word one in the Hadith regarding the three travelers.

Tahir-ul-Qadri provides, as an example, the first state established by Mu-
hammad in Madinah (Medina), which was a state established solely for Madi-
nah, thereby supporting the notion of a territorial state. Since this state exclud-
ed the people of Thul Hulaifa, who were an independent Muslim community
situated between Madinah and Makkah (Mecca), the former did not fall under
Muhammad’s authority in the same way as the latter and had its own independ-
ent political entity. Furthermore, the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah did not bind the
people of Thul Hulaifa nor even apply to them. One may consequently infer
from this that Tahir-ul-Qadri, in agreement with Ibn Khaldun, understands the
concept of nation-state, or to the idea of having more than one Islamic leader, as

33. Qamar-ud Din Khan, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya (Islamabad: Islamic Research
Institute, 1973), 31.
34. After a series of lengthy battles between the Muslims led by the Prophet Muhammad and the
Pagans of Makkah, a treaty for peaceful coexistence was signed between the Muslims and the Tribe
of Qureish (who were Pagans at the time and still ruled the City of Makkah) for ten years.
fundamental in Islam.

A contrasting view to this perspective would be that of Mawardi who did not agree with there being more than one imam, and was thus against the view that Islam can undergo a geographical divide. He argued that two imams cannot rule simultaneously and thus held to a pan-Islamic global view of khilafa. It is possible that Mawardi held to this view in order to declare unlawful the Buwayhid rule, as well as what remained of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain during his era. The idea that there may be a separate Turkish Islam, Iranian Islam, and Arab Islam as we have today would thus have been implausible for Mawardi.

CONCLUSION: A PLAUSIBLE WAY FORWARD

As mentioned earlier, there is no one specific perception of the Islamic state in terms of its role and functioning. From among the works of the medieval theologians/scholars analyzed within this paper, one could argue that Mawardi’s view of the Islamic state could be likened to that of a despotic-aristocracy, whereas Ibn Khaldun took a more democratic approach to the monarchical system of rule, and Ibn Taymiyya, although not declaring any preference, did suggest the need for popular consent. However, if taken to the extreme his views can also be seen as anarchical and somewhat despotic. The reason for such differences is essentially due to the socio-political and historical contexts which each of the medieval thinkers were exposed to. For Mawardi, it was a case of balancing authority between the two poles of Sunnism and Shi’ism, whereas for Ibn Khaldun it was a matter of reviving lost morale and power of the North African tribal system and for Ibn Taymiyya, it was neither an issue of balance nor revival, but rather that of rebellion against external influence and control from the Mongols. However, one commonality which is seen in the thoughts of all three scholars and which united their ultimate purpose for the establishment of the Islamic state was the need to implement the will of God by enforcing Shari‘a into one’s practical life.
It is precisely this aim which unites Qadri’s view of the Islamic State to the views of the medieval theologians; to implement Shari’a into one’s life as a *din*. Qadri has consequently proposed a plausible way forward in order for the Islamic state to survive and progress in modern society. He believes that the failed Islamic states of today are in need of *fikri-inkilaab* (intellectual or ideational revolution). Giving the example of Pakistan as one among many failed Islamic states of the contemporary era, Qadri believes that Pakistani culture and people as yet have not adopted the culture of democracy, and so it is necessary for the institutions to have power rather than the politicians, in order to avoid corruption. A similar observation can also be made for other Islamic states primarily within the near and Middle East, such as Egypt and Sudan. Qadri argues that there is no democracy in the societies of such states, whether in homes, at school or in the functioning of the government. Democracy has not been established in the state as a psyche and culture. This intellectual revolution, therefore, needs to be approached from various angles: educational, theological and ideational, in order to establish a moderate peaceful view of Islam and a culture of democracy.\(^\text{35}\)

This is why Qadri has called for the need of socio-economic developments to remove poverty in Pakistan, and make education inexpensive and accessible to all. Education has unfortunately become an industry, a trade in Pakistan. The poor have no access to good quality education even in state institutions, and private education is too expensive. The only means of education available to them is through the *madrasa*,\(^\text{36}\) where a student is given free food and clothing in order to reduce expenses. The poor do not care about where their children’s education will lead them, as long as they have food and clothing. Whether one is being trained to become a peaceful citizen or a terrorist is not significant; for


\(^{36}\) The term *madrasa* generally means “school.” However, in this context the term is specifically referring to the religious schools within Islamic countries such as Pakistan which solely cater for Islamic education.
them their economic deadlock has been resolved.

Qadri has consequently proposed a system similar to that which is common in the Western welfare state systems in order to eliminate poverty and reduce extremism. He explains how the Islamic *din* has become enclosed within the bounds of religion and handed over to the *madrasa*. It was not always like this, he says, worldly and religious knowledge were given equal importance and from this same fountain of knowledge dispersed the Ghazalis, Ibn Rushds, scientists and scholars. Now the division between the two has created two different and separate perceptions of life. There is, therefore, a fundamental need to amalgamate the two and to end the hatred of modern secular thinkers towards Islam, by putting an end to this religious stereotype of Islam.37

According to Bernard Lewis, foreign policy being a product of the European imagination is alien to the Islamic world, due to the distinction Islam makes between the *Dar al-Islam* (abode of Islamic territorial world) and *Dar al-Harb* (abode of the non-Islamic territorial world).38 This is further emphasized by Ehteshami, who argues that Islam has a minimal role to play within the global world order and international relations, since the international order is dominated by secular states who exclude religion from any active participation in the political governing of state relations.39

In light of such views, Qadri, seeing the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as ineffective and an inadequate representative of Muslim states within the global arena, has proposed a plausible solution to improving the role of the Islamic state in international relations. He proposes that the future success of the Muslim ummah can be achieved through the means of a union similar to

that of the European Union. Qadri stresses that there is a need to progress towards the idea of a Muslim economic community by opening trade zones within the international Muslim ummah and creating a world Islamic bank (or global Muslim bank), and wherever cooperation within regions is possible, forming common defense alliances. Whoever is able among a few leading states in Muslim countries can lead into this development and form a global funding system for the creation of this type of international community by opening up markets to each other in order to help strengthen one another’s economies, social statuses, and to bring democracy into their societies. This may be accomplished by binding the nations under the umbrella figure of the Muslim ummah, with the Islamic states ultimately retaining their separate identities.

Consensus is at the heart of Islamic doctrine and the circumstance in which we find ourselves today as a result of globalization has made it all the more easy for Islam to achieve its goal of creating a truly global community of independent Islamic states. Similar to Qadri’s theory of a global Muslim ummah, El-Affendi in *Who Needs an Islamic State?* suggests that “an Islamic territory must be governed by a pluralistic polity of coexisting but independent communities, governed by treaties rather than a constitution.” This, he argues, “is less ambitious than a khilafat and falls well short of the building of an EU-type union of Muslim states, but could lead to it eventually.”

---


42. Ibid., 33.
Jenny Bledsoe: Feminine Images of Jesus

Jenny Bledsoe recently graduated from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in honors religious studies and honors English literature with minors in Latin and history. In August 2011, Jenny began a Master of Theological Studies program at Harvard Divinity School, with a focus on religion, literature, and culture. Her research interests lie particularly in literature, religion, and gender in late medieval England. Jenny loves to delve into the mysteries of a centuries-old culture and has received several rewards for her work, including two UT Knoxville Chancellor’s Citations for Undergraduate Research in the Humanities. Jenny has presented her research at eight academic conferences.
Feminine Images of Jesus: Later Medieval Christology and the Devaluation of the Feminine

During the later medieval period in Western Europe, feminine representations of Jesus abounded. Medieval Christians had begun to emphasize the humanity of Jesus in reaction to the religious foci of the era before their own (early medieval focus on the spirit and Jesus’ resurrection), and seemed to find that “feminine” characteristics were most expressive of the human nature of Jesus. During the later medieval period (1000–1500 CE, encompassing both the “high” and “late” medieval periods), motherhood was valued. Medieval motherhood was cast in a positive light through the recent trend toward veneration of the humanity and suffering of the Virgin Mary. This standard of motherhood was based on self-sacrifice. While families were central and the cultivation of “feminine” virtues was valued, this does not mean that women themselves were.

As a result of economic changes, the later medieval period refashioned Christology, as well as conceptions of self. Feminine images of Jesus express changing ideals of femininity and also the socially accepted roles of women in the Church and the public. This study explores later medieval representations—both textual and visual—of Jesus as mother in order to determine the implications of such representations for actual women. We will sample three medieval writers who wrote about feminine Jesuses, two writing in the heyday of
incarnation theology and feminized Jesus imagery—the twelfth century monastics Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen—and later, one fourteenth-century theologian who inherited the legacy of her predecessors, Julian of Norwich. In her book on Hildegard’s theology of the feminine, Barbara Newman describes the shared focus and understanding of all medieval representations of a feminine Jesus: “The common denominator is a sense that the feminine is somehow problematic; being neglected, undervalued, or wrongly understood within a patriarchal culture, it needs to be perpetually redefined, revalued, and relocated in the general worldview.”1 Although all of the medieval writers subscribed to essentialist understandings of gender based in a patriarchal society, it is true that they all seemed to think that it was necessary to explore and define the feminine more fully and consider how the feminine fits within human understandings of God.

By also exploring several modern discussions on feminine Jesus imagery, we will scrutinize the legacy of medieval Jesus as mother imagery. This study ultimately argues that the feminine depictions of a divine figure who is understood to be inherently physically masculine are ultimately androcentrically androgynous. Because of the androcentric nature of such depictions, the feminine is subverted and cast as both physically and spiritually limited and as less spiritually valuable than the masculine.

**FEMINIST THEOLOGY**

Some feminist theorists argue that descriptions of divine motherhood refer to long-suppressed ancient worship of female goddesses or androgynous gods. Elaine Pagels writes that the monotheistic religions are unusual in comparison to other world religions in that the former do not employ feminine im-

---

agery to describe God. By 200 CE, upon the establishment of the Christian canon, orthodox Christianity discouraged feminine symbolism for expressing the essence of the divine. While women played leading roles in Gnostic Christian groups, which sometimes described God in feminine language, the orthodox tradition banned female leadership and description of the divine as female. Pagels questions why the orthodox Christian tradition so ardently demanded that women and feminine conceptions of God be banned from Christian hegemony: “Is it possible, then, that the recognition of the feminine element in God and the recognition of mankind as a male and female entity bore within it the explosive possibility of women acting on an equal basis with men in positions of authority and leadership?”

Mary Daly, radical feminist theologian, answers Pagels’ question a decade later. Daly calls for an uprising against Christian patriarchy, pointing out the pervasiveness of male images of God and the antifeminism that arises from such conceptualizations. Also taking issue with the standard Christian fall narratives that lead to pessimism about the future, Daly writes, “This static, sin-haunted view of human life reflects and perpetuates a negative attitude toward sexuality, matter, and ‘the world.’ In such an atmosphere antifeminism has thrived. To some theologians, ‘woman’ came to personify all those aspects of reality which they believed should be feared, fled from, denied, despised.” For Daly, the very core doctrines of orthodox Christianity must be revised to combat the antifeminism levied by a patriarchal society, to restructure the Christian-established patriarchy to create an egalitarian society. So, one way to understand the emergence of feminine characterizations of Christ is as an uprising of the stifled female divine. In somewhat of a contrast, we will see that these feminized repre-

3. Ibid., 298–99.
4. Ibid., 301.
6. Ibid., 186.
sentations of Jesus are actually based on systems of thought that relegate women to the negatively-perceived half of a binary opposition. In our exploration of the communities within which these images occur, we will discover that such feminine images of Jesus reinforce the subordination of women through the strict definition of what it means to be “feminine.”

**MEDIEVAL PHYSIOLOGY, MOTHERHOOD, AND THE EMPHASIS ON JESUS’ HUMANITY**

The medieval epoch was characterized by changing conceptions of the role of the mother, as well as changing conceptions of self. The later medieval period based its feminized Jesus on physiological theory and thus medieval artists characterized Jesus’ femininity through specifically “feminine” biological functions. First, a short introduction to the medieval period and the perceived mindset of the medieval people is necessary to the context of the discussion of images of Jesus as mother. Since medieval devotion to Jesus as mother was a component of popular religion, the attitude that is most important to this study is that of the medieval lay person. Since few lay people during this time were able to write, it is challenging to construct what their religious mindset might have been.7 Caroline Walker Bynum focuses on the images constructed in medieval religious writings because these constructions were personally important to the writers (mostly monks and other clergy) and were considered by the writers to have value for their audiences.8 The rise of affective piety and mystical theology included increased devotion to female figures and use of feminine metaphors for God. Feminine metaphors were particularly appropriate to the new devotion to Christ’s humanity, as they constructed characterizations of God that were similar to human features.9

---

8. Ibid., 7.
9. Ibid., 17.
While medieval lay people certainly valued the perspectives of the clergy and adherence to communal standards, a new sense of self was also being discovered during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These competing notions of the communal and the individual complicate the perceived motivations of medieval lay people. This new concept of the individual or the self is not the same as the modern conception of individualism. However, “[t]o the ancients the goal of development is the adult human being, for which one finds a model in the great works of the past; to the twelfth century the goal of development is likeness to God, built on the image of God found in ‘the inner man’; to the twentieth century the goal is the process itself.” And so, the medieval period was a time of changing ideas of self and society. Peter Brown agrees that the twelfth century did indeed mark a change in mindset, a shift in thinking about the relationship of the supernatural to the individual. Once, the sacred had been accessible only through group participation, but beginning in the twelfth century the supernatural came to be regarded as “an upward extension of the individual.” As Bynum emphasizes, this does not mean that medieval people began to reject the Church as an institution necessary to spiritual interaction; an individual medieval believer simply came to recognize that his or her interaction with God also had an inner component, in addition to the communal interaction with the divine.

**MEDIEVAL CONCEPTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD**

At this point in Western culture, there was no conception of separate religious and secular realms. And so, religion defined all aspects of later medieval

10. Ibid., 85.
11. Ibid., 87.
13. Ibid., 329.
society, including the role of the mother. Spiritual writers define the medieval woman or mother as having three distinct characteristics: “The female is generative (the foetus is made of her very matter) and sacrificial in her generation (birth pangs); the female is loving and tender (a mother cannot help loving her own child); the female is nurturing (she feeds the child with her own bodily fluid).”¹⁵ In medieval representations of Jesus as mother, Jesus displays these feminine characteristics, all of which are based on medieval physiological theories, which will be examined below. While medieval people apparently knew the proper medical care for pregnant women, the advice of such medical guides was starkly opposed to the ascetic ideals laid out by writings on spiritual motherhood: “Women who starved and abused their bodies were presented in hagiography as models of spiritual health, and very often as spiritual mothers. A sharp opposition between physical and spiritual health and virtue was built into medieval Christian motherhood.”¹⁶ At the same time, with Christ’s mother Mary as a standard by which Christian mothers modeled themselves, the Virgin mother gave “hope and consolation to the grim realities of the experience of most medieval mothers.”¹⁷ Along with the rise of the adoration of the human aspects of Christ, so too was Mary’s humanity emphasized in the twelfth century, focusing on Mary’s and all medieval mothers’ suffering.¹⁸ Thus, medieval ideas of motherhood are essentially intertwined with the religious tendencies of the time.

MEDIEVAL MEDICAL THEORY

High to late medieval theology focused on the characteristics the divine shared with humanity, emphasizing Jesus’ humanness. Bynum describes this theological shift from earlier medieval religious foci: “The new devotion to

¹⁵. Ibid., 131–32.
¹⁷. Ibid., 240.
¹⁸. Ibid., 241.
Christ’s humanity was also at least implicitly a shift in theological emphasis from atonement-resurrection and last judgment to creation and incarnation. In twelfth-century religious writing, great stress is placed on God’s creating of us ‘in his image and likeness’ and on Christ’s taking our humanity into himself. Medieval images of a feminine Jesus reflect this new focus on Jesus’ humanity, illustrating him as having characteristics of the ideal medieval mother. The reason for associating a human Jesus with femininity may not, at first, be clear. However, medieval medical theory generally associated the spirit with the male and the body – flesh and blood – with the female.

Medieval physiological theory was largely based upon Aristotle’s classical medical theories. “According to Aristotelian theory, the mother provided the matter of the foetus and the father its life or spirit or form.” Thus, Jesus was literally part of Mary’s body and blood. Christian believers partake of Christ’s blood in the Eucharist, thus being incorporated into the body of Christ, which was essentially composed of Mary’s body. These “images suggest a radical incorporation of all humanity in Christ.”

21. Ibid., 421.
was represented in art through his sharing of his blood and other bodily fluids with his believers. Clearly suggestive of the Eucharist, Quirizio da Murano’s *The Savior* (ca. 1460–1478) depicts Christ offering to a believer his blood from his breast, along with a wafer, symbolic of his body, both of which impart faith and thus nurture the spirituality of the believer (see fig. 1.1).23 An even more obvious allusion to the Eucharist appears in a German work titled *Christ and Charity* (ca. 1470).24 In this piece, Jesus’ blood spurts forth from his breast in a stream, as breast milk might. The blood streams into a cup held by personified Charity, obviously suggesting the Eucharist but also highlighting the nutritive nature of the Eucharistic blood by its connection with breast milk. According to medieval physiological theory, all bodily fluids were seen as bleedings, occurring in both male and female bodies, though bleedings functioned more regularly in women’s bodies.25 Bleeding was seen as purgative and as a symbol of cleansing; these ideas transferred to representations of Christ bleeding, even to those created centuries later than many of the textual representations of a feminine Jesus.26

The most important conflation of bodily fluids for this discussion is the equation of blood with breast milk, which was considered to be “processed blood.”27 So with this understanding, medieval mothers fed their children with their blood, just as Christ nourishes his believers with his blood in the Eucharistic rite:

> In medieval devotions ... milk and blood are often interchangeable, as are Christ’s breasts and the wound in his side. What writers in the high Middle Ages wished to say about Christ the savior who feeds the individual soul with his own blood was precisely and concisely said in the image of the nursing mother

---

26. Ibid., 407.
whose milk is her blood, offered to the child.\footnote{28}{Ibid., 132–33.}

Bynum points out a parallelism between Christ’s wound and Mary’s breast, which she calls a “double intercession.” Lorenzo Monaco’s \textit{The Intercession of Christ and the Virgin} (1400) is one such example.\footnote{29}{Lorenzo Monaco, \textit{The Intercession of Christ and the Virgin}, 1400, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters, New York City.} The Metropolitan Museum of Art describes the action of the work:

Christ and the Virgin are shown pleading with God the Father for mercy on behalf of eight small figures ... Pointing to the wound in his side, Christ says, “My Father, let those be saved for whom you wished me to suffer the Passion.” The Virgin, holding one of her breasts, pleads, “Dearest son, because of the milk that I gave you, have mercy on them.”\footnote{30}{“Description,” \textit{The Intercession of Christ and the Virgin}, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, \url{http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database/the_cloisters/the_intercession_of_christ_and_the_virgin_lorenzo_monaco_piero_di_giovanni/objectview.aspx?collID=7%26OID=70010757}.}

In this way, one sees the double intercession – Christ pleading with the Father and Mary pleading with Jesus – which associates Christ’s wound and Mary’s breast as serving the same purpose.

While Jesus’ blood served as a symbol of his nurturing nature toward his believers, it also served as proof of Jesus’ humanity, a key emphasis of the later medieval period. According to the story of the crucifixion, believers were ensured of Christ’s humanity when Longinus, a Roman soldier, pierced Jesus’ side with a lance and blood poured forth from his wound.\footnote{31}{Bettina Bildhauer, \textit{Medieval Blood} (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 29.} Apparently, “even the central Christian belief that God became flesh, that Christ had a body in the first place, was still contested, and in need of miraculous and theological confirmation. Again, blood was often used to supply such evidence.”\footnote{32}{Ibid., 28.} Another characteristic associated with this medieval Jesus is that his blood served as
food for his believers, reinforcing the feminine physicality of Jesus, “the feeder of humankind.”33

Bettina Bildhauer challenges Bynum’s idea that female blood was essentially positively viewed because of its nourishing qualities. Bildhauer argues that female blood was seen as fearsome and potentially contaminated; she also calls attention to medieval ideas about male heroic bleeding.34 It is worthwhile to consider the implications of Jesus’ bleeding being perceived as masculine in nature, but it is also useful to remember that the nutritive qualities of Jesus’ bodily fluids led to an association of Jesus with mother. Bynum supports her association of Jesus’ blood with breast milk through examples that illustrate the parallelism between Jesus’ wound and Mary’s breast, mentioned above. The double intercession of Jesus and Mary is also parallel in that both Mary’s breast milk and Jesus’ blood are feedings.35 Bynum argues this point because separately Jesus’ wound and Mary’s breast are depicted as offerings of food. In addition to the works mentioned above that highlight the nutritive qualities of Christ’s blood, some depictions overtly associate Jesus’ body with food. From the studio of Friedrich Herlin, *Christ with Ears of Wheat and Grape Vine* (1469) shows a wounded Jesus with wheat and grape vine.36 Bynum explains that the association of Christ’s body with food is an inherently feminine characteristic for medieval artists: “Over and over again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we find representations of Christ as the one who feeds and bleeds. Squirting blood from wounds often placed high in the side, Christ fills cups for his followers just as Mary feeds her baby. Christ’s body, like woman’s, is depicted as food.”37

Bynum argues that the association of Jesus’ body with food would have been to medieval people an inherently feminine biological characteristic.

As women were considered to be rooted in the body, the rise in affective piety in the twelfth century led to a focus on female biological reactions (bleeding, crying, and erotic union with Christ) to the divine in accounts of female spirituality.\(^{38}\) Elizabeth Robertson argues that in medieval medical theory “a female child was seen as simply an incomplete male.”\(^{39}\) This pervasive idea of female inferiority raises questions about the medieval representation of Jesus in female form. Why would medieval artists and authors represent their savior as a member of the inferior sex? Bynum would argue that such representations of Jesus highlight what medieval medical theory saw as the positive aspects of women: mothering, comforting, and nourishing through blood. Representations of a feminine Jesus also illustrate his human aspect, including the imperfections that humanity, corporeality, and femininity entail. Robertson suggests that representations of Jesus as mother are unique to medieval female spirituality.\(^{40}\) While feminine Jesus imagery may have proved particularly appealing to the female religious, it is nonetheless not limited to women writers, as we will see with Bernard of Clairvaux, for example.

Bynum argues that male authors might have chosen to portray Jesus as feminine because such a conceptualization allowed them to relate to the metaphor of sexual union with Jesus, a metaphor often employed by female mystics.

\(^{38}\) Elizabeth Robertson, “Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the Ancrene Wisse and Julian of Norwich’s Showings,” in Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature, eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 142.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 144.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 142. Robertson clarifies her position in relation to Bynum’s thesis: “Caroline Bynum argues that even though women were not created in God’s image, and even though they were conditioned by their sensual, appetitive natures, these facts did not prohibit their approach to God. While I agree that they did not prohibit women’s access to God, I think these views did condition their approach to God; that is to say, female spirituality is expressed not only through the body, as Bynum argues, but also through those parts and activities of the body that are understood as specifically or ‘essentially’ female.” Ibid., 149. Emphasis in original.
More broadly, though, Bynum writes that images of Jesus as mother “reflect a need, felt especially by males, for a view of authority that balances discipline with love.”\(^{41}\) Even so, feminine images of Jesus may have been particularly appealing to female believers who thought of their own bodies and religious receptivities in terms of medieval medical theory:

The biological parity between blood, sweat, tears, milk, and urine meant that a woman’s contemplation of Christ’s blood was contemplation of her own blood, and further that her tears were equivalent to Christ’s blood. The suffering body of Christ thus allowed a woman not only to pity Christ but to identify in him her own perceived suffering body; moreover, union with his suffering body would allow her to realize her perceived biological needs.\(^{42}\)

In a way Bynum agrees with Robertson’s conclusion that images of a feminine Jesus were particularly appealing to female believers, as medieval medical assumptions ultimately led to a connection between the female body and the body of God: “Not only was Christ enfleshed with flesh from a woman; his own flesh did womanly things: it bled, it bled food, and it gave birth.”\(^{43}\) While Jesus’ body exhibited female characteristics, these images enforced his humanity, the imperfect half of his nature. It is also important to remember that Jesus was still conceived of as essentially masculine.

Modern social constructions may cause misunderstandings of medieval theological ideas about a feminine Jesus. Bynum argues that it is essential that modern conceptions of what is sexual and erotic not be assumed for medieval viewers. Medieval believers often associated acts modern people find inherently sexual with liturgical, spiritual emotions and actions.\(^{44}\) One difference between medieval and modern viewers is that “there is a modern tendency to find sex

\(^{41}\) Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 8.

\(^{42}\) Robertson, “Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality,” 149.

\(^{43}\) Bynum, “The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,” 423.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 406–7.
more interesting than feeding, suffering, or salvation,” which could be considered to be based on a tendency for literal interpretation of artistic symbols.45 Of course, modern and medieval medical theories are vastly different and thus lead to divergent understandings of the body and the secretions of the body.46 While medieval art may seem straightforward and even simplistic to a modern viewer, “things are seldom what they seem, at least if the seeming is based on modern attitudes. Medieval symbols were far more complex … than modern people are aware. … Rather than mapping back onto medieval paintings modern dichotomies, we might find in medieval art and literature some suggestion of a symbolic richness our own lives and rituals seem to lack.”47 At the least, an understanding of medieval theological concepts as expressed in art will lead to an awareness of the historical background of modern Christianity and the gender stereotypes within it.

**A MODERN ADAPTATION**

Sarah Ruhl’s second newest play (directed by Les Waters and performed by Laura Benanti, Quincy Tyler Bernstine, and Michael Cerveris), *In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)*, explores female sexuality in the Victorian era, a time in which physicians used vibrators to relieve hysteria in female patients and in which wet nursing was common.48 Ruhl conducted extensive research on the Victorian era in order to provide an accurate picture of the social and romantic trends of the time. Of course Ruhl’s play is not a “true” account of the Victorian era, but it highlights many of the backward glances the white American Protestantism of the time made toward medieval representations of Jesus.

Just as Victorian society had been divided into private and public, female

45. Ibid., 413.
46. Ibid., 437.
47. Ibid., 438.
48. Sarah Ruhl, *In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)*, Lincoln Center Theatre, New York City, December 12, 2009.
and male spheres, so too is the stage of Sarah Ruhl’s *In the Next Room*. Although the action takes place within the space of the family home, the doctor/husband keeps primarily to the public area of the home, in which his patients are treated, and the wife to the private, domestic side of the home. This partition illustrates the division of Victorian society into female and male realms and also the changes to family models that result from the economic shift to a modern, capitalistic society.

Throughout the play, Mrs. Givings (Laura Benanti) makes statements about her inferiority as a mother because of her inability to breastfeed her baby herself. For example, she says, “I could not turn my body into food. I was a very inferior mother, a very inferior Jesus.” This present-day reference to Jesus as mother is at first surprising. It connects medieval representations of Jesus nurturing and breastfeeding his believers with his blood as a mother would to modern, Victorian images of a feminized Jesus.

Later in the play, Mrs. Givings states, “We can’t think of feeding Jesus. Jesus has to feed us.” This beckons viewers to think of the Eucharist, the ritual in which Jesus feeds his believers with what is literally his body.49 It is interesting that Mrs. Givings makes this statement because she makes it clear that she is a Protestant, and Protestants do not believe that the communion wafer and wine actually turn into Jesus’ body and blood, as the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation posits. The character of Mrs. Givings does not live up to her role as a mother because she is unable to feed her child, as Jesus feeds his believers in the communion rite. Mrs. Givings is also far from fulfilling the characteristics (being pure, pious, passive, and domestic) of True Womanhood. The fact that Mrs. Givings rebels from these standards could be historically accurate of the behavior of some Victorian women. Even so, it also reminds the viewer that Ruhl’s play is a present-day representation of the Victorian era looking back to

---

49. See the above discussion on the fifteenth-century German image *Christ and Charity* and Quirizio da Murano’s *The Savior*. 
the earlier example of the later medieval period.

One further connection between the medieval and modern periods manifests itself in a statement of the wet nurse. The wet nurse, Elizabeth (Quincy Tyler Bernstine), begins to feel a connection to her employer’s child and as a result quits her job because the attachment is too difficult for her because of the recent death of her infant son. Before departing, Elizabeth says that her blood is flowing through her employer’s child’s veins, as if a familial relationship has been transferred through her milk into the baby’s blood. This recalls medieval medical theory, which posited that all bodily fluids were essentially blood. The transference of familial connection through breast milk also points to the idea that the Eucharistic rite, in the consumption of Jesus’ blood, is key to incorporation of believers into the holy family.

Ruhl’s modern dramatic adaptation of Victorian characters interpreting medieval conceptions of Jesus as mother illustrates how a feminized Jesus can limit the lives of women, even those of a different period than the one in which the images were first created. In the play, Mrs. Givings attempts to live up to the maternal standards set by depictions of Jesus as ideal mother. Although Mrs. Givings seeks to fulfill an explicitly feminine and maternal role as a woman who breastfeeds her baby, her androgynous representation of Jesus as ideal mother limits her own ability to consider herself a successful mother because of her inability to fulfill the motherly responsibility to nourish that Jesus himself so well accomplished. In this way, the feminized Jesus is not empowering to this modern woman. Instead, the feminine characteristics of Jesus cause Mrs. Givings to judge herself inadequately feminine and maternal.

**WITHIN PATRIARCHAL, HIERARCHICAL COMMUNITIES**

**I. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX**

In the medieval setting, images of Jesus as mother were concentrated primarily within the intra-Church community. Holy men and women created or
commissioned these portrayals within a cloistered setting, and lay people simply received rather than participated in the formulation of these feminine images of Jesus. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) characterized not only Jesus but also abbots and prelates as mothers. In a letter, Bernard encouraged a recent convert to take comfort in a motherly Jesus, whose wounds would function as breasts in their nurturing powers.50 Describing himself as a mother, Bernard emphasized the nurturing role of a mother and in this way equated this maternal characteristic with his own relationship with lay people and holy men further down the hierarchy than himself. In his twenty-ninth sermon on the *Song of Songs*, Bernard characterizes himself as motherly and thus like Jesus for rebuking other members of his monastery when they stray from the right path:

And indeed if some of you have been saddened by me in the past for this reason, I do not regret it; the sadness was for their salvation. I certainly cannot recall ever having done it without experiencing great sadness myself, such as Christ referred to when he said: “A woman in childbirth suffers.” But let me no longer remember my anguish, now that I enjoy the fruit of my pain, seeing Christ formed in my offspring.51

Bernard envisions himself as generative and thus like Christ and in this nurturing and creative role, he also sees himself as one who creates Christ-like nature in others. Writing of the physical body in particular, Bynum explains, “Breasts, to Bernard, are a symbol of the pouring out towards others of affectiv-


ity or of instruction and almost invariably suggest to him a discussion of the
duties of prelates or abbeys.” Feminine imagery allowed Bernard to define the
proper roles of others within the Christian community and to situate himself
therein.

Bernard wrote many times of the role of the abbot as mother within the
monastic community. In one example, Bernard encourages his fellow monastic
leaders to balance their fatherly harshness with motherly gentleness and nurtur-
ing:

Learn that you must be mothers to those in your care, not mas-
ters; make an effort to arouse the response of love, not that of
fear: and should there be occasional need for severity, let it
be paternal rather than tyrannical. Show affection as a mother
would, correct like a father. Be gentle, avoid harshness, do not
resort to blows, expose your breasts: let your bosoms expand
with milk, not swell with passion.

With such imagery, Bernard is able to instruct other abbots to take on a
kinder and more welcoming leadership role, that of a mother and more specifi-
cally of a feminine Jesus. Bernard’s writings encouraged abbots to place them-
selves and their subordinates in supportive relationships within the religious
community. Although feminine, maternal imagery may seem to indicate a famil-
ial sort of relationship, it is important to note that proper behaviors and relation-
ships were being defined for the lay people and lower holy men and women in a
top-down fashion.

II. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

52. Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 115.
subditorum matres vos esse debere, non dominos; studete magis amari, quam metui: et si interdum
severitate opus est, paterna sit, non tyrannica. Matres fovendo, patres vos corripiendo exhibeatis.
Mansuescite, ponite feritatem; suspendite verbera, producite ubera; pectora lacte pinguescant, non
While her theology of the feminine is probably the most well developed of the three writers mentioned in this study, the thought of Hildegard of Bingen is also the most complex. Thus, because of the comprehensive nature of Hildegard’s writings on the divine and its feminine and masculine aspects, it is almost impossible to provide a single textual example of her presentation of a feminine Jesus. Hildegard (1098–1179), like Bernard and Julian, functioned within the patriarchal community of the monastery. Faithful to the existing structure of the Christian community, she did not seek to upend gender stereotypes or the Church hierarchy:

Hildegard attacked only the abuse and not the very form and source of hierarchical power. With her unshakeable faith in the divine ordering of society, and especially of the Church, she saw no conflict in principle between the prophetic and the priestly charisms. As to gender, her most radical departure lies in appropriating to herself the Pauline doctrine that divine power is perfected in weakness, and therefore in women. Given the structure of twelfth-century society, such a notion, taken with full seriousness, could have had dangerous implications; just as the claim that woman signifies the humanity of Christ could have shaken the ideology of an all-male priesthood. But, however radical the principles, Hildegard drew no such alarming inferences. She was resourceful enough in defending her own activity and authority, but she certainly did not aim at a full-scale empowerment of women.54

With her own role as a prophet, preacher, healer, and much more within the Christian community, Hildegard exhibited the potential for women to hold leadership roles in the Church. Additionally, her theological writings do not so much imagine Jesus himself as feminine but rather personify characteristics of the Godhead as a whole as essentially feminine. In this way, Hildegard described what she saw as the essentially positive and essentially female characteristics of

---

Jesus and the Trinity. In order to validate her feminine descriptions of God, Hildegard appealed to two “strategies of validation,” according to Newman: First, she described her supposed feminine weakness as a positive indicator of both her humility and chosenness by God, and, second, she empowered femininity by describing positive, feminine features of divinity. Hildegard’s theology of the feminine does not lead to any obvious consequences for actual women: “Her visionary forms fade into one another with dazzling and dizzying speed, but within them all, and behind all, shine neither woman nor man but the living Light.” The complex, multi-gendered nature of Hildegard’s writings about God may not have many implications for actual women, and thus they defy many contemporary feminist critiques.

III. JULIAN OF NORWICH

An anchoress best known for her theology of divine motherhood, Julian of Norwich (ca. 1342–ca. 1416) also wrote within a monastic community, describing the divine in motherly terms for all to read. Julian wrote of one aspect of the Trinity, Jesus, as a mother: “for in our Mother, Christ, we profit and grow, and in mercy he reforms and restores us, and through the power of his Passion and his death and rising again, he unites us to our essential being. This is how our Mother mercifully acts to all his children who are submissive and obedient to him.” Julian describes Jesus as motherly and thus feminine because of the grace he exhibits in nurturing and teaching his followers. Julian is a later ex-

55. Ibid., 35.
56. Ibid., 270.
ample of the feminine images of Jesus so prominent in the twelfth century with Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen. There were complications to Julian’s writing, as women were strictly banned from preaching. For example the Ancrene Wisse, a guidebook for anchoresses, enforces “St. Paul’s prohibition on preaching applied with special force to female recluses.”58 Women were viewed as dangerous because of their sexual nature; Julian circumvented this rule by re-envisioning the female body not as “inalienable sexuality as inherited from Eve but [as] inalienable capacity for maternity as modeled on that of the Virgin.”59 While Julian does avoid some prescriptions on her femininity, guidebooks such as the Ancrene Wisse likely “conditioned [the anchoritic] experience, determining how women like Julian might understand their own devotional practices and experiences.”60 It might seem that Julian of Norwich broke free from the negative Aristotelian conceptions of what it means to be feminine, but she only did so to a certain degree.

Julian operated within a male-dominated Christian community. Much like many women ordained as priests today, Julian had to shape her theology to fit the normative, male-dominated Christianity of her time. Rosemary Radford Ruether describes the modern situation of the female priest:

> Women are allowed in token numbers to integrate themselves into this male-defined role. They adopt the same garb, the same titles (Reverend, if not Father), the same clerical modes of functioning in a hierarchically structured church. They too stand in the phallically designed pulpit and bring down the “seminal” word upon the passive body of the laity. … Women play the ministerial role by endlessly proving that they can think, feel, and act like “one of the boys.”61

59. Ibid., 163.
60. Ibid., 160.
61. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Bea-
Julian of Norwich also had to participate in these “games of masculinity” in order to convey her radical theological message: “She does not question Christianity’s logocentrism – rather, she uses patriarchal logic in a very idiosyncratic way to gesture toward the doubly unrepresentable: mystical understanding and feminine experience.” Thus, these feminine representations of Jesus still function within an unchanged, patriarchal Christian community.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTUAL WOMEN**

The feminine images of Jesus we have explored above are actually androgynous representations, as they impose “feminine” characteristics on what is an indisputably male body. This uneven androgyny is actually androcentric: medieval women are limited by Aristotelian medical theories that conceive of the female as purely physical without spiritual capabilities. In this way, these feminine images of Jesus are deceptive. They are actually built upon systems that perpetuate negative stereotypes of what it means to be feminine.

Indeed, “there is little evidence that the popularity of feminine and maternal imagery in the high Middle Ages reflects an increased respect for actual women by men.” Bernard of Clairvaux expressed sentiments consistent with medieval medical theory in that he saw the “feminine” as inherently inferior to the “masculine”: “To call monks women, as Bernard does, is to use the feminine as something positive (humility) but also to imply that such is not the opinion of society.” And so, while medieval images of a feminized Jesus may highlight “feminine” characteristics in a positive light, such depictions are built on the belief that it is unusual to conceive of femininity as spiritually worthwhile.

63. McInerney, “In the Meydens Womb: Julian of Norwich and the Poetics of Enclosure,” 165.
64. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 143.
65. Ibid., 144. Emphasis in original.
The later medieval period was a time of rapid change – economically, socially, religiously – but feminine representations of Jesus actually did little to enact positive change in the lives of women:

All of these concepts of androgyny, whether they identify woman with the lower material nature, or whether they identify her with the higher spiritual qualities of altruistic love, never succeed in allowing women to represent full human potential. The very concept of androgyny presupposes a psychic dualism that identifies maleness with one-half of human capacities and femaleness with the other. As long as Christ is still presumed to be, normatively, a male person, androgynous Christologies will carry an androcentric bias. Men gain their “feminine” side, but women contribute to the whole by specializing in the representation of the “feminine,” which means exclusion from the exercise of the roles of power and leadership associated with masculinity.66

Later medieval feminized representations of Jesus contribute to the new emphasis on the humanity of Jesus, but at the same time they also reinforce stereotypes about what it means to be “feminine.”

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY REPRESENTATIONS OF JESUS AS MOTHER

Some ministers have delivered sermons on the trope of Jesus as mother within the past decade. These sermons are often heard in more progressive churches and in the most prominent case raise questions about the current state of Christendom, including the issue of the ordination of women. Katharine Jefferts Schori, then the bishop-elect of the U.S. Episcopal Church, closed the 2006 General Convention with a sermon highlighting an image of Jesus as mother. Schori preached, saying, “That sweaty, bloody, tear-stained labor of the cross bears new life. Our mother Jesus gives birth to a new creation – and you and I

66. Ruether, Sexism and God-talk, 130.
are His children. If we’re going to keep on growing into Christ-images for the
world around us, we’re going to have to give up fear.”

An article in *The Times* noted that Schori’s sermon was based on the writings of Julian of Norwich, the
fourteenth-century theologian, for which reason some defended her: “Liberals in Britain and America defended her sermon as being in a long tradition of writings by women theologians that use the metaphor of Jesus as mother.” To note that some defended Schori’s sermon topic indicates that others were not as receptive to it. Other modern sermons and online faith-based articles referring to imagery of Jesus as mother either directly cite the writings of Julian of Norwich or seem to be aware of Bynum’s *Jesus as Mother*, as they cite the same authors to whom Bynum refers, including Bernard of Clairvaux and Anselm of Canterbury. Many of the sermons and articles also either refer to Luke 13:34, which characterizes Jesus as a mother hen, or are written for the occasion of Mother’s Day. These contemporary appearances of a feminized Jesus are not common, and they are not always warmly received. A Southern Baptist website, the


71. Examples include above-mentioned Berge, Duckworth, and Percy.

72. The purpose of the Southern Baptist website is to combat the “heresies” of the splinter-group, the “Cooperative Baptist Fellowship,” who have erred from the conservative Baptist beliefs: “The organization’s willingness to accommodate blatant theological liberalism and its openness to those who hold extreme positions on such issues as abortion, pornography and homosexuality should
cerned about theological liberalism, quotes feminist theologian Jann Aldredge-Clanton, asking the readers of the site, “In the name of ‘inclusive language,’ is it now acceptable to call God ‘Mother’ or replace Jesus with ‘Christ-Sophia?’ Has feminist theology so caught on that it is now acceptable to ordain our women as pastors?” These are exactly the questions that contemporary feminist theologians answer with a resounding, “Yes.”

It is difficult to reflect on the present. It is evident, however, that progress has been made to incorporate feminine imagery of God in more progressive Christian churches: “The feminist movement has served as a catalyst to liturgical creativity, inspiring new inclusive-language hymnals, prayer books, and lectionaries. It has rekindled interest in theology, giving rise to whole new areas of theological inquiry and to a new generation of women theologians.” A fairly recent editorial even called for the employment of feminist theologies to reform the scandal-laden Catholic Church. Medieval images of a feminized Jesus did not have the goals of activism at heart, though. As we have seen, they did not even serve to better the social standing of women of the time.

CONCLUSIONS

As I have suggested, feminine representations of Jesus may not be the marker of a truly progressive and egalitarian Church. Misogynist ideas thrived in the later medieval Church in Western Europe, even amongst representations of a motherly or otherwise feminine Jesus. In fact, such representations of Jesus were actually built upon androcentric systems that reinforced the subordination


of women. That medieval Christians found “feminine” virtues and physical attributes most expressive of the bodily existence of their Savior is indicative of the fact that these societies saw women and femininity as limited. Medieval society thought of women as inherently physical and thus inherently flawed. Present-day Christians ought to hesitate in their crusade for inclusive God-language: simply casting “feminine” attributes or language upon a male Jesus does little to affect gender inequality. Within Christendom, there is a need to completely re-think conceptions of God, freeing the divine of gender altogether; after all, God wasn’t created in *imago humani*. 
Timothy Rothhaar was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA. He attended Duquesne University where he attained his B.A. in philosophy in May 2011. His philosophical interests include the works of Kierkegaard, Marcel, and Aquinas, as well as phenomenology.
Timothy Rothhaar

THE OUTCAST INDIVIDUAL:
ABRAHAM AND AFFLICTION IN THE
BROADER SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

The philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Simone Weil lived almost a hundred years apart, yet their ideas intersect especially with regard to the relationship of the individual to God. Intriguing are the similarities between Kierkegaard and Weil and how each constructs the faith of the individual amidst great spiritual and social upheaval, as they use their own lives to shed light on the human condition. For Kierkegaard, this task was done in the course of a modernity that, as he saw it, was losing its faith in God as a result of Hegelian philosophical idealism. Weil, on the other hand, was caught in the middle of her dedication to the plight of French workers and the rise of the Third Reich in the early stages of World War II.

Though not alive at the same time, each thinker tackled similar issues in philosophy, most notably—as Kierkegaard puts it—the teleological suspension of the ethical sphere of existence. The point of this paper will be to describe, compare, and contrast the teleological suspension of the ethical realm as found in Kierkegaard’s exposition on the story of Abraham and Isaac in his book Fear
and Trembling, with Weil’s understanding of affliction found in her essay “The Love of God and Affliction.” Before this inquiry, I must first describe what Kierkegaard deems are the three spheres of existence and how the teleological suspension of the ethical works.

WHAT ARE THE THREE SPHERES OF EXISTENCE?

Kierkegaard regards all individuals as falling into one of three spheres of existence or stages in life: the aesthetic sphere, the ethical sphere, and the religious sphere. Each sphere is named according to the main practice by which one lives. In other words, what one believes is not the object that determines which sphere an individual falls into; it is how one lives that determines which sphere one is in.

To be in the aesthetic sphere, the lowest sphere, is to live one’s life according to the pleasure principle: the seeking of immediate gratification and the avoidance of pain. The aesthete focuses on ideas, particularly associated with art, literature, fashion, and the people and places of the upper class. He lacks freedom, which for Kierkegaard is the possibility of giving one’s life meaning and direction; for the aesthete goes to great lengths to avoid any kind of committed, long-term relationship with another human being. Boredom, says Kierkegaard, is the downfall of the aesthete. The constant seeking of new, and mostly lavish, experiences becomes tedious. Recognizing the irony of his situation, he makes

3. It should be clarified that Fear and Trembling was written pseudonymously by Kierkegaard, as were many of his works. The pseudonymous author of Fear and Trembling is Johannes de Silentio (John of Silence). Though Kierkegaard writes pseudonymously in Fear and Trembling, for the purposes of this paper, the ideas referred to will be treated as Kierkegaard’s, though he may not have espoused the views he presented pseudonymously, as Kiekegaard himself discusses in his journals.
4. The aesthetic and ethical spheres are treated in his book Either/Or, while the religious sphere is treated in Fear and Trembling.
the transition into the ethical sphere.

The ethical person is in some ways “the exact opposite of the aesthete.” 5 Existing in the ethical sphere denotes a recognition of right and wrong in the moral sense. Hence, to live ethically is to take on a moral code as one’s own in order to benefit the larger community. 6 (The ethical sphere, for Kierkegaard, has its basis somewhat in the arena of politics, as a community is often based on written laws.) Yet there is something added to the ethical life that makes it a higher, so to speak, form of existence: freedom (and by extension responsibility). While the aesthete is preoccupied with avoidance of commitment, the ethical individual embraces it—whether in the form of a marriage or social relationship—as “[participation] in a community.” 7 Through all of the personal choices and tasks taken up by the ethical person, it is still not enough to prevent the individual from slipping into despair. One is constantly battling selfish motivations and desires, while attempting to obtain some form of moral perfection. Because one’s identity is based on the world around oneself, the ethical individual, when faced with the dilemma of a world that can change in an instant, is changed accordingly, causing inner confusion. The seriousness of trying to be perfect is exhibited within oneself as humorous, since there is simultaneously a realization of the paradox of the situation: the longing for moral perfection will never be attained on one’s own. The religious sphere is where one finds a new way of existing.

The final sphere of existence is called the religious sphere, where the existence of the individual is based upon his or her relationship to God. In the religious sphere, one knows oneself to be a sinner and needs God’s help, forgiveness, and grace to live a just life. The idea of eternal life in God’s presence—salvation—is accepted “in faith and with passion” 8 subjectively. Thus, there is

6. Beneficial insofar as the individual seeks good for others and not only self.
8. Ibid., 80.
an emphasis on the paradoxical nature of the religious sphere: that salvation is only to be had through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (the infinite, eternal God taking on the finite, temporal human form). Salvation is needed because of sin—separation between God and man—and can only be initiated by God as he is untainted by it. As the individual comes to accept the limitations on life due to sin, one sacrifices material concerns for the sake of a next life, in the hope that one might find happiness eternally. Again, there is a paradox here: while the religious individual is found in the world, the individual is no longer of the world. Worldly things are not the primary focus of life. Interaction with the world is always checked by what the individual recognizes as God’s will.

GENESIS 22 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The story is told in Genesis 22 of the Biblical patriarch Abraham, who is commanded by God to make a human sacrifice of his son, Isaac, for no apparent reason. On the surface, it appears that Abraham is going to commit an act of maniacal murder. Furthermore, the dilemma is momentous because God orders Abraham to obey a command that not only goes against moral reasonableness but also violates a promise God had previously made to Abraham. In Genesis 12, God had promised Abraham that his people would inherit the land of Israel. Since Isaac was understood by Abraham to be the person through whom that promise would be fulfilled, and since Isaac had no children, killing him would nullify God’s previous word, making God hypocritical.

Now, Abraham considered obedience to God’s command his duty. Yet, what God was here asking Abraham to do was morally wrong and he had no way out of his commitment to God. It is certainly the case that Abraham was not a Christian who would ask forgiveness in the Christian way. He was, however,
asked to believe in what *appears* to be a contradiction in God, similar to the Christian dilemma: Abraham is told he is to be the father of a nation and then asked to murder that nation; likewise a Christian is asked to believe in a God who is at the same time both God and man. Hence, were Abraham a Christian, the situation of killing one’s own son would be (nearly) identical—identical enough, at least for Kierkegaard—to Abraham’s situation, which qualifies him to be considered as making the journey into the religious sphere.

**WHAT IS THE TELEOLOGICAL SUSPENSION OF THE ETHICAL?**

Under the ethical sphere, the individual is subjected to what Kierkegaard calls the “universal.” As was stated in the section on the three spheres of existence, the ethical sphere requires an individual to relate to the community, the group, by means of a moral code. Thus, the universal is this relationship between the individual and the group—one might think of it as a kind of social contract.

The Greek word *telos* means “end” or “purpose” and to suspend the ethical is to push it away in favor of something else. Hence, to teleologically suspend the ethical is to put the ethical sphere, including the universal, aside for a higher purpose: This higher purpose is the single individual as he stands in relationship to God.

**HOW DOES THE INDIVIDUAL RELATE TO THE ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS SPHERES?**

What Kierkegaard means to say—in regards to the individual’s relationship to the religious and ethical—is that an individual’s direct, personal relationship with God (the religious) is higher than, or comes before, his relationship with the rest of the world (the ethical). For instance, before one looks at how the world views one’s lifestyle and choices, one must first look to God as the source
of one’s worth (spiritual, moral, etc.). After “being subordinate as the single individual to the universal”\textsuperscript{11} (i.e. obeying social morality), Abraham’s obedience now surpasses the universal via the universal itself and places himself in direct relation to God in choosing to go against the ethical/universal by “attempting”\textsuperscript{12} to murder his son Isaac. In order to rise above the ethical (or community) sphere, one thinks of himself this way\textsuperscript{13} by allowing himself to be judged according to God’s standards or commands, not one’s given society. If one permits his lifestyle to be reflective of his given community’s without “checking in with God” first (so to speak), then he has relegated himself to the ethical sphere.

**THE TELEOLOGICAL SUSPENSION OF THE ETHICAL IN *FEAR AND TREMBLING***

Kierkegaard describes faith as “precisely the paradox that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal.”\textsuperscript{14} This definition means that an individual’s actions are greater than a social morality. Abraham’s choice to sacrifice Isaac is greater than the universal moral norm of “do not murder” because his choice was made, not only in faith, but as the “single individual”\textsuperscript{15}: choosing not as one who is part of a whole society, but who is the whole himself. Abraham decides not to act on what he believes is right and wrong, but what is commanded of him regardless of whether it is right or wrong according to the ethical standard. When the single individual takes it upon himself to act, not in opposition to the ethical, but for reasons that the ethical cannot explain, he is “justified before it...as superior.”\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{11.} Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 55–56.

\textsuperscript{12.} Abraham shows more of a willing, rather than mere attempting.

\textsuperscript{13.} As well as acting like it.

\textsuperscript{14.} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15.} The single individual is just that: a single individual. Singularity is important to the effect that it emphasizes alienation from the rest of one’s community, whereas the individual is emphasized in order to show that there is no escaping the responsibility one has for one’s choices.

\textsuperscript{16.} Ibid.
Because Abraham is still living in the world, he is under the universal. Yet, because he as an individual is acting according to faith, that is, placing his actions above the universal in that they could be considered wrong via the ethical point of view, but righteous for one who can see beyond the mere duty of the ethical, Abraham goes beyond the ethical and enters the religious sphere. For the ethical sphere, this movement is objectively immoral, but for the individual who is obeying God’s command, it is beyond morality.

Kierkegaard describes Abraham as a “knight of faith”\textsuperscript{17}: one who is like the “knight of infinite resignation” in giving up the finite and temporal world, but who receives it back “by virtue of the absurd.”\textsuperscript{18} Abraham’s situation is unique in that God promised his descendants the land to where he was told to migrate.\textsuperscript{19} Instead of simply giving up Isaac for all eternity (i.e. infinite resignation), Abraham has faith that God will not actually require Isaac of him. There is a contradiction here that fascinates Kierkegaard: God will and will not take Isaac from Abraham. What makes Abraham a knight of faith is that he understands God cannot require both of these things of him at the same time, yet he must plunge into faith without question, for he knows not how God will or can resolve this conflict. The knight of faith does not know what God will do, but has faith that God knows what he is doing.

**WEIL’S UNDERSTANDING OF AFFLICTION**

The French word from which affliction translates is malheur. While malheur contains “a sense of inevitability and doom,”\textsuperscript{20} which the English word “af-

---

\textsuperscript{17} Kierkegaard’s knights are both individuals that have given up the finite world insofar as both have renounced its power over them and focused instead on the spiritual world. Yet, there is a key difference: the knight of infinite resignation cannot accept happiness in the finite world, because he cannot believe that it is possible to find it, while the knight of faith gains the world back, believing that happiness is possible because God will provide for him.

\textsuperscript{18} Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 57.

\textsuperscript{19} Genesis 12:7.

\textsuperscript{20} Weil, “The Love of God and Affliction,” 117.
“Affliction is an uprooting of life, a more or less attenuated equivalent of death, made irresistibly present to the soul by the attack or immediate apprehension of physical pain.”21 It has a meaninglessness about it, with the inability to name the significance of that meaninglessness. It contains a feeling of moral ambiguity, as a person is made concurrently the perpetrator and the victim of the same crime.22 All of these attributes are simultaneously present in one of the afflicted.

Examples of affliction, indicative of the qualities noted, can be found amidst the Holocaust. Of the innumerable crimes committed, there is one in particular that illuminates the characteristics of affliction. The story is told about a group of men told to line up in a concentration camp.23 Of those that were standing, another man was placed behind one of them. He is told by an SS officer to choke the man in front of him to death, or else the entire line of men will be shot to death. The man asked to be a murderer is in a predicament: either he murders one man of his own accord or he indirectly murders an entire line of them. He does not have a way out, for no right will be done, only a wrong. Whatever he chooses, his innocence is wiped out: he is the perpetrator of a crime and the victim of one.

In affliction, a person experiences distress of mind and body at the same time. Weil differentiates between strictly physical pain, pain only of the mind, and pain caused by affliction. A “toothache is an example [of physical pain]. An hour or two of violent pain caused by a decayed tooth is nothing once it is

21. Ibid., 118.
22. Whatever that crime may be.
23. Sarah MacMillen, untitled lecture (lecture, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, October 13, 2009).
over.”  

If the suffering is only in the mind, meaning “not bound up with physical pain or something analogous,” then it is not affliction, since all one must do is change one’s mindset. Pain of mind is simply suffering, not affliction. Suffering can have meaning. As Christianity teaches, a person can make suffering meaningful by a mental adjustment. Affliction, however, is much deeper than “ordinary” suffering. With affliction, there is a constant physical pain that does not simply “go away,” whatever that pain might be. As a matter of fact, it worsens the affliction. Because affliction causes a person to experience physical pain, that very same physical pain causes a mental acknowledgment of one’s own state, thus intensifying the affliction.

Another key aspect of affliction is its similarity to slavery. Weil quotes “the men of antiquity,” saying, “A man loses half his soul the day he becomes a slave.” Just as a slave’s entire being is taken over by his existence as a slave, so too is the soul branded with affliction’s “own particular mark,” that of slavery. One becomes a slave to affliction because, “little by little [affliction makes] the soul its accomplice,” similar to Stockholm syndrome or a learned helplessness. At some point, the soul believes it will not escape the afflicted condition; in a sense, it befriends the affliction. It causes the afflicted to “[stop] seeking a way of deliverance” that he might “plunge into it again” should he make it through affliction the first time. Affliction becomes something of a “parasite [as if it] were directing him to suit its own purposes,” tricking one into thinking that there is

25. Ibid., 17.
26. For example, if one says to oneself, “I will suffer for the glory of God,” then one is consoled and is therefore not afflicted. Once suffering has some value or meaning, it is no longer affliction.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 122.
30. Or the afflicted person.
32. Ibid.
no hope for his situation.

**WHAT IS THE INDIVIDUAL’S RELATIONSHIP TO AFFLICTION?**

The main relationship to affliction is one of inconsolability. The kind of plague that affliction generates within the life and soul of an individual is too deep and acute to be helped. Weil goes so far as to state that “only God can [set one free from past affliction]...and even the grace of God itself cannot cure irretrievably wounded nature here below.”33 Yet, “affliction would not have this power without the element of chance contained by it,”34 for chance instills a certain fear in the individual, as though affliction could happen at any moment.

While everyone may suffer in life, not everyone experiences affliction. The circumstances for each individual are different: “The same event may plunge one human being into affliction and not another.”35 It is personalized to fit each person, since it can happen anywhere at any time, though one knows not in what form affliction comes, nor when. The only possible means of defense, according to Weil, is to “persevere in love,”36 since God is love and created out of love (and only God can remove affliction).

**THE SUSPENSION OF THE ETHICAL IN WEIL**

As with Kierkegaard, the ethical sphere for Weil concerns an individual’s moral obligation to the community. Weil, however, places a much greater emphasis on the ethical, because in order for affliction to occur, there must be “social degradation or the fear of it in some form or another.”37 Social alienation is

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 125.
35. Ibid., 119.
36. Ibid., 124. She later says that love is “a direction and not a state of the soul.” Ibid., 135.
37. Ibid., 119.
experienced as a result of the inability of one to communicate one’s own situation of affliction with the community. An individual in this situation is separated from the rest of the group because of the subjectivity of the circumstance. Since the community cannot help the afflicted, the person is left alone in this afflicted condition without any source of human consolation.

KIERKEGAARD AND WEIL: SIMILARITIES

There are several areas of overlap in the suspension of the ethical realm that I would now like to explore. They are meaningful/lessness, moral ambiguity and misinterpretation, and alexithymia (inability to express one’s feelings).

I. MEANINGFULNESS AND MEANINGLESSNESS

The meaningfulness found in the teleological suspension of the ethical is found in Kierkegaard’s treatment of God’s transcendence. God, for Kierkegaard, is beyond the realm of the ethics, as shown. For Abraham to suspend the ethical in the way he did shows that—at least for the knight of faith—meaning is not found in the finite world. Meaning is found in the eternal. Only by obeying the eternal command of God could Abraham hope to find any meaning in his actions towards Isaac. The ethical individual could never experience this hope, which is another reason why the suspension of the ethical places the individual above the ethical: on top of standing in singularity before God, it gives meaning to one’s life. For Kierkegaard, God’s transcendence makes meaningfulness possible. In affliction, however, God’s transcendence is meaninglessness, since this transcendence is sign of the absence of God. Furthermore, since God is not present, and God is love, then love is absent in affliction. Perhaps what is most important about this aspect of affliction is its antinomian attribute. The antinomianism of affliction lies in the afflicted person’s struggle for survival; affliction
is Ananke and, therefore, not subject to law and beyond any judgment of good and evil.

II. MORAL AMBIGUITY AND MISINTERPRETATION

Perhaps the largest objection to the teleological suspension of the ethical is that it leaves one with a sense of moral ambiguity. Because Abraham is commanded by God, who is the source of all that is good and right, to murder his only son, one questions the morality of the religious sphere. The suspension of the ethical requires one to act on the God-given mandate. If one is asked to disregard one of God’s prior statements, then one has no choice but to act on what God commands at that moment. What causes confusion on the part of the individual is what Kierkegaard calls the paradox of faith, which “may be expressed in this way…in this relationship of duty the single individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute.”

Though mentioned earlier, it should be noted that in this relation, one may misinterpret what God requires. In being set apart from the ethical sphere, the individual may sacrifice his relationship with the rest of the world in such a way that is displeasing to God. For example, God may not demand that the individual completely and permanently sever any and every form of communication with the outside world but rather put it on hold for a little while, as with Abraham’s sacrifice. Therefore, if the individual (mis)interprets God’s message in such a way that he begins to live in disconcert with God’s command, the only way he could change his living otherwise would be to speak about it, which would indicate that the individual is really living in the ethical sphere.

39. Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 70.
40. As one will see, speechlessness is a sign of correct standing with God.
One aspect of affliction that is not so much a controversy as it is a travesty is that affliction gives one a feeling of moral ambiguity. It is even expected, given the earlier example. Like the suspension of the ethical, affliction removes a person from good and evil, but in a different way. When Abraham 'suspends the ethical,' he does it as an act of faith, whereas with affliction, this suspension is resolved from the amoral position of the soul. Since affliction relativizes the soul’s judgment of right and wrong, it actually deconstructs and destroys the morality of the person.

III. ALEXITHYMIA

A unique characteristic of Abraham’s situation is his utter silence when faced with who to tell about his situation. Kierkegaard takes this up in the third section of Fear and Trembling titled, “Was It Ethically Defensible for Abraham to Conceal His Undertaking from Sarah, from Eliezer, and from Isaac?” Abraham seems to experience alexithymia, which is a condition whereby one experiences an event so traumatic that one cannot speak of it. Abraham cannot tell anyone of what God has commanded of him, for it is beyond words; no one can understand what it is he is going through. Even if he attempts to communicate it with others, he will have exited the religious sphere, for language is of the ethical sphere.

The suspension of the ethical is expressed through alexithymia in this way: the actual silence of an individual who has been given a command from God is no different than that of another individual who is also silent. The only differ-

41. *Alexithymia* translates from the Greek as “without words for emotion.”

42. The ethical sphere includes laws, which individuals are supposed to obey. These laws can only be understood by a large amount of people because they are put into language, a language that everyone can understand. The religious sphere does away with this language because the personal relationship with God overrides any form of communication with others in that the relationship is attuned to the individual, and thus the individual’s life circumstances. Therefore, only that individual can even begin to try to understand what God is commanding of him because the commands are strictly specific—only an individual can carry them out.
ference between the two is that the religious individual’s situation “cannot be translated into real life,”43 that is, cannot be spoken of or discussed.

Correspondingly, a person cannot explain what is happening to him in affliction, for language is taken away. As stated by Weil, “[the afflicted] have no words to express what is happening to them.”44 It is seemingly the same situation as Abraham’s, except it moves in an opposite direction: Abraham’s silence is hopeful, but the silence of affliction is despairing. There is no way to numb the pain of affliction, for if there were a cure, one could not voice it. As language is taken away, so is meaningfulness.45 Even those individuals who have been in contact with others who experience affliction can never truly know what it is unless experienced themselves, for “affliction is something specific and impossible to describe in any other terms…”46

CONCLUSION

In order to understand the suspension of the ethical, one must understand where the ethical fits into existence and the role it plays. It is possible that the moral of Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling* is that faith is something which cannot be calculated. Kierkegaard uses Abraham as his example for faith because Abraham is completely dependent on God as a single individual: There is no group or community to help him understand his task—or what he is to do—for he must do it himself. The ethical sphere is about following a community’s institutionalized norms and the religious is, in some sense, a breaking away from the institution. Kierkegaard creates the religious sphere to combat the politics of the passionless Danish Lutheran Church, which was part of his reason for writing *Fear and Trembling*. A community cannot tell an individual how to act in a

44. Weil, “The Love of God and Affliction,” 120.
45. It should also be noted that thought is taken away. Since affliction is beyond suffering, there is no thinking out of it.
46. Ibid.
relationship to God, to the effect that the individual must still choose his own life, that is, he must discern on his own what is the best way to act and therefore live. Ultimately, Kierkegaard’s point is that one’s personal relationship to God should not take place at the ethical level because it is individual\textsuperscript{47} and institutions have a tendency to corrupt individual belief. Thus, the individual in his faith has a tendency to be suspicious of groupthink and community norms.

Similarly, Weil’s notion of affliction places the individual outside the realm of suffering and into a state of slavery, which is affliction. The ethical sphere is suspended because society cannot help the afflicted cope: the afflicted state is beyond the boundaries of human classification and logic. Seemingly, the individual is all alone, left to live in one’s own prison, unable but striving to love in a condition of meaninglessness. Weil’s afflicted individual, like Abraham, is an outsider to society, without fellowship, and belonging nowhere. Eventually, the afflicted individual may find his soul again and escape affliction, but only through a constant striving toward love.

\footnote{47. \textit{Individual} as it is a singular experience for each human being.}

Inspired by the great Muslim theologian, philosopher, and mystic Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Gwynne’s Logic, Rhetoric, and Legal Reasoning in the Qur’an: God’s Arguments provides a valuable new lens through which the Qur’an can be read and understood. Analyzing the Qur’an’s arguments is essentially ignored by the earliest exegetes, but Gwynne claims this is because, “reasoning and argument are so integral to the content of the Qur’an and so inseparable from its structure that they in many ways shaped the very consciousness of Qur’anic scholars” (203). While her work and method are informed greatly by traditional Qur’anic commentary (tafsir), Gwynne diverges from the usual task of Qur’anic commentary in that her analysis focuses on the form of arguments and commands rather than the content and its subsequent interpretation. Gwynne proposes schemata based in formal logic that can be used to reveal valid arguments, both explicit and implicit, within the text of the Qur’an. Gwynne argues for “the existence in the Qur’an of full arguments with premises and conclusions, antecedents and consequents, constructions a fortiori, commands supported by justification, conclusions produced by rule-based reasoning, comparisons, contrasts, and many other patterns.”
A formal argument requires premises from which the conclusion must be derived. For Gwynne claims that the arguments found within the Qur’an necessarily proceed from the Covenant between God and humanity. The validation of this premise is found within the Qur’an itself and need not refer to anything other than God’s word. To this end, Gwynne provides a comprehensive survey of verses where divine signs and the existence of precedent can be seen to substantiate God’s commands. Demonstrating this form, Gwynne considers Qur’an 96:1–5 as an argument where God identifies himself and then testifies to his own authority by noting expressions of his omnipotence; that God created humanity and provided them with knowledge. God’s command to Muhammad to “Recite!” is validated by his divine power.

After establishing the Covenant, divine sign, and precedent as the premises on which all Qur’anic arguments are based, Gwynne devotes the bulk of her work to analyzing the many different forms of argument in the Qur’an. Quoting specific verses in each instance, rule-based and legal reasoning are examined first and appear as the primary foci due to their prominence in the history of Qur’anic and Islamic scholarship. Categorical, conditional, and disjunctive arguments in the Qur’an are also brought to light by Gwynne’s comprehensive exegesis. She also briefly explores the debate techniques utilized by theologians like Najm al-Din al-Tufi and al-Ghazali.

Gwynne’s treatment of the material is systematically accomplished with simultaneous reference to Qur’anic verses and schemata that originate in formal logic. Her method effectively shows the Qur’an’s argumentative forms with meticulous detail. Additionally, Gwynne’s process of analysis provides interpretations of the Qur’an that are both logical and grounded in Sunna, even though these are achieved by means arguably outside of tradition. The complexity inherent in some of Gwynne’s concepts may make certain sections generally inaccessible to readers lacking an introduction to formal logic. This problem might prevent certain students and scholars from applying Gwynne’s work to their
reading of the Qur’an. However, this difficulty is at least partly overcome by the inclusion of detailed notes, a general index, and an index of Qur’anic verses. The latter of these is perhaps the most significant and useful because the verse index provides a supplementary interpretation to be utilized in any study related to the Qur’an.

Gwynne’s work is important to the field of Qur’anic studies in general for its insistence that innovative avenues of Qur’anic studies can be extremely profitable. Her focus on form rather than content, as well as numerous references to works by McAuliffe, Wansbrough, and Neuwirth, is evidence of a new trend in scholarship that focuses on the effect of the Qur’an on the consciousness of Muslims. Indeed, Gwynne’s claim that the arguments of the Qur’an were internalized by Muslims surely echoes Neuwirth’s findings related to suras as liturgical devices and Sells’s claim regarding the significance and power of a sura’s vocalization. Perhaps Gwynne’s greatest success is to render the verses (and arguments) of the Qur’an more accessible to scholars and students on an academic level, while retaining the Revelation’s applicability to Muslim traditions and beliefs both at the social and individual levels. Additionally, Gwynne’s work helps to establish the value of new directions for Qur’anic studies and even goes as far as providing a short section devoted to suggestions for future studies.

CORY FRITCH, Florida State University


With her assessment of the state of research on America’s Muslims, Karen Isaksen Leonard has offered scholars a timely and much-needed resource. Leonard’s extended bibliographic essay traces the inroads academics from across many disciplines have made into this subject. Highlighting recent studies of the last twen-
ty-five years—without neglecting older, seminal works such as C. Eric Lincoln’s *The Black Muslims in America* (1961)—she also points to areas in need of future research. Shortcomings are inevitable in sweeping reviews of scholarship on a burgeoning and interdisciplinary field such as this. Undoubtedly, certain topics receive scant attention or go unnoticed. Authors sacrifice substantive depth in favor of representative breadth. A concentration on methodology and theoretical concerns eclipses larger conceptions of the actual topic at hand. However, Leonard’s final product, while not entirely free of these pitfalls, is unique. With few exceptions, this is a balanced piece. It is also a knowledgeable introduction to the history of Muslim Americans in general with a finer interpretive analysis into certain topics—such as gender and race—than one would expect from a bibliographic review.

Leonard divides her book into three parts. Part I is a valuable historical overview of Islam in America, an examination of “the ways in which national origin, language, sectarian affiliation, race, class, and gender have structured Muslim communities.” Leonard illustrates the interaction between indigenous (namely, African American) and immigrant Muslim Americans and the subsequent development of what Leonard calls “ethno-racial” communities. She then reviews the political mobilization and organization of American Muslims and their increasing involvement in national affairs of state. Lastly, Leonard underscores certain issues she thinks require more attention; specifically, those relating to African American Islamic movements, smaller immigrant (sectarian or national-origin) communities, and, lastly, “unmosqued,” secular, and invisible Muslims.

Part II leaves behind the historical overview of Islam in America and commences a topical review of contemporary research findings on various issues and themes. Leonard investigates the matter of diverse identities and affiliations among American Muslims. The heavy focus here and throughout the book on identity—an important subject, to be sure—is not surprising given Leonard’s training as an anthropologist and her previous work on ethnic identities among
South Asian Americans. Surveying the physical landscape of Islam in America, Leonard locates the play of these aforementioned identities in their domestic and public settings. Her consideration of space, place, and built environments here—drawing on the scholarship of Barbara Daly Metcalf and others—is not only appreciated, but also insightful. Leonard then moves on to an inspection of the specifically religious practices and discourses evident in American Islam that pertain to notions of law and authority.

Included in Part II is a perceptive discussion of the “Americanization” phenomenon by which Muslim Americans participate by varying degrees in projects of integration and accommodation. Leonard supplies readers with a look at the scholarly debate between cosmopolitanism and pluralist multiculturalism (seen, for example, in the work of David Hollinger and Diana Eck, respectively) as well as debates between modernizers and their opponents within Muslim circles. Last of all, in Part III Leonard offers suggestions for further research agendas, underscoring the need for continuing interaction between Islamic studies and religious studies scholars and increased attention to post-9/11 issues.

As expected, although this is an invaluable resource for scholars or even general audiences interested in Muslims in America, a few conspicuous weaknesses are present. For one, while Leonard published *Muslims in the United States* just a few years ago, several surveys and works of scholarship have come out since 2003 that serve to make her book seem somewhat dated. On the one hand, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life’s 2008 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey contradicts some of the earlier statistics and findings upon which Leonard relies (especially regarding population demographics and political affinities). On the other hand, several significant articles and books published in recent years have effectively reshaped the configuration and direction of the field. Thus Leonard’s review is less helpful regarding developments in post-9/11 issues. For one example, she does not examine the effects of political and military involvement in West Asia on relations between differing Muslim groups in the U.S. or between
Muslim and non-Muslim Americans. For another example, she does not mention the effects of the recent Iranian revolutions on already-strained Sunni-Shi’a relations.

In addition, Leonard downplays the importance of cross-disciplinary and cross-Atlantic studies. She also neglects the kinds of conclusions and connections we can draw from studies of immigration and immigrant communities, as well as regionally based studies. A need exists for greater integration of American and European scholarship on Muslims and Leonard’s review does not help to remedy this. Lastly, Leonard leaves out any discussion on perceptions of Islam and Muslims in America’s cultural and intellectual history—a phenomenon with which scholars must still reckon—choosing rather to focus on “self-identified” Muslims. Yet outsider perceptions affect the American Islamic community, and thereby remain pertinent to her overall agenda. Though much of the published findings on this sub-discipline (such as Marr’s *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* and Nance’s *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790–1935*) came out after 2003, Leonard omits Allison’s *The Crescent Obscured* (1995) and even Edward Said’s requisite *Orientalism* (1978). Still, in the final estimate these are minor nitpicks of a book that researchers interested in the subject of Islam and Muslims in America will do well to read. Founded on solid research and composed in a clear and engaging style, Leonard’s review deserves a wide readership for years to come.

Daniel C. Dillard, Florida State University


Roger Corless was an eminent scholar in the field of Buddhist studies, and in *Path of No Path: Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism Honoring Roger*
Corless, other leading scholars—colleagues, friends, and students—contribute their academic work to the memory of Corless. This is the first of three volumes in a series dedicated to Corless; the remaining volumes will posthumously feature some of his new and earlier work. Richard K. Payne, the book’s editor, has managed to gather a collection of essays by various authors that resonate with Corless’ assorted research interests. In addition to Pure Land Buddhism, the essays also deal with a number of topics including American Buddhism, esotericism, and pluralism. The book’s ten chapters offer valuable new research to the field of Pure Land Buddhism and beyond, and scholars within the field will certainly benefit from them.

The book’s three broad sections—practice, transmission, and interpretation—are a bit constraining at times. Moreover, the division suggests that scholarly religious studies work should follow the same prescribed design (practicing and receiving transmission before being able to interpret). I will only address a couple of the articles in detail.

In the practice section, Charles D. Orzech delivers an interesting essay in which he illustrates how South Asian esoteric rituals may have been adapted into Tang China. Orzech claims that the Wuliangshou rulai guanxing gongyang yigui (T.930) was based on earlier esoteric templates from South Asia, and that the text was adapted to include Pure Land elements that could be integrated easily into Chinese Buddhist practice. This is irregular in Orzech’s view because the Wuliangshou yigui preserved the “non-esoteric soteriology” of Pure Land belief within an esoteric practice (44). In his conclusion Orzech discusses the ways in which esoteric and Pure Land practices correspond, a topic very familiar to Roger Corless.

Richard K. Payne’s essay in the transmission section will likely invoke the most reaction and commentary. Payne calls out Huston Smith in the essay, and includes a stinging (though well-formulated) critique of Smith’s 2004 introduction to Buddhism. Payne derides Smith’s (mis)representations of Buddhism,
demonstrating that they are nothing more than “Smith’s own theology” which suffers from perennialism and an anti-modern bias (155). Moreover, Smith’s depictions of Buddhism are couched in a Protestant discourse that privilege his own beliefs over more accurate interpretations of Buddhist doctrines and practices. It is clear that Payne views Smith as a real danger and wants to undermine his status, going as far as to reveal Smith’s apparent plagiarism in his recent works. Although it is certain that many scholars will applaud Payne’s exposition, at times his critique can be extended beyond Smith, including other authors in the book. Payne criticizes Smith’s connection of Pure Land belief to Christian concepts including soteriology, grace, and faith. Yet, some of the other authors in this volume (especially those in the interpretation and practice sections) are also guilty.

In the interpretation section, Kenneth K. Tanaka tries to reconcile a literal understanding of the Pure Land belief with a figurative understanding. Tanaka believes contemporary Shin Buddhists have a figurative understanding, whereas Shinran, their founder, never fully renounced a literal belief. To settle this issue, Tanaka offers an approach that reincorporates the literal understanding of Pure Land as a way to “see the ordinary differently” (235). In the following applications of this theory, Tanaka demonstrates that, like Shinran, a literal understanding of the Pure Land can aid a deeper figurative belief.

Kendall Marchman, University of Florida