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Contributors ∞ Contributeurs

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The Indus Culture and Writing System in Contact: At the Crossroads of Civilization in the Mesopotamian Realm

Paul D. LeBlanc

Abstract: This article explores the cross-cultural trade links of the Indus civilization in order to better contextualize the origins and development of the Indus script, a writing system which remains undeciphered. Focussing on its inclusion in the Bronze Age Mesopotamian world-system (in the 3rd and early 2nd millennium BC), I will examine the role played by the Indus state in the Persian Gulf trade in relation to possible influences it could have been exposed to as an actively engaged participant. Particular importance shall be placed on Dilmun's (Bahrain) role as an intermediary and trade entrepôt in the Indus-to-Mesopotamia long-distance sea-trade route. I shall argue that comparisons between the undeciphered Indus script and that of other contemporary writing systems, most notably the Mesopotamian cuneiform that dominated the Gulf trade, are totally legitimate enterprises since the two cultures were situated at a crossroads, with Dilmun at its centre.

Introduction

During the Bronze Age, in the course of the 3rd and early 2nd millennium BC, maritime trade in the Arabian Gulf connected the Indus civilization or the Harappan culture¹ to the political economies of Mesopotamia and other Gulf societies (Beaujard and Fee 2005; Edens 1992; Singh 2008, 166–69; Allchin and Allchin 1982, 183–90; McIntosh 2005, 133–46; Curtin 1984, 65–67). The flow of goods that connected the Indus merchants with the Gulf

1. The Indus civilization is also frequently referred to as the Indus-Saraswati civilization or the Indus Ghaggar-Hakra civilization, the former name based on a possible identification of the Ghaggar-Hakra River with the mythical “lost Saraswati” River of the Nadistuti sukta in the Rig Veda (McIntosh 2002, 24). Thus, my preferred use of a more simplified “Indus civilization”, as McIntosh herself puts it, “should be seen as an abbreviation in which the ‘Saraswati’ is implied” (ibid.).

trade provides a framework for considering the possible cross-cultural contact between civilizations in the ancient world as it relates specifically to the Indus culture, language, and script, the latter in use during the Mature Harappan period, ca. 2600–1900 BC (Possehl 1996, 2002; McIntosh 2002, 141–42). Among the possibility of cross-cultural opportunities that present themselves as theoretical “outside” influences, scholars have suggested links to exist between the Indus script and either one of the major writing systems of the day; the Proto-Elamite writing system, the Mesopotamian cuneiform, and, albeit to a lesser degree, the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, are often included in this discourse (Parpola 1994; Wells 2011).

The Mesopotamian World-System

The rise of the state in ancient Mesopotamia, especially interrelated city-states, saw “the expansion of trade networks with neighboring regions” as early as the 4th millennium BC (Beaujard and Fee 2005, 416). As a direct consequence, this expansion “may have resulted in the formation of a world-system, with southern Mesopotamia acting as a core” (ibid.). By the 3rd millennium, although this Mesopotamian world-system had geographically extended itself into the western Indian Ocean, where this maritime network interrelated with the Indus system of trade, the Indian Ocean was still by no means “a unified space” (417) between the two civilizations and their commercial exchanges. Nevertheless, it can be stated that as early as the 3rd millennium, there existed a “world-system”² that “took shape between the urbanized societies of Mesopotamia, Elam, and Indus through maritime roads in the Persian Gulf and land routes that ran all the way to Turkmenistan and Bactria (ca. 2600–1800 B.C.E.)” (ibid.).

2. The “world-system” is a term that can best be described as a commonly shared maritime trading zone, based on geographic factors, in which different exchange networks interrelate, and that can be further divided in subsystems with each one having its own “core” (or center) that determines the nature of trade with its peripheries (Beaujard and Fee 2005, 413). The term “core” refers to “the core states [that] establish a pattern of structural dependence on these exchanges among periphery states, thus perpetuating the existing class structure and preventing upward mobility” (Maoz 2011, 299).

As an active trading partner with the Mesopotamian state in the Indian Ocean maritime commercial zone (which extends into the Persian Gulf), the Indus civilization or *state*, while constituting an integral part of this world-system, is not considered to be a peripheral zone in relation to dominant Mesopotamian “cores” (Edens 1992, 121). Because the Indus state “lay[s] beyond the Mesopotamian periphery”, it is considered to have “formed a center with its own periphery” (ibid.). As a consequence, mainstream scholars are of the opinion that the “Mesopotamian-Indus relationship thus was center-center, and Mesopotamian center-periphery structures can be presented without detailed involvement of the Indus” (ibid.). And, as Christopher Edens rightly points out, this center-center *status quo* is quite important since the exact “nature of Indus interregional relations is hotly disputed (e.g., Shaffer (1982))” (ibid.).

The main reason for the dispute is that some archaeologists “have suggested that intermediary commercial links by sea and by land may well have been the cause of urban civilization in the Indus valley, not merely its result” (Curtin 1984, 66). The debate surrounding the possible influence of Mesopotamian urbanism, its appearance in the Indus Valley, and the emergence of civilization in the Asian Subcontinent, has unfortunately been overshadowed by the later European colonial model of expansion in the Indian Ocean (Ray 2003, 91) under British imperialists in the control of the Indian Subcontinent’s resources and maritime zone. And, as H.B. Ray notes, “[a]nother consequence of this colonial model has been the emphasis on the Harappans as suppliers of prestige and luxury goods to resource-poor Mesopotamia” (ibid.).

Although the Mesopotamian-Indus relationship is considered to have been center-center (Edens 1992, 121), this does not mean the Indus culture was devoid of any cultural influence from their commercial ties with their trading partners. To say that the Indus state lay “beyond the Mesopotamian periphery” (ibid.) refers to the fact that the Indus trading network lies immediately east of Mesopotamian-controlled Elam, the easternmost territorial conquest in Sargon (2334–2279 BC) of Akkad’s empire-building project (Teissier 1984, 12; Hamblin 2006, 73–101). Mostly through warfare and forceful subjugation, Sargon’s “Akkadian empire” (2334–2190 BC) managed to spread the hegemony of the

Mesopotamian trade system to other conquered societies in order to create a veritable world-system (Hamblin 2006, *ibid.*). Yet, even if the Indus state's center-center trade status was on an equal footing with the core Mesopotamian city-states, it may well have been subject to some of the same cultural influences as were the Mesopotamian "peripheral" regions. It is important to bear in mind, however, that even if written-records of Sargon of Akkad's conquests have survived, and that they document Elam as the easternmost Akkadian conquest (*ibid.*), there is still a possibility that the modern academic discourse that pertains to "peripheral" regions or ancient states (such as the Indus) that lay beyond the periphery (of the Mesopotamian world-system) is not so clear cut after all.

For instance, in recent times, there has surfaced archaeological proof that Sargon's dynasty (in the late 2300s BC) maintained "colonies of merchants" or "trade fortresses" in areas where "there is no evidence of Akkadian rule" (Curtin 1984, 66). Evidence brought forth in excavations in northern Syria and at Ashur in northern Mesopotamia has spurred the suggestion of "at least the possibility of a militarized trade diaspora or trading-post empire stretching overland to the northwest" (*ibid.*). Evidently, the Indus state does not lie to the northwest of the southern Mesopotamian city-states, the heart of the Akkadian empire, but the existence of an Akkadian "militarized trade diaspora" (*ibid.*) during this time serves to shed some room for doubt on world-system theorists who are quick to rule out any sort of periphery-core relationship between the Indus culture and ruling Mesopotamia (insofar as Mesopotamian-to-Indus sociocultural influences are concerned).

Even if the Indus might have possibly been spared the lower "peripheral" status of other Mesopotamian-controlled societies, there may still be many indications that the Mesopotamian center-periphery structures is at some level relevant to understanding the Indus culture.³ If the Indus state apparatus did indeed remain free of Mesopotamian socio-political subjugation and constraints, it nevertheless was economically

3. This, to a certain extent, runs contrary to Edens's opinion on the matter, who states that because of the center-center Indus-Mesopotamian relationship, there is no real need for Mesopotamian center-periphery structures to be examined with any "detailed involvement of the Indus" (1992, 121).

interrelated with the world-system in the Gulf trade as an actively engaged trade partner. And, as far as cross-cultural trade is concerned, transmitting such societal influences does not always depend on “imperial” rule (e.g. the Akkadian empire harnessing the Mesopotamian state apparatus onto a subjugated society, such as happened to Elam). Instead, the ancient inhabitants of the Indus state could have been culturally influenced through their seafaring activities by travelling to distant lands in order to carry on some business with strangers. As it so happens, in relation to Indus merchants carrying out their cargo in the Gulf maritime network, we do know of many distant ports of call where they unloaded their goods.

Indus Trade Links

The process of urbanization that appeared in the riverine valley of the Indus, whether or not as a direct result of Mesopotamian influence, encompassed complex trade linkages that extended well into the huge hinterlands of Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia, and peninsular India. Aside from these center-hinterland relations, the Indus linkages extended from these areas right down to the Persian Gulf and beyond, to southern Mesopotamia (Asthana 1982; Kenoyer 1997; Chew 2007, 35; 1999, 94–95). According to recent scholarship, while the Indus-Mesopotamian trade “may not have been as substantial as earlier held”, instead there has been a shift in attention that refocuses on “[o]ther areas such as the Persian Gulf [that] have been identified as important zones of interaction as far as the long-distance trade of the Harappans is concerned” (Singh 2008, 164–65). The foreign long-distance trade connections of the Indus extended far beyond Mesopotamia, and all the way to the ancient lands of Dilmun (Bahrain) and Magan (Oman)⁴, two distant lands located in and around the faraway Arabian Peninsula (Crawford 1998, 153; McIntosh 2008, 184).

4. As it is known in the Mesopotamian texts, Dilmun corresponds to modern-day Bahrain and the adjacent Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (McIntosh 2002, 161; Possehl 2002, 219) while Magan (or Makan) is usually identified as Oman (or the Omani Peninsula), situated on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula (Bienkowski and Millard 2000, 218).

Some impression of the Indus trade, both local and long-distance, can be formed by a study of the natural resources and raw materials unearthed at several excavation sites (e.g. Mohenjo-daro). Archaeological discoveries indicate that the Indus traders obtained semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli from the region of Badakshan in north-east Afghanistan, and turquoise from Iran, Kashmir, or further afield in Central Asia (Tibet); these natural resources were exported to areas as far away as southern Mesopotamia (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 186–87; Asthana 1982; Lal 1997; Chew 2007, 35; Clark 1977, 264). Amethyst likely came from Maharashtra; agates, chalcedonies and carnelians were also sought in peninsular India (from Saurashtra and West India), while jade was imported from somewhere a little further in Central Asia (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 186; Chew 2007, 35; Clark 1977, 264). Carnelian, a semi-precious stone used in the manufacture of beads and pendants, was a particularly important local resource: the “[l]ong barrel beads of this material rank among the technical achievements of the Harappans”, and the related technique of the “decoration or etching of carnelian beads” may well have made these “etched beads” among the items exported to Mesopotamia (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 202; see also Chew 2007, 35).

Gold was likely imported by the Indus traders from the goldfields of north Karnataka (probably from Mysore) in south India (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 183–90; Clark 1977, 264); silver, too, could have come from distant parts of the sub-continent (Clark 1977, 264), while northwestern India (Rajasthan and Gujarat) provided them with a more local source for copper than those copper ingots being imported over longer distances from Afghanistan and faraway Oman (ancient Magan) on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 186; Chew 2007, 35; Asthana 1982; Lal 1997). There are also many indications that lead may have been obtained from either East or South India (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 183–90) and fuchsite from north Karnataka (186). Alabaster was possibly obtained from a number of local sources both east and west, but with contemporary Shahr-i Sokhta as a large-scale manufacture of alabaster vessels, in all likelihood, it was also a probable source for the Indus merchants (*ibid.*).

Timber also played an important part in the Indus trade, both local and long-distance. As a natural resource that was

“harvested in the Western Ghats, the Jammu ranges, and the Punjab piedmont”, Harappan timber was a major export to Mesopotamia in “its utilization for building and home construction” (Chew 2007, 35). There was also teak which came locally “from the Gir forests or from Panch Mahals, Surat, and the Dangs”⁵, and deodar wood, which was obtained from as far away as the Himalayas (ibid.). In relation to the Indus timber trade, impressively, there was an elaborately established network of “[c]ollection centers on the western part of Gujerat [that] were established to facilitate the flow of timber for consumption in the Indus valley and for export via the Harappan coastal ports to the Gulf and beyond” (25). Perhaps the commercial activities of the Indus traders are poorly documented, but as Karl Moore and David Lewis (2009) still state that “archaeology offers substantial evidence of the impressive infrastructure that once supported trading ties [from Indus] to Sumer” (55).

The Indus-Mesopotamian trading activities were connected primarily by sea (Possehl 2002, 215–21; Moore and Lewis 2009, 55–56; McIntosh 2008, 168–81). In the Ur tablets, the Mesopotamians referenced the Harappan trading ships as originating from a place they called “Meluhha”, their name for the Indus civilization (Kenoyer 1991, 360; Possehl 1990, 276–77; 2002, 218–221; McIntosh 2008, 183–87; Moore and Lewis 2009, 55–56). To corroborate the cuneiform inscriptions that mention “Meluhhan” (Harappan) traders and ships carrying on business in Mesopotamia, further evidence that lends support to these ancient international relations are undoubtedly the great number of Indus or Indus-related artefacts distributed in many Persian Gulf archaeological sites (Kenoyer 1991, 360; Moore and Lewis 2009, 55–56; Possehl 2002, 221). For instance, archeological sites in and around the Arabian Peninsula, such as Maysar, Ra’s al-Hadd and Ra’s al-Junayz (in Oman, ancient Magan), Tell Abrak (on the border between the Emirate of Sharjah and the Emirate of Umm al-Qaiwain, United Arab Emirates), sites in Bahrain (ancient Dilmun), and even in Failaka, have all revealed proof of the Harappan trade presence with some form of Indus inscription having been uncovered from these sites. Then, travelling onwards inland from the Persian Gulf into the lands between the Euphrates and the Tigris – into the heart of Mesopotamia – the dust from the

5. On teak, see also Lal 1997.

ancient city-states of Ur, Nippur, and Kish have also revealed to archaeologists many Indus artefacts; the same is true of Susa, the ancient capital of Akkadian-dominated Elam (Parpola 1994, 10; Singh 2008, 167).

In their examination of the importance of the Indus-Mesopotamian commercial ties, Karl Moore and David Lewis (2009, 46–52) look at the early origins of globalization. In their survey of the economic life of the Indus state, they write about the existence of the Harappan outposts discovered on the Makran coast: “The location of the ports of Sutkagen-dor and Sotka-koh near today’s Iranian border show how important westerly connections by sea were for Harappan culture” (56).

Similarly, there existed a somewhat complex organizational structure surrounding the mining industries of semi-precious stones along with gold, lead, silver, copper, and tin. In many of these areas where these natural resources were exploited by the Indus traders, there has been discovered at various archaeological sites sufficient proof to indicate that the resource-based industry was developed “with the establishment of specialized Harappan outposts in these areas” (Chew 2007, 35). The reason for these commercial “outposts” is that, much like their utilization in Mesopotamia, these Indus “gateway settlements or outposts were embedded in a wide periphery to facilitate the flow of goods and natural resources” (ibid.; in making reference to Asthana 1982, Algaze 1993b, Possehl and Raval 1989). In speaking of these settlements, Chew writes that they “were established at locations near strategic routes/passes (e.g., Nausharo), located in hinterland areas close to the natural resources/commodities (e.g., Shortugai), or near to coastal areas to facilitate the maritime trade (e.g., Lothal)” (2007, 35). Undoubtedly, some of these Indus settlements faced some local hostility because they were fortified, such as Sutkagen-dor and Sutka-koh (ibid.). This detail adds to the important role they must have played for the Indus state, since these Indus settlements are now interpreted to have “provided the access points for the flow of natural resources much needed by the manufacturing economy of the Harappans” (ibid.).

Aside from these Indus settlements – essential “access points” for natural resources – there also existed “trading posts for the exchange of Harappan manufactured goods and some

agricultural products” (ibid.). As noted by Chew, this also essentially describes “the trading and production mechanisms circumscribing the exchange between the Harappans and its vast hinterland” in what are termed as “center-hinterland exchanges” that extended perhaps as far as Southeast Asia and East Africa (2007, 35). These commercial networks existed alongside the Indus center-center exchanges which occurred during the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC (ibid.; Edens 1992, 121).

Clearly the most remarkable of these Indus trading “outposts” or colonies is the lapis lazuli settlement discovered at Shortughai on the south plain of the Oxus in north-eastern Afghanistan (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 168–69, 186–87). The most impressive aspect of the Shortughai Indus settlement is definitely its remoteness in relation to the boundaries of the geographic extent of the Indus civilization, but also the fact that it is found beyond the high passes of the Hindu Kush mountain range. Aside from these Indus sites and settlements discovered in and around South Asia, there is literary evidence from Mesopotamia that informs us of an Indus settlement of merchants living in Ur (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 187), a fact which evidently greatly helps in attesting to the importance of the Indus-to-Mesopotamia trade network, with Dilmun acting as a direct intermediary between the two.

The particular role played by Dilmun in the Mesopotamian world-system was that it acted as an entrepôt for sea trade between Mesopotamia and “outlying regions” (Allchin and Allchin 1982, 187)⁶. While Dilmun held a particular trading relationship with its closer western neighbour on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula – that of Magan – it also played a special role for the Indus traders (Possehl 2002, 219–20). One of the reasons for the intermediary role it played was that the geographic location of Dilmun made it a natural stopover for seafaring Gulf traders who were making their way inland toward southern Mesopotamian city-states with heavy cargo (Bibby 1969, 2). What can be learned by the study of the Mesopotamian

6. The authors’ use of the term “outlying regions” is undoubtedly what the world-system theorists would refer to as either “peripheral” areas (in relation to the Mesopotamian world-system’s “center” or “cores”, the city-states) or “outlying regions”, which could also be considered to be “beyond” the world-system’s “peripheral” areas.

cuneiform passages mentioning Dilmun (and its merchants) is that there are “many references to this place as a commercial center” and that “[o]ne gets a sense that Dilmun was the operational nerve center for this early gulf and Arabian Sea trade” (Possehl 2002, 220).

There are far fewer references to direct trading activities between the Indus and Mesopotamia in the cuneiform records. Consequently, scholars are now placing a particular focus on Dilmun in regards to the intermediary role it played between the Indus-Mesopotamian long-distance sea-trade route. Polished flint weights, such as the ones in use in the Indus valley, have been unearthed in Dilmun, as well as several Indus seals⁷, and other possible imports having originated from the Indus valley (e.g. ivory, carnelian, and copper [Bibby 1969, 192–93]). Of great importance is the discovery in Dilmun of two different ancient systems of weights and measures, and the fact that the Indus standard was used alongside the standard of Ur (Bibby 1969, 188–93). This use of the Indus standard alongside that of Mesopotamia at this point in time in Dilmun allows us to clearly attest the importance Dilmun played as a trade entrepôt and commercial center or “operational nerve center” (Possehl 2002, 220) in the Gulf trade, as a direct intermediary between Mesopotamia and its foreign traders.

In relation to Indus culture and language, and possible cross-cultural trading influences, what does all this mean? Simply to revisit the key elements explored so far in this article, it can firstly be stated that the Indus traders were active participants in the (Mesopotamian-dominated) Gulf trade; and secondly, that Dilmun (Bahrain) acted as a trade entrepôt for the long-distance traders. There is no refutation of these two assertions. Accordingly, this brings us into the realm of theoretical questions that can be raised from these facts, the first being the primary subject of this article: the Indus script and language. Concerning these, let it be said that one does not necessarily have to relate to the other, meaning a writing system as a cultural invention can be appropriated by speakers of another seemingly unrelated language family (e.g. the Greek [Indo-European] borrowing of the Phoenician [Semitic] “aleph-bet”). This means the Indus speakers, whatever their language(s) might have been, could have

7. Bibby is referring to the three Indus seals he excavated.

appropriated elements of a “foreign” writing system and adapted it to their own use (and in the process rendering it mutually unrecognizable with its parent-system). Essentially, since we cannot read the Indus script (as it remains undeciphered), the next logical step is to then look at the cultural influences which the ancient Harappans were subject to in order to possibly identify some cross-cultural exchanges having occurred in their commercial dealings with them.

Given the particular trade relationship the Indus held with Dilmun, it is only logical to look at any possible cross-cultural exchanges between them; but alas, the language of Dilmun is yet another mystery to be solved. It is not known what language native Dilmunites spoke, nor is it known if they possessed their own distinct writing system – despite the fact that Dilmun was the economic “hub” of the Gulf trade. Large quantities of Dilmunite seals, tokens, and their impressions, have nevertheless been uncovered. But, as far as archaeologists can tell, they were simply “used to stamp packages and bundles” and “used in a similar way to ‘lock’ doors closed with a lump of clay” (Crawford 1998, 94). Although some tokens or seals do contain some sort of graphic design on them, for the most part they do not qualify to be any form of proto-writing, but are rather considered purely decorative or symbolic elements, such as arrow symbols and concentric circles (ibid.).⁸ Interestingly, given the importance the Dilmunites played in the Gulf trade as Indus-to-Mesopotamia trade intermediaries, Harriet Crawford looks at the reverse cross-cultural possibility, and explores the possibility of the Dilmunites having adopted the Indus script in the same way they had for the Indus system of weights and measures (ibid.).

Certainly, such a theory is not beyond the realm of possibility, for at the end of the 3rd millennium, locally fabricated seals⁹ from Dilmun and nearby Failaka began to appear, Indus-inscribed and –stylized. Some of these even incorporate Indus

8. Crawford interprets Dilmunite symbols as follows: “Tokens with identical designs have been found at different sites and this suggests the possibility that they acted as authorizations or identification within some system which covered a number of settlements. For example, two tokens with a design of concentric circles decorated with little loops were found at Saar, while apparently identical ones come from the Barbar temple and the Qala’at.” (1998, 94)

9. According to Glassner (1999, 135), these are the “cachets ronds”, i.e. a rounded seal style that begins to appear at this time in Dilmun and Failaka.

artistic elements on tokens, while others feature Indus signs alongside other stylistic elements (such as a Linear Elamite inscription over an image of an Indus-styled bull) (Glassner 1999, 135). Among such discoveries from this period that attest to the importance of the Indus presence along the Arabian seacoast, there has been uncovered “un cachet de Faylaka [qui] porte huit signes d’écriture harapéenne, ... indéniablement de fabrication locale; le revers est en effet tout à fait caractéristique des cachets de Dilmun : une bosse centrale à trois lignes et quatre cercles pointés incisés” (ibid.). A second Dilmun type seal similar to the one found in Failaka has also been discovered; it contains “[u]n bovidé [qui] y est représenté, d’une facture très similaire à ceux que l’on trouve sur les cachets de Faylaka, et accompagné d’une grenade, représentée dans le champ ; au-dessus de l’animal sont figurés trois signes en élamite linéaire” (ibid.). Between these two distinct types of seals, the first one contains an Indus inscription on a typical Dilmun-styled seal, while the second a Dilmun type seal with an Indus-stylized bull inscribed in Linear Elamite. Aside from these, also around the same time, a locally fabricated cuneiform tablet has been uncovered in Bahrain around the 20th century BC (ibid.).

The presence in Dilmun of these three different writing systems “de fabrication locale”, meaning the co-existence of Linear Elamite, the Indus script, and lastly the Mesopotamian cuneiform, all simultaneously being used ca. 2000 BC (Glassner 1999, 135–37), does demonstrably argue in favour of what archaeology has already proven: that Dilmun’s role as a leading commercial center in the Mesopotamian world-system also places it at the crossroads of civilizations as far as languages and culture is concerned.¹⁰ As far as the reason for their usage, Glassner

10. As Glassner notes, the fact that archaeological discoveries reveal these three writing systems to be coexisting and simultaneously used in Dilmun at this time (ca. 2000 BC) is not at all inconceivable. He writes: “Trois écritures seraient donc simultanément en usage, à Dilmun, autour de 2000, deux d’entre elles sont notées sur des cachets [le linéaire élamite et l’harrapéen], la troisième [le cunéiforme mésopotamien] l’est sur des tablettes. Le fait est parfaitement concevable: ne serait l’origine étrangère des trois écritures, la situation est tout à fait comparable à celle de la Crète où, dans la première moitié du 2^e millénaire, trois écritures coexistent dont l’une, notamment, de caractère linéaire (linéaire A), est notée sur des tablettes d’argile. On sait, d’autres part, que les Vay de Côte d’Ivoire utilisent également trois écritures” (1999, 137).

suspects that it had something to do with the commercial trading activities occurring at this time (ibid., 137). In relation to discoveries made in Magan, they are also quite significantly comparable to the Dilmunite finds, and there has even been unearthed in Magan a locally fabricated seal which contains the same Indus signs as one discovered in Lothal, the ancient Indus port city (ibid.).

It can therefore be observed that in many ways these archaeological findings do establish some legitimate grounds for discussing the shared linguistic and/or cultural hybridity (or plurality) of the societies of Magan (Oman), Dilmun (Bahrain), and Meluhha (Indus). The fact that these same three lands are often mentioned together in the Mesopotamian (cuneiform) records – and even “often in the same sentence”, as Bibby (1969, 219) remarks – does lend further support to the archaeological finds in making valid cross-cultural links between these ancient peoples. Not unlike the ancient Dilmunites, it would not then be entirely inconceivable to think of the Indus businesspeople as similarly being exposed to these other contemporary writing systems, most notably such as those of neighbouring Elam (either the proto-Elamite or later Linear Elamite script) or the Mesopotamian cuneiform that dominated the Gulf trade in which they were actively engaged.

Conclusion

Whether the Indus script was fueled by innovation, either through necessity and autochthonous design, or simply inspired by others; it is a question that remains unresolved. In their attempts to provide a solution, many theoretical approaches (or decipherment attempts) have been put forth by scholars in order to solve this question. Simply to relate exactly how these analytical approaches surrounding the Indus script bear any relevance to the current exploration of cross-cultural trade, ultimately it can be stated that all of the epigraphists’ views are based on historical perspectives and what archaeology has to offer to them. Scholars play connect-the-dots with ancient history in order to better frame their problem (the Indus script) in view of obtaining a solution (a successful decipherment). Historical perspectives form an integral part of the puzzle.

To make cross-cultural connections between the Indus and Mesopotamian writing systems is certainly a justifiable enterprise since there can be proven to exist some sort of trading relationship that connects the Indus civilization with the Mesopotamian sphere of cultural influence in the Persian Gulf trade, and this since at least the start of the 3rd millennium.

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Religious Freedom in Canada: Whither the Community?

Louise Tardif

Abstract: This article examines the evolution of the Supreme Court of Canada's understanding of religion as it applies to religious freedom cases since the establishment of the Canadian Charter of Rights in 1982. In particular, I highlight a change in the Court's view with the *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* case in 2004. This shift, involving a view of religion as both collective and individual to a view heavily weighted to an individual perspective, has later resulted in disastrous consequences for the Wilson Hutterian Brethren of Alberta in their bid to be exempted from providing photos for their driver's licenses in Alberta.

Introduction

Since the establishment of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the Supreme Court of Canada has provided the contours of how it imagines religion through its adjudication of religious freedom cases. The object of this article is to examine the evolution of the Court's understanding of religion since the establishment of the Charter. In particular I show that the change in the Court's view on the nature of religious belief and practice, from being embedded in community to being an individual and subjective pursuit, is problematic for the Wilson Hutterian Brethren community in Alberta.

The Canadian Constitution, through section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, guarantees freedom of religion. It also requires that the freedoms guaranteed under section 2 be interpreted through the lens of section 27, which refers to the "preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada". The Charter limits those freedoms under section 1 of the Charter: "The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be

demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society”.¹ The Court’s decisions have import on the lives of Canadians; they establish normative ideals and practices. As Berger explains: “Because it both commands the coercive power of the state and always implicitly assumes the ultimacy of its authority, law’s rendering of religion assumes the force and significance of a total claim about what matters about religion” (2008, 286).

In this paper, I posit that the *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* case (*Amselem*), adjudicated in 2004, was pivotal in how the Court imagines religion. With *Amselem*, the Court shifted the balance between the previously established view of religion as both collective and individual to a view heavily weighted to an individual perspective. As a result of this shift, three years after *Amselem*, the Wilson Hutterian Brethren Colony was marginalized by the Court in its adjudication of its case. In my examination of the change in the Court’s conception of religion, I highlight the tension within the court around the collective/individual nature of religion. I argue that the entanglement of these two polarities for devout individuals compels the Courts to account for the importance of community in their adjudication of religious freedom cases, both from a principle and from an effects point of view.

A comparison of early post-Charter cases with *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* shows that in early cases, the Court imagines religion as embedded in community and uses collective terms to refer to religion; whereas in *Amselem*, the Court’s view of religion is highly individualistic and, although the communal nature of religion is not totally rejected, collective terms are seldom used.² I contend that the individual conception of religion

1. *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part I of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, s. 1. The Court uses the *Oakes* test to determine whether an infringement of a right is justifiable under section 1 of the Charter. There are several conditions that must be examined under the *Oakes* test: there must be a pressing and substantial objective to the reason for the violation; the means of the violation must be rationally connected to the objective of the state; there must be minimal impairments of the rights; there must be proportionality between the infringement of the right and the objective of the state. The *Oakes* test comes from *R. v. Oakes* [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103. The first application of the *Oakes* test to a religious freedom case was done in *R. v. Big M Drug Mart* [1985].

2. For instance, there are over 75 references to groups, community, and collectivity by the justices in the *R. v. Edwards Books and Art Ltd.* Case, and less than 20 such references in *Amselem*.

in *Amselem* severed religion from its communitarian moorings and resulted in a disastrous outcome for the Hutterites.

The idea that Western-based legal systems are rooted in Christian liberal ideology, and give primacy to the individual in the tradition of Locke and Stuart-Mill, is not controversial.³ Canada's legal system, also a product of liberalism, follows in this tradition and considers the individual as the possessor of the rights. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, at the time of the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights in 1982, indicated that individuals

[t]ranscend the accidents of place and time, and partake in the essence of universal Humanity. They are therefore not coercible by ancestral tradition, being vassals neither to their race, nor their religion, nor their condition of birth, nor to their collective history. It follows that only the individual is the possessor of rights. A collectivity can exercise only those rights it has received by delegation from its members. (Axworthy and Trudeau 1990, 364)⁴

Thus the relationship of the state with its citizens is unmediated by cultural affiliation or religious membership and the rights language that establishes the contours of our relationship to the state does not recognize our social or relational nature.

Early Post-Charter Cases

Despite the “individualism” bias of the Charter, in early post-Charter cases the Court recognized the embeddedness of the

3. See Berger (2007) for a discussion of how Liberalism drives the individualistic character of the Canadian Charter. Also see Darian-Smith (2010) for a historically based review of Anglo-American legal systems.

4. Trudeau viewed collective rights as delegated by an aggregation of individual rights. It is noteworthy that in the discussion leading to the adoption of the Charter, Trudeau was against collective rights, except for the protection of education in French and English. In the end he agreed that the rights of Aboriginals should be included as a collective right, with the result that the collective rights that are protected in the Charter are Aboriginal rights and language rights, which the Canadian Courts have interpreted as being rights to those communities – English and French – to control their schools (Sanders 1991).

religious individual in her community. I will now discuss how two cases, *R. v. Big M. Drug Mart* and *R. v. Edwards Books and Art Ltd.*, set the tone for the definition of religion in the Court's imagination. In both these cases, religious practice is deemed to be communal as well as individual.⁵

Because *R. v. Big M Drug Mart* [1985] (*Big M*) was the first Charter case to deal with religious freedom, it set the tone for future cases.⁶ The case involved a drugstore that opened for business on a Sunday in contravention to the federal *Lord's Day Act*. *Big M* was notable in two ways: it put forward the principle that the Charter should be interpreted based on Canada's commitment to multiculturalism, thus anchoring religion in culture and community; and it took a broad view of religion, extending it to include freedom *from* religion, specifically state sanctioned religion as in the Christian day of rest (Sunday) being imposed on non-Christians.⁷

Justice Dickson, writing for the majority in *Big M*, defined religion as follows:

The essence of the concept of freedom of religion is the right to entertain such religious beliefs as a person chooses, the rights to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal, and the right to

5. The conceptualization of religion as both individual and communal set out in *R. v. Big M Drug Mart* and *Edwards* was used consistently in religious freedom cases until 2004. Examples of these cases are: *B. (R.) v. Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto* [1995] 1 SCR 315; *Lavigne v. Ontario Public service Employees Union*, [1991] 2 SCR 211; *Delisle v. Canada (Deputy Attorney General)*, [1999] 2 SCR 989; *R. v. Marshall*, [1999] 3 SCR 456; *Dunmore v. Ontario (Attorney General)*, 2001 SCC 94; and *Trinity Western University v. College of Teachers*, [2001] 1 S.C.R. 772, 2001 SCC 31. In a 2004 case, Justice McLachlin stated: "As a general rule, the state refrains from acting in matters relating to religion. It is limited to setting up a social and legal framework in which beliefs are respected and members of the various denominations are able to associate freely in order to exercise their freedom of worship, which is a fundamental, collective aspect of freedom of religion, and to organize their churches or communities" (*Congrégation des témoins de Jéhovah de St-Jérôme-Lafontaine v. Lafontaine (Village)*, [2004] 2 S.C.R. 650, 2004 SCC 48).

6. See Kay (1992), Moon (2003), and Lepofsky (1992) for a discussion of the importance of *R. v. Big M. Drug Mart* in the Canadian Courts' view of religion.

7. For an in-depth discussion of the broad definition of compulsion in *R. v. Big M. Drug Mart* by the Court in the context of freedom from religion, see Moon (2008).

manifest religious belief by worship and practice or by teaching and dissemination. (para. 94)

Dickson expanded by stating that freedom represents a protection from state coercion:

Freedom in a broad sense embraces both the absence of coercion and constraint, and the right to manifest beliefs and practices. Freedom means that, subject to such limitations as are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, no one is to be forced to act in a way contrary to his beliefs or his conscience. (para. 95)

The most relevant element to my hypothesis is the fact that although the definition of religion is focused on the individual's rights as a "person", elements such as the "right to manifest religious belief by worship and practice or by teaching a dissemination" reflect the communal and social aspect of religious practice and belief.

Following the *Big M* case, *R. v. Edwards Books and Art Ltd.* (*Edwards*), adjudicated in 1986, was about the Province of Ontario's *Retail Business Holidays Act*, specifically in regards to the fact that Sunday was identified as a "secular" pause day for workers in the retail sector. Four Ontario retailers were charged for being open and serving customers on a Sunday, against the provisions of the Act, which stated that retailers (other than those exempted under section 3(4) of the Act) must close on Sunday. The finer points of this case turned on whether the Act's purpose was to confer holidays for retail workers or whether it was to promote religious observance by a dominant religious group. In addition to reviewing the purpose of the law, the Court examined its effects.

This case is replete with references to community or groups (see note 2). Particularly relevant here is whether, in discussing religion, one can separate the individual from her community. For example, Justice Wilson stated that an interpretation of section 2a) that protects the religious freedoms of individuals but not the groups they belong to is precluded by section 27, and in doing so she clearly articulates the collective nature of religion:

Yet it seems to me that when the Charter protects group rights such as freedom of religion, it protects the rights of all members of the group. It does not make fish of some and fowl of the others. For, quite apart from considerations of equality, to do so is to introduce an invidious distinction into the group and sever the religious and cultural tie that binds them together. It is, in my opinion, an interpretation of the Charter expressly precluded by s. 27 which requires the Charter to be interpreted “in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.” (para. 207)

Judge Dickson, writing for the majority in the same case, also acknowledges that freedom of religion has both an individual and a collective aspect:

In this context, I note that freedom of religion, perhaps unlike freedom of conscience, has both individual and collective aspects. Legislatures are justified in being conscious of the effects of legislation on religious groups as a whole, as well as on individuals. (para. 145)

For our purpose, the most engaging feature of this judgment is that the Court characterizes religion as being a group or community endeavour.

Both *Big M* and *Edwards* entrenched the definition of religion as being based on individual beliefs strongly embedded in community activities and practices – here, religion is both individual and communal. This characterization went unchallenged until 2004, when the Court, in its adjudication of the *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* case, shifted its conceptualization of religion to a decidedly more individual and subjective understanding (see note 5).

The Turn to Individuality...

In *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* a devout Orthodox Jew (Mr. Amselem) and two other residents of the condo building they inhabited wanted to build a *Succah* on their balcony. Mr. Amselem

claimed that the *Succah* was required by his religion. Other residents in the building through Syndicat Northcrest sued Mr. Amselem claiming that the *Succah* interfered with their enjoyment of the building. The Court supported Mr. Amselem 5-4 in a split decision.

In this case the Court altered its view of religion to a more individualistic stance. Justice Iacobucci for the majority defined religion as follows:

Defined broadly, religion typically involves a particular and comprehensive system of faith and worship. Religion also tends to involve the belief in a divine, superhuman or controlling power. In essence, religion is about freely and deeply held personal convictions or beliefs connected to an individual's spiritual faith and integrally linked to one's self-definition and spiritual fulfillment, the practices of which allow individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith. (para. 39)

This view of religion focuses on the personal and individual spiritual experience, which fits within the classic definition of the religious experience as characterized in William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: "Religion ... shall mean the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (1994, 43).

For James, the individual who had true religious experiences (as opposed to a traditional and conventional religious life) was a "religious genius."⁸ It would appear that Justice Iacobucci imagined religion as the domain of religious geniuses, as opposed to ordinary individuals integrating their religious practices in their daily lives and their community. While the highly individualistic conceptualization of religion allows for the

8. The Jamesian conception of religion that the Court adopts in *Amselem* carries its own Christian bias. The identification of an experience as religious "may be a legacy of the theistic background shared by Schleiermacher, Otto, James and other theorists who have contributed to the literature on religious experience... The concept of religion has been shaped by this tradition. It is a product of modern Western, largely Christian, thought of past three centuries" (Proudfoot 2001, 67).

protection of a greater variety of religious practices and expressions, it may do so as against the communal and intersubjective nature of religion. Whether one uses a Durkheimian view of religion, which places religion as constitutive of the community,⁹ or McGuire's (2008) more unstable and fluid notion of the lived religious experience as an expression of chosen practices of shared values and experiences, community is an important component of the religious life.

The minority opinion in *Amselem* took a less individualistic view. Justice Bastarache, writing for the minority, acknowledged the collective aspect of religion:

However, a religion is a system of beliefs and practices based on certain religious precepts. A nexus between personal beliefs and the religion's precepts must therefore be established. ... Religious precepts constitute a body of objectively identifiable data that permit a distinction to be made between genuine religious beliefs and personal choices or practices that are unrelated to freedom of conscience. Connecting freedom of religion to precepts provides a basis for establishing objectively whether the fundamental right in issue has been violated. By identifying with a religion, an individual makes it known that he or she shares a number of precepts with other followers of the religion. (para. 135)

There are two elements to draw from this statement. The first is that for the minority, the difference between freedom of religion and freedom of conscience rests on the fact that religion is based on doctrine which frames shared religious practices. In other words, a link with doctrine is necessary for the determination that a practice or belief is religious in nature. The second point is the importance of community (shared practices). Justice Bastarache, relying on Macklem (2000), highlighted the collective aspect of religion more precisely:

Notwithstanding the wide variety of religious experience, no religion is or can be purely individual in its outlook, as

9. For Durkheim, religion comprises of a system of beliefs and practices which joins the believers into a "single moral community called a Church" (1965, 44).

ultimate concern is said to be. On the contrary, religions are necessarily collective endeavours. By the same token, no religion is or can be defined purely by an act of personal commitment, as the ultimate concerns of an individual are said to be. Instead, all religions demand a personal act of faith in relation to a set of beliefs that is historically derived and shared by the religious community. (para. 137)

Amselem also brought in the notion of sincerity of beliefs as a way to establish whether someone's practices and beliefs would be covered by the freedom of religion guarantee. Justice Bastarache explains the Court's understanding of sincerity of beliefs as being personal and subjective:

Although any analysis of freedom of religion must include an inquiry into the sincerity of the beliefs of those who assert it, such an inquiry must be as limited as possible, since it will "expose an individual's most personal and private beliefs to public airing and testing in a judicial or quasi-judicial setting": *Edwards Books, supra*, at p. 779. (para. 142)

Because sincerity of beliefs can only be assessed from an individual perspective, as a measure of religious freedom it may undermine the associational dimension of religious belief integral to many religions (Brown 2005, 141). Religious freedom, after all, is about more than private and individual practices. In the words of Van Dyke, freedom of religion "is not the right of an individual to go into a closet and worship alone. It is a communal right, and it includes the right (widely recognized) to maintain the community" (1982, 27). There are many religious experiences that are not attainable individually. For example, the sense of being transported to another realm in the presence of a group of monks engaged in Gregorian chants in a small chapel or the feeling of total unity and/or loss of self during an experience of group meditation has a different texture than the experience of communion with God that one may feel praying individually in the privacy of their home. Considering religion as solely an individual matter basically delegitimizes those religions for which

communal worship and other types of community activities are at the heart of their practice. It is difficult to imagine a meaningful concept of religious freedom without the existence of some protection for religious communities.

Another element of importance in the parsing out of the collective nature of religion is the fact that religion is embedded in culture. Moon argues that public discourse around religious freedom is now framed in more secular terms and that this has resulted in a shift in our understanding of religious freedom “from individual conscience or autonomy to cultural identity, as the foundation for freedom” (2008, 217). Cultural identity is by definition intersubjective and collective. This change in public discourse is in contradistinction with the Charter, which “always seeks to define rights exclusively as belonging to a person rather than a collectivity” (Axworthy and Trudeau 1990, 365). This points to a gap between the Court’s view of religion and how individuals experience their religion. Nowhere is this gap more evident than in litigation. In their attempts to isolate the core issues of matters under discussion, judges risk losing sight of the multifaceted nature of lived experience. Differentiating between the communal, individual, cultural, and religious aspects of being in the world may prove difficult:

Because the rights-based paradigm encourages litigants to emphasize the religious aspect of themselves to the potential exclusion of other aspects, parties before the court may feel compelled to present distorted representations of themselves. And because questions of religious freedom are so closely bound with the personal and communal identities of litigants, the harm sustained when they are forced to adopt the language of rights can be understood as an instance of misrecognition. (Kislowicz 2010, 9)

I argue that the Court’s shift from a community-minded definition of religion in early post-Charter cases to an individual/subjective view in *Amselem* is detrimental to those religious groups that embrace communitarianism. I will now turn to an examination of the negative impact of this change on the Wilson Hutterian Brethren colony.

... *And Its Disastrous Consequences*

The turn to individuality by the Court has many positive aspects, not the least of which is the recognition that religion is often expressed in a private moment of communion with one's God, unconstrained by doctrine. However, balancing the individual and communal aspects of religion is a site of struggle for the Court. Justice Iacobucci illustrated this struggle in *Amselem*:

First, there is the freedom to believe and to profess one's beliefs; second, there is the right to manifest one's beliefs, primarily by observing rites, and by sharing one's faith by establishing places of worship and frequenting them. Thus, although private beliefs have a purely personal aspect, the other dimension of the right has genuine social significance and involves a relationship with others. It would be an error to reduce freedom of religion to a single dimension, especially in conducting a contextual analysis like the one that must be conducted under s. 9.1 of the Quebec *Charter*. (para 137)

This struggle to balance the communal and individual nature of religious practice is at the root of the *Hutterite* case. In the *Alberta v. Hutterian Brethren of Wilson Colony* case, the Province of Alberta was asking the Court to rule on the requirement for all citizens to hold a driver's licence with a photograph. In 2003, the Province made the photo requirement universal for security purposes – in particular to prevent identity theft – thus cancelling Code G exemptions, which had been in effect since 1974.¹⁰ The Wilson colony objects to having their photograph taken as it contravenes their interpretation of the Second Commandment. In a close decision (4-3), the Supreme Court held that the Province of Alberta's requirement of a photograph on its drivers' licences was a reasonable limit of the Hutterites' freedom of religion, in a reversal of the decisions of the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench and the Alberta Court of Appeal.

The religion of the Hutterites is unique amongst Anabaptist sects in their commitment to communal living in which all

10. Code G exemptions were offered to those who refused to have their picture taken on religious grounds.

material things are held in common. Living communally is a large part of how they honour God: “Honoring God, they say, requires communal living, devout pacifism, and proper observance of religious practices” (Huntington and Hosteller 2002, 1). This is based on the teachings of Jesus and the community life he shared with his disciples. Hutterites believe community of goods is the highest command of love. A spiritually successful community is one that has “gman urnung”, which translates as “community order” (Hofer 1998, 17). All members of the colony are provided for equally and nothing is kept for personal gain. Hutterites do not have personal bank accounts; rather all earnings are held communally, and funding and necessities are distributed according to one's needs, as “[p]rivately owned material possessions lead human beings away from God” (Huntington and Hosteller 2002, 12). Self-sufficiency is part and parcel of their communal life.

The community lives in rural Alberta and drives for the purposes of commercial activities, as well as health purposes (to see doctors), and emergencies (driving the fire truck). The requirement to have a photograph on their driver's licence puts them in the difficult position of having to choose between acting against their religion and foregoing their driver's permit with considerable consequences to their survival as a community.

The notion that religious beliefs and practices are not only individual, but represent “a significant connection with others – with a community of believers – and structures the individual's view of herself and the world” (Moon 2008, 217), is particularly salient for the members of the Wilson colony. They exercise their religion both individually and communally. If they leave their community and do not join another Hutterite community, they do not maintain or practice their religion. They are no longer Hutterites. Their community legitimates and authenticates the Brethren's religious practices, which in turn reinforces their religious identity. Judge LeBel identified the importance of community for the Wilson Colony:

Religion is about religious beliefs, but also about religious relationships. The present appeal signals the importance of this aspect. It raises issues about belief, but also about the maintenance of communities of faith. We are discussing the fate not only of a group of farmers, but of a community

that shares a common faith and a way of life that is viewed by its members as a way of living that faith and of passing it on to future generations. As Justice Abella points out, the regulatory measures have an impact not only on the respondents' belief systems, but also on the life of the community. The reasons of the majority understate the nature and importance of this aspect of the guarantee of freedom of religion. This may perhaps explain the rather cursory treatment of the rights claimed by the respondents in the courts of the s. 1 analysis. (para. 182)

There is no argument in this case as to the existence of an infringement of freedom of religion. The Province of Alberta concedes that fact. The case hinges on whether the infringement is reasonable under section 1 of the Charter. The majority concluded that the requirement for a photograph on the drivers' permits satisfied the *Oakes* test (see note 1). Justice MacLachlin attests that the photo requirement is connected to the state objective, that religious freedom is not limited more than is necessary to attain the objective, and that the benefit to the state outweighs the infringement of the right.

At the outset of her opinion, Justice MacLachlin states the basis from which she interprets the case:

Much of the regulation of a modern state could be claimed by various individuals to have a more than trivial impact on a sincerely held religious belief. Giving effect to each of their religious claims could seriously undermine the universality of many regulatory programs, including the attempt to reduce abuse of driver's licences at issue here, to the overall detriment of the community. (para. 36)

There is much in the above paragraph that is problematic on many levels. Legal method aims to get at the truth of a matter. But, as Beaman explains, there are many versions of the truth (2008, 8). In one paragraph, Justice MacLachlin identifies whom she represents (a modern state) and whose interests she has at heart (the broader community), using loaded categories. Categories are usually defined in opposition to other elements. For example, heterosexuality is produced only in opposition to homosexuality.

And there is little need here to review the literature about the category of religion. But a reminder that the term “religion” has its roots in the late 19th century colonialist West and was created as an academic category to study religions *other* than Christianity may be useful.¹¹ Thus, inherent in the category religion is the “other”, represented by the Hutterites in this case. As Beckford explains, the process of “othering” stems from a perceived rejection of our secular normal ways of life:

The fact that some members of some minority religious movements choose to order aspects of their lives in accordance with different priorities makes them objects of suspicion because, among other things, their non-conventional ways of living imply that something is wrong with the machinery of “normalization”. (2001, 14)

It is apparent to me that the modern state in Justice MacLachlin’s statement is defined in opposition to the “pre-modern” way of life of the Hutterites.¹² The fact that the Hutterites reject the normal path of the Canadian institutionalized life (public education, employment, geographic isolation, driver’s licence with photo, etc.) offends MacLachlin’s conception of Canada as a modern state complete with modern individuals who embrace freedom, autonomy, and the rationality of liberal democracies. Justice MacLachlin’s “othering” of the Hutterites reduces them to a few individuals (perhaps acting in a vacuum) and eradicates their strong collective identity.

However, Justice MacLachlin still recognizes the communitarian aspect of religion in general:

11. See Olson (2003), Fitzgerald (2000), Wiebe (1999), McCutcheon (1997) and Proudfoot (1985).

12. The impression that the Hutterites lead a pre-modern way of life is likely based on the fact that they eschew the comforts of the modern consumer society, in particular private property and ownership. This is more a form of ascetism manifested in a desire to avoid personal attachment to consumer goods. However, their agricultural businesses are run in a very modern way, using the latest machinery, and their operations are computerized. In fact, the Hutterites are often the first to bring in new technology: “Innovative companies with new products often seek out the Hutterites to introduce to them the latest advances in technology” (Hofer 1998, 125). For more on the Hutterites’ use of modern technology on their farms see Huntington and Hosteller (2002, 61–62; 1975, 48–63).

Religion is a matter of faith, intermingled with culture. It is individual, yet profoundly communitarian. Some aspects of a religion, like prayers and the basic sacraments, may be so sacred that any significant limit verges on forced apostasy. Other practices may be optional or a matter of personal choice. Between these two extremes lies a vast array of beliefs and practices, more important to some adherents than to others. (para. 89)

Nonetheless, she relegates the Hutterites' desire for self-sufficiency as a matter of personal choice and convenience. In opposing the rights of the Hutterites to refuse to be photographed for their drivers' licence and attempting to balance it against the greater good of the broader community, Justice MacLachlin states that the solution for the Hutterites is to

hire people with drivers' licences for this purpose, or to arrange third party transport to town for necessary services, like visits to the doctor ... Obtaining alternative transport would impose an additional economic cost on the Colony, and would go against their traditional self-sufficiency. But there is no evidence that this would be prohibitive. (para. 96)

This is somewhat dismissive of the Hutterites communal integrity. Justice MacLachlin assumes that the inconvenience of having to hire drivers will be the same for the Hutterites as it would be for a person living in Calgary! As Justice Abella states: "Their inability to drive affects them not only individually, but also severely compromises the autonomous character of their religious community" (para. 115), whereas the benefits to the province are "at best marginal" (para. 116).

For the majority opinion, the province's goal of ensuring the integrity of the driver's licence system to minimize identity theft is deemed pressing and substantial in accordance with the requirements of the *Oakes* test. Justice Abella is critical of this characterization. She points out that there are over 700,000 Albertans who do not have a driver's licence (thus will not be in the facial recognition database) and that the missing 250 Hutterites will not have any discernable impact on the province's attempt to

reduce identity theft (para. 115). As the Canadian Civil Liberties Association points out in its factum for this case: “Put another way, would it constitute an undue hardship if Alberta’s facial recognition database were only 99.98984% complete?” (2008, 9). In fact, given the missing 700,000 people, the database will be short by about 20% of the Alberta population,¹³ which does not bode well for the integrity of the system. Justice Abella also states for the minority: “An exemption to the photo requirement for the Hutterites was in place for 29 years without evidence that the integrity of the licensing system was harmed in any way” (para. 156). In this context, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association’s claim that the province of Alberta is attempting to create an identity card regime by “stealth sheltered under the traffic-related purposes of the *Traffic Safety Act*” is not far fetched.¹⁴ This has implications that reach beyond the Hutterite community. Two examples are the effectiveness of the *Oakes* test in religious freedom cases and the impact of this decision on the Muslim community.¹⁵

In Canadian society, religions that are at the margins of MacLachlin’s modern state tend to have their freedom limited. “Such groups are most likely to find themselves outside the bounds of legal protection when their beliefs/activities intersect or conflict with other discursive imperatives” (Beaman 2008, 46).¹⁶

13. In 2010, Alberta had a population of approximately 3,600,000, including the off-reserve Native population (Government of Alberta, Municipal Services Branch).

14. From the factum presented by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association in the Case of the Supreme Court of Canada between the Province of Alberta and the Hutterian Brethren of Wilson Colony.

15. Ogilvy (2010) makes the case that the *Hutterite* decision shows the ineffectiveness of the proportionality test for the purposes of protecting religious freedom and argues that the apparent neutrality of the *Oakes* test allows the Court to advance certain values, which may be in line with the interests of the state (212). She also considers the impact of the decision on the Muslim community, explaining that in 1974, when Code G exemptions were granted to the Hutterites, the Muslim community was rather small in Canada and had not yet made its presence felt in the Western world. However, the mass migration of Muslims in the West and the post 9/11 geopolitical framework has implications in our consideration of the *Hutterite* decision, particularly as it pertains to litigation by and against Muslim women who choose to wear the *niqab* or *burka* (213–14).

16. Cf. Razack (2008) for an examination of the process of “othering” in an opposing dynamic.

In the *Hutterite* case, the security imperative (the protection from identity theft) trumps their freedom of religion and triggers a technique of governance that aims to control how they carry commercial activities or pursue basic activities like going to the doctor.

Conclusion

In her article “Is Religious Freedom Impossible in Canada?”¹⁷ Beaman (2012) argues that religious freedom in Canada – compared to the US – is actually (more) possible, based on three reasons. First, the largely Roman Catholic social structure in Canada is more amenable to a less intellectual, more embodied view of religion; secondly, group rights are recognized in Canada via the constitutional recognition of multiculturalism; and lastly, the court’s understanding of the religious experience as subjective reflects an understanding of lived religion. Beaman’s argument is based on the same logic that Justice Wilson used in the *Edward’s* case – that section 27 precludes an individual interpretation of religious freedom. She also quotes Justice Iacobucci whose first sentence in his general discussion of the *Amselem* case is: “An important feature of our constitutional democracy is respect for minorities, which includes, of course, religious minorities” (11). For Beaman, this statement, coupled with the requirement to interpret religious freedom through the multicultural heritage of Canada under section 27, opens up a space for what she terms a “soft” protection of religious groups. She also asks whether the “soft” recognition of group rights in the constitution will result in a protection of religious minorities from the “dominance of the protestant conceptualizations of religions” (12). In view of the outcome in the *Hutterite* case, the answer is clearly no. Contrary to James’ (1994) view of the religious life as “second-hand” religion set apart from the religious experience, the boundaries between the individual and the collective aspects of religion are often inexistent and where they exist, they tend to be fluid and messy. The life of a religious person, including her beliefs and practices, tends to be solidly anchored in collectivity.

17. Beaman’s article was published online before print in November 2010.

The change in the Court's conceptualization of religion since 2004 is striking and shows a gap between how the Court now imagines religion – mostly as an individual and personal endeavour – and how people experience and live religion, often with a strong communal component. In my examination of two early post-Charter cases and *Amselem*, I have shown that the shift in the balance between the collective and the individual nature of religion as viewed by the Court resulted in little consideration given to the community impact of the legal ruling in the *Hutterite* case. In my view, the right to religious freedom presupposes, in principle, the protection of religious communities from detrimental state action.

One has to wonder whether the outcome of this case signals a stricter analysis of rights under section 1 in future religious freedom cases. It certainly puts into question the ability of members of religious groups, for whom community life is a main characteristic, to argue their freedom of religion. There is a note of optimism, however, in the fact that the case was a split decision with minority opinions being very critical of the majority analysis. On the other hand, that could simply signal that we are witnessing the beginning of a more fractious Supreme Court.

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Virgins, Monsters, Martyrs, and Prophets: Tertullian's Species of Women

Heather Barkman

Abstract: Tertullian, a late-second century North African writer, identifies “woman” as a genus comprised of three species: the virgin, the wife/mother, and the widow. He sees any attempt to blur the distinction between species (such as when virgins are allowed special recognition in the church or when a widow seeks to remarry and revert back to a wife) as “monstrous”. He is especially concerned with virgins who seek to go unveiled, perceiving this act as transforming them into “some monstrosity with a head of its own” (*De virginibus velandis* 7) and argues that all women should be indistinguishable within the church. Nevertheless, Tertullian praises female martyrs and prophets of all species. As both martyrdom and prophecy are granted by God's grace, they are afforded a special position within the Christian community. Ultimately, however, female prophets are still not permitted to prophesize within the church, while female martyrs are able to transcend social boundaries and stand equal with men only through the public act of dying. This paper will juxtapose Tertullian's construction of species of women with his views on female martyrs and prophets in order to suggest a more nuanced understanding of Tertullian's views of women.

Introduction

Many authors have examined the topic of how women are depicted in the writings of Tertullian.¹ This is not surprising, since Tertullian's works consistently display a deep concern with the

1. In traditional scholarship, Tertullian's relationship with women was most often depicted as a misogynistic one (e.g., see Monceaux 1963). Similarly, feminist scholarship often emphasizes Tertullian's negative attitude towards women (see Ruether 1974, 157; van Vuuren 1973; and Heine 1987, 3–4). More recently, Tertullian scholars have tended to redeem his “misogynistic” reputation through reinterpretation of his texts and a closer examination of some of his lesser-known works. Examples include Hoffman (1995, 148), wherein he argues that Tertullian's views should be seen as relatively positive when considered in his own cultural and theological context (see also Lavender 1995, 331–56; and Church 1975, 83–101).

behaviour and appearance of women, especially as these issues relate to their roles within the church. In some of his treatises, he refers to “woman” as the genus that includes within it different species including the virgin, wife, and widow (Tertullian, *Or.* 22 [1954d, 268–71]; *Virg.* 4 [1954e, 1212–13]).² While scholars have noted this distinction, it has not been remarked upon in any significant way. In the introduction to his translation of *De virginibus velandis*, Geoffrey Dunn acknowledges that Tertullian supports his arguments by showing “that ‘woman’ is the genus that includes ‘virgin’ as the species,” (2004, 137) but he does not expand on this statement. A later article on the rhetoric of this treatise does not offer a more thorough discussion, essentially repeating the arguments found in the earlier introduction (2005, 16–17, 28–29). Similarly, Carly Daniel-Hughes also glosses over the point, opting to read Tertullian’s categories as stages of life rather than species (2010, 186).

In their treatment of the point, both of these scholars miss an important aspect of Tertullian’s understanding of gender. I argue that the distinction drawn by Tertullian between types of women is not simply a result of their different stages of life, but is rather linked to the fact that they represent different species in a more categorical sense, driven by social norms. In other words, Tertullian placed different expectations on virgins, wives, and widows not simply because they were of different ages or phases of life, but because they were categorically and inherently different species. Thus, the distinctions between species were rigid and could not be crossed, nor could a woman revert to a prior species once she has progressed to a subsequent species. Any overlap between species that occurred was therefore seen as monstrous and unnatural (Tert., *Virg.* 9 [1954e, 1218–19; 1885a, 33]), thereby demonstrating that Tertullian understood these species of women to be more strictly differentiated than a stage of life would seem to suggest. Tertullian limits the agency of virgins, wives, and widows by imposing stringent barriers on what kind of

2. The following abbreviations are used for texts from Tertullian (Tert.): *An.* = *De anima*/On the Soul; *Bapt.* = *De baptismo*/On Baptism; *Mart.* = *Ad martyras*/To the Martyrs; *Or.* = *De oratione*/On Prayer; *Ux.* = *Ad uxorem*/To His Wife; *Virg.* = *De virginibus velandis*/On the Veiling of Virgins. (Abbreviations for ancient writers and texts follow Blaise [1954])

behaviour is acceptable for their species and appealing to traditional Roman patriarchal structures.

Tertullian's examination of these issues was a response to the fact that others within his Carthaginian Christian community were beginning to question these kind of classical perceptions of womanhood. Members of his congregation and others within the broader Christian world were starting to believe that both virginity and widowhood did give Christian women access to certain positions of authority. Tertullian counters this movement by re-asserting traditional patriarchal Roman family values through creating an understanding of gender that both acknowledges the differences between species of women while simultaneously asserting that these differences ultimately make little difference, since virgins, wives, and widows are still under the genus "woman".

Nevertheless, there were exceptions to this rule, as all women (regardless of species) were able to participate in both martyrdom and prophecy. Despite his arguments against women elsewhere, Tertullian believes that women are just as capable as men at taking on these roles within the church community. In this paper, I will first put forth a more nuanced understanding of Tertullian's identification of the species of women than has been previously attempted, and then demonstrate the way in which Tertullian allows all species of women to be made equal to each other (and to men) by becoming martyrs or prophets.

Species of Women

Two of Tertullian's treatises that deal most directly with the issue of the identification of women as species are *On the Veiling of Virgins* and *On Prayer*. These texts are generally dated about ten years apart, with *On Prayer* assigned to between 198 and 203 (and therefore early in Tertullian's writing career) and *On the Veiling of Virgins* to 208–209 (Barnes 1971, 55).³ In the five to ten years

3. For a closer examination of the chronology of Tertullian's works, see Barnes (1971, 30–56); an alternative chronology is also offered in Fredouille (1972). For a comparison between Barnes and Fredouille and potential issues that arise within each, cf. Dunn (2004, 7–10) and Rankin (1995, xiv–xvii). For this article, I have used Barnes' dating.

between these treatises, Tertullian's attitude towards the veiling of virgins hardened from the somewhat relaxed attitude that, while veiling is preferable, no one could be compelled to be veiled (*Or.* 22.7–10 [1954d, 270–71; 1959, 179–81]) to his assertion that all women (regardless of species) must be veiled (*Virg.* 3 [1954e, 1211–12; 1885a, 28–29]). It should be noted that *On the Veiling of Virgins* was likely written in response to a concrete issue within the Carthaginian Church: some of the virgins who were nonveiled were trying to convince other women that they, too, should forgo the veil. This direct rejection of Tertullian's beliefs might have been what led to this later treatise's stronger language (Dunn 2004, 136; 2005, 27–29).

Tertullian uses examples from scripture to demonstrate that the term “woman” refers to the entire sex, inclusive of all the species. He notes that Genesis refers to Eve as a “woman” both before she was married and after, thereby demonstrating that the term “woman” can be used when referring to the sex as a whole (since it can be used to refer to both virgins and wives) (*Or.* 22.1 [1954d, 268–69; 1959, 177]; see Gen. 2:23). Because this is the case, Tertullian argues that it is appropriate for the angel in Luke 1:42 to address Mary saying “Blessed be thou among women,” despite the fact that earlier, in Luke 1:26–27, she was clearly identified as a virgin (*Virg.* 6 [1954e, 1215–16; 1885a, 31]). Clearly, the term “woman” is understood as containing within it distinct types of women, such as virgins.

It is important for Tertullian to establish this precedent since it allows him to defend Paul, and argue against those within his community who assert that virgins do not have to be veiled simply because Paul did not explicitly use the term “virgins” in his writings (*Or.* 22.2 [1954d, 269; 1959, 177]). Indeed, according to Tertullian, those who argue for the non-veiling of virgins state that “no mention is made by the apostle [Paul] where he is prescribing about the veil, but that ‘women’ only are named; whereas, if he had willed virgins as well to be covered, he would have pronounced concerning ‘virgins’ also together with the ‘women’ named” (*Virg.* 4 [1954e, 1212; 1885a, 29–30]). Having established his reasoning that “women” encompasses all kinds of females, Tertullian can more effectively argue that Paul's statement – namely that “every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonors her head” (1 Cor. 11:5) – includes the virgin,

who is a specific kind of woman, but a woman nonetheless. This argument is significant because it shows that others within Tertullian's Christian community were examining both Paul's language and what the implications of an all-encompassing understanding of the term "woman" would be. Thus, Tertullian's treatise should not be seen as simply rhetorical; rather, Tertullian was forced to discuss the differences between types of women precisely because others within his community were already doing so. He asserts that their limited understanding of "women" is improper. Tertullian must define how he will be using the terms that relate to gender roles in order to make sure that his audience (and especially the women within it) can clearly understand his point.

Finally, Tertullian expands from scriptural exegesis and suggests that the inclusion of virgins within the broad term "women" does not simply designate a stage or state of womanhood, but is representative of a different species of woman altogether. In *On Prayer*, he constructs subcategories within the gender and labels them in taxonomic terms, calling them different "species," each with their own "proper term" (*Or.* 22.2 [1954d, 269; 1959, 177]). In the later *On the Veiling of Virgins*, Tertullian words the same concept slightly differently, saying that "[o]f the natural world, the general word is woman. Of the general, again, the *special* is virgin, or wife or widow or whatever other names, even of the successive stages of life, are added" (*Virg.* 4 [1954e, 1213; 1885a, 29–30]; emphasis mine). Clearly, he therefore defines "woman" as the genus and "virgin" (and "wife" and "widow") as the species. Of course, part of the distinction between the species of women comes from the age and the phase of life they are in, but this does not tell the whole story since women could be virgins, wives, or widows at different ages. Tertullian tries to clarify his argument further, saying:

Subject, therefore, the special is to the general (because the general is prior); and the succedent to the antecedent and the partial to the universal: (each) is implied in the word itself to which it is the subject; and is signified in it, because [it is] contained in it. Thus neither hand, nor foot, nor any one of the members, requires to be signified when the body is named. (*Virg.* 4 [1954e, 1213; 1885a, 30])

Tertullian's comparison of the types of women to body parts is not entirely congruent. A species is part of a genus but can also exist separately, unlike a body part, which cannot exist without the whole body. What is important is the idea that, when one mentions the term "body," it is understood to contain all aspects of that body. Similarly, when a genus is mentioned, it is implied that all species within that genus are taken into account. Ultimately, Tertullian believes that when Paul, or anyone, uses the term "woman," it should be understood that they are including in that term all the parts or species of women. He makes this clear when he states that Paul's phrase "every woman" must refer to "women of every age, every rank, and every circumstance" (*Or.* 22.2 [1954d, 269; 1959, 178]). Furthermore, this identification applies to all aspects of Christian life.

However, the fact that Tertullian identifies virgins, wives, and widows as different species does not mean that any of these individual species deserve special treatment or public recognition. While the members of each species are expected to uphold specific criteria and behave in a certain way, they are all still women first and foremost. Indeed, there are some criteria which Tertullian believes all women must follow, such as for virgins to be veiled within the church, since all women must be veiled.⁴ According to Tertullian, there should be no distinguishing feature to separate the species of virgin (or wife or widow) from any other species of woman.

In order to gain a better understanding of the way that Tertullian viewed these distinctions, it is important to examine each species separately, starting with the virgin.⁵ In addition to allowing for anonymity within the church, Tertullian makes it

4. There have been many studies that examine closely Tertullian's views on veiling. For an overview of women's heads and hair as representation of their identities in relation to Tertullian, see D'Angelo (1995). For an overview of the way that Tertullian uses clothing (of both men and women) in his rhetoric, see Daniel-Hughes (2011), with pages 93 to 115 especially focused on veiling. Also see the same author (2010) for the way veiling connects with Tertullian's understanding of the body and resurrection.

5. A few examples of studies examining the way that early Christian writers depicted virgins within the early Christian community include Castelli (1986, 61–88), Salisbury (1991), Elm (1994), Cloke (1995, 57–81), and Cooper (1996). Peter Brown (1988) also provides an important overview of the way that people conceived sexuality as virginity and asceticism came to be more prominent throughout the development of Christianity.

clear that the outward appearance of a virgin – that is, her veil – is directly connected to her identity. Tertullian states: “You have denuded a maiden in regard of her head, and forthwith she wholly ceases to be a virgin to herself; she has undergone a change!” (*Virg.* 3 [1954e, 1212; 1885a, 29]) Thus, when a virgin’s head is uncovered, her entire being is transformed. With her head covered, she is the epitome of chastity, but uncovering her head leads to countless inappropriate situations that are not befitting of a true virgin. Tertullian thinks that true virgins, upon being unveiled, will be “blushing at being recognized in public, quaking at being unveiled, as if they had been invited as it were to a rape ... the very spirit itself is violated in a virgin by the abstraction of her covering, [and] she has learnt to lose what she used to keep” (*ibid.*). Therefore, the essence of a virgin is manifested in her veil. True virgins blush at being seen in public, and the act of blushing is an instinctual response that is inherently connected to the species of virgin and marks it as separate from other species.⁶ If the veil is taken away, the central component of virginity is lost and the virgin is transformed into a different, indefinable species. Tertullian believes that a virgin’s reaction to being seen as if she had been exposed “to a rape” is a sign that what virgins sensed would soon become a reality, and that it is simply a matter of time before they would lose their virginity through being exposed to the potentially dangerous gaze of men.⁷ If this would happen, the virgins would lose their species and exist in a liminal realm between virginity and wifehood.

Tertullian argues that true virginity “betakes itself for refuge to the veil of the head as to a helmet, as to a shield, to protect its glory against the blows of temptations, against the dam of scandals, against suspicions and whispers of emulation; (against) envy also itself” (*Virg.* 15 [1954e, 1224; 1885a, 36]). Later he addresses the virgins directly and implores them to “[p]ut on the panoply of modesty; surround yourself with the stockade of bashfulness; rear a rampart for your sex, which must neither allow your own eyes egress nor ingress to other people’s” (*Virg.* 16

6. For a further discussion of blushing in connection with shame, see Barton (2002, 221–34) and Burrus (2008, 45).

7. For a further discussion of Tertullian’s use of the dangerous gaze of men in his writings, see Daniel-Hughes (2010, 193–95), D’Angelo (1995, 148–49), and Goldhill (2001).

[1954e, 1225; 1885a, 37]). The virgins should do so not only to protect their virginity, but also to protect others within the community from being seduced by the sight of them (D'Angelo 1995, 147). This strong allegory shows the power that Tertullian places upon clothing. The veil is not merely fabric, but armor protecting the virgins from the dangers of the gaze of men and the subsequent dishonour that may arise.

Tertullian's argument that "true virginity does nothing to draw attention to itself; rather, it hides itself away" (Dunn 2004, 139) is representative of his viewpoint that the object of the veil is to protect virgins from the gaze of men. He states that "true and absolute and pure virginity fears nothing more than itself. Even female eyes it shrinks from encountering" (Tert., *Virg.* 15 [1954e, 1224; 1885a, 36]). If virgins were to be publicly acknowledged – either through being nonveiled or through special recognition within the congregation – it would cause a reaction distinct to their species. Tertullian argues that being excessively looked upon would only cause virgins to betray their virginity (D'Angelo 1995, 148). The veil offers a measure of protection, but if a virgin's virtue is to be retained, the veiling must be accompanied by the congregation's denial of distinguishing them in any way from the rest of the women. Tertullian understood the church to be a somber assembly in which no person, and certainly not a woman, could engage in any behaviour that would mark them as exceptional (Brown 1988, 81). The act of veiling, therefore, was an act of protection by means of anonymity.

Tertullian further implies that virgins should wear veils in order to demonstrate that, like all women, there is someone in authority over them (Dunn 2004, 137).⁸ He argues this point with reference to Paul, saying: "If 'the man is head of the woman,' of course [he is] of the virgin too, from whom comes the woman who has married; unless the virgin is a third generic class, some *monstrosity* with a head of its own" (Tert., *Virg.* 7 [1954e, 1217; 1885a, 31]; emphasis mine).⁹ This alludes to a popular conviction that virginity did, in fact, represent a kind of "transcendence of sex" (D'Angelo 1995, 149) since the virgin did not belong to a man in earthly marriage but only to Christ in a heavenly bond.

8. For further discussion on Tertullian's views that women should be subordinate to men, see Lavender (1995, 340–43).

9. See also 1 Cor. 11:3.

While some Carthaginian Christians were comfortable with this interpretation, Tertullian saw it as monstrous. A virgin may be a species within the genus “woman”, but she is still a woman and therefore is still under the authority of a man; the physical representation of this authority must always be worn. Since all women must be veiled, and a virgin is not to be specially recognized in any way within the church, Tertullian’s conclusion is that all virgins must therefore also be veiled.¹⁰

Another species of woman that Tertullian refers to is the wife.¹¹ While some early Christian writers emphasized the importance of perpetual virginity, Tertullian recognizes the societal need for marriage and argues that the wife can play a central role in the Christian community. He asserts: “We do not indeed forbid the union of man and woman, blest by God as the seminary of the human race, and devised for the replenishment of the earth” (*Ux.* 1.2 [1954b, 373; 1885b, 39]). This viewpoint may partially be attributed to his lack of desire to go against the accepted Roman societal model. Tertullian exhorts Christians to chastity and yet he does not want this practice to weaken in any way the basic structure or dynamic of the household (Brown 1988, 78). Tertullian desires Christians to live a modest Christian lifestyle within the already-established parameters of Roman society. Therefore, while a Christian wife embodies similar modest attributes of a virgin, there are distinct differences between the species of virgin and wife. Tertullian mentions one of these when he asserts that “[t]he unmarried woman thinks on the things of the Lord, that both in body and spirit she may be holy; but the married is solicitous how to please her husband” (*Ux.* 1.3 [1954b, 372; 1885b, 40]). A woman’s focus therefore shifts when she makes the transition from the species of virgin to the species of wife. Tertullian’s straightforward language here implies that this is an inarguable and inevitable change.

Of course, a wife’s focus on her husband does not imply that she was excluded from involvement in the Christian

10. Tertullian supports this argument further by arguing that “men-virgins” should “carry their glory in secret” by going un-veiled (since all men are un-veiled) and therefore being equally indistinguishable from the rest of the members of their gender (*Virg.* 10.1–2 [1954e, 1220; 1885a, 34]).

11. For further information about wives in early Christianity (and in Tertullian), see Conybeare (2007) and Winter (2003, 17–119); see also Cloke (1995, 100–33) and Cooper (1996).

community. Indeed, Tertullian thought that she could be very active in the religious life of her family, but this must be undertaken in a particular way. The way that Tertullian thought about the role of the wife can best be seen in Tertullian's treatise entitled *To His Wife*. In this letter ostensibly written to his wife, but meant for wider dissemination, he addresses her lovingly as "my best beloved fellow-servant in the Lord," (*Ux.* 1.1 [1954b, 373; 1885b, 39]) which demonstrates an important difference between the species of virgin and wife. Tertullian believes that a virgin will blush and feel shame if she is given any sort of public attention, but he views the wife as a partner with her husband in his Christian activities. However, neither of these women are permitted any kind of official recognition, and the outer distinction between virgin and wife should not be evident since both should be veiled.

The third species of women that Tertullian refers to is the widow. He is very clear that Christians, both men and women, ought not to remarry in the event of the death of their spouse. Once a woman has been transformed from a wife to a widow by the death of her husband, she may not revert back to wife by taking on a new husband. Indeed, he spends much of his letter *To His Wife* imploring her not to remarry if he happens to die first (*Ux.* 1.4–1.5, 2.1 [1954b, 375–76, 383; 1885b, 41–42, 44]). He states: "she whose husband has departed from the world should thenceforward impose rest on her sex by abstinence from marriage" (*Ux.* 1.6 [1954b, 380; 1885b, 42]). Tertullian's views on widowhood are explained by his attempt to overcome the kind of sexual desires that plague the younger species. Tertullian expects older women to be able to control their desires, but he also anticipates a biological cooling that makes these desires no longer present. This repression of sexual urges towards the end of life would therefore allow the Spirit to enter into the hearts of widows and widowers without obstacle (Brown 1988, 79–80).

The widow therefore is inherently different from the virgin or the wife in her lack of sexual desire, or at least in her ability to control her desires and refrain from acting upon them. The fact that this cooling seems to be biological as well as metaphorical reinforces the idea that widows represent a distinct species that is categorically different from virgins and wives. Tertullian further notes: "More glorious is the continence which is

aware of its own right, which knows what it has seen. The virgin may possibly be held the happier, but the widow is more hardly tasked” (*Ux.* 1.8 [1954b, 382–83; 1885b, 43]). It is more difficult for a widow than a virgin to remain chaste because a widow knows what she is giving up. The widows’ task is therefore more worthy of recognition and respect within an official capacity. Further, Tertullian’s acknowledgement of widows over virgins may be seen as another way of rendering the virgins as essentially passive and unnecessary. If a woman desires recognition within the church, she only has to wait until she becomes the species of widow.

Tertullian refers to an order of widows who both seem to have provided aid for women who did not have the protection of husbands, and who were elected and seem to have served teaching roles within the church.¹² However, the participation of widows within the church still has the potential to become problematic and Tertullian believes that it must be strictly controlled. Tertullian discusses a problem inherent to permitting any kind of woman to have a measure of authority within the church when he states: “I know plainly, that in a certain place a virgin of less than twenty years of age has been placed in the order of widows! ... such a miracle, not to say *monster*, should not be pointed at in the church, a virgin-widow!” (*Virg.* 9 [1954e, 1218–19; 1885a, 33; emphasis mine])¹³ The very idea that a virgin and a widow could undertake the same duties in the church causes Tertullian to be repulsed. A twenty-year old virgin and a sixty-year old widow are of dramatically different species and therefore cannot be treated the same way. A conflation of species is monstrous to him, just as a virgin without a veil is a monstrous third sex. Any time when the lines are blurred between species, such as when a virgin is allowed into the order of widows, when a widow remarries and becomes a wife for a second time, or when a virgin dresses in a way distinct from

12. The exact composition and role of the order of the widows has long been a question for scholars, complicated by the fact that different communities seem to have viewed the order in different ways. For further information on the order of the widows, see Davies (1980), Thurston (1989), Winter (2003, 123–67), and Cloke (1995, 82–99). For a more general overview of women’s official roles in the early Church, see Gryson (1976) and Madigan and Ostiek (2005).

13. Tertullian seems to follow the age restriction for the order of the widows put forth in 1 Tim. 5:9.

other women, is unacceptable to Tertullian and goes against the way he understands the natural order of things to be.¹⁴

Ultimately, Tertullian's writings about the species of women demonstrate that the variations between species really make little difference at all. He acknowledges that virgins, wives, and widows have some unique traits, but these unique traits do not allow them any public recognition. Indeed, his discussion of these different species re-asserts their positions within the Roman patriarchal family structure at a time when other Christians were challenging these roles. In Tertullian's view, the differences between the species should not be celebrated but suppressed. His identification of the distinct features of the virgin's species, including that she should blush at being seen and that her chaste identity is reliant upon being veiled, serves also to counteract the arguments being put forth in his congregation, namely that virgins are worthy of the creation of an order similar to that of the order of widows. Tertullian does not reject the order of widows, but he also does not discuss the order at any length, except to re-affirm the importance of following the criteria set forth in the writings of Paul. Perhaps the low numbers of once-married, 60-year-old women who would qualify for membership proved to be less threatening to Tertullian than the groups of young women who sought recognition in their church by virtue of their virginity. Through this examination, it is clear that Tertullian's construction of different "species" of women serves the dual function of reinforcing the differences between the categories, while simultaneously asserting that these differences do not allow for any special recognition since they all fall under the genus "woman".

14. Methuen (1997) argues that "virgin" and "widow" should be understood as titles in the early church, with widows holding positions of prominence and responsibility. She argues that the Greek *χήρα* and the Latin *vidua* do not necessarily refer to one whose husband has died, but should more accurately be translated as "a woman who lives without a husband" and might reflect a measure of agency regardless of marital status or age (287). Nevertheless, she asserts that widows would have been better equipped for a place of authority in the church because they would likely have experience running a household and would be more mature than the young and inexperienced virgin. The distinction for Methuen is therefore essentially one of status and phase of life (289–94). Gryson (1976, 22), on the other hand, does not support the comparison of the term *vidua* with an institutional role such as the *diaconessa*, as Tertullian does not indicate such an institution anywhere else in his writings.

The Exceptions: Martyrs and Prophets

Despite insisting on a separation between the species of women, Tertullian makes an exception for both martyrdom¹⁵ and prophecy.¹⁶ In his discussions, he makes no assertion that only certain species of women could participate in these two phenomena; it is also clear that the extraordinary actions of the martyrs and prophets allowed them a special place in the Christian community. Martyrdom and prophecy are linked in that they are granted by God's grace (Trevett 1996, 128). Thus, both of Tertullian's exceptions function outside of the human authority of the church hierarchy and receive their praise and recognition directly from God.

In his treatise *To the Martyrs*,¹⁷ Tertullian demonstrates "how these things, though exceeding painful, have yet been calmly endured by many ... and this is not only in the case of men but of women too, that you, O holy women, may be worthy of your sex" (*Mart.* 4.2 [1954a, 6; 1950b, 24]). It is significant to note that here, he uses the genus "woman" rather than naming the species separately. After this statement, he provides examples of notable women who have killed themselves rather than compromising their chastity or beliefs. One example is that of Lucretia, who, he states, "in the presence of her kinsfolk, plunged the knife into herself, that she might have glory for her chastity" (*Mart.* 4.4 [1954a, 6; 1950b, 24–35]). Clearly, Tertullian believed that committing suicide was one way for a woman to exercise agency and protect herself, regardless of her species.

In addition to the somewhat standard example of Lucretia as a woman who died an admirable death, Tertullian includes the surprising example of Cleopatra. He writes: "[The] woman has voluntarily sought the wild beasts, and even asps, those serpents worse than bear or bull, which Cleopatra applied to herself, that

15. There are, of course, numerous studies examining female martyrs. For a good overview of the issues related to female martyrdom and examples of female martyrs, see Cobb (2008) and Streete (2009).

16. Laura Nasrallah (2003) gives a good overview of prophecy in Early Christianity, while Trevett (1996) talks of Tertullian's association with the Montanist prophetic movement. For other Montanist sources, see Tabbernee (1997).

17. Usually dated around 197, although some date it as late as 203. See Barnes (1971, 55).

she might not fall into the hands of her enemy” (ibid.). Since Cleopatra cannot be construed as having any Christian virtues, it must be the act of suffering and dying for a cause that Tertullian finds to be the most important in this example. He sums up his intentions when he asks: “Are we not called on, then, most joyfully to lay out as much for the true as others do for the false?” (*Mart.* 4.9 [1954a, 7; 1950b, 28]) Certainly he does not want his female fellow-Christians to behave like Cleopatra, but they should be willing to give up their life for the true religion since so many women before them were willing to die for improper reasons. The fact that all kinds of women are represented in his examples demonstrates forcefully that here, species are not important. Virgins are not permitted to be seen in public, but they can die publicly and virtuously in an arena full of spectators. Once they have died, these women can be re-imagined and re-formed in order to make them fit the proper mold.¹⁸

Indeed, the only female martyr that Tertullian rejects is the Christian virgin Thecla, whose narrative has her adopting the ascetic life after hearing the preaching of Paul.¹⁹ While Tertullian might have been expected to praise such a woman, there is one problem – she does not actually die. Instead, she miraculously escapes death repeatedly, and in one memorable scene, she baptizes herself in a vat of water filled with rabid seals. Lightning strikes the water and kills the seals, leaving her safely baptized and wandering the countryside teaching others (*Acta Theclae* 34, 41). Tertullian calls her “a new serpent ... like that original one” and rejects her narrative as a forgery. He states that she is dangerous because her example is causing other women to think that they too might be able to teach and baptize, an idea that goes against everything he believes about the status of women (*Bapt.* 17.4–5 [1954c, 291–92; 1964, 37]). However, I argue that Tertullian is rather more troubled by the fact that Thecla continues her teaching

18. The blood of martyrdom also provided a medium for Tertullian’s thinking about gender, as he explores the contrast between the salvific male blood (represented in the Jewish practice of male circumcision) and the polluting female blood. Only through martyrdom is female blood able to be transformed from impure to pure due to the controlled environment in which it is shed, for the glorification of God. See Leyerle (2001, 43–48).

19. For the Thecla narrative, see Lipsius and Bonnet (1891), and Ehrman (2003) for a translation. For an exploration of Thecla’s popularity and the influence of her followers, see Davis (2001).

indefinitely, and not as much by the fact that she does not die. Unlike the other female martyrs on Tertullian's list, Thecla's legacy cannot be re-shaped into something more acceptable after death. Since she continues to live, she continues to subvert the category of virgin and is dangerous to Tertullian's overall worldview.

In contrast to his condemnation of Thecla, Tertullian praises Perpetua, who is both a martyr and a prophet.²⁰ In his Montanist treatise, *De anima*,²¹ in which he explores what happens to the soul after death, Tertullian identifies Perpetua as "the bravest martyr of Christ" (*An.* 55.4 [2010, 74; 1950a, 299]). Perpetua's species (as a wife and a mother) is prominently displayed within the narrative and within her visions,²² but Tertullian identifies her only as a martyr. However, it is significant that Perpetua is not depicted as prophesying publicly; she records her visions privately and only later are they compiled into a text that becomes prominent throughout the community. In this way, despite her extraordinary abilities, Perpetua remains appropriately indistinguishable from the rest of the women in the community.

Elsewhere in *De anima*, Tertullian recounts the vision of a female prophet within his own congregation, who, being inspired by the psalms, readings, sermons, and prayers within the church service, received a vision of the soul in its corporeal form. However, she does not interrupt the service or address those gathered publicly in any way; rather, Tertullian notes that they waited until after the service was over to ask her what she had

20. There have been many studies made on the remarkable work of *Passio Perpetuae*. See, for example, Salisbury (1997), Shaw (1993), as well as extended examinations in Streete (2009, 49–72) and Cobb (2008, 94–113). For an exploration of the Montanist nature of this text, see Butler (2006) and Trevett (1996, 176–84).

21. Dated between 206 and 207, and therefore within Tertullian's later Montanist period (Barnes 1971, 55).

22. For example, Perpetua's infant son miraculously no longer needs to be breastfed after she is separated from him in prison. Immediately afterwards, Perpetua has a vision of her deceased brother, Dinocrates, who is filthy and thirsty yet unable to drink. She subsequently prays for him to find relief and receives another vision where Dinocrates appears clean and able to drink the water (*Pass. Perp.* 7–8: 114–17). Clearly, Perpetua's maternal instincts do not disappear but are simply transferred into the visions of her brother. Her status as a prophet and a martyr-to-be does not supercede her identity as a woman who is also a wife and mother.

seen (*An.* 9.4 [2010, 11; 1950a, 197]).²³ Once again, this correlates with Tertullian's viewpoints about the necessary modesty and submissiveness of women. Even though this woman was given the gift of prophecy from God, she is not permitted to act in a way which will draw attention to herself within the public sphere (Trevett 2010, 173).²⁴

Conclusion

Tertullian's views on women and gender differences are complex and are influenced by the social world in which he lived and wrote. Tertullian carefully frames his argument of the differences between certain kinds of women in categorical language, emphasizing that the different species of women belong to "successive stages of life" (*Virg.* 4 [1954e, 1213; 1885a, 30]). The transformation of species can only occur in one direction. A woman might not become all three species in her lifetime, but she cannot reach the final species of widow unless she has first been a virgin and a wife. Virgins cannot do the same things that wives can do, wives cannot participate in the community the same way widows can, and neither a widow nor a wife can revert back to being a virgin.

Tertullian's arguments against re-marriage reaffirm his opinion that once a woman has transformed from wife to widow, this transformation cannot be undone. He also acknowledges that virginity is to be admired, while nevertheless maintaining the traditional Roman values of marriage and procreation. While others, both within Carthage and outside of it, believed that virginity and widowhood *did* give Christian women access to positions of authority and leadership, Tertullian counters this by turning different types of women into species that are subordinate

23. Tertullian introduces this woman by saying: "there is among us a sister who has been favored with the wonderful gifts of revelation." Quain (in Tertullian 1950a) inserts "Montanists" to qualify the group that Tertullian is including in his phrase "among us." Trevett is a bit more cautious, positing that this might refer to "a self-selecting Prophetic group" who lingered after the service, but not necessarily a group who identified itself as "Montanist" (2010, 173).

24. Trevett goes so far as to assert that "Tertullian may have thought that the only women granted freedom to prophesy, in tandem with the right to *public* activity, were Prisca and Maximilla".

to their genus and whose differences really make little difference at all. Female martyrs and prophets are the only exceptions to this rule. While female martyrs are permitted to gain public recognition through their very public deaths, the gift of prophecy does not allow women to be prominent within the public realm. Therefore, the only way that Tertullian thinks women (of any species) should be permitted to have any sort of special public recognition is through the act of dying a martyr's death. Their bodily destruction allows them to be reconstructed as non-threatening heroines and only then are they able to transcend their species.

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Robert Baden-Powell, the Boy Scouts, and the Construction of Identity

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Abstract: A provocative comment by Edward Said about Robert Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts invites critical examination of this extraordinarily successful organization. This paper uses genealogical analysis to understand the Boy Scouts as a response to perceived threats to the British Empire and to Western Christian civilization. The highly complex geopolitical context of the early 20th century, the moral issues involved in empire building, and the dynamic economic and social domestic trends in Britain are masked by Baden-Powell through his essentially conservative category of “character”. The Boy Scout organization became, in his words, a “character factory” to address the deterioration of British manhood which was imagined to be the primary cause of the changing global fortunes of the British Empire.

Introduction

My interest in Robert Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts was triggered by two comments by Edward Said, when he said:

In England by the late nineteenth century, imperialism was considered essential to the well-being of British fertility generally and of motherhood in particular, and, as a close reading of Baden-Powell's career reveals, his Boy Scout movement may be directly traced to the connection established between empire and the nation's health. (1993, 107–108)

Said then added that “[w]e should not be mistaken about these boyish pleasures” (137).

In this paper I examine “these boyish pleasures” about which we might be mistaken, by analyzing the Boy Scout movement as an exercise in the construction of identity in the early 20th century

Britain and its remarkably successful consistency into the late 20th century. Using genealogical analysis, I examine the religious, social, and political contexts in which Baden-Powell established the movement so closely linked to him and the ways it became woven into Britain's national identity and health. I suggest links between the concepts of identity, ideology, and character as a way of understanding what Said may have been suggesting in his provocative comment.

Identity

Identity is a much debated topic, but for the purposes of this paper I will think of identity as a conceptual place to stand, both in relation to oneself and the group with which one identifies, and in relation to other human and non-human groups. Identity is assigned and constructed for a variety of purposes and reasons, something Jean-Francois Bayart observed when he said:

These wars and insurgencies turned on the notion of identity, drawing their lethal power from the assumption that a so-called “cultural identity” necessarily corresponds to a “political identity”. But each of these “identities” is at best a cultural construct, a political or ideological construct; that is, ultimately, a historical construct. There is no natural identity capable of imposing itself on man by the very nature of things. ... There are only *strategies based on identity*, rationally constructed by identifiable actors. (2005, ix; italics in original)

Kwame Anthony Appiah's statement about African American identity construction applies equally to other groups, when he says that “[l]ike other nationalists, these people have the thought that they would like their people to do well *because they are their people*” (2005, 186; emphasis in original).

The manufacture of identity involves both a consensus about the ideal values of a group but equally important are the dark others who serve as the foil for identity and as the image of the other. Moral panic or fear of the dark other is a powerful theme in any narrative and identity is code for that which we do not want

to be or what we fear we might become if we do not pay attention to our darker tendencies, the threats from without or the traitors within. The other imagined by and energizing the Boy Scout movement was the sunken chested, smoking, masturbating, and generally unruly degenerate lurking in the dark streets of Britain's cities who would have been no match for the well-disciplined Germans waiting just across the Channel for an opportunity to invade the emerald isle while its population slept or indulged itself in other ways (Rosenthal 1986, 131).

Ideology

According to Gerald Gutek, ideology is a coherent way of seeing the world which proposes a plan of action in response to a problem (2004, 142). Ideologies emerge out of specific historical situation and, while they have philosophical underpinnings, they are more time-space specific than philosophies. Ideologies assume and build on meta-narratives which give an illusion of universal legitimacy beyond their historical specificity. As Kwame Anthony Appiah says:

Identities give those who have them reasons for action, as I've said, and so people will say to themselves sometimes, "Because I am an I, I should do X." Such an appeal is, in the terms I am proposing, standardly an appeal to a norm associated with that of an identity. (2005, 184)

I argue that the Boy Scout organisation was an exercise in the construction of identity and the expression of an ideology in response to a national crisis in early 20th century Britain, consisting of three parts: foreign competition and threats to empire; deterioration of national health and its implications for national security; and war, which, during the Great War, Baden-Powell came to see as a disaster rather than a great game.

Foreign Competition and Threats to Empire

In 1900, the British Empire was the dominant global power in much the same way the Roman Empire was in the 2nd century CE

or the American Empire is in the early 21st century. However, the shocking difficulty in managing the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the humiliation of the Boer War, the rise of German imperial power in Europe, and the emergence of Japanese imperialism in the Pacific, were signals that the world defined by the British Empire was being threatened. These events reinforced the feeling of Britain being under siege in a hostile world. Military ineffectiveness triggered profound questioning and self-examination, both about the imperial project itself but especially about British military preparedness, and about the state of British manhood and virility.

Deterioration of National Health

There were any number of explanations for the perceived decline in British military effectiveness, but the one that caught the public imagination and the subject of this paper was the crisis in British identity which focused on manhood and virility. The image of British forces being unable to subdue poorly clad, apparently unorganized Dutch farmers, and Indian mutineers baffled the British public. The British had always overcome the enemy and it was incomprehensible that they could not continue to do so. This was significant to British identity because, in the 19th century climate of nationalism, military activity was not just a matter of professional forces engaging one another over territory. There was much more at stake, including national self-esteem and honour. The public confusion gave rise to government sponsored studies, not just about military matters but also about national character and identity. The results of the studies were, predictably, not encouraging.

A report for the government by Sir Frederick Maurice revealed that “three out of five recruits was unfit for armed service, shocking a country that had always prided itself of the caliber of its men” (Rosenthal 1986, 3). The great industrial cities of Britain had given rise to a large population of urban poor who did not compare well to the imagined British yeoman of old. Evidence for the decline was readily available in Britain's great industrial cities with its teeming hordes of disadvantaged classes who were a far cry from the image of the ideal British citizen. Another report by C.F.G. Masterman found the degenerate “everywhere in the pestilential city, ‘stunted, narrow-chested,

easily wearied; yet voluble, excitable, with little ballast, stamina or endurance” (Rosenthal 1986, 131).

If the lower classes with their attendant behaviours were one source of degeneration, the feminist movement and the feminisation of men were another. Baden-Powell used the spectre of the “old woman” as a descriptor for unmanly men (MacDonald 1993, 17) and as a motivator for boys to engage in manly activities. The “old woman” was the opposite of the manly man: weak, helpless, useless in defense of the Empire, and dependent on the male citizen for protection.

Racial impurity was a further source of degeneration of national health. The titles of books recommended by the *National Council of Public Morals*, established in Britain to oversee moral and social reform, are revealing. The Council’s stated goal was “to help raise the quality and to maintain the purity, stability and strength of the British race, at home and in our dominions beyond the seas. [It is] out to promote the permanent racial and moral welfare of an Imperial Race-to-be” (Rosenthal 1986, 144). To that end, it recommended a number of books including *The Problem of Race Regeneration*, *The Methods of Race Regeneration*, *The Cleansing of a City*, *The Menace of the Empty Cradle*, *National Ideals and Race-Regeneration*, and *Education and Race-Regeneration* (Rosenthal 1986, 145). In a revealing exchange with representatives of the National Council, Baden-Powell reassured them that the Scouting movement was designed to maintain racial purity.

If the national anxiety about male health was being fed by government studies, its historical precedent was seen in the decline of the Roman Empire. That decline, documented by Edward Gibbon in his widely read *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, written between 1776 and 1788, was applied to the state of the British Empire in the early 20th century by Baden-Powell, among others. He noted the “unwillingness to take an active role in the defense of one’s country, a debilitating reliance on the generosity of the state to feed and take care of its people, a growing dependency on the passive enjoyment of the spectator to the exclusion of healthy exercise of oneself”, which, according to Rosenthal, were all “symptomatic for Baden-Powell of the way Britain was pursuing the same self-destructive course as that of the Roman Empire” (1986, 133).

War

War was the third problem facing the British Empire, identified as such by Baden-Powell during the disaster of World War One. It started as a continuation of the border war between France and Germany in 1870 when, within a few short weeks, Prussian forces had defeated the French, surrounding Paris in a siege and forcing a humiliating surrender and reparations. However, by 1914, military technology and international politics had changed: the results were so catastrophic that World War One is also known as the Great War. Twenty million people were killed with roughly 18 to 20 million more dying of the great influenza outbreak of 1918. Christian monarchies were wiped out, replaced in Russia by Communist totalitarianism, in Germany by National Socialism, in Italy by Fascism, while the liberal democracies left confused and internally divided.

It is in this context that we hear a new theme in Baden-Powell's speaking and writing. Between 1914 and 1918, he had visited the Western Front on at least two occasions and his tone in writing about war became much more subdued after 1914. While there are some references to peace making before 1914, it is clear that, after the Great War, peace had become a significant theme in his thinking. War as a great game for the improvement of the race had gone seriously awry and international cooperation rather than competition became a central theme of his writing and speaking. In January 1921 Baden-Powell wrote:

The world-wide crash of war has roughly shaken us all and made us awake to the new order of things. No longer is one nation better than another. Whether through mutual self-sacrifice, loyal support or brave opposition a sterling respect for each other has been engendered; the war has warned us that under the modern condition of material and intellectual development we ought to re-form ourselves and make better use of the blessings of civilization; otherwise this hellish punishment of brute strife, of which we have had a taste will overwhelm us in the end. (Sica 2007, 364)

After 1919 he began to promote the League of Nations as the most promising global instrument for peace. In 1922 he wrote:

In developing our patriotism, we must not forget the danger of getting it perverted into a narrow nationalism. It is right to be proud of your country but not to gas about it to the disparagement of others or to boost it on to a higher pedestal than it actually deserves. (Sica 2007, 368)

Baden-Powell did not repudiate the military itself assuming that, on the international stage, it was as necessary as a police force; but after 1914, his writing and speaking increasingly identified war as a problem.

The Boy Scout Movement as Relief

Scouting, as an ideology or program of relief, can be summarized in the phrase “character building”, the recurrent and consistent theme throughout the stories and lore told by Baden-Powell and repeated throughout scouting literature. “Character” was proposed as the universal panacea for the ills identified and character building was the program designed to bring about the desired social and political results. Baden-Powell had a specific character profile in mind, modeled on European, male dominated Christianity. Essentially he was creating an identity based on this character profile and he was very aware of the link he was making between character and the political implications of Scouting.

Baden-Powell was explicit about the purpose of the Boy Scout training. In *Rovering to Success* (1922) he wrote that “[t]he aim of the Scout training is to **improve the standard of our future citizenship, especially in Character and Health**”; and he added descriptors of improved citizenship, “to replace Self with Service, to make the lads individually efficient, morally and physically, with the object of using that efficiency for service for their fellow-men” (Sica 2007, 303; emphasis in original). Then, in July 1928, he said the following about the Cub Scout program: “Our object in taking up the training of the Cubs is not merely to devise a pleasant pastime for the Cubmaster or for the boys, but to improve the efficiency of our future citizens” (Sica 2007, 287).

The Scouting program was a response to the deterioration of national health, the threats to the British Empire, and, especially after 1918, was proposed as a vehicle to world peace. Robert MacDonald stated that

Scouting cannot be understood without some summary of its historical background. Both it and the other youth movements reflected and were a response to several quite different influences; popular imperialism, social Darwinism, the crisis of masculinity and the search for “national efficiency”, social concerns about poverty and slum conditions, new theories of education and the value of fresh air. All the ideas were topical in 1908 and contributed to shape Baden-Powell's invention. (1993, 13)

Britain, the great British Empire, and even civilization itself were under siege but the real danger was from within. Something had to be done and Baden-Powell launched the Boy Scouts movement in the belief that the future of the Empire rested on the shoulders of a morally pure, physically healthy, and obedient male population. The key to this revitalized population was character of which he saw himself as the model.

National Health

“Character” in Baden-Powell's terms included a number of descriptors or components: humour, courage, confidence, sharpness, love of excitement, responsiveness, and loyalty (Sica 2007, 280). “Pluck” is another term used to capture “character”. Baden-Powell was quite explicit about the importance of taking a systematic approach to character building, using, on a number of occasions, the metaphor of the factory to emphasize the point, referring to the Scout movement as a “character factory”. In November 1911, he wrote: “Our business is not merely to keep up smart ‘show troops’, but to pass as many boys through our character factory as we possibly can; at the same time, the longer the grind that we can give them the better men they will be in the end” (Rosenthal 1986, 6).

Religion, specifically Christianity, was considered by Baden-Powell to be fundamental to good character and to national

health. Christianity was the dominant religion in 19th century Britain, considered integral to the social order and to one's personal well being, a defining marker of civilization. References to Christianity are pervasive in Baden-Powell's writing and in the Scouting Movement as the 1975 *Canadian Scout Manual* demonstrates. The “good turns” which are part of the Scouting program were seen as expressions of citizenship in ways appropriate for boys and they were clearly linked to religion. He explained the role of “good turns” as “the idea of sacrifice for others, for his home and for his country, thereby leading to patriotism and loyalty of a higher type than that of merely ecstatic flag-waving” (Sica 2007, 346).

In a letter dated in the 1920's, he went on to explain why he had included “duty to God” in the “Scout Promise”:

In the Promise I purposely put the “duty to God” as a concrete form of active work that a boy can understand. An attitude of mind like “loving God” is not comprehensible to the average small boy, whereas he can understand that doing his Good Turn is a form of service to God. (Sica 2007, 346)

Character was defined in terms of its moral dark other. In an article written for *The Scouter* in August 1929, Baden-Powell advised scout leaders about the environment and temptations which encourage the opposites of “character”. Among the temptations he included “evil influences” in the home and motion pictures, which, while they could be used for good, “can be a powerful instrument for evil by suggestion, if not properly supervised” (Sica 2007, 282). Other dark characteristics are juvenile smoking, gambling, drink, loafing with girls, uncleanness (both body and spirit), juvenile crime, and lying described as “National Inefficiencies” (Rosenthal 1986, 5).

Scouting as a Remedy for Foreign Competition and Threats to the Empire

Baden-Powell proposed Scouting as a key element in the British response to external threats and internal deterioration. The consistent message was that real men are loyal citizens and

obedient soldiers who are willing to lay down their lives in the national interest. Scouting was positioned by Baden-Powell as the last line of defense in the face of invading forces.

While the militaristic implications of this proposal were controversial in the early 20th century, parodied by P.G. Wodehouse and others, it was an important part of the Scout identity created by Baden-Powell. Robert MacDonald described a military style funeral for nine Scouts drowned in what was described as a training exercise in August 1912, identifying the connection between “evangelical Christianity and patriotic heroics” (1993, 183). Despite the conceptual tensions between the pacificism of Christian social idealism and the perceived need for military preparedness, the image of the Boy Scout as “Little Soldier and Young Knight” was strong between 1908 and 1918 (ibid., 186). Baden-Powell described his intention to display Scoutcraft as a “war-game”, using language such as “enemy”, “hostile troops”, and “invading enemy camps” to describe some of the activities.

This Boy Scouts’ theme was also present in *While Britain Slept*, an invasion thriller written by Howard Reid (a Canadian from Cape Breton) that was published as a serial in “The Boys Herald” during 1910 and 1911. Its theme was that everyone, except the Boy Scouts, was ignoring the obvious signs of foreign invasion. It features Dick Halliday, commander of the Otter patrol of Boy Scouts and his band whose intention it is to pierce the German lines. In the encounter that follows, the Scouts prevail, with satisfying heaps of German bodies left in their wake (MacDonald 1993, 195). In September 1909, a cartoon published in the magazine *Punch* captures the same theme of Boy Scouts as defenders of the Empire. It features a Boy Scout holding the arm of Lady Britannia looking quite a lot like the late Queen Victoria as a frail old lady. The background of the picture is the English Channel and the caption reads: “Fear not, Gran'ma. No danger can befall you now, remember, I am with you” (ibid., 197).

Patriotism and the Christian religion were bound together in a mix in which they could hardly be distinguished. Baden-Powell simply assumed the Christian religion as an integral part of civilization and the language of warfare in Edwardian England was borrowed both from the Bible and Christian tradition. Christian language permeates Scouting literature and church

leaders adopted Scouting as completely consistent with their imagination. For instance, the Church Standard of January 1915 placed on its cover a Scout bugler rallying the nation. The verse “The Trumpet Call” was by Alfred Noyes and reads as follows: “Trumpeter, rally us, rally us, rally us / On to the City of God” (MacDonald 1993, 198).

The fact that the Scouts were not, in fact, part of the British defense strategy was less important than the role that the imagery played in the manufacture of identity. The idealized character of the British male citizen was embodied in “the Little Soldier and the Young Knight”, always being prepared for service. Laying down one's life was the ultimate act of service which served as an important counter point to the twin evils of selfishness and self-indulgence. The focus of Baden-Powell's rhetoric changed after 1918 from preparedness for war to peace, but the essential remedy continued to be the development of character.

Scouting and Peace

However, the enormous casualties and expense of the Great War were made all the more bitter for the protagonists by the irrefutable evidence that they had gained nothing. The themes of disillusionment in Post-War Europe can be seen in the arts, in political instability and retrenchment, and in the attempts to avoid a similar disaster through the formation of the League of Nations. The evidence of the failure of war were unavoidable in the loss of a generation of young men, disabled veterans, economic instability, and the fact that the participants had lost, not gained territory or advantage. Baden-Powell, at least in his public statements, cannot be described as disillusioned about the future, but he did join the calls for peace. In 1921 he called for an “international outlook”, describing the Great War as a “ghastly experience” in which “the greater part of Europe was scrapping in a dogfight. Millions of men were killed, nations ruined and the whole world was put into a state of unrest for years” (Sica 2007, 369). He offered the Scouting movement as a source of hope in the movement for peace, doing so by characterizing the causes of war as relating to character which Scouting was uniquely prepared to

address. The earlier themes of manliness and religion were thus redirected toward peace rather than war.

In an address to an American audience in May, 1919, he said the following about the League of Nations, connecting its hopes and promise to the Scout program:

But one feels that however well you may make a machine, every part beautifully fitted and arranged for running on the road, there is one thing necessary to make it go: the spirit. It is the spirit that is going to make that League of Nations grow; but it must be the spirit that is within the people, if they mean it to go and it is that spirit of brotherhood we want to press. If many of the nations who have taken up Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts would only develop our Movement on a sufficient size, a very large leaven of the next generation would be impregnated with that spirit of true brotherhood and if we can get that machine established, the League of Nations must go and will go and here can be no danger of its being interrupted in its work. (Sica 2007, 359)

In 1920 Baden-Powell wrote again about the League of Nations, saying that “there is another league of nations very much in embryo but growing up automatically and that is in the brotherhood of the Boy Scouts” (Sica 2007, 361). War, he said in 1922,

emerges out of primitive, savage instincts that lie close below the service which are in conflict with equally important tendencies of courage and self-sacrifice which are also inherent in the human character. The factor determining which tendencies will emerge as victorious is the proper education. Earlier “scholastic training” was clearly not effective, since there is still something lacking to raise higher the standard of manliness, good citizenship and enjoyment of life among the majority. (Sica 2007, 372)

It is in this new approach to education that the Scouting movement was to make its unique contribution. Baden-Powell said further

that “[t]he Scout Movement is an attempt to assist education in this direction... so that each shall become an efficient and high-tone individual. The aim of that efficiency, however, is not so much for his own promotion as for the ability better to serve the community” (Sica 2007, 372).

Religion continued to be fundamental to the civilized character but after the Great War it was re-conceptualized to serve the cause of peace and community. Baden-Powell's reflections on religion began to emphasize the universal human concerns common to all the great religions for peace and cooperation. In 1923 he said that “service of God is common to all people, transcending race, nationality, and creed and our little personal ambitions, whether for power, or riches or political ends”. This is a new outlook on citizenship “which is not the outcome of politics or art or commerce but of character and sense of service for the community, that is, of manly honour, self-control chivalry and broad-minded outlook of putting others first and self second” (Sica 2007, 373).

The Scout Promise is explained in this spirit, assuming that the loving God is universal, while also acknowledging that religion can take many forms and can serve as the basis for community, going beyond national boundaries: “People belong to different faiths and serve their God in different ways. As a Scout, and in keeping with the Golden Rule, you should respect their right to practice their own religion, even though it differs from your own.” (Handbook 1975, 17–18)

Analysis and Reflections

Scouting was by no means the only or even the first of the youth reform movements formed to counteract the decline of national health and imperial purpose, but it quickly became the most successful due largely to Baden-Powell's organizational ability, great energy, and his status as a national hero. He was an astonishingly successful promoter who created himself as the image of the embodiment of British manliness. He represented the best of “Britishness” and his well-publicized exploits reassured his public that British pluck had not disappeared.

The Boy Scout movement was a way of establishing identity and reinforcing a national narrative. It has had remarkable

success because it occurred in a matrix of perceived threats, fears, hopes, and dreams characterizing the British political and cultural imaginaries or “dreams”. “Dreaming”, Bayart wrote, “has been historically, and still remains, a vehicle of social change” (2005, 139). The Boy Scout movement arose out of one man’s dreaming but could not have succeeded if his dreams had not resonated with those of a critical mass of his fellow citizens (Rosenthal 1986, 6) and if they had not coincided with a shared “world of meanings” (Bayart 2005, 133) in the Western world. National dreaming is, of course, not unique to Britain and, as a result of Baden-Powell’s skillful and energetic representation of the national purposes of Scouting, the organization spread rapidly throughout the world, adopted by governments with a wide range of ideological orientations.

Between 1907 (when the organization was founded in the United Kingdom) and 1914, Scout branches had been established in 62 countries, of which Canada was one, the Boy Scouts of Canada being organized in 1909. Branches have continued to be established throughout the world to the present time. Endorsements came in at the highest levels, with, for example, the President of the United States being the Chief Scout of the American branch with the Queen and the Governor General serving in that role in the United Kingdom and Canada respectively. A chronology of Baden-Powell’s life is a litany of engagements with kings, queens, presidents, and other leaders throughout the world, and includes a review of Boy Scouts by King George V at his coronation (1911) and other honours from a variety of countries.

A critical element in the endorsement of Scouting by political elites around the world is its essential conservatism which, while its roots are in the British social class hierarchy, is easily adaptable to any social system. Baden-Powell’s use of the metaphor of the “brick” in *Scouting for Boys* (1909) is suggestive:

This means you should remember that being one fellow among many others, you are like one brick among many others in the wall of a house. If you are discontented with your place or with your neighbours or if you are a rotten brick, you are no good to the wall. You are rather a danger. If the bricks get quarreling among themselves, the wall is

liable to split and the whole house to fall. Some bricks may be high up and others low down in the wall; but all must make the best of it and play in their place for the good of the whole. So it is among people; each of us has his place in the world, it is not use being discontented, it is no use hating our neighbours because they are higher up or lower down than themselves. We are all Britons and it is our duty each to play in his place and help his neighbours. Then we shall remain strong and united and then there will be no fear of the whole building – namely our great Empire – falling down because of rotten bricks in the wall. (Rosenthal 1986, 9)

“Bricks” have a number of characteristics, including their uniformity and their solidity, but the metaphor also suggests an essential conservatism in Baden-Powell's thinking and in the Scouting program. Creativity and initiative were encouraged but the ethos of scouting encouraged acceptance of the political and social status quo. For Baden-Powell, national health was linked to a citizenry unified for a national purpose.

Although he emphasized the playful nature of scouting and refers to Scout masters as “boy-men” (Sica 2007, 275), this was a very systematic program with clearly defined purposes and outcomes. As Edward Said (1993) said, we should not be misled by these boyish pleasures of camping, scouting, and playing in the woods. They have a clear purpose which cannot be understood apart from Britain's imperial project or, in Appiah's words, “creating an ethico-epistemological lens – a way of seeing, of acting, of being; as something that determines a framework of concepts and values, something that ‘determines the boundaries of the imaginable’” (2005, 125).

The emphasis on personal morality and character allowed Baden-Powell to avoid critical political and economic analysis of wider social causes of national health and the morality of empire building, assigning all social ills to personal characteristics which can be remedied through character training. Baden-Powell directly linked character to national health, again, putting the burden of national health on the individual. In *Yarns for Boy Scouts* (1909) he wrote that “[a] nation owes its success, not so much to its strength in armaments, as to the amount of character in its citizens.

... So character is of first value whether for a nation or for that individual.” (Sica 2007, 313)

In Baden-Powell's view, “character” was the key to the world's ills, answering, in easily accessible terms, the complex questions of collective and national well-being. In this he was supported by Lord Rosebery who declared:

If I was to form the highest ideal for my country it would be this, that it should be a nation of which the manhood was exclusively composed of men who had been or were Boy Scouts and who were trained in the Boy Scout theory. Such a nation would be the honour of mankind. It would be the greatest moral force that the world has ever known. (Rosenthal 1986, 12)

Scouting is a cultural activity designed to reinforce a way of seeing the world and a way of imposing an imagination on the world which, simultaneously, prevents us from seeing other things. The *Canadian Scout Manual* (1975) has a ten page passage on “B.P.'s life” in which the language used is quite revealing. We learn that he was born on February 22, 1857, and that he was very active in school where, among other things, he “furthered his knowledge of nature and outdoor lore” (26). We are told about his successful military career which took him to India and to Africa “where he assisted in quelling the Zulu Rebellion. As a token of surrender, Chief Dinizulu presented B.P. with his chief's necklace of wooden beads strung on a leather thong, used by B.P. as a design for the Wood Badge” (27). What is noteworthy is the bland language which ignores the fact that the wood badge is, in effect, a trophy captured in a war of imperialism which destroyed a people.

Baden-Powell's attitude to war and his promotion of peace, while laudable, are also revealing in the sense that it developed after a devastating war among European nations. His stories about the colonial wars in which he was involved were depicted as a great game or sport, and his descriptions of killing in action against “rebellious” non-European groups being brought under control are cheerful and even voyeuristic. Seen from another perspective, however, these wars involved untold holocausts, as various groups in Africa and India were being brought under the control of the British Empire. In Baden-Powell we see no such

critical reflection. His comments, as early as 1914 when there were early warnings that the European Great War was going to be more than a game, are revealing:

As regards war with civilized nations, that is, no doubt, a brutal and out-of-date method of settling differences. But there are still, even in Europe, many nations only partly civilized. It is all a matter of education and character and mutual knowledge and regard for each other. (Sica 2007, 358)

As Edward Said (1993) pointed out, the assumptions of the superiority of Europeans and European civilizations are so pervasive that they are hard for Europeans to see. The Scout movement is a European cultural expression in the ways Said describes, the tone of racism running throughout Baden-Powell's story. The nations being subjected to British order did not count in the moral economy of imperialism or into the language of Scouting.

Conclusion

Like any cultural expression, the Scouting movement can be read on a number of levels, one of which is that it is a system of clubs in which adults and children interact in the timeless process of children being brought to maturity. The *Scout Handbook* is a delightful foray into a treasure trove of interesting information, and lore about everything from how to stay clean while camping to life saving, cooking, and all the other activities involved in an outdoor life. Robert Baden-Powell seems like a larger than life figure, with his amazing energy and output, his ability to make things happen, and his unflagging optimism that the world can be made into a better place.

There are many entertaining stories hidden in the founding of the Boy Scouts, and although it is easy to parody the movement, there is no doubt that it has done good for countless young people. However, through the course of my research into the Boy Scout movement, I was struck by its dark side in which an illusion of “boyish pleasures”, moral purity, and innocence mask

the reality of the racism, murder, and theft which are an inherent part of empire. The identity being constructed is within a specific imagination which is enacted to serve and support a cultural narrative. Cultural activities like the Boy Scouts serve to normalize and mask the dynamics of power, marginalizing minority voices and reinforcing a political status quo, something to which Edward Said alerted us.

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A Snake in the Temple: Lucian of Samosata's *Alexander* as a Challenge to the New Atheists' Enlightenment Narrative

Steven Tomlins

Abstract: During the middle of the second century AD, Lucian of Samosata penned a “supposedly-biographical” account of a charlatan claiming to be an oracle who went by the name of Alexander. This work, titled after the main character, offers an early account of scepticism applied to supernatural claims that is not all that different, in argument and attitude, from that of modern proponents of skepticism, which includes the so-called New Atheists (Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens). The New Atheists, however, have adopted a linear historical metanarrative that begins with early human belief in “religion” and leads to modern disbelief. Lucian’s writings provide insight on an individual who was publicly critical of popular religious beliefs seventeen centuries prior to the Enlightenment, thereby calling into question the New Atheists’ narrative of progress. By shedding light on Lucian, his cultural context, and his literary style, the tone will be set for an analysis of *Alexander* as an ancient Greco-Roman work that argues against belief in supernatural acts and promotes the use of reason, thus showing how the New Atheists narrative has failed to take ancient critics of “popular” religious beliefs, such as Lucian, seriously.

Introduction

According to Christopher Hitchens, religion “comes from the bawling and fearful infancy of our species” (2007, 64), and “[t]hanks to the telescope and the microscope, it no longer offers an explanation of anything important” (82). From this narrative, humanity’s infancy was a long process: Hitchens writes that Franklin, Newton, and Priestley were each products of “the childhood of our species” (267). Hitchens further suggests that our adulthood is a rather recent occurrence: “humanity began to grow up a little in the closing decades of the eighteenth century and the opening decades of the nineteenth” (66). By growing up,

Hitchens is referring to “men of learning” (ibid.) stepping away from belief in God. While he is concerned with religion’s resiliency, he nonetheless views religion as a product of the past that “reasoned” people have only recently begun to abandon.

Here Hitchens is not alone; his book *God is not Great* was joined on best-selling lists with books by other prominent atheists, namely Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins, and a neologism was coined for their categorization: “New Atheism”. The New Atheist literature is primarily concerned with promoting reason, rational scientific thought, and ultimately atheism, while denouncing religion as dangerous and outdated. Harris and Dawkins also think along the lines of Hitchens in terms of an “enlightened” shift, one brought about by science that has made it finally possible, or at least “intellectually fulfilling” (Dawkins 2006, 6), to disbelieve in God after a long childhood of naivety and ignorance. However, absent from their arguments is the possibility that there were always those who may have outright disbelieved in gods and religious phenomena, or at the very least been quite critical and skeptical of supernatural claims before this “enlightened” shift. Lucian of Samosata, writing in the second century AD, is a good example of an individual who was critical of popular religious beliefs, as is evident in his work *Alexander*, which points to the existence of an audience seventeen centuries prior to the Enlightenment that is an anomaly to the New Atheist’s narrative of progress.

In *The God Delusion* (2004) Dawkins writes of how the switch from polytheism to monotheism “should be assumed to be a self-evidently progressive improvement” (52) since it is a step toward atheism. He believes that the “nineteenth century is the last time when it was possible for an educated person to admit to believing in miracles like the virgin birth without embarrassment” (187). Pointing to a decreased role played by religion in terms of creating our morality, Dawkins explains that there has been a “moral Zeitgeist”, a shift “in a recognizably consistent direction, which most of us would judge as improvement” (304–305). This Zeitgeist, argues Dawkins, “is more than enough to undermine the claim that we need God in order to be good, or to decide what is good” (308). Religion has outlived its usefulness, according to Dawkins, even in shaping humanities ever-improving morality. Sam Harris argues a similar point in his book *The End of Faith*:

The Bible, it seems certain, was the work of sand-strewn men and women who thought the earth was flat and for whom a wheelbarrow would have been a breathtaking example of emerging technology. To rely on such a document as the basis for our worldview—however heroic the efforts of redactors—is to repudiate two thousand years of civilizing insights that the human mind has only just begun to inscribe upon itself through secular politics and scientific culture. (2004, 45)

While Harris argues that in most areas, such as “geography, astronomy, and medicine”, we have moved forward, he points to one major exception: religion is the “one area of discourse that does not admit of progress” (ibid., 21–22). He posits that if a well-educated fourteenth-century Christian found himself in our time he would “prove to be a total ignoramus, except on matters of faith. ... Though he would be considered a fool to think that the earth is the center of the cosmos, or that trepanning constitutes a wise medical intervention, his religious ideas would still be beyond reproach” (ibid.). This argument is problematic in that it does not take into consideration that religions change over time; it is also problematic in its assumption that all Christians think alike at any given time, when the truth is that even theological proclamations are not usually “beyond reproach”, even within the same circles. Furthermore, it fails to acknowledge that even in the second century, well-educated individuals did not always adhere faithfully to even the most popular “religions” of their day.¹ In Lucian’s time religious ideas were *within* reproach, at least through the literary techniques, style, and subject matter of the Second Sophists, as is evident through Lucian’s writings, particularly in his attack on a contemporary oracle, Alexander of Abonoteichus.

This essay will explore Lucian’s *Alexander* as an example of ancient skepticism and religious criticism that is not all that different, in argument and attitude, from modern proponents of skepticism, which includes the New Atheists. By

1. Using Harris’ thought experiment, one could argue that Lucian of Samosata, if plucked out of the second century and placed in our time, would prove to be an ignoramus on many things, but could perhaps find a commonality with the New Atheists in the criticism of religious ideas.

shedding light on Lucian, his cultural context, and his literary style, the tone will be set for a detailed analysis of *Alexander* as a work arguing against belief in supernatural acts, and encouraging the use of reason and natural explanations. Analyzing one such individual's work will also allow us to highlight the fallacy of constructing a single, linear historical metanarrative of human belief or disbelief in matters we now call "religious".

The Life, Times, and Literary Style of Lucian

Not much is known about the historical Lucian, and what is known has primarily been derived from his literary works, of which there are over eighty (Bartley 2009a, 4). We know from autobiographical details in his writings that he was from Samosata, traveled as a sophist, and in later life worked for Rome as a prefect of Egypt. There are smaller details which can be elaborated upon but no straightforward and comprehensive biography can be created from the sparse nuggets of information his work has left us. Much of the writing about Lucian's life is therefore dependent on the contextualization of elements of his culture, such as what we know of education, training, and the type of work he was engaged in during the second century (Marsh 1998, 1); such writing necessarily assumes Lucian's experience with these elements was average. Even though this assumption is not without its problems, it can nonetheless be useful for understanding the context in which his works were created.

Samosata was an ancient Syrian city situated in modern-day Turkey. It was at a crossing-point of the Euphrates river, and by Lucian's time it was home to "the headquarters of a Roman legion, and thus [it was] a link in a chain of communications that ran between the Black Sea and northern Syria" (Jones 1986, 7). Although the native language was Syriac, Greek was widely spoken, as with the wider Roman Empire, and Lucian was likely educated in Greek (Casson 1968, xiii) at an early age, absorbing not only the language but ancient Greek philosophical, historical, and mythological texts – elements of which he would later incorporate into his long career.

The second century was "the golden age of the Second

Sophistic, when highly trained speakers called ‘rhetors’ or ‘sophists’ enjoyed enormous influence and success” (Jones 1986, 10). This was the path Lucian was to follow, and as such his writing reflected “declamation[s] on fictitious or historical themes” (ibid.), which were popular at the time. In later life he took a position working for an Egyptian prefect. While this may have been a position of prestige, his fame² ultimately came not from his political or legal career, but from his unique voice as a sophist.

Stylistically, the sophists of this period tended toward “imitation”. Imitation stressed “the importance of a continuous literary tradition; it meant modelling one’s style and content on those of the best Greek authors” (Turner 1990, 12). Although imitation may seem somewhat stringent or rigid to modern writers, it in fact offered quite a bit of flexibility to sophists of the second century. By imitating what was already understood to be Greek “classics” by Lucian’s time, sophists were able to disguise “one genre as another” and create “a series of new forms whose literary merit lies essentially in the skill with which traditional elements have been combined for new comic effects” (Robinson 1979, 9). It also allowed writers to make controversial arguments, even arguments with absurd conclusions, so long as the arguments themselves were well structured (Turner 1990, 13). It is in his ability to combine well-known forms of literary and oratory genres, reconstruct them in novel ways, and make effective arguments that Lucian’s body of work exhibits his unique voice. The style he often utilized can perhaps best be called *satire* – particularly *religious satire*.

As with other satirists of his time, Lucian utilized common rhetorical devices and combined various genres in unique ways, so that satire through imitation proved the means for innovation (Robinson 1979, 43–44). Lucian innovatively – and

2. It is unclear how popular Lucian was during his own lifetime. A lack of outside sources mentioning him from his own time points to a lack of fame, although there is one striking exception. Galen refers to “one of our contemporaries, Lucian” as creating a fraudulent work by Heracleitos and passing it off as legitimate to “grammarians” (Jones 1986, 19). Jones explains that “[t]here can be little doubt that this is Lucian [of Samosata], since in the extant works he parodies Heracleitos and other writers of Ionic, and makes fun of grammarians,” while also noting that “[p]arody and pastiche were natural by-products of the highly verbal education of the time” (ibid.).

prominently – used satire³ through imitation to address religious belief. According to historian C. P. Jones, if Lucian “has a favorite topic, it is religion, understood in a broad sense to include gods old and new, cults, oracles, beliefs” (Jones 1986, 33). Indeed, Lucian seems to have taken a keen interest in the belief in supernatural agents and claims, and his religious satires can fairly be understood as criticism of his contemporaries’ beliefs in human “wonder workers”, gods, and magic⁴. Lionel Casson, who has translated some of Lucian’s works, argues as well that “[a]nything to do with the supernatural is anathema to him: there are no gods; there is no providence; all other oracles are *ipso facto* fakes” (1968, xiv).

While this essay will not go so far as to argue that Lucian is an atheist, it will argue that in Lucian’s works people who represent the gods – through prophecy, reincarnation, or claims of miracle-working – are suspect, and Casson (1968) is certainly correct in pointing out that Lucian treats supernatural claims to be fiction and oracles to be fraudsters. The narrator in Lucian’s *Lover of Lies*, for example, argues that those who make supernatural claims are liars who “delight in deceiving themselves and the people they encounter alike”, their non-critical audiences being “gullible”, and he sarcastically explains that the only reason he is not a believer in supernatural phenomena – in this case referring to ghosts – is that he alone, “in contrast to all the others, do not

3. On Lucian’s satires Robinson explains: “Clearly Lucian’s satires, whether realistic or fantastic, are satires of a very specific kind. They draw heavily on the prevailing rhetorical tradition and on previous literature for their themes and types, they consciously play with the audience’s awareness of their literary antecedents, and in certain cases they openly give pride of place to comic techniques, which eclipse rather than enhance the critical element of what they are saying. In fact, what we are dealing with is an excellent example of literary irony. A Lucianic satire relies on the previous existence of myth, romance, tragedy, comedy, the novella, all of which it absorbs into its own pattern.” (1979, 43–44)

4. Since this essay is not a scholarly critique of the terms “religion” or “magic” I am not concerned with issues surrounding projecting modern terms on ancient practices. Suffice to say I am aware that religion and magic would not mean the same thing to a contemporary audience as to an ancient one. But with the lack of a widely accepted solution to this problem, and in the belief that these words nonetheless evoke a sense of differentiation between practices that rely on supernatural versus natural explanations, I will still use them, but I caution the reader to consider their appropriateness for addressing the textual evidence that follows in the analysis of *Alexander*.

actually see them” (Ogden 2007, 46; 55; 58). At the conclusion of that series of stories, the narrator reflects thoughtfully on how to counter the propaganda of supernatural claims, such as sorcery, healing spells, and ghostly visitations:

[L]et’s take heart, my dear friend. We have in the truth and the universal application of straight thinking a powerful antidote to tales of such kind. So long as we depend upon these, none of those empty and foolish lies will ever trouble us. (ibid., 63)

Although Lucian is often associated with having an “Epicurean voice”, as will become evident in the next section, it is worth noting that Daniel Ogden argues that a “Cynic voice” is also evident in *Lover of Lies* (2004, 491–493). In addition to using Epicureanism and Cynicism to critique and counter supernatural claims, superstition, and magic, Lucian has also penned works criticizing religious practices (Robinson 1979, 33)⁵ and mocking the gods (Hewitt 1924, 132)⁶. Even “the old poets, historians and philosophers” are mocked by Lucian as having written works “full of wonders and tall tales,” in this case through parody in his influential work *A True Story*, which, incidentally, is considered the first work of science fiction since it includes a voyage to the moon (Robinson 1979, 23). Perhaps the most famous of his works, however, and certainly one of the most polemical, is *Alexander*; a work which contrasts a dubious charlatan posing as an oracle against wise, skeptical, and sober-headed Epicureans.

5. Regarding “the custom of placing an obol in the mouth of the dead man to pay his passage across the Styx” Lucian, in *On Funerals*, writes: “They do not give any forethought to the problem of what currency is in use in the underworld, of whether Athenian or Macedonian or Aeginetan coins are legal tender there. Nor have they considered the fact that it would be better not to have any money to pay the fare with. For then the ferryman would not accept them, and they would have to be brought back to the world of the living again.”

6. “In the field of religious satire,” says Hewitt, “Lucian made many a slashing attack on the orthodox beliefs of his time. Perhaps none of these were more damaging than his pungent criticism of the power and providence of the gods.”

*Alexander*⁷ is an attack by Lucian on a contemporary historical figure, an oracle named Alexander of Abonoteichus. *Alexander* is a satiric parody and polemic against the claims and character of a popular religious figure that thrived in the second century AD (Branham 1984, 143–44)⁸. Alexander of Abonoteichus was an oracle who gave prophecies, performed mysteries, combined healing spells with medicinal knowledge, and gained some prestige in terms of both popularity and political connections. Scholars used to consider Alexander to be a minor figure, but recently unearthed archeological evidence has shown him to be quite influential. This influence can be seen in unearthed coins bearing an image of Glycon, the reincarnated God of which he is associated (Jones 1986, 138). These coins, as well as an unearthed statue, match Lucian’s description of Glycon as having the body of a snake with a “semi-human” head.

Christopher Robinson points to Lucian’s polemic against Alexander as accurately referencing the second-century “development of minor cults offering methods of personal revelation,” which demonstrate “aspects of neo-Pythagoreanism,” although he also warns that as documentary material Lucian’s account is “highly suspect” (1979, 50). Kimberly B. Stratton argues a similar point, that Lucian’s narrative likely contains some truth, but “Lucian no doubt exaggerates certain questionable characteristics of his protagonist for rhetorical effect” (2007, 210). Exaggerated or not, for purposes of this essay it matters little how much of the story is historically accurate; the important thing is that an oracle, or prophet, named Alexander, was written about by

7. I am using Paul Turner’s English translation of Lucian’s *Alexander* from 1990. Since the most widely cited and assessable English translation is by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler from 1905, I have decided to include their translations of the passages cited in the footnotes. Nuances between translations can change interpretation; by incorporating both translations into the essay comparisons can be made in order to more accurately reflect upon the interpretations made.

8. Of the particular style of *Alexander*, Braham writes: “Lucian engages his reader’s judgment with a quizzical, seriocomic technique: contemporaneity is expressed through a parodic recreation of inherited motifs, through the wry and subtle use of literary personae, settings, and narrative patterns and, in general, through a peculiarly Lucianic penchant for juxtaposing traditional but incongruous styles and familiar but incompatible perspectives.”

a contemporary, Lucian, who disbelieved his divine nature and supernatural abilities.

Alexander is a satirical polemic against a prophet, written in the genre of a letter from Lucian to a friend, Celsus. Lucian uses his own voice as narrator, and actually plays a role late in the life of Alexander within his account⁹. While Lucian does not separate it into distinct headings, the story itself consists of four acts. The first act consists of Alexander's early years and rise to fame as a prophet. The second act introduces Alexander's opponents, the most notable of which are Epicureans. The third act demonstrates Alexander's increasing influence, which extends all the way to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. The final act has the narrator, Lucian himself, make an appearance as a debunker of Alexander shortly before the hero's far from romanticized death. Throughout the story, Alexander is portrayed as a fraud; he is depicted as a charlatan, whose deceptive tactics fools almost everyone, except, notably, the wise Epicureans¹⁰.

Lucian uses humour and wit in his treatment of Alexander, making the prophet, and the events of his life, come across as comical. Besides making for a humorously entertaining story, Robert Bracht Branham argues that the use of comedy offers the reader (or listener in its original context) an opportunity for reflection:

By making the prophet comical the narrator can challenge the reader to question the seriousness with which such figures, embossed on coins, are usually regarded. This seriocomic strategy, in which wit supplants argument, using laughter to shape our considered perceptions of the grounds for admiration, is embedded in the very form of the *Alexander* and is reflected in the character of its narrator. (1989, 189–90)

9. His role, as with his accusations, is also suspect; it could be read as an accurate recording of history, a conflation of actual events, or a fictional literary device for the story's climax.

10. Christians and atheists are also grouped with the Epicureans as Alexander's enemies, although Lucian does not place nearly the same emphasis on them as he gives the Epicureans, nor does he explain how they actually opposed Alexander, which he does in great detail for the Epicureans.

Moreover, comedy allows Lucian to “bypass troublesome arguments about superstition and prophecy, which provided the focus of more traditional polemics” (ibid., 189). In fact, by addressing the letter to Celsus, an Epicurean, Lucian avoids needing to explain why Alexander is a fraud; the very fact that he claims to have supernatural abilities seems to be enough proof. In his introduction to the story he is about to tell, Lucian expresses just how “full of it” Alexander was:

I won't attempt to clean out the whole of the Augean Stable, but at least I'll do enough muck-raking to give you some idea what an incredible amount of filth those three thousand cows managed to produce over a large number of years. (Turner 1990, 221)¹¹

The citizens and residents of Abonoteichus were not spared ridicule either; Lucian portrays them as chosen by Alexander because they are gullible enough to fall for his deceptions:

They were so superstitious and silly that you'd only to appear with someone playing the flute, the drum, or the cymbals, and start producing prophecies out of a hat, and they'd all gaze at you open-mouthed, as though you were something quite out of this world. (ibid., 225)¹²

Alexander, as Lucian portrays him, was correct in his judgment, for they, and those from neighboring cities who immediately came to see and hear from the new prophet and the reincarnated god Glycon, were quick to believe his lies:

11. For comparison, Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: “I may not cleanse that Augean stable completely, but I will do my best, and fetch you out a few loads as samples of the unspeakable filth that three thousand oxen could produce in many years” (1905, 212). The Augean stable is a reference to Heracles’ removing “the excrement of 3,000 cattle that had accumulated over thirty years” (Turner 1990, 308).

12. Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: “[The Abonoteichusians] were mostly superstitious and well-to-do; one had only to go there with some one to play the flute, the tambourine, or the cymbals, set the proverbial mantic sieve a-spinning, and there they would all be gaping as if he were a God from heaven” (1905, 316).

At last, when the town was absolutely packed with mental defectives, who resembled *homo sapiens* only in their appearance and were otherwise indistinguishable from sheep, he [Alexander] gave a reception in a small room. (ibid., 228)¹³

The target of Lucian's *Alexander* is therefore not singular: while the main character acts as a centerpiece to the narration, those he fools are also targeted as gullible; easily prone to believe supernatural claims and fall for Alexander's frauds.

In addition to Alexander's many other acts of trickery, Lucian goes into great detail to explain how Glycon came into being, and he treats his explanation as fact-based, without explaining how he came to know the specific facts. While Alexander's followers believed that Glycon was a reincarnated god in the form of a large snake who resided in a temple, a god whom they could occasionally see with their own eyes, Lucian believed there was a physical appearance of a snake-shaped god, but behind the appearance was a rational explanation: rather than actually being a god it was the result of human creativity, that is to say the merging of a tamed snake's body with a puppet's head. Lucian describes the "semi-human snake-head made out of linen" as being "painted to look quite lifelike, with a mouth that could be made to open and shut by means of horse-hairs, and a forked black tongue sticking out, which was similarly operated" (Turner 1990, 226)¹⁴. Alexander's presentation of Glycon comes across as comical yet brilliant in execution:

This snake was, as I said, a very large and beautiful specimen, and he wound it round his neck with its tail hanging down. There was so much of it, that part of it

13. Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: "He was not disappointed; the city was filled to overflowing with persons who had neither brains nor individuality, who bore no resemblance to men that live by bread, and had only their outward shape to distinguish them from sheep" (1905, 219).

14. Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: "[Alexander and a partner (who died unexpectedly before enacting this particular fraud)] had long ago manufactured and fitted up a serpent's head of linen; they had given it a more or less human expression, and painted it very like the real article; by a contrivance of horsehair, the mouth could be opened and shut, and a forked black serpent tongue protruded, working on the same system" (1905, 218).

overflowed his lap and trailed along the ground. The only bit that he didn't show them was its head. This he kept well up his sleeve – for the snake didn't mind what you did to it – and poked out the linen head from behind his beard, as though it belonged to the body that they could see. (ibid., 228)¹⁵

Lucian describes the trick in detail, not simply as his hypothesis or opinion, but as a matter of stone-cold fact: Alexander is conniving and manipulative, but also intelligent enough to successfully pull off a very successful fraud. His intelligence is not without limits, however, since Lucian explains him as doing a ridiculous act:

Alexander did one rather silly thing. He got a hold of Epicurus' *First Principles*, which is, as you know, his finest work and sums up his whole philosophy, took it into the middle of the market-place, and solemnly burnt it on a bonfire of fig-wood, as though it was the man himself. He then threw the ashes into the sea. (ibid., 241–42)¹⁶

The context for this ridiculous act – destroying Epicurus' *First Principles* – is that Alexander was making a statement against his opponents, of which Lucian presents the Epicureans as the most prominent. This is not a coincidence; Lucian presents Epicurus' writings as “giving people peace of mind, freeing them from superstitious fears, irrational hopes, and exaggerated emotions, forcing them to face facts, and literally purifying their minds, not by any idiotic ritual, but by reason, truth, and plain

15. Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: “He took into his bosom our Asclepius of Pella (a very fine and large one, as I observed), wound its body round his neck, and let its tail hang down; there was enough of this not only to fill his lap, but to trail on the ground also; the patient creature's head he kept hidden in his armpit, showing the linen head on one side of his beard exactly as if it belonged to the visible body” (1905, 219–20).

16. Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: “Alexander once made himself supremely ridiculous. Coming across Epicurus' Accepted Maxims, the most admirable of his books, as you know, with its terse presentment of his wise conclusions, he brought it into the middle of the market-place, there burned it on a fig-wood fire for the sins of its author, and cast its ashes into the sea” (1905, 232).

speaking” (Turner 1990, 242)¹⁷. When Lucian first introduces Alexander’s charlatan theatrics he notes that Epicurus would have been able to see through the deception right away, or even if he and his followers couldn’t explain how the “magic” was done, they would have known there had to be a natural – as opposed to supernatural – explanation:

In fact the whole thing was so well organized that only a Democritus, an Epicurus, a Metrodorus, or someone with equally strong views about such matters would have been capable of detecting the fraud, or of remaining convinced that it could not possibly be genuine, in spite of some doubt about the precise methods used. (ibid., 229)¹⁸

Lucian’s high regard for Epicurus and his followers is a major theme of *Alexander*. Epicureans, including the narrator, act as a sensible, rational counter-weight to the insensible, irrational acceptance of Alexander’s wonder-workings which were exhibited by others. Epicureans, although relegated to minor roles (with the exception of the narrator, who bites Alexander’s hand at the climax), can be understood as opponents of Alexander as well as opponents of irrationality. Lucian hints at this in his conclusion, addressed, as with the rest of the letter, to Celsus:

Well, my dear fellow, I’ve made this representative selection from the material available, partly as a favour to a friend ... but still more ... as a tribute to Epicurus, a really great man who perceived, as no one else has done, the beauty of truth, and by passing that insight on to his

17. Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: “[Alexander] had no conception of the blessings conferred by that book upon its readers, of the peace, tranquillity, and independence of mind it produces, of the protection it gives against terrors, phantoms, and marvels, vain hopes and inordinate desires, of the judgement and candour that it fosters, or of its true purging of the spirit, not with torches and squills and such rubbish, but with right reason, truth, and frankness” (1905, 232).

18. Fowler and Fowler translate this passage as: “It was an occasion for a Democritus, nay, for an Epicurus or a Metrodorus, perhaps, a man whose intelligence was steeled against such assaults by scepticism and insight, one who, if he could not detect the precise imposture, would at any rate have been perfectly certain that, though this escaped him, the whole thing was a lie and an impossibility.” (1905, 220)

followers, has given them a wonderful sense of freedom.
(*ibid.*, 248)

In 1905, Fowler and Fowler translated this same passage as:

My object, dear friend, in making this small selection from a great mass of material has been twofold. First, I was willing to oblige a friend and comrade ... [b]ut secondly I was still more concerned ... to strike a blow for Epicurus, that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him. Yet I think casual readers too may find my essay not unserviceable, since it is not only destructive, but, for men of sense, constructive also.
(237–38)

In both translations Epicurus is described in flattering terms, but in the Fowler translation it comes across as if Epicurus' character is "supernatural". Yet this does not fit with the way Epicurus is otherwise portrayed as a proponent of *natural* explanations. Jones points out that while "Alexander played on the hopes and fears that tyrannize mankind, so Epicurus brought liberation from them and was therefore 'truly holy' by contrast with the sham holiness of Alexander" (1986, 147). The "holiness" of Epicurus is likely an exaggerated description to be taken in contrast to Alexander, for Epicurus and Epicureans have been defined as sceptical proponents of reason throughout the work. It also plays to Lucian's audience, which one can assume would have similar opinions. Of the portrayal of Epicurus, and the audience, Branham writes:

The narrator and his immediate audience, insofar as they are followers of Epicurus, are accordingly characterized as the obverse of the histrionic prophet. Their hero is the proponent of simple, sober realities, the enemy of superstition and idealist metaphysics, the author of the *Kuriai Doxai* (*Authorized Doctrines*) and many scientific works. Important elements of his ethical teachings are referred to in the course of the narrative ... and his

empiricism and philosophical materialism provide the implicit grounds for our narrator's skepticism toward the phenomena of popular religious experience. Alexander, by contrast, is the dexterous manipulator of myth and fantasy who invades Abonoteichus by making the town into his own stage. (1989, 197–98)

The contrast in *Alexander* is found between the main character and Epicureans; if the intended audience were Epicureans there would also exist an added layer of contrast, that between their opinions of the charlatan and the actions of the charlatan.

It cannot be known with certainty whom the audience for *Alexander* would have consisted of, but Robinson (1979, 61) explains that it is reasonable to assume that as a touring sophist Lucian would have had a repertoire of works from which he could selectively perform, catered to specific audiences. In such a way, the “appropriateness of a topic to its audience can reasonably be taken to include the likelihood of its appealing to them as an entertainment” (ibid., 62)¹⁹. It seems fair to assume that the audience for which *Alexander* was written was one that had little sympathy for religious charlatans and fancied themselves reasonable; like the Epicureans in the story, they wouldn't have been fooled by Alexander's fraud. Lucian's audience was likely well educated, and *Alexander* may have been conceived and perceived as a lesson on “the type of material that they should be on guard against” (Bartley 2009a, 18). It is also likely that they would have sympathized with the Epicureans, otherwise Lucian would be performing a piece that the audience would have difficulty relating to, which seems counter-intuitive unless Lucian was trying to forward a controversial agenda. If that was his goal, however, it is surprising that he places so much emphasis on showering Epicurus with laudatory characteristics; it would be more logical to let the actions of the Epicureans, and the narrator, speak for themselves so the audience could absorb the message without being further distanced from the material.

19. It should also be noted that even in any given audience there would have been different interpretations of the same material. In this case “the more sophisticated members of Lucian's audience could respond to the literary skill of the pieces, the less sophisticated to their scandalous content” (Robinson 1979, 62–63).

Conclusion

In the fourth century, Lactantius writes of “Lucian who spared neither gods nor men” (Jones 1986, 22; translated from Lactantius, *Divinarum Institutionum*, 1.9.8.). In a tenth-century encyclopedia we find the first known biography of Lucian:

Lucian of Samosata, otherwise known as Lucian the Blasphemer, or the Slanderer, or, more accurately, the Atheist, because in his dialogues he even makes fun of religion. He was born somewhere about the time of Trajan. He practised for a while as a barrister at Antioch in Syria, but did so badly at it that he turned over to literature, and wrote no end of stuff. He is said to have been torn to pieces by mad dogs, because he had been so rabid against the truth – for in his *Death of Peregrinus* the filthy brute attacks Christianity and blasphemes Christ Himself. So he was adequately punished in this world, and in the next he will inherit eternal fire with Satan. (Turner 1990, 7)²⁰

This encyclopedic entry obviously depicts Lucian in a negative light, but it also points to his increasing relevance in the West. During the Renaissance, Lucian was seen by some as an “atheist blasphemer” and others as a “moral philosopher,” the former coming from a tradition of viewing his works as anti-religious and anti-Christ; the latter from viewing his writings as a valid attack on paganism and superstition (Zappala 1990, 215)²¹. Of the latter, in 1434, Lapo da Castiglionchio dedicated his translations of two of Lucian’s works to Pope Eugenius IV, explaining:

In the first of the two works, Lucian most wittily reproaches the superstitious beliefs which ignorant men generally observe during funerals. Since I knew that in your great wisdom and remarkable piety you strongly

20. Michael O. Zappala further explains that this comes from the *Suda Lexicon*, and it “was well circulated in the Renaissance and was a paradigmatic text for Lucian’s detractors” (1990, 23). In Ada Adler’s edited volume [*Suidae (sic) Lexicon* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967–71), 3:283], this passage is found at lambda 683.

21. Some Catholic historians, focusing on Lucian as skeptic, called Protestants “Lucianistes”, according to Zappala (1990, 213).

detest such beliefs, I thought a condemnation of them would not displease you. (Marsh 1998, 3–4)²²

While Lucian had both his admirers and his critics, what is clear from historical records that span the Byzantine area to the Renaissance is that many of Lucian's works were well known among intellectuals, and that he was known a skeptic of religion. To some he was a disbeliever of all religions, including Christianity; to others he was principally a critic of "false" or "pagan" religions; but to all he was a skeptic, and all aspects of religion were his favorite topic.

It is interesting that as scientific methodology, reason, and rationalism became prominent as descriptors of the "Enlightenment" of Western society, Lucian's prominence in educated circles seems to have waned. This may be due to a variety of reasons that are beyond the scope of this essay, but it is worth pointing out that Lucian's treatment of religion, particularly religious charlatans, does not easily fit into the Enlightenment narrative that has the maturing West progressing away from childish religions that once dominated a primitive past. Lucian points to an individual – the writer himself – and an audience that were critical of what we in hindsight call "religions" over seventeen hundred years before the Enlightenment. Lucian was "passionately engaged" with the religions of his time, and he reacted strongly when he saw religion "used as a means of exploitation of its followers" (Bartley 2009b, xi). As *Alexander* shows, he is also critical of those who fall prey to religious charlatans, and is an advocate of looking for natural explanations when presented with extraordinary claims. If religion belongs to "the infancy of our species", as Hitchens (2007, 11) suggests, so too does skepticism, disbelief, cynicism, and religious criticism.

Lucian of Samosata's *Alexander* is a clear case of a critic promoting the view that a religion – based around Alexander and Glycon – is man-made, and every miracle attributed to it has a natural cause. The Enlightenment narrative the New Atheists utilize is wrong to assume that disbelief is a modern phenomenon.

22. The two works Lapo da Castiglionchio translated and dedicated to the Pope were *On Funerals* and *The Dream or Lucian's Career*. This is translated from an excerpt in Angelo Maria Bandini, *Catalogus codicum latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae* (Florence, 1767–1778), 3: 364.

Belief and disbelief have long existed side-by-side. It is not simply a matter of education and science leading humans further and further away from religion; rather, in the past there have been lots of religious people and a few disbelievers, and today there are still lots of religious people and a few disbelievers. The percentage on either side of the religious/non-religious dichotomy shifts according to context and time, politics and discovery, (and even that is subject to difficulty with categorization – to which side does “spiritual” belong?), but it certainly isn’t the case that a narrative from ignorant belief in God or the gods to reasoned religious scepticism can be drawn from the dawn of humanity to the Enlightenment. Such a narrative ignores works, like Lucian’s *Alexander*, which clearly point to people who were skeptical of popular religious claims and beliefs in ancient times. Humanity did not need the Enlightenment in order to exhibit disbelief in religion, just as the Enlightenment did not strip religious belief away from humanity. There have long been polemical critics of supernaturalism; this is evidenced by Lucian and continues to this day through the works of a few of his modern literary equivalents in this area: the New Atheists. It is interesting to ponder how future religion-critical narrative-makers will frame their works if religion is still around two thousand years from now, or if they will conveniently leave them out of the picture.

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Julian and the Jews: Rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem

Reita J. Sutherland

Abstract: Julian “the Apostate” was harshly condemned by contemporary Christian writers and vilified by later writers for his rejection of the Christian faith in which he was raised, and his adoption of the traditional Greco-Roman religion. In a period of increasing anti-Semitism among Christian writers, Julian was further criticized for his connections with the Jewish people, often labeled a “philosemite”. The most widely embroidered incident revolves around Julian’s attempt to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, which had been destroyed in 70 AD. Christian writers saw this decision as evidence of Julian’s utter contempt for Christianity, as this attempt would invalidate the prophecies of Christ regarding the destruction of the Temple. In this paper, I challenge the historical conception that Julian’s decision to rebuild the Temple was done out of anti-Christian or philosemitic sentiment, and argue that it was rather a part of Julian’s overarching desire to rebuild and re-establish holy places.

Introduction

In 363 AD, the infamous “pagan”¹ emperor Julian “the Apostate” wrote to the community of the Jews expressing his intention to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. This appears to be one of the most bizarre decisions an emperor could make and, as such, has been the subject of a great amount of scholarly speculation, much of which attributing his pro-Jewish measures to a mere desire to irritate contemporary Christians (see Bowersock 1978), whose own relationship with their Judaic roots was highly controversial. Other scholarship seemed to suggest that Julian

1. “Pagan” is a loaded term which places the reader in a Christian world-view and mind frame; its use is therefore problematic for scholars. Unfortunately, the alternate term “practitioner of a traditional Greco-Roman religion” is somewhat clumsy. For this reason, I have chosen to use the term “pagan”, though I restrict its usage only to traditional Greco-Roman cults. All other religions will be identified by name.

was a sort of Judaizing “pagan” (see Blanchetière 1980). However, Julian was also very interested in temple reform, and it was my intention in setting out this plan of research to determine whether Julian’s actions demonstrated a special reverence for Jewish religion and was thus an attempt to infuriate contemporary Christians, or if it was simply an association by Julian of the Jewish Temple with other sacred religious spaces, and therefore part of his temple-restoration project.

Unfortunately, tracing the motives of one Roman emperor proved to be much more complex than I had originally counted on, and involved a reconstruction of the role of the Temple in Judaic and Christian thought, as well as of the temple-restoration policies of Julian before it became possible to consider the event itself. Even then, there are many more Christian accounts and interpretations of this event than there are “pagan” ones, and there are no Jewish accounts of Julian’s attempt to rebuild the Temple. Thus, this paper will begin with a discussion of the Temple and its significance to Christian theology, and then lead us to the relations of Jews with Christians and “pagans” in the centuries leading up to Julian’s reign, in order for us to appreciate this event more fully.

The Temple in Christian and Jewish Theology

Differing little from its contemporaries, the Jewish identity was highly regulated around the rituals of the temple. Sacrifice, purification, and reconciliation of both the individual and the nation took place at the altars of the Temple of Solomon, the permanent home of YHWH. This temple was however destroyed during the Babylonian conquest of Israel in the 6th century, causing the Jewish Diaspora to spend about 70 years separated from the only possible seat of their atonement. Then, after a few generations of dispersion, the so-called “Second Temple” was built in 516 BC and the Diaspora permitted to return to Jerusalem. The Temple resumed its place in Jewish society, where its priests followed the Torah’s outlined feasts and festivals, and assured the goodwill of YHWH for the people of the nation (Jaffee 2006, 172).

With the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD by Titus and Vespasian in the bloody Roman-Jewish War of 66–73, Judaism lost its centre. Instead of concentrating on the centre of Jerusalem, its focus shifted to the synagogue and the home, as these two institutions sought to redistribute the role of the Temple between them and transform and adapt the ritual patterns (*ibid.*). This is not to say that Jews despaired of a return to Jerusalem. Jews, even prominent rabbis, continued to view the destruction as a divine punishment, much like the earlier Babylonian exile (Shephardson 2008, 238)². Clearly, they believed their national sins had incurred the punishment of YHWH³, but they did not believe that their relationship to him had changed in a significant way. They looked forward to the renewal of the Temple, and with it the nation of Israel (Wilken 1983, 135).

Christians, by contrast, saw the destruction of the Temple as the death-toll of Judaism. According to the prophecies of Jesus in the Gospels, the Temple would be destroyed, without “one stone remaining on another” (Mt 24:1–2; Mk 13:1–2; Lk 19:41–44, 21:5–6)⁴. Early Christian writers looked to this event as another proof of the veracity of the claims of Christ, as well as Jesus’ promises to fulfill the Old Covenant (see Mt 5:17). By destroying the Temple, seat of sacrifice and atonement, Christians understood that Jesus’ New Covenant had finally superseded Judaism. Origen wrote that “[t]he word of God has abandoned the assembly of the Jews, and there is now another assembly, the Church, which is drawn from the nations.” Eusebius argued in the *Demonstratio Evangelica* that because Jerusalem had been destroyed, the Law had become redundant and illegitimate since it was “confined to one place” (Wilken

2. Shephardson notes that the Jewish writers were the earliest to touch on the destruction of the Temple in such works as 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, noting that they were being punished by YHWH for their sins, either historically or contemporaneously. She notes that the destruction does not change their view of their “election and vocation” as YHWH’s chosen people.

3. According to the Babylonian Talmud, various rabbis gave different interpretations of the Temple’s destruction, including “Rabbi Abaye because the Sabbath was desecrated in the city; [and] Rabbi Abahu because the reading of the Shema was neglected”. Another part of the Talmud blames “idolatry, fornication, and the shedding of blood”.

4. All Bible quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version*.

1983, 135–36). Christian Syriac writer Aphrahat made a similar comment about the Jewish Passover, arguing that it could only be legitimately consumed in Jerusalem (Shephardson 2008, 234–36)⁵.

Christians, in a view made popular by St Jerome's commentary on the book of Daniel but based on Eusebius, also interpreted Daniel 9:7. It speaks of “weeks of years” leading up to “abomination and desolation”, at which point “sacrifice and offering would be destroyed” as a Christological prophecy foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This viewpoint advanced a view that sacrificial worship at Jerusalem had ended (Wilken 1983, 136–37; Parkes 1961, 84).

By the time of Julian, Christians had envisioned Jerusalem as a Christian city, especially following Constantine's extensive building projects, filling the city with Christian churches and pilgrimage sites. The finality of the Temple's destruction was not debated, as to do so would be to doubt the words of the Christ, who swore that the Temple would be thrown down (Wilken 1983, 138). The position of Jews was certainly not as dismal as the position of their holy city at this time. Large Jewish communities existed throughout the Roman Empire, including communities at Alexandria and Antioch. However, this is not to say that relations between Jews, Christians, and the Empire were always positive.

The Relations of Jews with Christians and “Pagans” after 70 AD

It becomes apparent that Christian writers started ignoring the Jews after the first century. This may be for several reasons. Von Harnack wrote that after the Bar Kochba revolt (132–136 AD), Jews withdrew from the larger society and instead focused their attention internally, which stunted any meaningful interactions with the Empire at large, while Christians were enjoying a period of expansion in the Hellenic world (Wilken 1983, 44). Therefore, it becomes clear that in these first critical centuries, Christianity manages to supersede the internally-focused Judaism as well as a waning Hellenism.

5. Shephardson argues that the reason for such vehement declarations against Jewish celebrations was to discourage Christian Judaizers from participating in Jewish festivals.

It is also apparent that Christianity was “shaking off the yoke” of Judaism throughout these centuries. As the Jewish Torah became the Old Testament to Christ’s New Testament, and the Temple and Jerusalem became minor Christian centres, it appears that fewer Christian writers and theologians were interested in studying Jewish works; as such, knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic was certainly on the decline (Parkes 1971, 153). In the view of the Christians, they had become the “true Israel” (Wilken 1983, 45).

Jews, desperate to rebuild themselves after the numerous revolts and wars in Israel, experienced a neutral relationship with the Roman state. Emperor Septimius Severus, for example, promoted the place of Jews on city councils, a viewpoint which remained until the fourth century. Even in the Roman province of Palestine, site of the worst destruction, Jews quickly recovered and began building synagogues with amazing alacrity. Public opinion towards the Jews had also changed for the better. While earlier Roman writers such as Tacitus described Jews as uncouth and superstitious, Dio Cassius would have a positive view of them only a century later (*ibid.*, 47).

The advent of imperial Christianity with Constantine raises a number of interesting questions about the state of Judaism. Firstly is its legal status. While Christianity is elevated to “the worship of God”, Judaism is called a “feral or nefarious sect”. There are also laws passed which show favouritism for Christians over Jews, perhaps through the influence of Christian leaders. On the whole, laws at this period remain within the realm of previous legal precedent about the rights of Jews in society, although the language often appears harsh or defamatory. However, there is a marked change in the laws regarding converts to Christianity and Jewish proselytizing⁶. These laws most likely had the goal of marginalizing Jews by discouraging people from associating with them (Wilken 1983, 51).

The last significant legislation by Constantine concerned the relation of Jews and Jerusalem. Indeed, Jews had been forbidden to enter Jerusalem since Hadrian. Constantine relaxed

6. Although it had been illegal from the second century to circumcise non-Jewish slaves, Constantine introduced prohibitions about marriage between Jews and non-Jews and Jews owning non-Jewish slaves.

this law by allowing an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple, perhaps in exchange for a fee. Wilken (ibid.) suggests this may have been a bit of a “dig” at Jews, as they were only permitted in their homeland on a day of mourning, rather than a well-meant concession. It is thus clear that while Jews had a neutral relationship with the Roman state, their relationship with Christianity was one of suspicion and dislike.

Julian’s Reign

Into this seething religious hotbed of resentment stepped Julian, an Emperor with unpopular views in an increasingly Christianized and secular “pagan” time. Julian’s religion was grounded in an extreme need for religious rituals and traditional observances to designate his piety, which most resembled an austere sort of asceticism (Watts 1998, 25–30)⁷.

One method by which Julian was determined to express his piety was through the repair or refurbishment of temple sites, as they had fallen into disrepair as the traditional worship of the old gods waned. Julian’s works express this viewpoint quite amply. In letter 29 to his uncle Julius, he writes instructions to repair the temple at Daphne since it had fallen into disrepair, asking first that they “set up the pillars of the temple of Daphne; take those that are in any palace anywhere, and convey them thence”, and afterwards, if that was not enough, to augment those pillars with others of lesser quality scavenged from the surrounding area, since “piety is to be preferred to splendour, and when put in practise, secures much pleasure for the righteous in this life” (Julian 1913b, 99). Arian Christian writer Philostorgius notes a similar viewpoint in *Church History* VII.1:

When Julian had become master of the Roman Empire, as was said, his keenest desire was to restore paganism. He

7. Julian’s paganism was so austere as to be largely uninteresting to the lower classes. Watts remarks that Julian’s ascetic lifestyle and his ideas to reform the “pagan” clergy are very closely modeled on the Christian viewpoint he rejected, including notions of solitude, personal purity, and abstaining from licentious activities.

therefore sent letters to every place ordering that all haste and zeal should be applied to the rebuilding of the “pagan” temples and altars. (2007, 87)

In VIII.4, Philostorgius also says that Julian took away all the revenue Constantine and his sons had directed into the churches and diverted it to “all the other titles bestowed by this pagan foolishness” (ibid., 94). Though clearly disapproving of Julian’s actions, Philostorgius’ belief was that Julian had been a worshipper of the old gods in secret from the time of his childhood, and that his decision to rebuild temples was not out of anti-Christian contempt, as he will later claim in connection with the Second Temple, but out of personal zeal.

The “pagan” writer Libanius was able in one of his letters to subtly manipulate Julian into funnelling money into the reconstruction of Nicomedia after an earthquake. Libanius (2004) makes a parallel between Julian’s building projects and the lasting remembrances of heroes created by Homer. He writes that Nicomedia is “honoured by your [Julian’s] tears”, which he calls equal to the tears of the Muses for Achilles, or the blood Zeus shed over the death of Sarpedon. He tells Julian that Nicomedia, “lately a city” becoming a city again, should be his concern out of this sense of epic scope (115). This was obviously an effective tactic, as Nicomedia was rebuilt.

For Julian, then, temple restoration meant more than just making nice buildings. In fact, he made parallels between the state of the temples and the state of the worshippers. The care shown to the gods is clearly a marker of religious piety. In his 19th letter, addressed to a priest, he tells of a trip to visit the people of New Ilios where he wished to “explore the city – this was [his] excuse for visiting the temples”. He was pleasantly surprised to find that despite the large number of Christians present, including his own “tour guide”, the people wanted to maintain the local shrine out of respect to “a brave man who was their own citizen” just as they venerated the martyrs. Julian notes their logic is somewhat flawed, but is delighted when his companion is both able and eager to open the shrines for him and show him “all the statues in perfect preservation”. He concludes that he is dealing with a “man of culture, if you consider the times in which [they] then lived” (Julian 1913b, 51–53).

Given Julian's pro-Hellenic viewpoint, it may seem somewhat strange for the reader to imagine him commissioning repairs of non-Hellenic temples. However, to judge these events, one must examine his religious policies, rather than his religious views, as Julian was an Emperor as well as a worshipper. "Pagan" Ammianus Marcellinus notes that "when his fears were ended" and Julian no longer felt the necessity to conceal his "pagan" beliefs, he "revealed the secrets of his heart and by plain and formal decrees ordered the temples to be opened, victims brought to the altars, and the worship of the gods restored" (Ammianus Marcellinus 1950, 203-4). Ammianus also records in book XXII of his history that Julian, able to freely practise his long-secreted paganism, decided to play a sort of indulgent ruler by his decision to call all the Christian clergy to the palace and "advise them to lay aside their differences", encouraging them to all abide by their own beliefs in a peaceable manner (ibid.).

Julian, though, was a philosopher at heart. Despite his decree of toleration, he liked to weigh and consider the beliefs of his subjects, and he seemed to hold a great admiration for Judaism. In his letter to the High Priest Theodorus, Julian comments that Jewish believers are "so ardent in their belief that they would choose to die for it" rather than violate laws such as eating non-kosher food, while his own people were "in such a state of apathy about religious matters that [they] have forgotten any such customs of our forefathers and therefore we do not know whether any such rule has ever been prescribed" (1913b, 59).

To Julian, the willingness of Jews to suffer for their religion was as important to him as those people earlier mentioned who still maintained the shrines. Julian also maintained that the Jews were a pious, sincere people, and that his only regret was that they refused to acknowledge other gods along with their God, who he was quite free to embrace into his pantheon. He went so far as to assert that "they revere a god who is truly most powerful and most good and governs this world of sense, and, as I well know, is worshipped by us also under other names" (1913b, 61).

Julian's writings make it obvious that he preferred Judaism to its "bastard offspring" of Christianity, which he saw as a kind of Judaism stripped of its rituals, sacrifices, and its order. In his treatise *Against the Galileans*, he was incredibly critical of the

Christian decision to separate itself from its precursor of Judaism, haranguing them for abandoning sacrifice, which he saw as an integral element of a proper religion. In the treatise, he stages a mock between himself and Christians, asking why, if Christians had abandoned the “pagan” religion, they “do not accept the law of the Jews or the sayings of Moses?”: “Jews too do not sacrifice” is their supposed answer. Julian, quite rightly, corrects this error by pointing out that the Jews do sacrifice, in a way (Jaffee 2006, 215–18)⁸. He then reminds them that the only correct place for Jewish sacrifice was in the Second Temple, no longer extant. He finishes this little rhetorical device by posing his question a last time: “Why do you not sacrifice?” He concludes by stating that his purpose was only to show how the Jews agree with him in issues of religion, except for their bizarre monotheism, but that all the rest of the trappings were common between them: “temples, sanctuaries, altars, purifications, and certain precepts” (Julian 1913b, 404–7).

However, despite his admiration for the Jewish religion and his acknowledgement that his beliefs had much in common with those of the Jews, it would be erroneous to call Julian a Jew. He had criticism for the Jews equal to that meted out to the Christians. Earlier in *Against the Galileans*, before the previously-mentioned praise, Julian refers to the story of the Garden of Eden as “wholly fabulous” and asks how such a story differs in any way from Greek myths. Julian’s criticism extends to the character of the Jewish God, as he wonders how a god who tried to keep wisdom from humanity can be a perfect god, and not merely a jealous one. He concludes that unless the Torah is actually a set of myths with secret interpretations, that it is “filled with many blasphemous sayings about God” (1913b, 325–27).

According to Julian, not only was Judaism blasphemous in its interpretation of God’s character, but he also saw it as highly mistaken in its scope. Judaism claimed that their God was the only

8. The Jews continued a form of transformed sacrifice in their homes called the *hallah*. The *hallah* originally referred to the bread used in the Temple which fed the priests and their families. In the home, bread dough would be kneaded and a piece, the *hallah*, was removed and burned in the family’s oven. Rabbinic tradition made the synagogue a substitute Temple, with the family home substituting as the altar. By burning a sacrifice in the domestic oven, all meals prepared in a Jewish household were sanctified and the table, a substitute altar, became a place of holiness and sanctification.

god, over the whole world. Julian deeply objected to such a claim. In an extremely eloquent passage, he asks why, if Judaism's claims were true, that YHWH had not made himself known to the Gentile people. He questions the extent of the power of a god who "looked on for myriads ... while men in extreme ignorance served idols ... [and saved] only that little tribe which less than two thousand years ago had settled in one part of Palestine. For if he is the God of all of us alike, and the creator of us all, why did he neglect us?" (ibid., 343)

Since they had not received any of the signs given to the Jews, Julian deemed illogical that YHWH had the level of influence which the Jews ascribed to him. Julian therefore concluded that YHWH was "not the begetter of the whole universe" but was confined to a certain sphere of influence: the land of Israel and the Jewish people. And given this truth, it is necessary "to conceive of him as only one of the crowd of other gods" (ibid., 343–45)⁹.

Julian was willing to accept the Hebrew God into his pantheon because he saw a great number of parallels between his own religion and Jewish theology and ritual practise. However, he saw the Jewish God as confined to the geographic location of his people, in Israel. But, if the Jewish God was limited to one place – and Julian had earlier admitted that the Jews were hampered in their worship by the destruction of their Temple – and given Julian's repairs project, it can come as no great shock that Julian wrote to the Jewish community to announce his intention to rebuild the Temple¹⁰: "when I have successfully concluded the war with Persia, I may rebuild by my own efforts the sacred city of Jerusalem, which for so many years you have longed to see inhabited, and may bring settlers there, and, together with you,

9. Julian cleverly turned this seemingly anti-Jewish diatribe into an anti-Christian one, by listing Jesus in with the other things revealed only to the Jews. His final quip, that the Jews had imagined their god to be sovereign, appears directed more at the Christians than the Jews.

10. It would be very interesting to learn about the reaction of the Jewish community to this statement. Clearly, there were some Jews who were very enthusiastic to rebuild the Temple, as evidenced by the ancient sources' record of Jews coming to Jerusalem to help with the work. However, it is unlikely that all Jews in all communities would have welcomed the imposition of the "pagan" emperor into their holy site. Unfortunately, contemporary Jewish sources are silent on the issue.

may glorify the Most High God therein” (Julian 1913b, 181).

Julian’s intentions are not strictly noble, however. Julian clearly hopes to curry the favour of the Jews by rescinding anti-Jewish taxes (“the levy which is said to exist among you”) and laws, as well as by providing an opportunity for the Jewish Diaspora to return to Israel and resume their worship in a “Third Temple”. Perhaps Julian saw himself as a new incarnation of the Persian king Cyrus who allowed for the construction of the Second Temple by the Jewish Diaspora of the 6th century BC. In his letter, Julian is hoping that the support of his reign is not swiftly forthcoming from either the moderate “pagan” or the Christian fronts, through his repeated references to his imperial office or his reign: “So that everywhere, during my reign, you may have security of mind, and in enjoyment of peace may offer more fervid prayers for my reign to the Most High God, the Creator, who has deigned to crown me with his own immaculate right hand” (1913b, 179).

Despite the Jewish silence on the topic, this decision received a great number of interpretations from both Christian and “pagan” authors. Ammianus Marcellinus, in book XXIII of his history, simply writes that Julian, “[e]ager to extend the memory of his reign by great works ... planned at vast cost to restore the once splendid temple at Jerusalem”. Julian set this project in motion, but the project was abandoned due to a bizarre natural disaster: “terrifying balls of flame kept bursting forth near the foundations of the temple, and made the place inaccessible to the workmen, some of whom were burned to death” (Ammianus Marcellinus 1950, 311). This is an incredibly straightforward method of narrative. Julian, acting from a rather self-serving motivation, hoped to accomplish something, but due to environmental circumstances was unsuccessful. Given that “pagans” believed in omens, one wonders how exactly Ammianus Marcellinus was able to rationalize it. This is certainly a neutral response when compared to the disaster-movie type scripts of Christian writers.

Philostorgius too has a dramatic account of this event, through several manuscript variants. In all three variants, Julian’s motivation is described not as selfish but as anti-Christian. He attributes Julian’s motivation to an attempt to disprove Jesus’ prophecy that Jerusalem would be overthrown, and sees the failure

of the attempt as divine proof. Given this point of view, it is logical that he describes the natural disasters as “terrors sent from God” (Philostorgius 2007, 104–5).

Theodoret of Cyrus preserves part of Julian’s story in book III of his *Ecclesiastical History*. In chapter 15, he addresses Julian’s motivations, saying that Julian inquired of the Jews why they were not offering sacrifices, and when he was told it was because they had no Temple, he decided to reconstruct it. Theodoret then deviates from Julian’s self-proclaimed motives by saying that Julian was trying to “falsify the prediction of the Lord”. His account of the natural disasters is similarly dramatic, but he includes that as a result, many of the Jews converted to Christianity, “confessing the Godhead of him who had been crucified by their fathers,” while Julian, “like Pharaoh”, remained unmoved in the face of divine intervention (Theodoret of Cyrus 1892, book III, chap. XV).

John Chrysostom, known for his uncharitable position towards Julian and the Jews (Parkes 1961, 163)¹¹, makes the event into a sinister attempt on Julian’s part to win the Jews over to his own religion. In his fifth homily, section XI.4–5, Chrysostom claims that Julian “invited the Jews to sacrifice to idols”. In the same homily, section XI.6, he used their old way of sacrifice as an excuse and said: “In the days of your ancestors, God was worshipped in this way.” Chrysostom at least credits the Jews with refusing this offer, but makes the restoration of the Temple a Jewish request. And in section XI.9, he has the Jews answer: “If you wish to see us offer sacrifices, give us back Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, show us the holy of holies, restore the altar, and we will offer sacrifices again just as we did before” (Chrysostom 1967, 137–38).

Chrysostom claims that Julian jumped at this request, as

11. Parkes says that Chrysostom “has left us the most complete monument of the public expression of the Christian attitude to the Jews in the century of the victory of the Church. In these discourses there is no sneer too mean, no gibe too bitter for him to fling at the Jewish people. ... Most astonishing of all, at the end he turns to the Christians, and in words full of sympathy and toleration he urges them not to be too hard on those who have erred in following Jewish practices or in visiting Jewish synagogues. Dealing with the Christians, no text which urges forgiveness is forgotten: dealing with the Jews only one verse of the New Testament is omitted: ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”

“he expected it would be easy for them to go from sacrifice to the worship of idols” (ibid., 138), but that he also held the motive of disproving the words of Christ, which to his mind “forbade the rebuilding of the Temple” (139). This is an interesting position because Julian clearly had great respect for Judaism, and, as earlier outlined, agreed with the Jews on all points of theology except their monotheism. Could Julian indeed have idealised some form of syncretism between the two religions, and attempted to begin by currying their favour?

Gregory of Nazianzus has the same suspicious attitude as Chrysostom, and places the blame fairly between them because of “that hatred for us [Christians] which has smouldered in them from the very beginning”. Gregory claims that Julian used the Torah to convince the Jews that the time had come for their return to Jerusalem, and, given their “well-known credulity” and their anti-Christian sentiments, they easily complied. He notes that Julian “hid his true purpose” – that is, disproving Jesus – “under the mark of benevolence” (Gregory of Nazianzus 1888, 87–88).

Gregory reports that when they set to work in Jerusalem “they found [the doors] closed in their faces by an unseen and indivisible power which worked wonders of the sort for the confusion of the impious and the saving of the godly.” But he then adds that “what all people nowadays report and believe” is that fire from the “sacred place” – i.e. the Holy of Holies – stopped them, and performed signs which proclaimed God’s glory (ibid., 88–90). In both statements, Gregory acknowledges some sort of miraculous event with the same “end-goal”. Perhaps he is acknowledging that the story had become embellished over time, though it is very strange for modern readers to consider embellishing a miracle!

Conclusion

All Christian authors mentioning the incident of the Third Temple’s construction have made reference to Julian’s attempt to disprove the words of Jesus as the catalyst for his decision. Four times in the Gospels (Mt 24:1–2; Mk 13:1–2; Lk 19:41–44, 21:5–6), Jesus is recorded as prophesying the utter destruction of the Temple, with the prophecy understood to refer to the 70 AD

destruction of the Second Temple. As previously discussed, to Christians, this destruction of the Temple both tested and proved Jesus and symbolised the destruction of the Old Covenant between God and man. Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple is interpreted as an aggressively anti-Christian measure, rather than a pro-Jewish one. However, given Julian's thorough Christian education, it would be illogical to suggest that he was unaware of the theological implications of a new Temple.

When I began this research, I was hoping to discover whether Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem could be understood outside of terms like "philosemite" or "anti-Christian", and rather in terms of temple repair, with the Jewish Temple simply being one temple among many. At this point, I feel confident to say that Julian had a double or ulterior motive in this Temple affair. Julian had a "soft spot" for the Jews because of the suffering they endured for their faith. Stripped of their temple and exiled from their holy homeland, he saw their situation as analogous to his own, as paganism became increasingly marginalised by Christianity and as moderate "pagans" became more secular and less interested in the rituals he was so keen to return to. Given his association of the Jewish Temple with other sacred spaces, and given his own admissions in his writings, it is easy to see how he attempted to enact his own policy of toleration, by restoring a persecuted ancient religion.

It is also clear that Julian hoped to use the "good press" he would gain from these pro-Jewish actions as tools to his own advantage. He hoped that gratitude would bind the Jews to him and bring their support to his reign. He was clearly also cognizant that a restored Jewish Temple would throw the Christian Church into confusion as they puzzled over the prophecies of Jesus and sought to realign their post-Temple theology to this new reality. For Julian, raised on Christian apologetics, the restoration of the Temple signified the invalidation of Christianity, as it placed Christians either firmly back under the "local deity" of the Old Covenant or back in the hands of the gods of Rome. As with the rest of Julian's reign, we can only speculate what would have occurred had this project been carried to fruition.

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