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Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II

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https://doi.org/10.16993/bas

PUBLISHER

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VERSION

VoR (Version of Record)

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REPOSITORY RECORD

Adams, Matthew S., Alexandre J.M.E. Christoyannopoulos, Lilian Turk, Jesse Cohn, Emma Brown Dewhurst, Pedro Garcia-Guirao, Justin Bronson Barringer, et al.. 2019. “Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II”. figshare. https://hdl.handle.net/2134/35260.

Essays in

Anarchism and Religion

— Vol. II —

Alexandre Christoyannopoulos & Matthew S. Adams (eds.)

STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY PRESS

Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II

Edited by Alexandre Christoyannopoulos & Matthew S. Adams

STOCKHOLM
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published by
Stockholm University Press
Stockholm University
SE-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
www.stockholmuniversitypress.se

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Supporting Agency (funding): Loughborough University, UK

First published 2018
Cover Illustration: Jacob Wrestles with the Angel, by Gustave Doré (1832–1883)
Cover License: Public domain
Cover designed by Karl Edqvist, SUP

Stockholm Studies in Comparative Religion (Online) ISSN: 2002–4606

ISBN (Paperback): 978–91–7635–075–1
ISBN (PDF): 978–91–7635–072–0
ISBN (EPUB): 978–91–7635–073–7
ISBN (Mobi): 978–91–7635–074–4

DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas

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Suggested citation:
Alexandre Christoyannopoulos & Matthew S. Adams. 2018. *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas. License: CC-BY

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39. Christoyannopoulos, A. & Adams M. S. (eds.) 2018. *Essays in Anarchism & Religion: Volume II*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas

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Contents

Anarchism and Religion: Exploring Definitions 1
Alexandre Christoyannopoulos & Matthew S. Adams

Yiddish Radicalism, Jewish Religion: Controversies in the Fraye Arbeter Shtime, 1937–1945 20
Lilian Türk & Jesse Cohn

To Each According to their Needs: Anarchist Praxis as a Resource for Byzantine Theological Ethics 58
Emma Brown Dewhurst

Representations of Catholicism in Contemporary Spanish Anarchist-Themed Film (1995–2011) 94
Pedro García-Guirao

Subordination and Freedom: Tracing Anarchist Themes in First Peter 132
Justin Bronson Barringer

Restoring Anarcho-Christian Activism: From Nietzsche's Affirmation to Benjamin's Violence 173
Christos Iliopoulos

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: The Contribution of Christian Nonviolence to Anarchism 196
Sam Underwood

Prisons of Law and Brothels of Religion: William Blake's Christian Anarchism 232
Duane Williams

Occult Features of Anarchism 278
Erica Lagalisse

Index 333

Anarchism and Religion: Exploring Definitions

Alexandre Christoyannopoulos & Matthew S. Adams
Loughborough University, UK

One of the contested features in the scholarship on both anarchism and religion has been the question of definition. How one defines key terms does, after all, determine *what* one analyses (and what not), and generally reveals one's assumptions and preferences (implicit or explicit) about what is being discussed. Also, the same term can mean different things in different languages, times and places, even if deliberately employing a pre-existing term does usually signal intended alignment. To make matters more difficult, in some cases, definitional differences are not just merely minor and contextual, but deliberate and fought over, sometimes with a clear intention to *exclude* particular variants that are felt to precisely *not* legitimately fit the label. Indeed, both 'anarchism' and 'religion' are candidates for Gallie's definition of 'essentially contested concepts': "concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users".[1] Definitions therefore require decisions, betray one's particular sympathies and aversions, and reflect one's context.

For anarchists in particular, as much as 'protean fluidity' is a hallmark of the tradition and often a source of pride, some boundaries can be defended with much passion.[2] For instance, most anarchists are particularly insistent on excluding

[1] W. B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts," in *The Importance of Language*, ed. M. Black (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 123.

[2] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 414.

How to cite this book chapter:
Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. 2018. Anarchism and Religion: Exploring Definitions. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 1–19. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.a. License: CC-BY.

'anarcho-capitalism' from 'anarchism'.[3] Others reject any flavour of religion.[4] Some claim that only 'class struggle' anarchists should be labelled 'anarchists'.[5] Some devote much time to reflecting on the place of anarchism in political thought, whereas others insist on the prioritisation of praxis over theory.[6] Some explain anarchism by focusing on the writings of the 'classical anarchists' of the nineteenth century, others advocate 'blasting' that 'canon' and adopting a more open and critical anarchist historiography.[7] That anarchism occupies an ambiguous position in the family of political ideologies – seemingly fusing a trenchant demand for

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[3] The Anarchist FAQ Editorial Collective, "An Anarchist Faq," https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/the-anarchist-faq-editorial-collective-an-anarchist-faq#toc7.

[4] Harold Barclay, "Anarchist Confrontations with Religion," in *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, ed. Nathan Jun and Shane Wahl (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010); Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, "Christian Anarchism: A Revolutionary Reading of the Bible," ibid.; Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Lara Apps, "Anarchism and Religion," in *Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy*, ed. Nathan Jun (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Sébastien Faure, "Does God Exist? Twelve Proofs of the Non-Existence of God," The Anarchist Library, http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/sebastien-faure-does-god-exist; Johann Most, "The God Pestilence," Anarchy Archives, http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/most/godpest.html; Nicolas Walter, "Anarchism and Religion," *The Raven: anarchist quarterly* 257, no. 1 (1994).

[5] Nathan Jun, "Rethinking the Anarchist Canon: History, Philosophy, and Interpretation," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 1 (2013); Robert Graham, "*Black Flame*: A Commentary," ibid.; Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK, 2009); Lucien van der Walt, "(Re)Constructing a Global Anarchist and Syndicalist Canon: A Response to Robert Graham and Nathan Jun on *Black Flame*," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 1 (2013).

[6] Nathan Jun, "Anarchism and Philosophy: A Critical Introduction," in *Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy*, ed. Nathan Jun (Leiden: Brill, 2018). More generally, unsurprisingly in light of anarchism's radicalism and its emphasis on action, debates and tensions between those who spend much time theorising and those keener to focus on activism crop up sooner or later in nearly any anarchist circle.

[7] Matthew S. Adams, "The Possibilities of Anarchist History: Rethinking the Canon and Writing History," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 1 (2013); Ruth Kinna and Süreyyya Evren, "Introduction: Blasting the Canon," ibid.

thoroughgoing equality which is characteristic of socialism with an equally robust defence of liberty which is most commonly seen in radical forms of liberalism – can also add confusion for the uninitiated. Then there is the debate about political violence: for a political tradition that prides itself on its practical efficacy – on its ability to occasion change in the here and now, both in individual mentalities and in offering fresh models of political participation – the flawed but common association with seemingly gratuitous destruction is unhelpful.[8] Being in a position to point, instead, to the constructive acts of anarchists, and to their richly varied philosophies, including by offering a definition that either detaches 'anarchism' from its narrow association with political violence or at least focuses on its ideological content (irrespective of whether it sometimes informs 'violence'), could support an act of recovery.

As for 'religion', some employ the term broadly to include all the spiritualities and practices which can be considered 'religious', whereas others insist on the label applying more narrowly to more institutionalised and often Western-centric practices and beliefs, and do so precisely in order to differentiate such examples of religiosity from non-Western and less institutionalised spiritualities and rituals.[9] Some definitions hinge on the object of worship (God or gods), others on ritual practices, others still on the state of mind which opens itself to it.[10] Some insist on religion being a

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[8] Ward Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in North America* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2007); Andrew Fiala, "Anarchism and Pacifism," in *Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy*, ed. Nathan Jun (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!: Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto, 2008), chap. 4; Vernon Richards, ed. *Violence and Anarchism: A Polemic* (London: Freedom, 1993).

[9] Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 2013).

[10] John Bowker, "Religion," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* ed. John Bowker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. xviii-xiv; John Hinnells, ed. *The Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 414–16; Moojan Momen, *The Phenomenon of Religion: A Thematic Approach* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), pp. 26–28, and chap. 3.

private matter, sometimes with an explicit determination to keep it independent from politics.[11] Others argue that religion cannot but inevitably be political, and that its confinement to the 'private' sphere is actually the result of a political project.[12] Then there is the category of 'civil religion' to describe politics that looks like 'religion'.[13]

Unsurprisingly, therefore, it is generally expected that a work exploring either religion or anarchist politics will, at the outset, offer a definition that attempts to stake out the parameters of these terms. The fact that our project grapples with not just one disputed term, but two, makes this question of definition all the more important. The introduction to the first volume of *Essays in Anarchism and Religion* explained how this project emerged,

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[11] Jean Baubérot and Micheline Milo, *Laïcités Sans Frontières* (Paris: Seuil, 2011); Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Erica Michelle Lagalisse, ""Marginalizing Magdalena": Intersections of Gender and the Secular in Anarchoindigenist Solidarity Activism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36, no. 3 (2011); Tariq Modood, "Moderate Secularism, Religion as Identity, and Respect for Religion," *The Political Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2010); Graeme Smith, *A Short History of Secularism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2008).

[12] Steve Bruce, *Politics and Religion* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003); José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); William T. Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11, no. 4 (1995); Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Anthony T. Fiscella, "'Religious' Radicalism," in *Routledge Handbook of Radical Politics*, ed. Uri Gordon and Ruth Kinna, Stockholm Studies in Comparative Religion (London: Routledge, 2018); Jonathan Fox, *An Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Jeffrey Haynes, ed. *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2009); Nikki R. Keddie, "Secularism and Its Discontents," *Dædalus* 132, no. 3 (2003); Steven Kettell, "Do We Need a 'Political Science of Religion'?," *Political Studies Review* 14, no. 2 (2016); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[13] Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, *Varieties of Civil Religion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1980); John A. Coleman, "Civil Religion," *Sociology of Religion* 31, no. 2 (1970); Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, trans. George Staunton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); John Markoff and Daniel Regan, "The Rise and Fall of Civil Religion: Comparative Perspectives," *Sociological Analysis* 42, no. 4 (1981).

located it in the broader contexts of both the 'resurgence' of religion in politics and the increasing interest in anarchist studies, acknowledged our positionality and the disproportionate focus on Christianity, and summarised a tentative mapping of the territory according to four main categories of enquiry.[14] It nevertheless left out discussions of definitions. What follows here therefore is an exploration of some of the difficulties inherent in trying to define 'anarchism' and 'religion', and an explanation of why we chose to adopt a flexible approach for this project, followed by a short introduction to each of the chapters in this volume.

'Anarchism'

It is conventional to begin discussing the definition of anarchism by pointing to the etymology of the term. The suffix *-archy* is said to refer to the state or the ruler, the prefix *an-* to a rejection or negation, hence *an-archy* signals a rejection of the state or ruler. This, however, is somewhat too simplistic, as has been noted and discussed by a number of scholars in anarchist studies.[15] For one, even the Greek suffix refers to more than just 'the state' (or 'ruler'). It is akin to the Latin prefix *pri-*, as in: princes and principalities, but also principles, primordial and priority. 'Anarchy', even etymologically, thus hints at more than just a rejection or negation of the modern version of princes and principalities.

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[14] The four areas were: anarchist critiques of religion; anarchist exegesis; anarchist theology, and religious anarchist historiographies. Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Matthew S. Adams, "Anarchism and Religion: Mapping an Increasingly Fruitful Landscape," in *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume I*, ed. Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Matthew S. Adams, Stockholm Studies in Comparative Religion (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2017). The more detailed exploration of those four main types of enquiries has now been published as Christoyannopoulos and Apps, "Anarchism and Religion."

[15] Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), 269–70; Francis Dupuis-Déri, "Anarchy in Political Philosophy," in *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, ed. Nathan Jun and Shane Wahl (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010); Mitchell Verter, "The Anarchism of the Other Person," ibid.

Furthermore, even though definitions of 'anarchism' notoriously defy consensus, most anarchists today would subscribe to an attempt to interpret the term as indicating a critical and anti-authoritarian position with respect to all forms of hierarchy and domination. This includes top-down political structures such as 'the state', but also neoliberal capitalism (hence the allergic reaction to 'anarcho-capitalism'), patriarchy and heteronormativity, 'religion' (certainly hierarchical religious beliefs and institutions), racism, ableism, speciesism, and so on. To reduce 'anarchism' to 'opposition to the state' therefore overlooks this set of richer challenges to the multifarious expressions of power and discrimination. The state often underwrites and polices these structures of oppression, and there is much about it that earns it dedicated criticism from anarchists, but it is not the *only* object of their critique, sometimes not even the *primary* one.

Attempting to define anarchism by turning to concepts such as 'the state' and 'capitalism' also implies an historical gaze that, for some, unduly circumvents a much deeper tradition that opposes manifold forms of authority. For the more historically-minded commentator, to view anarchist politics emerging as a response to the centralising tendencies of the modern nation-state necessarily dates its genesis to, at the earliest, the closing decades of the seventeenth century. Similarly, if we emphasise the importance of capitalism, and locate anarchism's foundation in responses to the depredations of industrialism and the rise of the workers' movement, this timeline is further abridged. If it is meaningless to talk of 'anarchism' before the rise of the modern state or capitalism, where does this leave those that want to see the Levellers or Lao Tzu as essentially anarchist?

There is also the question of method and place, that is, of how and where this criticism is articulated. Some channel their anarchist critique primarily in workplace syndicalism. Some prioritise direct action and street protests, some informed by a determination to remain non-violent, although some dismiss such determination in activism as an expression of dilettantism. Some focus on the written articulation of their ideas, from zines to blogs to philosophical tracts. Some join armed struggles such as in Republican Spain in 1936, or in post-2011 Rojava. Some focus on prefiguring

political alternatives here and now. Many fuse these different priorities in novel combinations of thought and praxis.

There are, in short, many varieties of anarchism. In our project, since the interaction of 'religion' and 'anarchism' is both understudied and potentially pregnant with a rich variety of fruitful angles of analysis, we have opted to be as open as possible to different declinations of 'anarchism'. In their separate ways, therefore, each author in these volumes of *Essays in Anarchism and Religion* is implicated in this unforgiving task of definition. As editors, we remain open to the idea that anarchism remains a contested category – the site of manifold, competing definitions – and have encouraged authors to reflect on this vexed issue.

'Religion'

It is no less difficult to settle on a definition of 'religion', for a different variety of reasons. As Momen argues, although most people think they know what they mean by 'religion', "in-built cultural biases predispose us to view religion in particular ways": Westerners for instance see religion primarily as a system of beliefs; Hindus might lay more emphasis on the performance of ritual activities; and Muslims tend to focus on how one's personal and social life is to be lived.[16] Moreover, the idea of religion as a 'personal choice' is relatively recent: hitherto your religion was usually that of the family and community in which you were born.[17] The very categorising of 'religion' as a distinct part of one's compartmentalised life (separate from work, family, hobbies, etc.) is also a product of relatively recent and Western contexts.[18]

It is perhaps not surprising if different scholars embedded in different academic disciplines therefore propose significantly

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[16] Momen, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, pp. 21–25 (the quote is from p. 21).

[17] Ibid., pp. 24–25. See also Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).

[18] Christoyannopoulos and Fiscella, "'Religious' Radicalism."; Momen, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, p. 25.

different definitions of religion.[19] Some prioritise the metaphysical content, others the sociological characteristics, yet others the psychoanalytical impulse, others still the political function. Some might eschew definitions and point to a variety of characteristics to be found in all 'religion': practical and ritual (the religious performances and celebrations that punctuate days, months and years); experiential and emotional (Paul's or Buddha's conversions, religious music and art, etc.); narrative or mythic (the story of our origins); doctrinal and philosophical (theology, dogma, metaphysics, etc.); ethical and legal (how we are to live our lives); social and institutional (the community of adherents and its social function); and material (the physical buildings and sacred places).[20] Others will define it more informally as an activity one is "extremely enthusiastic about and does regularly."[21] Any one of these definitional preferences will result in the inclusion or exclusion of particular examples, the inclusion or exclusion of which might be disputed by others (Buddhism? Confucianism? Football? Shopping?). Several definitions may even result in having to label certain political ideologies as 'religion' (State communism? Nationalism?).[22]

A further difficulty is that what most Westerners instinctively understand as 'religion' is a product of Western history, laden, inevitably, with Westphalian and imperialistic baggage. There are therefore important reasons, from a post-colonial and post-Westphalian perspective, to proceed with caution before imposing any exogenous definitions upon a phenomenon some variant of which has consistently been part and parcel of the life and

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[19] Bowker, "Religion," pp. xviii–xiv; George Chryssides and Ron Geaves, *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*, Second ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Peter Connolly, ed. *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Continuum, 1999); Hinnells, *The Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, pp. 414–16; Momen, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, pp. 26–28, and chap. 3; Robert A. Segal, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

[20] Ninan Smart, *The World's Religions*, Second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 12–22.

[21] "Religion," Cambridge University Press, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/religion.

[22] *The World's Religions*, pp. 22–26.

thought of every human community for millennia prior to the European Enlightenment. This is not to say that the word 'religion' is polluted beyond repair by statist and colonial Western history, but that the particular context from which the widespread signification of the term as labelling a particular category of things emerged, and the implicit framing that this can still impose, should not be ignored.[23]

With such considerations in mind, our approach has been *not* to impose contestable limits but to stay open to different definitional approaches. Where the use of a term by an author in these volumes might be controversial, as with 'anarchism', we encouraged some acknowledgement and discussion of those choices. Just as with 'anarchism', though, we have not sought to police the boundaries of the term or proscribe its use in particular contexts *a priori*.

In editing and presenting essays on 'anarchism' and 'religion', therefore, we adopted an open and flexible approach to both terms' definitions. Our primary interest is not in excluding potential angles of analysis because they did not fit a particular kind of definition, but in creating a space for rigorous scholarly discussion at the overlap of the two, whatever the particular definitional preference of the author. In that sense, perhaps, we have abided by one precept commonly recognised in anarchist approaches to consensus-building.

The essays in this volume

The first volume contained eight chapters which adopted different combinations of modes of enquiry: Pauli and Blanes were primarily historical interventions; Galvan-Alvarez blended history and exegesis; Podmore engaged in anarchist theology; Meggitt was rooted in Bible studies; Strandberg approached anarchist critiques of religion from a philosophical angle; and Hoppen considered

[23] Christoyannopoulos and Fiscella, "'Religious' Radicalism."; Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Luca Mavelli and Fabio Petito, eds., *Towards a Postsecular International Politics: New Forms of Community, Identity, and Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

the mystical anarchism of two particular thinkers.[24] This volume presents a similarly diverse blend of essays considering anarchism and religion using a variety of modes of enquiry.

The first chapter in this volume, by Lillian Türk and Jesse Cohn, explores some of the tensions between anarchism and religion as debated in New York's famous Jewish-anarchist newspaper *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* in the period 1937–1945. It argues that what united those who defended religion and those who opposed it in the debates hosted by the newspaper is a critique of 'domination', whether religious or not. This chapter also articulates a contribution which for once does not come from the Christian tradition, even though the arguments that are covered apply not only to Jewish perspectives.

Just as recent work on the concept of domination in political theory has emphasised the distinctive things anarchist theorists have to offer to the discussion, the question of ethics has also been recognised as an area where anarchist critiques are especially powerful. In the second chapter, Emma Brown Dewhurst approaches this idea from a novel perspective, suggesting that ethical considerations derived from Christian Byzantine thought are best enacted by adopting practical ideas and critical thinking from communal anarchist thought. Focusing on Maximus the Confessor and Peter Kropotkin, she argues that despite their very different metaphysical starting points, they have similar thoughts on how human beings should act with respect to each other and

[24] Enrique Galván-Álvarez, "Why Anarchists Like Zen? A Libertarian Reading of Shinran (1173–1263)," in *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume I*, ed. Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Matthew S. Adams, Stockholm Studies in Comparative Religion (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2017); Franziska Hoppen, "A Reflection on Mystical Anarchism in the Works of Gustav Landauer and Eric Voegelin," ibid.; Ruy Llera Blanes, "Mutuality, Resistance and Egalitarianism in a Late Colonial Bakongo Christian Movement," ibid.; Justin Meggitt, "Was the Historical Jesus an Anarchist? Anachronism, Anarchism and the Historical Jesus," ibid.; Benjamin J. Pauli, "The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day, and Exemplary Anarchism," ibid.; Simon D. Podmore, "The Anarchē of Spirit: Proudhon's Anti-Theism & Kierkegaard's Self in Apophatic Perspective," ibid.; Hugo Strandberg, "Does Religious Belief Necessarily Mean Servitude? On Max Stirner and the Hardened Heart," ibid.

to the rest of the world, and that Kropotkin's ideas are therefore particularly useful to Christian ethicists.

The notion that anarchism, and indeed socialist thinking more generally, may have more in common with Christian ethical ideas than their frequently atheistic theorists would be willing to admit, is an established theme in the history of political thought. Anarchists, especially when contemplating not just their thoughts but their deeds, are often perceived in terms of their militant opposition to organised religion, and actions perpetrated under the so-called 'Red Terror' in revolutionary Spain might seem to capture this hostility in sanguinary terms. In his contribution, Pedro Garcia-Guirao adds depth and colour to this image, using film as a tool to probe issues of representation and historical accuracy. Providing a 'panoramic overview' of the portrayal of religion (specifically: Catholicism) in Spanish film productions that could be qualified as 'anarchist', he focuses particularly on films that interrogate the legacies of the Spanish Civil War. It considers both critical portrayals of stereotypical Christianity, and portrayals of Christianity which are more in tune with anarchist preferences.

What is certainly apparent is that rejections by anarchists of religious ideas frequently rest on a questionable understanding of the actual content of these ideas. Justin Bronson Barringer's chapter highlights some of the complexity inherent in, in this instance, Christian thinking, and demonstrates the way in which particular reading strategies can disrupt stereotypical interpretations of complex bodies of thought. He offers an anarchist reading of First Peter, arguing that Peter proposes an unacknowledged and politically radical vision of non-coercion, voluntary association and equality. Barringer also argues that this reading offers a situation whereby oppressive power structures are subverted and the oppressed are freed when those with little power paradoxically subordinate themselves to the existing powers that be.

The role of violence in occasioning social change has been a point of fierce contention throughout anarchism's history. These debates also sometimes have a fundamentally religious inflection, where anarchist activists inspired by Tolstoyan pacifism or Gandhian *satyagraha* both challenge the efficacy of political violence and ponder the extent to which bloodletting undermines

anarchism's cardinal insistence on the necessary equation between 'means' and 'ends'. In the fifth chapter, Christos Iliopoulos draws on Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin in order to challenge the thesis that Christian anarchist activism must remain dogmatically pacifistic. By promoting a Christianity that, instead of self-negation, adopts an affirmative life stance, and by distinguishing between mythical and divine violence, Iliopoulos argues that Christian anarchists need not remain shackled by passive and resentful readings of Christianity.

By contrast, in the chapter that follows, Sam Underwood argues that Christian anarchists make a compelling and convincing case that nonviolence is the most consistent position with the philosophy of anarchism in general, and should not be a characteristic unique to a specifically Christian anarchism. That is, he contends that the criticisms of violence articulated by Christian anarchists might speak to non-Christian anarchists too, and that nonviolence is actually a central element of anarchist prefiguration.

If Iliopoulos's chapter hints at the breadth of thinkers that are seen as offering something to the historic anarchist tradition – in this case Nietzsche, whose poetic assassination of modern ethical pieties inspired anarchists as diverse as Emma Goldman and Herbert Read – this theme is on display once more in Duane Williams' chapter. Rather than Nietzsche, Williams focuses on another thinker whose coruscating prose and dogged unconventionality has seen him positioned within the anarchist orbit: William Blake. Williams examines the extent to which Blake's writings on law and religion make him an anarchist, and demonstrates how Blake's anarchistic and religious tendencies are fused in a novel intellectual edifice. He does this by exploring Blake's opposition to both judicial and moral law, analysing his complete mistrust of institutional state religion, and examining Blake's reading of Jesus as a bold and inspirational transgressor of that law.

In the final chapter, Erica Lagalisse offers a deep history of the interlacing of anarchist and religious ideas and practices. Lagalisse investigates the religious and theological roots tied to the secret societies of the radical Enlightenment from which modern anarchism emerged as a distinctive politics. In the process she explores the hidden correspondences between classical anarchism,

Renaissance magic and occult philosophy, and questions the widespread attachment to the 'secular' on the Left, as well as its gendered and colonial inflections.

Lagalisse's interrogation of the gendered and colonial implications of conventional leftist secularism points also to the modest steps taken in this collection to deal with the enduring Eurocentrism and androcentrism that so often beset academic research. We welcome the fact that this volume has both more female scholars, and more reflections on non-Christian religious contexts, than the last, but equally acknowledge that there is a long way to go and that it is important to continue to broaden the scope of this project. Indeed, given the fluidity that this introduction, and the chapters comprising this volume, have all highlighted as a defining characteristic of the anarchist tradition, it is important that scholarship on this tradition should seek to address these problems. Nevertheless, while we are committed to these philosophical and methodological principles, a project of this nature will always come face-to-face with practicalities and structural biases that hinder the inclusiveness we aspire to achieve. The contributors remain overwhelmingly male, their contributions are often rooted in literatures defined by their Eurocentrism, and Christianity remains a hegemonic lens. We are determined, however, to address this issue. This is the second volume of a three-part series comprised of papers all emanating from the Anarchist Studies Conference held at Loughborough University in 2012, but we plan a fourth volume in this project that addresses these issues of positionality, intersectionality, and inclusivity directly. In contrast to the looser organisation of the first three volumes, the fourth will examine these dynamics head on, but also interrogate the conventions that these initial volumes are helping to cultivate concerning our object of study. The fourth volume, therefore, will be concerned as much with the legacy that our scholarship is creating, as with the intricate relationship between anarchism and religion.

But these self-flagellating *mea culpas* do not detract from the power and importance of this collection. Just as with Volume I, we continue to be astonished by the interdisciplinary breadth of this scholarship, by its thought-provoking originality, and by

the enthusiastic and authentic commitment by its authors to explore these areas. Editing these papers has been stimulating and enriching, and we hope that encountering them will prove just as rewarding to new readers, testing in the process some prevalent assumptions about how 'anarchism' and 'religion' should be defined.

Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and
Matthew S. Adams, May 2018

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Yiddish Radicalism, Jewish Religion: Controversies in the Fraye Arbeter Shtime, 1937–1945

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"Anarchism" and "religion" are categories of belonging that serve as tools for identification – both of oneself and of others. Yiddish-speaking anarchism is overwhelmingly remembered as an antireligious movement, a characterization drawn from its early experiences in the immigrant communities of the U.S. (circa 1880–1919). However, this obscures the presence of competing definitions of both religion and anarchism within the Jewish anarchist milieu and fails to take into account the social character of processes of identification unfolding over time. A generation after its circulation peaked, in a context of declining Jewish anarchist "groupness" (1937–1945), the Yiddish anarchist newspaper Fraye Arbeter Shtime *hosted debates over religion which reveal a far broader spectrum of interpretations than were apparent in the earlier period. Examining these debates demonstrates the subversive fluidity more than the rigidly bounded character of anarchist and religious identities alike, as an emergent consensus among Jewish anarchists names domination rather than religion per se as the common enemy.*

> The historians refuse to confront Jewish radicalism in its own right, even as they make shrewd remarks about its unanticipated role; the Jewish radicals, in similar fashion, refused to confront religion in its own right, even as they made shrewd remarks about its unacknowledged uses.
>
> (Howe 1976: 323)

How to cite this book chapter:
Türk, L. and Cohn, J. 2018. Yiddish Radicalism, Jewish Religion: Controversies in the Fraye Arbeter Shtime, 1937–1945. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 20–57. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.b. License: CC-BY.

> Once we are liberated from the vulgar, theological model of history that has been endlessly and scrupulously repeated by modernity, we should no longer be surprised or horrified by the "return" of religion [within anarchism]. Religion "returns," but – like all other things – it returns in an infinite, unpredictable series of events and situations [. . .]. Religion "returns" at once the same and yet different and surprising.
>
> (Colson 2007: 60)

Those familiar with the history of Jewish radicalism in America may have heard of the *Yonkiper beler* (Yom Kippur Balls), antireligious festivities held on the Day of Atonement between 1889 and 1903 by young anarchists such as the illustrious Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, featuring outrageous mockeries of ritual piety.[1] Indeed, the rejection of religion has a prominent place in the history of Jewish anarchist ideas. The assumptions that society is constructed according to an arbitrary divine plan not alterable by human intervention, that rules established by the will of God are the foundation of a system of law not accessible to reason but merely to be accepted by submissive believers – these were denounced in the strong critiques of religion issuing from Johann Most and Mikhail Bakunin.[2] Religion was

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[1] On these occasions, four-page leaflets (*tfile-zakes*) were disseminated, filled with parodies and satire, lampoons of prayer and religion in general and Judaism in particular (N. Goldberg in Tsherikover 1945: 434). Johann Most, Emma Goldman (1869–1940) and Alexander Berkman (1870–1936) gave speeches at *Yonkiper beler* alongside Saul Yanovsky (a.k.a. Shoel Yanovski, 1864–1939, first editor of the revived *Fraye Arbeter Stime* [*FASh*], *Di Ovnt Tsaytung* and *Di Fraye Gezelshaft*), Roman Lewis (1865–1918, founder of the Pioneers of Freedom (*Pionirn der frayhayt*), and Mikhail Zametkin (a.k.a. Michael Zametkin, 1859–1935, a popular orator and writer for the *Arbeter Tsaytung*); see Avrich 1988: pp. 191 ff. Orthodox and Reform Jews opposed the festivities, which rewrote and mocked *Kol nidre* (the recitation that introduces Yom Kippur), provided a buffet with alcoholic beverages, at which music was played and danced to and where the Marseillaise "and other hymns against Satan" were sung (N. Goldberg in Tsherikover 1945: 440–4, 444; transl. LT; see also Howe 1976: 105–107; Avrich 1973: 38–42; Avrich 1988: 176 ff., esp. 180 f.; Rosenberg 2001).

[2] See e.g. Most 1883. Johann Most (1846–1906), next to German socialists, exercised great influence on Jewish anarchists in late 19th century London and US-American cities (N. Goldberg in Tsherikover 1945: 426; see also E.

interpreted as an obsolete, irrational system of ideas that blocked or at least distorted thought. According to the historian Nathan Goldberg, who describes a pervasive antireligious self-understanding among Jewish immigrants until 1900, this concept of religion was particularly widespread among Jewish anarchists.[3] Robert G. Ingersoll's *Some Mistakes of Moses* and its two translations into Yiddish in 1886 and 1903 greatly influenced the militant atheism of the weekly paper *Arbeter Fraynt,* among others. Far from being limited to Jewish radicals, agnosticism and scepticism were widespread in the East European Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskole*) and among all those who left the traditional community, defined by a strict interpretation of Judaism perpetuated by authoritarian religious and educational institutions.[4] It was not unusual to be an agnostic, atheist or "Epicurean"[5] thinker by 1880, but according to Goldberg, the highly distinctive means employed by Jewish anarchists to agitate against religion turned a great part of the Jewish community away from them.[6]

Tsherikover, *Di amolike anarkhistn in gerangl kegn idishn got* [The former anarchists in struggle against the Jewish god] in *Idisher kemfer*, 7.3.1941.

[3] N. Goldberg, in Tsherikover 1945: pp. 434 ff.

[4] The critique of the traditional educational system (*kheyder*), teachers and authoritarian educationalists (*melamdim*) and the municipality of the *shtetl* (small town), derived from the East European Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskole*), was a widespread topos among socialist Jews by the time of the 1905 Russian Revolution, as reflected in numerous autobiographies (e.g. I. I. Singer 1946). Many biographies of *Haskole* document a progress set in motion by newspapers and industrialization, leading to a reform of education; representatives of the Jewish Enlightenment (*maskilim*) like Yoysef Perl (1773–1839), Avrom Gottlober (1810–1899) or his student Avrom Goldfaden (1840–1908) were teachers. This process and the tremendous importance of newspapers for education in the *shtetl* were both humorously and melancholically described by Sholem Aleichem (Solomon N. Rabinovich, 1859–1916) in *Drayfus in Kasrilevke* (1902).

[5] References to Epicurus often served to represent Jewish anarchists' self-perceptions, perhaps evoking associations with a search for the origin and meaning of human understanding and reason, a strong emphasis on the atomistic nature of science, and the struggle against fate and predetermination. These fundamental themes were reflected in the debate in *FASh,* as we will see.

[6] N. Goldberg, in Tsherikover 1945: 418.

Consequently, the identification of anarchism and radicalism in general[7] as antireligious was widespread among participants in the movement, and this identification is echoed by the secondary literature – a testament to the effectiveness of Jewish anarchists' antireligious activism.[8] Religion and anarchism are very broad categories of identification — categories used by activists and taken over by researchers when interpreting historical sources. However, as Paul-François Tremlett notes, contemporary social science has increasingly called into question the very boundaries of "religion" as a category of analysis, and indeed, we can discern competing interpretations of that category within anarchist discourse.[9] We would suggest distinguishing between self-defined groups and the abstract categories applied by outsiders in order to avoid the false assumptions and dichotomies that are created when Jewish and gentile anarchisms are characterised as antireligious movements *tout court*. It is worth considering, for instance, that Bakunin, famous for his 1871 masterpiece *God and the State* (translated into Yiddish by Shoel Yanovski in 1901), argued strongly against "official" religion intertwined with state power, but advocated a more nuanced view on decentralised denominations and their freedom of conscience and propaganda.[10] To translate this into a claim that Bakunin was "pro-religion" would be as short-sighted as characterising him as purely and simply "antireligious".

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[7] Most actors used the term 'radical' to describe themselves. The term 'anarchist' was used less often; Yiddish anarchist writers instead called themselves *frayhaytlekhe sotsyalistn* (libertarian socialists) or Epicurean thinkers.

[8] See e.g. W. J. Fishman, who correctly observes that "the radical *intelligent* eschewed religion as obscurantism maintained by the rigidity of superstitious ritual and rabbis who acted as a brake on anti-Tsarist activity. Jewish tradition was associated with the physical and mental degradation of the ghetto; and Yiddish was despised as the jargon of slaves, while Hebrew was elevated to the proper form of communication between Jews" (Fishman 2004: 98 f.).

[9] Tremlett 2004: 367–68.

[10] In his "Revolutionary Catechism", Bakunin demanded "[t]he abolition of all state religions and all privileged churches, including those partially maintained or supported by state subsidies", but also "Absolute liberty of every religion to build temples to their gods, and to pay and support their priests" (77).

Recent studies delving into the Yiddish radical milieu describe a range of nuanced attitudes towards religion. Annie Polland demonstrated the intellectual and social ties between 'radical' and 'religious' readers of the Yiddish socialist daily *Forverts* at the very beginning of the 20th century.[11] Editors of the paper sought ways to reach a wider audience and it becomes clear that as early as in 1900 one cannot assume a clear distinction between a religious and a secular milieu: "The *Forverts*' debates point to the vigour with which Jewish immigrants and their organizations wrestled with religion. They are especially significant in showing how religion and reactions to it did not disappear with the waning of religious authority, but rather became all the more pressing."[12]

When we investigate the categories of religion and anarchism as they appear in discursive practice – i.e., in the context of an open-ended, contentious dialogue between multiple actors – we find that it was domination, not religion per se, that the "antireligious" anarchists opposed, and that it was domination that the "religious" anarchist writers struggled to disavow while justifying their self-location[13] within the anarchist movement. This can best be demonstrated by examining a debate among Yiddish writers

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[11] Polland 2007. In her study of two debates in the Yiddish socialist daily *Forverts*, Polland demonstrates the "shared worlds" of 'radical' and 'religious' readers in 1904 and 1905. Letters showed similar argumentative strategies, but also social ties at people's work places, in families, marriages and even friendship. See also Michels 2005: 184. Other research (e.g. Cohn, Biagini) has pointed to *themes* shared by antireligious Jewish anarchists and the Jewish religious tradition itself (e.g., iconoclasm and messianism), affinities made tangible in the relations between Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber, for example.

[12] Ibid.: 376. Years later, in 1915, boundaries remained blurred, as "a reporter for the Orthodox *Morgn zhurnal*, noted the increasing 'tolerance on the Jewish streets,' manifested by both the pious and the radicals. [. . .] he relayed spotting a 'known anarchist sitting and talking with an orthodox rabbi' in a friendly manner. He also noted how Orthodox study groups hired leaders of the extreme left to deliver speeches of general, not political, interest at their meetings." (ibid.: 391).

[13] In order to capture some of the phenomena that are usually attributed to the term identity (hypostasized into a falsely concrete "thing"), the sociologist Rogers Brubaker offers process-oriented terms like identification and categorization, as well as self-location and social location, together with terms for qualities, such as commonality, connectedness, and groupness (Brubaker 2004: pp. 28 ff.).

published in the anarchist weekly *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (*Free Voice of Labor* or *FASh*) between 1937 and 1945. Instead of a single, clearly antireligious point of view, as we shall see, the articles present a heated debate on *Yidishkayt* ("Jewishness") interpreted in political, ethnic *and* religious terms, and its relation to different concepts of anarchism. We begin by exploring the themes emerging in the unique contributions of Abba Gordin, then situating these within the equally unique "counterpublic space" that was the *FASh*. This, in turn, will allow us to see how antireligious and religious anarchist perspectives were articulated in a period when Jews' political engagement with anarchism, while still significant, could no longer take the same form that it had in the era of the *Yonkiper beler*.

A central figure: Abba Gordin (1887–1964)

At the heart of this debate was Abba Gordin, a philosopher, social psychologist, biographer, and educationalist whom Paul Avrich describes as one of the most important figures in Russian anarchism.[14] Allan Antliff reads Abba and his brother Velfke Gordin, from the perspective of their Russian-Revolution-era writings, as antireligious "arch-materialists", suggesting that their primary inspiration came from Max Stirner's attack on "the metaphysical thinking underpinning religion" as "the foundation for the hierarchical division of society".[15] However, Antliff notes that their 1918 *Manifest Pananarkhistov* (or *Pan-Anarchist Manifesto*) rather even-handedly denounced "[t]he rule of heaven and the rule of nature – angels, spirits, devils, molecules, atoms, ether, the laws of God-Heaven and the laws of Nature, forces, the influence of one body on another" as equally arbitrary social constructs: "all this is invented, formed, created by society".[16] Indeed, for the

[14] Avrich 1973: 9. Gordin's works *Draysik yor in Lite un Poyln* (1958; *Thirty Years in Lithuania and Poland*) for the period ending in 1917, *In gerangl far frayhayt* (1956; In struggle for freedom) for 1917–1919, and *Zikhroynes un kheshboynes. Memuarn fun der rusisher revolutsye* (1955; *Memories and Accounts: Memoirs of the Russian Revolution*) for 1917–1924 are contributions to a history of Bolshevism and the facets of the revolutionary movement in Russia.

[15] Antliff, "Anarchy, Power, and Poststructuralism", *SubStance* 36.2 (2007): 61–62.

[16] Qtd. in Antliff 61–62.

Gordins, the materialistic and scientistic pretensions of Marxism were to be denounced as yet another religious illusion:

> For them, science – by which they meant all rational systems, natural science and social science alike – constituted the new religion of the middle class. The greatest fraud of all was Marx's theory of dialectical materialism. "Marxism", they declared, "is the new scientific Christianity, designed to conquer the *bourgeois* world by deceiving the people, the proletariat, just as Christianity deceived the feudal world". Marx and Engels were "the Magi of scientific socialist black-magic".[17]

Nor did Abba Gordin abandon this line of attack on religion and science alike after the collapse of the revolution: in *Communism Unmasked*, he writes that "The instinctive messianic spark glimmering in the heart of the laborer [. . .] devours his hard-won common sense, his healthy realistic look on life, and he forgets himself and becomes an easy victim of fantasms", and he denounces authoritarian communism precisely by calling it a "quasi-religion".[18]

In these statements, Gordin clearly located himself within the antireligious radical narrative. In other texts, however, we find different shades of pro-religious arguments. Joseph Nedava, a historian and friend of his, writes that this "rebel" and "iconoclast" promoted a revival of what he saw as the core values of Jewish ethics.[19] God is seen as force of mutuality created by individuals. The concept of deity – conceptualised as a vision of the *I* (*Ikh*) – was expressed by constant social and cultural evolution. The process towards individualism and eventually to collective "inter-individualism", as Gordin called the future state of society, entailed a synthesis between individuality and mutuality.[20] But

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[17] Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* 178.

[18] Gordin 1940: 31, 55.

[19] Nedava 1974: 74.

[20] A friend of Gordin's, P. Gdalya, published an anthology of anarchist thinkers, suggesting an entire anarchist tradition set in motion and developed by certain philosophers, eventually coming to fruition with Gordin's concept of "inter-individualism" (P. Gdalya 1963). The book is a collection of biographies starting with William Godwin, followed by Pierre J. Proudhon, Élisée Reclus, Domela Nieuwenhuis, Johann Most, Errico Malatesta, Jean Grave, Sébastien Faure, Francisco Ferrer y

religion and the Jewish tradition were not merely a pool from which Gordin took allegories and moral lessons in order to transform them into a revolutionary programme. Religion, he wrote, must be understood in sociological and psychological terms: The religious feeling creates social bonds and changes them. It spans the abyss separating socialism and individualism and creates "inter-individualism."[21] In this respect religious ideas *become* real as soon as adherents believe and *make* them real.

Gordin's concept of God shifts from antireligious and anticlerical barbs hurled against a supreme being to instrumental interpretations of God as the foundation for a higher rationality and ethics to a phenomenological interpretation comparable to Rudolf Otto's notion of a supernatural *Sensus Numinis*. The religious feeling and striving for justice in Gordin's words can only be *felt* by a Jewish believer.[22] Occasionally Gordin draws on esoteric images such as the ingestion of light[23] to describe the purification of body and soul as a way of coming closer to deity and to the future state of society. These shifting concepts reveal the difficulty of locating Gordin's ideas in a continuum ranging between Orthodoxy and free thought.

Accordingly, in his writings on religion, Gordin both shares *and* subverts the modern notion of religion as an entity essentially separate from power and politics.[24] On one side Judaism is idealized as a non-political entity, with a proud history of a diasporic, self-governed, stateless society. Judaism or rather Jewishness

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Guardia, and Abba Gordin. Gordin himself wrote a preface, thanking the aid of *Ashuakh*, a cooperative publishing house in Tel Aviv.

[21] Gordin 1938: 103. In this respect Gordin followed principles of idealism, which argued that ideas formed reality. Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner were heavily attacked as 'German idealists' by Karl Marx in *The German Ideology* (*Die Deutsche Ideologie*, 1846).

[22] Judaism evokes a prophetic feeling of justice, which can be directed against the depravity of capitalism, militarism and imperialism (Gordin 1940: 10). For an approach to Gordin's Yiddish writings by the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, see Türk 2014, ch. 2.

[23] Gordin 1938: 291.

[24] See the essays in Fitzgerald 2007 for an investigation into the dichotomy of religion and power as distinct and separate alternatives, as "two essentialized domains, one concerned with power and public order, the other the private inner world of prayer" (ibid.: 2).

(*Yidishkayt*) must be seen an exception to the general rule, as an ethical entity, to which secular or political institutions are extraneous.[25] In this respect, Gordin, as an anarchist who despises statist and militarist societies, shares or rather hypostasizes the notion of religion as entity separate from politics. On the other side, the author subverts this notion of religion and its separation from politics and official affairs. He claims that the privatized notion of 'religion' is foreign to Judaism. The synagogue has always been a social and secular ("worldly," *veltlekh*) institution, next to being the house of prayer it served as club, library, lecture hall, guest house and playground for children. Most parts of the Talmud are worldly jurisprudence connected to holy texts, which are themselves worldly.[26] Here, as in antireligious lines of argumentation, the ideological and apologetical function of the dichotomy of religion and politics is obvious.

While Nedava and the Israeli historian Moyshe Goncharok give rich descriptions of Gordin's character, a systematic history of his (anti-)political, religious and anarchist thinking is still a task to be fulfilled.[27] Gordin went through a course of education shared by many Russian-Jewish intellectuals of his time. Along with his brother he attended the traditional primary school, learned Talmud, autodidactically learned Russian, and secretly acquired Russian progressive and revolutionary writings.[28] After abetting a jailbreak in 1905, Gordin was arrested but was released shortly thereafter. In September 1911, the first and only issue of an anarchist educationalist paper, *Der Yunger Yid* [*The Young Jew*], edited by the brothers Gordin, was published.[29]

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[25] Gordin 1940: 21 f.

[26] Ibid.: 250 f.

[27] Nedava 1974; Goncharok 2002.

[28] Gordin 1958: 12. Zeev (Zalman) "Wolf" Gordin tended to Marxism-Zionism (*Poale Tsion*) during the time of the Russian revolution in 1917. Both brothers were influential among industrial workers and sailors in Russian cities. Wolf Gordin underwent remarkable personal transformations: after leading the St. Petersburg branch of the Anarchist Federation, he turned to the Bolsheviki, then broke away from Lenin after a while, fled to the United States and eventually became a Protestant missionary (Avrich 1967: 237; Nedava 1974: 75).

[29] The paper was subtitled "Monthly newspaper for pedagogy, social life, philosophy, and the spreading of anarchism". In Vilnius, just as in

Both authors supported what they called Pan-Anarchism.[30] Initially, Abba Gordin published political and educational pamphlets in Russian and became a prominent figure in the Moscow Anarchist Federation in 1916. He visited Nestor Makhno together with Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman after the civil war in 1917.[31] Makhno seems to have distanced himself from Gordin, characterizing him and other members of the Federation as "men of books rather than deeds" who "seemed mesmerised by their own words and resolutions and devoid of the will to fight for their ideals".[32] On 6 February 1926, Gordin was forced to flee via Siberia to the United States, where he then published mainly Yiddish works which he had begun in Russia.[33]

A Yiddish anarchist counterpublic space

The debate in which Gordin played such a central role took place among Yiddish-speaking intellectuals who did not in every case refer to themselves as anarchists, but who, in writing for

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Białystok, existed a set of printing letters for the Russian-anarchist paper *Anarkhiya*, which was edited by someone under the pseudonym "Angel". The set of letters for both papers was destroyed by Tsarist police and thugs (Nedava 1974: 77; Goncharok 1997: 9).

30 In A. L. and V. L. Gordin: *Manifest pananarkhistov*, Moscow 1918 and in Br. Gordiny: *Nichego ne zabyli i nichemu ne nauchilis*, in: *Anarkhist*, 22.10.1917, 1 f. (transl. into English in Avrich 1973: 49–52, 55) the brothers described pan-anarchism as a comprehensive program directed against five primary forms of oppression. Five ideals were posited: 1.) the political ideal of society's liberation from government, 2.) the economic ideal of the workers' liberation from private property, 3.) the pedagogical ideal of children's liberation from authoritarian education (which they called "pedism"), 4.) the anticolonial ideal of the liberation of all nations from empires ("national-cosmopolitanism"), and 5.) the feminist ideal of women's liberation from misogyny and domestic domination (ibid.: 49).

31 Goncharok 1997: 12–14; LNYL: 139 f.

32 Avrich 1967: 211.

33 The details given on the year of Gordin's emigration vary: Joseph Nedava refers to 1924 (1974: 73), LNYL however indicates 1926. Gordin was to be sent to the Manchurian border according to an order of the director of Cheka Felix E. Dzerzhinsky, but H. Kropsoy pled for Gordin and he could flee from Russia (Goncharok 1997: 13). Nevertheless, Gordin started writing *Gruntprintsipn fun Idishkayt* in Shanghai in 1927 (1938: ii).

Fraye Arbeter Shtime, an organ that considered itself exclusively anarchist, thereby situated their arguments within an anarchist counterpublic space, demonstrating an "openness to radical ideas" typical of Yiddish socialist circles.[34] Just as the newspaper was open not only to self-proclaimed anarchists but also to socialists, Marxists, Labour Zionists, and literary critics and Yiddish educational reformers of various stripes, so the Jewish anarchists themselves did not always define themselves as "anarchist", but rather shifted between socialist and libertarian identifications according to context. With this openness *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* played a crucial part not only for anarchists, but also for Jewish workers in North America. It constituted one of the few institutionalised forms of Jewish anarchism – the press, fraternal societies (*faraynen*), modern schools and cooperatives – and concurrently fulfilled a social function: newspapers and societies were focal points for immigrants, providing the space to elaborate Jewish self-perceptions. The paper was a highly productive part of the "Yiddishist" culture movement; it was the most long-lived Yiddish anarchist periodical and along with the daily *Forverts*, one of the most long-lived Yiddish papers per se.[35]

It cannot be underestimated how dependably *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* served as a bridge between emerging and established Yiddish writers; along with the London *Arbeter Fraynd* and *Zsherminal,* it played an important role in establishing Yiddish literature by the end of the 19th and in the first decades of the 20th century. The prolific translation work of Yankev A. Merison (a.k.a.

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[34] Michels 2005: 103. Kathy Ferguson develops the concept of the "anarchist counterpublic" in the context of an analysis of Emma Goldman's militant career; while this is never simply a universal "public space", it is a space within which anarchists "rubbed shoulders with [those of] other political dispositions, inciting conversations among radicals and liberals over shared agendas such as freedom of speech or access to birth control", extending beyond the intimate circle of "friends, acquaintances, and identifiable [anarchist] groups [. . .] into the realm of strangers" (2010: 197).

[35] Cohen 1945: 430–43, 431; Zimmer 2015: Ch. 1, pp. 32–37. "The *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* played a vital role in the Jewish labor movement in America; and throughout its long life it maintained a high literary standard, featuring some of the finest writers and poets in the history of Yiddish radical journalism" (Avrich 1988: 184).

Jacob Maryson)[36] was published alongside that of fine Yiddish writers, even if they did not consider themselves anarchist. This inclusiveness was felt as a strong connection among Yiddish anarchists. Yoysef Kahan (a.k.a. Joseph J. Cohen), an administrator of the paper, spoke of their habit of referring to themselves as *FASh mishpokhe* (the "*FASh* family") at several occasions. The term was used to describe friendship and mutual respect.[37]

Not in spite of but because of this mutuality, the tensions and antinomies of anarchism laid the foundation of the debate we

[36] Merison (1866–1941) was a Yiddish and Hebrew philologist, editor of *Varhayt* ("Truth"), *Di fraye gezelshaft* ("The Free Society"), *Undzer kind* ("Our Child" – a pedagogic journal published by *Kultur lige*). He also wrote for *Arbeter fraynd* ("The Worker's Friend"), *Ovnt tsaytung* ("The Evening Times") and *Tsukunft* ("The Future"), drew up the controversial brochure *Anarkhizm un politishe virklekhkayt* ("Anarchism and Political Reality"; New York 1906), in which he argued pro participation in elections. Others like Rudolf Rocker and Shoel Yanovski strongly opposed this (Goncharok 1997: 11). Furthermore, Merison translated C. Darwin, K. Marx, H. Spencer, M. Stirner, E. Malatesta, P. Kropotkin, J. S. Mill, H. Ibsen and J. A. Thompson, published own articles on philosophy, sociology, physiology and pedagogy, and thus enriched vocabulary and style of the Yiddish language. He was founding member of the *Kropotkin literatur gezelshaft* ("Kropotkin Literary Society") in 1913 (ibid.). This cooperative publishing house printed socialist and anarchist masterpieces in Yiddish until 1930.

[37] Kahan 1945: 430. Kahan named members of the editorial board (among others D. Izakovits, B. Aksler, Dr. Globus, Dr. Dubovski, A. Mints, Sh. Farber, L. Finkelshtayn, Dr. Michael Cohn, Hirsh Rayf), contributors from cooperative circles (among others Dr. Y. A. Merison, Vm. Natanson, Dr. Herman Frank, Abba Gordin, Gr. Raiva, S. Retap, S. Deyvidson, Vm. Shulman, A. Frumkin, R. Lazarson), from non-cooperative circles (among others A. Almi, A. Bukshteyn, B. J. Bialostotski, I. Borodolin, B. Glazman, I. B. Goldshteyn, I. Hurvits, Dr. Zeligman, M. I. Kheymovits, Daniel Tsharni, Leybush Lehrer, Khayim Liberman, Yankev Milkh, L. Malakh, Nakhmen Mayzel, Rubn Fink, Alter Epshteyn, A. M. Fuks, Oskar Kartazshinski, I. Kornhendler, L. Krishtal, Melekh Ravitsh, I. Rapoport, B. Rivkin, Dr. Yankev Shatski), from abroad (Rudolph Rocker, M. Korn, Dr. Max Nettlau, Dr. I. Rubin, Dr. I. N. Shtaynberg, Alexander Berkman, Voline [Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum], Vm. Tsukerman) and at festive occasions Yoysef Opatoshu, Ben-Tsien Goldberg, Aaron Glants-Leyeles, Dr. Khayim Zshitlovski, Halper Leyvik, Dr. A. Mukdoni, Shmuel Niger, Tsivion, Dr. Koralnik, Hillel Rogof, Avrom Rayzen. Cartoonists and poets like Rokhl Okrent, Bimko, Deyksel, D. Gisnet, Yudkof, Tsinkin were innumerable (ibid.: 431; first names written out according to the source).

will describe below. It should not be surprising that religion was not in every case part of the anarchists' prizing of differences.[38] To illustrate the range of ideas that are to be taken into account when speaking of antireligiosity, we will examine antireligious identifications by six authors. The second part of this essay addresses at least eight identifications, whom the antireligious derisively referred to as "religiously inspired souls" (*di religyez geshtimte*),[39] "traditionalists" (*pro-traditsyonistn*),[40] "seekers after God" (*got-zukher*),[41] the "Jewish-only philosophers" (*di nor-yidishe filozofn*),[42] "leaders of the religious-ethical-socialist circles [with] their empty phrases",[43] "part-time returnees to tradition" (*di konyunktur bal-tshuves*)[44] rushing "back into the ghetto",[45] or "pious" (*frumakes*),[46] "reactionaries",[47] and "hypocrites".[48] Such phrases defined the ideal Epicurean freethinker by contrast with these supposedly traitorous backsliders. It will be interesting to note to what extent religious anarchists[49] applied different argumentative strategies in response to their opponents, and which explanatory demands were met in each case. Later, we will remark

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[38] "Anarchism, for all its international pretensions, for all its faith in the unity of mankind, has always been divided into national and ethnic groups. [. . .] Nor should this be surprising. For anarchists, cherishing diversity against standardization and conformity, have always prized the differences among peoples – cultural, linguistic, historical – quite as much as their common bonds" (Avrich 1988: 176).

[39] Sh. Rabinovitsh: *FASh* 16.09.38, p. 5.

[40] A. Gelberg, in: *FASh* 23.6.39, p. 3.

[41] V. Nayman: *FASh* 29.07.38, p. 3; Sh. Rabinovitsh: *FASh* 16.09.38, p. 5.

[42] Sh. Rabinovitsh: *FASh* 16.09.38, p. 5. Here, Rabinovitsh addresses Shmuel Niger, Abba Gordin, Mordechai M. Kaplan, Shlomo Bager, Kalmen Vaytman, Itskhak Unterman, drawing an analogy to the English philosopher George Berkeley (born 1685), a proponent of 'subjective idealism' and immaterialism ('to be is to be perceived').

[43] V. Nayman: *FASh* 29.07.38, p. 3.

[44] Sh. Levin, in: *FASh* 28.3.41, p. 5.

[45] V. Nayman: *FASh* 29.07.38, p. 3.

[46] T. Eyges, in: *FASh* 21.3.41, p. 3. The suffix *-akes* is attached to *frum* (pious) and adds a strong derogatory sense.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] The term is not used as self-identification. It is a provisional term applied to reduce complexity.

on the role that religious anarchists played for their communities and on the assumptions made by observers questioning the compatibility of religion and anarchism.

Varieties of antireligious polemics

The antireligious lines of reasoning present in these debates attack both religion and nationalism from a universalist point of view. However, the critique sharply distinguishes religion from ethnicity and conceptualizes religion as a system of private thought only. Public, social thought with bearing on the world of practice – e.g., philosophical, ethical, or legal teachings – is thus also to be rigorously set apart from religion; religious practice is of interest merely in its (negative) effect on the human educated mind. Religion is seen as detrimental to the world of politics properly conceived, since it is organized and advanced by reactionary forces in history. These arguments are unique in applying Feuerbachian terminology and clearly separating religion from ethnicity in the frame of Jewish traditions.

Such lines of reasoning can be found in the Marxist position brought forward by V. Nayman,[50] who equated religion with irrationality and superstition. Nayman contrasted religion to science, declaring that the call to return to religion on the part of "religio-ethical-socialists" was a call to return to "the ghetto". Accordingly he saw religion as narrow-mindedness, whereas a departure from Jewish and religious education meant opening up people's minds. Here, a universalistic concept of socialism close to Marxism can be detected, one that depreciates Jewish religious and ethnic particularity, which was equated with the backwardness of the ghetto.[51] Nayman supported secular, socialist and

[50] V. Nayman: *FASh* 29.07.38, p. 3. Nayman, whose first name, always abbreviated, has yet to be identified, used "Marxism and the sciences" as synonyms, thus placing himself on the terrain of scientific socialism.

[51] Marx's concept of religion was ambivalent and thus allowed numerous interpretations. It firstly was directed – according to the prevalent anti-Semitic *Zeitgeist* – against Jews, equating a Jewish "*worldly religion*" ("weltlicher Kultus") with "*huckstering*" ("Schacher") and self-interest ("Zur Judenfrage" 372; "On the Jewish Question" 170). It secondly treated both Jewish and gentile religion as equally false. The critique was directed

especially non-Jewish education. He argued against those who held, with Almi,[52] that blind trust in science was to blame for Nazism and the persecution of the Jews. Instead, science was to ease people's lives.

Nayman attacked the concept of Jewish chosenness and compared it to the anti-Semitic perception of Jews as a separate group. Instead of locking themselves behind the walls of a ghetto,[53] the Jewish people should act in concert with the rest of humanity in the face of the crisis of capitalism. The author called for solidarity and a unified struggle for true socialism in which every human being might "shine like a brooch's precious stone", emphasizing purportedly 'common' interests and the need for international struggle in the face of the capitalist crisis.

A similar strategy was applied by Thomas B. Eyges, who identified ethnic separatism as a problem, accusing "the religious" of demanding ethnic unity.[54] To Eyges, the call "back" to religion was not only chauvinistic, but also insolent, especially in "times

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against any kind of religion, as Marx wrote in the introduction to *Die Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*. Here, religion was the sigh of the oppressed ("Seufzer der bedrängten Kreatur"), a sedative creating dependence and addiction while deterring from protest and revolution (MEW, vol. 1: 378). In a different context Marx claimed that he was caricaturing economic relations, not persons (1867/1998: 100; see also Traverso 1994).

52 A. Almi (Eliye-Khayim ben Shlomo-Zalmen Sheps, a.k.a. Eli A. Almi, 1892–1963) – an agnostic writer, author of numerous books, satirist and humorist, folklorist, poet and polemicist – wrote for the Yiddish dailies *Forverts* and *Der Tog* as well as the satirical weekly *Groyser Kunds* and the literary journal *Tsukunft*, but contributed primarily to *FASh* from 1923 (LNYL vol. 1, 108–9).

53 One of the leading scholars on the history of Yiddish language, Max Weinreich, wrote: "[. . .] in Yiddish, until the days of Hitler, *geto* was a foreign-sounding learned word, never much in vogue." (1968: fn 10). Instead neutral terms like *di yidishe gas* or *di gas* (literally "the Jewish street", "among Jews") were in use. In this respect, Nayman employed a term that resonated with the assumptions of the Nazi extermination policy. It is worth noting that the mutual accusation of Nazism not only worked on the level of polemics to shame the opponent, but also was a widespread concern within 1930s and 1940s romanticism.

54 T. Eyges, in: *FASh* 21.3.41, p. 3. Tuvye Borekh (Thomas B.) Eyges (1875–1960) was author of *Beyond the horizon: The story of a radical emigrant*, Group Free Society, Boston 1944, and ran a weekly column in *FASh* ("Correspondences of a traveler"; LNYL, vol. 1, p. 57 f.). He also wrote

like ours", when humanity needed to help all the victims of war.[55] Here again, common and natural interests were held up for contrast with the supposed divisiveness of others. Eyges reminded his readers that most wars, persecution, and violence had been triggered by religious ideas. In this sense, religion was seen as cause of war, not a solution. Its influence on people's minds was especially dangerous when it penetrated into Yiddish secular schools. It was obvious to Eyges that religious zealots punished dissidence and called for sanctions against freethinkers and atheists.[56] In this case, the author no longer lamented the failure of transnational unity as a political strategy, as did Nayman, but identified religious ideas as the roots of violence, persecution and punishment. To Nayman's line of reasoning, which saw particularities as incompatible with universalism, Eyges added a second notion: religion exercised domination by imposing sanctions and acting on people's minds – a point to which religious anarchists were quick to respond.

Shlomo Rabinovitsh[57] and A. L. Goldman[58] both added a widespread anti-authoritarian critique of religion.[59] Rabinovitsh viewed religious *Yidishkayt* in political terms as a right-wing tendency within the radical community. God, for Rabinovitsh, represented an authoritarian king who creates and supervises the world, defines sin and good deeds (*mitsves*), and is petty-minded enough to arbitrarily reward or punish human behaviour. To this perception of God as authoritarian, Goldman added an attack on theodicy,

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for *Arbeter Fraynt*, the first London-based Yiddish anarchist paper, which often published anti-religious articles.

55 T. Eyges, op. cit.

56 Some letters in the 1904 debate likewise referred to a threat which pious Jews (e.g. by sabotaging meetings) posed to free thinking (Polland 2007: 395).

57 The anti-religious writer Shlomo Rabinovitsh has yet to be identified. He is not listed as an author for *FASh* in Kahan 1945: 430–43.

58 It is conceivable that this was Abraham Leib Goldman (1885–1970). Born in Szreńsk, Poland, Goldman taught in Canada (from 1907) and the US (from 1912 in New York City) at Yiddish secular schools, like *Sholem Aleichem shul* and *Arbeterring*. He developed a Yiddish stenographic alphabet (see Yivo archives, RG 632).

59 Sh. Rabinovitsh, in: *FASh* 16.09.38, p. 5.; A. L. Goldman, in: *FASh* 03.12.43, p. 3.

questioning the senseless, blind, even willing suffering of God's righteous followers. He asked why a supreme power would need to crush the smallest little worm, and the "bird with the worm"[60] too. Here Goldman referred to the biblical narrative of the binding of Isaac as illustrating the cruelty of this divine authority.[61]

Goldman took a stand against an agnostic argument made by A. Almi defending science against faith in order to establish yet another position within an anarchist critique of religion.[62] Almi had earlier raised a question concerning causality (*urzekhlekhkayt*) in creation which, in Almi's view, had not yet been resolved in the sciences. Almi held that the assumption that all natural processes could be explained by natural law would contradict the assumption that their creation was coincidence. Cosmic order could be interpreted as regularity – a plan by "someone" of whom one knows nothing. For Goldman, responding to Almi, this was merely *pilpl* ("splitting hairs" – the rabbinical method of a detailed discussion of Talmudic issues); these questions were to be solved by theology, not by science, thereby distinguishing between their domains of competence and jurisdiction. Since science and knowledge were in a state of constant progress, Goldman suggested, the answers to what could not yet be explained could be safely postponed. He drew examples from mass communication and transportation – a

[60] A. L. Goldman, in: *FASh* 03.12.43, p. 3.

[61] The classic example is Job's suffering in the Book of Job. It is noteworthy that antireligious critics focused on specific biblical stories that presented mythological accounts of the world, as in the Creation (Genesis 1,1–2), and/or an image of God as cruel or vengeful, as in the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22,1–19), the stories of Babel (Genesis 11,1–9) and the Deluge (Genesis 8,1–14). In these episodes, human beings are made to be fearful of God, which antireligious thought seized on as evidence that religion derived from fear and ignorance of the forces of nature. This point is addressed by religious anarchists. Abba Gordin is one of the few to answer the critique of ritual sacrifice, in stressing the outcome of the story of the binding of Isaac, which he read as a prevention of death (Gordin 1939/1919: 109 ff., esp. 118).

[62] Almi argued that the universe, including everybody and everything (*mit hak un pak*), was just a piece of human thought. For Goldman, however, it is not enough to "not know" about the existence of God. He was insulted by Almi's claim, that earlier generations (*an amokiker mentsh*) might have known "more" than present thinkers (A. Almi, in: *FASh* 05.11.43, p. 2). Goldman then accused Almi of idealizing the past.

century earlier, no one would have expected to be able to fly – to respond to Almi's emphasis on the uses of scientific knowledge for waging war and suppressing dissent.[63]

In this case, one could argue, it was indeed religion, understood as the blurring of scientific reason, and not only domination, that constituted the core of what was to be rejected. Almi's wish to supply answers to the unresolved question of causality in science – which was linked to an anarchist critique of knowledge (*Erkenntniskritik*) – certainly suggested that not only power, but also knowledge and its origins were crucial in the debate illustrated here. But Goldman circumvented the problem, deferring questions about the as-yet unknown to the future, and instead stressed the question of how God could allow human suffering – thereby returning to the problem of domination and human subordination under a divine will as the core argument against religion. The problem of why evil was prevalent in a world God created remained equally unresolved, and again, raised the spectre of God as an arbitrary authority.

The most vigorous argument against religion was presented by Shlomo Sayman, who attacked the authoritarian behaviour of "the new believers".[64] The author drew up two exclusive and opposed positions: one side represented by *rabonim* (rabbis), threatening and punishing human joy, who regarded the *Tanakh*,

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[63] The role of science in society was heavily debated not only by Goldman and Almi. Here one finds problems that were addressed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno touching the intertwined productive and destructive elements of democratization and mass culture in their *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, a social critique published in 1944. The hypothesis in the book is reminiscent of Almi's – that the scientific rationality produced by the Enlightenment was no great improvement over the "mythic fear" it sought to banish, and that a purely instrumental reason, stripped of ethical commitments, turned into barbarism (Horkheimer; Adorno 1967, 16, 30, and passim).

[64] Sh. Sayman: *FASh* 13.11.1942, p. 3. Sayman (1895–1970), a dentist and teacher of Hebrew, was very active in the Yiddish secular school movement; he was president of the *Sholem-Aleykhem Folk-institut* between 1940 and 1955. Apart from this, he was vice-president of the New York *Yidish-Etishe Gezelshaft*, established by Abba Gordin. He wrote for *FASh*, *Di Tsayt*, *Tog* and *Dos Idishe Folk* (LNYL, vol. 6, 413–15). Here, he took a very sharp stand against public displays of religious belief.

the Hebrew bible, as absolute knowledge, which was not to be modified or seen as a reflection on historical events. The other side was represented by the Epicurean press, that provided the privilege to print without acting out censorship, even if it would not agree with what was being printed. After emphasizing tolerance towards "true" pious Jews, Sayman distinguished between modest Jews, not acting out their beliefs in public, and modern returnees to tradition (*bal tshuves*). For him, the "true" religious Jews were harmless compared to the formerly radical, who now "paraded" in public, dressed in *arbe-kanfes* (traditional cloth). The "newly religious" hypocrite was even more traditional than the harmless, naively pious Jew, who in any case did not exhibit religiosity in public.[65]

Sayman went beyond the question of authority to question the visibility of religious behaviour in public space. First he complained that former radicals now "carry their money to Lubavitch".[66] How could writers contribute fine Yiddish pieces to the radical press, then pray three times a day, keep *kashres* (dietary laws), and observe the Sabbath? What is remarkable in this line of argument is Sayman's concern for literary production. He feared for what Pierre Bourdieu would call the radical community's cultural capital – "fine Yiddish writers" – as much as its monetary resources. Accordingly, he urged a separation between the "truly" pious and the "former radical", whom he asked not to shout too loudly and parade with false piety. Thus, in a unique manner, Sayman combined the rhetorical strategies used by most actors in this highly diverse field – blaming, accusations, and dramatization – in order to now silence religious actors and exclude them from the public space of the Epicurean press and thereby from its discourse. Sayman's distinction and exclusion from the press describes a zone

[65] Ibid. The *Forverts*-debates equally displayed rhetoric moves to define how a true believer should act: "a true religious idealist would stand up for his ideas and trust in God's protection" (Polland 2007: 385–7). Obviously Sayman here contradicted the claim that 'truly' religious Jews posed a threat to free-thinkers.

[66] Ibid. Chabad-Lubavitch is a collective term for adherents of Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), the son-in-law of Rabbi Yosef Yitschak Schneersohn (1880–1950), who migrated to the US in 1940 and built the movement to which Sayman referred.

of tolerance – a private sphere; but it is when belief is acted out in public that it becomes subject to criticism as "reactionary", "chauvinistic" and even "regressive".[67] Thus, a nonconformist was identified by Nayman against those who were merely to be tolerated (or yet to be persuaded).[68]

Religious anarchist subversions

Following Friedrich Schleiermacher's distinction between "religion" and "religiosity," Nathan Goldberg,[69] Abba Gordin,[70] Tsvi Kahan[71] and Khayim Ashli (Ashley)[72] held that *religion* was the institutionalised, "frozen" form of the religious feeling; it was a "fossilised" personal connection to higher meaning.[73] In this sense,

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Nonconformity and nonconformism are terms discussed by the graduate school *Religious Nonconformism and Cultural Dynamics* (2009–2014) at Leipzig University. The terms help to distinguish between what is open to question and what is not.

[69] N. Goldberg, in: *FASh* 15.01.43, p. 2. In his article "Social doctrine that turns 'humanity' into a religion" Goldberg addressed the rise of positivism as a religion. In addition to the debate illustrated here, the author contributed to the volume "History of the Jewish labor movement in the United States" cited earlier (N. Goldberg, in Tsherikover, op. cit.).

[70] A. Gordin, in: *FASh* 15.11.1940, p. 5.

[71] Ts. Kahan: *FASh* 4.11.38, p. 5. Kahan addressed Shlomo Rabinovitsh by referring in the title of his article to "Those Who Ask: What Good Is Religion?"

[72] Kh. Ashli, in: *FASh* 13.11.1942, p. 5. Khayim Ashli is one of the pseudonyms used by A. Almi, but it is unclear, why Almi wrote under different pseudonyms for *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*.

[73] Ibid. An analogy to the hidden energy and heat in coal allows us to conceptualise religion as a system of thought that might release an ancient revolutionary spirit. The motif could be taken from the *Zohar*, a Jewish mystic source (*Zohar* III, 70a). These characterizations of religious spirit also strongly parallel Gustav Landauer's "spiritual atheist" conception of dynamic *Geist* as existing in tension with the symbolic structures erected to contain it in history: "Wherever men have been, they were [. . .] held together by a common spirit, which is a natural and not extrinsically imposed compulsion [. . .]. But this natural compulsion of the unifying quality and common spirit, until now in known human history, has always needed external forms: religious symbols and cults, ideas of faith, prayer rituals or things of this sort. Therefore spirit is in the nations always connected with unspirit, and deep symbolic thinking with superstitious

religion reflected human longing for higher meaning – education, culture, and civilization. Religiosity was rooted in this striving, not in fear of God or nature.[74] Rather than regarding religiosity as entailing an abdication of choice, they reinterpreted it in ways that stressed the individual's responsibility. One of these reinterpretations connected science to an ethical belief system. The other redefined tradition in a highly modern, voluntaristic manner as a system of core values that were to be chosen by individuals.

Whereas the antireligious polemicists were sometimes concerned to isolate religion (Judaism) from secular ethnicity (the *Yidishkayt* of language, literature, and culture), the defenders of religion did not draw a clear distinction between religion as system of thought, Jewish traditions and ethnicity. Here, religion and the Jewish *folk* are often represented as intertwined categories of belonging. Religion can be defined as the source of spiritual meaning, philosophical and ethical teachings, art and literature and – most importantly – as way of living with both individual

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opinion. The warmth and love of the unifying spirit is overshadowed by the stiff coldness of dogma. Truth, arising from such depths that it can be expressed only in imagery, is replaced by the nonsense of literalness.This is followed by external organization. The church and the secular organizations of external coercion gain strength and grow continually worse: serfdom, feudalism, the various departments and authorities, the state. This leads to an eventual decline of spirit among and over the people, and of the immediacy that flows from the individuals and leads them to unity" (Landauer 1978: 32–33).

74 Ts. Kahan, op. cit. In Abba Gordin's writings we find a critique of what Max Weber described as the *routinization of charisma* by religious officials (Weber 1979: 246). Gordin intended to keep an original religious feeling and called to the prophets' revolutionary spirit. Respect and fear of yourself was fear of God. Idolatry was to not serve one's own interest (Gordin 1938: 65). Where Stirner posited a concept of the *Einzige* or Ego possessing its own 'truth' (Buber 2002: 96), Gordin described the *I* as the knowledge of the Wise (*medat harakhamim*, Gordin 1938: 65), a treasure-house (ibid.: 45), provided with a prophetic gift of sensitivity and presentiment (ibid.: 91). The priests (*kohanim*) ritualised, mechanised the service; the prophets rejected these externalizing doctrines and favoured a vivid, dynamic, ethically based unity: "ethos instead of rite; solidarity, equity [*yoysher*] and justice [*tsdoke*] instead of uniformity!" (ibid.: 277). To be a radical Jew meant to be a fighter for equity and justice and to follow the prophetic sense for justice (*yoysher-gefil*) (Gordin 1940: 248).

and social implications. In rare cases, Judaism is described as *folk* only by excluding religious and traditional contents.[75]

Herman Frank[76] contended that science would be inferior to tradition if it was without ethics, whereas ethics had its foundation in higher meaning – here linked to the Jewish religious tradition. The question of knowledge, progress and science[77] was a "psychological", "internal" and "humanistic" issue. In response to Goldman's antireligious argument, Frank enlisted Spinoza, David Hume and Immanuel Kant in order to shift the domain of competence and jurisdiction: not theology but philosophy had addressed the problem of causality and posited a rational concept of deity. Menakhem Boreysho[78] went further than Frank in embracing the Jewish religious tradition: he argued that religiosity provided

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[75] E.g. Yitskhak Finkelshtayn and Anatoly Gelberg (Türk 2014, ch. 4.3).

[76] H. Frank, in: *FASh* 3.12.1943, p. 5. Herman Frank was editor of *FASh* (1940–1952), author of the small brochure *Anarkho-sotsyalistishe ideyen un bavegungen bay yidn. Historishe un teoretishe aynfirung*, Paris/Tel Aviv 1951 (Anarchist-socialist ideas and movements among Jews. Historical and theoretical introduction) and editor of Shaul Yanowsky's *Ershte yorn fun yidishn frayhaytlekhn sotsyalizm*, New York 1948 (First Years of Jewish Libertarian Socialism). He became interested in the history of Hasidic Judaism and translated Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer to Yiddish. In this article of 1943 he appraised a book by the Marxist historian Raphael Mahler (*Haskole un Khsides in Galitsye*, 1942), which later was translated into English (*Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment. Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Eurene Orenstein et. al., Philadelphia 1985).

[77] One year before, Khayim Ashli had stated that scientists, even if starting from similar presuppositions, always came to different conclusions. Ashli was not specific, but might have referred to different interpretations of statistical data. It would not be contradictory if even Darwin visited a church, he concluded (Kh. Ashli, op. cit.).

[78] M. Boreysho, in: *FASh* 15.03.1940, p. 5. Boreysho (1888–1949) was a teacher at Yiddish secular schools (*Arbeterring*) and wrote for the communist *Frayhayt*, until it justified the 1929 anti-Jewish riots in Palestine. He also published in *Tog*, *Haynt*, *Tsayt*, *FASh* and *Literatur un Lebn*. Overlapping ideas can be found to the prevalent introspectivist art movement (*Inzikhistn*) in the city of New York. According to the poet Yankev/Jacob Glatshteyn, Boreysho's religious poetry was not seeking God in the "common" manner, but rather in metaphorical ways (LNYL, vol. 1: 249). Boreysho was not necessarily an anarchist. With regard to spirituality, he took a stance close to that of Abba Gordin.

meaning, stability and ethical values that instrumental rationality did not. This author expressed his valuing of subjectivity and individual perception by taking an esoteric position towards poetry, stressing conscience, meditation and the study of the inner self.[79] Love for humanity was, in the terms of the traditional ("old") Jews, love for *Shekinah* (the divine presence on earth).[80]

A. Almi, too, held that truth was a matter of faith: the only thing one knew was what one *believed* to be true.[81] In support of this proposition, Almi offered two lines of reasoning – one from principle and one of a personal nature. In the first place, human knowledge would always be limited; the origins of life remained a mystery. The possibility of coincidences was denied by scientists, who presupposed regularity in the laws of nature. Almi thereby took an agnostic stance in rebuttal of A. L. Goldman's argument that a belief in higher beings was superstitious. Secondly, while firmly proclaiming that he believed in God, and, he added, in a higher power and universal reason, in view of the dire circumstances of the present time, he voiced his disappointment in God.[82] For Almi, thus, the problem of human suffering did not necessarily lead to a blind or abject acceptance of God, as Goldman thought, but would rather lead to a dispute with God. Almi went on to question and reject the orthodox approach to

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[79] The 'internal' and 'psychological' seemed to be of high importance. One can find overlapping ideas with literary artists, *Inzikhistn* (Introspectivists), of the 1930s and 1940s. Knowledge was seen as an introspective process and a study of the inner self, e.g. by Shea Tenenboym. *Tanakh* formed part of world literature; it was intimate and lyrical, showed social conflict, depicted loving, suffering, patient or just human heroes (Sh. Tenenboym, in: *FASh* 8.12.44, p. 5). We find what Max Weber described as sanctification of everyday life and a glorification of the simple ways of living (Weber 2005: 413–471).

[80] M. Boreysho, op. cit.

[81] A. Almi, op. cit. As he later wrote: "All men have faith. There are no unbelievers. Even the atheist has faith. His faith, however, instead of being bound up with God, adheres to nature – which actually implies faith in an entity synonymous with that of God" (1947: 38).

[82] Almi makes the traditional confession of faith, starting with *ani maymen be'emune shleyme* ("I believe with a perfect faith"). Other authors, describing the atmosphere of the time, speak of *ani-maymens* (confessions of faith) and *bal-tshuve-shtimungen* (tendencies to return to God).

God's authority alike, wherein one could not believe that anything happened without His will. The contention was, if one believed so, one must concede that evil derived from God as well. Almi's response to human suffering was an individualistic interpretation of responsibility and belief: violence, just like domination, was enacted by individuals. Political authority arose from man, not from God.[83] Gangs and thugs persecuted Jews in those days. Against them, he argued that one may hold a *sider* (prayer book) in one hand and – being responsible for one's own defence – a gun in the other.[84] In this respect, Almi subverted the prevailing picture of a submissive believer, redefining it in order to legitimise religiosity, and in so doing, provided new grounds for anarchists to change their hostile stance towards religion.

Similarly, Shmuel Levin argued against both knee-jerk antireligiosity and thoughtless religious piety.[85] In his view, anarchists should not transplant Jewish orthodox exegesis of *Tanakh* into their own approach, and instead should treat the scripture as historical documents. The *Tanakh* and its rich translation into Yiddish by Yehoash[86] should be taught as literary work in Yiddish

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[83] It is worthy to note, that emancipation and secular education could be seen as *gzeyre* (anti-Jewish decree) by traditional Jews and Hasidim. The rejection of civil and bourgeois emancipation among Zaddikim ("just and pious men", usually leaders of Hasidic groups) like Israel Kosenitzer, Jakob Isaak Lubliner and their adherents, not only entailed the rejection of equal rights, but also of polonisation, military service, and secularization – meaning the loss of communities' relevance and the loss of religious knowledge (Dubnow 1922: 276 f.).

[84] This picture was one strategy to encounter prejudice by telling from a photography of an orthodox Jew and *litvak* (a Lithuanian Jew stereotyped as strictly rational Talmud student), who was well-read in worldly literature, holding not only a *sider* but also a weapon (A. Almi, in: *FASh* 11.10.40, p. 5).

[85] Sh. Levin, in: *FASh* 28.3.41, p. 5. See for the diametrically opposing view against an exegesis of *Tanakh* the example of Sh. Sayman, op. cit. (Haym) Shmuel Levin (1890–1959), who was in Berlin 1920–1934 and migrated to the US in 1936, wrote in New York for *Dos naye lebn*, *Di Tsukunft*, *Morgen-Zshurnal*, *Tog*, the communist *Ikuf* and *Hamer* and for *FASh*. His work was translated into Polish, German, English, French, Dutch and Hebrew (LNYL, vol. 5, 298–300).

[86] Sh. Levin, op. cit. Yehoash, a.k.a. Solomon Blumgarten (1870–1927), as a "Yiddishist," not only translated the Bible into Yiddish and co-authored

secular schools. Levin's argument for a different way of engaging with tradition is reminiscent of Hasidic motifs: he promoted enthusiasm for a belief that resisted institutional structure and demanded subjective, intuitive understanding of the feeling and "taste" of *Khumesh* (Torah).[87] Against the pious Jews, he suggested not taking the commandments literally; conversely, he advised radicals not to rush away from *Tanakh* too hastily. This act committed in the heat of the moment was not well considered and contradicted the true spirit of freethinking. Levin also addressed the classic anti-authoritarian critique of traditional learning in *kheyder* (religious elementary school), applying the same strategy as Almi: authority rose from human acts, not from God. Levin shifted the burden of authority and responsibility onto the teachers: these *melamdim* (religious instructors) simply had been lousy educators.[88]

Khayim Ashli similarly used the anarchist tactic of claiming the position of the true freethinker for oneself.[89] Ashli emphasised what had been established by Shmuel Levin to weigh up advantages and disadvantages of the Jewish tradition. Thus, in the spirit of what he considered true freethinking, he warned against turning antireligious ideology into a dogma, a new religion.[90] To make more careful distinctions, to select what was progressive and what

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a dictionary of Hebrew terms and expressions in Yiddish, but also was a poet and editor of *Tog*.

[87] Sh. Levin, op. cit.

[88] In fact, this view on *melamdim* and *kheyder* was a widespread topos among thinkers of East European enlightenment and Yiddish writers. The classic critique was coined by *maskilim* like Perets Smolenskin (1842–1885) and Judah Leib Gordon (1830–1892), who brought up the use of corporal punishment symbolised by the *kantshik* (a stick) and the tight curriculum. Mendele Moykher Sforim (Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh, 1835–1917) and Sholem Aleykhem (Sholem Naumovitsh Rabinovitsh, 1859–1916) – both classics of Yiddish literature – were equally promoters of modern education and wrote against the *kheyder*, a mode of education that had existed since 17th century.

[89] Kh. Ashli, op. cit.

[90] Similarly Shmuel Niger argued, a well-known literary critic, who claimed that so-called freethinking was only to break *shabes* (Shabbat) and *kashres* (the dietary laws) as pithy phrase and in a rather knee-jerk manner. Niger is quoted in V. Nayman, op. cit.

to discard – this was, he argued, what the ignorant (*ameratsim*) in "our radical swamp" had failed to do. Tradition was to be chosen and selectively changed.

A. Gelberg and Yankev Levin addressed the Yiddish secular schools' curriculum,[91] reconsidering the contents of the Jewish holidays and redefining them for educational purposes. *Peysekh* (Passover), *Khanike* (Hannukah) and *Purim* could be interpreted as celebrating a tradition of revolutionary liberation, as opposed to the New Year's observance, *Rosh Hashone*, and the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kiper*, which were religious "as seen from any perspective" and in their very essence.[92] They differentiated between different kinds of holidays, to keep some and redefine their content, and distance themselves from the contents of the others in order to remain within an anarchist logic. Holidays, especially *Shabes* (the Sabbath), were to be interpreted in social terms as days of rest from work.[93]

Still, those authors who called for a reinterpretation of tradition did not speak with one voice. For instance, Gelberg criticised so-called "traditionalists" (*pro-traditsyonistn*) like Abraham Golomb, arguing that while holidays were reinterpreted in *every* historical period, the constant fact in Jewish history was the national, so holidays were to be seen as national holidays. Therefore,

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[91] A. Gelberg, in: *FASh* 23.6.39, p. 3; Y. Levin, in: *FASh*, 17.01.41, p. 7. Tony Michels explained in detail, that one central point of the Yiddish schools was to give secular and socialist education. Still, this did not exclude to teach Hebrew and *Tanakh* (Michels 2005: ch. 4, esp. 207–210). Naftali (Anatol) Gelberg (1894–1958), a Bundist and advocate of Yiddish education, taught in Toronto and New York City at the Yiddish secular schools (*Arbeterring mitlshul* and *Arbeterring Perets-shuln*) and wrote for socialist, here anarchist, and also general-interest daily papers like *Keneder Adler* in Toronto (LNYL, vol. 2, 301–2).

[92] Y. Levin, op. cit. Yankev Leyb Levin (1884–1958), in St. Petersburg one of Simon Dubnov's students, was a Labor socialist (*Po'aley Tsien*), later territorialist, and pioneer for Yiddish socialist education in Warsaw and New York (Harlem). He wrote for *Tsukunft*, *Tog*, *Idisher Kemfer*, *FASh*, *Sotsyalistishe shtime*. It is interesting to note that Levin edited *Oyfn veg*, a series devoted to creating a codex (*Shulkhn-orekh*) for secularizing the Jewish tradition (LNYL, vol. 5, 276–8).

[93] Cf. recent Reform theologians' attempts to reimagine "Sabbath, sabbatical, and jubilee" together as linking traditions of social justice and ecological balance (Waskow 2000, 51).

he suggested adopting a pragmatic stance and – as Almi and Shmuel Levin had argued – contesting the religious "zealots'" (*shvitspeltsn*) monopoly over interpretation of the tradition.[94] What is noteworthy here is that "tradition" could be interpreted both in religious and national terms.

In short, Yiddish-speaking writers for *FASh* who defended religion did so on grounds emphasizing religious pluralism within the Jewish tradition, which entailed an individual's responsibility to choose among these different concepts in Judaism. To the individual belonged the competence and jurisdiction over any redefinition of religious concepts and practices. At the same time, a particularistic notion of anarchism was stressed – a "specific" and intrinsically Jewish contribution to radical ideas was valued. Judaism was not seen as identical to Orthodoxy. On the contrary, it was the antireligious anarchists who endorsed an orthodox concept of God in assuming that God enjoyed sole authority over human action, while "believing" anarchists like Almi broke away from this deterministic concept, stressing self-responsibility. Thus, we might say, religious anarchists in the Jewish community embraced an individualistic concept of responsibility, which had been shifted to a supernatural power by anti-religious anarchists.

Conclusion

Writing from the perspective of the early 1950s, just past the cataclysm that marks the period of our study, Herman Frank reflected that while "the initial stages of the movement in England and the United States" were indeed marked by "[t]he identification of Jewish Anarchism with atheism and anti-religious campaigns," that moment had gone: "With the passing of time [. . .] a more refined and profound approach to all kinds of problems concerning ethical and spiritual life became increasingly noticeable in the press and literature of the Jewish Anarchists, while the shallow and vulgar anti-religiousness of yesteryear rapidly declined and

[94] Ibid.

disappeared."[95] What were the consequences and implications of this transformation?

The debate illustrated here reflects the emergence of growing tendencies towards religiosity (*bal-tshuve shtimungen*) among Yiddish radicals during a time when Jewish anarchism was in decline. Joseph J. Cohen described the 1920s and 1930s as an ideologically "defensive" phase of the Yiddish anarchist movement, as anarchists were driven back by the influential communist and Zionist movements and by their own factionalism, uncertainty, and even disillusionment.[96] Plus, the loss of a Yiddish reading radical audience may be attributed to immigration restriction laws in the 1920s and to the devastating defeat of anarchism in the Spanish Civil War.[97] Taking these ideological and historical changes into account, we observe in the 1930s what Rogers Brubaker described as subsiding "groupness".[98] These processes explain the subcultural dynamics perceived on both sides of the debate: antireligious actors and the "traditionalists" themselves described changes within the radical community. Religious Jewish anarchists had to locate themselves in relation to the prevailing atheist identifications of other Jewish anarchists. They sought to modulate the strong critique of religious and educational institutions derived from the East European Jewish Enlightenment. Religion

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[95] Frank 1954: 284–5.

[96] Cohen 1945: 528–9. Moyshe Goncharok explains the decline of Yiddish anarchism as a result of the disappearance of the experts and enthusiasts of Yiddish literature, of fiery speeches and Jewish workers' pride (1997: 7).

[97] Zimmer 2015: 172–5; 196–205; 210–11.

[98] In describing the processes that shape identities, Brubaker suggests going beyond the level of mutual attributions and accusations to describe the categories being applied for perceiving the self and others. Categories can be assumed, claimed, circumvented, contested, subverted or simply ignored, and through this process of negotiation, identities are mutually allocated. Following Brubaker, we can analyse the "tipping and cascade mechanisms" of commonality, connectedness and "groupness" ("Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl" – a term coined by Max Weber), avoiding imagining groups as monolithic units: "[S]ensitivity to the variable and contingent, waxing and waning nature of groupness [. . .] can focus our analytical attention and policy interventions on the processes through which groupness tends to develop and crystallise, and those through which it may subside" (Brubaker 2004: 19).

as a group-building category was embraced when activists and editors were searching for a wider audience, as was the case during the *Forverts* in the early years of the 20th century. We might also attribute the debates in *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* 30 to 40 years later to this search for a broader meaning of anarchism. Whereas earlier, radicals in groups such as the *Arbeterring* had pleaded for tolerance towards "Yom Kippur Jews" or "three-day-a year-Jews,"[99] however, now we find writers actively incorporating religion into a system of freethinking ideas.

Some similar argumentative strategies can be found on both sides of the debate in *FASh*. Nayman argued that anarchists should not react to Marxism in a merely reflexive manner, since such ideological prejudice ran contrary to the spirit of true freethinking. In turn, Khayim Ashli held that freethinking itself had been reduced to a dogma, an antireligious religion and fanatical belief system. These parallel rhetorical moves allow us to see, behind the antireligious/religious dichotomy, a shared pattern of anarchist identifications. Both antireligious and religious actors rejected "false" piety – assuring their self-location within the anarchist movement. Since it was the differentiation by Friedrich Schleiermacher between religion and religiosity that was referred to, one may conclude that spiritual traditions were closer to anarchism than others, such as institutionalised religions and the "fossilised" religious feeling. Abba Gordin strongly criticized the processes of institutionalization through routinization of the charismatic prophets' originally radical meanings.

Self-identifications as Jewish anarchists *and* as traditionalists required thorough legitimation, as evidenced by their various argumentative strategies. The antireligious harked "back" to what they perceived as a radical tradition, reminding their opponents of their "radical heritage" and a shared history of persecution of Epicurean thinkers by religious "sects". Those writers used a strategy that can be described as a listing of names, reminiscent of a "Wanted" poster, in order to circle the problem, a new development being discussed. By calling out "former" radicals and describing their new attitude towards Jewish religion, they

[99] Polland 2007: 392.

positioned themselves as defenders of the classic anarchist ideals. This is not a strategy used by religious anarchists (so-called *pro-traditsyonistn*), who usually wrote in response to a specific author, article, or topic.

Religious anarchists generally preferred to modify the terms of the debate, e.g., by distinguishing between "religion" and "religiosity" or between the concept of God as a supernatural authority and a more individualistic conception. Almi addressed the problem of human suffering by expressing his deep disappointment in God for the present-day destruction of the world, thereby relating his own religious attitude to that of Job's wife, who persuaded Job to argue with God. In this respect, religious anarchists insisted on a broader range of options for conceptualizing and talking about religion – like valuing the work of the skilful storyteller Yehoash – instead of abandoning everything seemingly connected to Judaism.

In this period, therefore, rejection of religion was no longer a *sine qua non* of Jewish anarchism. Identifications emerged that referred to a particularistic and specifically Jewish tradition, connecting anarchist ethics to a higher meaning. Instead, *domination* was unacceptable to anarchism, not only with regard to religion and spirituality. In this way, the rejection of domination came to characterise anarchism more specifically than its rejection of religion, even if the antireligious stance remained widespread. This rejection of arbitrariness, petty-mindedness and cruelty was a topos shared by all participants in the debate. Antireligious authors opposed authoritarian systems that had no legitimacy apart from the force of tradition and ideologies in which the individual was subjugated. Religious anarchists put stronger emphasis on individual responsibility in religious and educational matters. High esteem for science was prevalent and equally valued, although its compatibility with ethics was disputed. Religious anarchists could also, at need, draw support from the ideas of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ludwig Feuerbach, George Berkeley and Herbert Spencer, questioning the origins and limitations of human understanding and reason, placing science on the same epistemological level as philosophy. One could add, that religious anarchists favoured a holistic approach to science in addressing the unresolved

question of causalities raised by A. Almi. Herman Frank shifted the area of competence and jurisdiction to philosophy, which in his view combined theology and science. Antireligious authors, on the other hand, exhibited a more liberal tendency to separate the domains of theology and science after the manner of A. L. Goldman or (even more so) Sh. Sayman. In their appeal to scientific rationality as the sole means of salvation from reactionary influence, these polemics display the ideological function of the dichotomy of religion and 'the secular' or 'politics':

> Religion did not emerge alone, but in conjunction with other categories, one of them being "the secular" (non-religion). The conceptualization of "religion" and "religions" in the modern sense of private faith, or the related sense of a personal adherence to a soteriological doctrine of God, was needed for the representation of the world as a secular, neutral, factual, comprehensively quantifiable realm whose natural laws can be discovered by scientific rationality, and whose central human activity is a distinct "non-religious" sphere or domain called "politics" or "political economy".[100]

Scientific rationality was to be the essence of the public sphere, the political, which was to be cleansed of religious ideas. Perhaps the antireligious acted as modernizers, which is the ideological function mentioned in Fitzgerald's introduction. In this way, they may have reproduced aspects of the ideology of "political modernity," along with its foundational distinctions between private faith and public reason, privileging the latter as the sphere of universal truth and validity.[101]

Through these debates among Jewish radicals, religious anarchists helped to sharpen and specify the concept of domination – and, thereby, that of anarchism. Their opponents might argue that their mission was to dilute the radical impetus of anarchism. One may consider religious anarchists as important actors for exploring the affinities between anarchism and pious Jewish movements such as Hasidism. Of course, their opponents resisted this development, as exemplified by Sayman's furious polemic. Nevertheless,

[100] Fitzgerald 2007: 6.
[101] Jun 2012: 43–46.

the concept of anarchism that emerges from these dialogues is broad enough that it may be represented even by religious actors, forcing historical research to re-examine its own presuppositions.

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To Each According to their Needs: Anarchist Praxis as a Resource for Byzantine Theological Ethics

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I argue that anarchist ideas for organising human communities could be a useful practical resource for Christian ethics. I demonstrate this firstly by introducing the main theological ideas underlying Maximus the Confessor's ethics, a theologian respected and important in a number of Christian denominations. I compare practical similarities in the way in which 'love' and 'well-being' are interpreted as the telos of Maximus and Peter Kropotkin's ethics respectively. I further highlight these similarities by demonstrating them in action when it comes attitudes towards property. I consequently suggest that there are enough similarities in practical aims, for Kropotkin's ideas for human organising to be useful to Christian ethicists.

Introduction

There has always been a radical message in Christianity that undermines the importance of worldly power and wealth.[1] Reception of this message has varied hugely across the history and geography of the church, but it has by no means been the case that the full extent of its call for egalitarianism, love, inclusivity, and communal distribution of wealth has always remained a sidelined voice in the church. In this chapter, I explore the theology of one

[1] E.g. Matt 5:1–12; Matt 19:16–24; Matt 25:34–46; Mark 12:30–31; Acts 2:42–47

How to cite this book chapter:
Brown Dewhurst, E. 2018. To Each According to their Needs: Anarchist Praxis as a Resource for Byzantine Theological Ethics. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 58–93. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.c.
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of the greatest theologians of the early Church,[2] a Byzantine monk called Maximus the Confessor. Whilst in his lifetime he was a victim of persecution, his theology is now upheld as orthodox in Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican churches. This makes him a figure of prime importance when it comes to highlighting the political and ethical outworking of an interdenominational theology for the Christian tradition.

In this chapter I present some of the foundational ideas in Maximus' theology, looking at the philosophy and metaphysics that he draws out of scripture, and demonstrate why this results in what, by today's standards, we would consider a radical ethics. I suggest that a useful way to try and formalise an ethical response to Maximus' theology would be to draw on anarchist literature, especially the ideas of Peter Kropotkin. Whilst it is clear that Kropotkin does not share the same metaphysical commitments as Maximus (or any Christian theologian), the philosophical ideas grounding Kropotkin's ethical response, have enough similarity that a Christian can (and I argue, *should*) look to practical anarchist principles like Kropotkin's as a possible means of living out their Christian ethics. If there is agreement between Christians that Maximus is an important theologian for us today, and that his thought has the full radical implications I demonstrate, then it should also follow that at the very least, Kropotkin's ideas for anarchist living ought to be considered as a mode of living worth pursuing.

This chapter has three parts to it. In the first, I give a short overview defining terminology and introducing the lives and contexts of Maximus and Kropotkin. In the second section I lay out the key theological ideas important for understanding Maximus' ethics. In the third section, I justify a similarity that I believe exists between Kropotkin and Maximus in their understanding of human well-being and how we ought to act. As a result of this similarity, I then conclude that Kropotkin's practical suggestions for how to live in a stateless society ought to be considered as a vital direction in which practical Christian ethics might be taken.

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[2] cf. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor.* (London: Routledge, 1996), i.

1. Who is Maximus and What is Anarchism?

Maximus the Confessor was born in about 580AD and died in 662AD. He lived under the rule of the Byzantine Empire, the power ruling most of the Mediterranean and North Africa between 330–1204AD. Maximus, like all theologians who lived prior to 1054AD, lived before the East-West Schism in the church, making his work important within many Christian traditions. In academic circles, due to poor transmission of early Greek works to Western Europe during the medieval period and a variety of other factors, Byzantine theologians like Maximus have had relatively little attention. In the last hundred years,[3] and especially the last fifty years, this has changed, and the field of Maximus studies is now a rapidly growing area. This attention has inevitably also given rise to an interest in the ethical outworking of Maximus thought, *i.e.* how we should live as a result of this theology.[4] I mention below a few of the directions in which Maximian ethical scholarship

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[3] H. Von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor.* Daley, B. (trans.) (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988 (first ed. 1946)), 23.

[4] E.g. R. Bordeianu, 'Maximus and Ecology: The Relevance of Maximus the Confessor's Theology of Creation for the Present Ecological Crisis'. *The Downside Review* 127 (2009): 103–126; D. Munteanu, 'Cosmic Liturgy: The Theological Dignity of Creation as a Basis of an Orthodox Ecotheology'. *International Journal of Public Theology.* 4, 3 (2010): 332–44.; E. Theokritoff, *Living in God's Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology.* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 50–90; C. Brenna, 'Orthodox Cosmology and Modern Rights Theories'. NY, 20–22.09.2012 (Conference paper delivered to the OTSA 2012 Annual Meeting, available on request). T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 225–30; T. Grdzelidze, 'Creation and Ecology: How Does the Orthodox Church Respond to Ecological Problems?' *The Ecumenical Review.* 54, 3 (2002): 211–218; G. Popa, 'Theology and Ecology: Hermeneutical Insights for Christian Eco-Theology'. *Journal for Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Science.* 2 (2008): 97–128; E. Zelensky, 'Nature as Living Icon: Ecological Ethos of Eastern Orthodoxy'. Religions: Vol. Environment, 11 (2012): 167–179; J. Chryssavgis & B. Foltz (eds.) *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature and Creation.,* Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2013.

is being taken. First, however, it is worth saying a bit about who Maximus was.

Maximus grew up either in Constantinople with ties to the civil service and the imperial court, or, depending on what sources we use, in Palestine to a relatively poor family where he had strong ties to the Palestinian monastic movement.[5] At some point, possibly around 626,[6] he abandoned all this and went off to become a monk in a monastery in North Africa. He was heavily influenced by a famous theologian and monk, Sophronius, whose lead Maximus would eventually follow in taking a stand in Empire-wide theological controversies. Maximus appears to have remained a monk his whole life, never being made a priest or bishop. Despite this, lay, monastic, and clerical figures from all over the empire wrote letters to him asking for his philosophical, theological, and spiritual advice on various matters. In Maximus' later life he famously wrote on the two wills of Christ, taking a theological stand during a time when political unity rather than theological orthodoxy was foremost on the imperial agenda.[7] He was tried for heresy and treason and eventually his right hand and tongue were cut off (these being the tools by which he spread his heresy), and he was exiled to what is now modern day Georgia, where he died later that year on 13th August 662.[8] His theology on the two wills later

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[5] Andrew Louth argues that Maximus' familiarity with court and imperial proceedings along with his extensive education suggest that it is more likely that Maximus was born and raised in Constantinople (Louth, *Maximus*, 5). Along with Brock's earlier observation that Palestine would place Maximus close to his friend Sophronius, (see Louth, *Maximus*, 6–7), Pauline Allen argues that Maximus' theology retains a distinctly Palestinian ascetic flavour such as his response to Origenism and awareness of Neoplatonism that would be made sense of if Maximus was Palestinian born. cf. P. Allen, "The Life and Times of Maximus the Confessor", *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor.* P. Allen & B. Neil (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9–14. The controversy over Maximus' early life comes from two competing biographies of his life – an earlier Syriac one that hates him and a later Greek life that extols him.

[6] All dates from the tentative timeline reconstructed by Allen, "Life and Times", 14.

[7] For further background see Louth, *Maximus*, 7–16.

[8] His first trial was in 655 after which he was exiled to Bizya/Thrace. His second trial was in 662 after which he was exiled to Lazica/Georgia. Cf.

became the groundwork for the sixth Ecumenical Council and he is now venerated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran traditions.

In current theological ethics, Maximus' theology has become particularly important for environmental ethics. His work provides a strong theological grounding for the integrity of all creatures (including the earth itself, and plants and minerals). Radu Bordeianu, for example, has explored the ecological implications of Maximus' work for the current environmental crises.[9] This includes considering the validity of claims pointing toward Christian theology as partially responsible for attitudes condoning environmental destruction. Whilst the accusation has some validity, Bordeianu writes that a more responsible theology has been in our grasp for centuries with thinkers such as Maximus the Confessor.[10] Another important contribution to scholarship on Maximus and ethics is a recent collection of essays that suggests how Byzantine theology, and in particular the work of Maximus the Confessor, may be a useful resource for contemporary ethics.[11] In one paper in this collection, Andrew Louth admits that the world has changed a lot since the time of Maximus: the universe is not so small and young as it was thought to be, and the human and even the Earth are much more insignificant than the Byzantine mind could ever conceive.[12] Despite this, Maximus' theology offers us a sense of 'the coherence of all things',[13] and an awareness of interrelation between the particular and the whole. It makes sense of how a creature might be minuscule within an enormous cosmos, and yet still have purpose and responsibility because of the choices we can make and our ability to contemplate everything

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Allen, "Life and Times", 14–15; Louth, *Maximus*, 16–18; G. Berthold, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*. (London: SPCK, 1985), 31, note 32.

[9] Bordeianu, 'Maximus'.

[10] Bordeianu, 'Maximus', 103.

[11] See section 'I. "Knowledge United to God": Environment, Nature and Creation in Patristic Thought' in Chryssavgis & Foltz (eds.), *Toward*. 9–71.

[12] A. Louth, 'Man and Cosmos in St Maximus the Confessor' in *Toward*. Chryssavgis & Foltz (eds.), 68–9.

[13] Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 70.

around us.[14] This description of the universe need not be at odds with our biological comprehension or scientific explanations and may rather enhance our understanding of the fragility of relationships within our environment.[15] Louth posits that Maximus' vision offers a means of combining a holistic understanding of the universe with a rich sense of the place of reason. The tools of scientific theory and mathematical expression are tools that only make sense to the human, no matter how universal they appear to be.[16] In this way, the search of the human for wisdom concerning its surroundings is entirely compatible with the Byzantine world view. In Maximus' thought, every human is *logikos*, rational, with the capacity to choose.[17] This rationality is one of the greatest gifts to humankind, who as a result may choose to coexist and make peace with one another and the natural world, or, as we will see, cause devastation in its misuse of choice.[18] Louth's contribution is particularly important as a contemporary source that recognises that a huge shift has taken place in our perception of the universe as a result of our scientific advances. He rightly points out that we need to justify why we are looking back to a cosmological theology prior to these scientific advancements for advice on how to live in the world today. Louth's explanation leads us to affirm that spiritual wisdom that asks us to live well with other creatures and one another is not usurped by scientific enquires but is a necessary part of what it means to be human. The utility of Byzantine thought for the Christian is that this inquiry is not seen as apart from spiritual concerns, but contextualised within a wider inquiry into who we are and how we ought to live.

Having given an overview of Maximus and his place in contemporary scholarship, I wish to define my use of the term 'anarchist', and briefly justify my choice to look at Kropotkin in this chapter. Following Peter Marshall's definition, I loosely take anarchists to be those who "reject the legitimacy of external government and of the State, and condemn imposed political

[14] Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 68–70.
[15] Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 70–1.
[16] Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 70–1.
[17] Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 63–4.
[18] Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 68.

authority, hierarchy and domination. They seek to establish the condition of anarchy, that is to say, a decentralized and self-regulating society consisting of a federation of voluntary associations of free and equal individuals", so as "to create a free society which allows all human beings to realize their full potential".[19] It is difficult to make generalisations about anarchist thought, given its condemnation of set political ideologies, however, one thinker whose ideas continue to remain important in communal anarchist thought is Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921). Kropotkin's writings are particularly valuable for the way that they intertwine philosophical critique of the status quo, anecdotal and statistical evidence of differing economic systems, biological evidence to counter the political primacy of a social survival-of-the-fittest idea, and pragmatic ideas for both long and short-term changes that can be made to society.

In *Anarchy in Action*, Colin Ward goes so far as to call his own book "an extended, updating footnote to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*.".[20] Ward believes Kropotkin's continuing relevance is abundantly apparent and that, for example, "Anyone who wants to understand the real nature of the crisis of the British economy in the 1980s would gain more enlightenment from Kropotkin's analysis from the 1890s than from the current spokesmen of any the political parties."[21] Ward identifies a severe paucity in the imagination of the left, which has largely abandoned "those aspirations for the liberation of work".[22] Consequently, he suggests that Kropotkin's "decentralist and anarchist vision" may yet hold much for us, and he claims it is certainly much less an "absurd" idea than a socialist faith in the humanisation of work through the conquest of the state power by the proletariat.[23] I have quoted Ward writing of Kropotkin's relevance in 1973, 1974 and 1998, but in the wake of the 2008 economic crash,

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[19] P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism.* (London: Harper Perennial, 1992), 3.

[20] C. Ward, *Anarchy in Action.* (London: Freedom Press, (1st pub 1973, this ed. 2008)), 10.

[21] Ward, *Anarchy*, 10.

[22] Ward, 'Introduction' in P. Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow.* (London: Freedom Press, 1998 (1st ed. 1898)), 13.

[23] Ward, 'Introduction' in Kropotkin, *Fields,* 13.

I think Kropotkin's ideas are more important than they ever have been before. Following the systemic failures of state socialism and capitalism, Kropotkin's ideas look ever more prophetic and attractive. Most importantly for this chapter, the ethical commitments underlying Kropotkin's practical writings share much with the key features I identify in Maximus' ethics, making his work a good potential resource for Christian praxis.

2. The Cosmic Theology of Maximus the Confessor

I outline here three areas that are important for understanding how Maximus believes humans should live. I explain how Maximus believes the cosmos is held together (2a). This allows us to glimpse the way he believes all nature[24] and creatures are linked to one another and to God, since for Maximus the universe is not merely a physical place, but also possesses a spiritual dimension. I then (2b) discuss the specific importance Maximus places on the human and the responsibilities that go with this importance. Lastly I look at what, practically speaking, Maximus believes human activity – ethics – should consist of (2c).

2a. Union and Distinction

Maximus' theology can be understood in terms of 'union and distinction'.[25] He believes that all things will be gathered to union with one another in God, but will still retain their unique, distinct identity when they are united.[26] This means that his theology is a delicate balance between a desire for harmony and unity of all things, and a dedication to the freedom and personal expression of every creature. Maximus writes that we deepen our knowledge of God by understanding and discovering meaning within one

[24] Used here as a lay term for creation, especially non-human creation, rather than in the theological sense of *physis*.

[25] Proposed as a systematic way of reading Maximus' theology by M. Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[26] Maximus, *Myst*. TCr. Ch.1.

another and the natural world.[27] As this occurs we begin to overcome the divisions and confusions that keep creatures at enmity with one another.[28] Drawing on Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:16 and similar passages, Maximus explores the way in which the cosmos is recapitulated and made whole in Christ.[29] God intends all of creation to be drawn towards God and united in love, and God works towards this end continually.[30] Maximus uses the example of travelling from the edge of a wheel down the spokes to the centre – in this example, creatures that move towards God (the centre) also move towards each other, coming closer spiritually and overcoming odds with each other as they are motivated by love.[31] Thus, unity, perfection and participation in God shall be reached when "there shall be no intentional divergence between universals and particulars".[32] For Maximus, the providential end for creatures is to be gathered to God and all divisions overcome, while the identity of each creature is never at risk of being abolished.[33] Particular creatures continue to exist, but the difference between one creature and the next is no longer a source of conflict, and is instead a cause for celebration.[34] As Melchisedec Törönen explains, number is thus difference without being division,[35] so that, just like "When we speak of a two-coloured or five-coloured stone (or of any multi-coloured one) we do not divide the one stone into two or five stones".[36] Although we can count many things in one, it does not make it many – and although something is one, it does not mean we cannot pick out the unique colours within it.

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[27] Maximus, *Amb. 21* 1248C–D in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambiguua Vol I*. Constas, N. (ed.) (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 434.

[28] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1313B in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambiguua Vol II*. Constas, N. (ed.) (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 118.

[29] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308D in *On Difficulties II,* 106–8.

[30] Maximus, Ad Thal. 2, CCSG7:51.

[31] Maximus, *Amb 7*. 1081B-C in *On Difficulties I,* 100.

[32] Maximus, *Ad Th. 2*, 7:51 (Blowers (trans.), *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 100).

[33] Maximus, *Amb. 10*. 1189A in *On Difficulties I*, 310.

[34] Cf. Maximus, *Myst*. TCr. Ch1.

[35] Törönen, *Union and Distinction*, 42.

[36] Maximus, *Epp. 12* PG91 476A-C (Törönen (trans.) *Union*, 42).

Maximus' vision for the world is one where there is both perfect community and yet distinct personal relation that comes about through Christ. He writes:

> For the wisdom and sagacity of God the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ, who holds together the universals of beings by the power of wisdom, and embraces their complementary parts by the sagacity of understanding, since by nature he is the fashioner and provider of all, and through himself draws into one what is divided, and abolishes war between beings, and binds everything into peaceful friendship and undivided harmony, both what is in heaven and what is on earth, as the divine Apostle says.[37]

Vladimir Cvetković notes that in advocating this kind of union, Maximus' cosmology "abolishes all the divisions that exist in the humankind, not only those established by gender differentiations, but also those based on national, ethnic, political, cultural, educational and any other platform".[38] In proposing that we are guided in the direction of union, and in the overcoming of divisions between creatures, Maximus implies that there is no place for the judgement, exclusion or abuse of another being on the basis of its difference.[39] Difference is not to be a dividing factor, but a celebration of intended diversity that brings creation closer together as it exhibits love and moves closer to its intended end in God. The conclusion Maximus leaves us with is that there is no place within the cosmos for ideological, political, racial or any other kind of hatred. What we hate, we divide from us, and in doing so also separate ourselves from God.[40] What we love, by contrast is brought to God, who is love.[41]

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[37] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1313B in *On Difficulties II*, 118 (Louth (trans.), *Maximus*, 162).

[38] V. Cvetković, 'Maximus the Confessor's Geometrical Analogies applied to the Relationship between Christ and Creation' in P. Pavlov, et al.(eds.), *Orthodox Theology and the Sciences.* (Columbia: Newrome Press, 2013), 277.

[39] Cf. Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305C in *On Difficulties II*, 104; Maximus, *Myst*. TCr. Ch.1; cf Col. 3:11–15.

[40] "The one who sees a trace of hatred in his own heart through any fault at all toward any man whoever he may be makes himself completely foreign to the love of God, because love for God in no way admits hatred for man." Maximus, *De char*. PG90 963C I.15 (G. Berthold (trans.), *Maximus*, 37].

[41] Maximus, *De char*. PG90 963B I.13.

The existence we lead and the communities we choose to be a part of must therefore reject persecution and social division based on the differences we see in one another. An ethical exploration of this cosmology might lead one, for example, to question the necessity and utility of societal and legal divisions and borders that discriminate on bases such as culture, ethnicity and wealth. Anti-discrimination ideas are often upheld in Christian ethics by an appeal to human rights laws,[42] but the ethical possibilities that could be derived from Maximus might go further than these to challenge more basic artificial boundaries such as those of nations and territorial borders. The discrimination involved in the maintenance of borders is particularly well illustrated in the manifesto of the decentralised grassroots organisation 'No Borders'. They point out that the maintenance of a border elevates movement of people into a commodity purchasable only by those with the economic wealth or political power to do so. The system of deportation and border control targets and criminalise those who are poor. In this way, 'No Borders' write, "Modern states try to turn movement into a right that is granted or denied according to economic and political power".[43]

Maximus' understanding of union and distinction brings a further dimension to the ethical outworking of 'love your neighbour' (Mark 12:13; Matt. 22:39). It is clear that, for Maximus, diversity found in different communities and cultures is a cause for celebration, and is one of the ways in which creation is brought together. We are many in our diversities and yet one in celebration of this and in our day-to-day relations of love. This means that a particular culture can be celebrated, but when that identity is exclusive, insular and inspires hatred for what is different instead of love in multiplicity, it becomes a source of division that breaks apart the unity of the cosmos. In my mind, it would be hypocritical to consider Maximus' cosmic theology to be a call for equality between

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[42] See for example, A. Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy*. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 128.

[43] No Borders, 'A No Borders Manifesto': http://noborders.org.uk/node/47 (Accessed 20.03.14).

the sexes[44] without also considering it to be a condemnation of refusing asylum seekers or migrant workers entry into a country. Maximus' balance between union and distinction is one that calls for communal care but also personal freedom through Christ-like love.[45] This love is always about loving every particular person, especially the persecuted, powerless, and marginalised. Divisions within our society that breed hatred, alienation, or otherwise limit the extent to which one may love, have no place within the cosmic scope of Maximus' theology.

2b. The Human as Microcosm

Within Maximus' cosmological thought, humans play an important role. With this importance, however, comes a responsibility. Humans possesses reason and free will. For Maximus, this means that humans are uniquely placed to be the voice of voiceless creation, and have the potential to express all creation with that voice and so commend the cosmos as one to God.[46] Following, amongst others, Gregory of Nyssa,[47] Maximus understands each human to contain all the cosmos within them – to be *micro-cosmos*.[48] A human partakes of and is able to contemplate both visible and invisible things, and is thus like a "laboratory in which everything is concentrated and in itself naturally mediates between the extremities of

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[44] Male and female are discussed as distinctions in humans that are overcome in Christ. Maximus believes that prior to the Fall humans were without sex or gender (based on Gal. 3:28 and his reading of Genesis) and that procreation probably happened in a different way: (Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305C & 1309A-1312A in *On Difficulties Vol II*, 104, 110–114). See also S. Mitralexis, 'Rethinking the Problem of Sexual Difference in Ambiguum 41' *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 2:1 (2017), 139–144.

[45] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308B-C in *On Difficulties II*, 106–8.

[46] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305B in *On Difficulties II*, 104].

[47] "It has been said by wise men that man is a little world in himself and contains all the elements which go to complete the universe." Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Soul and the Resurrection' in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises* W. Moore & H.A. Wilson (trans.) (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 1892), 682.

[48] Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.7.

each division".[49] Maximus believes that the human person's unique possession of both rationality and sensibility[50] means that they are capable of mediating the differences within the created order and bringing it into harmony and coexistence.[51]

Drawing heavily on Paul's letters, in his *Ambiguum 41*, Maximus illustrates that, when humanity chose to turn away from God, it was the ability to mediate between God and the rest of creation that was lost to humanity.[52] When Christ became incarnate as both God and human, he united creation with God.[53] Through his death and resurrection Christ makes relationships between creation and God possible again.[54] It was humanity that caused the fractures in the relationships between heaven and earth, and within creation itself. As such it is as a human that God comes to restore mediation and harmony.[55] Humans, then, can choose to partake in this restored ability to mediate through Christ. We do so by freely choosing to try and coexist in love, bringing together all of creation in unity.[56] When writing on the place of mediation in Maximus' cosmology and its relevance for today, Louth notes:

> St Maximus's divisions of nature may seem to us quaint, but his idea that within the manifold that is the created order there are divisions that can either, when transcended, express the richness and beauty of the created order or, alternatively, cause gulfs of incomprehension, darkness, and pain seems to me an insight of continuing relevance.[57]

Louth's exposition, which specifically refers to the theology in Maximus' *Ambiguum 41*, makes the point that we do not have to sign-up to the specific philosophical and metaphysical structures

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[49] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305A-B in *On Difficulties II*, 102–4.
[50] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305D-1308A in *On Difficulties II*, 106.
[51] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305B-C in *On Difficulties II*, 104.
[52] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308C-1312B in *On Difficulties II*, 108–114.
[53] Maximus' theology is heavily reliant on the 'logic' of the Council of Chalcedon (451) which affirmed Christ as being one person in two distinct natures of human and divine.
[54] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308C in *On Difficulties II*, 108.
[55] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308D in *On Difficulties II*, 108–110.
[56] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308B-C in *On Difficulties II*, 106–108.
[57] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308B-C in *On Difficulties II*, 106–108.

of a Byzantine worldview in order to see value in the recognition that human choices have got the world into the mess it is in today. Whether we are discussing environmental destruction, extreme inequalities in wealth, or social, political, economic or cultural discrimination, exploitation and persecution, the means to deepening these rifts or alleviating one another from suffering have the potential to come from uniquely human decisions and choices. This is one of the many reasons that, in the Byzantine ascetic tradition, the question of what humans should do begins with a reflection on one's own actions and the way we treat others and the world around us.[58] This, in turn, is never separate in the Byzantine mind from the perpetual activity of Christ and the Spirit in our lives and a reciprocal relationship rooted in grace and free will that occurs between God and the human.[59]

For Maximus, the ability to choose and deliberate and possess rationality (*logos*), is a *natural* ability of humanity. With possession of this power however comes a responsibility to the rest of creation. The abuse of rationality and the divisions that form within our societies (between fellow humans and between the human and the rest of the natural world) have devastating effects. The gifts humanity has been given of grace, capacity to love and capacity for wisdom, are ones that come with a terrible price for all creation when humanity falls short of its natural ability and potential. This foresight in the effect of human activity within its own societies and upon the environment is just one of the ways in which Maximus' thought might challenge the Christian conception of who we are, what might be possible, and what the failures to love difference imply. This cosmology proposes that, because we *can* love, we have an obligation *to* love. To put our rationality purely to self-service has demonstrably destructive consequences for everything touched by that choice. This is a cosmology that

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[58] See for example, K. Ware 'Through Creation to the Creator' & A. Keselopoulos, 'The Prophetic Charisma in Pastoral Theology: Asceticism, Fasting, and the Ecological Crisis' in T*oward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature and Creation.* J. Chryssavgis, & B. Foltz, (eds.), (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2013).

[59] Maximus, *Or. Dom.* PG90 877A.

speaks of the beauty of the whole, but also of its fragility as a cosmos built on interrelation.

2c. The Ascetic Practice of Love

Lastly then, let us look at what Maximus believes this cosmology will translate into in terms of human action. We have seen that Maximus believes that the human is tasked with uniting the cosmos through their choice to love, but what does this mean and what does this look like? What does Maximus mean by love? How does one seek God's meaning in creation, move towards God and mediate between creatures? Maximus answers that these hopes are made possible in Christ and by following him in faith and in the practice of love.[60] To practise love is to follow the example of the life and death of Christ.[61] By grace we have faith, rational choice, the ability to mediate, and restoration in Christ, but we ourselves must have the voluntary inclination to eradicate the troubles ('passions') that run counter to human nature.[62] We were made naturally good, but it is through the fall and our continuing choice to sin (to turn away from God, who is love) that human nature is occluded by passions that separate us from God.

Behind Byzantine cosmology, and also at its heart, is the ascetic way of life.[63] Rooted in the Gospel and then developed by early Christian desert monks, ascetic thinking occasionally took the form of 'centuries'.[64] These were a set of one-hundred aphorisms upon which one might meditate that would aid one in the struggle to live a practical, Christian, spiritual life. Through simple means of self-discipline and a life of love and humble giving, one might grow in wisdom, and begin to tread along the path in the Byzantine cosmic vision that brings all creation closer to harmony, unity, perfection, and ultimately to God. In his *Centuries*

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[60] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 975C I.27.

[61] On cultivating the mind of Christ: Maximus, *Th.oec.* PG90 1163B II.83; on discerning the *logoi* through a pure mind: *De char.* PG90 981C.

[62] Maximus, *Th.oec.* PG90 1127B II.6.

[63] Louth, *Maximus*, 44.

[64] P. Sherwood, *The Ascetic Life and The Four Centuries on Charity*. (New York: The Newman Press, 1955), 102; Evagrios of Pontos is credited with inventing the 'century' format of ascetic literature.

on Love, Maximus writes four sets of a hundred statements that guide the reader in their search for wisdom, their internal battle with passions that plague them, and their struggle to live a life of genuine compassion and love for fellow creatures. For example, he writes:

> If you harbour resentment against anybody, pray for him and you will prevent the passion from being aroused; for by means of prayer you will separate your grief from the thought of the wrong he has done you. When you have become loving and compassionate towards him, you will wipe the passion completely from your soul. If somebody regards you with resentment, be pleasant to him, be humble and agreeable in his company, and you will deliver him from his passion.[65]

Following the words of St Paul, Maximus also urges the ascetic to "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep".[66] This is the way in which one may have the 'mind of Christ'.[67] By preparing one's heart and mind this way, Maximus believes that one can begin to perceive real meaning in the world about us. As the intricacies of the created world become visible to us, so will we come to know God through all creation about us.[68] Knowledge, harmony and holiness are pursued through freely choosing to practice love. Love takes the form of learning to be merciful, patient, and kind even when someone frustrates or hurts us; it is a means to helping others see faults within themselves that they can learn from, rather than reinforcing cycles of alienation and hatred.[69] This, I think, might be a suitable way of summing up ascetic practice according to St Maximus. The broader hope is union and reforging the relationship between the creator and all creation, but the minutiae takes place in the simple life of the human person, who, in possessing rationality, may choose to live in such a way that brings peace to those around them.

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[65] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 1043D III.90 (Louth (trans.), *Maximus,* 39).

[66] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 1043D-1045A III.91; Romans 12:15.

[67] Maximus, *Th.oec.* PG90 1163B II.83.

[68] Maximus, *Th.oec.* PG90 1161CD II.79; 1161D-1164A 80.

[69] Contemplation of the *logoi* in Maximus' writings is discussed in relation to contemporary ethics in D. Bradshaw, 'The *Logoi* of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought' in *Toward*, 9–22; Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 59–71.

At its simplest, this cosmology is an exposition of the need to practice love in the human life. Love, as defined by Maximus with reference to Paul, is Christ-like love. It is the challenge that requires the humility of the self and giving to the other. As Maximus writes, "The one who loves God surely loves his neighbour as well. Such a person cannot hold on to money but rather gives it out in God's fashion to each one who has need".[70] The ethical implications of such a love are already being teased out by Maximus here. Love equates to seeing the suffering of others as the suffering of Christ, and to giving to others as Christ has given to us. This naturally means that money and possessions go to those who need them. Accumulation of property and wealth are thus deeply problematic and sinful acts.[71] Maximus has begun talking of the economic relationships that result from this love, but we can also think about the requirements of such love on our political relations. In an ethics where personal care for the other is paramount, the structures of a system that maximises personal profit at the expense of others becomes unacceptable and incompatible with an entire Christian worldview. David Harvey gives us a concise overview of what he believes a neoliberal agenda to be, writing that it "proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade".[72] Dedication to preserving an individual's right to wealth and property brings about an attitude that cannot hope to comprehend love as the basis of economic relation. The *telos* of love[73] in Maximus' ethics

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[70] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965B I.23 (Berthold (trans.), *Maximus*, 37).

[71] *i.e.* Acts that separate us from God, because they are unloving. The problem of property is discussed further in 3b. Positions on Property.

[72] D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2.

[73] The *telos* of the ethical life for Maximus is *theosis*, perfect union with God, in which we still remain distinct persons. Since God is love, and we have a very practical demonstration of this love in Christ's life and death, we do not lose anything by simply calling the *telos* of Maximus' ethics 'love'. For a full discussion of the *telos* of Maximus' ethics, see 'Chapter 2: A Telos of Theosis' in my doctoral thesis *Revolution in the Microcosm: Love and Virtue in the Cosmological Ethics of St Maximus the Confessor*.

brings it into direct confrontation with ideologies grounded in capital accumulation and protection of private property. If we took giving to those in need as the basis of our economic and political theories and relations, we would have to radically restructure the economic systems and policies of any current capitalist state. If in any of our activities, whether on an individual or collective basis, we perpetuate the economic, political and social oppression of someone elsewhere on the globe, we have by definition a lifestyle that is deeply problematic for anyone who considers love to be integral above all else. Maximus' cosmic and ascetic theology points Christian ethics in a direction that seriously calls into question the basic premises of any society that runs counter to a requirement of love.

3. Ethical Commitments in Maximus and Kropotkin

Next I turn to look at Kropotkin's ideas and some of the possible compatibilities these might have with Maximus' thought. In particular I examine the way that Kropotkin's practical ideas for society may be useful resources when extending Maximus the Confessor's ethics to the present day. I first consider the philosophical and anthropological underpinnings of Kropotkin's anarchist theory. For there to be grounds for a similar ethical praxis (means), there must be a semblance of a shared goal (end/*telos*). I have already intimated that a shared metaphysical *telos* will not be apparent in Maximus and Kropotkin's ethics, but I suggest here, that the vision for human life on earth is underpinned in both Maximus and Kropotkin by the same kind of philosophical principles. I examine the concepts of mutual aid and well-being in Kropotkin's thought and compare this to Maximus' understanding of love – arguing that the character of these concepts is similar enough to be valuable grounds for ethical praxis. Following this, I discuss their positions on private property as a way into considering the commonalities in their bases for human economic relationships. Lastly, I look at some of Kropotkin's practical

(PhD diss., Durham University, 2018) (Available online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/12376/1/Brown_Dewhurst-_Revolution_in_the_Microcosm.pdf?DDD32+), 63–92.

suggestions for an anarchist society and indicate how these might be useful developments for those who use Maximus' theology as an ethical basis today.

3a. Mutual Aid and Well-Being

In his autobiography, Kropotkin describes how from a young age he was deeply distressed by the inequality, injustice and oppression inherent in serfdom, and the expectations in social interaction this system enforced.[74] As the son of a wealthy landowner, he tells of the horror he felt at the way that serfs were treated in his father's household. After one incident when he was about ten years old, Kropotkin wrote of the following encounter:

> Tears suffocate me, and immediately after dinner is over I run out, catch Makár in a dark passage, and try to kiss his hand; but he tears it away, and says, either as a reproach or as a question,
>
> "Let me alone; you, too, when you are grown up, will you not be just the same?"
>
> "No, no, never!"[75]

From then on in his memoirs, Kropotkin describes a continual struggle to confront the injustices he found in Russian society. Remaining at the heart of his struggle is the desire to give to those in need, to bring a measure of fairness into the lives of those about him and above all "not be just the same" as the privileged who kept others enslaved. He claimed it was no good wanting to change society simply through the idea of the 'right to work' or 'to each the whole result of his labour'.[76] What had to be at the heart of desire for change in human society was hope for 'well-being for all',[77] based on a principle of 'to every [wo/]man according to [her/]his needs'.[78] It was in this way that common people could

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[74] P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1971 (1899 (1st ed.))), Chapter VIII, 48–62.

[75] Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 51.

[76] P. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*. (Milton Keynes: Dodo Press, 1892), 10.

[77] Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 11.

[78] Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 24.

become "the builders of a new, equitable mode of organisation of society".[79]

Kropotkin justifies his belief in the need for a society that seeks the well-being of all by locating a driving factor for this in an evolutionary tendency of the natural world towards co-operation. He notes that while the traditions and history of a society play an important part in the development of ethics, conscience itself "has a much deeper origin, – namely in the consciousness of equity, which physiologically develops in man as in all social animals . . .".[80] He writes that a key factor of evolution has been the social development and ability of animals to co-operate with one another in order to survive.[81] He calls this the 'mutual-aid tendency', believing it to be something more base and instinctive than human feeling and sympathy. For him it is a kind of natural propensity for solidarity, "an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution, which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life".[82] At face value, there appear to be a number of similarities between this mutual-aid tendency toward co-operation and Maximus' claim that to love is natural and involves voluntarily giving, sharing and caring for others. However, we have quite an explicit quotation from Kropotkin claiming that it is not enough to say that human society could be founded on 'love'.[83] To address this accusation it is important to situate Kropotkin's thesis, *Mutual Aid*, in its context.

Mutual Aid was a vital work of its time, challenging the legitimacy of emerging social Darwinism at the end of the nineteenth century and proposing that cooperation, as well as struggle, had foundations in evolutionary science.[84] Social Darwinism exacerbated the struggle of the individual in nature and derived from it a

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[79] Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 379.

[80] P. Kropotkin, *Ethics: Origin and Development*. (Montréal: Black Rose Books Ltd., 1992 (1922 1st ed.)), 338.

[81] P. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1902), xvi.

[82] Kropotkin, *Mutual,* xiii.

[83] See Kropotkin, *Mutual*, xii–xiii.

[84] Kropotkin, *Mutual*, ix–x.

series of natural facts about the capability of the human and from there a legitimacy in the way in which human societies operated.[85] Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* really set about challenging the premise that the struggle of the individual is all that can be found in nature (or in Darwin's theory, for that matter).[86] However, the extent to which ethics should be informed by observing nature was not called into question. This makes sense of why, for Kropotkin, it is not enough to say that human society could be founded on 'love', though the concept for him is a nonetheless important emotion derived from this natural 'mutual-aid tendency'.[87] Kropotkin still holds that scientifically proven tendencies in human nature must dictate the shape of our societies.[88] Of course, this does not really explain why it could not be possible for the human, which believes itself to have developed the capability to love, to base its societies upon such a relation. Kropotkin writes, "It is not love of my neighbour – whom I often do not know at all – which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire. . .".[89] But need it not be? The heart of Byzantine ascetic literature is the assertion that the human can precisely cultivate an attitude of love toward any neighbour, even one previously not known.[90] Since we are *able* to cultivate such an attitude, we have a responsibility *to* live in this way, Maximus believes, as we are the only creatures on earth who have sufficiently developed the rational capacity to live in such a fashion and thus enable harmony between all creatures.[91]

Whilst the semantics may be debated, it is clear that Maximus' depiction of love as the foundation of human relationships does not sit at odds with Kropotkin's hope for 'well-being for all'. We have in both Kropotkin and Maximus, a concept that extols the importance of particular free will and identity, whilst recognising

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[85] Kropotkin, *Mutual*, ix.
[86] See Kropotkin, *Mutual*, viii–xii.
[87] See Kropotkin, *Mutual*, xii–xiii.
[88] Cf. Chomsky's doubt on the utility of this kind of thought in anarchism see, Chomsky, 'Interview with Ziga Vodovnik' in *Chomsky on Anarchism*. B. *Pateman* (ed.) (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), 240.
[89] Kropotkin, *Mutual*, xiii.
[90] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 964C I.15.
[91] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308B-C in *On Difficulties II*, 106–8.

that we are also naturally social creatures who ought to care for one another's well-being and give to one another according to the needs of each. Kropotkin's scientific reasoning, although appearing to conflate normative and descriptive accounts of evolution, is certainly not a boundary to the Christian seeing utility in his ideas and practices. A key part of Byzantine cosmology is that it is not only human well-being that is sought for, but the well-being of the entirety of nature, of which humanity is a part. 'To every man according to his needs' might be a key slogan of nineteenth century Marxist and anarchist thought, but the sentiment is much older and one of the places it was cultivated as a way of life was in the practical *ascesis* of Christian desert monasticism: ". . . in God's fashion to each one who has need".[92] To give to another person is to do the work of God, according to the Gospel and early church.[93]

3b. Positions on Property

In examining Maximus and Kropotkin's positions on property, we can see philosophical principles become ethical directives. Property is matter we become attached to, regardless of whether we need it, and often at the expense of another human who goes without as a result of our attachment. It is thus an ideal topic to focus on when looking at how a theoretical dedication to love or well-being[94] takes on a practical ethical dimension.

The anarchist position on property is often summarised in Proudhon's famous slogan 'Property is Theft!'.[95] The practicality

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[92] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965A I.23 (Berthold (trans.), *Maximus*, 37)].

[93] John 15:13.

[94] In using these concepts side-by-side I do not mean to imply that Maximus' 'love' and Kropotkin's 'well-being' should be used interchangeably. As a result of (3a), I think we have sufficient grounds to consider them similar ethical principles or ends, and thus to us to think of them as approximately equivalent in the context of inquiry into ethical praxis.

[95] P. Proudhon, 'Property is Theft' in *No Gods, No Masters*. D. Guerin (ed.), (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1998), 48–54; We can find this sentiment also expressed in early Byzantine theology. Basil of Caesarea writes "Is not the person who strips another of clothing called a thief? And those who do not clothe the naked when they have the power to do so, should they not

of this position however seems better expressed by Kropotkin. "What we want is not the redistribution of overcoats," writes Kropotkin, but ". . . the day when the worker in the factory produces for the community and not the monopolist – that day will see the workers clothed and fed."[96] More important than who owns what possession is the creation of an environment in which the human person may live without being in want. The capitalist mentality and the 'middle-class rule', as Kropotkin calls it, has a "morality drawn from account books, [and] its 'debit and credit' philosophy, its 'mine and yours' institutions" must be demolished.[97] The threat of Kropotkin's anarchism is that "we will do our utmost that none shall lack aught".[98] Thus for Kropotkin, property is a resource, necessary for keeping humans alive and ensuring human well-being. When it is seized and commandeered by one class to keep another in subjection, human well-being is obfuscated by the violent greed of those in power. Or to borrow the words of St Basil of Caesarea:[99]

> It is as if someone were to take the first seat in the theatre, then bar everyone else from attending, so that one person alone enjoys what is offered for the benefit of all in common – this is what the rich do. They seize common goods before others have the opportunity, then claim them as their own by right of preemption. For if we all took only what was necessary to satisfy our own needs, giving the rest to those who lack, no one would be rich, no one would be poor, and no one would be in need.[100]

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be called the same? The bread you are holding back is for the hungry, the clothes you keep put away are for the naked, the shoes that are rotting away with disuse are for those who have none, the silver buried in the earth is for the needy. You are thus guilty of injustice toward as many as you might have aided, and did not." Basil of Caesarea, 'I Will Tear Down My Barns' in *On Social Justice*. C.P. Schroeder (trans.) (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 69–70.

[96] Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 33.

[97] Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 156.

[98] Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 39.

[99] c. 329–379 AD, one of the Cappadocian Fathers – the great theologians of the early Church.

[100] Basil of Caesarea, 'I Will Tear Down My Barns' in *On Social Justice*. Schroeder (trans.), 69.

Kropotkin's position on property comes straight out of his commitment to human well-being and the presence of the mutual aid tendency. How we distribute resources, and also how we structure our relationships is informed by Kropotkin's commitment to his ethical principles. Hierarchies of power and class, and divisions into mine and yours, disrupt not just an immediate ability for those in want to access what they need, but also entrench isolation, alienation, and exploitation in human societies. For Kropotkin, rethinking these relationships makes sense sociologically and anthropologically speaking. For the Christian, to give to the other and to overcome division in human society and the natural world is draw near to God and to fulfil human potential as made possible by Christ.[101]

Following in the footsteps of the Acts of the early church,[102] desert ascetics prior to and during the Byzantine empire were proponents of communal property. I wish to draw attention to the mindset that such an understanding of property perpetuated. This is point made by Maximus,[103] but I think the following story from the sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers illustrates it better:

> There were two old men who dwelt together for many years and who never quarrelled.
>
> Then one said to the other: "Let us pick a quarrel with each other like other men do."
>
> "I do not know how quarrels arise," answered his companion.
>
> So the other said to him: "Look, I will put a brick down here between us and I will say "This is mine.' Then you can say 'No it is not, it is mine.' Then we will be able to have a quarrel."
>
> So they placed the brick between them and the first one said: "This is mine."
>
> His companion answered him: "This is not so, for it is mine."
>
> To this, the first one said: "If it is so and the brick is yours, then take it and go your way."
>
> And so they were not able to have a quarrel.[104]

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[101] Matt. 25:34–40.

[102] Acts 2:42–47.

[103] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965A I.23; 965C I.26.

[104] J. Wortley (ed. & trans.) *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation*.'The Quarrel', N.352/17.26

The politics of possession, property and coexistence are all expressed within the ascetic life that treats the act of love as a lifestyle and set of choices made in order to live like Christ. The story of these two old men reflects on what it means to be holy and to truly be at peace with another person. Not only are one's actions to be unhurtful, but one's entire attitude is to be cultivated to the point where to take when another needs becomes an utterly nonsensical and bizarre notion. Possession and property hold no value in an ethos where meaningful relation is expressed through giving. It does not matter whose brick it is, rather that it be given to the one in need and that the object not become the source of conflict between two people who might otherwise live in peace. Our economic relations, I think, are often the basis of our social relations and attitudes. To live in a society where protection of private property and free trade are paramount is to set an expectation for social relations built upon these ideas. Our perceptions of value and our interactions with others are built upon deserve, merit and right, rather than a comprehension of compassion and the needs of others.

Both Kropotkin's anarchism and Christian desert monasticism seem to share an understanding that along with the economics of giving and communal living, there must be a change in our mindsets and consequently our social relationships. Although there are many differences between the kind of communal living Kropotkin imagined and that of the monastic movements in the early church, there are certain similarities in the kinds of changes both communal ideas required of people. Both require not merely a relocation of objects but a change in the conception of how property rules our relationships, and how attachment to wealth should never come before a dedication to the well-being of another person. The categories of 'mine' and 'yours' were as common in Byzantine cities as they were in 19th century capitalist states and allowed no space for the prioritising of *people* rather than the acquisition of things.[105] What Kropotkin's communalism and some desert monastic practices share, is a turning upside down of

[105] On this see Basil's sermons 'To the Rich' and 'I Will Tear Down My Barns' in *Social Justice*. Schroeder (trans.), 41–71.

the idea that accumulation of material possessions has to do with merit, and a positive disregard of any practices that do not focus on the integrity and well-being of the human being.[106] What is really required is a change in our priorities, so that instead of our ultimate aim being an ideal of, say, the distribution of property, we instead dedicate ourselves to the well-being of all and giving to each according to their needs.[107] Outside of some present-day monastic communities, there now seems very little emphasis on either the economic or socio-political implications of property within the Christian tradition. Whilst Christianity has its own history of communal living and property,[108] it may be that the modern anarchist movement will serve as a reminder in this regard, that neoliberal and capitalist attitudes toward property are incompatible with a genuine concern for the welfare of others.

3c. The Practicalities of a Stateless Society

Having demonstrated that there are key philosophical principles shared between Kropotkin and Maximus when it comes to anarchist 'well-being' and Christian 'love', I present some of Kropotkin's practical suggestions that may be of use in Christian ethics. As a result of his dedication to human well-being, Kropotkin presented ideas for anarchist organising as an alternative to exploitative societal structures premised on inequity of power and wealth. Given the similarities that have been explored, I believe the methods for organising Kropotkin suggests, can be a place of inspiration to

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[106] For the desert monastics this was also about a spiritual well-being, since such attachment to material possessions also distracted from attention to God. The rejection of worldly goods was a rejection of the wealth of the world, so that an ascetic might instead focus on spiritual wealth. Spiritual wealth was concerned with good spiritual practice, good spiritual relation with God, and good spiritual relation with human and non-human creation.

[107] Which may entail the distribution of resources, or the means of production being in the hands of workers, but these things are important only in so far as they are part of an ethics that works toward human well-being.

[108] For example see the writings of Pelagius, 15; Joachim of Fiore, 36; John Ball, 41; Winstanley, 128 in A. Bradstock & C. Rowland (eds.) *Radical Christian Writings: A Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002).

Christian practical ethics as well. I believe that the ethical principles present in Byzantine ascetic Christian theology have much more in common with Kropotkin's ideas for a stateless society, than the exploitative structures of present-day states. Although the writings of Maximus, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and the desert fathers and mothers had a much more personal and introspective dimension, they fundamentally discuss the character and structure of personal relationships. When asking what it means to live in a community structured upon those personal loving relationships, I believe a good set of practical suggestions can be found in the works of Kropotkin, who at the end of the day, has a vision for human living that is very familiar to Christian ethics.

Kropotkin's vision is that life be led in communities that freely cooperate with one another, and that the freedom of each never be compromised or subjugated. Human relations must be based upon free agreement, he proposes. There must be "a society of equals" so that it becomes "an organism so constructed as to combine all the efforts for procuring the greatest sum possible of well-being for all, while full, free scope will be left for every individual initiative".[109] By nature of being a community built upon free relation,

> this society will not be crystallised into certain unchangeable forms, but will continually modify its aspect, because it will be a living, continually evolving organism; no need of government will be felt, because free agreement and federation take its place in all those functions which governments consider as theirs at the present time, and because, the causes of conflict being reduced in number, those conflicts which may still arise can be submitted to arbitration.[110]

Community cannot be static because relation is not static. The needs of one human differ from another, and a society must have the flexibility to serve the needs of each as well as the needs of many. Kropotkin suggests a society built on federated communities, where people might regulate their own local communities,

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[109] Kropotkin, *Memoirs,* 398.
[110] Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 399.

so that "society will be composed of a multitude of associations, federated for all the purposes which require federation" and "all these will combine directly, by means of free agreements between them, just as the railway companies or the postal departments of different countries cooperate now, without having a central railway or postal government, – even though the former are actuated by merely egotistic aims".[111] Kropotkin considers ways in which industry, agriculture, and social organisation might realistically exist without reliance on the perpetuation of poverty or the oppression of fellow humans. The kind of critical thinking he encouraged questioned the necessity of any system built upon the subjugation of another being. His ideas therefore comprise practical ways in which people might cooperate with one another without exercising coercive power.[112] The political critique Kropotkin proposes is that cooperative community and mutual aid are a better root of human society than accumulation of wealth for the self and the few and coercive defence of private property. Since humans *can* mutually co-operate, Kropotkin's ethics ends up saying, humans *should* mutually co-operate.

Kropotkin's theoretical ideas for the structure of an anarchist society are inseparable from his concern for the human condition. His ethics does not shy away from radical socio-political and economic conclusions and is demonstrative of how an ethics of human relation must resolve itself into a new vision for human society. We can see this for example within his work, *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, which was first collected into a book in 1899.[113] In this work, Kropotkin outlines four aspects of his anarchist vision. The first is the decentralisation of industries which allows us "To return to a state of affairs where corn is grown, and manufactured goods are fabricated, *for the use of those very people who grow and produce them*," so that "Each region will become its own producer and its own consumer of agricultural produce".[114] The second looks at the possibilities of agriculture, and how the market garden might be put to good use. The main

[111] Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 398–9.
[112] Kropotkin, *Mutual*, 223.
[113] Ward, introduction to Kropotkin, *Fields,* iv.
[114] Kropotkin, *Fields,* 40.

point of this section is to illustrate that it is always within our means to produce food locally to feed a population.[115] On this, he says, "The obstacles against it are not in the imperfection of the agricultural art, or in the infertility of the soil, or in climate. They are in our institutions, in our inheritances and survivals from the past – in the 'Ghosts' which oppress us".[116] His point is that our cultural, traditional, political and economic practices are tied to our current institutions and prevent us from attempting to create local, self-sustaining economies and agriculture. In his third section, Kropotkin discusses the necessity of "*producing for the producers themselves*" and also the healthy need for all people to be involved to some degree in manual outdoor labour.[117] On a similar theme, the last area Kropotkin covers is education: "'Through the eyes *and* the hand to the brain' – this is the true principle of economy of time in teaching."[118] Kropotkin is keen to emphasise that understanding of the theoretical comes through the practical, and that this is true in school-learning, but also in the societies that we construct. We cannot understand labour unless we labour.[119] In *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, Kropotkin demonstrates the need for our economic and political decisions never to occur in isolation from our social and ethical thought. The two belong to one another and inform each other and are built on one another.

Of particular note in terms of compatibility with Maximus' ethical vision, is Kropotkin's concern that "society will not be crystallised into certain unchangeable forms"[120] so as to best reflect and grow with the needs of its citizens. The understanding that, in Ward's words, "there is no final struggle"[121] but that our relationships – personal and communal – must be continually worked at, is one that recognises that we are *demanding the impossible*.

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[115] Kropotkin, *Fields*, 103; This is still the case today with responsible changes to land use and diet, cf. S. Fairlie 'Can Britain Feed Itself' *The Land* 4 Winter (2007–8): 18–26.
[116] Kropotkin, *Fields*, 106.
[117] Kropotkin, *Fields*, 158.
[118] Kropotkin, *Fields*, 175.
[119] Kropotkin, *Fields*, 186.
[120] Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 399.
[121] Ward, *Anarchy*, 37.

In always setting our sights higher, we keep our communities from stagnating into what is easy, and require ourselves to always seek better ways to live in compassion with those around us. One of the principle metaphysical differences between Maximus and Kropotkin, is that for Maximus, ultimately our life on earth is directed towards God, whilst Kropotkin's ethics is thoroughly rooted in human aims and ends. Although this is a key difference between these two thinkers, practically speaking, it could be another place of comparative similarity. For Maximus there is no completion point in which our ethical responsibilities are done. Ethics is human choice to seek love and knowledge *i.e.* to seek God. There is always more to learn about God and more ways to grow in love. Even then in *theosis*, the end hope of all creation for final rest in God, we still anticipate ever-moving rest,[122] a rest in which relationship continues to ever deepen. In our lives here and now, we can thus also see for Maximus a dedication to the idea that human relationship rooted in love, is a relationship that must continually grow and recognise its own shortcomings. As a practical ethical principle, the idea that there is not one set end for human society, but that we must continually and consciously seek to revise our communities into places where particular and communal well-being can flourish, is one both startlingly anarchist and Byzantine in character.

Conclusion

Thus we can see that there is a potential compatibility between the ethical vision proposed by Maximus the Confessor and the practical means of coexistence proposed by Kropotkin. While Maximus' thought is firmly rooted within a Christian cosmos, and sees both the origin and end of things as being in God, the ethics necessitated by his theology is very close to a number of anarchist considerations. The love of Christ explored by Maximus is one that upturns a status quo that places value on wealth, power, and coercion. In exploring the spiritual significance of rooting our actions in love, Maximus presents us not just with a vision for

[122] Maximus, *Ad Thal. 59* CCSG22 line 131.

7th century ascetic living, but also an ethics that identifies care for fellow creatures as the root of economic and political relation. In likewise identifying Kropotkin's ideas as politico-economic theories that stem from social concerns, we can see that common care for the well-being of others necessarily challenges us to rethink the structures of the societies and institutions in which we live. The divergence in philosophical frameworks between Maximus and Kropotkin does not mean there cannot be agreement as to what good human living looks like, and consequently a shared vision of how to create a better human society.

In the process of describing the utility of anarchist theory to Christians who wish to make use of Maximus' thought, my hope is that this chapter will make some contribution towards self-criticism within the Christian faith, and a wider interest in the lessons that can be learned from others similarly dedicated to the well-being of the marginalised and down-trodden. I hope it has also become clear to those of us who identify as anarchists, that many of the political and historical problems associated with the church, are not expressive of all theology underlying the Christian faith. This is a theology that is not just limited to the faith of the apostolic era (as implied by Kropotkin),[123] nor to the Byzantine era, since it is very much alive today in theological study and also in different denominations of the church.

So long as giving to each according to their need is paramount to human activity, which I think both Maximus' concept of love and Kropotkin's dedication to well-being both affirm, there is much hope to be had for united practical endeavour. At the very least, there is certainly a lot in the practical ideas put forward by anarchists like Kropotkin, that can be explored further in Christian ethics as an alternative to complicity in societal structures that have no place for the love of Christ. Christ's love challenges the foundations of nationalisms, racisms, classisms, sexisms, and any other hatreds and division. It is this specific character of love that Maximus suggests is fundamental to a theological cosmology that asks who we are as humans and where we are going. This theology sits in firm contradiction to societies and ideologies built on

[123] Kropotkin, *Ethics*, 120–1.

the glorification of wealth and power, so at the very least, it seems important to explore the radical alternatives set forward by thinkers like Peter Kropotkin.

Abbreviations

Ad Thal.	Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Questions Addressed to Thalassius)
Amb.	Ambiguorum liber de variis difficilibus locis Sanctorum Dionysii Areopagitae et Gregorii Theologii (Difficulties found in Dionysios the Areopagite and Gregory the Theologian)
De char.	Centuriae de charitate (Centuries on Love)
Ep.	Epistulae (Letters)
Myst.	Mystagogia (Mystagogy)
Or. Dom.	Orationis Dominicae expositio (Commentary on the Lord's Prayer)
Th.oec.	Capita theologica et oeconomica (Chapters on Theology and Economy)
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca
PG	Patrologia Graeca

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Representations of Catholicism in Contemporary Spanish Anarchist-themed Film (1995–2011)

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This essay explores the portrayal of Catholicism in eight Spanish anarchist-themed films. The first part discusses negative representations of the Catholic religion rehearsed in these films, set as they are mainly in the context of the Spanish Civil War. Among those representations are: the political and economic purpose of the Catholic Church's control of education in Spain; the breaking of the religious vows of poverty and chastity, and the recourse to praising the vow of obedience when under scrutiny; and the breaking of the seal of the confessional. In the second part, the essay shows that those films also portray a Christianity which can be more solidary, revolutionary and attached to a different idealization of Christ, unlike the Church consisting of high-ranking members of the clergy. This second part also considers the notion of "secularization" and the extent to which anarchism has become an alternative religion in these films. The essay also reflects on the reliability of films as historical sources.

> Like any work of history, a film must be judged in terms of the knowledge of the past that we already possess. Like any work of history, it must situate itself within a body of other works, the ongoing (multimedia) debate over the importance of events and the meaning of the past.[1]

Almost coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, two respectively anarcho-communist (and

[1] Robert Rosentone, 'The historical film as real history', *Film-historia online*, 1 (1995), 5–23 (p. 9).

How to cite this book chapter:
García-Guirao, P. 2018. Representations of Catholicism in Contemporary Spanish Anarchist-themed Film (1995–2011). In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 94–131. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.d.
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anarchist or libertarian)-themed blockbusters were released: *Land and Freedom* (1995) and *Libertarias* (1996). These films relay the view that for Franco the armed conflict was in large part a religious issue: a crusade against atheists, communists, Jews and Freemasons.[2] After all, the central role of the Catholic Church in the conflict was illustrated by the radio message sent by Pope Pius XII "To the faithful of Spain" on 14 April 1939 in which he expressed support for Franco and blessed the Christian heroism of those who had defeated the impious red forces.[3] The films touch on that support, but they also document the anticlerical wave that emerged among certain anarchist, republican and communist groups during the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1939) and notably during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).[4]

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[2] "[. . .] The Spanish war was not a political conflict or a class struggle, but rather a war of two civilizations – a Catholic one and an alien, anti-Spanish, and Marxist one. According to Pla y Deniel [a Spanish bishop], the war resulted from the apostasy of the nation (the Bishop could not conceal the fact that most Spaniards supported the Republic), civil marriages, and the secular education system". In: Tadeusz Miłkowski, 'The Spanish Church and the Vatican during the Spanish Civil War', *The Polish Foreign Affairs Digest*, 3 (2004), 207–242 (p. 208).

[3] "With great joy We address you, most dear children of Catholic Spain, to express to you our fatherly congratulations for the gift of peace and of victory, with which God has deemed worthy to crown the Christian heroism of your faith and charity, tried in so many and so generous sufferings. Our Predecessor, of venerable memory, expected, with longing and trust, this Providential peace, which is undoubtedly the fruit of that copious blessing which he sent, in the very beginning of the struggle, 'to all those who had devoted themselves to the difficult and dangerous task of defending and restoring the rights and the honour of God and Religion'; and We do not doubt that this peace shall be the one that he himself foretold since then, 'the sign of a future of tranquillity in order, and of honour in prosperity'". Cited in Mundabor, 'Pope Pius XII's Message After the Victory In Spain. 14 April 1939'. <http://mundabor.wordpress.com/2011/07/21/pope-pius-xiis-message-after-the-victory-in-spain/> [accessed 26 July 2012]. See Mary Vincent, *Catholicism in the Second Spanish Republic: religion and politics in Salamanca, 1930–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[4] Two good sources on Spanish anticlericalism are: Manuel Pérez Ledesma, 'Studies on Anticlericalism in Contemporary Spain', *International Review of Social History*, 46 (2001), 227–255; and Julio Caro Baroja, *Introducción a una historia contemporánea del anticlericalismo español* (Madrid: ISTMO, 1980).

These films, however, have a tendency to rehearse old stereotypes corrupted by the violent excesses of the Spanish Civil War – "the war that won't die".[5] For example, in *Land and Freedom* (1995) and *Libertarias* (1996) anarchists continue to be "condemned as apostles of violence"[6] while the clergy are represented as apostles of fascism. Despite this, however, they also hint at a revised conception of religion whereby the real enemy is shown to be the ecclesiastical hierarchy, not necessarily all of the clergy, or all aspects of Christian ethics. The aim of this essay, therefore, is to provide a panoramic overview of Catholicism as portrayed in Spanish film productions that could be qualified as "anarchist-themed", first by considering the recurrence of old anticlerical sentiments, then by looking at the aspects of religion which are portrayed as implicitly more redeemable.

It should be clear that the contemporary Spanish anarchist-themed films analysed here do not belong to what might be termed propaganda film.[7] In what follows, "anarchist cinema" (or anarchist-themed cinema) is defined according to Stuart Christie's criteria as "not necessarily films made and produced by anarchists – some of which can be very boring indeed", but as also including "several anti-authoritarian films made by non-anarchists".[8] I will also follow the canon in approaching the "Spanishness" of those films relatively broadly, given that at present the transnational nature of Spanish film seems unquestionable: "To talk of Spanish cinema is to talk of its relations with other cinemas, through coproductions, through the sharing of actors and technical personnel, and

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[5] I have borrowed this expression from: David Archibald, *The War That Won't Die: The Spanish Civil War in Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

[6] Richard Porton, *On Anarchist Cinema. Anarchist Film and Video* (Oakland-Sussex: PM Press-ChristieBooks, 2009), p.vi.

[7] See Magí Crusells Valeta, 'Cinema as a political propaganda during the Spanish Civil War: España 1936', *Ebre,* 38, (2004), 1–12.

[8] Cited in: Porton, *On Anarchist Cinema*, p. 16. In the same book, Porton (p.i) asked: "If we speak of 'anarchist cinema,' are we referring to films about the historical experience of anarchists and anarchism or films with an anarchist impetus that might have been made by non-anarchists?'". For a further discussion see: Duncan Campbell, 'A revolution in cinema?', *The Guardian*, 24 November 2006. <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/nov/24/1> [accessed 15 July 2013].

particularly through its drawing on a common fund of formal, generic, and thematic concerns".[9] Thus, in addition to *Land and Freedom* (1995) and *Libertarias* (1996), I will also analyse *La lengua de las mariposas* [*Butterfly's Tongue*] (1996); *Salvador* (2006); *El corazón de la tierra* (2007) also known as *The Heart of Earth*; *Los girasoles ciegos* [*The Blind Sunflowers*] (2008); *La mujer del anarquista* (2009) or *The Anarchist's Wife*, directed by the German film director Peter Sehr in collaboration with the French scriptwriter Marie-Noëlle Barré; and *El cine libertario: Cuando las películas hacen historia* [*The Libertarian Film: When Films Leave Historical Legacies*] (2011).

Similarly, taking 'anarchism' and 'religion' as umbrella terms is not without its problems. 'Anarchism' alludes here to the historical-philosophical term that was born in parallel to Liberalism and Utopian Socialism. Even if the word has different implications, some of the common characteristics that it invoked, at least in the Spanish context, include the following: ". . . intellectual, political and social emancipation, which implies moral emancipation, and, upon this basis, the free development of a mature and regenerated humanity".[10] Nevertheless, there are several currents of thought and practice within anarchism that appear in these films: anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-collectivism, anarcho-pacifism, libertarian possibilism or 'possibilistic anarchism', and mutualism, among others. For its part, the term 'religion' seems more unproblematic in this context: in the context of this essay it refers mainly to the Catholic Church (as an institution with a strong hierarchical structure) but also to a set of beliefs (based on the principles from the gospel) held by grassroots Christians.

It is also worth acknowledging at the start the highly conflicting relationship between the "fictional film" genre and its approach to using film-as-history, as suggested by the epigraph above. On this issue, this essay takes film as a valid (but special) form of historical discourse, as a "vital source of information on what people believed" and as "an index to the key problems of a period and even

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[9] Jo Labanyi, and Tatjana Pavlović, eds, *A Companion to Spanish Cinema* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 1.

[10] Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1996), p. 44.

more importantly, the way those problems were perceived".[11] Still, there is a debate condensed in one crucial question: "In what sense does a film *reflect* the society in which it is made and therefore tell us something about that time and that place that is of value for the historian?"[12] Of these difficulties, three significant issues are worth highlighting.

In the first place, there is the issue of genre. Even though these films are part of a fictional narrative, we could frame them within the genre of "historical film". According to two of the most important internet film databases (*IMDb*, *FilmAffinity*), the majority of these films fit into "drama", "history" and "war" (or "post-war") genres. *Salvador*, for instance, is described as a "drama" and "based on a true story", while *El cine libertario: Cuando las películas hacen historia* is classified as a "documentary" and "movie documentary". Helpful as that taxonomy is for those databases, film critics agree that categorizing these films is neither straightforward nor unproblematic.[13]

The second main difficulty for those working in film studies is the danger of using a film as history or as an historical document. Film academics call "representation [. . .] the process by which the media presents the *real world* to an audience".[14] To present films *as* history, though, can be controversial: "historians will say, films are inaccurate. They distort the past. They fictionalize, trivialize, and romanticize important people, events, and movements. They falsify History".[15] Rare, therefore, are the films which represent the past as accurate, historical documents, despite the temptation to present them as such.

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[11] Warren I Susman, 'Film and History: Artefact and Experience', in *Hollywood and the American Historical Film,* ed. by J.E.Smyth (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1–11 (p. 4).

[12] Susman, p. 4.

[13] See Stephen Schwartz, 'The paradoxes of film and the recovery of historical memory: Vicente Aranda's works on the Spanish Civil War', *Film History: An International Journal*, 4 (2008), 501–507, (p. 501).

[14] Philip Rayner, Peter Wall and Stephen Kruger, *AS media studies: the essential introduction*. (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 61.

[15] Rosenstone, p. 1.

The third difficulty, building on the second, concerns the degree to which these films in fact construct and invent "reality".[16] In that regard, three factors are worth bearing in mind: a) the "ideological positions of directors and screenwriters"; b) the "emotions" they choose to express to "help understand the events they relate to"; and c) the way they sometimes become perceived as "excellent" and alternative "sources of information" to contrast to the received orthodoxy (in other words, the history they represent is actually taken as a narrative to query the established one).[17]

Nonetheless and notwithstanding the risk of simplification, history books are also created in specific contexts: historians write with their ideological agendas shaping the way the past is perceived and facing similar problems of objectivity, even though some would argue that there is at least one fundamental difference between fiction and history, which is that "[. . .] both tell stories, but history tells a true story".[18] My general assumption in this essay is that fictional Spanish films – understood as cultural products of a symbolic system[19] – work as sociological indicators of the *cosmovisión* or worldview of the specific society in the specific era in which they were made.[20] Furthermore, films can even be considered "*interpreters* of history".[21] Therefore, in the analysis which follows, where appropriate I will touch on the chosen tone of the films, on the audiences and reception of the films, on the historical context that they purport to represent, and on their construction or propagation of stereotypes.

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[16] José Uroz, ed., *Historia y cine* (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 1999), p. 6.

[17] Francisco Javier Zubiaur Carreño, 'El Cine como fuente de la Historia', *Memoria y civilización: anuario de historia de la Universidad de Navarra*, 8 (2005), 205–219 (p. 215). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Spanish to English are mine.

[18] Rosenstone, p. 8.

[19] Martín Paradelo Núñez, 'El mundo a través de un cristal. Alcance crítico de los modos de representación cinematográficos', *Estudios. Revista de Pensamiento Libertario*, 2 (2012), 76–101 (p. 78). And, Susman, p. 9.

[20] Labanyi and Pavlović, p. 2. On this topic see: Luise White, 'Telling more: lies, secrets, and history', *History and Theory*, 4 (2000), 11–22, and Jennifer Jensen Wallach, 'Building a bridge of words: The literary autobiography as historical source material', *Biography*, 3 (2006), 446–461.

[21] Susman, p. 5.

In what follows, I will first pinpoint and discuss some of the old negative representations about Catholicism which Spanish anarchist-themed films indulge in: first, the traditional role of the Catholic Church as an institution that monopolized education in Spain for several centuries; then the supposed violation of religious vows (vow of poverty, and vow of chastity) and the exaltation of the vow of obedience by churchmen under scrutiny, mainly in the midst of the Spanish Civil War; and then the violation of the seal of the confessional. Secondly, I will argue that despite these negative representations, there was never a homogeneous church in Spain either during the Civil War or during Franco's Regime, and I will show that those films do also portray a Christianity which can be more solidary, revolutionary and attached to a different ideation of Christ, unlike the Church consisting of high-ranking members of the clergy. This second part will also discuss the notion of "secularization" and the degree to which anarchism has become an alternative religion in these films. In the conclusion, I will return to the controversial question of the link between anarchist films and representations of religion, and the extent to which films are good sources of historical information.

1. Negative representations

Let us start by listing the old anti-religious sentiments that appear in these films. They are replete with scenes of anticlericalism, and instances of spontaneous violence against Catholic symbols. The films similarly caricature the entire religious class, portraying priests as dogmatic masters of the education system. The Church is represented as an immoral corporation, concealing cases of religious men perpetrating sexual abuse, general criminal activity, and showing a lack of respect for the vow of silence implicit in confession. In short, these anarchist films tend to settle scores with old enemies: if Francoist sympathizers set out to build an image of anarchists focused on fanaticism, intolerance and crime, libertarian-themed film tends to create a similar iconography of the members of religious orders associated with the Francoist side.

1.1 The monopoly of education[22]

One way to understand the roots of this anticlericalism is by looking at the religious monopoly on education in Spain: "Workers not only believed the clergy made a profit from their schools, but considered them an obstacle to the development of a free public school system. [. . .] Articulate labour spokesmen [. . .] declared that the ideas taught in Catholic schools were antithetical to the cause of workers' rights".[23] In 1877, an alarmingly high 72% of the Spanish population was illiterate.[24] Thirty-three years later, the illiteracy rate was still high: 59% among adults and 50% among children over the age of 10.[25] These rates of illiteracy can be explained in part by the country's economic poverty, but another reason could also be that education was subject to payment of a fee, and was in the hands of the institution that had been the most ideologically and economically powerful entity in Spain since the 15th century – that is, the Catholic Church. In other words: only the children of the wealthy could afford to pursue an education. This compounded the workers' misery, and had become a cause of hostility towards the Church: "One major problem was the clergy's need to finance its activities, and the corresponding resentment of workers who had to pay for the services or who simply disliked the money-making activities of a religious institution".[26] The long-term legacy of these injustices can be seen in both *La lengua de las mariposas* and *Los girasoles ciegos*.

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[22] For a deeper analysis on anarchism and education in Spain see Carolyn P. Boyd, 'The Anarchists and Education in Spain, 1868–1909', *The Journal of Modern History*, 48.4 (1976), 125–170. And Pedro García-Guirao, 'Francisco Ferrer y las misiones pedagógicas del anarquismo español' (Murcia: *Biblioteca Saavedra Fajardo*, 2007).

[23] Joan Connelly Ullman, *The tragic week: a study of anticlericalism in Spain, 1875–1912* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 326–327.

[24] Compared to other countries in 1870, illiteracy rates were 68% in Italy (a strongly Catholic country), 24% in Great Britain and 31% in France. <http://ourworldindata.org/data/education-knowledge/literacy/> [accessed 10 June 2015].

[25] M. Gloria Espigado Tocino, 'El analfabetismo en España. Un estudio a través del censo de población de 1877', *Trocadero: Revista de historia moderna y contemporanea* (1990), 173–192.

[26] Joan Connelly Ullman, p. 326.

The first of these, *La lengua de las mariposas*, centres on the relationship between a pupil (Moncho) and his schoolteacher (Don Gregorio) a few months before Francisco Franco's coup in July 1936. Moncho does not want to go to school because everyone has told him that all religious teachers beat their pupils. However, Don Gregorio turns out not to be like those feared religious teachers. He is a freethinker (an anarchist) and a "kindly if unorthodox"[27] educator who believes not in God, but in what he calls the "Observation Method" – a scientific method based on empirical observation and measurable data – and he opposes the repressive methods of clerical teachers committed to using fear and punishment. Don Gregorio – as theorised by Francisco Ferrer, the founder of the *Escuela Moderna* or *Modern School*[28] – conceives of the classroom as a laboratory to change mentalities and as a permanent experiment based on observation and on Maieutic pedagogical methods rather than on authoritarianism and faith.[29] Moncho is captivated by his new teacher and friend, but his educational system does not please everyone. For example, the priest complains to Don Gregorio that ever since Moncho started his schooling he no longer cares about going to church and no longer wants to be an altar boy. Don Gregorio interrupts the conversation to say that he does not teach his students to hate the Church but to be free spirits: "Freedom encourages the spirit of

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[27] Nina Caplan, 'Butterfly's Tongue', *Daily Mail*, 14 November 2000. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-6351/Butterflys-Tongue.html> [accessed 10 January 2013].

[28] Most of the anarchist educational projects were based on the Modern School. The Modern School was a progressive school founded in 1909 by the Catalan libertarian Francisco Ferrer i Guardia. Its principles were free secular education, massive literacy (especially among working class), mixed education, and the abolition of corporal punishments. See Geoffrey C.Fidler,'The Escuela Moderna Movement of Francisco Ferrer: 'Por la Verdad y la Justicia", *History of Educations Quarterly* 25 (1985), 103–132.

[29] "Considering the hostility of the Church against this conception of the classroom as a laboratory for change, then it is not surprising that Spanish authorities had received with concerns Ferrer's proclamation [. . .] that 'the child, in order to avoid errors', must be taught that it is 'essential' 'not to admit anything on faith'". In: Porton, *Cine y Anarquismo*, p. 195.

strong men" (19:05). To be a free spirit means eliminating dogmas and symbolical chains; and Don Gregorio tries to eliminate these from his pupils' brains. Moncho, the little boy, is intimidated by the idea of Hell. However, Don Gregorio tells him that Hell does not exist, or at least it does not exist in the hereafter but rather on earth itself. Instead he says: "Hate, cruelty, that is hell. Sometimes hell is our very selves" (53:23). In fact, he will suffer what could be considered "hell on earth" in the final scenes of the film, when Moncho's mother (and the wife of a former anarchist) feels compelled to join a public street condemnation of left-wingers shouting: "Criminals, atheists, reds! Atheists, atheists, atheists!" (01:25:03). Even the former anarchist publicly insults the teacher in order to avoid suspicions falling upon him: "Murderer, anarchist, son of a bitch, bastard, atheist, atheist, atheist" (01:27:00).

For some film critics *La lengua de las mariposas* is a clear example of "sugar-coated history", fictional, invented, or untrue, and devoid of any historical value. It is:

> Republican Spain seen through rose-tinted glasses; a harsh and bitter world, magically transformed into an idyllic premodern utopia about to be cruelly crushed by fascism. There is a refusal to engage with a concrete historical past, and what is presented [. . .] is a nostalgic recreation of a republican Spain that never was.[30]

In the light of this criticism, the film critic Jesús Miguel Sáez complained about the leftist prejudices advanced in this type of film, made by directors that formed "The cultural humus of PM Zapatero's regime".[31] For Jesús Miguel Sáez, given these ideological conditions, Cuerda's film did not convey any historical learning but a pure intolerance and manipulation of religious issues: "With these kind of films [certain film directors] have been devoted to the 'official historical memory', one that makes the Civil War a clash between the good – defenders of freedom, – and evil – promoters of obscurantism and crime, – and the Church has

[30] David Archibald, 'The war that won't die', *The Guardian*, 28 July 2000. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2000/jul/28/culture.features1> [accessed 9 January 2013].

[31] Jesús Miguel Sáez González, 'Reseñas de cine', *Vivat Academia*, 112 (2008), 1–9 (p. 6).

been included in this latter side".[32] Regardless of the correctness of this review, his words highlight some of the factors noted in my introduction, such as the importance of film contexts, production and history, as well as the traditional left-wing bias against the Church, not just during the Civil War but also today.

A good example of the representation of the clergy as "promoters of obscurantism and crime" can be found in the role of Don Salvador in *Los girasoles ciegos*, the polar opposite of Don Gregorio in *La lengua de las mariposas*. *Los girasoles ciegos* describes the terrible secret of an apparent widow (Elena) and her son (Lorenzo). Everyone in Orense (Galicia) believes that Elena's husband (Ricardo) died at the beginning of the Civil War (1936) in the Republican faction. In reality, Ricardo lives hidden in a small secret room in their family house, translating freethinking, republican and anarchist authors. Don Salvador, a priest who fought on the fascist side, starts a new job in Orense. He becomes Lorenzo's new teacher. The child is not willing to follow Don Salvador's religious teaching and the priest uses this rebelliousness to approach Elena sexually.

At school the children and the teacher are required to sing the fascist song "Cara al Sol" [Facing the Sun]. Not performing this duty involved serious punishment for the children and their families. Furthermore, in the classroom we can see the three compulsory symbols on display in every Spanish public school: The Crucified Christ, a picture of Franco and another of José Antonio Primo de Rivera. The priest's teaching is based on the following principle: "What matters most at the end of the day is to develop as a good person, in other words as Christians and Spaniards" (16:50). His words mix politics with religion and assume that in order to be a good Spaniard, one has to be a good Christian. Don Salvador's pupils – especially those with Republican relatives – return home terrified by the horrendous stories about non-believers told by their teacher.

In *La lengua de las mariposas* Moncho's mother is afraid of her son's questions regarding his father's Republican ideology. In one scene of this film, he innocently points out to her: "Dad does not

[32] Sáez González, p. 4.

even give a shit about God" (16:20), to which she replies: "Well, that is a sin but Dad believes in God like every upstanding citizen" (16:29). In *Los girasoles ciegos*, young Lorenzo does not want to sing "Cara al Sol", and he is constantly interrogated by Don Salvador, who is eager to discover what might be going on in his home and the political background of Lorenzo's family, in order to report it to the authorities. In these scenes, both films denounce the sovereign "Right of Death and the Power over Life" that the priests had over the population. Don Salvador not only controls the physical punishment of boys but also, to use a Foucauldian expression, "governs theirs souls".[33] As film critics have pointed out, the director of the film, Cuerda – who is not necessarily an anarchist, but is a left-wing film director – falls back on the trope of presenting this dark side of the Spanish Church: "[Cuerda] has given more minutes, or at least more kick to the conservative camp of history, that is, to the sphere of the church. Not so much to the faithful people but to the people who see everything from the podium".[34] A distinction is thus drawn between the clergy and the laity, though as we will see later, some films also differentiate between a particularly reactionary church hierarchy and the lower clergy.

1.2 Caricature and criticism of religious double standards

This section draws on the film representation of the three vows that Catholic priests have to make to become ordained: poverty, obedience and chastity. According to ecclesiastical law, the clergy must live and act in accordance with these rules. However, the films under analysis portray systematic violations of these vows. This negative and archetypal representation is a pattern within anticlerical Spanish anarchist art and literature: "Priests are

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[33] Michel Foucault, 'Right of Death and Power over Life', in *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1. An Introduction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), 133–159.

[34] Olmo, 'Crítica de la película Los girasoles ciegos', (Precríticas, 3 October 2008). <http://www.precriticas.com/criticas/la-lengua-de-los-girasoles/> [accessed 10 January 2013].

considered as fanatics, obscurantists and corrupt men, traitors to the Gospel".[35]

1.2.1 Vow of poverty

Libertarias focuses on María's story. She is a young nun who is recruited (by force) by Pilar (an anarchist woman) at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Their plan is to create a women's group to fight Francoist troops. Very soon, they discover that they have to fight not only Franco but also the macho attitudes of their male anarchist comrades. María doubts her faith in churchmen when she witnesses the ravages of war first hand together with the hidden pesetas of the Church. In Aranda's film, militia members discover sixteen million pesetas in cash and abundant quantities of gold in the Episcopal Palace. They decide to display these treasures publicly so that the people can witness the hypocrisy of the Church while the proletariat starves to death. As Ullman explains, this panders to popular perceptions at the time: "These orders were considered exceptionally wealthy, an opinion based largely on the fact that nuns performed no remunerated service".[36] This is also an illustration of a classic left-wing criticism of the Church, most famously articulated amongst anarchists by Bakunin in *God and the State*. He stated that "Christianity is the religion *par excellence*, because it exhibits and manifests, to the fullest extent, the very nature and essence of every religious system, which is *the impoverishment, enslavement, and annihilation of humanity for the benefit of divinity*".[37] In *Libertarias*, the clergy are portrayed as not even pursuing "the benefit of divinity" but only their own riches. Furthermore, in the middle of a revolutionary anarchist fury aimed at seeking social justice (both in film and reality), the discovery of such a treasure was always likely to entail: firstly, the immediate confiscation of the wealth and property of the church; secondly, the punishment of such a robbery in the name of God;

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[35] Lily Litvak, *El cuento anarquista: 1880–1911: antología* (Madrid: Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, 2003), p. 32.

[36] Joan Connelly Ullman, p. 327.

[37] Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008), p. 24 [italics in the original].

and finally, the restitution of this wealth to those who really need it: the people.[38] Similarly, popular uprisings are represented in these films as a form of historical revenge by the dispossessed against the wealthy elites and as a justification of violence, and especially as an excuse to search religious buildings and churches. In the same way, swift executions are explained and justified by the sheer thrust of popular uprisings. In the context of "revolutionary justice" the image that anarchists hold of the Church was considerably influenced by the actions of its hierarchy: while the priests are often given the benefit of the doubt, those in the upper echelons of the Church's hierarchy are deemed guilty of collaborating with the Franco regime and accused of plundering the working class.[39] This tells us much about how the Church was perceived not only retrospectively but also today as an accomplice of the oppressive class.[40]

1.2.2 Vow of obedience

Another negative representation of Catholicism in anarchist-themed films is the portrayal of the vow of obedience to God and the Church as a way of renouncing personal freedom in order to obey blindly the preferences of bishops and popes, often against the principles of the Bible. Conceived in such a way, churchmen were, for anarchist militants, potential traitors of the social revolution which one would expect followers of Jesus to support. For example, the documentary film *El cine libertario:*

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[38] "These economic factors formed the basis for the workers' conviction that religious orders and great capitalists were closely linked, and for the popular identification of clericalism with capitalism". In: Joan Connelly Ullman, p. 328.

[39] "The abuses against clergyman (for example the assassination of the bishop) are justified indirectly by the authors using the pretext that they took control of money and riches. [. . .] The iconography is a reminiscence of the old Soviet films about the revolution: The hero is no longer the officer and gentleman of Franco's films, but the mass [the people] and, within it, the individuals forming that mass". In: Xavier Ripoll, 'Los milicianos en el cine', *Film-Historia*, 3 (1996), 287–294 (p. 292).

[40] Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), p. 82.

Cuando las películas hacen historia portrays churchmen as part of a traitor "reactionary beast". Such treason takes two forms. The first is that churchmen turn out to be not only politically reactionary, but counterrevolutionary, at least in the context of the first half of the 19th century in Andalusia:

> [. . .] the Church became not simply a conservative-revolutionary force, as among the small proprietors of Navarre and Aragon [. . .], but a conservative force *tout court*, in that it joined hands with the wealthy classes. [. . .] As the social bandits became *bandoleros* protected by local rich *caciques* and the Church of the rich, the peasants' dream of a just and a free world had to find a new expression.[41]

The other treason is that, religiously or morally, priests are seen as betraying grassroots Christians, or the cause of supporting the poor,[42] remaining instead at the service of savage capitalism. In the Spanish imagination, this reactionary betrayal is embodied in the feared triad of the Civil Guard-Cacique-Parish Priest, other times represented as the Bourgeois Capitalist-Soldier-Priest, and even as the Capital/State-Religion-Army.[43] The triad is synonymous with repression, authority and obedience.

Along similar lines is the anarchist-communist-themed *Land and Freedom*, a film that tells the story of David Carr (a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain) who fights for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War in the context of the International Brigades. In the very beginning coincidentally he joins the militias of the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista or Workers' Party of Marxist Unification). After that he ends up joining the Spanish Communist Party (he perceives a greater military efficiency and discipline there) but he is soon disappointed by the internal fights among different left-wing groups,

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[41] Hobsbawm, p. 81. A *bandolero* was an outlaw or bandit, who specially operated in the mountainous Southern areas of Spain. A *cacique* was a local political boss in Spain, who gained and maintained power thanks to illegal activities such as suborning Church and police, buying votes and terrorising people.

[42] Hobsbawm, p. 83.

[43] Lily Litvak, *El cuento anarquista, (1880–1911): antología* (Madrid: Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, 2003), p. 31.

and especially by the repressive ideological purges against POUM members and anarchists because they are the group that most clearly despises blind obedience to hierarchical diktats. At the beginning of the film, a Spanish anarchist militant spokesperson tries to convince the British audience to join the Spanish revolutionary movement stating that: "The big landowners, industrialists, churchmen and army officers feared the growing power of the working class" (3:46). For Spanish anarchists this reactionary behaviour is even more reprehensible in the case of the clergy because, on the pretext of celebrating the act of worship, they secretly conspired against freedom and terrorised the population by associating the revolution with the realm of the devil. The battle is pitched as one for freedom and against obedience to the forces of the status quo.[44]

This debate over obedience and anarchist freedom is also represented in *Libertarias*. Pilar – the anarchist woman – discovers María (a former nun) praying and trying to obey and respect all the commandments of the Church while passively witnessing the suffering of Spanish people at war because of these commandments, and Pilar says: "All right, it is time for you to forget this God who is in heaven and for you to take charge of people who are on earth" (1:34). Similarly, in the same film, María introduces herself with the traditional Spanish expression: "To serve God and you" (16:00); to which Pilar angrily replies: "Bloody hell! You must not serve God or anyone! From now on you are free!" (16:03), something that illustrates well the anarchist dislike of any notion of religious obedience.

The most important question arising here is: What is the clergy willing to do on behalf of Christian obedience? The answer is

[44] "The machine gun and rifle behind the altars, after saturated images of liturgy and incense, and later impregnated of powder and profanity. [. . .] There, where under the guise of Catholic worship they conspired against freedom, and they wilted blooming consciences, and the children's minds. They protected and organized usury and all those places covered with holiness fell under the pressure of the furious mass full of courage and they lit with flames the red dawn that was dying the Spanish horizon". Cited in: Santiago Juan-Navarro, 'Un Pequeño Hollywood Proletario: El Cine Anarcosindicalista durante la Revolución Española', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies,* 4 (2011), 523–540 (p. 528).

provided by Don Salvador, the young priest of *Los girasoles ciegos*, who appears as a part of the crusade, as a former Warrior-Priest with a uniform and a pistol.[45] He confesses to his religious superior that he did not want to fight in the war but says: "I have killed them; I have finished them off on the ground while they looked me in the eye [. . .]" (5:45). In other words, clergymen have felt forced to perpetrate acts they knew were wrong or at least contrary to biblical instruction.

1.2.3 Vow of chastity

In these films, anarchists take an almost sadistic delight in representing the failure of the clergy to keep to the vow of chastity.[46] As we can see in *Libertarias*, María, after the outbreak of the Revolution, tries to find a place to hide. Suddenly she discovers in a block of flats an inscription on a door with the portrait of Jesus Christ that says "I will reign". The origin of that inscription comes from the Bible: "He must reign until he shall have put all enemies under his feet" (Corinthians 15:25). However, the door leads not to a devout place but to a brothel. There, the prostitutes help María and, against her will, undress her while making jokes regarding her odd smell. They ask if nuns do not wash their intimate parts in the convents (7:20). In the next scene, they force her to hide under a blanket as a regular customer arrives. To María's surprise (and terror), the customer is the city's chubby and lustful bishop (7:30–8:35). In preparation for the sexual intercourse, he

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[45] According to Miłkowski, the direct military collaboration of churchmen in Franco's trenches was not widespread but was a very limited activity: "Some rare, but most expressive accounts, indicate the direct participation of many Catholic priests in the war — greater than the Catholic hierarchy would like to admit. 'Heraldo de Aragón' informed its readers of chaplains participating in military operations. A practical follower of Huidobro described how, when he was distributing the Holy Communion among convicts prior to their execution, one of them tried to use the opportunity to escape. The priest proudly described catching him himself" (p. 221).

[46] Pérez Ledesma devotes a very well-researched part of his article to the study of the priestly sexuality entitled: 'Sexuality of the Clergy and Sexuality of the Anticlericals' (pp. 233–235).

sarcastically even mentions to María that "God is in control, it will be ok!" (8:40–8:50). When the spectators perceive that they might witness the rape of the nun, and therefore the breaking of her vow of chastity, an armed female anarchist militant enters the room and threatens to kill him if he touches María (12:46–13:43). The scene contains a clear message for the audience: female-liberation should be in the hands of active women liberating other women from all forms of patriarchy. Notwithstanding, this is not the last time that both María's virginity and her innocence are under threat.

Her new life outside the monastery is packed with challenges and dangers – not always originating from clergymen. For instance, when María and her sisters stroll through the streets, they fear the lascivious and aggressive presence of a group of anarchist militants dressed up in the clothes of religious people. Nonetheless, one of the militants blurts out: "Little nun-comrades, don't be afraid. The revolution respects women, even those of the clergy!" (5:40–5:55). However, such a statement is historically inaccurate because in fact 283 religious women were victims of the conflict.[47] Moreover, as Adriana Cases explains, symbolically "[t]o rape a *sanctimonious woman* is equivalent to desecrating places of worship; to rape and kill a wealthy woman is equivalent to sweeping away the old order, and this is part of the revolution that seeks to destroy the system that has been oppressing the people".[48] In this case, María survived unscathed from all male attacks; she even gets horrified as she witnesses the execution of the same Catholic bishop she encountered earlier in the brothel. She represents the "image of virginal victimization"[49] given that she does not succumb even to the promise of happiness embodied by her male counterpart; that is, by the anarchist ex-priest who tries to seduce her using both the gospel

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[47] Jan Bank & Lieve Gevers, *Churches and Religion in the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p. 90 and Adriana Cases, 'La violencia sexual en la retaguardia republicana durante la Guerra Civil española', *Historia Actual Online*, 34 (2014), 69–80 (p. 77).

[48] Adriana Cases, p. 77.

[49] Maria Van Liew, 'Witness to War: Virginal Vicissitudes in VicenteAranda's Libertarias (1996)', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 25 (2008), 230–240 (p. 231).

and anarchist principles: "His efforts to court and marry her serve to emphasize the bonds, stronger than her sexual desire for him, with her comrades. She consistently chooses Pilar over him for protection and affection." [50] In these films religious women maintain their chastity and their gendered representations aim to move the spectators toward empathy and respect. By contrast, the representations of lascivious religious men differ radically from those of the religious women.

In a similar vein, in *Los girasoles ciegos* the young priest Don Salvador spends his nights contemplating pictures of women from the Bible trying to obtain sexual relief using a homemade vagina made from cloths and a pillow. Later his sexual obsessions find a target in Elena López Reinares (Lorenzo's mother). Even though she does not try to seduce him, he develops an unhealthy obsession with her. He sees the young widow as a constant temptation, as the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. He confesses this to his superior and even mentions his involvement with prostitutes during the Spanish Civil War. His superior recommends that he should confess and take care of his instincts. Following this recommendation Don Salvador tries everything he can to consummate his desperate sexual attraction for Elena. One day he even turns up at her house wearing his military uniform thinking that Elena might accept him as a man and as a fighter, rather than as a representative of the clergy. Nevertheless, as soon as the priest discovers that his lust is not reciprocated, he attacks and destroys the whole family. Ricardo Mazo Torralba, Elena's husband, who for more than five years had remained hidden – as a *topo*[51] – in the attic, cannot stand the attempted rape of his wife and leaves his hiding place to fight Don Salvador. Finally, knowing that he will probably be shot as a result, Ricardo jumps out of a window. For Catholic critics, such moments in the film made it "in these

[50] Maria Van Liew, p. 237.

[51] *Topo* [literarily a mole] is the unofficial term used to describe those who lived hidden after the Civil War to avoid the Francoist repression. Two good researches on this issue are: Ronald Fraser, *In hiding: the life of Manuel Cortes* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), and Jesús Torbado and Manuel Leguineche, eds, *Los topos: el testimonio estremecedor de quienes pasaron su vida escondidos* (Barcelona: Argos, 1980).

years of examining the behaviour of priests and their training, an intense look at the sexual conflicts of those who follow a priestly vocation".[52]

In contrast, Jesús Arnal (Buenaventura Durruti's[53] secretary and a former priest) is represented differently.[54] While the bishop in *Libertarias* who visits prostitutes is soon shot, Jesús Arnal represents a member of the anarchist militia, but a special one. He also is (or was) a churchman; however, he believes in the anarchist revolution (including the sexual one) and he tries to have a romantic relationship with María (the nun), although she rejects him.[55] The spectator is left with a different representation of the moral and political standing of the two priests: the fascist priest is bad and impure, while the anarchist priest is good and relatively pure.

1.2.4 The seal of the confessional

In addition to their portrayal of the failure to keep to the religious vows of poverty and charity, and to their willingness to blindly follow the vow of obedience, these films further highlight the violation of the vow of silence that is implicit in confession, also called the *seal of the confessional*. To take an example from *Land and Freedom*, in one scene a parish priest indiscriminately shoots from the bell tower of the church to resist the collectivization of the building and the land. Later he denies being the gunman but is exposed before the crowd as a liar as he has a large bruise on his shoulder, a mark caused by the continued use of a rifle. In

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[52] *Blind Sunflowers (Los Girasoles Ciegos)*, (Roma: Signis world Catholic association communication, March-June 2009) <http://www.signis.net/article.php3?id_article=3163> [accessed 10 January 2013].

[53] In the Spanish anarchist movement, Buenaventura Durruti (1896–1936) was described as a revolutionary hero. He died shot under strange circumstances while defending Madrid from the fascists.

[54] Luisa Marco Sola, '*Si Jesucristo estuviera en el mundo formaría también en estas milicias populares*. La memoria de la Iglesia disidente', *Historia y Memoria*, 3–4 (2007), 1–14 (pp. 9–10). <http://www.todoslosnombres.org/php/generica.php?enlace=muestradocumento&iddocumento=100 > [accessed 20 July 2012].

[55] Lee, p. 102.

the face of this irrefutable evidence, the people of the village call for immediate justice and instant execution. In this sequence, the spectator is encouraged to empathize with the act of justice that the *pueblo* demands. Nonetheless, this empathy is the fruit of the dramatization of history referred to earlier, "the passion trap", "where the passions of the war filter into [the] construction of the story and infect the story with either heart wrenching shouting or overly emotive writing".[56] The tension of the sequence rises when a woman further accuses the priest of being responsible for the execution of five young anarchist CNT members, one of them having previously told the priest during confession where the men had been hiding from the Civil Guards. It then becomes clear that the priest had undeniably violated the seal of the confessional and gone immediately to the Civil Guards to denounce the men. Here again, a priest is portrayed as betraying a moral code which is supposed to be defining to his profession. As a consequence of his incrimination, the five young CNT members died in an ambush. Faced with the evidence of such betrayal, the militia members shoot the priest and burn the relics from the church.[57]

2. New conceptions of religion in Spanish anarchist films

Even though the old anticlerical sentiments are clearly represented in these contemporary anarchist films, the emergence of new conceptualizations can also be observed, which I have grouped under two themes outlined below.

Firstly, in those films there is a timid and conciliatory tone linked to a set of principles derived from the ethics of the early Christians (prior to the emergence of the centralized Roman Catholic Church). Some parts of the films seem to seek a certain

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[56] Paul Doyle, *The Anarchist's Wife – A Review*, (Seattle: By the Firelight, 28 May 2009). <http://bythefirelight.com/2009/05/28/the-anarchists-wife-a-review/>. [accessed 7 January 2013]

[57] "This is in contrast to the scene in Loach's *Land and Freedom* where anticlericalism is incidental yet explained by the priest shooting at the militia from his bell tower. When the priest is captured with a rifle and the marks on his shoulder to prove his firing, he is shot. Aranda's anticlericalism is much more important but also much more muddied and unexplained and as a consequence, irrational". In: Lee, p. 103.

peace with Catholicism, but not with the Church as an institution. Secondly, these films also display a certain indifference towards religion, which could be interpreted as a form of tolerance for individual beliefs. In other words, as long as religion is kept within the private domain and does not interfere with the public sphere, anarchism will respect it.[58] The religious issue in contemporary films is either simply ignored, or diluted by problems that were more relevant to the working class. There is arguably a third iconography in the projected images of these films, which is that the religious class appears as ideologically sick but likely to be "cured" if invited to partake in "the banquet of life",[59] that is, by the adoption of anarchist vital principles. However, as this iconography is not as prevalent as the other two in the films analysed here, and as I discuss it elsewhere, it will not be discussed here.[60]

2.1 The other Church (Grassroots Christians)

Despite my opening description of the Francoist Christian crusade against atheism, Judaism and Freemasonry, and the fact that some historians refer to the Church at that time as "puritan and pro-government",[61] there was never a homogeneous church in Spain either during the Civil War or during the Franco Regime. At the heart of these films what we also see represented is the so-called "other Church", composed of grassroots Christians. In some ways, anarchists seem to be tolerant towards this early Christianity and also towards an ideology close to Liberation

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[58] "A common position in modern philosophy is that the religious beliefs a person holds are of a personal, existential nature and should play no role in typically secular enterprises like science and politics, where the arguments offered should be accessible to anyone". In: Hendricus Johannes Prosman, 'Secularity: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern', *Ars Disputandi supplement series*, 4, 2011, 31–70 (p. 65).

[59] Anselmo Lorenzo, *El banquete de la vida. Concordancia entre la naturaleza, el hombre y la sociedad* (Barcelona: Sintra, 2006).

[60] Pedro García-Guirao, 'Pobres pero honradas: Lujuria burguesa y honorabilidad proletaria en las novelas breves de Federica Montseny', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 24 (2011), 155–177 (pp. 167–168).

[61] José Rubio Hernández, *El movimiento obrero en el cine* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2009), p. 27.

Theology that symbolically raises Jesus Christ's flag.[62] The revolution becomes a bonfire upon which the old evils of the working class, including religion as stereotypically perceived, are burnt in order to make way for a new world,[63] but in this new world religion is not necessarily something wrong, or something that cannot be reconciled with anarchism.[64] In fact, these anarchists try to rescue the Christian principles that they are sympathetic to, and attempt to integrate them into anarchist ideology. For them, God is not the same as Jesus Christ, just as the Church is not the same as religion or mysticism. These ideas seem to echo Leo Tolstoy's objections against the ecclesiastic faith, which he considered diametrically opposed to Christ's teaching.[65]

Thus, in *La mujer del anarquista*, during the siege of Madrid by the Condor Legion, the terrified reds – including the anarchists – pray in the basement of a building for the bombing to end. In the same film, the main anarchist character (Justo) is religiously married to Manuela, who is originally from a religious and wealthy right-wing family. Nevertheless, when they go into exile in France, Manuela wants to go to church to light a candle to keep her promise to God for safely reuniting the whole family. As for Justo, even though he says that he will never enter a Church again in his life, that does not necessarily make him an atheist. Similarly, in *Libertarias*, Floren, a club-footed anarchist who owns a library

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[62] See Linda H. Damico, *The Anarchist Dimension of Liberation Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 1987).

[63] In this sense, Pérez Ledesma states that "the destructive work of all of them [anticlerical movements] was a response to the need to put an end to the symbolic system of traditional societies, to which the Church lent its ideological and bureaucratic apparatus, in order to give way to a modern, middle-class, secularized and individualist society" (pp. 240–241).

[64] Some authors argue something different: "Therefore, religion is not what interests anarchists regarding Christianity, but the desire of Jesus to defend his truth, even paying with his life, which is a shared truth as a defence of justice and of the value of those who are unprotected and weak; those, by binding to a belief, can be strong inside". In: Jorge Urrutia Gómez, 'El retorno de Cristo, tipo y mito', *Anales de literatura española*, 15 (2002), 237–255 (p. 238).

[65] See Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You Or, Christianity Not as a Mystical Teaching but as a New Concept of Life* (New York: Editions Artisan Devereaux, 1927).

and who can communicate with the spirits of some presumably dead Spanish anarchists, discusses the existence of God with María, the former nun. Floren believes in God but nevertheless blurts out that: "God is a fascist" (31:40). She also describes Jesus Christ as the first anarchist in history and places her religious sentiments in seeming contradiction with those of the papal Church: "I believe in Jesus Christ but not in priests" (33:05). She shocks María with this assertion (even though it was a quite widespread belief among anarchists)[66] as well as with her confessed belief that Jesus Christ is a woman (33:22).

That religious men and women are respected in these films only if they rebel against the established Church can also be seen in *Libertarias*, where María, after meeting Floren and being exposed to anarchist readings, becomes a new person. She still believes in religion, but in a polarized and revolutionary form that has no place for the Church hierarchy. She favours the Christian spirit and what might be called early Christianity, opposed to the papal church. All these ideas lead us to the historical figure of Jesus Christ, not as the passive man of the cross but as the fighter, the radical propagandist, one who is principally a militant, a persecuted pariah, an accused man and, above all, someone without rituals, churches or intermediaries between humankind and its own liberation.[67]

In any case, the turning point in the representation of this new Spanish Church begins to develop in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (1962–5):

> The Church in Spain was one of the most forceful democratizers in the Catholic wave [which is the label Diamond *et al* give to the third wave of democratisation, to note the role of Catholicism in it]. It is also one of the churches upon which Vatican II exercised its strongest influence. Among the factors that caused the demise of Spanish authoritarianism, the Church's opposition was

[66] See Aníbal Vaz de Mello, *Cristo, el Anarquista. Estudio sobre la personalidad y filosofía de Jesús de Nazaret* (Editorial Claridad: Buenos Aires, 1936), and Urrutia, pp. 237–247.

[67] See Matías Usero Torrente, 'La Iglesia Católica y su Política', *Orto. Revista de Documentación Social*, 10 (1932), 20–23 (p. 20) and Urrutia, pp. 237–247.

> arguably the most formidable. Paradoxically, though, the Church did not apply this resistance through energetic popular participation, but rather through its power of withdrawal. It significantly aided democratization by deciding no longer to support the regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco.[68]

It is worth remembering that part of the old Church had collaborated directly with Francoism. The Church finally acknowledged, some thirty years later, the mistake that it had committed by becoming directly involved with the political purges of the Franco Regime. The process of separation of Church from State in Spain started in the late 1960s.[69] After the Second Vatican Council, the Church became a real driving force for social justice in Spanish communist, socialist and trade unionist clandestine assemblies.[70] This social phenomenon can be seen, for example, in the anarchist film *Salvador*. The film describes the life of the Catalan anarchist Salvador Puig Antich, the last person executed by garrotte (a medieval weapon used for strangulation) in March 1974 under the dictatorship of a dying Franco, who would die on 20 November 1975. In the film, Oriol Arau, the young lawyer who is trying to save Salvador Puig Antich's life, promotes a social campaign where groups of Christians play a prominent role, so much so that a plea of mercy is sent by the Vatican to save Salvador from execution. Unfortunately, Franco decides to execute the death sentence passed on this young anarchist.[71] Despite this injustice,

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[68] Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Philip J. Costopoulos, eds, *World religions and democracy* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2005), p. 107.

[69] "In the sixties and seventies social secularization took a centre stage. [Secularization was] understood as a reduction to the private sphere of religion and as a desecration of a worldview. But rather than a decline of religious feelings, there was a crisis in the institutional and rituals of Catholicism". In: Mónica Moreno Seco, 'Creencias religiosas y política en la dictadura franquista' *Pasado y memoria: Revista de historia contemporánea*, 1 (2002), 1–53 (pp. 22–23).

[70] For an analysis on the Vatican hostility to Franco Regime see Paul Preston, *The triumph of democracy in Spain* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[71] "Franco decided to go ahead with the executions despite European protests, the clemency request by Pope Pablo VI, and Franco's own brother Nicolás' objections". In: Tatjana Pavlovic, *Despotic bodies and transgressive bodies: Spanish culture from Francisco Franco to Jesús Franco* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), p. 79.

a new self-understanding of Catholicism, which had taken root with the Second Vatican Council, was emerging, and was based on three principles mentioned earlier: a) Internalized and living piety, that is, a religion which is more optimistic and in which the act of adoring God is substituted by acting as Christ; b) Criticism of the economic system and opposition to the dictatorship; and c) Plurality in understanding religion.[72] As the implications of the Second Vatican Council took hold in Spain, the church's view of the regime changed, which in time made it easier for later films to evoke the possibility of "the other Church".

A matter of vital importance in the anarchist interpretation of "the other Church" is the figure of the militant priest, and that figure is the one which appears in *Libertarias*: Jesús Arnal, Durruti's secretary. In fact, Durruti saved him from execution by anarchist *milicianos*. The leader of the anarchists told them: "We shall not do anything to the priest because he is one of us". At the beginning of the film, he has a theological discussion with María (the nun), who asks for clarifications on his views about religion, to which he replies: "Jesus Christ (your Lord) told us that the poor are holy" (01:03:48). And later: "On the day of the Resurrection Jesus Christ will emerge with a raised fist" (01:29:10). These words clearly illustrate a take on Christianity very different to the old anarchist anticlerical sentiments.

2.2 The notion of secularization

Finally, it is worth discussing the way in which religious tropes are "secularised" in these anarchist films. In *Libertarias*, an American journalist – presumably Ernest Hemingway – somewhat surprisingly claims that: "Some argue that anarchism is just a religious statement" (01:32:12). What he seems to mean is that anarchists pay such attention to the anarchist corpus, they would put such effort in the dissemination of the anarchist principles, they believe so blindly in the idea of revolutionary fury (as the salvation for the misery of the people), and they are so committed to a future social justice (as a kind of avenging apocalypse) that they are

[72] Moreno Seco, pp. 25–27.

comparable to those faithful to their Catholic religion (studying the Holy Scriptures closely, having faith in the end of the times, spreading the word of Christ and having an intense Christian commitment to social justice). Anarchism, in that sense, is merely a transposition of religion or a substituted religion: "Anarchism is not in *Libertarias* an ideology that attracted adherents but rather — and certainly for María — a substitution for Catholic religious faith".[73] This idea seems ridiculous for Pilar (she replies to the American journalist: "No God, No master!"). After all, perhaps she sees the characterisation of anarchism as religion as worrying.

In any case, Antonio Rabinad and Vicente Aranda (the film's screenwriters) seemed to be hinting at this argument about traditional Spanish anarchism's millenarian qualities[74] when they wrote the aforementioned scene. According to Grace Duncan, this stereotyped identification between anarchism and religious millennialism has been influenced by the work of numerous historians who have tended to use in their books "images and metaphors identifying the [anarchist] movement with the essence of Spain, with the biblical past, with profound emotion, and idealized childhood".[75]

In the literature on secularization in political theology,[76] depending on the interpretation, "secularization" works at least in three ways:[77] 1) as a transposition of religious concepts to non-religious ones; 2) as an ideological transformation where religious concepts are reinterpreted; and 3) as emancipation from the Biblical heritage (as a progressive liquidation of religious rituals, symbols,

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[73] Lee, p. 103.

[74] For a study on this debate see: Martha Grace Duncan, 'Spanish Anarchism Refracted: Theme and Image in the Millenarian', *Journal of Contemporary History and Revisionist Literature,* 3 (1988), 323–346. And, Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*.

[75] The historians in question include Constancio Bernaldo de Quiros, Franz Borkenau, Gerald Brenan, J. Diaz del Moral, E. J. Hobsbawm, Edward Malefakis and Stanley G. Payne. Martha Grace Duncan, p. 324.

[76] See Jean-Claude Monod, *La querelle de la sécularisation: Théologie politique et philosophies de l'histoire de Hegel á Blumenberg* (Paris: Vrin, 2002).

[77] Prosman, p. 68.

and any public religious spheres of power, implementing a lay society).[78] These films 1) interestingly borrow religious concepts; 2) use symbolism and imagery and apply those to the anarchist cause; and 3) celebrate emancipation from religious dogma and rituals.

One clear example of such secularization of religious tropes can be found at the end of *Libertarias*. The film ends with María reciting a secular and revolutionary prayer for Pilar, who is bleeding to death after Francoist Moorish troops have slit her throat:

> One day that is already in our Lord's time, this planet called Earth that we step on, will cease to be called Earth and will be called Freedom. That day the exploiters of the people will be cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing teeth. And the angels of heaven, at the top, will sing songs of joy while beholding the Freedom star, bluer and brighter than ever. Because upon that star will reign Peace and Justice, so a paradise will be there forever, and Death will not exist anymore (01:56:00).

The image suggests messianic hope in the coming, not of the Lord, but of a revolutionary apocalypse that will sweep away injustice and pain from the Earth. While the film finishes with an ostensibly dramatic ending, María's prayer surrounded by debris encompasses a promise of happy-ending for the disinherited of the "banquet of life". The focus on María in the final sequence of the film is thus intended to further emphasize her representation as "the anarchist Messiah".[79]

Another film in which religious tropes appear secularised and reproduced by anarchists is *El corazón de la tierra*. The film is based on the 1888 strikes by syndicalist miners in Rio Tinto (Huelva, Spain), led by the Cuban anarchist Maximiliano Tornet, against the Rio Tinto Company, a British multinational metals and mining corporation. The protests were ferociously repressed as a

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[78] See Mark Chaves, 'Secularization as Declining Religious Authority', *Social Forces*, 72 (1994), 749–774.

[79] Jo Labanyi 'The Politics of the Everyday and the Eternity of Ruins: Two Women Photographers in Republican Spain (Margaret Michaelis 1933–37, Kati Horna 1937–38)', in *Cultural Encounters: European Travel Writing in the 1930s*, eds. by Charles Burdett and Duncan Derek (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002) 85–106 (p. 91).

Spanish mercenary army bribed by the British massacred many of the miners. In the film, Tornet is represented as a martyred, revolutionary Jesus Christ. When Tornet comes to Rio Tinto (Huelva) in 1883, the British owners of the opencast mines see him as a dangerous "anarchist apostle".[80] He uses the Bible in his speeches, but revises Biblical messages to replace them with revolutionary ones. So, where the Bible says "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6) and "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10), Tornet comments: "No! Blessed are those who are rebels, those who fight for the land, those who conquered it, and those who take what belongs to them. [. . .] No! What about the right here and the right now? Don't wait so long. Blessed are those who fight for freedom; blessed are those who demand their rights and blessed are those in whose hearts conscience and dignity lives. Yes! Let us be blessed!" (8:37). His power of persuasion, leadership and charisma inspired many and led to one of the bloodiest strikes in nineteenth-century Spain. Tornet's death provides another example of this kind of secularization: not only do his words remind us of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:6 and Matthew 5:10), but so does his death at the hands of the powerful mine owners. After beating him, they slit his throat and throw his body into the sea where, as it is slowly sinking, the movements of his body are clearly reminiscent of the Crucifixion. A new anarchist martyr was born. We also see this kind of secularization permeating non-religious humanist and civil funeral ceremonies held in these anarchist films. For example, in *Land and Freedom*, during Coogan's (an Irish Republican member of the International Brigades) funeral his *compañeros* sing "The Internationale" instead of praying, and the same happens with Blanca's funeral. The religious content of the ritual is emptied and replaced with new anarchist imagery. In any case, like Pilar in *Libertarias*, not everyone accepts such a millenarian reading of Spanish anarchism. For example: "[. . .] Kaplan feels that to call anarchism a quasi-religious or secular millenarian movement is to denigrate it: 'In a secular age, the taint of religion

[80] Hobsbawm, p. 80.

is the taint of irrationality'".[81] I have shown, however, that secularised religious tropes are visible in some of the anarchist practices as portrayed in these films.

3. Conclusion

The historical tensions between anarchists and churchmen during the Spanish Civil War were real. As put in *Libertarias* (12:23), "Priests and nuns [had to] flee to hide like rats in view of the rising sun of proletarian justice". Needless to say, this "proletarian justice" was just a euphemism for the use of violence against the clergy as a social group: "On the whole, about seven thousand members of the clergy were killed, including 13 bishops, 4184 priests, 2365 monks, and 283 nuns during the Civil War in Spain".[82]

In the end and despite the above discussion, it seems that neither the passage of time nor the democratization of Spain have yet brought an attempt to reconcile anarchist principles with those of the post-Second Vatican Council Catholic Church. The two positions remain far apart. One reason for this irreconcilable conflict is precisely the continued prevalence of those anticlerical sentiments inserted deeply in the anarchist worldview which are so well represented in these films. Perhaps another reason can also be found in the problematic depictions of history which can be reinforced when films such as those discussed here are accepted as historically accurate. My contention is that the authors and film directors did not necessarily aim to tell the historical truth of the events portrayed, yet their rendering of those events are interesting indicators of the way those are remembered and interpreted by the society the films were made in. Moreover, the historians, academics and critical analysts among us must guard against the risk of taking as accurate the potential and intentional lies, reinventions of history, and silences contained in these anarchist films. Besides, "An uncovered lie might function as a red flag, alerting a historian to an area where she should dig

[81] Martha Grace Duncan, p. 334.
[82] Miłkowski, p. 210.

little deeper".[83] The films discussed here should therefore not be read in isolation, but along with secondary scholarship about the time-period in question – both of the film and the history.

As I have shown in this essay, from *Land and Freedom* (1995) to *El cine libertario: Cuando las películas hacen historia* (2011), contemporary Spanish anarchist-themed films have been engaged in representing the history of Spain using old antireligious sentiments and new representations of religion. However, in all of them the conception of the Church as a counterrevolutionary force and as a corrupt and greedy institution tends to dominate portrayals of religion. To a large extent, these films indulge in a long tradition of anticlericalism in Spain: "Anticlericalism was a decisive trend in Spanish political, social and cultural life from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the Spanish Civil War".[84] The films therefore embrace a social tension that has operated in Spain for at least two centuries, between the forces of secular ideologies (sometimes with outright hostility to religion) and those that treat traditional religious values and institutions as necessarily a matter of identity (Spanishness, in this case).

At the same time, the films also represent the prelude to a new secularized world which, in the case of Spain, arguably started in 1931 with the Second Spanish Republic, stopped violently in 1939, and restarted after Franco's death. In this sense: "[. . .] historical films too should be seen not as a return to the past but as a means of negotiating the relationship of the past to modernity. That is, the spectator travels to the past temporarily so as to rework his or her position in the present".[85] Therefore, contemporary viewers of these films are made to contemplate the unstoppable process of secularization that Spain has been experiencing since the adoption of the 1978 Constitution. In the end, this historical process is a key factor for understanding the relationship between contemporary Spanish anarchist films and religion. Moreover, the major Spanish

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[83] Jennifer Jensen Wallach, 'Building a bridge of words: The literary autobiography as historical source material', *Biography*, 3 (2006), p. 450.

[84] Pérez Ledesma, p. 227.

[85] Jo Labanyi, 'Negotiating modernity through the past: costume films of the early Franco period', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 13 (2007), 241–258 (p. 241).

anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT, regards religious issues in a more conciliatory way than any stereotypical depiction might assume. According to the CNT' statutes:

> Any worker can join the union, regardless of their political or religious views. They only have to accept our associative agreement and respect the decisions made in assembly. CNT is an independent organization [. . .]. To preserve this independence, members of political parties or religious organizations cannot use the union as a forum in which to promote those organizations and cannot hold offices.[86]

This official position coincides with most of the new representations of religion analysed in this essay. These new representations suggest that religion must be kept within the private domain, that the official Church and the individual practice of religion or mysticism must be distinguished, and that early Christianity, and the idea of practicing what Jesus Christ preached are worth recovering and giving space to in an anarchist society.

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Subordination and Freedom: Tracing Anarchist Themes in First Peter

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First Peter seems an unlikely place to look for anarchist inspiration. In fact, at first glance it seems to offer support for the very sorts of domination that anarchists so adamantly oppose: governments over citizens, masters over slaves, and husbands over wives. Drawing on Petrine scholarship, historical insights, political philosophy, theology, and biblical exegesis, this paper will argue that, in fact, First Peter contains several anarchist themes. The paper shows that Peter advocates non-coercion, voluntary association, equality of all persons, and subversion of the powers that be. By examining some key debates in Petrine scholarship, the essay examines some relevant points of contention like debates over the meaning of Peter's use of the haustafeln tradition and proper translations of key Greek words related to government and submission/subordination before showing that the best interpretations point to something at least akin to anarchism in this text. Peter's concerns are moral and ethical as well as political and this essay weaves together all of those areas on inquiry to put forward a reading that offers a Christian anarchist ethic and political theology. Two millennia after it was written, Peter's epistle still offers a compelling vision for an alternative society, a society that embraces anarchist values and works to subvert the powers intent on maintaining their perceived control of the world.

Introduction

First Peter seems an unlikely place to look for anarchist inspiration. At first glance it seems to support the very sorts of domination – governments over citizens, masters over slaves, and husbands over

How to cite this book chapter:
Bronson Barringer, J. 2018. Subordination and Freedom: Tracing Anarchist Themes in First Peter. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 132–172. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.e. License: CC-BY.

wives – that anarchists oppose.[1] This paper will examine whether, and to what extent, First Peter contains themes that inform an anarchist position.[2] First Peter is a short letter attributed to the Apostle Peter (1:1), though its authorship is still contested by scholars.[3] Likewise scholars argue about when exactly the letter was written, but most agree that it is written to address the persecution of Christians that was either already going on or was expected in the near future. Peter's first letter is addressed to exiles scattered throughout Asia Minor, perhaps people who had fled Jerusalem or Rome due to persecution.[4]

Peter is concerned about the welfare and the witness of his fellow Christians. First Peter in many ways reflects Jesus' words to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves"[5] because the letter offers these Christ-followers advice about avoiding persecution,

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[1] Peter's letter to "exiles" in this world exhorted early Christians to embody this movement toward anarchy as they adopted a certain way of being in the world, a way of being that would ultimately point to another, better world. It was by adopting non-coercion, voluntary association, and the equality of persons that these early Christ-followers put themselves in a place that necessarily subverted coercive hierarchies.

[2] Jonathan Bartley, *Faith and Politics After Christendom: The Church as a Movement for Anarchy* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006), 8. Bartley suggests that in a post-Christendom world it is right to recognize "the church as a movement for anarchy." I believe Bartley is right, but I argue Peter had this vision in mind well before Christendom. It is anachronistic to call Peter's writing anarchist, but anarchist themes are found throughout his first letter. The themes that will be examined include non-coercion, voluntary association, equality of persons, and subversion of the powers that be, all for the sake of Jesus.

[3] I am most persuaded by arguments for the traditional position that this letter was indeed written by Peter, so I will attribute it to him throughout this essay.

[4] Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 706. Christians were lumped together with other minority religions in the minds of many in the Roman Empire. Naturally they were directly linked to the Jews, and "Romans viewed Christians, like Jews, as antisocial" (706). However, they were also viewed with suspicion because they had superficial similarities with other despised religious sects like the cults of Isis and Dionysus. See also David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 65–73.

[5] Matt. 10:16

yet instructs them how to live courageous and moral lives in the face of slanderous accusations and oppressive violence precisely because they have faith in the Christian God.

This is a good place to mention definitions. I have little concern with the idea of "religion." Following William Cavanaugh, I would assert that "there is no such thing as a transhistorical or transcultural 'religion' that is essentially separate from politics," and that "the attempt to say that there is a transhistorical and transcultural concept of religion that is separable from secular phenomena is itself part of a particular configuration of power, that of the modern, liberal nation-state as it developed in the West."[6] Rather, I am concerned to address the faith broadly called Christian. As for "anarchism", I have essentially adopted a combination of the definitions offered by Vernard Eller and Jacques Ellul later in the essay.

One of Peter's main purposes is, as Joel B. Green puts it, to answer questions such as: "What to do with Rome? What to do about Rome? What to make of Rome?"[7] Green explains that "For Peter, of course, 'Rome' really was the issue: its sanctioned religions, its imperial and colonizing presence and practices, its world system, its matrices of honor and order."[8] Should they rebel? Should they acquiesce? Should they withdraw? Should they make compromises? Or, should they do something altogether different? Green then points out that "Peter understands that the problem is not about Rome per se, though, and so he refers to Rome not by its real name but as 'Babylon.' 'Babylon' was a cipher for a world power hostile to God, and, for Peter, this is what Rome had become."[9]

In order to articulate the view that Peter's letter proposes several ideals compatible with anarchism, this essay will first offer some preliminary definitions of anarchism in general and Christian anarchism in particular by briefly surveying some of the relevant literature. The following section will then describe one of the key

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[6] William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 9.

[7] Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1.

[8] Ibid., 1.

[9] Ibid., 1.

interpretive considerations: the ancient household code, a literary form Peter uses in his letter to instruct his readers. From there the essay will turn to the specific themes Peter addresses that correspond with an anarchist vision for society, including non-coercion and voluntary association, equality of persons, and how each of those empowers individuals and communities to subvert the powers. The essay will conclude by arguing that Peter's vision for this alternative sort of society is wrapped up in his understanding that it is not those who seek power who will ultimately shape the world, but those whose humility is evident that will make this reality, inaugurated by Jesus, manifest in the world until it is someday likewise consummated by Jesus.

This essay argues that Peter proposes an unconventional vision whereby oppressive power structures are subverted and the oppressed are freed when those with little power, counter-intuitive as it may seem, subordinate themselves to the powers that be. While this argument may not be particularly popular, it is not unheard of amongst self-proclaimed anarchists and those offering anarchist-friendly theologies, but it is uncommon enough that it is worth briefly exploring here before delving into the specifics of Peter's own arguments for subordination as a subversive practice.

Tolstoy argues, in the opening of his short essay "On Anarchy," that "[anarchists] are mistaken only in thinking Anarchy can be instituted by a revolution. . . But [anarchy] will be instituted only by there being more and more people who do not require protection from governmental power, and by there being more and more people who will be ashamed of applying this power."[10] Peter instructs his readers to subordinate themselves rather than attempt a revolution or rebellion. His readers, largely, did not have the option to seek government protection anyway, but Peter's case is that they did not require it because they put their trust in the Lord. Nevertheless, they were able to shame oppressive powers by living morally upright lives.

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[10] Leo Tolstoy, "On Anarchy" in *Pamphlets Translated from the Russian*. Accessed on December 30, 2013 at https://archive.org/stream/pamphletstrans100tolsgoog#page/n250/mode/1up

Late theologian and ethicist John Howard Yoder talks about "revolutionary subordination"[11] as the way in which Christians work for social change (including, problematically, the subordination of women to men, which I will anyway return to below).[12] He makes the important observation that something in the Christian religion had already prompted subjugated classes to embrace freedoms that they had never known before.[13] Thus they were tempted to a certain unruliness that would, in its context, be shameful because women and slaves were expected to show certain decorum, and presumably doomed to failure. The peculiar revolutionary element, for Yoder, is that, "after having stated the call to subordination as addressed first to those who are subordinate already", those who have embraced this subordination "then

[11] It is worth noting that in Yoder's personal life he greatly abused his own power, which may cause some to question his work on the subject. I think this is fair though I contend that the value of his insight stands alone. The idea of "revolutionary subordination" is particularly problematic when read in light of Yoder's preying on female subordinates and often sexually assaulting them. It might also be said that "revolutionary" is strong of a term as the moves envisioned by writers like Peter may have smaller and more gradual societal changes in mind, which seems to fit well with Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. Also see Yoder quote from Ibid., 186. Rightly understood though, it is the powerful, it seems in Yoder's thought, though clearly not in his life, who ought to find occasions to subordinate themselves, just as Jesus did. That is revolutionary. For an extended account of Yoder's sexual predation see Rachel Waltner Goosen, "'Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse" in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, No. 89, January 2015. http://www.bishop-accountability.org/news5/2015_01_Goossen_Defanging_the_Beast.pdf

[12] Feminist scholars, such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have taken particular exception to Yoder's account. And they are probably right inasmuch as only expecting women to submit is indeed problematic and leads to abuse. The appropriate change only happens in the church and society when free men submit themselves to slaves and women, which may have been precisely the case in 1 Peter 5:5. This works its way into mutuality and thus erodes oppressive systems, not so much abolishing them immediately. Note Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 82–83.

[13] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 173.

go on to turn the relationship around and repeat the demand, calling the dominant partner in the relationship to a kind of subordination in turn."[14] For Yoder, it is precisely because "the call to subordination is reciprocal [that it] is once again a revolutionary trait."[15] Yoder goes on to write:

> The Christian is called to view social status from the perspective of maximizing freedom. One who is given an opportunity to exercise more freedom should do so, because we are called to freedom in Christ. Yet that freedom can already become real within one's present status by voluntarily accepting subordination, in view of the relative unimportance of such social distinctions when seen in the light of the coming fulfilment of God's purposes.[16]

In other words, Yoder recognizes that what Peter is doing here is calling Christians to continue to move toward freedom whenever possible, but to also keep in mind that their freedom is tied up in the freedom of every other person. It is by choosing to live in thoughtfully restrained freedom that Christians are able to offer a compelling witness to the world around them, thus exhorting their fellow humans to join this way of Jesus that will increase all people's freedom, rather than uphold the structures which oppress many while affording autonomy to only a few.

Some might question whether this approach really "works," but this question seems foreign, or at least secondary to Peter and to the other New Testament writers. They simply are not utilitarian enough because they trust that ultimately God will set all things right even if humans fail. However, this does not mean they are not concerned with human thriving: the New Testament writers articulate a vision for a different sort of society, a society within society, lived out in the political community called the church. The New Testament writers offer us "reason to hope that the loving willingness of our subordination will itself have a missionary impact,"[17] but our hope lies not in our own ability to make history turn out right, but in the fact that our witness will be used by

[14] Ibid., 177.
[15] Ibid., 177.
[16] Ibid., 182.
[17] Ibid., 185.

God's Spirit to challenge domineering systems to forsake their oppressive ways in exchange for the upside-down Kingdom where it is the servants who exemplify honourable behaviour. Again Yoder writes:

> [Jesus'] motto of revolutionary subordination, of willing servanthood in the place of domination, enables the person in a subordinate position in society to accept and live within that status without resentment, at the same time that it calls upon the person in the superordinate position to forsake or renounce all domineering use of that status. This call is then precisely not a simple ratification of the stratified society into which the gospel has come. The subordinate person becomes a free ethical agent in the act of voluntarily acceding to subordination in the power of Christ instead of bowing to it either fatalistically or resentfully. The claim is not that there is immediately a new world regime which violently replaces the old; rather, the old and the new order exist concurrently on different levels. It is because she knows that in Christ there is no male or female that the Christian wife can freely accept that subordination to her unbelieving husband which is her present lot. It is because Christ has freed us all, and slave and free are equal before God, that their relationship may continue as a humane and honest one within the framework of the present economy, the structure of which is passing away.[18]

With this basic understanding of the way voluntary subordination might be a subversive practice (an admittedly at first surprising but actually fairly widespread Christian anarchist perspective)[19], it is now appropriate to define anarchism and anarchy for the purposes of this essay then turn to the way in which Peter lays out his anarchist vision of subordination and freedom.

Defining Anarchism and Christian Anarchism

Defining anarchism (the ideology) and anarchy (the aim) is sometimes difficult because historically they have had a wide range of definitions, and the words themselves are loaded. David Miller

[18] Ibid., 186.

[19] See Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011), chapter 4

writes: "Of all the major ideologies confronting the student of politics, anarchism must be one of the hardest to pin down. It resists straightforward definition."[20] Anarchy is often misunderstood as chaos, "a black monster bent on swallowing everything; in short, destruction and violence,"[21] and this has led many to dismiss the idea of Christian anarchy out of hand, since the Christian God is not a God of disorder, but a God of peace.[22] The word "anarchy" was originally used pejoratively to describe English and French revolutionaries,[23] and many people still use the term in a derogatory fashion, as if it were simply synonymous with chaos. Again Miller writes: "The prevalent image of the anarchist in the popular mind is that of a destructive individual prepared to use violent means to disrupt social order, without having anything constructive to offer by way of alternative – the sinister figure in a black cape concealing a stick of dynamite."[24] However, as this essay will demonstrate this is neither the sort of movement that Peter, nor contemporary Christian anarchists have in mind.

Moreover, the image Miller describes is still common in the minds of many Christians, who therefore see anarchy as incompatible with Christianity. Besides, secular anarchists argue "Christianity has produced about as hierarchic a structure as can be, and anarchism not only rejects any hierarchy but is also often fervently secular and anti-clerical."[25] Both views are unfortunate because the Bible, particularly the New Testament, contains many themes akin to anarchy. Similarly, many theologians and Christian leaders from Tertullian to Barth and Tolstoy to Dorothy Day, have espoused a range of anarchist-friendly theologies.

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[20] David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: JM Dent, 1984), 2.

[21] Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910). Accessed on November 2, 2013 at http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/goldman/aando/anarchism.html

[22] 1 Cor 14:33.

[23] Nicolas Walter, "About Anarchy" in Howard J. Ehrlich, Carol Erlich, David DeLeon, and Glenda Morris eds., *Reinventing Anarchy: What Are Anarchists Thinking These Days*? (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 42.

[24] Miller, 2.

[25] Christoyannopoulos, 1.

While most anarchists agree that society can and should function without the rule of government, there are disagreements about what shape an alternative society would take.[26] Anarchists ranging from Kropotkin and Goldman, to Randal Amster and Mohammed Bamyeh, however, all recognize the themes this essay notes in Peter's first epistle, namely non-coercion, voluntary association, equality of all persons, and subversion of the powers that be as central to a future anarchist society.[27]

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[26] John P. Clark, "What is Anarchism?" in J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman, *Anarchism: Nomos XIX* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 5. Clark's essay concisely yet thoroughly explains many variations within anarchist thought.

[27] Peter Kropotkin defines anarchy as "the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which *society is conceived without government* – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but *by free agreements concluded between the various groups*, territorial and professional, *freely constituted* for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being" (Emphasis mine). Peter Kropotkin ed. Marshall Shatz, *Conquest of Bread and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 233. Emma Goldman defines anarchy as "The philosophy of a new social order based on *liberty unrestricted by man-made law*; the theory that *all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful*, as well as unnecessary" (Emphasis mine). Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910). Accessed on November, 2 at http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/goldman/aando/anarchism.html. Randall Amster argues, "Anarchism is at its root a philosophy and set of practices based on the premise that people can and should act from a place of *freedom from domination and coercive force*. . . Our self-interest is wholly bound up with the interests of everyone else, *making anarchism in its full dimensions a theory of radical egalitarianism* as much as one of individual autonomy" (Emphasis mine). Randall Amster, *Anarchism Today* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 2. Bamyeh is, perhaps ironically, not as forceful in his definition of anarchy at least as it relates to coercion, yet he still seems interested in understanding anarchy as a society where coercion is unnecessary. He writes, "[Anarchy] does in fact signify order, but one of a very specific type: in its most pristine and developed *forms anarchy is unimposed order*. In a less developed but still noble enough form, anarchy is a quest for unimposed order – that is, order supported by the *minimum necessary use of coercion*" (Emphasis mine). Mohammed A. Bamyeh, *Anarchy as Order: The*

One particular variety of anarchism is specifically Christian. One way to define Christian anarchy is to begin with a Biblical understanding of the powers that be, which are said to be more impressed with the god of this age than with the God of eternity.[28] Vernard Eller offers a helpful explanation of the powers and a useable definition of Christian anarchy. He writes,

> For us, then, 'archy' identifies any principle of governance claiming to be of primal value for society. 'Government' (that which is determined to *govern* human action and events) is a good synonym – as long as we are clear that political arkys are far from being the only 'governments' around. Not at all; churches, schools, philosophies, ideologies, social standards, peer pressures, fads and fashions, advertising, planning techniques, psychological and sociological, theories – all are arkys out to govern us. 'Anarchy' ('unarkyness'), it follows, is simply the state of being unimpressed with, disinterested in, skeptical of, nonchalant toward, and uninfluenced by the highfalutin claims of any and all arkys. And 'Christian anarchy' . . . is a Christianity motivated by 'unarkyness.'[29]

Christian anarchy, according to Eller, is not about bullish rebellion, but it is a revolution of humble, lamb-like subordination – yet it is still a revolution.[30] It is about example, particularly about Christians embodying the example of Christ, neither being drawn to places of power, nor giving the powers special concern, but always being faithfully obedient to the Father.[31]

History and Future of Civic Humanity (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 27.

[28] The Bible tells Christians that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). If the struggle is indeed against the powers and rulers, the "archys," then to say Christians are anarchist seems to make perfect Biblical sense. See Luke 12:11, Eph 6:12, Col 2:15, 1 Cor 15:24.

[29] Vernard Eller, *Christian Anarchy: Jesus' Primacy Over the Powers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 1–2.

[30] Christoyannopoulos discusses this peculiar kind of subversive subordination advocated by many Christian anarchists in *Christian Anarchism*, chapter 4.

[31] Eller, 3. "For Christian anarchists, then, the goal of anarchy is 'theonomy' – the rule, the ordering, the arky of God. At this idea, of course, the world rises up to insist that the arky of God is just as impositional as (if not

Haustafeln as a Literary-Rhetorical Tradition[32]

A primary interpretive consideration for understanding 1 Peter is the hortatory form of the ancient household codes or *Haustafeln*,[33]

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more so than) any other arky that might be named. But Christians say NO – and that on two counts. First particularly as God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, the style of his arky is not that of imposition but of the opposite, namely, that of the cross, the self-givingness of agape-love. And second, God's arky, his will for us, is never anything extraneous to ourselves but precisely that which is most germane to our true destiny and being. . . Rather than a heteronomous imposition, God's arky spells the discovery of that which is truest to myself and my world."

[32] There is a longstanding debate, represented by David Balch and John Elliott, about whether relevant sections of 1 Peter are best understood in the *Haustafeln* or *Oikonomia* tradition. The former is understood as specific codes that individuals should follow, whereas the latter is more about the way the leader of the house manages everyone in the household. While there is merit to delineating the debate in this way, it is largely a distinction without much difference. Overall, I am satisfied with the use of *Haustafeln* language, though the one area where the *Oikonomia* language is helpful is in the recognition that Peter is not interested in mere capitulation to societal norms, that is the particular codified duties that society laid on each person; he is instead interested in reshaping those norms over time. I will thus stick to the more common language of *Haustafeln*, while on occasion noting the value of contributions from scholars like John Elliott. What is important in this debate is the extent to which 1 Peter articulates either resistance or conformity of Christians to surrounding society. David G. Horrell does a good job of describing this debate, while also suggesting a reading closer to mine, one that allows for "conformity and resistance" to be held in tension. David G. Horrell, "Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliot Debate Towards a Postcolonial Reading of First Peter," in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, edited by Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin (New York: T&T Clark: 2007), 111–143.

[33] Philippa Carter, *The Servant-Ethic of the New Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 87. "The *Haustafeln* texts in the New Testament have often been criticized as examples of how early Christianity capitulated to social institutions and mores that were burdensome for many people. I Peter is perhaps most susceptible to such a critique." It is also worth noting that while Peter's use of the form does not make up the whole letter, it does shape the content of other sections of his exhortations. For instance, Troy Martin suggests that "In 5:1–5 the community groups of elders and young men are even substituted for these [husband/wife, father/child, slave/master] pairs" commonly found in ancient household

and the way Peter modifies the form for his purposes. The *Haustafel* was a code that "Stoic and other philosophers commonly used . . . to delineate proper relationships with others."[34] The household code tradition did not begin with the Stoics though: "Plato and Aristotle, as well as other Greek political theorists, were interested in the relation between the 'city' and the 'house.'"[35] Peter, too, is interested in this connection; he first discusses his readers' relationship to the rulers of the wider society in 2:13 before he moves on to concerns in the home in 2:18.

Aristotle and others were concerned about authority and subordination in relationships between husbands and wives, fathers and children, and masters and slaves because they believed that in order for society to function properly people had to fit into their natural place in the home or society would become corrupt and chaotic.[36] Thus it makes sense that these codes had such widespread use and immense importance in Greco-Roman political theory, and furthermore why "Any group accused of upsetting proper subordination in the household would be criticized by those charged with maintaining the constitution [that is order in society]."[37] Elliott seems to acknowledge this, but argues that 1 Peter's concern has more to do with internal cohesion among the church, and the distinct identity of Christians than conforming to societal expectations regarding order.[38]

Thus, the *Haustafel* form was enticing to minority religious groups attempting to find ways to interact with society because "slandered religious groups sometimes adopted these codes to demonstrate that their groups actually supported the values of the Roman society; this demonstration was important in combating persecution."[39] If part of Peter's purpose in writing was

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codes. In Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 127.

[34] Keener, 713.

[35] Balch, 15.

[36] Ibid., 61.

[37] Ibid., 61.

[38] John Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible Commentary. (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 2000), 505–511.

[39] Keener, 713.

to demonstrate that Christians did indeed have a concern for the common good, and that they could indeed accept many Roman values, then it makes sense that he would adopt this form as a way to help protect his readers from undue persecution.

Of course, Peter had this purpose in mind, but only to a degree.[40] He wrote to help Christians avoid unnecessary persecution, while preparing them for the near inevitable persecution they will experience,[41] but more importantly Peter turns the form on its head to express truths about the Kingdom of God.[42]

The emphasis in many *Haustafeln* was on those with relative power.[43] Yet, Peter gives more attention to wives and slaves, as well as ordinary citizens. Peter uses the code to express mutuality,[44] a fundamental departure from patriarchal societal expecta-

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[40] Elliott argues that in fact "such an 'accommodating' and conformity-urging aim of the code material is thoroughly incompatible with exhortation of 1 Peter as a whole, which urges 'holy nonconformity, (1:14–17)" (Elliott 509). However, Elliott seems to concede on 510 that there is nothing wrong with conformity inasmuch as it "is possible without compromise of one's loyalty to God." In other words, Elliott does not provide sufficient evidence that Peter might not have had in mind both of what Horrell calls "conformity and resistance."

[41] See Green, 71–72.

[42] Horrell, referring to Scott, notes that for instance, that there are "many diverse ways in which subordinates express and practice their resistance to oppression, in what he calls 'the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt'" (Horrell, 118). I am suggesting that the kingdom of God occupies this broad terrain.

[43] This does not necessarily mean that the powerful were always mentioned first (Green, 164), only that they were treated as individual moral agents as opposed to those under their "rule" who were only told to obey, usually without further exposition.

[44] Perhaps the mutuality here is implicit because of the mention of Sarah and the debate over who listened to whom in her marriage. (See Discovering Biblical Equality, 231ff [esp. 234–235]). Also, note his argument for equality in marriage on 237. "When addressing those without power," notes Peter H. Davids, the apostle Peter "does not call for revolution, but upholds the values of the culture insofar as they do not conflict with commitment to Christ. He then reframes their behavior by removing it from the realm of necessity and giving it a dignity, either that of identification with Christ or of identification with the 'holy women' of Jewish antiquity. When speaking to the ones with power, however, he asks them not to use their power, but to treat those they could dominate as their equals – for in fact they are." (Peter H. Davids, "A Silent Witness

tions. According to Boring, "It is striking that when the *Haustafel* enters the Christian stream, even though the patriarchal order continues to be presupposed, instruction is given in terms of mutuality and not merely hierarchy. . . In the Christian literature, slaves, women, and children are addressed as persons in their own right, not merely as subjects to masters, husbands, or fathers."[45] Balch writes:

> Aristotle mentioned masters, husbands, and fathers before slaves, wives, or children. . . and addressed only the male – the master, husband, and father. In the NT [New Testament], however, the wives are addressed, and this is done before the exhortation of husbands. Slaves are addressed before masters in Colossians (masters are not exhorted in 1 Peter). The NT writers emphasize the subordinate members who were in a difficult social situation. . . Slaves and wives are addressed first by these early Christian moralists because they were the focus of an intense social problem between the church and Roman society. Romans frowned on their wives and slaves being seduced by bizarre foreign cults, and this led the author of 1 Peter to address the household code to those who were the focus of the tension.[46]

Although Balch's recognition of the differences between Aristotle's and the New Testament writer's use of the form is significant, his assessment is lacking. Peter addresses these folks to dignify them inasmuch as he makes claims about their ability to lead folks from pagan idolatry into relationship with God. In other words, as Horrell puts it, "The weak also exercise agency and power though the multifarious means by which they resist their domination, whether in hidden or overt ways,"[47] a fact that Peter seems to be acknowledging, at least implicitly, through his instructions to them. While wives and slaves were occasionally mentioned in other *Haustafeln*, they were only told how to act without any justifying rationale. Peter exhorts wives precisely because they have

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in Marriage" in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis – Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005, p. 238.)

[45] M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 106.

[46] Balch, 96–97.

[47] Horrell, 118.

the influence to win over their unbelieving husbands. Peter is not only making claims about their moral agency, but declaring their ability to *lead* their husbands into right belief.

Likewise, Peter is empowering slaves by using them as an example for all Christians. Peter's use of this form of ethical instruction itself bolsters the actual content of his exhortation. It serves at once to make it appear as if Christians fit into their society, and to call them into a better, alternative society. His instructions are not about keeping people in their place, but freeing them to love more fully. This ought to be understood as a uniquely anarchist position because it does not rely on any sort of paternalistic account of a better society whereby one group lifts another out of poverty or the like, rather it is a simple rejection of static hierarchies in favour of communities that are mutually empowering. Of course, in the short term Peter seems to be advocating for his readers to live in a particular way within the current hierarchy, all the while holding on to the hope that God will use their witness to create a more just and mutual society in which fluid hierarchies are more accepted.[48] This, then, ultimately suggests a rejection of the authority of the powers that be because the subordinate persons were no longer subject to them, but rather subject to the Lord.

As Randall Amster writes, "The rejection of authority is the sine qua non of anarchism. In this view, the imposition of power through force, coercion, domination and oppression is both unconscionable and untenable. . . Anarchism challenges claims to authority that are vested with the enforcement power of the state."[49] Therefore, Peter's vision as envisioned in this epistle, particularly his use of the *Haustafeln* form is anarchistic inasmuch as it does not seek to reform the powers and authorities as much as it seeks to see them abolished in this new society that is the church.[50]

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[48] See Horrell, 120–121.

[49] Randall Amster, *Anarchism Today* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 6.

[50] Peter is not interested in destroying the emperor as a person, since he does after all say that his readers ought to honor the emperor, rather he is interested, it seems, in the slow erosion of oppressive institutions including the position of emperor itself. One can honor the person, while believing that the office is unnecessary or even oppressive. I take this to mean that we are to honor people in places of power simply because they are people. We are not to show them special honor, and therefore we can

Amster continues by offering some helpful headings in his chapter "Contemporary Anarchist Thought," which suggest a number of interconnected themes which collectively make up anarchy including several found in 1 Peter, such as "Anti-authoritarianism, "Voluntarism", "Mutualism", and "Egalitarianism."[51] The anti-authoritarianism he describes is not against people asserting expertise in a particular area, but against someone moving beyond that area of expertise to force their authority on others. Amster explains that:

> As it turns out contemporary anarchism is nuanced enough in its values to narrow its anti-authoritarianism to those exercises of power that are rigid, reified, and imposed, but not necessarily those that are present in healthy communities grounded in equality and respect. In an anarchist society, someone with expertise may well represent an *authority* in a certain sphere, without then asserting his or her power in another sphere. . . . The critical factor for anarchists is that "the advice of an expert should only be accepted on the basis of voluntary consent," meaning that the acceptance of authority in any particular matter rests with the recipient and not the person or group asserting it.[52]

Peter, it seems, is arguing for this sort of society in the church. He allows for expertise to be shared among everyone in the community. In the very writing of the epistle, Peter is sharing his expertise as an *authority*, while suggesting that the response to that authority must not be coerced and likewise that the authority may move from person to person as the situation demands.[53]

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hope for, and indeed expect, the abolition of all governments as each person confesses Jesus as Lord.

[51] Amster, 6, 8, 9, and 12.

[52] Ibid., 7. Amster quotes Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (New York: Harper Perenial, 2008), 43.

[53] Amster's brief discussions on mutualism and egalitarianism likewise reflect Peter's own exhortations. Amster, for instance, writes: "Freed from compulsion, people learn to act at least in part for the common good, since there exists an undeniable recognition of the necessity of human community and sociality" (Ibid., 9), which echoes Peter's words in 2:15–16 where is exhorts his readers to do good and avoid evil precisely because they have the freedom to do so. Like Peter, Amster sees egalitarianism (equality of persons) as an outcome of anti-authoritarianism,

Non-coercion and Voluntary Association

Anarchists from a variety of traditions ranging from early thinkers like Kropotkin to modern scholars like Randall Amster have offered defences of non-coercion and voluntary association as foundational to their understanding of anarchism. In the Christian anarchist tradition in particular most expositors have tended to be pacifists as Ellul articulates when he writes that anarchy is "an absolute rejection of violence."[54] He, like Peter, seems to do so on principle, but without losing sight of the potential for non-coercion to effect change.[55] This is reflected in Peter's exhortations to wives, because it is their disciplined subordination, not an attempt at coercive rebellion, which Peter argues may lead their husbands in a shift of attitudes and actions.

Likewise, his more general exhortation to the whole Christian community to "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (2:12) suggests that it is through living morally persuasive lives that people are won over to a particular group. Peter desires that people freely choose Christianity because they have been around those who have "tasted that the Lord is good" (2:3).

This is also reflected in Peter's opening line when he calls his readers "exiles" (παρεπιδήμοις) in this world (1:1).[56] At first glance,

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volunteerism, and mutualism. Amster writes: "An anarchist social order that eliminates coercion and domination promises to cultivate self-governing individuals who exhibit voluntary behaviors that are often mutually beneficial, ideally creating a horizontal network of productive enterprises and self-managing communities that could subsume the material and emotional necessities of life" (12). This seems to reflect Peter's words in 4:8–10 in which he exhorts readers to love one another, offer hospitality, and share their gifts with others for the sake of the good of the whole community.

[54] Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 11. See also Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* chapter 1.

[55] Ellul argues that disciplined nonviolence is often more effective in this regard than violence.

[56] Peter also uses similar language in 2:11. It seems to suggest that Christians are not to demonstrate loyalty to any given nation or government. It is worth noting that Balch and Elliot differ on whether this term is a metaphorical one or a literal one.

such a term seems to evoke images of coercion, as one rarely goes into exile on one's own accord. Yet, this is precisely the paradox of Christian faith. In spite of the impending persecution in their view,[57] Peter's audience chose to join a movement that rejected the use of coercive force, and advocate extreme avoidance of such force by encouraging its members to favour places of lowliness rather than power. The witness of the community and their *kerygma,* a Greek word that is best translated as proclamation, that Jesus had indeed overcome the most oppressive forces of all, sin and death (1:3), was sufficient to draw people to the faith. Peter's use of the word παρεπιδήμοις is indicative of both his belief in the attractive power of God's Spirit, inasmuch as people chose to take on the lowly position of exiles because they were persuaded by the beauty and goodness of Christian faith, and the basis for his later exhortations regarding the church's peculiar witness, as those who have become exiles in this world, of equality of persons and subversion of the powers.

Near the end of the letter, Peter offers an admonition to church leaders. Verses 5:1–5 are a return to the form of the *Haustafel*. Once again Peter co-opts the form to undermine conventional conceptions of authority; leadership in the church is not about coercive power, but example.[58] Likewise, and totally foreign to the Greco-Roman world, while it is true that "Peter advocates submission to the ruling elders [5:1]" it is important to note that "he also urges – against Greco-Roman society's ideals – mutual humility [5:5]."[59]

Peter addresses leaders as a fellow elder. This is important because "Whatever hierarchical mode of thinking might be discernible in Peter's self-representation or in his talk of 'elders' is vacated by. . . Peter's refusal of special privilege by locating himself as an

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[57] This is reflected not only in Peter's letter, but in Christ's own words. "If they persecuted me they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

[58] There is not adequate space to explore this in this essay, but leadership by example is found throughout Peter's letter, both explicitly and implicitly. Christ is the example for all (2:21). Peter is the example for his readers, particularly the elders (5:1). Wives are examples for their husbands (3:1). Shepherds are examples for their flocks (5:3).

[59] Keener, 721.

elder alongside other elders."[60] Though Peter has already identified himself as an apostle (1:1), "Additional evidence that, in instructing his audience, Peter is not exercising conventional authority is his apparent refusal to distribute directives simply on the basis of his apostolic office."[61] Peter voluntarily humbled himself, relying not on his office for authority in the community, but on his communion with local church leaders, and on his experience as a witness (μάρτυς) testifying to Christ's sufferings.

Peter's own conduct implores church leaders to humble themselves and view their position not as an opportunity to lord power over others, but as a chance to use their gifts in service. In 5:1–3, those revered as leaders are counselled to live in exemplary fashion, and charged with the care of their congregations.

Peter applies the language of shepherding to church leaders.[62] As Keener notes, "The image of a 'shepherd' is that of a concerned guide, not of a severe ruler,"[63] an image that hearkens back to Peter's identification of Jesus as shepherd and overseer (2:25). It is to be a ministry of example rather than an exercise of dominion (5:3).

The metaphor is then extended, and qualified, in light of the fact that every member of the church is a sheep under the care of the "Chief Shepherd" (5:4). This is further evidenced in the next verse as all members of God's household are exhorted to wear the same clothing of humility toward one another (5:5), as sheep all wear the same warm wool. It is not coercion that binds the Christian community, but a common humility.

It is also striking that Peter explicitly offers the elders the *choice* to "serve as overseers," rather than do so because they are obligated (5:2). It is not societal pressure, nor money, nor ego that

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[60] Green, 164.

[61] Ibid., 164.

[62] John 21:16. See Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 319. This language is perhaps reminiscent Peter's own experience with Jesus when Jesus gave Peter the charge to shepherd Jesus' sheep. Ferguson notes, "The work of shepherds is in looking after sheep – protecting them, leading them to water and pasture, caring for their injuries, seeking them when lost" (321).

[63] Keener, 720–721.

implores shepherds to assume their post; Peter exhorts them to this ministry because they are willing and eager to serve. Achtemeier comments on Peter's rhetoric in 5:2, writing,

> "The contrast between 'not under compulsion' (μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς) and 'willingly' or 'freely' (ἑκουσίως) apparently exhorts elders to accept their responsibilities without undue coercion. . . The second antithesis qualifies the first, in that the second term προθύμως ('eagerly'), is virtually a synonym for ἑκουσίως, and the first term, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῶς ('not in a way characterized by desire for base gain'), may be a concrete instance of the kind of compulsion to be avoided."[64]

As is typical in this letter, instructions to a particular party serve to instruct the larger church community. If even those who hold leadership roles are expected to humbly serve others then it follows that all members ought to follow that example. Thus, Peter instructs the younger people in the community to "subordinate" (ὑποτάσσω)[65] themselves to the elders because the elders have provided a compelling, imitable example. Bamyeh says that anarchy has a type of order that is not imposed, and that order means "(1) that the agreements that organize social life are voluntary in nature and (2) that whatever authority may exist is conceived of as practical rather than absolute or permanent authority."[66] That is the case here in Peter's discussion about the leadership of elders as a sensible structure for these early Christian communities, so long as they recognized that their positions were not those of domination or their right, but simply as positions that they could use to serve others, even subjugating themselves to "lesser" members of the community when necessary.

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[64] Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 326.

[65] The importance of this particular word will be examined in the following section.

[66] Mohammed A. Bamyeh, *Anarchy as Order: The History and Future of Civic Humanity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 27. He further suggests that the role of these authorities is to help move subordinate members into a place where mutuality is possible. A child learns to be independent of the parent and the student learns to teach. (28)

It is precisely because people are inclined to seek power,[67] and abuse it, that an anarchist voice is necessary. Hence Peter's insistence that non-coercion and voluntary association are requisite expectations of the Christian community. Christians reject the temptation to wield coercive power, and the allure of associating too closely with folks who do; they set an example by choosing to associate with others who, like Christ, elect to serve not be served.[68] It may or may not prove to be an effective social strategy, though Peter assumes it will indeed influence people, but the rejection of coercive force is inseparable from Peter's larger anarchist vision.

Equality of Persons

A cursory reading of the text, specifically the *Haustafel* in 2:13–3:8, might suggest that Peter favoured forms of subjugation that were in line with the culture in which he lived,[69] yet a closer reading suggests that Peter has a high regard for the equality of persons.[70]

The first of the three potentially problematic of exhortations in Peter's *Haustafel* revolves around Christians' relationship to government. It begins with the command to "submit" to governing authorities. However, an exploration of the Greek reveals that many English translations do not convey the best rendering of the text.

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[67] Achtemeier points to the fact that "the warning against the desire for money is a regular part of [Christian] advice" (326), which is true, but it is reasonable, based on the all of 5:1–5, that similar warnings against the desire for power should also be acknowledged.

[68] Matt 20:28, Mark 10:45.

[69] Some scholars have suggested such a reading. See Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and of the Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987). Below I will articulate why such a reading is incorrect, and why an anarchistic reading of the text is more appropriate.

[70] Peter seems to be following the Pauline tradition. See for example Gal. 3:27. Likewise he might be recalling his own vision about clean and unclean animals in Acts 10:9–19.

One issue raised by exploring the Greek text (Ὑποτάγητε πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει [which Actemeier rightly translates as "Be subordinate to every human creature"[71]]) is the precise meaning of the word κτίσει, which is often translated as "authority," "institution," or "ordinance." Such renderings are neither literal nor contextually appropriate. The primary meaning of κτίσις is "creation" or "creature," and the context attests to the accuracy of this sort of translation here. Achtemeier writes that "'human being,' [is] a translation to be preferred to 'human order' or 'institution,' since the latter meaning is nowhere to be found in Greek literature, and the examples that follow – emperor, governors – are human beings not institutions."[72] This rendering of κτίσις suggests that Peter has an expectation that Christians willingly "submit" themselves to *all* people, an expectation that puts all humanity on an equal plane, undermining the claims to authority made by ruling powers. Rendering ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει as "human creature" is more faithful to the meaning of the word κτίσις, and supports the claim that Peter's concern is indeed the equality of persons.[73] It challenges the prevailing arguments that this passage is primarily about submission to governing institutions, and thus disaffirms common arguments that Christians look favourably upon ruling powers.[74]

Another issue raised by the Greek text is the meaning of Ὑποτάγητε,[75] which is often translated as "submit" or "be subject." It may appear that it has connotations of obedience since the word is related to ὑπακοή. However, as Boring notes ὑποτάσσω is "a broader and more flexible word," and therefore its specific meaning may be determined by context.[76] Achtemeier argues that "Its meaning is closer to 'subordinate' than to 'submit' or 'obey,' and advocates finding one's proper place and acting

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[71] Achtemeier, 179.

[72] Ibid., 182.

[73] Unfortunately there is not space to expand this brief word study, but Elliott's own study regarding translation and meaning is helpful. See Elliott, 486 fn 92.

[74] The case for this translation is strengthened by Peter's later exhortation to show proper respect to everyone (2:17).

[75] Although this is not the lexical form, I have chosen to leave the verb form here because of its imperatival force. The lexical form is ὑποτάσσω.

[76] Boring, 108.

accordingly rather than calling upon one to give unquestioning obedience to whatever anyone, including governing authorities, may command."[77]

Peter's exhortation follows the Pauline tradition, which calls Christians to consider others better than themselves (Phil 2:3). Boring points out that considering others better than oneself does not necessarily require obedience, nor losing one's identity. He writes, "What is called for here is not mindless robotic obedience or servile cowering that denies one's own identity and sense of worth, which is provided not by status in society but by rebirth and incorporation into God's saving plan for history as members of the holy people of God."[78] David Lipscomb argues,

> [Ὑποτάγητε]. . . carries the idea that the person or body that submits, is entirely distinct and separate from and in antagonism to the person or body to which it submits. The Christian then is not part of the body to which he submits, or to which he brings himself under subjection. . . We cannot be said to submit to ourselves, or to a body of which we are a part and parcel, and with which we are in harmony, and which we aid to conduct or manage. Submission carries the idea of antagonism and opposition which are restrained and held in abeyance. This is the relationship everywhere defined as that which connects the Christian with the governments under which they live.[79]

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[77] Achtemeier, 182.

[78] Boring, 108.

[79] David Lipscomb, *On Civil Government: Its Origin, Mission and Destiny and The Christian's Relation to It* (Indianapolis: Doulos Christou Press, 2006), 75. The objection could be raised that Lipscomb's definition is problematic since the same word is used to describe the husband/wife relationship and the master/slave relationship. Lipscomb recognizes this and offers an extended response, part of which is quoted here. "It is argued against this, that we are commanded to submit to God – children to their parents, wives to their husbands. . .. Therefore antagonism is not involved in the expression. Antagonism in all these relationships is the ground of the admonition. Were there none, there would be no need of the admonition. . . But in these relations to God, to the parents, to husbands. . . still other terms as love, honor, are added. . . [W]e are told not only to submit to God but to love him with all the soul and the mind and the body, this leads to active, hearty, soul-felt participation in carrying forward his government. So the child is commanded to love the parent, the wife her husband, and all the members of the church must have a care

Therefore, according to Lipscomb, when Peter calls Christians to Ὑποτάγητε he is suggesting that they are in some way in conflict with the body to which they "submit," but this does not imply an ontological superiority on the part of the ruling body. In other words, Christians are free to submit or subordinate themselves to government because they realize their own distinct identity apart from the powers, and furthermore that they realize that this distinct identity is equally true of every other person.

The exhortation to "Be subordinate to every human creature" is directly followed by an important modifier – "on account of the Lord" (διὰ τὸν κύριον). Again, Achtemeier writes, "The motivation for such subordination, 'because of the Lord,' confirms the basis of such subordination in Christian faith. . . That phrase also qualifies subordination by placing it within the larger context of obedience to God; one is not to be subordinate in matters that go counter to God's will."[80] One cannot rightly "obey" a presumed authority for the Lord's sake if the authority is rebelling against that very Lord.

For centuries, commentators who have understood 2:13 as a command to obey governing authorities have struggled to reconcile that interpretation with the oppositional instruction in 2:16 to "live as free men."[81] Even if one understands the material in

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for one another, they were to be members of one another, and to labor together for their mutual good, the advancement of their common cause, to love as brethren and be true children of God. . . But as no higher or closer relation than submission is required toward civil government, all the Christian can do in that relation, is to refrain from active antagonism and conflict, and to quietly and passively submit within the prescribed limits, but no intimation of obligation or license to participate in or in anywise fellowship and support is found" (75–76).

[80] Achtemeier, 182.

[81] Martin Luther, *Commentary on Peter & Jude*, trans John Nichols Lenker. Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1990). For instance, Luther writes, "since ye have done all that was necessary to attain to true faith and you hold your body in subjection, let this now be your first business, to obey the civil authorities" (116). While on the other hand, he writes, "Christians yield themselves to the control of God's Word; they have no need of civil government for their own sake" (119). Furthermore, he claims, "Our conscience is enlightened and has become free from human ordinances and from the control which they had over us, so that we are no longer obliged to do what they have commanded under peril of our salvation"

2:13 to be essentially a command to obey authorities, as some do, one still must contend with this seemingly contrary exhortation.[82] Here Peter radically diverges from the *Haustafel* tradition because he is not concerned about upholding the hierarchies believed to hold society together. Furthermore, the Greek text (ὡς ἐλεύθεροι) is more accurately rendered "as free [men/people]," which assumes the freedom of Peter's audience whether they live into that freedom or not. This is not to say that they are free to do whatever they please because their freedom is afforded to them as slaves to Christ, and it is to persuade others to join the Christian faith.[83]

Therefore, subordination is a choice, a free choice of a free human, whose allegiance is to God, not something that governments can demand. It is this freedom that ultimately strips authority from the principalities and powers because they become unneeded and unwanted by people who view all others as equal. This is the example of Jesus, who Peter points to in 2:21, the One with all authority who voluntarily subordinated himself to the powers who were to crucify him.[84] Here Jesus demonstrated that he would rather die than take power by force, that he would rather count himself among the criminals and outcasts than the powerful elites. Jesus is the model of overcoming by subordination, the leader of this anarchist revolution of the upside-down kingdom that disarms abusive systems not by reforming them, but by offering an alternative, the alternative of a cruciform revolution

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(120). Though it is clear that Luther difficulty with this tension, he does provide great insight for Christians dealing with the paradoxical exhortations of Peter in his statement, "For Christ's followers are to be led and ruled only be the Spirit. . . Henceforth, they are under obligation to do nothing but good to their neighbor, helping him with all they have, as Christ has helped them" (120).

[82] See Kistemaker and/or Jobes.

[83] This is a paradox that many, Christians and non-Christians, find difficult to grasp. See my argument in the essay "What About Those Men and Women Who Gave Up Their Lives so that You and I Could be Free? On Killing for Freedom" in *A Faith Not Worth Fighting For* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012), 92–94.

[84] Matt 26:42. Jesus subordinated himself to the governing bodies to the point of death, not because of their inherent authority, but because he was bearing witness to God's great love.

whereby subordination to the powers in the name of God will ultimately make a spectacle of their very existence.[85]

English translations diverge from the Greek text again in Verse 2:17, suggesting a different meaning than the one in Peter's original words. This verse is best translated as "Honor all [men]. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king/emperor." Achtemeier rightly suggests that "The use of 'honor the emperor' in 1 Pet 2:17 as a direct parallel to 'honor all people' specifically divests the emperor of any and all trappings of divine authority and power."[86] Actually, this structure suggests an even more radical meaning because it not only "divests the emperor. . . of divine authority and power," it suggests that there is no inherent difference between even the emperor and a slave.[87] Later Achtemeier moves this direction, writing, "The contrast of the first and last clauses indicates that the initial command to honor all implies such honor is not to be reserved for the mighty; no creature of God is unworthy of it, whatever his or her station in pagan society."[88]

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[85] See Col 2:15

[86] Achtemeier, 181.

[87] This reflects Luke's comment that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). If Christians are to follow that example then they too must refuse to show favor.

[88] Achtemeier, 188. Peter of course finds himself in a difficult place where he must simultaneously instruct his readers about the anti-hierarchical nature of the Kingdom of God, while not drawing unnecessary attention to his words from those who are looking for reasons to attack Christians, as well as attempting to redefine concepts of honor and shame for his readers. Peter's letter serves a paraenetic function, in that it offers moral exhortations intended to socialize converts to this new religion (Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter*. [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 103–118). Paraenesis, and its resulting socialization, in the hierarchical Greco-Roman society was intended to cause one to live in such a way that "one could attain δόξα (glory)" (Martin, 108). For Peter's audience, however, in attempting to follow the teachings of Jesus they have been maligned, scorned, and persecuted. According to Martin, "This problem sets up the rhetorical situation for the author of 1 Peter and explains the unique paraenetic feature of eschatology. . . in this letter . . . . The author of 1 Peter has resorted to eschatological ideas in his paranaesis to resolve this problem of a non-realization of δόξα (Martin, 111–112). Martin is largely correct, but Peter doesn't so much "resort" to using eschatological arguments as much he simply continues in the tradition of Jesus' own teaching, perhaps recalling Jesus' words that his

The individual sections of this pericope each suggest a reading sympathetic to an anarchistic equality of persons under and before God. The same is true of the whole pericope, 2:13–17. Achtemeier writes:

> The *inclusio* formed by the two imperatives that begin (Ὑποτάγητε, 'be subordinate') and end (τιμᾶτε, 'honor') the passage, and by the opening and closing references to the emperor, shows it to be a careful literary composition. One must therefore pay attention to the deliberate limitations placed here on the status of civil government: the emperor is a 'human creature' to whom subordination is due as an example of general subordination on the part of Christians within civil society.[89]

Peter's construction challenges notions that Christians were enemies of the empire, while simultaneously subverting it by giving each person equal respect.

A brief caveat is necessary here to explain the importance of assessing the structure of a text in the field of biblical exegesis. In an attempt to understand the text inductively, that is to attempt to understand the text on its own grounds rather than imposing meaning on the text, exegetes often look for structural relationships in the text that may make authorial intent more apparent. One of the structures seen often in the biblical text is called inclusio. "Inclusio is the repetition of words of phrases at the beginning and end of a unit, thus creating a bracket effect. At the boundaries inclusio establishes the main thought of the book (passage), pointing to the essential concern of the book (or passage). One should note the relationship between these bracketing statements and the intervening material in order to identify the semantic relationship

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followers would indeed experience persecution for being his disciples, and later Paul's words that it was after Jesus' suffering and shame that Jesus received the joy of glory (e.g. Phil 2:6–11, Heb 12:2). Thus, Peter is saying precisely what he means, but only one who is in on the redefinition of terms in the Christian tradition would understand this reappropriation. Peter uses the common social framework of glory/honor and shame, but reinterprets the concepts through the lens of the uniquely Christian assertion that suffering comes before glory, and glory only comes, at least in fullness, when God resurrects and redeems the faithful.

[89] Achtemeier, 180.

with which an inclusio is used."[90] In other words, this is simply a form of parallelism, which is commonly used in many types of literature in order to emphasize a given point or to highlight the similarities in a variety of connected clauses.

"Thus the bracketing statement is a general claim that is spelled out, or particularized, in the intervening material," note Bauer and Traina.[91] In this case, Peter makes the general statements regarding subordination and honour, but spells out the parameters regarding the way in which his readers are to submit to and honour others, including his seemingly contradictory claim that they are to live as free people. This pericope seems to be a paradox in that by honouring the authorities they are shamed. According to Peter in the verse that precedes this pericope, the contrast of the good behaviour of Jesus' disciples, largely epitomized by enduring unjust suffering for Christ's sake, with the idolatrous, self-serving behaviour of the powers, will expose the corruption and injustice meted out by the imposturous and rebellious powers of this world.

While the focus of this analysis has been primarily on the rhetorical structure of this pericope, the brief segues into theological and social issues strengthen the claims regarding Peter's shrewd composition. Like other writers who find themselves vulnerable because they are at odds with a society's values, Peter employs cunning rhetorical and theological moves that those socialized into early Christianity could understand and appreciate while those outside this "chosen people" (2:9) would not find immediately threatening. The following section of exhortations directed at slaves, then wives and husbands should further illumine the sort of double meaning potentially bound up in Peter's letter by exposing more of the ways in which different inferences might be made by those inside church and those on the outside. With this in mind it is possible to see the subversive nature of Peter's next set of instructions.

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[90] David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 117.

[91] Ibid, 118.

Peter moves into exhortations directed at slaves, then wives and husbands. Though specific parties are addressed, Peter never loses sight of the whole community. His instructions to these specific parties serves a double purpose, to help these particular persons find their place as individual moral agents and bearers of the Imago Dei, and to use them as examples of Christlikeness. "Since 2:13–3:7 doesn't cover all cases and classes, instructions to slaves and wives are to be taken as illustrative. . . The whole community is to learn from what is said to slaves and wives."[92]

On slaves

Again, Peter's modified use of the *Haustafel* dignifies slaves by assuming their moral agency, yet it is disturbing to modern readers that he takes no umbrage with slavery itself. However, a closer reading of the text suggests that Peter is merely taking a more calculated and ultimately subversive approach. By revisiting themes of subordination to all people (Ὑποτάγητε πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει) and being as free people, then setting slaves up as examples to the rest of the Christian community, and directly connecting them with Christ, Peter turns the social order on its head, a reality already coming to fruition in early Christian communities.

Two relevant clauses point readers back to Peter's previous discussion. First, Peter uses the word "subordinate," in this case (ὑποτασσόμενοι),[93] a direct parallel to his earlier use in 2:13. Peter's use of "subordinate" to slaves here is a particularization of his instruction for all Christians to do so. Second, Peter points back to his discussion about the freedom of all Christians, including those in slavery, as those who choose to live as "God's slaves" (θεοῦ δοῦλοι). As Boring remarks, "all Christians are free, all are slaves. As those already freed and accepted before God, their identity does not depend on the social status others attribute to them."[94]

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[92] Boring, 107.

[93] The lexical form is ὑποτάσσω.

[94] Ibid., 111. It should be noted however that some ancient writers like Seneca recognized slaves as having the same inherent value as all other humans, but he still supported slavery so long as masters treated their slaves well.

Peter cunningly subverts social values, asserting the equality of persons. As Joel Green writes, "[I]t is obvious that Peter's theological perspective (particularly his identification of his Christian audience, including slaves [v. 17], as 'free persons' [v. 16], his emphasis on 'honoring all persons,' including slaves, and his specific address to slaves as moral agents [v. 18]) must trigger the unraveling of the institution of slavery – at least insofar as this institution rested on arguments from inherent nature and incarnate status in the Greco-Roman world."[95]

Peter not only dignifies slaves by addressing them as moral agents, he sets them up as examples to the rest of the Christian community. This at once serves to uplift slaves and call those in higher social classes to seek a certain downward mobility, thus moving closer to a society where all people not only have theoretical, but realized, equality.

It is noteworthy that "Romans reacted negatively when Jewish and Christian slaves – the first group to do so – rejected the worship of their masters' gods, insisting on an exclusive worship of their own God"[96] because these slaves are examples of godliness in the face of potentially awful consequences. Those who otherwise have little or no power are empowered to lead the rest of the Christian community by example.[97] This means that other Christians are not to subjugate those in slavery, but to look to them as exemplars of Christian discipleship.

Most important is the fact that, as Keener notes, "Although ancient society was very status-conscious and associated power with greatness, Peter identifies Christ with unjustly treated slaves."[98] This comparison undermines conventional ways of thinking and challenges readers to live the values of Jesus' upside-down kingdom. That is to say, by comparing Christ to slaves, Peter dignifies lowliness and exhorts his readers to take on servant roles because they are free to do so in Christ. In this way, it is important to note

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[95] Green, 79.

[96] Balch, 74.

[97] It is at least conceivable that slaves could be elders in the early church, and as the discussion earlier about shepherds suggests they would be potentially great candidates.

[98] Keener, 715.

that the particulars of a slave's experience are at the fore, and thus the suffering of the slave is not meant to be downplayed. There is no sort of "All Lives Matter" move being made here. Peter clarifies that "Slave Lives Matter."

On Wives and Husbands

Peter's instructions to wives carry some complex socio-cultural baggage, but they, along with instructions to husbands, offer insight into understanding the equality of persons in Peter's thought. Women in much of the ancient world had little power and were often viewed as property, and agents of seduction leading men astray from their religious/societal duties.[99]

The women Peter addresses had already broken with tradition choosing to worship their own God instead of their husbands' gods, something that Peter unequivocally commends, exhorting wives to lead their husbands to Christian belief. This is a reversal of the typical expectations, stated by Plutarch: "A wife ought not make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Therefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour."[100]

For the wives Peter is addressing there is no expectation that women are required to follow their husbands into any religion, but that women had the power to lead their husbands into worship of the true God. Likewise, Peter's instruction to wives necessitates

[99] The fact that Peter feels compelled to address wives with specific instructions to subordinate (ὑποτασσόμεναι) themselves to their own husbands (3:1), a practice already expected of women in Greco-Roman society, suggests that these women had already begun embracing the freedom found in Christ, though it seems that they may have been choosing to use that freedom in unwise ways.

[100] Found in Balch, 85.

that their worship not be done in secret, and more importantly that God would indeed find favour in their worship.[101]

Some might point to Peter's use of Sarah as an example of wifely obedience to undermine the above interpretation, but one need only look briefly at the story Peter is referencing, both in its biblical and extrabiblical contexts, to see that Sarah and Abraham's relationship was more complicated than might initially appear. Peter could be referring to Gen 18:12, which shows "Sarah was hardly the paradigm of the servile housewife, but was laughing out loud."[102] Rather than being obedient to Abraham, she was in fact sometimes disrespectful. "Moreover, in the relevant material in Genesis, it is easier to find evidence that Abraham obeyed Sarah more than the other way around."[103] On the other hand, Peter also says that Sarah called Abraham "Lord," which could suggest that husbands may rightly subjugate their wives. However, "[Lord] was not an unusual expression on the lips of Sarah, but was the way in which all women of the period referred to their husbands (probably with as little reflection on it as a modern woman gives to the term 'husband)."[104] My wife, for example, refers to me as a husband to others, but does occasionally call me husband directly as well.

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[101] This perhaps reflects Peter's more general exhortation that Christians live such good lives among their pagan counterparts that the pagans would see these good works and glorify God (2:12).

[102] Boring, 125–126.

[103] Green, 96. Green remarks, in footnote 79, that in Genesis God actually tells Abraham to obey Sarah at one point, but the reverse is never seen in Genesis.

[104] Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 120–121. In fact Davids contends elsewhere that, "bible translations divide over whether to translate this term according to its use in 1 Peter or within the context of Genesis. Like the NRSV, the NAB translates the term contextually as "my husband." The NKJV follows the traditional AV rendering of "my lord." The NIV has "my master" with the alternative "husband" in a note. The NLT compromises with "my master—my husband." Davids, "A Silent Witness in Marriage: 1 Peter 3:1–7" in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarily without Hierarchy* edited by Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis with Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 231.

However, it could very well be the case that Peter does not, primarily at least, have the Genesis text in mind, but extrabiblical stories familiar to the Jewish people. It seems that commentators around Peter's time were actually discussing the significance of Abraham and Sarah's interactions.[105] Peter, once again, might be "splitting the difference" inasmuch as his reliance on the Genesis text would likely lead to one conclusion, but his reliance on the extra-biblical literature would point to a different conclusion. Perhaps he has both in mind, as this essay has shown, was his general way of helping Christians avoid persecution while eroding away the very systems that were the source of that persecution.

Peter's reference is not to convince wives of their inferiority, but rather to encourage them to choose subordination as a witness to the God who is faithful to make all things right. Furthermore, "These [including Sarah] were 'holy women,' not because of their specific moral virtue, but because they were heroines of the Scriptures."[106] Sarah's particular heroism, as it relates to Peter's purposes, was in the hope she placed in God, specifically as an alien and stranger in a foreign land.

Perhaps Peter uses Sarah to poke fun at unwitting pagans who believed that the natural order required wives to do what their husbands command. At first glimpse, they would have likely seen Peter's words as essentially endorsing Greco-Roman values, but those familiar with the story of Sarah would be inclined to see her as a more complex example of faithful hope rather than simply wifely obedience. Peter has in view a people who would put their hope in God, exhorting them to treat all people with reverent dignity.

Likewise, calling wives the weaker vessel is sometimes viewed as an ontological statement about women's strength of character, emotional stability, or intended place in society and marriage.[107]

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[105] Davids, "A Silent Witness," 233.

[106] Ibid., 119.

[107] See for example, Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 143–145. Grudem argues that women are "weaker vessels" in at least three ways. First, he says they have less physical strength than men. Second, according to Grudem, women are weaker in that they have less authority in marriage. Third, he argues, women are more emotionally vulnerable, which he says is a weakness that can also be a strength. Also,

This view fails on at least two counts. First, and perhaps most notably, the reference to females as "weaker" directly follows six full verses that speak specifically about the strength of character required of Christian women, and the behaviours expected from women as fully human moral agents.[108]

Second, the most contextually appropriate reading of the text shows Peter's awareness of the ways in which women were vulnerable in his readers' context. As Jean Bethke Elshtain writes, "Human beings are soft-shelled creatures. All bodies are fragile. But some bodies, in some circumstances are more vulnerable than others."[109] Peter reminds husbands that this is the situation for their wives in the patriarchal Greco-Roman world. These wives are more susceptible to abuse in the male-dominated culture, and therefore Christian husbands have a responsibility to counter these societal norms by treating their wives as equal heirs to all that God offers.

For Peter, the point of Christians choosing to live into the freedom of Christ is that they live holy lives that others find strangely compelling. As people adopt Christianity, the expectation is that they treat all others equitably as Jesus did. Peter is proposing a social strategy whereby Christians would move the world toward an embrace of anarchist principles, perhaps the most important of which is the equality of persons.[110] In short, "The servant-ethic of

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see Martin Luther *Commentary on Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1990), 140. Luther writes that "the wife is weaker bodily, as well as more timid and more easily dispirited." Davids notes, 123, that it was common in the Greek and Hebrew world for women to be viewed as "weaker in mind or morally inferior" by citing Plato (Leg 6.781b) and noting that other places in scripture use similar wording to talk generally about human moral failings (Rom 5:6) and an irresolute conscience (1 Cor 8:7–11; Rom 14:1).

[108] See Davids, 123.

[109] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "The Equality of Persons and the Culture of Rights," *University of St. Thomas Law Journal*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1. (2003), 5. Available at: http://ir.stthomas.edu/ustlj/vol1/iss1/2

[110] There is no doubt that equality of persons could, by itself, fall under progressive or Marxists ideologies, but the way I believe Peter is using it is thoroughly anarchist because his vision involves no coercion or benevolent dictator or government program that will bring about his desired outcome. Rather, Peter proposes a society where people by their own

I Peter, then, is strategic. In essence, it seeks to turn enemies into friends."[111]

Subverting the Powers

Hopefully, the subversive nature and power of non-coercion, voluntary association, and the equality of persons has begun to become apparent in this overview of 1 Peter. That being the case, it is pertinent to only highlight the points of contact that these themes make with the Petrine message of subversion of the powers.

When one experiences unjust suffering, oppression unleashed by the powers, there is a temptation to lash out against those forces or to rebel in hopes of establishing a new order. This approach simply perpetuates the power struggles, shifting the power from one person or group to another.

Peter offers no such option to Christians. He suggests an alternative way of being in the world. He writes:

> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen (4:8–11).[112]

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free choice extend a hand of friendship to enemies precisely because they have their own free moral agency and can choose to use it in this way. Nor is Peter's concern primarily economic; he is simply articulating the larger NT vision that in the Kingdom of God there will not be divisions based on race, gender, or social status, but all people will be invited to participate in the community as they choose.

[111] Carter, 89.

[112] Much could be drawn out from this specific passage, but one of the most compelling arguments for the power of subversion Peter has in mind one might focus on his call to hospitality. See Christine D. Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). Pohl writes, "Although we often think of hospitality as a tame and pleasant practice, Christian hospitality has always had a subversive countercultural dimension. 'Hospitality is resistance,' as one

This is the alternative Peter offers for subverting the powers while avoiding being drawn into them. It is an important word because as Ellul writes, "When the church has been seduced by the ruling classes, becoming a power or being obsessed with politics, this is tantamount to its possession by the prince of this world himself."[113]

First Peter is a manifesto of sorts in which Christianity is set against the powers. These powers, the ones upholding the hierarchies Christ came to destroy, are undermined by this band of aliens and strangers who claim Jesus is Lord. Peter's epistle is an archetype of Ellul's statement that "Biblically, love is the way, not violence. . . Not using violence against those in power does not mean doing nothing. . . Christianity means a rejection of power and a fight against it. . . There remains the anarchism which acts by means of persuasion, by the creation of small groups and networks, denouncing falsehood and oppression, aiming at a true overturning of authorities of all kinds as people at the bottom speak and organize themselves."[114] Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, drawing from Peter Brock writes, "the state may be valid for non-Christians, but if 'all truly followed in Christ's footsteps it would wither away.' God uses the state in his ordering of the cosmos only because his commandments for a peaceful and just society are not being followed."[115] Thus, the church's witness of subordination is intended to draw people into the Christian faith which ought to have the side effect of the dissolution of oppressive power structures.

Peter's letter maintains that Christians subvert the powers not by violence, or rebellious revolution, but through the faithful witness of righteous suffering. Non-coercion and voluntary association, and the equality of persons are part and parcel of such a witness. Each calls into question the legitimacy of the powers, and

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Catholic Worker observed. Especially when the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome are potent far beyond themselves. They point to a different system of valuing and an alternate model of relationships" (61).

[113] Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 180.

[114] Ellul, A&C, 13–14.

[115] Christoyannopoulos, 153–154.

exposes their sinfulness, challenging each person to glorify God rather than self.

Social Location and Christian Witness

Peter is making the radical claim that it is not the powerful, the violent, the coercive, nor the privileged who wield true influence in the world.[116] It is the ones who are humble, by choice or by circumstance, the ones who take up crosses upon their shoulders, who are able to bear witness to the true, eschatological reality that the powers, even death itself, have been overcome by Jesus.[117] Rather than pursuing power, for Green, "Christians should expect to be treated as those who are powerless. . . knowing, however, that their appropriate conduct would have a redemptive effect akin to that of Jesus."[118]

As Boring puts it, "Throughout [1 Peter], the emphasis is on mission, not on *sub*mission. As in the example of Christ (2:21–25), submission is for the sake of mission."[119] The mission is taken up voluntarily with a purpose in mind, not because the social order demands it, nor because one group is necessarily inferior or supposed to be subservient to another. The message here is that by choosing submission Christians follow the example of Christ. Speaking to the disenfranchised, Peter honours their contributions to the Christian mission and shames the powerful who would impede that mission. He also suggests that it is not the powerful of this world who are most like Christ, but those who find their place in humble, seemingly powerless, service to others. Therefore, Peter seems to be arguing that Christians effect change in the world, not by using power over others, but by bearing witness to the eschatological hope and truth of Jesus. Near the end of

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[116] More evidence of Peter's concern with social location can be seen in his address to wives regarding their dress. Peter argues against the notion that it is displays of wealth or beauty that show one's value. Davids writes, "[Peter's] critique would apply mainly to upper-class women who could afford more than the simplest dress (and perhaps to the aspirations of other women).Thus it is a critique of the whole culture" (117–118).

[117] See Col 2:15.

[118] Green, 72.

[119] Boring, 113.

his specific instructions to the congregations regarding righteous subordination and its effects, Peter writes: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time" (4:6).

Peter's vision of Christian witness was not of rebellion, but that they model a different society, one not predicated on hierarchies and coercion even as they choose to subversively subordinate themselves to these forces that are already present, but on loving relationships where each person honours the dignity of others. Two millennia after it was written, Peter's epistle still offers an implicit yet compelling vision for an alternative society, a society that embraces anarchist values of non-coercion, voluntary association, and the equality of persons all as a way to subvert the powers intent on maintaining their perceived control of the world. Paradoxically, it is not the powers that have power over the world's destiny, but the One and ones who choose humble subordination that declare the triumph of love.

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Restoring Anarcho-Christian Activism: From Nietzsche's Affirmation to Benjamin's Violence

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This chapter approaches the issue of activism through the prism of the pacifism/violence debate within Christian anarchist circles. Based on two philosophical critiques – Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of Christianity and Walter Benjamin's critique of violence – I challenge the main anarcho-Christian theses that favour a pacifist/passive model of action, providing an alternative context for the interpretation of the relevant biblical passages and, ultimately, offering a restored version of anarcho-Christian activism, beyond dogmatic pacifism and fetishistic violence. The first critique looks at those Christian features that have turned Christianity into self-negation, and promotes an affirmative life stance. The second critique presents a qualitative approach to violence, distinguishing between two types – mythical and divine – out of which the latter revises the role of violence in Christian anarchist practices. Resistance to evil and secular authority can now acquire a new meaning, affirmative and active instead of passive and resentful.

The seeming paradox posed by the term "Christian anarchism" is due to the historical conflict between anarchist and Christian thought and practice that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. This is the epoch when anarchism gradually builds a more coherent philosophy, obtaining an essential identity in the middle of the next century through the works of the classical anarchists. Christianity, on the other hand, not only has long overcome the fierce persecution by the Roman Empire by the nineteenth century, but also stands in both East and West as the prevailing religion,

How to cite this book chapter:
Iliopoulos, C. 2018. Restoring Anarcho-Christian Activism: From Nietzsche's Affirmation to Benjamin's Violence. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 173–195. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.f.
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whose official leaders either openly practice political authority (in western Europe through the Catholic Church) or join hands with it (in eastern Europe through the Orthodox Church).

This chapter treats anarchism not as an ideology but rather as an open-ended set of ideas and practices which primarily promote antiauthority, solidarity and freedom. In turn, Christianity is not seen as a closed, dogmatic religion but as the way of life exemplified by Jesus, based on love, brotherhood and life-affirmation. No matter how general and vague the above "definitions" may seem, I intend to demonstrate more clearly the way I approach both in the main part of my essay where the conjunction between anarchism and Christianity takes place in the face of anarcho-christian activism.

Anarchism, taking many of its basic principles from the Enlightenment, seemed to oppose any metaphysical perception of reality and, due to its antiauthoritarian nature, any form of power that attempts to manipulate, exploit and enslave the individual. Prominent anarchist thinkers like Bakunin, Kropotkin, Stirner, and Goldman, challenged the role religion played, particularly the Christian church, in mollifying popular displeasure and excusing poverty and exploitation by regarding kings and emperors as the fulfilment of the divine will. At the same time, they saw religion discouraging revolutionary action, instead waiting for an oncoming restoration, through the Second Advent of Christ, and the establishment of "God's Kingdom" on earth. Kropotkin, for example, describes how the Church, after a quite promising start, gradually became more and more alienated from the original teaching of Jesus, coming to the point where it made a complete alliance with the rulers to the extent that even the teachings of Jesus came to be regarded as dangerous by the Church itself.[1] Kropotkin's view is depicted well by another Russian who in his early years participated in socialist circles: Fyodor Dostoyevsky, in his masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov,* describes how "the Grand Inquisitor" encounters Jesus upon his return to earth, and condemns him for the gift of free will to humanity. Moreover, he

[1] Peter Kropotkin, *Ethics, Origin and Development* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1993), p. 121.

proclaims the collaboration of the Church with secular authorities, with the kingdoms of the earth, Satan himself, in order to secure mankind's happiness.[2] For Bakunin, Christianity manifests "the impoverishment, enslavement, and annihilation of humanity";[3] it is "the bourgeois religion *par excellence*",[4] whereas according to Goldman, "the Fathers of the Church can well afford to preach the gospel of Christ. It contains nothing dangerous to the regime of authority and wealth".[5]

Moreover, Christianity, as the "official" religion of the western world, obtains a secular character by supporting, through theological argument, the authority that made it the sole dominator in the field of spiritual matters. Consequently, any subversion of the social/political scene, like the one preached by anarchists, was condemned without second thought as a revival of Lucifer's mutiny against God and of Adam and Eve's disobedience that drove them out of Eden.[6] The harsh criticism and violent oppression of most millenarian movements by the Church is an indicative example of this approach.[7]

Apart from the historical reality, many arguments concerning the incompatibility between Christianity and anarchism also come from the "theoretical" frame of the Christian faith, as it has been formed through the books of the Old and New Testament. Here we can find texts that support patriarchy,[8] submission to authority and to rulers[9] and the perpetuation of exploitation.[10] Of course, each side attributes a different value to these passages.

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[2] Fyodor Dostoyevski, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2003), pp. 334, 343.

[3] Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (n.p.: Create Space, 2011), p. 9.

[4] Bakunin, p. 39.

[5] Emma Godman, *The Failure of Christianity*, http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-the-failure-of-christianity.pdf, [20 Mar 2016], p. 2.

[6] Genesis 3. King James Version.

[7] See Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle* Ages (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), especially chapters 12 and 13.

[8] Genesis 16:1–6. 19:6–8, 1 Corinthians 14:34–36, 1 Timothy 2:11–15.

[9] Exodus 15:26, Matthew 22:15–22, Luke 6:27–30, Romans 13:1–7, Titus 3:1–2, 1 Peter 2:13–17.

[10] 1 Corinthians 7:20–22, Ephesians 6:5–8.

Anarchists consider them examples of reactionary politics, whereas Christians regard them primarily as fundamental to obedience to God's will – which for Christians is a different primary concern, and not intended to be reactionary. However, what I am particularly interested in is locating the basic obstacles to the effort of uniting anarchism with Christianity, obstacles that many (anarcho) Christian scholars have tried to overcome in two key ways.

The first way involves the articulation of multiple "anti-paradigms" using the same books of the Holy Bible[11] relied upon by patriarchal interpreters, but to emphasise support for a communal way of life with clear anarcho-communist features,[12] disobedience towards secular authorities,[13] the overcoming of the Law,[14] the project of freedom,[15] the abolition of social, national and cultural norms,[16] and the merciless critique of the rich and the exploiters.[17] Later, I will also refer to some radical practices and discourses of Jesus, as they are presented in the most important part of the New Testament, the four Gospels.

The second approach consists of the effort to give an alternative interpretation to the "anti-anarchist" passages mentioned above, to turn them around and make them part of an antiauthoritarian and liberating view. This reading denies the idea that Christianity and anarchism are incompatible and thus elaborates some of the basic principles of the current of thought and practice called Christian anarchism.[18]

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[11] We can come across such approaches in the works of Jacques Ellul (*Anarchy and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), especially part II, chapter 1), Thanassis Papathanasiou (*Κοινωνική Δικαιοσύνη και Ορθόδοξη Θεολογία – Μία Προκήρυξη* [Social Justice and Orthodox Theology – A Proclamation] (Athens: Akritas, 2001)) and Giorgio Agamben (*The Time that Remains – A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005)).

[12] Acts 2:44–46. 4:32–37.

[13] Acts 5:28–30.

[14] Romans 7:6, Galatians 2:16.21. 3:19–20.

[15] Galatians 5:2–6, Colossians 2:16–23, 1 Timothy 4:4–5.

[16] Philippians 3:4–11, Colossians 3:11.

[17] James 5:1–6.

[18] Here I refer to the views of various thinkers (discussed further down in this chapter) as presented in Alexandre Christoyannopoulos 'Responding to the State: Christian Anarchists on Romans 13, Rendering to Caesar,

In contrast to these approaches, this chapter advances a different argument, consisting of two other components. The first is related to the foundation of this second way of overcoming the obstacles, a foundation which, in my opinion, is a false one. In the main, these efforts are based on the implied authenticity of the Apostles, and especially of Paul, and a uniformed and indivisible perception of what constitutes "the" Christian tradition. The consequences seem problematic, even disastrous: on the one side, we have the exaggerated and hasty effort to justify Paul's many "anti-anarchist" sayings, and on the other, we deprive ourselves of a creative, active and critical reading of the Scripture. What I mean by this "critical and active reading" is a radical interpretation based on a creative bridging of the Bible's contradictions, instead of a mainstream and dogmatic perception which eliminates such a possibility, based on a rigid and uniform reading that neglects or even denies the existence of such contradictions.

The second component expresses exactly this need for a different reading of both the biblical texts (and especially the New Testament) and the teaching and life of Jesus, aiming for a totally different interpretative framework in order to restore anarcho-Christian activism, lead it back to what it was before a religious status quo emerged. This framework draws on two inspirational and valuable tools. The first one is Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of Christianity as a faith favouring death instead of life. Nietzsche unveils the self-denying spirit of Christianity since the present (earthly life) must be sacrificed in favour of the future (afterlife). According to him, praising Jesus' death on the cross as a means of escaping this life for the sake of heaven is a stance attributed to Paul and characterizes the Christian worldview which, in turn, generates a miserable and passive attitude towards secular authority. The second tool is Walter Benjamin's critique of violence. Although pacifism occupies a central place in (anarcho) Christian rhetoric, Jesus seems to have made use of violent means that go beyond this pacifistic reading. Benjamin's distinction between pure and impure violence stresses the difference between

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and Civil Disobedience', in *Religious Anarchism, New Perspectives* ed. by Alexandre Christoyannopoulos (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 106–44.

violence that liberates and violence that enslaves. Whereas the second type is norm-positing and norm-imposing, the first manifests norm-breaking, a violence of pure means which serves no ends.

Both approaches, Nietzschean and Benjaminian, are used in this paper only as methodological tools without touching upon any further implications of the two thinkers for either Christianity or anarchism. Nietzsche's hostility towards anarchism and religious faith in general, Benjamin's theology-soaked libertarian Marxism, as well as the elective affinity between Nietzsche and Benjamin and indeed between the two of them and anarchism[19] are all very interesting themes related to this essay, but going far beyond its narrower objectives. The Nietzschean and Benjaminian angles presented here, offer an opportunity for Christian anarchists to redefine their resistance towards the antichrist state and authority by turning their passive and self-negating stance into an active and life-affirmative practice.

Paul and the problematic "Paulodicy"

Paul, also known as Saul of Tarsus, is an emblematic figure in the history of Christianity. A Hebrew with a pharisaic, religious education, and an extremely cultivated member of the Judaic community, he undertakes the persecution of Christians who are considered blasphemous towards Yahweh.[20] He very soon changes sides[21] and moves from being a merciless persecutor of Christians, to becoming one of the most important heralds of Jesus' message, founding churches across the Roman Empire, and taking on a central pastoral role through his epistles to these church communities. Moreover, he clashes with the Judaic component of

[19] For a more detailed view into this elective affinity between Nietzsche, Benjamin and anarchism see Christos Iliopoulos, *Nietzsche and Anarchism: an elective affinity, and a Nietzschean reading of the December '08 revolt in Athens,* PhD thesis, Loughborough University, 2014, http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.631586.

[20] Acts 7:58, 8:1–3.

[21] Acts 9:1–19.

Christianity,[22] arguing that the newly formed Christian community must be perceived not as a Judaic heresy but as a superseding of Judaism.

The central role of Paul in the evolution of the new church had a problematic consequence: he was either overestimated by those who looked upon his sayings, considering them to be of an unquestionable authenticity, or he was criticized, by those who held him responsible for driving Christianity away from Jesus' original teaching, institutionalizing the church and turning it into a means of a spiritual escapism. In both cases, Paul was charged with a burden that surely exceeded him, since neither was he infallible nor was he exclusively responsible for the supposed departure of the Church from its original spirit.

This second category includes thinkers like Tolstoy, Kropotkin and Nietzsche, each for individual reasons. Tolstoy criticized Paul from a Christian point of view, Kropotkin from an anarchist one, and Nietzsche challenged him in the name of a joyful philosophy of life. Taken together, they unleashed a biting critique that, on the one hand, seems to overlook certain historical and psychological factors while, on the other, constitutes a special yeast for the critical approach to Christianity and the overcoming of the incompatibilities concerning the Christianity-anarchism conjunction which I wish to explore.

What scandalizes (Christian) anarchists in the teaching of Paul is mainly the passage from the Letter to Romans that not only calls for submission to secular authorities but also considers them a godsend.[23] These approaches to Paul's sayings by Christian anarchists fall into the two aforementioned types of approach.

The first is expressed as the rejection of Paul as a distorter of Jesus' teaching (Tolstoy's view), or with the rejection of these texts as inauthentic, or by highlighting the many counter examples from his life and teaching that show Paul probably had something else in mind when he was praising secular authorities so provocatively. This last view is shared by James Redford and Timothy Carter – as Alexandre Christoyannopoulos shows[24]– who urge us

[22] Acts 15:1–21.
[23] Romans 13:1–7.
[24] See Christoyannopoulos, 'Responding to the State', pp. 106–44.

to take into account the historical context under which the letter to Romans is written, stressing the idea that Paul was trying to protect the Roman Christian community from a pogrom by the imperial authority. This approach is the most realistic since the frequency of Paul's radical stances against the law, and in favour of freedom and equality, should lead us to reject a monolithic reading of his epistles, making greater demands on our interpretative procedures in reading between the lines and trying to reach an overall, coherent, picture of his writings by bridging any ambiguities. Additionally, this can also be confirmed from a detail in his letter to Titus, where Paul suggests that he should behave in a way that will leave no room for any accusations,[25] which implies that one of Paul's primary concerns was to avoid provoking the authorities, something that could justify such a blunt praise in his letter to Romans.

On the other side, we have the second type of approach that causes serious problems not only to Paul and his posthumous fame but to Christian anarchism as well. This other type of "Paulodicy" – that is the need to justify Paul for his sayings – consists in the effort of interpreting his anti-anarchist and "authoritative" views in a way that reinforces an anarchist Christian perspective instead of opposing it. Hence, for Vernard Eller, Peter Chelcicky, Archie Penner and others,[26] Paul's submission to authority is a force of subversion through forgiveness, love, patience, and trust in God's plan for justice. These views deny that Paul might have had a human weakness in taking on the widespread beliefs of his time concerning (state) authority, or that he was just practicing a "smart" and thoughtful move[27] that, nonetheless, led (anarcho) Christianity to resign from fighting for life and turn to an after-death justification of earthly hardships. I will return

[25] Titus 2:7–9.

[26] The detailed arguments of all these thinkers are also presented Christoyannopoulos, 'Responding to the State'.

[27] In this case, which seems quite likely, it is understandable that Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek called Paul the "Lenin of the Church", and Lenin "St. Paul of Communism", an apt connection but not very flattering, at least from a Christian anarchist perspective. For this connection between Paul and Lenin, made by Badiou and Žižek, see Roland Boer, *Lenin, Religion and Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 2.

in detail to this second type of approach, exploring Nietzsche's critique of these features and his understanding of the tendencies of Christianity that have turned it from a practice of fighting and living, into a theology of resignation and death.

Nietzsche and Christianity: Dionysos versus (?) the Crucifix

Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is based on its negation and nihilistic attitude towards existence and life: original sin, fall, guilt, the repression of the instincts, the vanity of earthly life, the acknowledgement of the hereafter as the returning to a heavenly condition, the returning to "real" life.

Since the formation of the first church, Paul's main concern, what has been praised, and what has been used as the foundation stone, is "the God on the Cross".[28] The sorrow (we need only to remember the hurtful way that, after the original sin, man will be fed from the earth and woman will give birth[29]) is a "crown witness" against life, a life that is guilty, unfair, something that has to be justified.[30] The redemption of life, its justification, must follow the narrow path of a new sorrow, and redemption means that someone – and all his followers – will pass through this hurtful narrow path: God on the Cross. The Crucifix will take the responsibility for the sins of the entire world, will redeem life: Jesus is crucified in order to resurrect, so that humans will return to "real" life, the life of the hereafter.

The binary sorrow-punishment and sorrow-ransom for Nietzsche is a machinery that internalizes sorrow, and turns it against the self, creating the bad, the sinful, and the guilty conscience. It is the machinery through which the Christian acts nihilistically, negating life: on the one hand the construction of guilt and sin, and on the other hand the multiplication of sorrow as the ransom that will "buy the sorrow" of this fallen life.[31] Even when

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[28] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ,* §51.

[29] Genesis 3:16–19.

[30] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 15.

[31] Ibid.

Christianity praises life and love, in these hymns lie hatred and negation, since "love" refers to a castrated, mutilated and dying life with moral rules and "musts", with instincts oppressed and denied, a life that is nothing but a blurred shadow of the hereafter's "real" life.

For Nietzsche, being is also anguish but for a different reason. It is pain and anxiety because of the severance of humans from the primal unity, individualization and the struggle for survival. Humans need the creation of an Apollonian illusion, they need art as a conscious illusion that will ease the pain and make them live life as an aesthetic phenomenon. Dionysos comes to cooperate with Apollo by dissolving every now and then the illusions of the latter, by throwing humans into dancing and singing, and the intoxication of the Dionysian wine. The two gods cooperate and create Tragedy, this aesthetic weapon that will ease the anguish of existence.[32] Moreover, Tragedy will become the springboard for affirming existence, for accepting and praising life here and now.

Dionysos, the god of joy and wine, dancing and laughter, is the same Dionysos that was cut into pieces by the Titans, offered as dinner to the Olympians and was then reborn – resurrected through Demeter. He is the god that *justifies pain with his life instead of justifying life with his pain*. That means that pain is accepted as an ingredient of life, not as a prerequisite. We live and therefore feel pain, which is justified because we affirm life in all its aspects, adversities and hardships. However, justifying life with pain would mean that we live *for* feeling pain rather than feeling pain *because* we are alive. Hence, Dionysos does not internalize pain, life is just per se "affirming even the hardest pain".[33]

According to Nietzsche, humans lost their innocence when they denied what they are, when they repressed their instincts in the name of a revealed morality, when they demonized pain by identifying it with punishment, and asked to project it on gods that would bear this pain on their behalf;[34] when, by internalizing their pain, they created for themselves a bad, guilty conscience.

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[32] See Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy.*

[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* IV, §1052.

[34] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* II, 7.

In combination with the praising and beatitude of the weak and the "wrecks of life", with the reverse of values (now the strong is selfish and arrogant whereas the weak and scared is modest and humble) and the repression of their instincts, this bad conscience led them to resentment: the venom that poisons existence and defines the "good" (weak, slave) in relation to the "bad" (strong, master). From now on, humans are hetero-defined, they no longer build their morality on their own but crawl ascetically and miserably behind a morality that promises a reward in the other world equal to the suffering of this one. They are like a "poor Lazarus" that finds himself in the arms of Abraham only because he suffered under the table of the indifferent rich man. In short: *Dionysos versus the Crucifix*.

However, Nietzsche's critique of Christianity differs from his critique of Jesus. For the German philosopher whatever followed the crucifixion was a distortion of the Crucifix's life and work. "Even the word 'Christianity' is a misunderstanding, there was really only one Christian, and he died on the cross. The 'evangel' *died* on the cross. What was called 'evangel' after that was the opposite of what *he* had lived: a '*bad* tidings', a *dysangel*".[35]

Of course, Nietzsche's basic objections (reversal of values, subversion of the robust Rome, beatitude of the weak) remain valid. The difference is that on the one hand, he recognizes Jesus as the human type strong enough to ruin a morality and self-institutionalize his own – that is, a true generator of values – and on the other hand, he openly questions the originality and Christlikeness of certain passages from the gospels and the rest of the New Testament, especially those referring to punishments, judgments and asceticism.[36]

Let me underline, at this point, the distinction between an end and a cause. I distinguish between Christ and Jesus. I distinguish between the crucifixion that took place *aiming at* the resurrection of Christ and the opening of a road for the "other world", and the crucifixion that took place *because of* the way Jesus lived, because

[35] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, §39.
[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, §45.

of his choice to clash with this world's authorities, a clash that ended with the cross.

Jesus lived with an aim to make his life an example of affirming and approving the present existence. He wanted, like Nietzsche, to make humans carriers of new, subversive values, he consorted with the pariahs of his society, neither to keep them hemmed in the margin – in the way that even today the Church arguably does through charity, for example – nor to make them embrace the dominant values that he was rejecting. He wanted to renovate humans within the standards of a liberating and immoral morality, to make them love what they can be, what they can become, or as Nietzsche used to say, "you have to become who you are".[37] Therefore, Jesus *justified his death with his life*.

On the other hand, Christ died in order to resurrect, in order to expose the reversal of the last nihilistic obstacle: death. He died in order to confirm the existence of the hereafter *only* as a perspective and continuation of this life, not in terms of judgment and punishment but in terms of affirmation, of the "Sacred Yes" to life,[38] to naturalism, to everything that constitutes human nature. Is this not, after all, what the events of the violent ousting of the merchants from the temple[39] or the approval of the children's innocence[40] show? In the first case, we have the release of Christ's feelings and thus, without any sentimental repression taking place, the poisoning of the resentment effect is avoided; this instant expression of wrath leaves no place inside him for feelings of hatred to flourish. In the second case, he applauds children's innocence and, in fact, approves their lack of integration to the social and psychological norms and even the cruelty children sometimes display, because this cruelty is not directed personally to their neighbour but is a hearty, impulsive and sincere expression of specific feelings in time and space. Therefore, Christ *justified hereafter with his death*.

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[37] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, aphorisms 270 and 335.

[38] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* I, "Of the Three Metamorphoses".

[39] Matthew 21:12–13.

[40] Mark 10:13–16.

Jesus and Christ are unified under the personality of the God-man, a being that is a perfect God and a perfect human at the same time. His monolithic perception, like that of the Church from his crucifixion onwards, turns Christianity into a carrier of negation, resignation and dislike of life and human naturalism. There cannot be a resurrected man other than as an affirmation of the here-living man, like resurrected Christ who is the affirmation of Jesus from Nazareth.

Theses and Antitheses for restoring Anarcho-Christian Activism

Through the prism of the Nietzschean critique a new road opens before our eyes: the active reading of the Bible and the utilization of its contradictions in order to construct a different (anarcho) Christianity; a different reading that interprets Christianity as a struggle in favour of life, thus making possible and creative the conjunction of anarchism and Christianity.

Using the Nietzschean critique and the anarchist view as an apparatus, I will now critically re-approach some basic points of anarcho-Christian thinkers, presented in Christoyannopoulos' overview, that I believe inhibit anarcho-Christian activism.

Through an extended effort of understanding/justifying the scandalous passage of Romans 13, prominent thinkers and anarcho-Christians who do not dismiss Paul altogether reach, more or less, three basic and related conclusions:

a) Secular authorities are an inevitable evil that act in the world with God's tolerance and as his tool for maintaining the world's order for those that have not answered his call.
b) Anarcho-Christians ought to submit to the state due to love, having, however, always in mind that God's will comes before secular authority.
c) The subversion of the state and authority must take place in terms of patience, passive resistance and love, preferably never through illegal acts (unless in direct contradiction to God's will), and individuals must always be ready to suffer the consequences of disobedience. After all, even "prison is

> a kind of resting place in today's world, a 'new monastery' in which Christians can 'abide with honour'".[41] The vindication of our stiff upper lip together with the vengeance and the just punishment of the authoritarians, all belong to God.

As far as the first conclusion is concerned, God's tolerance of something that is "evil" is definitely an example of respect for human free will. Nevertheless, there is a problem with the second component. If we accept that dominance is something bad for anarcho-Christian morality, then how is it possible for a "virtuous" God to use "evil" means in order to achieve his goals and, even more, to maintain an order that daily, in all its expressions, produces inequalities and exploitation (the classical dilemma of "theodicy")? Let us not forget that every "nation"/state obtained its linguistic idiosyncrasy – one of its fundamental characteristics – as a result of human arrogance, according to the story of the Tower of Babel in the Old Testament.[42]

The interpretation that an activist anarcho-Christian can give to this point, is mainly the sincere answer that God's will is unknown and every effort for theodicy can end up being an even greater parody than Paulodicy. Nevertheless, this does not imply an agnostic resignation, but rather that the initiative belongs to the anarcho-Christian subjects who are called, through an active interpretation, to self-define (based on their interpretation) and not hetero-define (based on the supposed divine intentions) their actions. Hence, the existence of dominance can hardly be attributed to, or be legitimized by, a divine will.

The second conclusion tends to confuse love with passivity and mildness. The mistake in this case is that a mellow and moderate stance does not always presuppose feelings of love but, as Nietzsche says in his critique, can become the spring of resentful and vengeful feelings. The other way around, a critical, emotionally charged, attitude does not exclude love and interest for the one who stands opposite us. If, for example, we accept the fact that

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[41] Christoyannopoulos, 'Responding to the State', p. 135.
[42] Genesis 11:1–9.

Jesus not only did not feel any hatred but, on the contrary, loved everyone, then his harsh critique of the Pharisees[43] or his violent entrance to the Temple of Jerusalem[44] are stances diametrically opposed to the passivity anarcho-Christians call for in relation to the state and the authorities.

Moreover, it is implied that when authority clashes with God's will, then anarcho-Christians should side with the latter, without second thoughts (of course, again through a patient and passive resistance). However, what also seems to be ignored, is that the existence of state, nation and dominance per se, directly contradict the basic features of human "nature" that are supposed to be synonymous with those of the supposedly loving, virtuous and just God that created humans in his image.[45] Hence, rupture and clash with the state do not need excuses or further justification. The existence of dominance is a necessary and sufficient condition for subverting it since it opposes God's love and justice.

The third conclusion justifies the Nietzschean critique of quitting life, in favour of a hereafter, and of nourishing sentiments of resentment and vengeance, what Nietzsche calls a *bad conscience*. (Anarcho) Christians seem to underestimate the importance of their earthly presence, considering it as a short passage to the real, after-death life. Additionally, they look towards a divine justification of their practice – meaning, they do not act authentically or unselfishly – and, even worse, put their hopes on God for the punishment of those who harmed them – an anticipation poisoned by the venom of revenge that has nothing to do with love and forgiveness.

Furthermore, the rejection of disobedience whenever it is expressed through "illegal acts" seems rather inappropriate to those who believe that laws are often incompatible with justice. Besides, we should never forget the incident in the Old Testament during the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt:[46] God advises Moses that all Jews, before leaving, should borrow clothes and objects of

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[43] Matthew 23:1–33.

[44] John 2:13–17. This passage will be analysed in more detail further down, in relation to the matter of violence.

[45] Genesis 1:26–27.

[46] Exodus 3:21–23.

great value from their Egyptian neighbours with no intention of ever returning them! The third conclusion would imply that this action is thievery and therefore illegal. Nonetheless, Thanassis Papathanassiou gives the different and quite radical interpretation of St. Irenaeus for this incident, cancelling every false dilemma between "legal" and "illegal" procedures. That is, St. Irenaeus opines that what God actually does is to urge Jews to regain a part of all the things that were stolen from them during their slavery in Egypt.[47] At the very least, God does not always urge passive or lawful obedience.

In conclusion, a restored anarcho-Christian activism calls for a crystallized, responsible and morally autonomous action, with love towards the earthly existence and without feelings of vengeance.

The Debate on Pacifism

What is common in all three of the above conclusions is the strict adoption of pacifist means of action to the extent that any use of violence is viewed as incompatible with an anarcho-Christian perspective. Therefore, I would like to deal separately with this matter since I believe that any fixed position (violence – non violence) is a dangerous dogmatism within Christian anarchism.[48]

Any reference to Christianity as a pacifist current is the conclusion of a reasoning based on Jesus' teaching about love from the New Testament. There are, however, at least two representative passages of the Gospel, together with a crucial "intervention" of Walter Benjamin regarding the distinction between violence that liberates and violence that subdues, which subverts the pacifist axiom making us revise and "restore" violence within Christianity.

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[47] Thanassis Papathanassiou, *Κοινωνική Δικαιοσύνη και Ορθόδοξη Θεολογία – Μία Προκήρυξη* [Social Justice and Orthodox Theology – A Proclamation], p. 27.

[48] This conversation takes place in the chapter of Christoyannopoulos mentioned above. Nevertheless for a more detailed reasoning see the exceptional work of the same author in Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism, A Political Commentary on the Gospel* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), and especially sections 2.8 and 4.5.1.

The first incident is the narration of Jesus' entrance into the Temple of Jerusalem, the overturning of the merchant's tables and their ousting. This incident is mentioned by all four evangelists, and if we omit the rather "neutral" narration of Luke[49] the other three[50] are quite colourful. On one level, all three agree that Jesus overthrows the merchants' goods and drives them out of the Temple calling them thieves.[51] Then, we have the following slight variations: Mark says that Jesus "would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple", whereas John says that "when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables".[52]

It cannot be denied that Jesus acted violently. The overturn of the tables, the casting out of the merchants, the blockage of any exchange, the fear and uneasiness that he probably caused to the merchants, are actions of physical and psychological violence.

The interesting point – after highlighting features of violence in Jesus' behaviour – is that the conversation shifts towards the "degree of violence" taking place and the aspect that this violence was "extremely limited and [. . .] never directed at people".[53] The truth is that the relevant passages do not mention the act of physical violence against the merchants but do not consider it impossible either. As Adin Ballou says "as I have an equally good right to imagine how Jesus acted on the occasion, I shall presume that he did nothing unworthy of the principle, the character, and spirit that uniformly distinguished him"[54] To this, Christoyannopoulos adds: "Although there can be no definitive proof either way, given Jesus' main teaching, the absence of violence is more probable than its presence".[55] Before exposing the reasons for which Ballou is mistaken to support the non-physical clash between Jesus and

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[49] Luke 19:45–48.

[50] Matthew 21:12–13, Mark 11:15–17, John 2:13–17.

[51] In fact, this is mentioned in Matthew and Mark, whereas according to John, they are accused of turning the Temple into a shopping centre, but this is still a negative characterization.

[52] John 2:15.

[53] Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* p. 105.

[54] Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* pp. 105–106, quoting Ballou.

[55] Ibid.

the merchants as more probable, I will interject the inspired distinction that Benjamin makes about violence.

In his work, *Critique of Violence,* Benjamin introduces the distinction between *Mythical* and *Divine Violence*. The former is the violence used as a cold means for the fulfilment of a goal, no matter if this goal is about the preservation of an existing law or the creation of a new one. The latter is the violence expressed as a manifestation, a discharge, without being the means of a certain goal. It tends to lead to emancipation, liberation, and not to domination. Benjamin writes:

> Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythical violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood.[56]

Let me note here that divine violence is not just a "pressure valve" that will, later on, let reality return to its lawful and suppressive conditions. When Benjamin leaves an "open window" for these personal relationships that are not characterized by violence but love, compassion and comradeship[57] he wants to point to the construction of a revolutionary community, where divine violence will have subsided. Besides, as examples from the French and Russian revolutions suggest, if a revolutionary process results in legislative and institutionalized norms, then the divine violence degenerates into the mythical violence, shifting from a liberating and redemptive force against tyranny, to a means of oppression and vengeance, a new tyranny. This may also answer the logical question that rises and constitutes a weak point of Benjamin's reasoning: what are the limits of a redeeming violence? What happens when such a manifestation leads to the loss of a human

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[56] Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p. 297.

[57] Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', p. 289.

life? For Christian anarchists, every such loss is equally painful. However, taking action cannot and must not be suspended because of such a probability. Only complete inaction, isolation and stagnation can guarantee the eclipse of harmful effects. It is the intentions – as with the example with Jesus in the Temple – that must draw our attention and interest.

This critique of violence by Benjamin completes the critique made by Nietzsche. The violent manifestation of Jesus, the innocent and pure cruelty of children, is nothing but approval and respect for human nature and protection from the venom of resentment. Hence, when Jesus overthrows the tables of the merchants in the Temple, he is probably confronting them at a physical level too. It would be more than strange for a group of people that had turned their commercial and gainful activity in the Temple into a status quo, not to react to the damage of their fortune by someone who did not possess any official authority, religious or political. Even the previous, triumphant, entrance of Jesus in Jerusalem could not have ensured him any immunity for such an aggressive action against the long lasting and widely accepted practice of the merchants, and their fortunes. Therefore, unlike Ballou, I think that what took place was most probably a severe physical conflict between Jesus and his disciples, and the merchants, a conflict that does not necessarily contradict his overall teaching.

According to this Benjaminian logic, his deed is a violent action that, nonetheless, does not seek to punish the merchants. Moreover, it is not the means for a goal that could be described as "restoration of the law that regulates the proper usage of the temple" (through the punishment of those who broke it), but rather a striking against the "law" the merchants had instituted with the open tolerance of the priesthood – that is, divine and not mythical violence.

Jesus' action is a manifestation of a redeeming violence for the overwhelming rage he feels when he sees the pathetic commercialization of his father's homestead. He does not use his whip to give a divine punishment but to awaken the merchants from the lethargy caused by their vice. From a Benjaminian angle, therefore, the complementary objection of some Christian anarchists

about violence, an objection that rejects violence as adoption of the same means used by the state,[58] is irrelevant.

The second incident refers to the context of Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane.[59] The most colourful narration is that of Matthew, according to which when one comrade of Jesus cuts with his sword the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus asks him to put his sword back, highlighting that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword", while he reminds him that if he wished for any help, he could, at any time, ask the angels.

Jesus' comment on the sword underlines the need for a complete realization of one's deed; that actors must always take full "ownership" and conscience of their actions. This realization, and not an a priori "moral imperative", will be the moral criterion for the action. Jesus does not reprimand his comrade for his hastening to defend him with his sword but because he knows that his comrade's action is not conscious, something which is proved just after his arrest, when all of his frightened comrades abandon him. Hence, he gives a warning concerning the realization of the action and not its moral substratum.

On the other hand, the fact that Jesus refers to the legions of angels suggests that under different circumstances he would not deny his physical defence against his armed prosecutors. His voluntary surrender has to do with the imminent and definitive crush of death, through his resurrection, and not with the fulfilment of an anti-violent fetishism.

Finally, my main point is that non-violence does not constitute an essential ingredient of an anarcho-Christian outlook, just like violence does not either. It is, of course, true that non-violence seems to be the main trend in Christian anarchism as well as in Jesus' teaching. However, we have certain historical anti-paradigms from the millenarian revolutions of the Middle Ages,[60] and we have the dynamic entrance of Jesus into the Temple and his stance

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[58] Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* p. 209.

[59] Matthew 26:47–56, Mark 14:43–52, Luke 22:47–53, John 18:1–11.

[60] See for example Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

during his arrest. These do not "legitimize" a Christian violent practice, but equally, they do not reject it. What I have argued in this chapter is that the interpretation of Jesus' life and teaching remains open and that an alternative reading favours a challenge of the prevailing pacifistic theses, in a Christian anarchist context, based on both historical and (theo)logical arguments. Subsequently, this open interpretation and alternative reading can redefine the Christian anarchist resistance against the State and secular authority by getting rid of the weight of the violence/non-violence pseudo-dilemma and adopting an active rather than a passive stance.

Conclusion

This chapter aims at presenting the points of the anarcho-Christian argument that drive Christian anarchism to hibernation and, eventually lead to an overall negation of life. These points are the passive (resi)stance and the obsession with a pacifist action, in the name of Jesus' teaching and the supposed divine intentions. On the contrary, a Nietzschean reading offers an analysis of the distinction between Jesus' life/death and its perception by Paul and the mainstream Church, giving an alternative perspective of the connection between Jesus and life before and after death. Consequently, it leads to a restored (anarcho) Christian activism calling for an interpretation of the Scripture and the Christian tradition based on our relationship with our comrades, as well as with Jesus himself. This interpretation should not be dogmatic, or be by revelation but experiential and active, aiming at accepting life after death only as an affirmation of the earthly life, and not the other way round.

An important stop in this journey, apart from the critique made by Nietzsche, is the treatise of Benjamin that sheds a different light on the issue of violence which constitutes a special debate in the circles of Christian anarchism. By recognizing that violence is an essential characteristic of human "nature", also present in Jesus' practice even if not unambiguous, we can approach it through a different lens and restore it as a Christian anarchist practice that will not be essential but neither rejectable.

Nietzsche's reading of Jesus' death not as a prerequisite for an afterlife but, primarily, as an outcome of his self-affirmative life against the authorities of his time, as well as Benjamin's critique of violence, which overcomes the false dilemma between violence and non-violence, redefines Jesus' life and violent practices respectively. Given that Christian anarchists cannot but draw on Jesus' example in order to resist evil and secular authority, redefining this example means to offer a new meaning to this resistance which now becomes active and affirmative instead of passive and resentful.

However, this journey's most important feature cannot be other than our will, as Christian anarchists, to realize here, now, everywhere and for ever the values of Christianity and anarchy and drive the ship that is called Ecclesia towards the open sea of God's Kingdom on earth.

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Blessed Are the Peacemakers: The Contribution of Christian Nonviolence to Anarchism

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Although Christian anarchists are typically committed to pacifism, in the broader anarchist literature pacifism is a decidedly minoritarian position. It may be argued on this basis that Christian anarchists are pacifists on account of their Christianity rather than their anarchism, and that non-Christian anarchists, in not sharing Christians' commitment to following Jesus, have no similar reason to accept pacifism. However, this paper argues that the radical nonviolence defended by Christian anarchists is as consistently anarchist as it is Christian, for in Christian nonviolence we find anarchistic commitments to mutual aid, prefiguration, and attention to 'the least of these'. The paper therefore also suggests that the criticisms of violence articulated by Christian anarchists might actually speak to non-Christian anarchists too, and that nonviolence is in fact a central element of anarchist prefiguration.

What contribution can Jesus and his followers, especially those followers of Jesus who call themselves anarchists and pacifists, make to anarchist discussions of nonviolence? Is the position of radical nonviolence that is typically adopted by Christian anarchists simply a requirement of their being *Christian*, rather than having anything to do with their also happening to be *anarchists*? If so, then Jesus and his followers would have no contribution to make to anarchist discussions of nonviolence. On the other hand, if part of that which is seen in the teachings of Jesus as anarchistic by these Christian anarchists is precisely his radical nonviolence,

How to cite this book chapter:
Underwood, S. 2018. Blessed Are the Peacemakers: The Contribution of Christian Nonviolence to Anarchism. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 196–231. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.g.
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there may in fact be a connection between Christianity, anarchism, and nonviolence. In the present paper, I will argue for this connection. Specifically, I will argue that the biblically based argument for nonviolence – drawing primarily on the teachings of Jesus – is ultimately an anarchist case for nonviolence, insofar as it is consistent with anarchist calls to rethink normativity and fulfils the prefigurative principle, and, as such, deserves serious consideration by both Christian and non-Christian anarchists.

Before proceeding, I should say something about how I am using the present volume's guiding terms, 'religion' and 'anarchism.' As the editors note in the introduction, both terms are quite difficult, if not impossible, to define in such a way that leaves no room for objection. Without attempting to offer exhaustive or wholly non-problematic definitions, then, I will simply indicate what I have in mind when I employ these terms.

Regarding 'religion,' my own inclination is to call 'religious' those traditions, texts, beliefs, and practices which attempt to say something about and/or foster communion with the 'divine,' 'sacred,' or 'transcendent.'[1] And I understand 'anarchism' to be a political philosophy which brings together radical anti-authoritarianism and radical egalitarianism.[2] More specifically, in Peter Kropotkin's words, anarchism is "the no-government system of socialism,"[3] which seeks to maximize what Emma Goldman calls the "twin forces" of "individual liberty and economic equality,"[4] through the

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[1] Of course, these last three terms are themselves so broad and indefinite as to admit of a multitude of interpretations, but it seems that the phenomenon of religion is itself so marked by a multitude of interpretations that this difficulty is not only unavoidable but instead a defining feature of religion.

[2] I am indebted to my friend and former teacher, Nathan Jun, for this articulation of the essential formula for anarchism. For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Nathan J. Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

[3] Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles," in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, edited by Roger N. Baldwin, (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002) 46.

[4] Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays (Second, Revised Edition)*, (New York/London: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1911), available from https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-anarchism-and-other-essays#toc4.

dismantling of hierarchical structures of power and the reorganization of society along non-hierarchical, democratic lines.[5]

I. Christian Nonviolence

The case for Christian nonviolence is a familiar one: Jesus blesses the peacemakers,[6] warns that those who live by the sword die by the sword,[7] and overturns *lex talionis* – "an eye for an eye" – instead teaching nonviolent resistance.[8] This final point is particularly important and is made by appealing to a proper translation of the Greek verb that Jesus uses for "resist." Walter Wink, for example, argues in *Jesus and Nonviolence,* that the verb is most accurately understood to refer to "violent rebellion, armed revolt, sharp dissention."[9] "Support for this [Wink's] translation," writes Kurt Willems, "is not unwarranted as *antistēnai* is the word repeatedly used in the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible as 'warfare' and is also used in Ephesians 6:13 in the context of active military imagery."[10]

Jesus exemplified nonviolent resistance in his life and teaching. For although he never violently aggressed another person – even to the point of not resisting his executioners – Jesus was, in John Howard Yoder's words, "a social critic and an agitator."[11] And Bart Ehrman points out that in the empire, "only two known people were specifically called 'the son of God.' The emperor was one

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[5] Beyond this, several different visions have been proposed for what specific form such a society should take, including mutualist, communist, and syndicalist forms of organization. For an overview of these differences, see Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide*, (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005).

[6] Matthew 5:9 (NRSV).

[7] Matthew 26:52.

[8] Matthew 8:38–39.

[9] Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 13.

[10] Kurt Willems, "Nonviolence 101 – Resistance is Futile. . . or the Meaning of ἀντιστῆναι (part 2)," available from http://www.patheos.com/blogs/thepangeablog/2011/02/07/nonviolence-101-resistance-is-futile-or-the-meaning-of-ἀντιστῆναι-part-2/ (accessed 2 August 2014), para. 7.

[11] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (2nd. Ed.), (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 1.

of them, and Jesus was the other."[12] Jesus was boldly proclaiming the coming kingdom of God, of which he (Jesus) would be the king. It does not get much more subversive than that. "This was the message he delivered to his disciples," writes Ehrman, "and in the end, it was the message that got him crucified."[13] Jesus was not passive or a quietist or an apolitical teacher of private religious morality. He was a nonviolent revolutionary.

This same line of argument is taken up by Christian anarchists, who argue that, as Alexandre Christoyannopoulos writes, because "The state is founded on the very thing Jesus prohibits"[14] – namely violence – the state too must be rejected by Christians as immoral. The most obvious Christian objections raised against this position are the "render unto Caesar" passage, Jesus' cleansing of the temple, Jesus' arrest when he tells his disciples to arm themselves, and Romans 13. All of these passages have been dealt with at length by various authors and so, with the exception of the temple cleansing which is discussed in section four below, they will not be addressed here.[15] Suffice it to say that Christian anarchists see the logical conclusion of Jesus' teachings on nonviolence to be anarchism – anarcho-pacifism, to be precise.

Anarcho-pacifism, however, is a minority position in the anarchist community. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear pacifism condemned by anarchists in the strongest terms. Albert Meltzer writes, for example, that while "phoney anarchism contains a large streak of pacifism," such radical nonviolence is ultimately no better than "militant liberalism," insofar as it "renounce[es] any form of positive action for anarchism," and is, therefore,

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[12] Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 225.

[13] Ibid., 128.

[14] Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Bible, [Abridged Edition]*, (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011), 44.

[15] See, for example, Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism*. Kevin Daugherty, in "Romans 13 and the State" (available from http://mennonerds.com/romans-13-and-the-state/), argues that Romans 13 may not be referring to *governing* authorities at all, but rather to *spiritual* authorities.

"authoritarian."[16] If Meltzer is correct, by no means can we consider Christian nonviolence – or any position of nonviolence, for that matter – to be inherently anarchist. What Meltzer's view fails to appreciate, however, is the fact that it is possible to draw a stronger line between Christian nonviolence, Christian anarchism, and the broader anarchist tradition.

II. Normativity, Anti-Normativity, and Prefiguration

The question of ethics is potentially an insurmountable barrier separating Christian and non-Christian anarchists. After all, it seems obvious that the Christian, *qua* Christian, is expected to follow a very specific set of moral laws, in obedience to the greatest authority of them all, God. Anarchists, on the other hand, have historically spurned normative ethics as necessarily authoritarian. This is not to say that anarchists advocate some form of amorality or moral relativism, but, as Nathan Jun explains in *Anarchism and Political Modernity*,

> In the place of normativity, the anarchists offer two alternatives: first, a sophisticated anthropological, sociological, and evolutionary analysis of the origins and functions of moral systems; and second, a pragmatic and procedural theory of action referred to as 'prefiguration.'[17]

The most obvious example of the first alternative is Peter Kropotkin's work, *Mutual Aid*, in which he argues that, "Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle."[18] Countering the modern-day form of individualism that insists upon a greedy, self-interested human nature, Kropotkin argues,

> The very persistence of the clan organization shows how utterly false it is to represent primitive [humankind] as a disorderly agglomeration of individuals, who only obey their individual passions, and take advantage of their personal force and cunningness

[16] Albert Meltzer, *Anarchism: Arguments For & Against* (6th Second Revised Edition), (San Fransisco: AK Press, 1996), 25.

[17] Jun, 129.

[18] Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of* Evolution, (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006), 5.

> against all other representatives of the species. Unbridled individualism is a modern growth, but it is not characteristic of primitive [humankind].[19]

As to the second alternative that Jun cites, there are many examples in anarchist literature, but perhaps the most pithy statement of anarchist prefiguration is found in Jean Grave's "Means and Ends," in which he writes, "[t]he surest means of making Anarchy triumph is to act like an anarchist."[20] Jun develops this theme, writing that "The 'prefigurative principle' demands coherence between means and ends. That is, if the goal of political action is the promotion of some value, the means and methods employed in acting must reflect or *prefigure* the desired end."[21] In short, means must be consistent with ends. Coercive means cannot be expected to lead to non-coercive ends.

How can such an approach to morality possibly be squared with the approach wherein morality is a function of God's commandments? Rather than "No gods, no masters," it seems that Christian anarchists simply proclaim, "No *other* gods, no *other* masters, besides God," which, while it may yield some interesting political implications in its own right, certainly sounds antithetical to anarchism. However, I will argue that both of these alternatives to normativity – the evolutionary and the prefigurative – can in fact find a good deal of support in the teachings of Jesus, particularly when we pay close attention to Jesus' declaration that, "the kingdom of God is among (or *within*) you."[22]

(a) Mutual Aid and the Unkingdom

In *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin notes that, "Even the new religions which were born from time to time" in the shadow of empires,

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[19] Ibid., 71.

[20] Jean Grave, "Means and Ends," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300CE to 1939)*, edited by Robert Graham, (Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books, 2005), 157.

[21] Jun, 129.

[22] Luke 17:21

> found their first supporters among the humble, in the lowest, down-trodden layers of society, where the mutual-aid principle is the necessary foundation of every-day life; and the new forms of union which were introduced in the earliest Buddhist and Christian communities, in the Moravian brotherhoods and so on, took the character of a return to the best aspects of mutual aid in early tribal life.[23]

It is tempting (and I think rightly so) to read this alongside Jesus' words, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."[24] If the kingdom of God is among us, and belongs principally to the poor, it seems that Jesus and Kropotkin may (however unwittingly) be striking a similar chord. For what "kingdom" is found among the lowly and downtrodden of society? As David Graeber notes, we tend to find more empathy, compassion, and solidarity among the working classes – where mutual dependence is among the greatest of life's necessities – than we do among the wealthy, where cooperation is too often cast off in favour of competition and personal gain.[25]

Jesus' kingdom is the one that belongs to the poor, and, in a sense, we might say that Kropotkin's is as well. But this is not, of course, a kingdom in the familiar sense of the word, but something more like what Mark Van Steenwyk calls an Unkingdom.[26] And if Jesus is the king, we could not but call him an "Unking," for his "rule" (or "unrule," as it were) is one not of violence and conquest, but of love, hospitality, and nonviolent resistance. Accordingly, when Jesus says that, "My kingdom is not of this world," we can read him not as declaring the existence of an otherworldly kingdom, located elsewhere in the universe or beyond, but rather as proclaiming a coming earthly kingdom that looks nothing like the kingdoms of this present world. As W.H. Auden

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[23] Kropotkin, 247.

[24] Luke 6:20

[25] David Graeber, "Caring Too Much. That's the Curse of the Working Classes," available from http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/26/caring-curse-working-class-austerity-solidarity-scourge?CMP=fb_gu. (accessed 31 July 2015).

[26] Mark Van Steenwyk, *The UNkingdom of God: Embracing the Subversive Power of Repentance,* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

writes, "Jesus said My Kingdom is not of *this* world. He did not say of *the* world."[27]

Thus, we find – perhaps surprisingly, given Kropotkin's hostility to religion – a connection between the teachings of Jesus and Kropotkin. Jesus preaches a kingdom of love and compassion and declares not only that it is among us but also that it belongs to the poor. Kropotkin draws upon evolutionary science to argue that human beings are cooperative by nature, and that this principle of mutual aid is found particularly well preserved among the poor, who are, not surprisingly, those praised by Jesus for their proximity to the kind of politics he seeks to illustrate. We certainly should not conflate the teachings of Jesus with Kropotkin's writings, considering the obvious and dramatic differences between the two. All I mean to draw out here is the specific compatibility between Jesus' Unkingdom and Kropotkin's writings on mutual aid and show how a Christian and non-Christian anarchist can find common ground.

By this account, then, we have good reason to say that the Unkingdom of God and the principle of mutual aid are naturally compatible: mutual aid is typically found among the downtrodden (to whom Jesus points), and is indeed an essential characteristic of an anarchist society such as Jesus' Unkingdom. Therefore, the "sophisticated anthropological, sociological, and evolutionary analysis of the origins and functions of moral systems" which anarchists prefer to a religious ontology in fact meets the political recommendations that follow from that ontology on the question of ethics.

Of course, there are some anarchists – probably individualists in the fashion of Max Stirner in particular – who may take issue with Kropotkin's argument and thus will not be interested in the question of whether or not it is compatible with the Unkingdom. The question then becomes: should we accept that Kropotkin's basic view of ethics – as a result of our evolutionary development as social creatures – is a necessary component to any and all anarchist accounts of ethics? This is of course a thorny issue because

[27] W.H. Auden, quoted in Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God After God,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 135.

any talk of "*the*" anarchist view on something – anything – is by its very nature extremely difficult. Accordingly, I would respond to anti-Kropotkin objectors with two main points: first, I would agree with Jun that this approach to ethics can reasonably be considered a basic component of historical anarchist approaches to ethics; and second, as work in contemporary evolutionary biology frequently shows, there are good grounds for taking Kropotkin's arguments seriously.[28] Accordingly, while I would certainly concede that it is difficult if not impossible to assert any view as "*the*" anarchist position, I would argue that anarchists have very good reason to accept Kropotkin's argument both as historically important for anarchism as well as important for such contemporary debates as to whether or not human beings can live peaceably without hierarchy or centralized government.

(b) Prefiguring the Unkingdom

Jesus paradoxically preaches a kingdom already-come and an apocalyptic kingdom *to-come*. And herein, I want to argue, lies Jesus' prefigurative principle. Jesus calls his followers to make this coming kingdom ever more real through concrete acts of love and hospitality. Lee Camp refers to this as living "proleptically": "If the Kingdom of God has broken in . . . then the church is to *live proleptically* according to the now-present-and-coming Kingdom. To *live proleptically* means to live *now* according to something that is still yet in the future[.]"[29]

We find the clearest expression of how we are to live proleptically in the Sermon on the Mount, wherein we find Jesus' most explicit teachings of radical love, forgiveness, and nonviolence: "Do not resist an evildoer,"[30] "Give to everyone who begs from you,"[31] "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute

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[28] See, for example, Frans de Waal, *The Age of Empathy.*

[29] Lee C. Camp, "What About Romans 13: 'Let Every Soul Be Subject'?", in *A Faith Not Worth Fighting For: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions About Christian Nonviolence*, edited by Tripp York and Justin Bronson Barringer, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012), 142.

[30] Matthew 5:39.

[31] Matthew 5:42.

you,"[32] "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink."[33]

But surely, we object, we must defend ourselves against aggressors? Surely we cannot be expected to give to *everyone* who begs from us? Surely we cannot love terrorists? Surely we have to plan for retirement?

Maddeningly, however, Jesus offers no exception clauses. Indeed, Leo Tolstoy insists that when Jesus taught nonviolence, he "meant neither more nor less than what he said."[34] D. Stephen Long similarly writes,

> Nowhere does Jesus' Sermon on the Mount suggest that it is only for individuals. There is no footnote or proviso where Jesus says, 'You are to live this way except when it comes to the defence of your neighbours, then you must use the violence at your disposal to protect them.' In fact, the Sermon on the Mount is not private instruction for individual consciences; it is the political platform for the new kingdom or city that Jesus proclaims, the city that is to be 'set on a hill' and illumine the world (Matt 5:14–16).[35]

Gustav Landauer, as anarchists are fond of repeating, argues that "The state is a relationship between human beings, a way by which people relate to one another; and one destroys it by entering into other relationships; by behaving differently to one another."[36] With this in mind, the Sermon on the Mount is a call to radically rethink and reorient our relationships with one another in a way that prefigures the Unkingdom of God. It may seem impossible, but, as Jesus says, "for God all things are possible."[37]

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[32] Matthew 5:44.

[33] Matthew 6:25.

[34] Leo Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, translated by Huntington Smith, (Guildford: White Crow Books, 2009), 16.

[35] D. Stephen Long, "What About the Protection of Third-Party Innocents? On Letting Your Neighbors Die," in York and Barringer, 21.

[36] Gustav Landauer, "Destroying the State By Creating Socialism," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300CE to 1939)*, edited by Robert Graham, (Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books: 2005), 165.

[37] Mark 10:27

What does this Unkingdom look like? Or to ask in John Caputo's provocative words,

> What would it be like were there a politics of and for the children, who are the future; a politics not of sovereignty, of top–down power, but a politics that builds from the bottom up, where *ta me onta* (I Cor 1:28) enjoy pride of place and a special privilege? What would a political order look like if the last are first, if everything turned on lifting up the lowliest instead of letting relief trickle down from the top? What would it look like if there were a politics of loving one's enemies, not of war, let alone, God forbid, of preemptive war?[38]

In short, I would follow the many Christian anarchists who have argued[39] that it would look like anarchy.[40] And Jesus does not say that his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are simply meant to indicate how we will live once the Unkingdom has arrived, some distant day in the future, for the Unkingdom *has* arrived.[41] It is already amongst us in the communality of the poor and lowly, and it is realized in every concrete act of love, hospitality, and forgiveness. Accordingly, there are no exception clauses or provisos. Jesus is teaching a new way of being for the here and now – a new way of being that prefigures the already-here-yet-still-to-come Unkingdom. We are to care for the poor *today*, to welcome strangers and love our enemies *today*, and to put away our swords *today*. For, as Richard Kearney says,

> The kingdom is present in the '[l]east of these,' just as Christ is present in the giving of a cup of cold water. That means that in every moment, there is the possibility of good and the possibility of non-good. There's the possibility of love; there's the possibility of hate, violence, aggression. We're choosing constantly. And every moment we are actualizing the kingdom or not-actualizing the kingdom.[42]

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[38] John D. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernity for the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 87.

[39] See Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism*.

[40] Caputo in fact refers to this as "sacred anarchy," but by this he does not have anything like political anarchism in mind.

[41] That is, it has arrived as per our blending of Jesus and Kropotkin above.

[42] Richard Kearney, "Theorizing the Gift," in *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*, edited by

Caputo similarly says that the kingdom of God "*is* feeding the hungry. . .visiting the imprisoned, curing the sick. That *is* the kingdom of God."[43]

Otherwise, if we are to play no role in the establishment of the kingdom, but are rather expected simply to sit and wait for God to come down and do it all for us, I think we render both ourselves and Christ impotent. For we can neither do anything on our own and neither will following the way of Christ do us any good either. Both our actions and Christ's teachings are essentially useless. We fall into this trap by thinking that we face an either/or: *either* we establish the kingdom, *or* God does. But this has dangerous implications. For one thing, such a move seems to result in an absolute, unbridgeable chasm between God's transcendence and our immanence. In other words, we end up with an essentially Gnostic separation between the utterly depraved, corrupt, and fallen world, on the one hand, and the absolutely perfect, unblemished spiritual world on the other. Clayton Crockett warns us of the danger here:

> Any time one posits two planes, a plane of transcendence and a plane of immanence, the problem becomes the mediation, in both ontological and metaphysical terms, between the two planes. If God is simply located on a transcendent plane, then knowledge of God is impossible and religion is reduced to the problem of political obedience.[44]

The alternative is to follow Caputo and Kearney in saying that we in fact participate with God in the realization of the kingdom, and that Christ did in fact intend for his teachings to be followed. As Kearney says, "We actualize what God possibilizes and God possibilizes what remains impossible for us."[45] According to this view, God could not establish the kingdom without us, for there would be no one to give flesh to the kingdom through following

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Richard Kearney, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 291.

[43] John Caputo, "On the Event in Christianity," available from https://youtu.be/R2nq8baHDFY (accessed 29 November 2015).

[44] Clayton Crockett, *Radical Political Theology*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 68.

[45] Kearney, 293.

Christ's teachings and example – "God can't create the kingdom unless we create the space for the kingdom to come," as Kearney says[46] – just as we could not establish the kingdom without God, for then the impossible would remain impossible.

The greatest biblical examples of this are to be found in the parable of the sheep and the goats[47] and Jesus' appearing as a stranger on the road to Emmaus.[48] The argument of both of these passages is that when we welcome the stranger we welcome Christ, and when we deny the stranger we deny Christ, which is to say that Christ does not appear if we do not act. Kearney draws a connection here between Matthew 25 and Jesus' famous words that "no one comes to the Father but through me"[49] in the following way: "You can only come to the Father if you come through me. Who am I? I am every stranger who asks for food and water."[50] Christ is in the face of the stranger, which means that his kingdom – his Unkingdom – is built by welcoming the stranger.

This does not mean that Christ is ours to control, however, for when we welcome Christ we welcome the one who possibilizes what is for us impossible. Once again, it is not a strict either/or. As Kearney says elsewhere, "I don't believe there's an absolute God out there and then a completely compromised humanity here. I think there are constant *to-ings* and *fro-ings*."[51] Besides love and hospitality, my argument in this paper is that nonviolence is another way that we spurn the worldly logic of tit-for-tat violence and create a space in which Christ's impossible Unkingdom can be realized, opening a door for these "*to-ings* and *fro-ings*."

But how can we say, as was done above, that "for God all things are possible"? How does this not negate all that has been said thus far and land us back at square one, with the case for Christian nonviolence ultimately resting upon calls

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[46] Ibid., 286.

[47] Matt. 25:31–46.

[48] Luke 24:13–43.

[49] John 14:6.

[50] Richard Kearney, "Anatheism," interview by Josef Gustafsson and David Capener, *Freestyle Christianity*, 17 February 2016, available from: http://www.freestylechristianity.se/podcast/richard-kearney-anatheism/ (accessed 31 May 2016).

[51] Kearney, "Theorizing the Gift," 287.

to obey an authoritarian God? Are we not abdicating human responsibility?

According to 1 John, "God is love."[52] Based upon this simple yet profound claim, Ellul writes, "the true face of the biblical God is love. And I do not believe that anarchists would be too happy with a formula that runs: No love, no master."[53] Furthermore, as Caputo reminds us, "love is a how, not a what,"[54] meaning God, too, "is a *how*, not a *what*." [55] This may be a provocative and controversial statement, but it helpfully reminds us that God is not necessarily an extrinsic deity, a distant ruler 'out there.' The Kingdom of God – the Unkingdom ruled by Jesus Christ – is principally a Kingdom of love. And love does not hand down laws with an iron fist or mete out punishment to those who disobey. "There is no fear in love," writes the author of 1 John, "but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love."[56] Nor, however, does love allow us to stand idly by and allow injustice to go unchallenged.

Much like Caputo's notion of God as a weak force, which lays an absolute claim upon us, but does so without an army to enforce its claim;[57] or Kearney's God-Who-May-Be, who cannot be unless we act in the world to bring God about in concrete moments of love and hospitality,[58] love commands with more power than any force in the world, and yet is utterly powerless to act on its own, without our choosing it. It will not allow passivity any more than force. This weak force, or may-be, is Christ's broken body on the cross, contrasted with the authoritarian state. "[T]he

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[52] 1 John 4:16b.

[53] Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 35.

[54] John D. Caputo, *On Religion*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 134.

[55] Ibid., 135.

[56] 1 John 4: 18.

[57] John D. Caputo, "Spectral Hermeneutics," in *After the Death of God*, edited by Jeffrey W. Robbins, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[58] Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001).

ways of the world are the ways of power,"[59] says Caputo. And Christ's weakness on the cross is the absolute reversal of this power. It is not merely that Christ hides or restrains his power on the cross; rather, as Caputo insists, it is precisely in Christ's genuinely helpless state that we find the sacredness of the crucifixion:

> The sacredness lies in the cries of protest that rise up from the scene. The event to be willed here is the depth of outrage at the injustice of imperial power, of the crushing of the Kingdom by worldly forces. The divinity lies in the identification of the name of God, for Jesus was the *eikon* of God, not with Roman power but with an innocent victim of that power, not with retribution but with the act of *forgiveness* that is attributed to Jesus by the evangelists.[60]

The name of God, then, is not the name of a supreme, all-powerful alpha-Being, but rather of "a restive possibility that makes the world restless with hope for justice and impatient with injustice, while the actuality or the realization is assigned *to us*[.]"[61] To say that God *is* love is to say that God does not deal in the worldly ways of power and force, but rather that God disturbs these all-too-human ways of being and calls for something new – challenging *us* to be the ones to actualize this something new. This is a radically covenantal understanding of God. Indeed, Kearney argues that a more faithful translation of the Hebrew *'ehyeh asher 'ehyeh* – God's words to Moses in Exodus 3:14, typically translated as "I am who I am" – is "I am who may be."[62] Accordingly, Kearney argues that God should be read here as promising *to be*, on the condition that we uphold our end of the bargain: "Be what? . . . Be what is promised as it is promised. And what is that? . . . A kingdom of justice and love."[63]

Like Caputo, Kearney insists that the most important word when speaking of God is *perhaps*. And *perhaps* does not mean

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[59] Caputo, "Spectral Hermeneutics," 63.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 64.
[62] Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 22.
[63] Kearney, 38.

that God is impotent, but it does mean that God is *weak* as opposed to the all-too-human obsession with power and sovereignty that seems to dominate the current political and theological arenas. There is nothing divine about demanding constant, absolute control – a demand which is the truer mark of fear and insecurity, it seems. Divinity, rather, is to be found in the faces of power's victims, of the lowly and downtrodden, who do not allow us to turn a blind eye to injustice. "Truly I tell you," Jesus says in Matthew 25, "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."[64]

If, then, instead of saying that *God* commands, what Christians say is actually that *love* commands, then non-Christian anarchists might find it easier to agree, and this does not conflict with anarchist commitments to antiauthoritarianism. For, as Errico Malatesta writes, "ours is a struggle inspired by love."[65] Most Christians will obviously not want to say that this is *all* that it means, nor will atheist anarchists want to say that love is "the true face of the biblical God." My suggestion is simply that both could find common ground with this notion of God as love. Christian anarchists, then, could somewhat daringly describe prefiguration of an anarchist community of mutual aid as the very embodiment of God – indeed of the Body of Christ.[66]

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[64] Matt. 25.

[65] Errico Malatesta, "Violence as a Social Factor," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300CE to 1939),* edited by Robert Graham, (Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books: 2005), 163.

[66] It is interesting to note, as an aside, the similarity between this position and that of death of God theologians, who argue in Hegelian fashion that the dialectic of God the Father and God the Son has, following the crucifixion of Christ (in whom God's entire being had been emptied via radical kenosis), found its resolution in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, according to this view, manifests itself in the church, such that the church is, quite literally, the body of Christ immanent in the world. (For a helpful, more in-depth discussion of this view, see Homebrewed Christianity's interview with Christopher Rodkey here: http://homebrewedchristianity.com/2015/07/18/when-a-radical-theologian-gets-in-the-pulpit/)

III. Enemy-Love

But can this love be reasonably expected to extend to our enemies – viz., our oppressors – as Jesus teaches? I would argue that all that has been said thus far leads most naturally to radical, Christ-like enemy-love. For the love that Jesus teaches – the love that prefigures the Unkingdom – is indiscriminate. As Søren Kierkegaard argues in *Works of Love*,

> Your neighbor is every man [sic], for on the basis of distinctions he is not your neighbor, nor on the basis of likeness to you as being different from other men. He is your neighbor on the basis of equality with you before God: but this equality absolutely every man has, and he has it absolutely.[67]

And, consequently, "by being a Christian he does not become free from distinctions, but by winning the victory over the temptation of distinctions he becomes a Christian."[68] It is therefore impossible, from a Christian perspective, to distinguish between those who deserve our love and those who do not. Human life must be taken to be inviolable, and there can therefore be no hierarchising of who is more or less valuable and therefore deserving of love, forgiveness, and hospitality. There can be no adjudicating between one's "goodness" and "badness." Again, Jesus offers no exception clauses. If we are to value any one human life indiscriminately, we must value them all the same. To do otherwise would be to deny the inherent value, dignity, and equality of every human person, and to admit that human value can be *earned* and *forfeited*. Walter Wink is particularly helpful on this point:

> Commitment to justice, liberation, or the overthrow of oppression is not enough, for all too often the means used have brought in their wake new injustices and oppressions. Love of enemies is the recognition that the enemy, too, is a child of God [or *Love*]. The enemy too believes he or she is in the right, and fears us because we represent a threat against his or her values, lifestyle, or affluence. When we demonize our enemies, calling them names and

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[67] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, translated by Howard and Edna Hong. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 72.

[68] Ibid., 81.

> identifying them with absolute evil, we deny that they have that of God within them that makes transformation possible. Instead, we play God.[69]

Wink reminds his readers that even one's worst enemy is a person too. First and foremost, therefore, we should seek reconciliation, rather than further alienation and fragmentation of our already damaged relationships with one another. In fact, if reconciliation is not achieved, the conflict will likely be perpetuated indefinitely, continuing the cycle of violence, until one side manages — probably through sheer brute force – to dominate the other into submission. Wink continues:

> Unless these people are exterminated in a genocidal war or an endless guerrilla insurrection, they must be converted. And no one can show others the error that is within them . . . unless the others are convinced that their critic first sees and loves the good that is within them.[70]

IV. Two Types of Objections

There are two obvious standpoints from which objections to my argument can be raised. First, objections may be levelled against my biblical argument for nonviolence – viz., it may be objected that the Bible (specifically Jesus' teachings as found in the Gospels) does not in fact lend itself to my radical nonviolence thesis. Second, it may be objected that nonviolence does not in fact work. I will attempt to address each of these in turn.

(a) Biblical Objections

There are three main New Testament passages that are cited in objection to biblically based arguments for nonviolence: Jesus' cleansing of the temple, Jesus' telling his disciples to arm themselves, and Paul's admonition to obey the governing authorities

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[69] Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 59.

[70] Ibid., 62.

in Romans 13. As stated above, the latter two in particular (as well as the "render unto Caesar" passage) have been skilfully addressed many times over by Christian anarchists and pacifists and so will not be considered here. I will, however, consider the temple cleansing as doing so serves a dual purpose – namely, it allows the response to the biblical objection as well as addresses the larger question of civil disobedience and property destruction.

According to the Gospel of John, "In the temple [Jesus] found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle."[71] At first blush, this passage appears to show Jesus acting violently. However, Christian anarchists and pacifists have convincingly argued that this passage is in fact consistent with the view of Jesus as a nonviolent revolutionary.

All four Gospel writers recount Jesus' cleansing of the temple, but it is only in John that we are told of a whip. This may have something to do with the fact that, as John Dear writes, "Most scholars agree that John deliberately paints Jesus as a righteous prophet in the tradition of Jeremiah, who engaged in similar dramatic actions."[72] John would therefore have a greater interest in emphasising just how filled with righteous anger Jesus was. But did Jesus' anger lead him to strike people and animals with his makeshift whip? Christian pacifists argue that such an interpretation would be erroneous.

John Dear insists that Jesus' becoming violent in this episode "would be entirely inconsistent with the Jesus portrayed throughout John's Gospel, as well as the Synoptics."[73] We should therefore be wary from the outset of any translation that depicts a violent Jesus. Indeed, Andy Alexis-Baker skilfully argues that a careful study of the Greek demonstrates that the most faithful translation is the one cited above: "he drove all of them out of the temple, *both* the sheep *and* the cattle" (emphasis added). In other words,

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[71] John 2:14–15

[72] John Dear, "Didn't Jesus Overturn Tables and Chase People Out of the Temple with a Whip?" in York and Barringer, 188.

[73] Ibid., 189.

at most Jesus' whip is used against the animals but never against any people.

But the suggestion that Jesus would whip the animals is similarly troubling for Christian pacifists. However, as Alexis-Baker goes on to argue,

> We might go further and deny that Jesus committed 'violence' against the sheep and cattle, since a makeshift whip of rope would hardly do much more than get them moving out the door. . .in a real sense, the narrative does not depict Jesus beating the animals; but instead he saves their lives from sacrificial slaughter in a monetary and religious system.[74]

In other words, Jesus was liberating both humans and animals from the economic system of slaughter. His overturning of the moneychangers' tables is symbolical of his overturning the calculating kingdoms of the world and inaugurating a new Unkingdom marked by the free gifts of love, grace, and forgiveness.

We are left with the reality of property destruction in this passage, but this should not be seen as problematic. It is not uncommon in the 21st-century to hear property destruction lumped under the category of 'violence' alongside violence committed against persons. Such a disturbing trend seems to suggest that broken windows and broken bones are essentially the result of the same offenses – viz., 'violence.' Uri Gordon's *Anarchy Alive!* provides a helpful discussion of the way in which this reclassification of property destruction as 'violence' is essentially a divide-and-conquer strategy. If the actions of activists can be divided between categories such as legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, non-violent and violent – where 'violent' may mean nothing more than a broken window – citizens and activists can be effectively divided against one another and, consequently, more easily controlled and pacified.

The crucial question to ask is, why is a brick thrown through a window 'violent' and the police officers' use of tear gas, water cannon, etc. on the brick-throwers not? Such a division of violent and nonviolent along the lines of illegal and legal is highly

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[74] Andy Alexis-Baker, Violence, Nonviolence and the Temple Incident in John 2:13–15," in *Biblical Interpretation 20 (2012)*, 94.

suspect. Gordon suggests that the motivation here is "strongly connected to a fear of the uncontrollable, the abnormal and the criminal,"[75] and that order-preserving violence therefore comes to be seen as justified, legal, and, ultimately, nonviolent, whereas action that threatens the social order is classified as unjustified, illegal, and violent (these words becoming synonymous at this point). Social movements consequently become much more easily fractured, weakened, and delegitimized, insofar as they are carved up into 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' camps, often contributing to internal discord as well as turning the public against the 'violent' and 'illegitimate' groups.

We should therefore see the classification of property destruction as another form of 'violence' as nothing more than an attempt to further demonize civil disobedience and protect the established order. Indeed, if we follow the common anarchist argument that the law exists primarily – if not exclusively – to protect private property (and private property, as Proudhon teaches, is theft), then the property-destruction-is-violence move clearly favours plutocracy over democracy.

In a passage often used to denounce Christian nonviolence and condone the state's violent protection of property, then, we in fact find yet another instance of Jesus' radical, nonviolent subversion of the established order. The temple cleansing serves as a reminder that, in Dear's words, "the nonviolent Jesus was decidedly not passive."[76] And neither should we be. Jesus shows why pacifism and nonviolence should not be confused with passivism and non-resistance.

(b) Practical Objections

Perhaps the most common objection levelled by both Christians and non-Christians, anarchists and non-anarchists, is that nonviolence simply does not *work*. Ward Churchill, for example, condemns the common methods of nonviolent protest, in which "[o]ne will find hundreds, sometimes thousands, assembled in

[75] Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory*, (London & Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2008), 83.

[76] Dear, 185.

orderly fashion, listening to selected speakers calling for an end to this or that aspect of lethal state activity, carrying signs 'demanding' the same thing,"[77] and it is indeed hard to deny that these are generally unsuccessful in effecting immediate and meaningful structural change.

However, perhaps the solidarity that is cultivated and the teaching and raising of public awareness can allow even these seemingly useless protests to have an impact. It does not mean that other tactics will not be open to and even necessary for loving nonviolence (or what Keith Hebden helpfully refers to as "compassionate activism"[78]). Nonviolence can take many forms, such as teaching, writing, feeding the homeless, and starting community gardens, all of which challenge state violence and coercion through building a new world in the shell of the old. And sometimes it might be necessary to flip some tables over, so to speak – i.e., to engage in nonviolent direct action which denounces the state's abuse of political, economic, military, and religious power. This is, after all, wholly consistent with Jesus' life and teachings.

More specifically, one of the most important ways that Christian anarchists respond to this type of objection is by arguing that nonviolence is the only way to escape the cycle of violence. Quite simply, it is argued, responding to violence with further violence only increases the amount of violence in the situation, and the cycle of tit-for-tat violence will continue indefinitely. Equating violence with slavery, Tolstoy writes, "all attempts to abolish slavery by violence are like extinguishing fire with fire, stopping water with water, or filling up one hole by digging another."[79] This basic argument is repeated again and again in the Christian anarchist literature.[80] Jacques Ellul, for example, lists this as one of

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[77] Ward Churchill, *Pacifism As Pathology*, (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 61–62.

[78] Keith Hebden, *Seeking Justice: The Radical Compassion of Jesus*, (Washington: Circle Books, 2013), 16.

[79] Leo Tolstoy, "The Slavery of Our Times," in *Government is Violence: Essays on Anarchism and Pacifism*, edited by David Stephens, (London: Phoenix Press, 1990), 145.

[80] See Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* for a helpful and thorough overview.

his laws of violence: "Violence begets violence — *nothing else*."[81] Furthermore, Ellul writes, "once we consent to use violence ourselves, we have to consent to our adversary's using it, too."[82] In other words, not only do we enter the cycle of violence when responding violently, we in fact *affirm* this cycle insofar as we affirm that violence is an effective means to our desired end.

Accordingly, when Peter Gelderloos condemns nonviolence as racist, statist, patriarchal, and otherwise in line with the status quo,[83] Christian anarchists can respond that, insofar as violence is the primary way in which this racist, statist, patriarchal status quo is enforced, nonviolence is in fact a powerful challenge to the status quo – a means of not being conformed to the ways of the world.

Furthermore, nonviolence can arguably unmask state violence more effectively than violence can, as when, for example, we see sit-down protestors being attacked by police[84] or nonviolent Palestinian protestors gunned down by Israeli forces. Recent headlines – such as Sharif Abdel Kouddous' article for *The Nation* entitled "Palestinians Engaged in Nonviolent Protest. Israel Responded With a Massacre,"[85] or The Real News Network's interview with Michael Omer-Mann entitled "IDF Prepares to Kill More Peaceful Protesters in Gaza on Friday"[86] – appear to appeal

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[81] Jacques Ellul, *Violence: Reflections From A Christian Perspective,* translated by Cecilia Gaul Kings, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 100.

[82] Ibid., 99.

[83] See Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, available from http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-gelderloos-how-nonviolence-protects-the-state

[84] James Crugnale, "UC Davis Police Pepper Spray Student Occupy Protestors, University Investigating Incident," *Mediaite*, 19 November 2011. Available from http://www.mediaite.com/online/uc-davis-police-pepper-spray-student-occupy-protestors-university-investigating-incident/. Accessed 31 July 2015.

[85] Kouddous, Sharif Abdel. "Palestinians Engaged in Nonviolent Protest. Israel Responded With a Massacre," *The Nation*, 17 May 2018. Available from https://www.thenation.com/article/palestinians-engaged-in-nonviolent-protest-israel-responded-with-a-massacre/ (accessed 17 May 2018).

[86] The Real News Network, "IDF Prepares to Kill More Peaceful Protesters in Gaza on Friday," 17 May 2018. Available from https://therealnews.com/stories/idf-prepares-to-kill-more-peaceful-protesters-in-gaza-on-friday (accessed 17 May 2018).

precisely to the sense of injustice that can be aroused within readers in the face of such violent responses to nonviolent protestors. To be sure, it would be an unhelpful oversimplification to say, definitively, that violent protest never has and never could have similar impacts on public awareness, or that nonviolence always has and always will. But I argue that when the protestors are nonviolent, the violence of the state is brought into uniquely sharp relief and is therefore more easily identified as excessive not only by those who already sympathize with the protesters' cause, but also by those who might otherwise accept the legitimacy of state violence. For, in such instances, the state's violence stands fully exposed, unable to dull itself against images of aggression on the part of the protesters or to hide behind justifications of 'self-defence' or 'keeping the peace.'

Thus, contrary to someone such as Chu Minyi, who goes so far as to argue that "assassination will help arouse revolutionary agitation and quicken social revolution,"[87] I argue that it is rather these instances of nonviolent resistance that are most likely to awaken the public to injustice. Violent acts such as physical attacks or assassinations, on the other hand, often serve only to confuse the moral sensibilities of a public for whom the state's violence is so normalized that it hardly appears as violent at all – and, indeed, it will appear to be only that much more justified when wielded as a form of defence against violent dissent.

Therefore, while we should heed Gordon's warning to avoid playing into the divide-and-conquer strategy of carving up radical groups into 'violent/illegitimate' and 'nonviolent/legitimate' camps, nonviolence in these situations has the pragmatic advantage of, first, not alienating the public, and second, allowing the state's violence to stand alone and therefore be unmasked as unnecessary and illegitimate. Christian anarchists and pacifists have long argued that the story of Jesus' crucifixion accomplishes precisely this, insofar as it is the story of a state's crushing nonviolent dissent, and Jesus' persistent nonviolence, love, and forgiveness

[87] Chu Minyi, "Universal Revolution," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300CE to 1939),* edited by Robert Graham, (Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books: 2005), 345.

exposes the Roman government's use of force as excessive and brutal. Read from this perspective, then, the church's historical support for, and participation in, state violence is a betrayal of Jesus' message.[88]

Importantly, the pragmatic appeal to nonviolence should be distinguished from consequentialism. As Benjamin Franks argues, a rejection of consequentialism is one of the key points of differentiation between anarchist direct action and other, non-anarchist forms of civil disobedience:

> [D]irect action is prefigurative, the means have to be in accordance with the ends. Civil disobedience is not prefigurative, and it is frequently consequentialist. . .It is this rejection of consequentialism that particularly marks direct action out as especially anarchic.[89]

Prefiguration allows us to take seriously the consequences of our actions while also recognising that those consequences – the ends – are inextricably linked to the means. It strikes me as all too easy for consequentialism – at least as it is articulated by those like Minyi – to slip into justifying the sacrificing of a few for the many in the name of a greater end, and thereby instrumentalising human life in a way similar to the instrumentalization wrought by states and capitalism.

The radical and uncompromising affirmation of the inherent value, dignity, and equality of every human person is one of the most subversive and anarchic revolutionary acts. Jesus understood this. It is upon this very affirmation that the Unkingdom that he preached turns. The Unkingdom is embodied in such affirmation and it is the way that we are not conformed to the ways of this world but rather live according to the present-and-coming Unkingdom. Only prefigurative nonviolence, in other words, which privileges neither means nor ends, but rather recognizes the necessary agreement between the two, can allow us to wholly

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[88] See Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism*.

[89] Benjamin Franks, "The Direct Action Ethic," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume Three: The New Anarchism (1974–2012)*, edited by Robert Graham, (Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books: 2005), 86.

escape the cycle of violence that results from, and perpetuates, the instrumentalising, tit-for-tat logic of state and capitalism.

We may also hope that the illegitimacy of state violence effected by this unmasking will be made apparent not only to the protestors and others watching, but even to the aggressors themselves. Indeed, Richard Gregg argues that in this sense nonviolence is "a sort of moral ju-jitsu."[90] The attacker, according to Gregg,

> suddenly and unexpectedly loses the moral support which the usual violent resistance of most victims would render him. . .He feels insecure because of the novelty of the situation and his ignorance of how to handle it. He loses his poise and self-confidence.[91]

The aggressor can no longer refer to their victim, or the situation more generally, as violent; it becomes clear that only the aggressor is acting violently. Such a realization is disorienting and destabilizes the aggressor's moral security.

It may be objected, however, that such an argument depends upon the assumption of some basic level of moral decency on the part of the attacker. However, as Wink argues, "Had Jesus waited for the Romans to achieve a minimum moral level, he never would have been able to articulate the message of nonviolence to begin with. On the contrary, his teaching does not presuppose a threshold of decency, but something of God in everyone."[92] Recalling our discussion above of hearing 'love' when we speak of 'God,' Wink's argument is quite powerful:

> There is no one, and surely no entire people, in whom the image of God has been entirely extinguished. Faith in God means believing that *anyone* can be transformed, regardless of the past. To write off whole groups of people as intrinsically racist and violent is to

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[90] Richard Gregg, quoted in Nicolas Walter, "Direct Action and the New Pacifism," in in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume Two: The Emergence of the New Anarchism (1939–1977),* edited by Robert Graham, (Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books: 2009), 200.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Wink, 67.

> accept the very same premise that upholds racist and oppressive regimes.[93]

It may certainly be true that institutions can be, and often are, inherently racist and oppressive, but Wink cautions us against forgetting that the people who act on behalf of these institutions are still people. Oppressive institutions such as the state are in the business of taking the easy ways out of imprisonment and execution in response to dissent, condemning rather than engaging persons and groups of persons in their entirety. It should be the business of Christians and anarchists to instead choose the more difficult paths of forgiveness and reconciliation, which demand that we recognize the humanity of even our worst enemies.

Perhaps a more powerful criticism of nonviolence, however, is that spontaneous violence provides a means for repressed bodies – especially black, brown, female, non-binary, and queer bodies – to wrench themselves free from the state's grasp and deny the state the ability to control them. This line of argument is hinted at, for example, in "Reflections on the Ferguson Uprising," when one of the anarchists being interviewed says, "having those moments of uncontrollability or possibility open up. . .will entail violence."[94] This is a very important argument given the fact that, in the wake of the Ferguson and Baltimore uprisings, it is increasingly common to hear the action of a black man who throws a brick through a window be condemned as that of a violent 'thug.'[95] Calls to emulate Martin Luther King Jr. subsequently ring out as not-so-subtle attempts to rein disobedient bodies back into the establishment's control. As Ta-Nehisi Coates points out in an article for *The Atlantic*, "when nonviolence begins halfway through the war with

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[93] Wink, 67.

[94] Crimethinc., "Reflections on the Ferguson Uprising," 12 August 2015. Available from http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/crimethinc-reflections-on-the-ferguson-uprising.pdf (accessed 29 November 2015).

[95] According to Columbia University linguist John McWhorter, "the truth is that thug today is a nominally polite way of using the N-word." For the full interview, see: http://www.npr.org/2015/04/30/403362626/the-racially-charged-meaning-behind-the-word-thug

the aggressor calling time out, it exposes itself as a ruse."[96] In other words, nonviolence does in fact become a means of control and repression in this case, which is a large part of Gelderloos' worry cited above. As Coates concludes his article:

> When nonviolence is preached by the representatives of the state, while the state doles out heaps of violence to its citizens, it reveals itself to be a con. And none of this can mean that rioting or violence is 'correct' or 'wise,' any more than a forest fire can be 'correct' or 'wise.' Wisdom isn't the point tonight. Disrespect is. In this case, disrespect for the hollow law and failed order that so regularly disrespects the community.[97]

This echoes Gordon's point discussed above. Nonviolence is called for by the greatest perpetrators of violence as a means to ensure that the disobedient group remains powerless to effect real change. If, on the other hand, the disobedient group does not adopt nonviolence, and violence is perhaps escalated even further, the state will simply label the actions 'illegal,' 'illegitimate,' and – most importantly – 'violent,' and doing so provides an alternative method of maintaining control. We thus face a kind of catch-22. Both violence and nonviolence can be manipulated in favour of the interests of the powerful.

What all of this means, I think, is that there are no simple answers. Every situation is different and must be assessed on an individual basis. If windows are broken and nonviolence is called for, perhaps it is time for both parties involved to sit down and attempt to bridge the contentious divide through dialogue. Or, perhaps it is time to engage in further civil disobedience. I maintain, however, that once *violence against persons* is resorted to, the status quo has been reaffirmed and the cycle of violence re-entered. Violence against persons is seen as perfectly valid in the hands of the powerful, and, as Bart de Ligt writes, "it is the task of the social revolution to go beyond this violence and to

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[96] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Nonviolence as Compliance," *The Atlantic*, available from http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/nonviolence-as-compliance/391640/ (accessed 29 November 2015).

[97] Ibid.

emancipate itself from it."[98] Otherwise we remain captive to the instrumental thinking that allows us to see persons as expendable and the might-is-right logic that offers justifications for violence as a legitimate response to dissent and disagreement.

While I do not agree with those pacifists – Ellul and Tolstoy among them[99] – who argue that the violence of the oppressed against the oppressor is the *same* as the violence of the oppressor against the oppressed, I do argue that violence against persons must always be avoided insofar as adopting it opens the road for oppressive institutions to do the same and even claim that they are the party who can legitimately do so in order to restore order and minimise the violence which is spinning out of control.

This may be unsatisfying to many who want to see immediate, drastic change, and recognize that violence is often – if not always – the means for realising such change. But as Yoder writes, "Violence is always, apparently, the shortest and surest way . . . [a]nd in the long run that appearance always deceives."[100] It does not create a new world, it does not change our relationships, and it does not address the problem of having such a violent society in the first place. What the use of violence *does* do, according to Christian anarchists, is affirm the superiority of violence over love – to, in other words, deny the possibility of overcoming violence with love. And while it is true that nonviolence will not always give us the quick results that violence promises, as Walter Wink writes, "[t]he issue . . . is not just which *works* better, but which *fails* better. While a nonviolent strategy also does not always 'work' in terms of pre-set goals – though in another sense it always 'works' – at least the casualties and destruction are far less severe."[101]

All of this comes back to prefiguration. If we want a nonviolent, non-coercive world, we would be miscalculating to hope to achieve it through violence and coercion. For "it is impossible,"

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[98] Bart de Ligt, *The Conquest of Violence: An Essay on War and Revolution*, (Winchester: Pluto Press, 1989), 168.

[99] See Ellul, *Violence*, 97.

[100] John Howard Yoder, quoted in Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary On the Gospel,* 40.

[101] Wink, 54.

writes Bart de Ligt, "to educate people in liberty by force, just as it is impossible to breathe by coal gas."[102]

V. Conclusion

Christ calls his followers to participate in the new kingdom that he is inaugurating – the Unkingdom, which operates in every way counter to the way the worldly kingdoms operate. This, I think, is one of the most powerful ideas that Christ and his followers can offer to anarchism. I maintain that Christ calls his followers to live according to the Unkingdom *right now*, to not be conformed to the ways of the world, as Paul says, but to live otherwise. At no point does Jesus say that this will be easy – indeed, he explicitly says the opposite. And it must surely be admitted that, according to worldly standards of practicality, living according to the Unkingdom could not possibly be more impractical. But, in another way, such living is supremely practical insofar as it is the only way to realize the Unkingdom. In other words, we must live according to the paradoxically now-and-to-come Unkingdom, both because it is here and because it is still to come. Adopting the radical nonviolence that Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount is one of the most important ways that we can do so. It may seem crazy at first blush – and, again, it *is* crazy from the standpoint of maintaining the status quo – but it is in fact the only way to escape the cycle of violence and to prefigure a more loving, peaceful, and just society, an anarchist society.

I submit that if we take the Sermon on the Mount as a daily guide for transforming ourselves as well as our relationships with others – viz., as a guide for prefiguring the Unkingdom – that is where the deepest and longest lasting change will begin. As Tolstoy writes, "in our world everybody thinks of changing humanity, and nobody thinks of changing himself [sic]."[103] As social creatures, to change ourselves is at the same time to change our relationships with others. And – going back to Landauer – it

[102] De Ligt, 72.

[103] Leo Tolstoy, "On Anarchy," in *Government is Violence: Essays on Anarchism and Pacifism*, edited by David Stephens, (London: Phoenix Press, 1990), 70.

is through changing our relationships with others, through countering the violence, hatred, and greed of the present world with love, forgiveness, and nonviolence, that we will build a new world in the shell of the old.

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Prisons of Law and Brothels of Religion: William Blake's Christian Anarchism

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This chapter demonstrates how both anarchistic and religious tendencies are fused in William Blake's work. While acknowledging biographical and historical approaches to Blake scholarship, the methodological approach is foremost hermeneutical. Highlighting how Blake can be understood as a Christian anarchist by interpreting the significance of key beliefs and arguments found in his work, the chapter also explores Blake's opposition to both judicial and moral law, which underpins his questioning of the authority and rule of king and priest. The chapter consists of two sections. First it analyses Blake's complete mistrust of institutional state religion, along with its establishment of priests who, Blake maintained, cruelly bound and thus enslaved believers with moral law, then it examines Blake's view of Jesus as a transgressor of this law, through his unique insight concerning the mutual forgiveness of sins that places love and liberty above all else.

Introduction

It has been said of William Blake that he is an: 'Uncompromising supporter of freedom from all institutions, laws, and moral codes; he is a Christian anarchist.'[1] However, while Blake scholarship is multifarious, very little appears to have been written on Blake in

[1] Victor, N. Paananen, *William Blake*, (New York: Twayne Publishing, 1996), p. xiii.

How to cite this book chapter:
Williams, D. 2018. Prisons of Law and Brothels of Religion: William Blake's Christian Anarchism. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 232–277. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.h. License: CC-BY.

direct relation to anarchism. Therefore, we might not immediately make a connection between the two. This said, where themes such as 'dissent', 'radicalism', 'revolution', and 'antinomianism' have preoccupied Blake scholars they have indirectly characterised some of the anarchistic elements of his thinking. Exceptions that focus explicitly on Blake and anarchism include the short book by Peter Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, and an essay by Christopher Z. Hobson titled, 'Anarchism and William Blake's Idea of Jesus.'[2] My aim in this essay is to show how Blake can be understood as a Christian anarchist. That Blake can be *understood* as a Christian anarchist is different from saying that he identified himself as one, and this is a subtle and important qualification that I will develop in the conclusion.

Before I begin it might be helpful to provide some explanatory notes on how I intend to approach the essay. While I incorporate some fairly well trodden areas in Blake studies, my intention is to gather them under one overarching theme in order to gain an all-round picture of how anarchistic and religious tendencies are fused in Blake's work. My aim is not to highlight potential problems with what I deem to be Blake's Christian anarchism. I appreciate that problems may arise in readers' minds, but my desire foremost is to expound and celebrate what I see as a significant, if speculative, facet of Blake's work while seeking to anticipate potential issues.

I will refer chiefly to Blake's writings, and occasionally to his visual art. Barring a few editorial symbols, I will also quote his writings without intervention as they are faithfully copied in David V. Erdman's, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*.[3] In terms of interpreting Blake's poems, although I am aware of the dramatic context of speeches some of them contain, I will nevertheless tend to attribute words directly to Blake. Although this might serve in simplifying the poems, I do it on the assumption

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[2] See Peter Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, (London: Freedom Press, 1988), and Christopher Z. Hobson, 'Anarchism and William Blake's Idea of Jesus', *The Utopian*, vol. 1, 2000.

[3] One of the anonymous reviewers of this essay said of Blake's frequent and significantly irregular punctuation and syntax: 'Anarchism is inscribed at the level of textuality, too, and Blake's singularity should stand.'

that ultimately Blake is using figures to express his *own* views. I say this regarding what Blake calls 'mental deities',[4] mindful that according to the journalist Henry Crabb Robinson (who knew him in later life) Blake maintained: 'that in asserting the actuality of spirits he was giving personality to ideas as Plato had done before.'[5] Or what Blake's friend, Frederick Tatham, called his 'peopled Thoughts.'[6] In places I will draw attention to the chronology of Blake's writings, but frequently I will overlook this because the meaning of the text will be my chief concern.[7]

This brings me to my methodological approach. Ideally I would include a biographical and historical perspective, exploring the different facets of religious dissent and political radicalism that arguably influenced Blake's thinking. But part of my reason for not doing so is that the extent to which Blake was influenced by or belonged to these movements is an endless source of speculation, and even questioned.[8] While I acknowledge the significance of

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[4] William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 11, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, Edited by David V. Erdman (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), p. 38.

[5] G. R. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 363.

[6] Richard Holmes, *Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience*, (London: Tate Publishing, 1992), p. 6.

[7] I appreciate, however, that there are dangers here because it overlooks how a younger Blake was different from an older Blake. Nevertheless, I will do this with a consistency in mind regarding Blake's outlook.

[8] See, for example, Keri Davies and David Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths: Re-historicizing the Politics of Dissent and Antinomianism', and, 'Christ and the Bridal Bed: Eighteenth-Century Moravian Erotic Spirituality as a Possible Influence on Blake', in *Re-Envisioning Blake*, Edited by, Mark Crosby, Troy Patenaude, and Angus Whitehead (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Davies and Worrall question Blake's connection with Dissenter and Antinomian movements. Blake has often been linked through his mother to the Moravians who in turn have been interpreted as being Dissenters. But Davies and Worrall write: 'The Moravians saw themselves in no sense dissenters from, but, on the contrary, as a sister church of, the Church of England.' Davies and Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths', p. 37. And furthermore that: 'The dissenting churches viewed the Moravian Brethren with hostility.' Davies and Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths', p. 40. Atwood writes: 'In 1749, the British Parliament officially recognized the Moravian Church as a legitimate ecclesiastical body (rather than a dissenting group)' Atwood, 'Christ and the Bridal Bed', p. 162. But while the Moravians viewed themselves as not being

the biographical and historical approaches to Blake scholarship, my methodological approach is foremost hermeneutical. This is partly down to space, but also as a philosopher and theologian I confess to being more comfortable in this area (and more interested if I am completely honest) whereas with the biographical and historical I am more dependent on the scholarship of others.[9] This said, where necessary I will incorporate some of this scholarship. Concerning the hermeneutical, my main task is to highlight how Blake can be understood as a Christian anarchist by interpreting the significance of key beliefs and arguments found in his work. I will do this by exploring how Blake was opposed to both judicial and moral law thus questioning the authority and rule of king and priest. However, given the theme of this essay I will tend to focus more on the moral and priestly angle. To this end my essay will consist of two sections. I will begin by exploring Blake's complete mistrust of institutional state religion, along with its establishment of priests who, he maintained, cruelly bound and thus enslaved

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Dissenters, Davies and Worrall claim that they were forced to register their churches as dissenting meeting-houses. With the above in mind I wish to avoid what Davies and Worrall call the critical and biographical commonplace that Blake was a Dissenter, although I keep an open-mind that he still *may* have been one either through influence or allegiance. See Davies and Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths', p. 40. Highlighting key texts that have identified Blake as a Dissenter and following what they take to be sound evidence that opposes this, Davies and Worrall write: 'The easy labelling of William Blake as a dissenter has next to no validity.' Davies and Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths', p. 44. But of course given the nature of academia, at some point in the future there may be further evidence unearthed that seeks to argue there is validity. Until that time, Davies and Worrall write: 'Blake the Dissenter can now only ever be someone else's unmarked grave in Bunhill Fields. It certainly is not that of William Blake, 1757–1827, late of Fountain Court.' Davies and Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths', p. 47.

[9] I am also mindful of a point made by Davies and Worrall that says 'the current character of Blake studies is generally historicist.' Davies and Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths', p. 31. This they add, drawing on conclusions made by the Research Assessment Exercise of 2008, is the currently dominant approach to all research in English departments regarding orientation and method. Davies and Worrall, 'Inconvenient Truths', p. 31. I do not wish to add to this dominant historicist criticism, nor am I qualified to do so. Also I am not from an English department, but a department of Theology, Philosophy, and Religious Studies.

believers with moral law. And in the next section I will examine Blake's view of Jesus as a transgressor of this law, through the latter's unique insight concerning the mutual forgiveness of sins that places love and liberty above all else.

We can view these two sections as each referring to what are for Blake different interpretations of religion, namely, a false one and a true one. Briefly, for Blake, false religion is that which preaches vengeance for sin based on judicial and moral laws of good and evil, which are universally applied to all individuals thereby circumscribing their freedom and authorizing punishment for their transgressions. For Blake, general prohibitive laws like the Ten Commandments are oppressive and inherently unjust. In contrast, true religion subverts such cruel systems of law through mutual forgiveness that counteracts sin and engenders a universal humanity or divine body living as members of One Man – Jesus Christ.

Finally, I would just like to say a few words about my own approach to the concepts of 'anarchism' and 'religion.' If I was to think of one word that encapsulated the essence of both these subjects it would be 'liberty.' It might be argued that anarchy and religion both offer freedom in their differing contexts from those things that rule us, be that monarchs, government, laws, desires, suffering, ignorance, and so forth. And in some cases the concepts of anarchism and religion are arguably fused through a figure concerned with one of the topics listed above, Lao-Tzu and government, for example. Likewise, in this essay anarchism and religion will be argued to come together through Blake's interpretation of Jesus as a radical visionary and religious transgressor.

Institutionalised Religion and Priesthood

In relation to Blake, reference is often made to the publisher Joseph Johnson who had been associated with a network of religious dissenters and political radicals in London since the 1760s. Johnson had agreed to publish a poem by Blake titled, *The French Revolution*.[10] Johnson's radical circle included Thomas Paine,

[10] This was in seven books, but either due to government pressure or because of the foretold inaccuracy of the work the publication did not

Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin and Joseph Priestley. Some Blake scholars and biographers have argued that Blake attended weekly dinners above Johnson's bookshop, where he may have met and befriended such figures. Others, however, have argued that according to the evidence Blake probably only ever attended one of these dinners. While it is tempting to place Blake among the circle around Johnson and to assume he would be at home there, Peter Ackroyd notes insightfully that Blake was quite different to them in many respects, especially when it came to views on religion.[11] Alexander Gilchrist says: 'Himself [Blake] a heretic among the orthodox, here among the infidels he was a saint and staunchly defended Christianity – the spirit of it – against these strangely assorted disputants.'[12] Frederick Tatham, Blake's friend in later life, is also quoted to have said: 'In one of their conversations, Paine said that religion was a law & a tye to all able minds. Blake on the other hand said what he was always asserting, that the religion of Jesus, was a perfect law of Liberty.'[13] For me Tatham's recollection, accurate or not, serves in drawing our attention to a crucial distinction in Blake's thinking. For when it came to institutionalised religion, priesthood, and moral law, Blake would have no doubt agreed with Thomas Paine's sentiments. But regarding what Blake saw as the *true* religion of Jesus he would certainly have disagreed with Paine. The rest of this essay will consider this distinction.[14]

To a certain extent then Blake would have accepted Paine's view that 'religion was a law and a tye to all able minds', but to

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happen. All that remains of the poem is the page proofs of the first book. The remaining six are lost.

[11] Peter Ackroyd, *Blake* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), p. 159. Ackroyd speculates that it would be an error to see Blake as a part of Johnson's group dining above the shop, and that they probably only saw him as a journeyman engraver with eccentric views.

[12] Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake,* ed. Ruthven Todd (London and New York, 1942), p. 94.

[13] Bentley, *Blake Records*, pp. 530–1.

[14] Regarding his thoughts on Paine, it is worth reading Blake's 'Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible*, by R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff. London, 1797', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, pp. 611–20.

Blake's thinking it was only a corrupted and perverted form of religion that did this. It was institutionalised, state religion, comprising (in a Christian context) the established churches and their priests who bound and restricted believers with moral law, just as the crown and government did with judicial law. We can perhaps draw attention here to Jesus' words when he says of the scribes and Pharisees: '. . . they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders.'[15] Whereas, in contrast, Jesus invites those who feel the burden of their sins: 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . for my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.'[16]

In Blake's poem, 'The Chimney Sweeper', one of his *Songs of Experience* that appeared in 1794, the sweep is asked of the whereabouts of his parents? His reply is that they are in the church praying: 'And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King / Who make up a heaven of our misery.'[17] Blake's religious, social, and political sentiments are all captured in his well-known poem titled, 'London', again from *Songs of Experience*. This poem also connects the chimney sweeper and Church through the lines: 'How the Chimney-sweeper's cry / Every blackning Church appalls.'[18] Alfred Kazin argued that getting the soot out of the church was an impossible task for the boy in the poem, and asserts how the church is black with 'dogma and punitive zeal' and made all the blacker by the chimney sweeper's suffering. And turning to the word 'appalls' he observes how the church is not appalled by the plight of the boy and this makes the church appalling.[19]

Blake held the resolutely independent position that questioned the necessity of going through the institution of the Church to get to God. He writes: 'Henceforth every man may converse with God

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[15] Mt 23: 4. KJV.

[16] Mt 11: 29–30. KJV.

[17] Blake, 'The Chimney Sweeper', *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 23.

[18] Blake, 'London', *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 27.

[19] Alfred Kazin, *The Portable Blake* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1946), pp. 14–15.

& be a King & Priest in his own house.'[20] John Beer links Blake's assertion to: 'Theophilus Evan's millenarian statement that once man regains the perfection of Adam, the Law will be 'writ in every Man's heart, so that . . . every Man should be Priest unto himself'.'[21] There are perhaps also echoes of Jesus' exchange with the woman of Samaria at the well, where Jesus says: 'But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.'[22]

Much of Blake's writing condemns what he perceives to be the false institutional religion, and champions in turn what is for him true religion. A perfect example of this distinction is found in the following lines from Blake's work, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

> The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive. And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country. placing it under its mental deity; Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood, Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things. Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast[23]

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[20] Erdman, 'Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible*, by R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff. London, 1797', *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 615.

[21] John Beer, *William Blake: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 22.

[22] Jn 4: 23, KJV.

[23] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 11, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 38. S. Foster Damon links the last line to Lavater's 398th *Aphorism*: 'Let none turn over books or roam the stars in quest of God, who sees him not in man.' S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1988), p. 322. Also note the similarity of Blake's passage with Coleridge's lines from 'The Piccolomini': 'The intelligible forms of ancient poets, / The fair humanities of old religion, / The power, the Beauty, and the Majesty / That had their haunts in dale or piny mountain, / Or

Blake confirms this last point in the same work when he later writes: 'God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men.'[24] And then again: 'The worship of God is. Honouring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius. and loving the greatest men best, those who envy or calumniate great men hate God, for there is no other God.'[25] As will become more significant as we proceed, this tells us that for Blake: 'God is not in some unknown world elsewhere.'[26] Blake referred to God understood in this metaphysical way as, 'Nobodaddy', which S. Foster Damon translates as meaning, 'nobody's daddy.'[27] Although I wonder if it might equally mean, 'no body daddy' in the sense of a god with no body, or 'nobody daddy' in the apophatic sense of a god that is nothing. In his poem 'To Nobodaddy', Blake writes of what he (as we will come to see) deems to be a false god:

> Why art thou silent & invisible
> Father of Jealousy
> Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
> From every searching Eye
>
> Why darkness & obscurity
> In all thy words & laws
> That none dare eat the fruit but from
> The wily serpents jaws[28]

Damon writes: 'The abstract God of the Anglican Prayer Book, "without passion or parts," was for Blake a mere logical abstraction without significance.'[29] Here Blake accords with Johann Kaspar Lavater, who in one of his *Aphorisms on Man* writes: 'He, who adores an impersonal God, has none; and, without guide

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forest, by slow stream, or pebbly spring. / Or chasms and watery depths.' Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology* (London: Spring Books, 1967), p. 5.

[24] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 16, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 40.

[25] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 22, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 43.

[26] Paananen, *William Blake*, p. 54.

[27] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 301.

[28] Blake, 'To Nobodaddy', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 471.

[29] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 159.

or rudder, launches on an immense abyss that first absorbs his powers, and next himself.'[30] In his annotation to this aphorism, Blake responds with: 'Most superlatively beautiful & most affectionately Holy & pure would to God that all men would consider it.'[31]

Blake loathed the mental and corporeal cruelties enacted by the Church in the name of this systematized and abstracted God, and he set out to denounce them. An example of the Church's cruelty according to Blake is found in his poem, 'A Little Boy Lost' from *Songs of Experience*. The boy we can assume is *lost* in more ways than one, but especially perhaps because found and seized by the Church. In the poem the boy asserts:

> Nought loves another as itself
> Nor venerates another so.
> Nor is it possible to Thought
> A greater than itself to know:[32]

Here the boy is demanding the right to assert *his own* thoughts and desires.[33] This, I believe, also connects with Blake's dislike of an impersonal God that supersedes and possibly absorbs our own identity. For Blake, the personal or the human is not to be overlooked in the name of metaphysical abstraction. The boy in the poem then asks his father, how can I love you or any of my brothers more than this? However, a priest overhears the child and seizes him with 'trembling zeal' by the hair, to which Blake with a stinging criticism designed to expose both the action of the priest and the inaction of those standing by, sarcastically adds: 'And all admir'd the Priestly care.'[34] Meanwhile the weeping child cannot be heard and twice Blake says that the parents weep in vain, suggesting the overriding power and influence of

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[30] Lavater, Aphorism 552, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 596.

[31] Blake, 'Annotations to Lavater', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 596.

[32] Blake, 'A Little Boy Lost', *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 28.

[33] Kazin, *The Portable Blake*, p. 41.

[34] Blake, 'A Little Boy Lost', *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 28.

the Church. Following this the boy is stripped to his little shirt and bound in an iron chain. The final verse says that he is then burned where many have been burned before, and closes with the line: 'Are such things done on Albions shore.'[35] The implication is that on a subtle level such things are done by priests, as well as by parents, teachers, politicians, and monarchs. All in all, and capturing the essence I think of Blake's thinking, the boy is guilty of wanting to be autonomously himself and is in turn punished for it. Here Blake is deliberately inverting what is commonly taken to be the truth, this being that all our problems come as a result of defying the divine laws, whereas on the contrary: 'Blake believed many of the ills of the world to result from a loss of imagination and an unwillingness to cultivate human energies in freedom.'[36]

Blake loathed the notion of universal laws applicable to all. Such laws ignore what Blake took to be fundamentally true – that we are all different. A difference crushed under the rule of One God, One King, and One Law. With reference to universal law, Damon tells us that to Blake the Ten Commandments were: 'Negative generalizations drawn up regardless of the individual . . . Blake was emphatic that human happiness should not be sacrificed to the traditional rules, the individual should always be considered first.'[37] Hence Blake ends *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* with the line: 'One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression'[38] Elsewhere, Bromion (characterising reason) asks: 'And is there not one law for both the lion and the ox?'[39] While similarly Tiriel (representing the body and the decay of materialism) asks: 'Why is one law given to the lion & the patient ox?'[40] After this particular

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[35] Blake, 'A Little Boy Lost', *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 29.

[36] Beer, *William Blake: A Literary Life*, p. 97.

[37] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 90.

[38] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 24, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 44.

[39] Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, 4: 22, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 48.

[40] Blake, *Tiriel*, viii: 10, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 285.

line Blake had written before deletion: 'Dost thou not see that men cannot be formed all alike.'[41]

This I would argue is not so much a question mark against equality, but against the One Law that judges us to be equal before it. As metaphors for types of people the lion and ox are indeed different, but their equality should stand in being *equally* free to be what it is they are. Where we do not have equal ways, we *should* have equal rights to those ways. Blake advocated liberty, equality, and fraternity, but he did not advocate uniformity. Marshall argues: 'He felt that no law could cover the multitude of individual acts and is thereby inherently unjust.'[42]

Blake often refers to childhood play in his poems and paintings to depict the liberty and joy that rules and laws suppress.[43] This might also be influenced by Jesus telling his disciples that unless they are converted and become like little children they will never enter the kingdom of heaven, and that of such *is* the kingdom of heaven.[44] In his poem, 'The Garden of Love', again from *Songs of Experience*, Blake tells us that he went to the garden of love and sees that a chapel now stands where he used to play on the green. The immediate indication appears to be that the chapel puts an end to love and play. The poem continues:

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not. writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:

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[41] Blake, *Tiriel*, viii: 10. Note that the deleted line is still printed in, Geoffrey Keynes, *The Complete Writings of William Blake* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 109.

[42] Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 42.

[43] See, for example, 'The Echoing Green', 'Laughing Song', and 'Nurse's Song' in *Songs of Innocence*, and 'The School Boy' in *Songs of Experience*.

[44] Mt 18: 3; 19: 14, KJV.

And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.[45]

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says that he will destroy the temple and raise it up in three days. The Jews then ask how he can do this when the temple took forty-six years to build. But as we know Jesus is speaking in this instance of the temple of his body.[46] Blake may be making a similar analogy with reference to the chapel. The gates of the chapel, our body, have been shut by religious prohibition that cruelly demands 'thou shalt not.'[47] Elsewhere and with allusions perhaps to Plato's cave allegory, Blake famously writes: 'If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.'[48] The 'doors of perception' refer to the five senses, which Blake understood to be: 'The chief inlets of Soul in this age.'[49] Being closed up, everything appears finite and corrupt instead of infinite and holy. The cleansing of the doors of perception, says Blake, will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment. But as we have heard in the Garden of Love, Blake tells us that priests in black gowns are binding with briars his joys and desires.[50] Referring elsewhere to joys, Blake asserts: 'As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves

[45] Blake, 'The Garden of Love', *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 26.

[46] Jn 2:19–21, KJV.

[47] Incidentally, Emanuel Swedenborg is said to have had a vision where he saw a magnificent temple with the words *Nunc Licet* written over the doorway. This translates as, 'now it is permitted'. For Swedenborg this meant 'Now it is permitted to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith.'

[48] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 14, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 39.

[49] See, Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 4.

[50] A briar refers to the pipe made of 'tree heath' that many priests of the time smoked. It might moreover refer by association to the rope-like smoke of the pipe. Briar is also the name of a wild thorny rose, which could also imply the crown of thorns worn by Jesus as a cruel means of torture.

to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.'[51] While with regard to desire he says: 'Those who restrain desire do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.'[52] And in what on the surface appears to be one of his most shocking statements, he argues: 'Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.'[53] Blake also writes:

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[51] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 9, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 37. He uses a similar image in his poem 'The Human Abstract', when he says: 'And the Catterpiller and Fly, / Feed on the Mystery.' Blake, *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 27.

[52] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 5, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 34. Similarly Friedrich Nietzsche argued that the vices of some grow lazy, and they call that virtue. He adds: 'There are others who are like household clocks wound up; they repeat their tick-tock and want people to call tick-tock – virtue. And again, there are those who hold it a virtue to say: 'Virtue is necessary'; but fundamentally they believe only that the police are necessary.' Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (London: Penguin, 1961), translated by, R. J. Hollingdale, pp. 118–119.

[53] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 10, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 38. This proverb has been the subject of much debate. I have always read it in the most shocking way to mean that it is far worse to not act on desires than it is to murder an infant in a cradle. But it is probably more subtle than this. Marshall says of this proverb: 'He means that repressed desires can make a person permanently cruel and destructive.' Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 48. It would seem therefore that it is better to murder the infant than nurse the person that would result from unacted desires. Similarly Beer writes of the proverb: 'This has attracted criticism from some critics, who take it as an injunction to follow one's desires however inhuman and cruelly murderous they may prove. But . . . the logic needs to be read backwards rather than forwards. Acted desires are being compared to infants reared in proper freedom. It will be impossible for such desires to be inhuman or murderous, because they will by their very nature be the expression of a freedom which is fully human, embodying a full vision of human potentiality. It is *unacted* desires that are likely to fester, and which will then resemble children whose development has been thwarted by ill usage.' Beer, *William Blake: A Literary Life*, pp. 59–60. Thus it is better to murder in the cradle what would otherwise become unacted desires nursed.

> Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn, no longer, in deadly black, with hoarse note curse the sons of joy. Nor his accepted brethren, whom, tyrant, he calls free; lay the bound or build the roof. Nor pale religious letchery call that virginity, that wishes but acts not![54]

Similar in some respects to the poem 'The Garden of Love' is a poem from Blake's notebook, commonly called, 'The Chapel of Gold':

> I saw a chapel all of gold
> That none did dare to enter in
> And many weeping stood without
> Weeping, mourning, worshipping
>
> I saw a serpent rise between
> The white pillars of the door
> And he forcd & forcd & forcd
> Down the golden hinges tore
>
> And along the pavement sweet
> Set with pearls & rubies bright
> All his slimy length he drew
> Till upon the altar white
>
> Vomiting his poison out
> On the bread & on the wine
> So I turnd into a sty
> And laid me down among the swine[55]

Beer says of this poem: 'The very chapels in which abstinence was preached were caricatures of the bodily organ of sexual desire that had been made secret, and their adherents reaped a cruel crop.'[56] Typically in Blake's poems, the serpent represents the priest. I believe the poem evinces what the Church had reduced sex to. The serpent is penis and priest. The chapel is vagina and church:

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[54] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 27, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 45.

[55] Blake, 'The Chapel of Gold', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, pp. 467–8.

[56] Beer, *William Blake: A Literary Life*, p. 67.

'Is it a symbol of priesthood polluting the most sacred things of life?'[57] Perhaps serving to confirm this and again connecting the chapel with the body, Blake also produced a pencil sketch titled, 'The Golden Chapel' depicting a woman with a gothic chapel for a vulva.[58] In a fragment from his notebook titled, 'Merlin's Prophecy', Blake says:

> The harvest shall flourish in wintry weather
> When two virginities meet together
>
> The King & the Priest must be tied in a tether
> Before two virgins can meet together[59]

Where sexual continence is encouraged by the Church in the forms of complete sexual abstinence and the prohibition of extra-marital sex, it creates a defiled perception of sex as impure and sinful. Thus licentiousness and adultery come into being as debauched negatives, where before they were simply joyfully natural sex, namely, 'the garden of love' that bears so many sweet flowers. Blake, however, is not writing erotica. He is not seeing sex as something filthy and offensive and used therefore to defy social convention. Rather he is being open and sincere about something natural, and thereby opposing the anomalous restraint of desire, the ashamed need for surreptitiousness, the general fear of living, and the warped character that follows such forsaken self-deceit.[60] Perceptively Kazin said of Blake that he was able to foresee:

> The danger that is exactly present in our modern eroticism, which has the same relation to the failure of love that totalitarian solutions have to the failure of society. When we compare Blake with an artist like D. H. Lawrence, or an oratorical rebel like Henry Miller, we can see how much the obsessiveness, the cringing over-emphasis on sex in the most advanced modern writing is

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[57] S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2006), p. 287. Damon adds that the sty is a cleaner place than the polluted temple.

[58] See from *Vala, or the Four Zoas*, 'The Golden Chapel', pencil, c. 1797.

[59] Blake, 'Merlin's Prophecy', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 473.

[60] Kazin, *The Portable Blake*, p. 37.

> due to the inability of these writers to treat sex naturally in the whole frame of the human organization. As the dirty story pays homage to puritanism, so our modern eroticism wearily proclaims that the part which has been dislodged from the whole shall now be the key to experience. The limitations of eroticism have exactly the same character, in life and in art: it divorces sex from human culture.[61]

Concerning the negative views of sex that Blake felt the Church had created and the consequences of this, he tells us that just as Prisons are built with stones of Law so Brothels are built with bricks of Religion.[62] This appears to argue that we only have prisons *because* of law, and only have brothels *because* of religion. Or as Paananen rather neatly puts it: 'For Blake the institutionalized moral prohibition in fact creates the vice that it condemns.'[63] Marshall likewise says that Blake understood: 'Laws require prisons to enforce them as much as repressive morality creates the need for prostitutes.'[64] But in Blake's time the law did more than build prisons. It also built the gallows that could even be used to hang children.

Damon notes that Blake's proverb: 'Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion', must have been inspired by Paul's words: 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.'[65] If so Blake is, it would seem, applying his own twist to Paul. For when Paul writes: 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin'[66], he means that our obedience to the law may justify us in the eyes of ourselves and other people, but not in the eyes of God

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[61] Kazin, *The Portable Blake*, p. 38.

[62] See Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 8, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 36.

[63] Paananen, *William Blake*, p. 51.

[64] Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 42.

[65] Rom 3: 20, KJV. Damon adds that upon this passage grew one of the Gnostic heresies: 'Epiphanes . . . wrote a book *On Justice* . . . asserting . . . that the law, by introducing the distinction of meum and tuum, was the real author of the sin of theft and adultery.' (Mansel's *Gnostic Heresies*, VIII). Quoted from, Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, p. 320. Note that 'meum' and 'tuum' translate roughly as 'mine' and 'yours'.

[66] Rom 3: 20, KJV.

before whom we are always guilty owing to the universal corruption in our nature. We are thus unlike Adam in his innocence or Christ whose works were perfect, because we are sinful. Thus our obedience to the law is always imperfect in God's eyes despite any justification by our own works.[67] And so to say, 'by the law is the knowledge of sin', means for Paul that the very existence of the law lets us know we are sinners. If Blake was inspired by Paul's line, his aim may have been to take its conclusion and apply to it an opposite logic so as to say *no law, no sin*.[68] This is because for Blake it is *only* the law itself that makes us sinners. Thus Marshall argues: 'It is law which alone defines a crime, invites people to commit it, and promises dire punishment.'[69] The gist here is that for Blake law is not the cure for social and moral problems, but the main reason behind those problems.[70]

In some respects Blake was opposed to the notion of Sin, which he took to be a false infringement based on a manufactured code of morality designed to punish people for following their natural energies. However, as will become clear, Blake also realized that without Sin there could be no forgiveness. We might be justified in arguing that if there was no concept of Sin to begin with then there would be no need for forgiveness. Nevertheless there *is* a concept of Sin, which, as we shall see, forgiveness serves to counteract. This concept of Sin was important to Blake because if one is pure they cannot taste the sweets of the forgiveness of sins and if holy cannot behold the tears of love.[71] With reference to Sin Blake writes: 'Satan thinks that Sin is displeasing to God he ought to know that Nothing is displeasing to God but Unbelief & Eating

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[67] My thoughts on Paul are guided here by Matthew Henry's Concise Commentaries, and John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible.

[68] In a related way Nietzsche writes: 'No morality has any value in itself.' Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, (London: Penguin, 1968), Translated by, R. J. Hollingdale, p. 100. While elsewhere he similarly writes: 'There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena.' Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, (London: Penguin, 1973), Translated by, R. J. Hollingdale, p. 96.

[69] Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 42.

[70] Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 42.

[71] See, for example, Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 60, *in* Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 211.

of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.'[72] We will explore why for Blake eating of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil is so significant in due course, but suffice to say that for Blake this is why there is a concept of Sin that demands forgiveness in the first place.

Regarding the 'natural energies' mentioned earlier that we are punished for following, Blake writes: 'Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy. Energy is Eternal Delight.'[73] While Blake lived in a time that called itself, 'The Age of Reason', he himself was more inclined to live in an 'Age of Imagination', 'Age of Inspiration' or 'Age of Energy.' Reason, for Blake, was represented by his god, Urizen. The name is said by many to be a pun for 'Your Reason', while others derive it from the Greek ουριζειν, meaning 'to limit' which is the root of the English 'horizon.' It could of course mean both for the point would appear to be that as a horizon your reason sets limits and bounds to your energy. For Blake, the typical depiction of Urizen is as an old man with a white beard, and we are perhaps meant to identify him with the, 'isolated paternal deity of traditional Christian iconography.'[74] Setting bounds to our energies he is the contrary to imagination, or Blake's god, Urthona. Urizen is the avenging god of punitive law. He is also known as an architect and uses a compass to draw his circumscribing lines and boundaries.[75] Blake might be influenced here by Milton, who says of the Creator that he: 'Took the Golden Compasses, prepared / In God's eternal store, to circumscribe / This Universe, and all created things.'[76] In his note-book of 1808–11, Blake writes in the

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[72] Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 564.

[73] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 4, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 34.

[74] Robert Ryan, 'Blake and Religion', *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 156.

[75] Hence Blake's reference to the brethren of priests who 'lay the bound or build the roof' that was quoted earlier from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. See Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 27, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 45.

[76] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, vii, 225–7, quoted from, *The Annotated Milton: Complete English Poems*, (Ed.), Burton Raffel, (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), p. 351.

following lines titled, 'To God': 'If you have formd a Circle to go into / Go into it yourself & see how you would do'[77]

Blake's most vehement attack on institutionalised religion and its view of sexuality is perhaps found in his poem, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. Robert Ryan says of the poem:

> Oothoon, the victim of rape, having been scorned by the rapist and rejected by the man who once loved her, delivers a searing indictment of the entire moral system in which she has been trapped, concluding with a bold advocacy of free love. In lines that still have power to shock, she speaks of masturbatory acts and asks, "Are not these the places of religion? the rewards of continence? / The self enjoyings of self denial?"[78]

Referred to as 'the frankest literary work on this subject before our times',[79] I would maintain that it is still relevant today owing to the strict religious moral laws that in some parts of the world still see, for example: rape victims accused of adultery, adulteresses disfigured or stoned to death, and homosexuals hanged. And lest we forget, we might also mention the sexual abuse of children by abstinent priests. Speaking of Oothoon's reference to masturbation, Paananen writes: 'Not only is masturbation the usual outcome of the sexual denial that both Blake and Oothoon oppose, but it is the physical manifestation of a society that denies relationship and commodifies the opposite sex, thereby creating the tormenting object and the private, secretive subject that Blake and Marx saw to be definitive features of bourgeois society.'[80] In another speech Oothoon: 'traces the connection between Christian theology and clerical privilege and the social injustices they foster, moving in quick imaginative progression from tithes to marriage as related manifestations of the same oppressive system.'[81] The speech is as follows:

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[77] Blake, 'To God', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 516.
[78] Ryan, 'Blake and Religion', p. 157.
[79] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 438.
[80] Paananen, *William Blake*, p. 70.
[81] Ryan, 'Blake and Religion', p. 157.

> With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer?
> Where are his nets & gins & traps. & how does he surround him
> With cold floods of abstraction, and with forests of solitude,
> To build him castles and high spires. where kings & priests may dwell.
> Till she who burns with youth. and knows no fixed lot; is bound
> In spells of law to one she loathes[82]

In an epigraph to his poem *The Four Zoas*, Blake used the following statement from Paul: 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'[83] However, while Blake follows Paul here, in his view: 'Paul's chief error was his hostile attitude to sex that reduced it to a physical need.'[84] Thus Paul writes: 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman . . . But if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn.'[85] Whereas Blake, on the contrary, quite beautifully writes in a poem often referred to as 'Eternity': 'He who binds to himself a joy / Does the winged life destroy / But he who kisses the joy as it flies / Lives in eternity's sun rise.'[86]

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[82] Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Plate 5, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 49.

[83] Eph 6: 12.

[84] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 323.

[85] I Cor 7: 1–9.

[86] Blake, 'Eternity', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 474. The actual extent of Blake's own sexual liberty is unknown. Ackroyd says of Blake's wife Catherine that she harboured: 'A more general discontent with her husband's opinions on sexual matters.' Ackroyd, *Blake*, p. 81. Some biographers of Blake mark how he suggested having sexual relations with a concubine, which is usually understood to be one of their maids. Others suggested that the third woman was Mary Wollstonecraft. Whoever the proposed concubines were, Blake is said to have changed his mind on seeing Catherine cry in response to this suggestion. However, other biographers dismiss the third woman as no more than conjecture. Ackroyd writes: 'There is no evidence that Blake was ever unfaithful to his wife.' Ackroyd, *Blake*, p. 82. But James King draws attention to Alexander Gilchrist's mysterious words about Blake and Catherine: 'There *had* been stormy times in years long past, when both were young; discord by no means trifling while it lasted. But with the cause (jealousy on her side, not wholly unprovoked), the strife had

Transgression and the Forgiveness of Sins

In one of his annotations, Blake remarks:

> All Penal Laws court Transgression & therefore are cruelty & Murder / The laws of the Jews were (both ceremonial & real) the basest & most oppressive of human codes & being like all other

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ceased also.' James King, *William Blake: His Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), p. 130. Kazin says that Blake's writings show that he was: 'Tormented by her jealousy and that he thought marriage was the devil.' Kazin, *The Portable Blake*, p. 36. In his note book 1800–3, Blake writes: 'When a Man has married a Wife / he finds out whether / her knees & elbows are only / glued together' Blake, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 516. Of what he perhaps expected from a wife, Blake writes in his notes: 'In a wife I would desire / What in whores is always found / The lineaments of Gratified desire' Blake, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 474. But perhaps the truth of the matter is contained in Blake's poem, 'My Pretty Rose Tree': 'A flower was offerd to me; / Such a flower as May never bore. / But I said I've a Pretty Rose-tree: / And I passed the sweet flower o'er. / Then I went to my Pretty Rose-tree; / To tend her by day and by night. / But my Rose turnd away with jealousy: / And her thorns were my only delight.' Blake, 'My Pretty Rose Tree', *Songs of Experience*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 25. On a lighter note, the *Blake Records* give the following account of Blake's liberalism in the form of his and Catherine's nudity: 'One story in particular he [Thomas Butts] was fond of telling . . . At the end of the little garden in Hercules Buildings there was a summer-house. Mr Butts calling one day found Mr. And Mrs. Blake sitting in this summer-house, freed from "those troublesome disguises" which have prevailed since the Fall. "Come in!" cried Blake; "it's only Adam and Eve, you know!" Husband and wife had been reciting passages from *Paradise Lost*, in character, and the garden of Hercules Buildings had to represent the Garden of Eden; a little to the scandal of wondering neighbours, on more than one occasion.' Bentley, *Blake Records*, pp. 53–4. For a recent discussion on what may have influenced Blake's views on sexuality, see, Craig D. Atwood, 'Christ and the Bridal Bed: Eighteenth-Century Moravian Erotic Spirituality as a Possible Influence on Blake', in *Re-Envisioning Blake*, Edited by, Mark Crosby, Troy Patenaude, and Angus Whitehead (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). For example, Atwood writes: 'It is possible, and perhaps even likely, that some of the more intriguing aspects of Blake's art, poetry, and spirituality have roots in the radical religious piety his mother experienced in the Moravian Church in Fetter Lane. Eighteenth-century Moravian hymns, liturgies, and sermons are replete with sexualized imagery.' Atwood, 'Christ and the Bridal Bed', p. 161.

> codes given under pretence of divine command were what Christ pronounced them The Abomination that maketh desolate, i.e. State Religion which is the Source of all Cruelty.[87]

Ryan commenting on this passage writes: 'To Blake's apocalyptic imagination the Established Church was a tool, if not an embodiment of Antichrist.'[88] Similarly Blake writes:

> Man must & will have Some Religion; if he has not the Religion of Jesus, he will have the Religion of Satan, & will erect the Synagogue of Satan. calling the Prince of this World, God; and destroying all who do not worship Satan under the Name of God. Will any one say: Where are those who worship Satan under the Name of God! Where are they? Listen! Every Religion that Preaches Vengeance for Sin is the Religion of the Enemy & Avenger; and not the Forgiver of Sin, and their God is Satan . . . This was the Religion of the Pharisees who murdered Jesus.[89]

Elsewhere Blake tells us: 'There is a God of This World. A God Worshipd in this World as God & set above all that is calld God.'[90] For Blake then, echoing Paul in II Corinthians 4: 4, Satan is the God of this world. Satan takes possession of this world when Adam and Eve eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thus bringing judgment based on moral values into the world. However, with what appears to be a Gnostic tinge Blake also understood the angry creator God of the Old Testament to be a false and cruel God. He says of this God: 'Thinking as I do that the Creator of this World is a very Cruel Being & being a

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[87] Blake, 'Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible* by R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff. London, 1797', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 618. The term 'abomination that maketh desolate' is found in Dan 9: 27, 11: 31 and 12: 11. See also, Ezek 11: 18 and 21. It is also referred to explicitly by Jesus in, Mt 24: 15 and Mk 13: 14.

[88] Ryan, 'Blake and Religion', p. 153. Note that Blake uses the term 'Antichrist' to refer to a number of things. See Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 25.

[89] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 52, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 201.

[90] Blake, 'Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible* by R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff. London, 1797', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 618.

Worshipper of Christ I cannot help saying the Son O how unlike the Father . . . First God Almighty comes with a Thump on the Head Then Jesus Christ comes with a balm to heal it.'[91] In later life Blake had stopped calling the Old Testament God 'Jehovah', and referred to the creator of the natural world as 'Elohim.' Henry Crabb Robinson discussed this notion of a false God with Blake pointing out that the Bible is the work of God, and it begins by saying that God created the heaven and earth, but Robinson then adds: 'I gained nothing by this for I was triumphantly told that this God was not Jehovah but the Elohim.'[92]

What does Blake mean by the difference between Jehovah and Elohim, and what is its significance? Damon (drawing on the rabbinical tradition) writes: 'Elohim (an honorific plural) is the Creator in *Genesis* [1]. It represents God in his aspect of Justice, as contrasted with Jehovah, the aspect of Mercy. Sometimes the word 'Elohim' should have been translated simply "judges".'[93] For this reason commentators like Moses Maimonides refer to the line in Genesis 3: 5 as: 'Ye shall be as gods [judges], knowing good and evil.' The reading that refers to Adam and Eve becoming as 'judges' by eating from the tree in the midst of the garden, reinforces what Blake takes to be the Original Sin, namely, establishing oneself as a judge by dividing human realities into good and evil. Immediately after eating the fruit from the tree, Adam and Eve see they are naked and in shame cover themselves. Whereas before this they are naked and not ashamed, which literally means, not covered with clothes. For Blake then, Original Sin is to know good and evil and to judge others by moral values. Hence Adam and Eve can now see and judge, for example, their own and one another's nakedness. This is a revolutionary reading in itself owing to the fact that the distinction between good and evil is typically used to judge those who are deemed to have sinned, whereas

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[91] Blake, 'A Vision of the Last Judgment', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 565.

[92] Bentley, *Blake Records*, p. 545.

[93] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 119. In his poetry and art, Blake often equates Elohim with one of the gods from his own mythology, namely, Urizen. As discussed above, Urizen symbolizes (among other things) reason and law-making.

clearly for Blake, *this judging* based on the knowledge of good and evil *is the actual sin*. Thus, according with Jesus who crucially preached, 'Judge not',[94] Blake writes: 'Who dare to Judge but God alone?'[95] The knowledge of good and evil, begetting judicial and moral law, is what banishes humankind from Eden, whereas Jesus' gospel of the forgiveness of sins serves as we shall explore to reverse this.

Interestingly Blake associated the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the gallows at Tyburn, which he called 'Albion's fatal tree.'[96] The fatal fruit of this tree, what Blake also calls 'a Tree deadly and poisonous',[97] allows humankind to establish itself as Elohim (gods or judges). Kazin writes: 'To him the tree in Eden is the gallows on which freedom-seeking man is hanged by dead-souled priests.'[98] While Jon Mee says of the gallows at Tyburn, they are: 'The place where the unity of the nation is built upon the judicial murder of some of its members. The gallows for Blake are a place where difference is suppressed so that the bogus integrity of the nation may be preserved.'[99] Damon writes, for Blake: 'It is the system of Morality, the false church of Mystery, the whore of Babylon. On this tree Jesus was crucified.'[100] For Blake then, Christ is crucified on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, i.e. crucified by law and judgment.

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[94] Mt 7: 1.

[95] Blake, 'Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible*', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 619.

[96] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 82, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 240. Damon writes: 'Tyburn was the site of the famous gallows in London. It was situated about the lower corner of Edgware Road, just to the north of Hyde Park, which was adjoined by Kensington Gardens. As the name indicates, Tyburn was near a brook, which crossed Oxford Street a little to the east of the present Marble Arch, and flowed through St. James's Park, then plunged underground at the intersection of Stratford Place and South Molton Street, which is "Calvary's foot." Elsewhere, Blake thrice associated Tyburn and Golgotha.' Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 413.

[97] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 38, in Erdman *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 185.

[98] Kazin, *The Portable Blake*, p. 11.

[99] Jon Mee, 'Blake's Politics in History', *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 146.

[100] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 410.

Referring to this fatal tree and seeing Albion as the punisher and judge, Blake writes:

> He sat by Tyburns brook, and underneath his heel, shot up!
> A deadly tree, he nam'd it Moral Virtue, and the Law
> Of God who dwells in Chaos hidden from the human sight[101]

Nevertheless when it comes to his take on good and evil, Blake is ambivalent. On one level he is not looking to rid us of good and evil entirely for he saw these as fundamental to the dialectical nature of reality, which is made up of a 'dynamic interplay of opposing forces.'[102] Blake called these Heraclitean forces, 'contraries.' He writes:

> Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human Existence.
>
> From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason[.] Evil is the active springing from Energy.
>
> Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.[103]

Blake was wanting us to see that evil is as equally important as the good. Moreover by inverting these terms Blake appeared to see his notion of evil as the more positive aspect and good as the negative: 'Heaven and its angels, the "Good," are simply the unthinking orthodox. But Hell and its devils, the "Evil," required revaluation.'[104] With reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Blake asserts: 'The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it'[105]

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[101] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 28, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 174.
[102] Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 20.
[103] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 3, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 34.
[104] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 262.
[105] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 6, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 35.

In this context, Devils for Blake are the source of all creative and revolutionary energy, while Angels passively obeying reason are 'restricting spirits of conventionality.'[106] In this way then Blake is to a certain extent a moralist who akin to Nietzsche sought a revaluation or transposition of values.

But on another level beyond human existence, there are for Blake *no* moral precepts like good and evil because the forgiveness of sins preached in the Gospel cancels them out. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake writes: 'Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.'[107] This would include the distinction between good and evil that turn humans into moralizing judges, which do not reflect how things truly are from a divine and therefore infinite viewpoint. Hence in his work *Jerusalem*, Blake writes:

> What seems to Be: Is: To those whom
> It seems to Be, & is productive of the most dreadful
> Consequences to those whom it seems to Be: even of
> Torments, Despair, Eternal Death; but the Divine Mercy
> Steps beyond and Redeems Man in the Body of Jesus Amen
> And Length Bredth Highth again Obey the Divine Vision
> Hallelujah.[108]

For Blake, moralizing law based on a conventional or orthodox interpretation of good and evil was an error. He writes: 'And Man himself Become a Fiend, wrap'd in an endless curse, Consuming and consum'd for-ever in flames of Moral Justice. . . . Under pretence of Moral Virtue, fill'd with Revenge and Law.'[109] And we can add to this that, as far as Blake was concerned, Jesus shared the view that moralizing law was an error in that he was willing to subvert moral rules. We have quoted Blake above who said that without realizing it Milton was a true poet and so of the devil's party. Blake it has been said was the same knowingly, and

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[106] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 103.

[107] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 8, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 37.

[108] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 32, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 179.

[109] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 36, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 182.

so too, as he more than implies, was Jesus.[110] Accordingly Blake held a view of Jesus diametrically opposed to that of orthodox Christianity. Blake is to his mind righting an inverted Jesus, hence he says: 'The Modern church Crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards.'[111] Ryan writes:

> Blake proclaimed what he understood to be the true religion of Jesus, the distinguishing qualities of which were a radical demand for social justice, the cultivation of mutual love and forgiveness, and the fostering of creative freedom in religion, morality, and the arts. The difficult mission that Blake undertook was to combat the deformed Christianity that had become the national religion of Britain, to take religion back from the priests who had subordinated it to the political, economic, and cultural agenda of the ruling classes, and to make it a truly revolutionary force in society.[112]

Although, like other religions, Christianity had come to be controlled by clergy who represented and maintained the *status quo*, in Blake's eyes it had in truth originated with a radical visionary who had little time for either priests or conventions. For Blake, Jesus was an iconoclast who sided with artists and revolutionaries and who was about liberation rather than repression and submission. For this reason his religion of Jesus does not concern dogma, ritual, and moral lore.

When referring to Jesus' life Blake never believed in his supernatural conception, but saw him as the son of an unidentified human father, and begotten out of wedlock.[113] Related to this, and

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[110] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 103.

[111] Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 564.

[112] Ryan, 'Blake and Religion', p. 154.

[113] And yet according to Blake, Jesus *is* God owing to his claim that: 'I and *my* Father are one.' Jn 10: 30, KJV. Blake saw Jesus as the 'Human God' or 'divine human', but only in the sense that he was created in God's image as indeed we all are according to *Genesis* 1: 27. Thus Blake is said to have asserted that: 'Jesus is the only God . . . And so am I and so are you.' Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 158. Appearing to border on Humanism, Blake anticipating Nietzsche also writes: 'Thou art a Man God is no more, / Thy own humanity learn to adore' Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 520.

with a hint of anti-Semiticism, Blake says of his vision of Christ: 'Thine has a great hook nose like thine / Mine has a snub nose like to mine.'[114] Likewise in his notebook he writes: 'I always thought that Jesus Christ was a Snubby or I should not have worshipd him if I thought he had been one of those long spindle nosed rascals.'[115] Begotten out of wedlock, Jesus was seen from birth to be an offense against the Law. Blake believed that Jesus' mother Mary was: 'Innocently gay & thoughtless, not being among the condemned because ignorant of crime in the midst of a corrupted Age.'[116] In his poem *Jerusalem*, Blake reads between the lines of the Gospel account that says Mary was found with child while engaged to Joseph, but *before* they came together; and with Joseph being a righteous man and not willing to expose her to public disgrace he was going to divorce her secretly.[117] Blake creatively imagines the following conversation between Mary and her espoused Joseph:

> If thou put me away from thee
> Dost thou not murder me? Joseph spoke in anger & fury. Should I
> Marry a Harlot & an Adulteress? Mary answerd, Art thou more pure
> Than thy Maker who forgiveth Sins & calls again Her that is Lost
> Tho She hates. he calls her again in love. I love my dear Joseph
> But he driveth me away from his presence. yet I hear the voice of God
> In the voice of my Husband. tho he is angry for a moment, he will not
> Utterly cast me away. if I were pure, never could I taste the sweets
> Of the Forgive[ne]ss of Sins! if I were holy! I never could behold
> the tears

However, Blake's position is probably more akin to something between orthodox Deiformity and heretical Deification, for he also writes: 'God is Man & exists in us & we in him.' Blake, 'Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 664.

[114] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 524.

[115] Blake, 'Miscellaneous Prose', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 695.

[116] Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 559.

[117] See Mt 1;18–19.

> Of love! of him who loves me in the midst of his anger in the furnace of fire.[118]

In response, Blake has Joseph weep and hold Mary in his arms. Joseph then tells Mary:

> I heard his voice in my sleep & his Angel in my dream:
> Saying, Doth Jehovah Forgive a debt only on condition that it shall
> Be Payed? Doth he Forgive Pollution only on conditions of Purity
> That Debt is not Forgiven! That Pollution is not Forgiven
> Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the
> Heathen, whose tender Mercies are Cruelty. But Jehovahs Salvation
> Is without Money & without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness of Sins,
> In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity! for behold!
> There is none that liveth & Sinneth not! And this is the Covenant
> Of Jehovah: If you Forgive one-another, so shall Jehovah Forgive You:
> That He Himself may Dwell among You.[119]

By reading Matthew 1: 18–25 in this way, we can see that Blake went far beyond the traditional 'Hate the sin but love the sinner.' Furthermore, when Blake writes: 'If you Forgive one-another, so shall Jehovah Forgive You: that He Himself may Dwell among you', it seems that for Blake the very act of our forgiving one-another is *simultaneously* God's act of forgiving us. This puts a completely different emphasis on the following in the Lord's Prayer: 'And forgive us our debts, *as* we forgive our debtors.'[120] This is to say that God forgives us our debts *in the very act* of us forgiving our debtors. They are not distinct acts. Hence immediately after the Lord's Prayer it reads: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'[121] Elsewhere Blake writes: 'Where Mercy, Love &

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[118] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 60, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 211.

[119] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 60, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, pp. 211–12.

[120] Mt 6: 12. KJV. Italics mine.

[121] Mt 6: 14–15. KJV.

Pity dwell, / There God is dwelling too.'[122] Interpreting these lines, Hobson argues: 'God and Jesus, for Blake, are humanity, when and where it can live by these virtues.'[123] This puts into greater perspective our quoting Blake earlier as saying: 'men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast'[124] and likewise: 'God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men.'[125]

Returning to Blake's view that Mary was an adulterer, importantly this makes her a Transgressor and thus the fitting mother of Jesus who, for Blake, was the greatest of all Transgressors.[126] In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake has a devil say:

> If Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree; now hear how he has given his sanction to the law of ten commandments: did he not mock at the sabbath, and so mock the sabbath's God? murder those who were murderd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery? steal the labor of others to support him? bear false witness when he omitted making a defence before Pilate? covet when he pray'd for his disciples, and when he bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such as refused to lodge them? I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments: Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse: not from rules.[127]

Similar views are expounded in Blake's unfinished poem *The Everlasting Gospel*, which shows that as a revolutionary fighting

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[122] Blake, 'The Divine Image', *Songs of Innocence*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 13.

[123] Hobson, 'Anarchism and William Blake's Idea of Jesus', p. 49. Similarly, Hobson writes: 'In *Jerusalem* . . . the "Divine Vision" sings a song of oppression and endurance; the poem's narrator closes by saying, "This is the Song of the Lamb, sung by Slaves in evening time." *Jerusalem*, 60: 5, 38. We must be careful not to assume that Blake means slaves' songs are like the divine vision; he is saying slaves' songs *are* the divine vision and the song of the Lamb (that is, Jesus); Jesus *is* slaves singing of freedom.' Hobson, 'Anarchism and William Blake's Idea of Jesus', p. 50.

[124] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 11, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 38.

[125] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 16, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 40.

[126] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 264.

[127] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plates 22–24, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 43.

against the established political and religious order, Jesus is willing to defy moral principles and break the Ten Commandments. The poem therefore sets out Blake's understanding of Jesus as a transgressor of the judicial and moral law. In one fragment, Blake writes: 'The Vision of Christ that thou dost see / Is my Visions Greatest Enemy.'[128] He also says of Christ: 'Thine loves the same world that mine hates, / Thy Heaven doors are my Hell Gates'[129] And referring to scriptural exegesis: 'Both read the Bible day & night, / But thou read'st black where I read white.'[130]

We cannot overlook that in the Old Testament Jehovah is responsible for a long list of deeds that can appear evil to our eyes. Thus as Damon notes Jesus' understanding of Jehovah as: 'the loving Father of all was a revolutionary concept. He was no longer the God of vengeful Justice but the God of Mercy.'[131] Elsewhere Damon says: 'The universal paternity of the all-loving Father signifies the Brotherhood of Man, the only basis for a peaceful society. But this must rest upon the freedom and development of the Individual.'[132] Blake himself writes: 'What is Liberty without Universal Toleration.'[133] Toleration then points to the 'forgiveness of sins', which Blake understood to be Jesus' revolutionary abrogation of the system of justice and punishment.[134] Thus Blake asserts: 'The Gospel is Forgiveness of Sins & has No Moral

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[128] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 524.

[129] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 524.

[130] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 524.

[131] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 205.

[132] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 214. Hobson explores Blake's notion of Jesus as the Brotherhood of Man in some depth in his essay, 'Anarchism and William Blake's Idea of Jesus.' However, there is the danger here of an overriding tendency to see Jesus as universal humanity, and not balance this with the view that universal humanity is likewise Jesus. That is, for Blake, one cannot simply be reduced to the other.

[133] Blake, 'Annotations to Boyd's *Historical Notes* on Dante, Dublin, 1785', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 635.

[134] For Blake this was the unique insight of Jesus, and according to Damon was completely overlooked by the classical Pagan philosophers, such as, Plato and Aristotle. Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 141.

Precepts'[135] Consequently, as mentioned earlier, rather than anyone establishing themselves as judges and dividing human reality into good and evil, Jesus instead asserts: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.'[136]

As we have seen, for Blake a significant example of the forgiveness of sins was that of Joseph forgiving Mary her alleged adultery. This is later echoed in what is perhaps the most outstanding example of the forgiveness of sins, namely, the *Pericope Adulterae* found in Chapter 8 of the Gospel of John. Here Jesus saves a woman (who Blake associates with Mary Magdalene) from being stoned to death in accordance with Mosaic Law for also committing adultery. Wishing to see how Jesus reacts to the law, the scribes and Pharisees ask him his view on the matter. Exposing their hypocrisy, Jesus famously replies: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her."[137] Starting from the elders, they depart one by one until Jesus is left alone with the woman. He asks her if any man has condemned her, and when she says no, Jesus then tells her that he does not condemn her either.[138]

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[135] Blake, 'Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible*, by R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff. London, 1797', in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 619.

[136] Mt 7: 1–2. Again Blake might read this to mean that our judging or not judging is simultaneously God's judging or not judging. Before this, Jesus questions the *lex talionis*, saying: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' Mt 5: 38–39, KJV. And following this says: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies.' Mt 5: 43–44, KJV.

[137] Jn 8: 7, KJV.

[138] It is interesting to note that during this exchange with the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus bends down twice to write in the ground with his finger. Nothing is said about this in the text, but it may be a reference to the following in Jeremiah: 'O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, *and they* that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.' Jer 17: 13, KJV. Tradition has it that Jesus is actually writing out the sins of the scribes and Pharisees after asking them to cast a stone if they are without sin. I also wonder if Jesus is writing in the ground to show

Jesus often questions and denounces the scribes and Pharisees for being advocates of a narrow legalism who, without purity of soul, outwardly comply with conventional morality: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.'[139] In *The Everlasting Gospel*, Blake says of the *Pericope Adulterae*:

Was Jesus Chaste or did he
Give any Lessons of Chastity
The morning blushd fiery red
Mary was found in Adulterous bed
Earth groand beneath & Heaven above
Trembled at discovery of Love
Jesus was sitting in Moses Chair
They brought the trembling Woman There
Moses commands she be stoned to Death
What was the sound of Jesus breath
He laid His hand on Moses Law
The Ancient Heavens in Silent Awe
Writ with Curses from Pole to Pole
All away began to roll[140]

Blake then has Jesus say to the scribes and Pharisees:

. . . Come Ye forth
Fallen Friends of Heavnly birth
That have forgot your Ancient love
And driven away my trembling Dove
You shall bow before her feet

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that the spirit of the law is not engraved in stone tablets as is the letter of the law.

[139] Mt 23: 27, KJV.

[140] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 521. Beer writes: 'The Jesus revealed in this poem is someone who does not adhere slavishly to the law but who interprets experience in a more humane manner, understanding that the adulterous woman has at least the virtue of living by love. Other passages show him failing to fulfil any suggestions that he showed humility – or even gentility – so far as relations with his fellows were concerned.' Beer, *William Blake: A Literary Life*, p. 188.

> You shall lick the dust for Meat
> And tho you cannot Love but Hate
> Shall be beggars at Loves Gate[141]

Finally, Blake says of Jesus:

> The Publicans & Harlots he
> Selected for his Company,
> And from the Adulteress turn'd away
> God's righteous Law, that lost its Prey.[142]

E. P. Thompson says of Blake: 'In shedding the prohibitives of the Moral Law; Blake held fast to the affirmative: Thou Shalt Love. It is because this affirmative remains an essential need and quest of our own times that William Blake still speaks with such power to us.'[143] Accordingly Blake asserts:

> Mutual in one anothers love and wrath all renewing
> We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses
> We behold multitude; or expanding: we behold as one,
> As One Man all the Universal Family; and that One Man
> We call Jesus the Christ: and he in us, and we in him,
> Live in perfect harmony in Eden the land of life,
> Giving, receiving, and forgiving each others trespasses.[144]

By a continual forgiving of each other's trespasses, Hobson points to Blake's belief in human imperfection, which, he argues, is paradoxically the key to Blake's idea of nonauthoritarian society. If we recall, we quoted Blake as saying: 'There is none that liveth & Sinneth not!'[145] The notion of perfectibility is said to be deeply entrenched in radical thought. The argument is that because people

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[141] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 522.

[142] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Keynes, *Blake: Complete Writings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 757. Note that this passage does not appear in Erdman's text.

[143] E. P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 128.

[144] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 34, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 180.

[145] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 61, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 212.

are not perfect they need to be shaped from above by a more perfect leadership.[146] Hence communism can soon become totalitarianism. Blake was aware of such regimes from England's religious history (Cromwell, for example), and witnessed it in his own life with the French Revolution that replaced one form of tyranny with another. Hobson writes:

> In place of the French "republic of Virtue", which led to vesting supreme power in virtue's guardians, Blake offered the idea of continual forgiveness of sins . . . By implication, if there is continual forgiveness of sin, the ideological justification for a hierarchy of social guardians vanishes, a crucial step in convincing people to abolish the hierarchies in reality.'[147]

We noted above that the only basis for a peaceful society rests upon the freedom and thus development of the individual. Blake writes: 'The worship of God is. Honouring his gifts in other men'[148] Appearing to echo Jesus' command to: 'Love your enemies'[149], Blake insightfully and quite beautifully suggests that: 'Opposition is true Friendship.'[150] This is not to my mind a simple call to 'live and let live', but more subtly and profoundly says, 'let live and live.' For as Blake affirms: 'Mutual Forgiveness of each Vice / Such are the Gates of Paradise'[151] This is to say that through the mutual forgiveness of those that trespass against one another liberty is granted to each in the process. Consequently all life is increased in

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[146] Hobson, 'Anarchism and William Blake's Idea of Jesus', p. 53.

[147] Hobson, 'Anarchism and William Blake's Idea of Jesus', p. 53.

[148] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 22, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 43.

[149] See Mt 5: 44.

[150] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 20, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 42. Incidentally, this line of Blake's brings to mind the following passage from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: 'In any domain – whether it be the cells of a body, the members of a society or the elements of a spiritual synthesis – *union differentiates*. In every organised whole, the parts perfect themselves and fulfil themselves.' Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (London: Collins, 1955), p. 40.

[151] Blake, *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 259.

recognition that: 'Every thing that lives is Holy'[152] Paradoxically, it seems that tolerated difference through forgiveness not only brings about liberation for all, but also allows for a more genuine harmony, which, as we saw above, equates for Blake with Eden – the land of life. It also equates with Jerusalem, which as the Holy City of Peace always represents 'liberty' for Blake. This perhaps gives renewed emphasis to Blake's famous lines:

> I will not cease from Mental Fight,
> Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
> Till we have built Jerusalem,
> In Englands green & pleasant Land.[153]

While I have referred above to society resting upon the liberty and development of the individual, we must be careful here and stress that Blake's anarchism does not simply serve to promote individual choice and thus freedom. This is more a means than an end. Blake's vision is not about the individual self and certainly does not advocate what we might call a subjective or private take on religion. Blake's vision is radically social. The love between people is a mutual love made 'in the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity!'[154] It is through the forgiveness of sins that we become a Universal Humanity or Divine Body living as One Man – Jesus Christ. As Blake says: 'General Forms have their vitality in Particulars: & every particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus.'[155] And elsewhere: 'The Eternal Body of Man is THE IMAGINATION. God himself / that is / The Divine Body . . . [Yeshua] JESUS we are his Members.'[156] These citations almost certainly appear to echo Paul when he says: 'Now ye are the Body

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[152] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 27, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 45.

[153] Blake, *Milton*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, pp. 95–6.

[154] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 61, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 212.

[155] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 91, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 251.

[156] Blake, *Laocoön*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 273.

of Christ, and members in particular.'[157] There also appears to be a trace of Paul's reference to God being, 'all in all.'[158] Likewise Paul's description of the true Christ who: 'is before all things, and by him all things consist.'[159] And there are clearly parallels with Jesus when he says: 'Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.'[160]

Another crucial point to consider is that the mutual forgiveness of sins *should not* be taken as another moral law or divine command used to bind people in terms of 'thou shalt.' And of course there is the added danger that this warning in the form of *should not* is also taken as yet another prescriptive demand to counter the initial danger. These are indeed dangers that miss the point and rightly court transgression. The doctrine of forgiveness (if it is a doctrine) must stem from self-sacrifice and love. To rule by judicial or moral law that you must, for example, tolerate does not bring about toleration. It becomes yet another moral code used to enslave and judge people. Blake's advocacy of love and forgiveness represents God in His aspect of Mercy – not Justice. A genuine forgiveness of sins repeals moral precepts. It

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[157] 1 Cor 12: 27. KJV.

[158] 1 Cor 15. 28, KJV.

[159] Col 1: 17, KJV. Another figure who was greatly influenced by Paul was Teilhard de Chardin, and Blake's Divine Body of Christ consisting of particular members is akin to Teilhard's Cosmic Christ. Throughout his work Teilhard argues that 'union differentiates', which is to say that in any organized whole the parts become more autonomous not less so and form a harmonized complexity rather than becoming lost in the great whole. For example, he writes: 'Now, what is the only way in which a centre can be formed and sustained as such? Is it by breaking down the lower centres which fall under its governance? Indeed it is not – it is by strengthening them in its own image. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1969), p. 117.

[160] Mt 18: 19–20. KJV. I am indebted in this paragraph to the essay, 'William Blake and Life in the Divine Body', by Christopher Rowland in, *Paul, Grace, and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches*, edited by, Paul Middleton, Angus Paddison, and Karen Wenell (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2009), pp. 119–130.

is a case of putting love before the letter of the law, as we saw with the woman taken in adultery. Through mutual forgiveness Jesus is among us *as us*, that is 'he in us, and we in him.'[161] Thus mutual forgiveness mirrors Paul's call for unity indicating: 'One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.'[162]

A significant question, I believe, emerges when we ask how Blake's view of Jesus as a transgressor of rabbinical law squares with the following words attributed to him: 'Think not that I come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'[163] It is argued that selections of the sayings of Jesus were in circulation before the Gospels were produced, and some were preferred by stricter Jewish Christians: 'Such a selection of sayings could be drawn up in accordance with the outlook of those who compiled it; sayings which in themselves appeared to support that outlook would be included, while others which appeared to go contrary would be omitted.'[164] Matthew is said to have not limited himself to one selection. However the source said to draw from 'a more legally minded Christian circle'[165] is often labelled M because it only features in Matthew's Gospel, while a more comprehensive selection is referred to as Q. An example here is the verse that follows the one just quoted, which has Jesus say: 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'[166] The scholar T. W. Manson argued that coming from the M form this was a revision of the original wording designed to bring it in line with rabbinical doctrine. Whereas Luke's version of the saying, 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail'[167] came from the Q form and was closer to the original. Furthermore Manson argues that: 'The saying in

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[161] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 34, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 180.
[162] Eph 4: 6, KJV.
[163] Mt 5: 17, KJV.
[164] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Illinois, IVP Academic, 1996), p. 355.
[165] Kaiser, et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 355.
[166] Mt 5: 18, KJV.
[167] Lk 16: 17, KJV.

its original form asserts not the perpetuity of the Law but the unbending conservatism of the scribes' and is not meant to be 'sound Rabbinical dogma but bitter irony.'[168] Thus interpreted correctly Manson understands Jesus to be saying to the scribes: 'The world will come to an end before you give up the tiniest part of your traditional interpretation of the law.'[169]

It is apparent that Jesus did not adhere to the rabbinical interpretation of the law. And when the scribes and Pharisees accuse his disciples of transgressing the tradition of their elders by not washing their hands before eating bread, Jesus replies: 'Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?'[170] Yet crucially, and surely Blake would have agreed, for Jesus circumstances could alter cases in that (taking an obvious example): 'The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.'[171] But Jesus does not ignore the necessities of God's law nor encourage his followers to be less just, as the ensuing verse confirms: 'That except your righteousness exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter in the kingdom of heaven.'[172] When he is left alone with the woman taken in adultery and it is confirmed that no man including himself condemns her, Jesus does not simply tell her to go, but rather to go 'and sin no more.'[173] But crucially this I would argue is not to be seen as a condition for forgiveness. We quoted Blake earlier as saying:

> Doth Jehovah Forgive a debt only on condition that it shall
> Be Payed? Doth he Forgive Pollution only on conditions of Purity

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[168] T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (Reprint; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 135.

[169] Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 135.

[170] Mt 15: 3, KJV.

[171] Mk 2: 27, KJV.

[172] Mt 5: 20, KJV. From another point of view Jesus' fulfils the law which he sees as the expression of God's will because obeying or disobeying the law begins in the heart. He constantly called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites because they only followed the law outwardly and not inwardly. Jesus' mind and will is to do the will of God and: 'where this is so, there will be an emphasis on the inward spiritual aspects of ethics and religion, rather than on outward and material aspects.' Kaiser, et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 357.

[173] Jn 8: 11, KJV.

> That Debt is not Forgiven! That Pollution is not Forgiven
> Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the Heathen, whose tender Mercies are Cruelty. But Jehovah's Salvation
> Is without Money & without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness of Sins[174]

Yet significantly Blake goes one step further and has Mary add to her sin of adultery the sin of blaspheming Love and Jesus. In so doing he twists the notion of what it is to sin. For Mary her added sin occurred because she concealed her true nature, and so speaking to Jesus she refers to her:

> Dark pretence to Chastity
> Blaspheming Love blaspheming thee
> Thence Rose Secret Adulteries
> And thence did Covet also rise
> My Sin thou hast forgiven me
> Canst thou forgive my Blaspehemy[175]

In Blake's interpretation of Joseph forgiving Mary her alleged adultery it would seem that in line with the rabbinical tradition, Elohim as Justice and Jehovah as Mercy are correlated as Elohim Jehovah. This is because for Blake, as we touched upon earlier, Elohim as Justice and Jehovah as Mercy are necessary to each other in that sin can only be forgiven when it is first judged to be sin.[176] For Blake: 'Justice, the punishment of (or vengeance for) sin . . . was the Contrary of Mercy, the forgiveness of sin. It was the Old Dispensation of Moses, annulled by the New Dispensation of Jesus.'[177] And perhaps this New Dispensation is precisely how Jesus, in Blake's view, fulfils the law.

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[174] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 60, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 212.
[175] Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 522.
[176] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 119.
[177] Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 227.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that to a certain extent Blake can be understood as an anarchist in that he advocated all forms of liberation and rebelled against all authority – State and King, Church and God, Master and Mammon, Parent and Teacher. However I have not referred to Blake simply as an anarchist, but as a *Christian* anarchist. The advocacy of liberation from authority was for him best expressed in what he deemed to be the true spirit of Christianity, namely, Jesus' subversion of all judicial and moral law. And so while Blake was arguably a heretic among the orthodox, he was nevertheless a Christian in his anarchism in that among political radicals he staunchly defended what he saw as the *true* religion of Jesus and thus *true* spirit of Christianity. Accordingly he attacked religion that was a law and a tye to minds, but always asserted that the religion of Jesus was a perfect law of liberty.[178]

Yet we have seen that Blake was also an anarchist in his Christianity. For Blake the views of Jesus were diametrically opposed to the orthodox views of the Church in that Jesus had little respect for priests, laws or conventions. Arguably Blake sought to do battle with a distorted Christianity and make it a revolutionary force in society by taking it back from the priests who had subordinated it to the political, economic and cultural agendas of the ruling classes.[179] He mistrusted institutional state religion, which for him was the source of all cruelty, and attacked its priests for binding believers with law. Blake saw Jesus as a transgressor of law through his insight into the mutual forgiveness of sins, which repealed the system of justice and punishment. We saw that for Blake law is not a remedy for social disorder and moral chaos, but one of its principal causes.[180] In Blake's view human ills are not due to our transgressing divine law but because of the loss of imagination to restrictive reason, and our unwillingness to cultivate human energies in freedom.[181] He wanted individuals to be free to cultivate their own mind and imagination, and to become

[178] See Ackroyd, *Blake*, p. 159.
[179] See Ryan, 'Blake and Religion', p. 154.
[180] See Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 42.
[181] See Beer, *William Blake: A Literary Life*, p. 97.

king, priest and artist in their own home.[182] Radically inverting our notion of good and evil, Blake understood that the good who passively obey reason are the unthinking orthodox and restricting spirits of conventionality.[183] While the evil are those who actively follow the creative and revolutionary energies that reason always seeks to circumscribe and limit. In Blake's eyes it appears that the latter is represented best by true artists and poets who are never fettered, but like Jesus seek to pursue and advocate the revolutionary liberty that constitutes the true spirit of religion. Through his own artistic freedom and religious spirit Blake it seems sought to undo institutionalised Christianity, which he felt perverted Jesus' original anarchistic message of love and liberty.

But does all I have discussed above make Blake a Christian anarchist? I noted in the introduction that understanding Blake as a Christian anarchist is different from saying that he identified himself as one. For me Blake is only a Christian anarchist by implication. Christian anarchism, either as a movement or a concept, is not something he consciously identified with and subscribed to. The scope of this essay has made it easier to view Blake as a Christian anarchist by drawing relevant samples of his writing together that fit this description. But I think we should be cautious here, while nevertheless acknowledging Blake's tacit Christian anarchist tendencies. It is not my intention then to thoughtlessly claim that Blake was a Christian anarchist in the strictest sense of the term. Blake is tautologically Blake to such an extent that categorising him as anything other than Blake is a mistake in my view. And given his temperament, even this is a box he would have likely wished to leap out of. Consequently, he refuses to be pinned down and claimed for any particular cause.[184] Beer says: 'No doubt there were shifts in Blake's attitudes, corresponding to the dominant tone of the work he was producing at any given time, but his personality cannot be contained within any single one of them.'[185] Similarly Ackroyd argues: 'Blake did not join clubs or circles and, for similar reason of temperament, he rarely

[182] Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p. 9.
[183] See Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 103 and p. 262.
[184] See Beer, 2007, p. 24.
[185] Beer, 2007, p. 36.

became attached to ideas or suggestions other than those that he formulated for himself. But he was immensely receptive to beliefs which might confirm his own sense of life.'[186]

Tellingly, Blake has his god Los say in the poem *Jerusalem*: 'I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's.'[187] A little further Blake refers to Los: 'Striving with Systems to deliver Individuals from those Systems.'[188] While P. H. Butter adds that Los must also: 'Create new systems so as not to be enslaved by his own.'[189] I think these three positions evince Blake's character and serve to indicate how he was indeed anarchistic. It is this utter spirit of liberty guided by his religious vision that is perhaps testament to his Christian anarchism – to the extent that he fits such a label precisely by escaping it.

This last remark may intrigue and yet tantalise. It announces a paradoxical relationship between Blake's work and anarchist positions. What is this paradox? What is it in anarchist thought that Blake's work resonates with, and in what sense does his work escape that dimension? It is themes evident in his work, such as, 'dissent', 'radicalism', 'revolution', 'antinomianism', 'transgression', and 'liberty', that indirectly characterise anarchism and thus associate him with anarchistic thought.

Yet Blake was too much of an anarchist to be labelled an anarchist. Just as a genuine existentialist might escape the label 'existentialist' on the grounds of authenticity, so Blake might elude the title 'anarchist' on the grounds of liberty. His spirited temperament, complex character, and visionary imagination prevent his strict conformity to any type. In short, he was one of a kind. Thus any type used beside his name has to conform as much to him. A category, even the category 'anarchist', defines and so sets limits like the circumscribing compass of Urizen. And, as we saw, Blake is loath to step into any such circles. It is this unrestrained and

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[186] Ackroyd, 1995, p. 88.

[187] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 10, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 153. Los is a god in Blake's pantheon, and represents the poetic spirit in humankind.

[188] Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 11, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 154.

[189] P. H. Butter, *William Blake: Selected Poems* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1982), p. xxvii.

boundless liberty that, for me, characterises his anarchism, an anarchism given its central focus on Jesus that we might cautiously call a Christian anarchism.

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Occult Features of Anarchism

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By exploring the hidden correspondences between classical anarchism, Renaissance magic and occult philosophy, this chapter advances the critical study of Left-political attachment to the 'secular', wherein Western anarchist and socialist cosmologies have been mystified. By historicizing Western anarchism and 'the revolution', it highlights the development of Left theory and praxis within clandestine masculine 'public' spheres of the radical Enlightenment, and how this genesis proceeds to inflect anarchist understandings of the 'political'. Inspired by ethnographic research among contemporary anarchist social movements in the Americas, this essay questions anarchist 'atheism' insofar as it has posed practical challenges for current anarchist-indigenous coalition politics. Moreover, in its treatment of 'secret societies' this essay has pedagogical utility for today's political activists as well as scholars of anarchism. Where popular fear of 'secret societies' is widespread, charting the construction of the secret society in European history has practical political importance. By attending to this history, we also witness the co-evolution of modern masculinity and secularized social movements as a textured historical process, and observe the privatization of both gender and religion in the praxes of radical counter-culture, which develops in complex dialectic with the "privitization" of gender and religion by the modern nation-state.

Let us explore the hidden correspondences between classical anarchism, Renaissance magic and occult philosophy, and other hidden features of anarchism besides. Let us historicize Western anarchism, whose genesis within clandestine masculine 'public'

How to cite this book chapter:
Lagalisse, E. 2018. Occult Features of Anarchism. In: Christoyannopoulos, A. and Adams, M. S. (eds.) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II*. Pp. 278–332. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/bas.i. License: CC-BY.

spheres of the radical Enlightenment continues to inflect anarchist understandings of the 'political' even today. As I have related in my previous work concerning the exclusion of indigenous women and their concerns from anarchist public spheres, anarchist "atheism" can pose practical problems for current anarchist-indigenous coalition politics: our concern is beyond academic.[1] By illustrating the cosmology of classical anarchism I hope to complicate present-day anarchist attachments to "secular" analyses, in which anarchist theology is simply displaced and mystified. By attending to the same story, we witness the co-evolution of modern masculinity and secularized social movements as a textured historical process. We observe the privatization of both gender and religion in the praxes of radical counter-culture, which develop in complex dialectic with the "privatisation" of gender and religion by the modern nation-state (as above, so below).

Given its topic, this essay also necessarily engages with the history of "secret societies", wherein I have crafted my treatment to have pedagogical utility for today's political activists, as well as scholars of anarchism. Popular discussion of "secret societies" is currently widespread in the English-speaking world (and beyond), such that charting the construction of the secret society – both real and imagined – in European history arguably has practical political import, beyond being required for the particular academic task at hand.

It is therefore explicit that I come to the historical work at hand methodologically as an anthropologist, and for the purposes of practical intervention within social movements and politics today. It is from being a participant (2000–2005), and later ethnographer (2005–2015), within contemporary anarchist social movements myself that I consider it important to unpack the history of "anarchism". While charting instances of "anarchy" throughout

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[1] The previous work I refer to is: Lagalisse, Erica '"Marginalizing Magdalena": Intersections of Gender and the Secular in Anarchoindigenist Solidarity Activism'. *Signs – Journal of Women in Culture and Society.* Vol 36, No. 3. (2011). For a lengthier rehearsal of the present essay and discussion of its relation to my previous work the reader may look to Lagalisse, Erica (2018) *Occult Features of Anarchism – With Attention to the Conspiracy of Kings and Conspiracy of the Peoples* (Oakland: PM Press).

time and space is a valid political project, there is also much to be gained by charting the emergence of "anarchism" as a distinct "ism" – and to do so does not necessarily detract from the aforementioned project, but rather keeps us honest as we proceed.[2]

I thus purposefully engage the past from the perspective of the present, tacking back and forth between diverse times and places to unearth bits and pieces of buried anarchist history based on an ethnographic imagination, using both secondary and primary sources. The interdisciplinary activity necessarily involved in such a project means that diverse specialists will be inspired, hopefully, to add some qualification, and thus lend their own knowledge and methodological strengths to the problem. Strangely, or perhaps not so strangely, the particular metaphysics of modern anarchism and its relation to social and historical context has not so far received the attention it deserves. This is no doubt partially due to the bias of many anarchists against religion, and the bias of many scholars against anarchism, but is perhaps also because the topic requires delving into the relationship between anarchism, occult philosophy and "secret societies" – all charged topics, even independently.

First Premises: The Theology of Politics

Carl Schmitt's general point that modern politics embodies secularized theological concepts is of basic relevance here. Schmitt also remarks, while pursuing his particular question regarding sovereignty, that every political idea "takes a position on the 'nature'

[2] With respect to the questions of definition discussed in the introduction to this volume, I thus place myself among those who treat "anarchism" as a historical object; considering both "anarchism" and "religion" as discourses and practices developed in a certain social and historical context is a necessary precondition for this essay. Beyond my own proceeding exposition, with respect to "anarchism" as historical see also Carl Levy, 'Social Histories of Anarchism', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 4 (2010), pp. 1–44 (p. 8–10); with respect to "religion" as historical see also e.g. Gil Anidjar, 'Secularism', *Critical Inquiry*, 33 (2006), pp. 52–76: "it was in the context of the colonial encounter that Christendom granted other communities and traditions the name it had only ever given itself – religion – and reincarnated itself as 'secular'."

of man", presupposing that "he is either 'by nature good' or 'by nature evil'", and that to "committed atheistic anarchists, man is decisively good".[3] This essay will dovetail with Schmitt's summary remark in only some ways; for our purposes a more nuanced discussion of the transcendence vs. immanence of divinity in the history of ideas within Western philosophy is crucial. I am inclined to point to Marshall Sahlins' work on *The Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology*.[4] Sahlins suggests that the theological preoccupations underlying European political theory and science can be traced back at least as far as St. Augustine, and the quarrel among Pagan, Platonic, and Gnostic positions with that of the emerging Church authorities regarding the transcendence versus immanence of divinity, i.e. whether nature and humanity, whether together or separately, are wholly, partially, or latently divine, or are merely borne from the divine.

Cast in Sahlins' light, the persistent dualist conundrum in Western politics and social theory appears as a spiralling repetition of this same theological concern: There is Lust, which is not of God; there is Matter, distinct from Spirit; there is Desire, as opposed to Reason. Those who suggest some coercive force stops (or must stop) us from pursuing our "animal" desires follow the logic of a transcendent divinity. Since we are by nature so evil and base, God – or something else "out there" conceptually derived from Him – must keep us in line. For St. Augustine it was the State of Rome, for Hobbes any Sovereign will do (his "self-interest" clearly evolving from Augustine's "desire"). The "individual" vs. "society" polarity evident in most social theory is only another manifestation of the same – here God becomes "society" (rather than "the State"). One could go further and point out, for example, that in Durkheim's work the transcendent force appears as the "social fact" – from a mass of pre-social individuals

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[3] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology – Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1985), here pp. 56.

[4] Marshall Sahlins, 'The Sadness of Sweetness: The Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology', *Current Anthropology*, 37 (1996), 379–418. (This particular history of ideas was first presented to me in the form of David Graeber's lecture notes from Dr. Marshall Sahlins' theory seminar ca. 1990.)

and desires emerges "society" which then serves to restrain these desires. Furthermore, note that in methodological individualism desire creates and governs society, whereas in cultural determinism desire creates the society that then governs desire, but it is always the same terms in play. In short, the transcendent God of theological dualism can be found just beneath the surface of every argument for centralized authority, including most canonical social theory (which anarchists, we may note, tend to recognize as "authoritarian").

What if we approached modern "anti-authoritarianism" with the same lens? I propose that a particular theological thread likewise runs through it. The same cultural baggage in tow, developing in dialectic with its opposite, modern anti-authoritarianism grapples with the same theological dilemma, yet attempts to resolve it differently by re-arranging the terms and with recourse to various pagan traditions and syncretic Christian hereticism itself. In other words, whereas many have located "anarchist" elements in Christian millenarianism and non-Western traditions, I wish to draw attention to the latter as elements of "anarchism" itself. Modern anarchism has never been purely atheist except in name, and rather develops based on overlapping syncretic pagan cosmologies that behold the immanence of the divine. In fact, utopian socialism, anarchism and Marxism each rely (in ways both similar and different, which I will tease out below) on a specific syncretic cosmology that is incipient in the Middle Ages, changing and crystallizing in the Renaissance, and gradually given a scientific makeover throughout the Enlightenment up to the 20th century. Just as the secularization of the modern state privatizes religion but continues to embody a particular theology in its structure and ideology, the social movements that resist this dominant power structure go through a similar process of secularization in parallel, wherein gender and religion are displaced from "politics".

A Heretical Account of the Radical Enlightenment

Standard histories of modern anarchism often locate its precursors in the heretic movements (e.g. Anabaptists, Ranters and Diggers) that articulated combined critiques of Church authorities, the

enclosures of private property and forced labour during the feudal period and early capitalist order.[5] These movements often called for communal ownership in Christian idiom, e.g. by elevating "grace" over "works", yet the form and content of these heretical social movements was different than the Christian millenarian movements that preceded them.[6] Millenarian movements were spurred on by a charismatic individual or momentous event, whereas the heretical movements had defined organizational structures and programmes for change, leading at least one historian to call them the "first proletarian international".[7] What happened to effect the shift? And what does it mean that anarchist historians easily recognize such movements as "anarchist" when they are located safely in the past – as "precursors" – yet as soon as modern anarchism proper is articulated, religious levelling movements are seen as backward, if not heretical to anarchism itself?

The shift from the spontaneous millenarian movement to the organized heretic one had much to do with their incorporation of non-Christian ideas and mystical doctrines that began circulating in Europe during the Crusades. Platonic philosophy, Pythagorean geometry, Islamic mathematics such as Algebra, Jewish mystical texts and Hermetic treatises were all "rediscovered" via Muslim Spain and translated into Latin during this time. It is well known

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[5] see e.g. Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible – a History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana Press, 1993); Atindranath Bose, *A History of Anarchism* (Calcutta: World Press, 1967); George Woodcock, *Anarchism – a History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co. 1962).

[6] See Bose 1967; Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down – Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra : Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Sylvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch – Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.) Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1970).

[7] Federici 2004, p. 33. See also Cohn 1970; Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, (London: Macmillan, 1922); Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992).

that the creative re-composition of this ensemble inaugurated the Renaissance and later the "Enlightenment" on the level of high culture, but how the composite led to new levelling projects from below has received less attention. The Hermetica in particular is probably the least recognized fount of the modern Left, and yet an important thread running through it.[8] The Hermetic tradition beholds a unified universe of which man is a microcosm ("As above, so below"), and wherein cosmic time beholds a pulsation of emanation and return. The Hermetic cosmos is hierarchically arranged in symmetrical diachronic and synchronic bifurcations (dyads) and trifurcations (triads), but a web of hidden "correspondences" and forces – alternately "energy" or "light" – cut across and unify all levels; in duration everything remains internally related – "All is One!" Significantly, humanity participates in the regeneration of cosmic unity – our coming to consciousness of this divine role is a crucial step therein. God and creation thus become one and the same, with the inevitable slip that our creative power – including intellectual power – is divine. The initiate must first purge himself of false knowledge in order to be able to receive the true doctrine; at any given moment only some are ready. Hermes himself explains that he "keeps the meaning of his words concealed" from those who are not.[9]

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[8] The Hermetica or *Corpus Hermeticum* is a collection of texts written in the 1st or 2nd centuries A.D., yet during the Renaissance they were held to be the work of Hermes Trismegistus ("Thrice Greatest Hermes") imparting the mystical insights of ancient Egypt. Egypt was held to be an 'original' and thus superior civilization, one that nourished the philosophy of the Greeks, for example, such that the discovery of these texts was especially prized. When a monk arrived in Florence from Macedonia in 1460 carrying some of the Hermetic texts, Cosimo de Medici ordered his translator to drop Plato's dialogues immediately and turn his attention to them. See Frances Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 12, passim. For the Corpus Hermetica itself see Brian Copenhaver, Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation with Notes and Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1992).

[9] See Copenhaver 1992, p. 58. The quotation is from *Corpus Hermeticum* 16.

The Hermetica has proved adaptable to a variety of projects. Its neat metaphysical geometry, which arrived alongside algebra and the Pythagorean theorem, helped form a composite that lent itself to a massive investment in mathematical forms and understanding. Mathematics became the hidden architecture of the cosmos, the most permanent and basic truth, and revelation of these secrets certainly did permit an ability to build and create in ways never before imagined — providing both cathedrals and calculus, for example. A variety of mystical doctrines proliferated from the interaction of this composite with pre-existing natural philosophy, alchemy being only the most famous. Hermetic logic can also be discerned in a variety of other eclectic doctrines that developed throughout this period, such as Joachimism, Eckhartean mysticism, Paracelcism, the mathematics of John Dee, the arts of Ramon Lull, Rosicrucianism, vitalism (followed by spiritualism, mesmerism and more) all of which behold secret cosmic "correspondences" and sacred geometry, and in turn inspired the "scientific revolution" of the Enlightenment.[10] To offer just one example, calculus was but the *caput mortuum* of Newton's search for the Philosopher's Stone (if not the Stone itself), his theory of aether "hermetic cosmogony in the language of science".[11] The conceptual vocabulary of his physics (e.g. "attraction", "repulsion") was adopted from the Hermeticist Böhme via famous alchemist Henry More.[12] The "disenchantment tale" of the Enlightenment is just

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[10] See the work of Frances Yates – *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966); *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment,* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1972]), as well as *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition,* cited earlier; see also Richard S. Westfall, 'Newton and the Hermetic Tradition', in *Science, Medicine and Society in the Renaissance*, ed. Allen G. Debus (New York: Science History Publications, 1972). To review primary sources see Brian Copenhaver's The Book of Magic – From Antiquity to Enlightenment (NY: Penguin, 2015), which includes substantial material from Renaissance figures (Pico, Ficino, Agrippa, Dee, Bruno, and more). See also lengthier discussion in Lagalisse (2018).

[11] Klaus Vondung, 'Millenarianism, Hermeticism, and the Search for a Universal Science', in *Science, Pseudoscience, and Utopianism in Early Modern Thought*, ed. Stephen McKnight (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), p. 138.

[12] See Ernst Benz, *The Theology of Electricity*. trans. Wolfgana Taraba (Allison Park: Pickwick Publications, 1989).

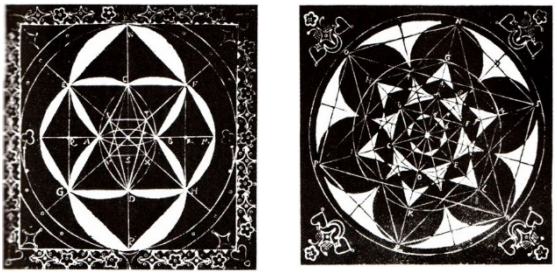

Fig 1. "Figura Mentis" and "Figura Intellectus" drawn by Giordano Bruno, Prague, 1588. [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bruno_Figura_mentis.jpg; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bruno_Figura_intellectus.jpg.

that – a tale. The persecution of "magic" and "witches" among the poor during this period is rather best understood as a disciplinary measure directed specifically at the peasantry – and at women especially – insomuch as it served to enforce the logic of private property, wage work, and the transformation of women into producers of labour. As Sylvia Federici explains, fears around a declining population (work force) and the reproductive autonomy of lower-class women (practicing birth control) was what distinguished the witch from the Renaissance magician, who demonologists consistently passed over.[13] Indeed the alleged devilish activities of the "baby-killing" witch were often plagiarized from the High Magical repertoire.

The Hermetica was also fundamental to the emergence of new social movements against systemic power, specifically Freemasonry and the revolutionary brotherhoods that proliferated during the 18th and 19th centuries. Unlike the millenarian and heretic movements before them, these social movements consisted of literate radicals more so than peasants, and were decisively masculine public spheres. Women's power within the peasant and heretic movements was ambiguous and never unchallenged, but women were actively involved, partially because renovated and

[13] Federici 2004. See also Ulinka Rublack's *The Astronomer and the Witch – Johane Kepler's Fight for his Mother* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), where we behold one 'magical' man given the status of Imperial Mathematician while his 'magical' mother is imprisoned for witchcraft.

Fig 2. The compass is associated with power (in a geometrically gendered arrangement) by William Blake in Europe: A Prophecy (1794) —'When he sets a compass upon the face of the deep' (Proverbs 8: 27). [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_a_Prophecy_copy_K_plate_01.jpg.

syncretic Christian cosmologies granted them new footholds, and partially because women had the most to lose in the privatization of the commons.[14] Freemasonry, on the other hand, is what social movements look like after the witch hunts: Just as Alchemists played at the creation of life while arresting feminine control over biological creation, speculative Masonry emerges in which elite males worship the "Grand Architect" upon the ashes of artisans' guilds while real builders were starving. By the establishment of the Grand Lodge in London in 1717, the trade secrets of operative masons had become the spiritual secrets of speculative ones, lodge membership now thoroughly replaced by literate men lured by the ceremony, ritual, and a secret magical history supposedly dating back to the time of King Solomon and the Grand Architect of his temple, Hiram Abiff – Freemasonry itself has always involved a fantastic pastiche of Hermetic and Kabbalistic lore.[15]

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[14] Op cit.

[15] Regarding Hermeticist currents in speculative Masonry see Jean Tourniac, 'Vie et perspectives de la franc-maçonnerie traditionelle' [2nd edition], (Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1978); Regarding the specific links Freemasons made between ancient Egypt and freemasonry, see for example the minutes of *Le Conseil de l'Ordre du Grand Orient,* April 25 1887, reprinted in Christian Lauzeray, *L'Égypte ancienne et la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Paris: Éditeur Guy Trédaniel 1988). J. P. Dubreuil in his *Histoire des franc-maçons,* (Bruxelles: H.I.G. François, 1838) analyzes ritual form, dress, ceremonial objects, art and catechism to suggest allegories shared in the Egyptian, Jewish and Freemasonic traditions. See also Claude-Antoine Thory, *Histoire de la fondation du Grand Orient de France* (Paris, Chez P. Dufart, libraire, Quai Voltaire, N°. 19, de l'imprimerie de Nouzou, rue de Clery , No. 9, 1812). Further references in English regarding the social history of Freemasonry include Margaret Jacob, 'Freemasonry and the Utopian Impulse', in *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought*, ed. R.H. Popkin (NY: E.J. Brill, 1988), as well as Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment – Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), and the (bibliography of) primary source materials offered within Dr. William Wynn Westcott's *A Catalogue Raisonné of Works on the Occult Sciences, Vol III – Freemasonry, A Catalogue of Lodge Histories (England), with a Preface* (London: F.L. Gardner, 1912). Note that there are significant differences between the social development and organization of Freemasonry in England vs. on the European continent, yet as

One Hermetic aspect of the Masonic cosmology that is key for our discussion, and discussed further below, is the notion that man and society tend toward perfection. The work of Spinoza (1632–77) was also, together and separately, an inspiration in this regard. In his 'Theological Political Treatise' (1670), Spinoza arguably provides the founding text of modern liberalism by effectively conflating the 'chosen people' and the chosen 'state' or 'society', and by relativizing the gift of prophecy as an imaginative (vs rational) capacity of men and women of all traditions ('gentiles').[16] The imports of Spinoza's complete oeuvre, across time and audience, are of course diverse (and contested), yet it is clear that with the Treatise he equipped contemporary European radicals with a dynamic philosophy that unified, divinised and animated the universe as well as honoured a deterministic vision of man and nature, thus providing a new religious vision and a renovated foundation for social resistance at once, which contemporaries named "pantheism".[17] This word, apparently first used by John Toland (1670–1722), was taken up during the period in question to refer to a metaphysics that re-emphasized the vitalistic, spirit-in-matter qualities of nature, and tended to deify the material order in the process.[18] This new faith in scientific progress encouraged the conception of temporal institutions both as permanent, and as vehicles for enacting fantasies

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their consideration is not crucial to our present study these will be bracketed here.

[16] See Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological Political Treatise*, edited by Jonathan Israel, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007 [1670]), especially Chapter 2, "On the Prophets", [1], [3]; Chapter 3, "On the Vocation of the Hebrews", [8], [9], *passim*.

[17] Op cit. See also Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*. (NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Cartesian principles and Thoughts on metaphysics*. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963). Regarding the role and charges given Spinoza's work within the culture of the 'radical Enlightenment' see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of Mind – Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), as well as Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment,* regarding contemporary articulations of "pantheism" in particular, and their relation to Spinoza's ideas.

[18] See e.g. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, p. xi; 32–3.

of progress: A new heaven on earth would be manifest through the works of men themselves.

The *Traité des Trois Imposteurs* that Masons circulated clandestinely during the 18th century refers to Moses, Jesus and Mohammed as the three "Imposters" in question, yet the coterie who printed it included Toland, who in his *Pantheisticon* (1720) elaborated a new ritual that claimed to combine the traditions of Druids and ancient Egyptians and included the following call-and-response: "Keep off the prophane People/ *The Coast is clear, the Doors are shut, all's safe*/ All things in the world are one, And one in All in all things/ *What's all in All Things is God, Eternal and Immense*/ Let us sing a Hymn Upon the Nature of the Universe." Masons imagined themselves simultaneously the creators of a new egalitarian social order and protagonists of cosmic regeneration, all articulated in the language of sacred architecture. Their society was anti-clerical, yet espoused a pantheism that infused their social levelling project with sacred purpose. Theirs was a pyramidal initiatic society of rising degrees and reserved secrets, but one in which all men met "upon the level".[19]

The Masonic levelling project was not altogether radical. It is true that Masonic lodges were frequented by elite men who instrumentalised them to further consolidate their power, and that the Masonic project was one of limited reforms, one to which Jews, women, servants and manual labourers were denied entry.[20]

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[19] See Jacob, 'Freemasonry and the Utopian Impulse', pp. 127–130; regarding the *Traité des Trois Imposteurs*, see Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, chapter 7; the quotation from the *Pantheisticon* is on pp. 122–123; see also xiii. See also J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), Chapter 2. Regarding Freemasons beholding a new heaven on earth, see also "SONG II" in *The Universal Masonic Library, Vol. III – Preston's Illustrations of Masonry,* (NY: W.Leonard & Co., Aferican Masonic Agency, 1855, pp. 364–5), a work which begins with a section titled "Reflections on the Symmetry and Proportion in the Works of Nature and on the Harmony and Affection among the various Species of Beings": ". . .But, ungrateful unto Heaven/ The rebel was from Eden driven. [Verse 4] From thence proceeded all our woes/ Nor could mankind one comfort cheer/ Until Freemasonry arose/ And form'd another Eden here. . .".

[20] See e.g. Alberto Valín Fernández, 'De masones y revolucionarios: una reflexión en torno de este encuentro', *Anuario Brigantino,* 28 (2005),

It is also true that the Masonic ideal of merit as the only fair distinction allowed room to critique the tension between formal ideals and actual practice, and that Masonic lodges were the first formal public association in 18th century Britain to take up the cause of the "workers' question" – albeit on a purely philanthropic level – by founding hospices, schools and assistance centres for proletarian workers.[21] In pre–revolutionary France, lodges first began accepting small artisans then proletarian workers as well, lowering fees and abolishing the literacy requirement for entrance to this end. By 1789 there were between 20,000 and 50,000 members in over 600 lodges, and it was no longer possible for participants to reasonably claim they were manifesting an egalitarian social order by merely gathering to discuss literature, science, and the cultivation of Masonic wisdom.[22]

173–98, as well as his monograph length work, Alberto Valín Fernández, *Masonería y revolución – del mito literario a la realidad historica* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Ediciones Idea, 2008). In the words of one Bordeaux lodge master (1745), "*le privilege de l Égalité deviendroit [sic] un abus bien dangereux, si sous ce prétexte on admettrait indifferément tous les états*", cited in Roberts, p. 50, who is citing W. Doyle, 'The Parlementaires of Bordeaux at the End of the Eighteenth Century 1775–1790', (Oxford: Oxford, PhD diss., 1967) p. 338. According to another contemporary Freemason (1744), the sister lodges organized for women were but for "immoral purposes" and "beguiling" them "into thinking they had penetrated the secrets", in Roberts, pp. 50–51, who cites in turn *La Franc-maçonne ou révélation des mystères des franc-maçons* (Brussels, 1744), p. 11–15.

[21] See Jacob, 'Freemasonry and the Utopian Impulse', especially p. 142; Valín Férnandez, 2005, discusses Freemasonic philanthropy related to the "workers question" on p. 182.

[22] Regarding the reforms in favour of proletarian workers, see Valín Férnandez, 2005, p. 183; Valín Férnandez is following the work of André Combes – see, e.g., André Combes, *Les trois siècles de la franc-maçonnerie française* (Paris: Dervy, 2006). The figures given regarding lodge membership in 1789 are from Daniel Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles de la révolution française* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1933), and Daniel Ligou, 'La Franc-Maçonnerie Française Au XVIII Siècle (positions des problèmes et état des questions)', *Information Historique* (1964). One overview of this process in English is Margaret Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World – the Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

The Revolutionary Brotherhoods

Here we arrive at the question of "conspiratorial" revolutionary brotherhoods that has been exploited in paranoid intrigue.[23] On one hand, due to the utopian rhetoric developed in the Masonic "public" sphere, some members became directly involved in revolutionary activities, both in France before the Revolution, as well as throughout Europe in the years immediately following. On the other hand, it is true that many revolutionaries who were not necessarily Masons made use of the lodges' existing infrastructure and social networks to further their cause. Yet others simply adopted Masonic iconography and organizational style, which had accrued a measure of symbolic power and legitimacy, in developing their own revolutionary associations. It is not possible in retrospect to distinguish entirely between these phenomena, the salient point being that the revolutionary brotherhoods that proliferated at the turn of the 19th century derived much of their power from their association with perennial secrets and magical power, and that this imaginary and their related style of social organization were fundamental to the development of what we come to recognize as modern revolutionism.[24]

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[23] There is a more written on the connection between Freemasonry and revolutionary movements in French, Spanish, Italian and German than in English. Valín Fernández offers a substantial bibliography of Spanish, French and Italian sources (pp. 173–98). Roberts offers further sources in French, Italian and German. In English one does well to follow Margaret Jacob, yet she does not concern herself with revolutionary movements on the continent.

[24] I proceed to summarize below, yet note that a detailed genealogy of the revolutionary brotherhoods in question (e.g. The Corresponding Society, the Conspiracy of Equals, the League of the Just, the Communist League, the Fraternal Democrats, etc.) can be found in Julius Braunthal, *History of the International,* Vol. 1 – 1864–1914, (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), Chapters 4–6. Valín Férnandez, 2005, also treats the question of descent, vs. imitation, vs. overlap. Note that Eric Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels – Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (NY: Norton, 1959), although inflected with a critical Marxist bias, is also a further resource in English for an overview of revolutionary fraternities and their rituals. Roberts also discusses the "seedtime of the political secret societies" in Chapter 7.

Adam Weishaupt (1748–1830), a young Bavarian professor who founded the Illuminati in 1776, was one of few convinced egalitarians of his day. His revolutionary agenda involved the complete dismantling of the State, Church and institution of private property, all justified by a revamped Christian millenarianism affected by readings of J.J. Rousseau and the Eleusinian mysteries, and organizationally inspired by the secret association of the Pythagoreans.[25] According to Weishaupt, our true "fall from grace" was our submission to the rule of government:

> "Let us take Liberty and Equality as the great aim of [Christ's] doctrines and Morality as the way to attain it, and everything in the New Testament will be comprehensible. . . Man is fallen from the condition of Liberty and Equality, the STATE OF PRE NATURE. He is under subordination and civil bondage, arising from the vices of man. This is the FALL, and ORIGINAL SIN. The KINGDOM OF GRACE is that restoration which may be brought about by Illumination."[26]

Yet "Do you really believe it would be useful", he asked, "as long as countless barriers still remain, to preach to men a purified religion, a superior philosophy, and the art of self-government?", "[s]hould not all these organizational vices and social ills be corrected gradually and quietly before we may hope to bring about this golden age, and wouldn't it be better, in the meanwhile, to propagate the truth by way of secret societies? Do we not find traces of the same secret doctrine

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[25] See René Le Forestier, *Les Illuminés de Bavière et la franc-maçonnerie allemande* (Genève: Slatkine Megariotis Reprints, (1974 [1914]) or Israel, *A Revolution of Mind*, (who both cite further sources in German), or Roberts who refers to Le Forestier. (Roberts is most concerned with the mythology that developed around "secret societies" rather than their objective history.)

[26] Weishaupt in communiqué titled "Spartacus to Cato" (Spartacus was Weishaupt's pseudonym), quoted by John Robison in *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* (Dublin: W. Watson and Son, 1798), pp. 92–3. To consult original German see "Spartacus to Cato" (5 March 1778) in Richard van Dülman, *Der Geheimbund der Illuminaten* (Stuttgart: Verlag, 1975), pp. 220.

in the most ancient schools of wisdom?"[27] For Weishaupt, only the "immanent revolution of the human spirit" (*die bevorstehende Revolution des menschlichen Geistes*), driven by a "widely propogated universal Enlightenment" (*verbreitete allgemeine Aufklärung*) will break the chains of tyranny, yet repressive political conditions required a discreet Enlightened revolutionary elite in the meantime.[28]

Weishaupt had joined a Masonic lodge in 1774 but had left shortly after, not satisfied with the level of critique he found therein. A year after founding his more radical group however, the members together decided in 1777 to join lodges once more in order to find new recruits, and the strategy worked. The Illuminati grew from Weishaupt and five students in 1776 to fifty-four members in five Bavarian cities by 1779, and eventually extended to Italy, Lyon and Strasbourg to include figures such as Goethe, Schiller, Mozart and Herder. The pyramid structure of the network, modelled on Masonic form, was organized into three grades (the Minervale, Minervale Illuminato, and inner circle of Areopagites) and became both an agency for the transmission of commonplace Enlightenment ideas and attitudes and a "quasi-religious sect" at once, in which men met to contemplate the utopian regeneration of society.[29] Its growth was short-lived however. In 1783, a Minervale Illuminato left the order discontented and shared its radical ideas with his employer, a duchess of the Bavarian royal family. Ensuing suspicions that the Illuminati were connected

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[27] Le Forestier's French translation of the full passage from German is as follows, "Croyez-vous qu-il serait utile, tant que d'innombrables obstacles ne seront levés, de prêcher aux hommes une religion épurée, une philosophie supérieure et l'art de se gouverner soi-même?. . .ces vices d'organisation et ces tares sociales ne doivent-ils pas être corrigés peu à peu et sans bruit, avant qu'on puisse espérer amener cet âge d'or et ne vaut-il pas mieux, en attendant, propager la vérité par le moyen des sociétés secretes? . . .Trouvons-nous des traces d'une pareille doctrine secrete dans les écoles de sagesse les plus anciennes. . .? Ne remarquez-vous pas qu'une telle institution d'éducation progressive a existé depuis les temps les plus anciens?", in Le Forestier, pp. 283. The English translation above is mine.

[28] See Israel, pp. 78; Israel cites Adam Weishaupt, '*Anrede an die neu aufzunehmenden* Illuminatos dirigentes' in van Dülman.

[29] See Roberts, pp. 118–124; Israel, pp. 73–80. The direct quote is from Roberts, p. 122.

with an Austrian plot to annex the Electorate (and perhaps worse) alarmed the government, and a repressive campaign began. By the end of the 18th century, stories vilifying the Illuminati and the Freemasons – who were all "under its control" – were in full force. Fearing the death penalty, members went into hiding or exile.[30]

The turn of the century saw a proliferation of other revolutionary societies across Europe that mimicked the forms of Freemasonry and the Illuminati, including the Charbonnerie and Carbonari, the Mazzinians and le Monde, all constituting an international network of revolutionary movements that had certain ideological, if not organizational, solidity. The politics of Babeuf (1760–1797), who was imprisoned in the aftermath of the French Revolution as the prime agent of the "The Conspiracy of Equals" (and anticipated Proudhon's argument that "Property is Theft" by forty-three years) as well as the politics of Phillipe Buonarotti (1761–1837), who founded the Sublime Perfect Masters in 1809, likewise bear a family resemblance.[31] It did make certain practical

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[30] As writes Jonathan Israel, "Contemporary observers like the ultra-reactionary court official Ludwig Adolf Christian von Grolman (1749–1809) – who published a well-known collection of secret documents of German Illuminatism, *die Neuesten Arbiter des Spartacus und Philo* in 1793 – protested that the highest grades of the order were, in effect, a clandestine vehicle for the propagation of materialist and atheistic ideas and that at the core of the highest mysteries of the organization's first grade, the so-called *Philosophengrad* (philosopher's grade), lay unadulterated *Spinozismus* (Spinozism). . .that everything that exists is matter, that God and the universe are the same, and that all organized religion is a political deception devised by ambitious men". See Israel, pp. 74, who cites in turn Martin Mulsow "Adam Weishaupt as Philosoph", in *Die Weimarer Klassik und ihre Geheimbünde*, edited by W Müller-Seidel and W. Reidel (Würzburg, 2003), 27–66; W. Reidel, "Aufklärung und Macht. Schiller, Abel und die *Illuminaten*" in *Weimarer Klassik*. For overview in English see also Roberts, pp. 125–128.

[31] Regarding Babeuf see R.B. Rose, *Gracchus Babeuf – the First Revolutionary Communist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978), or Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders, *Socialist Thought – a Documentary History* (NY: Anchor Books, 1964). Regarding Buonarotti see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The First Professional Revolutionist: Filippo Michele Buonarotti (1761–1837)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959). During his trial defense, Babeuf explained that "[t]he institution of private property is a surprise that was foisted upon the mass of simple and honest souls. The laws of this institution must necessarily bring about the

sense to organize in a clandestine fashion, as proposed by both Babeuf and Buonarotti (beyond Weishaupt) at the turn of the century, as following the French Revolution the feudal dynasties of Russia, Austria, Prussia, Italy and Spain, with powerful allies in all other European countries and the Catholic church, had formed their own international organization, pledging themselves to forcible action within states in which absolute sovereigns felt threatened by, in the words of Tsar Nicholas, "revolutionary inroads".[32] These conservative governmental powers formalized themselves as the "Holy Alliance" at the Congress of Vienna in 1814, and proceeded to cooperate in international publication bans, surveillance and repression of militants. This posed serious practical problems. To suggest the prevailing political mood, consider the Fraternal Democrats' reply to the Brussels Democrats (then led by Karl Marx) in 1846: "[Marx] will tell you with what enthusiasm we welcomed his appearance and the reading of your address . . . We recommend the formation of a democratic congress of all nations, and we are happy to hear that you have publicly made the same proposal. The conspiracy of kings must be answered with the conspiracy of the peoples. . .". [33]

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existence of the fortunate and unfortunate of masters and slaves. The law of *heredity* is supremely abusive. . .it follows that this possession by a few is usurpation. . .whatever an individual hoards of the land and its fruits beyond what he needs for his own nourishment has been stolen from society", in Fried and Sanders, pp. 63–4). Buonarotti had a low opinion of established freemasonry, but nevertheless admitted only Masons into the brotherhood for the express purpose of using established lodges as a nursery for revolutionary ideas in a Christian language. Every candidate for supreme command of the Sublime Perfect Masters had to infiltrate a masonic lodge and rise through its hierarchy to a key position, successfully altering the structure of lodges in Tuscany, Piedmont and Lombardy by adding a third grade that dovetailed the lodges' hierarchy with their own. See Eisenstein, *The First Professional Revolutionist,* p. 45, *passim*). Louis August Blanqui (1805–1881) shifted from espousing republicanism to radical democracy under Buonarotti's influence, and later created his very own sect – the Society of the Seasons. For further discussion of Blanqui and his influence on revolutionary practice and the work of Karl Marx in particular see Braunthal, Chapter 6, especially pp. 46–52.

[32] Cited in Braunthal, pp. 39.

[33] Cited in Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life*, (London: Fitzgerald, 1936), pp. 142–3. Regarding the Holy Alliance see Braunthal,

In other words, the pyramidal structure of all the revolutionary organizations, in which each level of the pyramid would know only its immediate superiors, clearly had a practical function insomuch as it protected revolutionaries from repression in this era of increasingly consolidated state power and surveillance. The resemblances were not necessarily due to ex-Illuminati members starting up new groups, but rather partially due to the fearful accounts thereof propagated by governments at the time, which had the ironic effect of inspiring others to try the strategy.[34] The specific organization and ritualization of all this revolutionary activity clearly had other functions as well: the Brotherhoods affirmed and unified the aspirations of illuminated men whose purpose it was to steer mankind toward achieving perfection on (this) earth. Bakunin, 32nd degree Mason himself, appeared to feel the same calling when he founded his own secret "International Brotherhood" in Florence in 1864 that mirrored Weishaupt's vision almost exactly one hundred years later.[35] The main difference between the two was that Bakunin's Brotherhood was meant to infiltrate the First International and wrest it from the authoritarian socialists' control, as opposed to infiltrate Masonic lodges in order to wrest them from Liberals' control. This is far from the only way in which Masonry and the International Workingman's Association (IWA) coincide.

Chapter 5 – "The Counterrevolutionary International", especially pp. 37–43.

[34] As Julius Braunthal writes, for example, it was in fact Buonarotti's book *Babeuf and the Conspiracy for Equality*, which "conveyed to posterity the ideas and methods of the Babeuvists. It appeared in Brussels in 1828 and two years later in Paris. In 1838 the Chartist leader, Bronterre O'Brian, published an English translation. Marx read the book in 1844 and, together with Engels, considered arranging for a German edition, to be translated by Moses Hess.", pp. 35–6. See also Arthur Lehning, *From Buonarroti to Bakunin – Studies in International Socialism* (Brill: Leiden, 1970).

[35] Bakunin became a member of the order during the 1840s in Paris; see Nunzio Pernicone. *Italian Anarchism, 1864–1892*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1993 pp 16, *passim*) for discussion of both Bakunin's masonry and activities in Florence.

Illuminism in the IWA

By the mid-19th century many members of Masonic society had come to feel the proletarian struggle coincided with their greater cause, and the use of Masonic organizations as a cover for revolutionary activity was now a long tradition, as was the tendency to use Masonic rites, customs, and icons to emblematically symbolize the values of equality, solidarity, fraternity, and work.[36] Pierre–Joseph Proudhon, a Mason who lived to see the formation of the IWA, wrote that "The Masonic God is neither Substance, Cause, Soul, Monad, Creator, Father, Logos, Love, Paraclete, Redeemer. . .God is the personification of universal equilibrium".[37] In Proudhon's day, the British lodges were admitting increasing numbers of proletarian members – particularly skilled and literate workers – and had come to support the workers' struggle to the extent that the first preparatory meeting of the IWA on August 5, 1862, attended by Karl Marx among others, was held in the *Free Masons Tavern*.[38] Many of those in attendance were "socialist Freemasons", a phrase applied at the time to the members of the small lodges founded in 1850 and 1858 in London by exiled French republicans, and which involved many members of diverse national backgrounds – the "Memphite" lodges, named

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[36] See Valín Fernandez, 2005, pp. 181.

[37] This is Proudhon writing in *Of Justice in the Revolution and the Church* (1858), cited in Heleno Saña, *El Anarquismo, De Proudhon a Cohn-Bendit* (Madrid: Indice, 1970), p. 40. It is arguably telling of bias in anarchist historiography that many English language reprints of Proudhon do not include such material; as just one example, L.S. Edwards and Elizabeth Fraser, *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1969) includes excerpts from *Of Justice and the Revolution in the Church* and cut out this part, preferring Proudhon in the following mode: "God is stupidity and cowardice; god is hypocrisy and falsehood; god is tyranny and poverty" (1846). For further discussion and references regarding the religiosity of figures such as Proudhon and Kropotkin, see Harold Barclay, "Anarchist Confrontations with Religion" in *New Perspectives on Anarchism* (Lanham: Lexington, 2010), (note the relationship is one of "confrontation"), as well as the synthetic overview and multiple further sources offered in Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Lara Apps, "Anarchism and Religion" in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[38] See e.g. Valín Férnandez, 2005, pp. 182.

after the sacred Egyptian burial ground. The immediate objectives of the Memphite programme were twofold: The struggle against ignorance through education, and helping the proletarians in their struggle for emancipation by way of Proudhonian mutual aid associations. Louis Blanc was among the members of the Memphite lodges (the *Loge des Philadelphes* in particular) along with at least seven other official founders of the IWA. In Geneva also, the local wing of the IWA was often called the *Temple Unique* and met in the Masonic lodge of the same name.[39] Many present at the time observed that the incipient IWA's organizing power was so weak that if it were not for the organizing efforts of socialist Freemasons, the official founding meeting of the IWA on September 28th 1864 would never have come to pass.[40]

Communist and anarchist symbolism, such as the red star and the circle-A, date back to this period and also have Masonic origin. The star, which hosts an endless charge of esoteric meanings in both the Hermetic and Pythagorean traditions, had been adopted in the 18th century (some say 17th) by Freemasons to symbolize the Second Degree of membership in their association – that of Comrade (*Compañero* and *Camarade* in my sources). Among socialists, it was first used by members of the Memphite lodges and then the IWA. Regarding the Circle–A, early versions like the 19th century logo of the Spanish locale of the IWA are clearly composed of the compass, level and plumbline of Masonic iconography, the only innovation being that the compass and level are arranged to form the letter A inside of a circle.[41]

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[39] Op cit. pp. 179, 182–4.

[40] See Valín Férnandez, 2005, p. 182–3. See also his main source in this regard, Max Nettlau, *La anarquía a través de los tiempos* (Barcelona: Editorial Antalbe, 1979 [1929]), who references accounts written by those present at the time.

[41] See Valín Férnandez, 2005, pp. 180–88. Valín Férnandez' original intuition was that he might find the Level as symbol of egalitarianism dating back to the Levellers of the English Revolution, but neither the Levellers, Diggers or any other pre-Masonic movement used these tools to symbolize their struggle and values; they are clearly taken from the Masonic repertoire. The logo of the Spanish locale of the IWA presented in Fig. 1 is reprinted in Valín Férnandez, 2005, pp. 183.

Fig 3. The seal of the *Consejo Federal de España de la A.I.T.* circa 1870. By Vilallonga (Own work, based on AIT.jpg.) [CC BY-SA 2.5 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5)], via Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FRE-AIT.svg.

Over time these symbols have developed a new complement of meanings – many 21st century anarchists don't even know that the star used by communists, anarchists and Zapatistas alike is the pagan pentagram, and are not reminded of the mathematical perfection of cosmogony when they behold it, just as they do not necessarily realize there is a genealogical link between the (neo)pagan Mayday celebration and today's anarchist Mayday marches.[42] In the 19th century, however, these symbolic associations were well known by those involved, and their adoption reflected how much they resonated with mystical and historical weight. Even Bakunin, while he rejected the personal God of his Russian orthodox childhood, put forward a pantheistic revolutionism. In a letter to his sister (1836) he wrote, "Let religion become the basis and reality of your life and your actions, but let it be the pure and single–minded religion of divine reason and divine love. . . [I]f religion

[42] These of course commemorate the Haymarket massacre (1886), but it is no coincidence that there was much upheaval in Chicago that day, because revolutionaries had been honouring Mayday since before the time of the Illuminati, which was also founded on this symbolic day.

and an inner life appear in us, then we become conscious of our strength, for we feel that God is within us, that same God who creates a new world, a world of absolute freedom and absolute love. . . that is our aim".[43]

Throughout the 19th century the only people involved in the revolutionary scene who were consistently annoyed by this sort of mysticism were Marx and Engels. Proudhon's ramblings about God as Universal Equilibrium were the sort of thing Marx and Engels objected to and contrasted with their own brand of "scientific socialism" – "the French reject philosophy and perpetuate religion by dragging it over with themselves into the projected new state of society".[44] Bakunin and Marx differed on this point and a number of others, the most famous being the role of the State. Whereas Marx considered a state dictatorship of the proletariat to be a necessary moment in his historical dialectic, Bakunin espoused the notion of a secret revolutionary organization that would "help the people towards self–determination, without the least interference from any sort of domination, even if it be temporary or transitional".[45] Bakunin also wrote that he saw our

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[43] Cited in in Arthur Lehning, *Mikhail Bakunin – Selected Writings* (Cape: University of Michigan Press, 1973), pp. 34–5. Bakunin is much better known among anarchists living today for his reversal of Voltaire's famous aphorism – "if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him"; see Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State*, ed. Paul Avrich (NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1970).

[44] See Friedrich Engels, 'Progress of Social Reform on the Continent', in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – Collected Works, Vol. 3*, ed. Robert Tucker (NY: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 392–408, p. 407.

[45] Cited in Lehning, *Mikhail Bakunin*, p. 191–2. The reasons for which Marx and Bakunin came to different conclusions are complex; both were students of Hegel and worked within his dialectical tradition yet read him differently (see Robert M.Cutler, *Mikhail Bakunin – from out of the Dustbin – Bakunin's Basic Writings, 1869–71* [Michigan: Ardis, 1985], as well as fn. 71 of the present work on this point. Bakunin's quarrel with Marx also arguably had much to do with elevating the revolutionary status of Slav peasants vs. German proletarians. While anarchist transnationalism cannot be reduced to a function of patriotism, Levy makes a valuable point: "Even if anarchists and anarchism are assumed to be anti-thetical to nationalism and national movements, they, like socialists and the ideology of socialism (and even Marxism) lived in close (one could say dialectical) relationship to both nationalism and the nation

"only salvation in a revolutionary anarchy directed by a secret collective force": "We must direct the people as invisible pilots, not by means of any visible power, but rather through a dictatorship without ostentation, without titles, without official right, which in not having the appearance of power will therefore be more powerful."[46]

The "dictatorial power" of this secret organization only represents a paradox if we do not recognize the long tradition, and larger cosmology, within which Bakunin is working. Revolution may be "immanent" in the people, but the guidance of illuminated men working in the "occult" was necessary to guide them in the right direction. Members of his International Brotherhood were to act "as lightening rods to electrify them with the current of revolution" precisely to ensure "that this movement and this organization should never be able to constitute any authorities".[47]

Theosophy, the Dialectic, and Other Esoterica of 19th Century Socialism

Beyond Bakunin himself, Robert Owen (1771–1858), Charles Fourier (1772–1837) and Saint–Simon (1760–1825) are also often cited as forefathers in standard histories of anarchism.[48] The Owenites were distinctly anticlerical, attacking all forms of "religion", but Owen himself was a spiritualist in admiration of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), who taught the arrival of an "internal millennium". The first Owenite communes in America were based largely on Swedenborg's teachings.[49] Charles

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state" (Carl Levy, "Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860–1939." Australian Journal of Politics and History [2004, 50, 3, pp. 330–342], here pp. 331). For further analysis of the rivalry between Marx and Bakunin in the IWA see Braunthal, *History of the International;* Wolfgang Eckhardt, *The First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men's Association*, (CA: PM Press, 2016).

46 Bakunin cited in Saña, *El anarquismo*, p. 106.

47 Bakunin cited in Robert M. Cutler, *Mikhail Bakunin*, p. 28.

48 See e.g. Bose; Marshall; Woodcock; fn. 6 of present work.

49 See e.g. Alfred J. Gabay, *The Covert Enlightenment – Eighteenth Century Counterculture and Its Aftermath* (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation

Fourier, for his part, based his political project on what he called the Law of Passional Attraction – a series of correspondences in nature that maintain harmony in the universe and could be applied to human society.[50] Saint-Simonians aimed at reforming existing institutions, but Fourierists and Owenites rejected the existing system altogether. Rather than a mere "changing of the guard", they advocated the creation of new forms of independent organization within the existing system; hence their "precursor" status to anarchism, perennially defined by the notion of building a new world within the shell of the old, whether via "networks", communes or syndicates, and primarily defined by its rejection of state power.

Darwin's treatise on evolution also lent itself to theories of social change that dovetailed with revolutionary thought – a distinction between *evolution* and *revolution* in 19th century utopian socialism would be rather forced. The insight that the natural world was characterized by evolving beings blended easily with the concept of cosmic regeneration – adaptive "process" became "progress", a tendency toward perfection. Indeed many extended the idea from plants and animals to human society, the most famous version of such a move being "Social Darwinism", traceable to Herbert Spencer who was the actual author of the phrase "survival of the fittest".[51] Here Darwin is recuperated within the transcendentalist tradition to lend weight to the Hobbesian conception of the state of nature – the "war of each against all" convenient to capitalist ideology. Anarchist natural philosophers of the 19th century read Darwin differently. Piotr Kropotkin posited "Mutual Aid" as a prime "Factor of Evolution" (1914), which we ourselves can manifest as we lead civilization toward egalitarian harmony.[52] It is also worth noting that Kropotkin's key

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Publishers, 2005), pp. xiv, 153–4; Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 585.

[50] See Manuel and Manuel, chapter 27.

[51] See Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964 [1859]); Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology*. (London: William and Norgate, 1864).

[52] Piotr Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1955 [1914]).

contribution to anarchist theory was heavily influenced by Mechnikov, who was in turn inspired by a long stint in revolutionary Japan, and who had written of the world being divided into three spheres – inorganic, biological and sociological, each governed by its own set of laws but with enough correspondences between them that human society could be read as a continuously evolving expression of a unified whole.[53]

The theosophy of Helena Pavlova Blavatsky (1831–1891), which intrigued many anarchists, involves a teleology of divine evolution represented by successive "root races" and whose finality was cosmic union.[54] Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), a Theosophist and anarchist himself, also admired Fedorov (1828–1903) who wrote that the common task of humanity was to use science to resurrect its dead fathers from particles scattered in cosmic dust.[55] Chulkov, Berdyaev and Ivanov, contemporaries of both Fedorov and Tolstoy during the Russian occult revival, all posited a "mystical anarchism" that equated political revolution with realignment in the cosmic sphere.[56] In England, union organizer and early

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[53] See Sho Konishi, 'Reopening The "Opening of Japan": A Russian-Japanese Revolutionary Encounter and the Vision of Anarchist Progress', *American Historical Review,* 112 (2007), 101–30, as well as his monograph, Sho Konishi, *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[54] Find Blavatsky's theory in Helena Pavlova Blavatsky, 'An Abridgement of the Secret Doctrine', ed. Elizabeth Preston and Christmas Humphreys (Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1966).

[55] See Leo Tolstoy, "The Kingdom of God is Within You: Christianity Not as a Mystical Doctrine but as a New Understanding of Life", in *The Kingdom of God and Peace Essays,* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2001), as well as discussion in Christoyannopoulos and Apps, *Anarchism and Religion*. Regarding the 'anarchist religion' inspired by Tolstoy in Japan, see Konishi (2013). Regarding Tolstoy and the occult revival in Russia see also Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, 'Introduction', in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, Ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 11, 22; James Webb, *The Occult Establishment,* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1976) 157, 174–5.

[56] See Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, 'Political Implications of the Early Twentieth-Century Occult Revival', in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 379–418 (p. 382); Webb, 196.

feminist Annie Besant, who organized women match-makers and fought to open the Masonic lodges to women, was convinced she was the reincarnation of Giordano Bruno, and it was Theosophy that inspired her to fight for Home Rule in India, as well as how she met Jawaharlal Nehru, himself a member of the Theosophical Society.[57] Just as socialists were attracted to the occult, spiritualists and mediums of all kinds, who were disproportionately women, were led by their spiritual views to engage the "social question".[58]

Further examples from the anarchist diaspora include the story of Greek utopian socialist Plotino Rhodakanaty, often credited as being the first European "proselytizer" of anarchism to arrive in Mexico, whose first task upon arrival was to draft pamphlets titled *Neopanteísmo* (1864) while working with Julio Chávez Lopez to foment uprisings in the Chalco valley, after which he founded the *Escuela del Rayo y del Socialismo,* (which translates, somewhat ungracefully, as '*School of Socialism and Lightening*' [and/or] '*the Ray*' ['*of Light*']).[59] Rhodakanaty later went on to form *La Social*, a 62-branch network of agitators in contact with the IWA, who formed *Falansterios Societarios* in indigenous communities.[60] Fifty years later, the politics of Ricardo Flores Magón (1874–1922) were immortalized in his newspaper titled *Regeneración,* while his comrades called each other

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[57] Andrée Buisine, 'Annie Besant, Socialiste et mystique', *Politica Hermetica,* 9 (1995); Peter van der Veer, Imperial Encounters – Religion and Modernity in India and Britain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), chapter 3.

[58] Nicole Edelman, 'Somnabulisme, Médiumnité et socialisme', *Politica Hermetica,* 9 (1995). See also Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón.* (New York: Zone Books, 2014), pp. 31–7, 271–5).

[59] Inspired by Spinoza, Hegel, Fourier and Proudhon, Rhodakanaty called his political pantheism "pantheosophy"; see John Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860–1931* (Austin: UT Press, 1978, here pp. 19–20); Angel Cappelletti, "Prólogo y cronologia – Anarquismo Latinoamericano." In *El Anarquismo en America Latina*, edited by Carlos and Angel Cappelletti Rama (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1990, pp. ix-ccxvii; here p. clxxvii); Carlos Illades, *Rhodakanaty y la formación del pensamiento socialista en México* (Rubi: Anthropos, 2002).

[60] See John Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class,* Chapter 1.

"co–religionaries".[61] Further south, Augusto César Sandino of Nicaragua (who later became the icon of the 'Sandinista' revolution in the 1970s and 1980s), was enthralled by the Magnetic-Spiritual School, Theosophy, and Zoroastrian, Hindu and Kabbalist lore, fusing all these ideas together with communist ones in such a way that he was refused entry to the Third International as a consequence – they had heard rumours that he flew a seven-striped rainbow flag alongside the red and black.[62] I could go on, but do not have the space to treat so many complex stories of diverse colonial encounters with the attention to specificity they deserve. I merely present these few suggestive examples to remind us that the cross-pollinations of diverse cosmologies underlying modern revolutionism does not necessarily stop, and perhaps find only their latest expression, in present-day anarchists' selective fascination with indigenous cultures and cosmologies.[63]

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[61] On Magón's *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM) and its relationship with syndicalist movements and transnational anarchist organizing see e.g. Lomnitz, Cappelletti, and Hart (cited previously) as well as Ruben Trejo, *Magonismo: utopia y revolucion, 1910 – 1913*. (Mexico, D.F.: Cultura Libre, 2005), Javier Torres Parés, *La Revolución sin Frontera: el Partido Liberal Mexicano y las relaciones entre el movimiento obrero de México y de los Estados Unidos, 1900–1923* (Ediciones Hispánicas, 1990); and Eduardo Blanquel, "El anarco-magonismo." *Historia Mexicana* (13 [3], pp. 394–427, 1964). Lomnitz in *The Return of Ricardo Flores Magon* provides a unique ethnographic entry into the political culture and everyday life of the PLM and the *Regeneración* press; the reference to "co-religionaries" cited above is taken from a letter co-written by Ricardo Flores Magon which is itself titled "To Esteemed Friend and Correligionary", February 11, 1904, cited in Lomnitz (pp. 198). Lomnitz also discusses Freemasonry in connection with the Mexican revolutionary movement (pp. 96–7), as well as the influences of Theosophy and Spiritism among PLM members.

[62] See Donald Hodges, *Sandino's Communism – Spiritual Politics for the Twenty-First Century* (Austin: UT Press, 1992), chapter 6.

[63] I explore contemporary anarchist solidarity campaigns with indigenous peoples movements in a more critical vein in Erica Lagalisse, "*Good Politics": Property, Intersectionality, and the Making of the Anarchist Self*" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2016); see especially Chapter 3: "anarchism's peasants and indigenous people fill a certain 'savage slot'. . . that has always served to justify anarchist politics whether or not real peasants or indigenous people are liberated in the process" (137). See also e.g. K. Johnson and K. E. Ferguson, "Anarchism and Indigeneity"

Not every anarchist was a theosophist or enamoured with the occult. Emma Goldman, for example, wrote an entirely scathing account of Krishnamurti's arrival in America as the supposed Theosophical avatar.[64] However, the fact that Goldman's *Mother Earth* and a variety of other anarchist periodicals bothered to criticize Theosophy at all should tell us something – nothing is forbidden unless enough people are doing it in the first place. Even the sceptics often grudgingly recognized that they were kindred spirits. As anarchist C.L. James wrote in 1902: "However ill we may think of [Swedenborgian] dogmas, their influence is not to be despised. They have insured, for one thing, a wide diffusion of tendencies ripe for Anarchistic use. Scratch a Spiritualist, and you will find an anarchist."[65] Indeed it was none other than the president of the American Association of Spiritualists that published the first English translation of *The communist Manifesto* in 1872.[66]

We can imagine how much this annoyed Marx. But Marx's anticipation of a Communist millennium after the overthrow of capitalism, brought about by a mixture of wilful effort and inbuilt cosmic fate, isn't actually that different from the idea of the unfolding New Age. The major difference, and the one that prompted Marx and Engels' to distinguish their utopian vision as "scientific" compared to the others, was their notion of the dialectic, which preserved the form, if not content, of the Hegelian one.[67]

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in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, Eds. C. Levy, M. S. Adams, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), for contemporary discussion (construction) of affinities between "anarchism" and "indigeneity".

[64] Cited in Veysey, *The Communal Experience – Anarchist and Mystical Counter-Cultures in America* (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 45–6.

[65] C.L. James, *Origins of Anarchism* (Chicago: A. Isaak, 1902), cited in Veysey.

[66] see Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Introduction." In *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, edited by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, pp. 1–34, 1997), here p. 22.

[67] See e.g. Karl Marx, 'The German Ideology', in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, [1932] 1978), pp. 146–200 (p. 154); and *Capital Vol. 1* (London: Penguin, 1990 [1876]), especially pp. 494, fn. 4.

Hegel's dialectic cast history as a dynamic manifestation of the Idea, the unfolding of consciousness itself, in which everything is but a mode and attribute of a single universal substance.[68] Meanwhile Hegel's *Logic* (1812) features an obsession with emanation and return by way of neat geometrical constructions of all kinds, while in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), the Idea issues in nature, which issues in Spirit, which returns to Idea in the form of Absolute Spirit.[69] Marx breaks with Hegel in conceiving consciousness as inextricable from material social processes, rather than as a first premise, however the material and the ideal remain indissoluable, his logic is dialectical, and the eschatology of his historical dialectic can be traced back to Joachim de Fiore as much as Hegel's can. While one of the main defining attributes of anarchism is its anti-Marxism, many Hermetic features of Marxist thought remain preserved (as abstract content) as well as transcended within anarchism's concrete form.[70]

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[68] Certain 'non-metaphysical' readings of Hegel aside, it is commonly noted that Hegel's philosophy is pantheistic (or monist, as opposed to dualist), following Spinoza; see e.g. Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[69] I follow Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 2001): Regarding Hegel's subject/object consider *Corpus Hermeticum 14*, "for the two are all there is, what comes to be and what makes of it, and it is impossible to separate one from the other"; likewise, with Hegel's dialectic of desire and recognition in mind, consider *Corpus Hermeticum 10:* "For God does not ignore mankind; on the contrary, he recognizes him fully and wishes to be recognized." ; see Copenhaven, pp. 56, 33; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977 (1807)). Hegel's system of logic is a triad, each further divided into three chief moments, analyzed in turn into three other constitutive moments, which are split in turn into another three; see Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*. trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 (1812)). As Magee writes, "The dove of [Hegel's] Spirit emerges from a God-created nature, and circles back to God" (pp. 212). see also Magee, chapter 7. Regarding Hegel's relationship with Freemasonry see Susan Buck-Morss, 'Hegel and Haiti' in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 26., No. 4 (summer 2000), pp. 821–865.

[70] Marx distinguished his dialectic from that of Hegel as being materialist rather than Idealist, yet in both of their systems the resolution of the dialectical contradiction comprehends not only the destruction and

The fact that Marx builds on Hegel who builds on the Hermetica does not necessarily mean they are wrong; it simply means that a vast amount of "rational" social theory relies on archetypes and geometries of thought stemming from a specific, historically situated cosmology – as does the notion of "rationality" itself.[71]

Socialism and occultism developed in complementary (as well as dialectical) fashion during the 19th century, yet the cosmological grounding of 19th century anarchists' politics is generally downplayed, or treated as epiphenomenal, in retrospect: Just as

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transcendence of the thesis by the anti-thesis but also its preservation. In Bakunin's system, the Positive and the Negative destroy one another entirely, leading to the transcendence of both and preserving nothing. Bakunin established the Negative as the motive force of the dialectic as opposed to Marx and Hegel whose dialectic began – and ended – with the Positive (thesis). Insomuch as Hegelian philosophy informed the political analyses and calls to action of each Marx and Bakunin, here we can see one of the reasons they parted opinion over the role of the state. Bakunin sociomorphized the Positive into Social Reactionaries and the Negative into Social Revolutionaries; the state, as part of the (Positive) old order, would be destroyed and transcended entirely by the social revolution; no aspect of the existing society, including the state, would survive the insurrection. Both Marx and Bakunin believed that Democracy was the motive force of history, the real form of Hegel's world-historical Spirit. They also agreed with Hegel that Monarchy was the generic form of the state. For Bakunin, this meant that "the State had to be *destroyed* in a general conflagration. For Marx, however, the essence of the State was Democracy itself; he conceived Democracy to be embodied in a constitution hierarchically superior to other political forms, and therefore concluded that the State had to be *realized* to its highest degree" (21, author's emphasis). See Cutler, *Mikhail Bakunin*, for further discussion, especially pp. 18–21, here pp. 21)

[71] Beyond the discussion presented here, the reader may wish to consult the following in regard to the (co)construction of "secularization", "rationality", "science", "magic", and "religion": Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation (New York: Knopf, 1966); Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England (New York: Penguin, 1982); Owen Chadwick, The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century (the Gifford lectures in the University of Edinburgh for 1973–4), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); as well as Talal Asad's Formations of the Secular, and Gil Anidjar's Secularism, cited earlier. My strongest recommendation would be to begin with Stanley Tambiah's *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990).

Newton's Alchemy is largely ignored in mainstream histories of the establishment, so Fourier's Law of Passional Attraction is rewritten in mainstream histories of the Left as a vision of "a harmonious society based on the free play of passions".[72] It was only when Marxist "scientific socialism" became hegemonic during the 20th century that the theological understandings of modern revolutionism were buried from consciousness among the popular and academic Left.[73] During this past century, whenever occult philosophy has been dealt with in its own right, it has generally been cast as "comforting" in anxiety-provoking periods of social change, or, in certain Marxian style, as a product of capitalist alienation. In Adorno's *Theses against Occultism* (in which he makes ample use of Hegel, somewhat ironically), occultism is both a 'primitive' holdover and a consequence of 'commodity fetishism' at once, in a typical circular (and colonialist) argument that suggests the occult worldview is wrong because it is animistic and vice versa – a "regression to magical thinking".[74] E.P. Thompson, for his part, characterized the working class as "oscillating" between the "poles" of religious revivalism and radical politics.[75] Over and over, occult philosophy is portrayed as either inducing apathy among the masses or as the territory of elite reactionaries who stir them to hatred, rather than having any connection to socialism, communism, or anarchism. The symbiosis of Blavatsky's Theosophy with eugenics, and the association of occult narratives

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[72] See Marshall, pp. 149.

[73] The complex historical reasons why certain currents of Marxism vs. anarchism became more widespread during the 20th century will be bracketed here, yet note that contributing factors are necessarily overlapping and debatable, with explanations ranging from Eric Hobsbawm's (in *Primitive Rebels*) which beholds scientific Marxism progressively replacing the more "primitive" anarchism, to Graeber's which highlights how the centralizing logic of state Marxism was practical during the 20th century of global war (see David Graeber, "The New Anarchists" in *New Left Review,* 13, 2002, pp . 61–74, here pp. 69); it is of course impossible to provide a scholarly analysis (representation) in this regard that is not also a (material) political position – Marxists and anarchists can agree on this particular point.

[74] Theodor Adorno, 'Theses against Occultism', *TELOS,* 19 (1974), p. 8.

[75] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (NY: Vintage, 1963), p. 391.

and iconography with the rise of fascism, for example, are often pointed out, and of course the connections are there.[76] The ideas offered within occult philosophy do not necessarily lead to revolutionary politics, but they do not necessarily lead away from them either. When regarding the relationship of "magic" to anti-systemic movements, perhaps any deterministic formula is bound to fail. When approached by privileged persons with a lust for power, "magic" can serve to justify and advance elite aspirations. But without the influx of so much material charged as "ancient magical wisdom" that helped triangulate popular religion,

[76] See e.g. Nicolas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890–1935*, (NY: New York University Press, 1992). Regarding the historical link between occultism and Nazism it is key to understand that at the turn of the 20th century (1903), the global capitalist oligarchy was blamed on a secretive group of Jewish patriarchs (in turn associated with Masonry and magic) in a Russian forgery titled "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion", which was widely distributed in decades following (Henry Ford himself distributed 500,000 copies); see Victor E. Marsden, ed. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, (Filiquarian Publishing LLC, 2006); R.S. Levy, *A Lie and a Libel: The History of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). The reader may also note that one of the influential books to associate "revolutionism" (from the French Revolution to the Bolshevik Revolution) with a similar secretive directing force was *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (London: Boswell, 1936) by Nesta Webster, which relied heavily on the *Protocols*. There also existed works during this time period that did not partake of this specific view of history, yet wherein anti-Semitism nonetheless defines the analysis, such as Mircea Eliade's *The Myth of the Eternal Return – or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974 [1949]), wherein the linear, redemptive history that has displaced (true) understanding of cyclical time is associated with Judaism. For an analysis of anti-Semitism with respect to the Saint-Simonians see Zosa Szajkowski. 1947. "The Jewish Saint-Simonians and Socialist Antisemites in France." *Jewish Social Studies* 9 (1):33–60; compare with Moya, José. 2004. "'The positive side of stereotypes: Jewish anarchists in early twentieth-century Buenos Aires',." Jewish History 18 (1): pp. 19–48; Levy, Carl. 2011. "Anarchism and cosmopolitanism." Journal of Political Ideologies 16 (3):265–278. See Nesta Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (London: Boswell, 1936).

modern materialism and social discontent in new ways, we may never have seen the rise of "anarchism" as we know it. Even this quick glance at the history of revolutionism problematizes any simplistic dichotomy of New Age spirituality as reactionary (in both the senses of conservative and right-wing), vs. a materialist worldview as progressive (in both senses of forward-looking and leftist). Rather, secularized and "scientized" religion appears inherent to modern anti-systemic critique and collective action – the West's attempt to save itself from its impoverished materialism through an enchantment "newly reconfigured".[77] The world did not have to be "disenchanted" before modern anti-authoritarianism could occur, it had to be *re*-enchanted: A rejection of material exploitation, "materialist values" and materialist philosophy appear as three sides of the same coin.

To Conclude (and to Begin Anew. . .)

As I explained at the outset, I began this project partly in order to clarify how the "atheism" professed by those working in the Western anarchist tradition intersects with colonialism, as well as embodies a serious misunderstanding of the history of anarchism itself. In my previous ethnographic work, I had argued that maintaining a neat dichotomy between "spirituality" and "radical politics" only makes sense within a colonialist rubric wherein the religious Other becomes the constitutive limit of the "rational West". The subsequent reception of my work by both academics and anarchists has beheld a certain pattern: Many anarchist activists and scholars agree that we should indeed be more "respectful" of "indigenous identity". This, even though I had taken care to emphasize that the operative problem goes beyond a failure to be sufficiently polite in the presence of difference. Beyond being "disrespectful", insisting on a disenchanted universe delimits the radical imaginary in general. To refrain from telling the non-atheist activist they are wrong (while continuing to think they are), simply because he or she is a person of colour, is really very different

[77] See Thomas Laqueur, 'Why the Margins Matter: Occultism and the Making of Modernity', *Modern Intellectual History,* 3 (2006), 111–35 (pp. 111–12); Webb also makes this point, p. 344–45.

than self-critically deconstructing one's colonial mentality that treats the religious as Other in the first place.[78]

Keeping this question in mind, I wonder what the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe would have looked like if militants regarded culture as property the way many anarchists and indigenous people do today. Certainly the "occult" history of anarchism that I present above could be analysed in terms of Orientalism, and of course the cross-cultural dialogues among heretics during the Crusades happened in the context of complex power relations.[79] At this time, however, it was not yet clear who would emerge as the dominant party. Is Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* "culturally appropriated" because he was inspired by Japanese revolutionaries? Perhaps insofar as we don't know about it, in combination with the fact that there is now money to be made off Kropotkin-related-commodities. However, reading a concept like "cultural appropriation" on to the past would falsely assume that the fields of meaning and value at the time can be equated to those inflecting today's self-making projects: During the Renaissance "difference" did not have the same currency, and people were not ascribed the same identities nor "self-identified" according to the categories in play now. It makes sense that a critique of cultural appropriation emerges in the present-day context, wherein cultural difference is fetishized and certain people may valorise themselves by accessorizing commodified attributes of those they

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[78] See Lagalisse, *Marginalizing Magdalena,* for my first rehearsal of this argument with reference to Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular – Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford University Press: California, 2003), Gil Anidjar (cited earlier), Joan Scott "Sexularism", *RSCAS Distinguished Lectures*, Florence, Italy, April 23, 2009, Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands – La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), and Jacqui M. Alexander, *Pedagogies of crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), among others – it is perhaps no coincidence that in the 'memory' of Jacqui Alexander, "everything is interconnected". See Lagalisse, *Good Politics*, Chapters 7–9, for an in-depth discussion of non-performative white anti-racisms among anarchists, and the "insult of courtesy" that may characterize praxes of "anti-oppression".

See Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (NY: Vintage, 1978).

[79] See Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (NY: Vintage, 1978).

structurally oppress, but we may also lose something in the process of applying the logic of property to culture, and to spirituality in particular.[80] When entire cosmologies are reified as "proper" only to specific pre-ordained identities, we are effectively saying they are false to the extent that they do not apply across the cosmos whatsoever. The sacred is thus rendered as alterity, nothing more than a cultural accoutrement in a marketplace as big as the universe. Appropriating indigenous spiritual forms without the intended content is entirely in line with the logic of capitalist colonialism, but so is marking off and containing everything considered sacred as *property* (and thus nothing more).[81]

In other words, the fact that anarchists are often unable to recognize the subversive potential of religious sensibilities – whether those of indigenous women or Bakunin himself – is disturbing beyond anarchists' failure to respect the "difference" or the "identity" of others, and to recuperate such a debate within the parameters

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[80] For discussion of cultural appropriation in this vein see Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2004.)

[81] Readers in anthropology might consider how the disciplinary "ontological turn" could be read similarly, wherein the anthropologist (finally) grants the "reality" of plants that think, clouds that have agendas, and spiritual animal protectors, but only by inventing multiple realities in the process: ontology (reality) becomes plural such that the white man can still enjoy his office without having to worry about the weather; see, e.g. David Graeber's "Radical alterity is just another way of saying 'reality': A reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro" Hau – Journal of Ethnographic Theory, Vol 5, No 2 (2015), and Zoe Todd's "An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism' Journal of Historical Sociology, Volume 29, Issue 1 (2016). Regarding the 'sacred', following Durkheim (The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 2008 [1912]) who built his theory around the "totem", the sacred is, by definition and universally, something "set apart". Rejoinders such as Asad's Formations of the Secular locate the "sacred" as a specifically Judeo-Christian concept. In either case, while most peoples throughout history do create categories of things, people, and ideas that are set apart from the mundane in some form, I here refer to the specific divisibility of the material and the 'sacred' that occurs through processes of commodification and reification; see, e.g., Andrea Smith, Conquest – Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide. (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), Chapter 6; Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands – La Frontera. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), pp. 68–9, passim.

of "identity" and attendant proprieties is arguably racist in and of itself. Rather, we must actually consider the synergistic relationship between spirituality, faith and radical political movements, whether in present-day Latin America or 19th century Europe, up to and including the original "New Age movement" itself from whence modern anarchism came.

In so doing, we also appeal to anarchists who do not take a hard atheist stance, yet who feel the need to hide their various spiritual inclinations in officially Left-wing spaces: whereas at the turn of the 20th century it was possible to say "Scratch a Spiritualist, and you will find an Anarchist", a hundred years later the tables have been turned. Other things haven't changed that much – a zine an activist acquaintance of mine published in 2013 is titled "Anarchism and Hope" wherein he advises: "Fuck waiting on on someone else or some divine force to change shit. Hope means we can see how to do it ourselves."[82]

I also suggested in my introduction that the story told here is important to reflect on because while the patriarchal bias of classical anarchist theory and practice is often noted in reference to its genesis in male proletarian workers' movements, the gendered quality of "anarchism" is arguably more fundamental than that. The masculine public sphere of anarchism reaches back even further, and articulates with an occult cosmology that is older still. As anti-systemic resistance in Europe shifted from the millenarian mode to modern socialism, the biggest difference was not, in fact, that the former was "religious" and the latter wasn't, but rather that in the latter the paradise of heaven would be manifest on the earth, and through the works of men not God – or indeed, men *as* God – and that it was the job of a chosen few who had access to "ancient spiritual wisdom" circulating in new secret male orders to inspire them to action. To simply argue now that "real" anarchism is by definition feminist as well insomuch as anarchism is "against all forms of domination" does not engage the ways in which the anarchist revolutionary person was constructed vis-à-vis a variety of exclusions from the outset, especially insomuch as

[82] see Aaron Lakoff, *Anarchism and Hope,* Howl! arts collective, Montréal, Québec, 2013.

these continue unmediated by a certain unacknowledged "vanguardism": Revolution may be immanent in the people, but as any 21st century anarchist around can see, fluency in a particular vocabulary, knowing the names of certain historical figures, and being vouched for by someone in the know is all requirement for entry into the anarchist club, as is a commitment to a specific ideological constellation informed by the history of its practice, wherein men's oppression by the state becomes the prototype for power in general.

I may be forcing an analogy by saying that all of this social and subcultural capital resembles the "opaque system of signs" of 19th century initiatic societies, but the (hidden) correspondence is worth reflecting on.[83] Similarly, unless we narrowly define "vanguard" to mean "political party" *per se*, the common notion among present-day anarchist activists that Marxists are "vanguardist", whereas anarchists are not, does not bear scrutiny. Anarchists have always considered themselves purveyors of particular insight, and continue to join social movements and the general fray to steer it all in a more revolutionary direction.[84] My point is not to criticize such a practice, but to suggest that its disavowal and dissimulation within discourses of "solidarity" may be disingenuous.[85] While anarchists today carefully skirt the phrase "consciousness raising" (it sounds too Marxist), their

[83] See Lagalisse, *Good Politics,* Chapter 6, for a lengthier discussion on this point and in regard to the changing forms of clandestinity characterizing the Left from the 19th to the 21st century.

[84] To offer just one contemporary example, anarchists participated in the Occupy movement (2011), despite its observed "reformist" aspects, to prevent it veering in a racist and nationalist direction, and to steer it towards a liberatory politics; see e.g. Erica Lagalisse, "Participación e influencias anarquistas en el movimiento 'Occupy Wall Street'." *Periodico del CNT* (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo), nº 383, noviembre 2011.

[85] For further discussion in this vein see Lagalisse, *Good Politics* — Anarchist activists in the North America today often articulate their actions and ideology as "taking lead" from indigenous activists or other marginalized groups of people, yet they are also working within a tradition of their own.

various workshops on "anti-oppression" appear to have precisely such a purpose: Why so much self-deception?[86]

Similarly, it should also be significant that today's anarchist intellectuals generally do not cite indigenous women scholars such as Audra Simpson when they are mounting their compelling arguments against the State: Theirs are not the code words for belonging.[87] Rather, anarchist activists and scholars who are interested in questions of "sovereignty" often prefer to peruse the work of Giorgio Agamben who, much like Carl Schmitt, brackets gender and race by proceeding as if one can equate "human being" and "male citizen of Rome or France".[88]

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[86] See Lagalisse, *Good Politics*, Chapter 8, with respect to current discourses and praxes of "anti-oppression".

[87] See e.g. Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus – Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

[88] I refer to Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer – Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), and Schmitt's *Political Theology* cited earlier. Agamben presents the inclusion/exclusion of "bare life"/sexuality as fundamental to classical-then-modern politics without reference to gender, yet indulging de Sade and with prime reference to Foucault. The Holocaust concentration camp is presented as epitome of the "sacredness" (murderability) of Life and modern bio/thanatopolitics by extension – Aimé Cesaire, author of *Discourse on Colonialism* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 2000 [1955]), turns in his grave. The prime contribution of Agamben's essay appears to be the crafting of a certain genealogy of ideas wherein knowledge is the sovereign domain of European male philosophers in contradistinction to feminists and black scholars of slavery: In his work these are definitively excluded from philosophy *qua* philosophy in perfect symmetry with how Roman/French women and slaves are excluded (as "bare life") from Agamben's own analysis. Note that Agamben's book *The Coming Community* (1993) was influential to The Invisible Committee's *The Coming Insurrection* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2007), which has enjoyed popularity among anarchist "insurrectionalists" in French, English and Spanish (among other presses). For a feminist response to The Invisible Committee/Tiqqun, see e.g. "Further Materials Toward a Theory of the Manchild" by Moira Weigel and Mal Ahern online at http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/further-materials-toward-a-theory-of-the-man-child/. See also Audra Simpson's rejoinder to Agamben – ". . .one does not have to dwell exclusively in the horror of a concentration camp to find life stripped bare to cadastral form. . ." (*Mohawk Interruptus*, pp. 153–4).

It is not simply sexist reading habits that marginalize indigenous women scholars' work, but also the fact that their words are less easily recuperated within the European anarchist tradition, which has already decided that religion is bad and whose model of oppressive power is the state. For the indigenous women in Andrea Smith's ethnography, "sovereignty" is "an active, living process within this knot of human, material, and spiritual relationships bound together by mutual responsibilities and obligations"; Audra Simpson, for her part, points out the "critical language game" involved here: indigenous mobilizations of "sovereignty" are useful to signal "processes and intents to others in ways that are understandable".[89] These remarks certainly sound different than the definitions of "sovereignty" advanced by Schmitt, described by Agamben, and critiqued by many anarchists, wherein sovereignty is always an (unmarked yet male) fantasy of absolute power via the state apparatus (and the practical project of consolidating this power as much as possible). But then again, why should Agamben or Schmitt be granted sovereign jurisdiction over the (power of) the Word? Indigenous women's mobilizations of "sovereignty" are not necessarily rhetorical, but even when they are, this where the (performative) magic happens. Following their lead could teach us all something about "sovereignty" that Schmitt, Agamben, and their anarchist readers fail to notice: European "sovereignty" has always involved subsuming women and children as property of

[89] Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred contends that (native) "sovereignty" is premised upon Western notions of the nation–state, with its monopoly on violence and agendas of domination, yet Andrea Smith suggests we take lead from indigenous women activists who rather remark "sovereignty is not a foreign concept brought by the colonizers to Indigenous America. We are born as sovereign beings. Our struggle as sovereign peoples is to live the laws of creation."; see Andrea Smith, *North Americans and the Christian Right,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), here pp. 260–1; Taiaiake Alfred, *Wawáse – Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2005). Audra Simpson is supportive of Alfred's point, yet analyzes the rhetorical politics involved in indigenous mobilizations of "sovereignty" (*Mohawk Interruptus,* pp. 105, *passim*). Note that while the status of Andrea Smith's indigenous identity is currently hotly contested, it is regardless significant that her work has also often been ignored. See Lagalisse, *Good Politics*, Chapter 9, for an analysis of the debacle over Andrea Smith's identity.

male citizens whereas it is male citizens that are subsumed by the sovereign.[90] And furthermore, the male-philosophy slip between (legal) person and human being is also preserved in the anarchist response – "autonomy".[91] It is surely significant that the anarchist person is imagined as an independent, autonomous, and transcendent (sovereign) being that enters into "mutual aid" with others of its kind, much like the modern person writ large – the state. And that just as the state characterizes itself as benevolent to its citizens, the anarchist considers himself benevolent to the people (women) similarly subsumed in his "autonomy" and without whom he could not survive.

It should not be a surprise that anarchist academics ask me to authorize my texts by citing Carl Schmitt — they do want me to be accepted into the club, and kindly offer me the password. Neither should it be a surprise that reviewers suggest consecrating my work with the latest exegetical ruminations on St. Paul by Simon Critchley, whereas it is possible to get through ten years of doctoral studies regarding "anarchism" and only find out about Rosa Luxemburg afterwards, because of a book that happens to be laying on Barbara Ehrenreich's kitchen table: Anarchism has always been a gendered and racialized domain authorized by speculative elites as much as real builders.[92] In my view, when it comes to

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[90] I rehearse this argument at length elsewhere, with attention to Levi-Strauss's work on the universalization and particularization at work in combinations of linear and taxonomic hierarchy, Louis Dumont's theory of hierarchy, and David Graeber's rejoinder regarding the exclusion as well as subsumption that is involved in hierarchical arrangements, which I adapt with reference to Macpherson's work on the 'possessive individual' (see Lagalisse, *Good Politics,* Chapter 9).

[91] En lieu of fantasies of absolute state power, "autonomy" involves a fantasy of absolute personal power that must presume a strict independence of individuals (or homogenous groups thereof), which must then be mitigated by a correlate call for "mutual aid" – the other side of the same coin. See Lagalisse, *Good Politics,* as well as Lagalisse (2018) for an in-depth discussion of this point, where I discuss how the anarchist ideas of autonomy, self-government, and self-management rely on the "self-organizing system" of modern life science, with reference to the work of Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World – On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins.* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[92] Simon Critchley's The Faith of the Faithless (NY:Verso, 2012) does provide an in-depth analysis on the meanings of religion, sovereignty, and

approaching things like "liberty" or "equality", the work of historian Jonathan Israel is more compelling than that of philosophers such as Agamben or Critchley, in my view, as Israel sets aside abstract propositions and instead works hard to "describe in the contexts of history and culture the actual emergence of these ideas".[93] Perhaps the anthropologist is bound to favour historians such as Israel, yet by the same token is left wanting if contextual analysis does not comprehend the interesting (and productive) contradiction of ideas like "equality, democracy and individual liberty" actually emerging within new, secretive, status-restrictive, male-only clubs that are often referred to, rather curiously, as the modern "public sphere". How can so many of us pass over the (synchronic) gendered pairing of the Enlightenment Salon and Freemasonic Temple, or the (diachronic) gendered series of ("magical") witches and ("rational") brotherhood ceremonies, and yet claim to properly understand the form or content of the ideas of either? Not with recourse to the logic of 'history', whether that of Foucault or Hegel (or the Hermetica itself). It seems all 'earthly perspectives' are bound to be incomplete after all — including my own.

Let us now move to briefly discuss the "secret society". While I originally turned my scholarly attention to the cosmology of anarchism on account of my ethnographic research within anarchist and indigenous social movement collaborations, at a certain point during my research for this project I did consider it my specific responsibility to acquaint myself with the great flourishing of creative works concerning "secret societies" and "the Illuminati" to be found on YouTube throughout the past decade. It is clear that in the political and historical imagination corresponding to the majority of these works — popularly referred to as "conspiracy theories" — the 'Secret Order of the Illuminati' is understood to be a truly extraordinary

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liberty in the work of Jean-Jaques Rousseau and Left thinkers who follow him, thus offering an argument around 'mystical anarchism' and faith that dovetails partially with my own; his own exposition advances by way of literature and logical propositions rather than an ethnographic social history. The book on Rosa Luxemburg I found on Barbara Ehrenreich's table (she had been asked to write a blurb for it) was Kate Evans, *Red Rosa – A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg*, (NY: Verso, 2015).

[93] Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind,* pp. x.

organization that has, among other things, achieved the ends of its historical enemy, the Holy Alliance, or the "conspiracy of kings".

It has also become clear during the same time period that most self-identified anarchist activists in North America dismiss the unsatisfying teleologies of such "conspiracy theories", especially those rife with anti-Semitic or otherwise racist narratives.[94] Yet such narratives, increasingly prevalent, are arguably the very reason persons concerned with social justice should be paying attention. Respectable researchers may insist that diverse popular 'conspiracy theories' of power are laughably false, yet they apparently contribute to real political effects, such as the growing neo-fascist movements in North America, which are not laughable at all. Indeed given the evident charge and influence of the "conspiracy theory" in North America today — its forms and contents, as well as the powerful rhetorical functions of the (derogatory) discursive category itself, I suggest that anarchists consider engaging, mobilizing and qualifying the popular discontent evident in so-called "conspiracy theory".[95] Anti-capitalists of all stripes would surely do well to tackle so much curious confusion regarding the Left and the Conspiracy of Kings, so many disturbing racialized political imaginaries, and so many 'bizarre' origin stories of capitalism often found within the works marked "conspiracy theory". We might critically analyse the genre in terms of allegory and archetype, narrative and imagery, voice and public, authorship and audience, for the express purpose of practical intervention. We might even explore, in the process, how both dominant powers and their "conspiracy theorist" critics make use of occult 'arts of memory' to compel their publics, and thus how the Hermetic tradition continues to inform both Right and Left in the

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[94] I offer a preliminary analysis of the social dynamics surrounding the "conspiracy theory" in contemporary anarchist social movement spaces in Erica Lagalisse,"Anarchism and Conspiracy Theories in North America, or: The Conspiracy Theory as Antidote to Foucault", presented at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting., Denver, CO, December 2015.

[95] The final chapter of my upcoming monograph-length rehearsal of this work (Lagalisse 2018), elaborates further on "conspiracy theory" as both an academic and practical political problematic, and explores the related question of occult(ed) arts of memory suggested briefly below.

21st century, albeit not in the way some "conspiracy theorists" may suspect. The pantheism I have discussed in these pages may indeed equally inspire the fantasies of fascism, the apocalypse of the dialectic, and the anarchist faith in an egalitarian social order. We would be wise to not ignore it, because now, as during the 19th century, as during the Renaissance period with which this essay began, the Hermetica proves 'adaptable to a variety of projects', including both pyramid and levelling schemes, as well as pyramid schemes for levelling — As Above, So Below.

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Index

A

Abiff, Hiram 288
ableism 6
Abraham 163–164
Achtemeier, Paul J. 151, 153, 155, 157–158
Ackroyd, Peter 237, 252n86, 274
Adam and Eve 175, 249, 254
Adorno, Theodore 37n63, 310
agnosticism 22, 36
agriculture 84–86
alchemy 285–286, 310
Alexis-Baker, Andy 214–215
Allen, Pauline 61n5
Almi, A. 34, 34n52, 36–37, 42–46, 49–50
Agamben, Giorgio 317–318
Amster, Randall 140, 146–148
Anabaptism 282
Anarchism
  anarcho-capitalism 2, 6
  anarchist communism 94–97, 108–109
  anarchist studies 5–6, 13
  anarcho-syndicalism 6, 95–97, 121, 125
  Christian anarchism 12, 133–135, 138–141, 173–194, 196–226, 232–276
  classical anarchism 2, 12, 278–322
  definitions 1–7, 20–25, 60–64, 138–141, 174–176, 197–200, 279–281
  individualism (*see also*: Stirner, Max) 203
  Pan-Anarchism 29
  possibilistic anarchism 97
Anglicanism 61–62
Anti-authoritarianism 6, 282
Antisemitism 34, 260, 321
Antliff, Allan 25
Apollo/Apollonian 182
Arbeter Shtime 10, 20–57
archy 6–7
Aristotle 145
Arnal, Jesús 113, 119
art 8, 40, 105, 233
ascetism 71, 72, 88
Ashli, Khayim 39, 44–45, 48
atheism 11, 21–22, 95, 103, 117, 279, 312
Auden, W.H. 202
Augustine (Saint) 281
authoritarianism 35, 37, 49, 64, 155–156, 186–187, 209, 282
Avrich, Paul 25

B

Babel 36n61
Babeuf, Gracchus 296
Bakunin, Mikhail 21, 23, 174–175, 297, 300–302, 308n70, 314
Balach, David L. 145, 148n56
Ballou, Adin 189–190
Bamyeh, Mohammed 140, 151
Barth, Karl 139
Basil of Caesarea (Saint) 80, 84
Besant, Annie 304–305
Beer, John 239, 274
Benjamin, Walter 12, 173–194
Berkeley, George 49
Berkman, Alexander 21, 29
Bible, the 9, 38, 107, 110, 112, 120, 122, 132–169, 158–159, 175–178, 185–188, 198, 213, 254–256, 258, 263
Blake, William 12, 232–276, 287
Blanc, Louis 299
Blanes, Ruy 9
Blavatsky, Helena 304–305, 310–311
Böhme, Jakob 285
Bordeianu, Radu 62
Boreysho, Menkhem 41–42
Boring, Eugene M. 145, 153–154, 160, 168
Bourdieu, Pierre 38
Brock, Peter 167
Brubaker, Rogers 24n13, 47
Buber, Martin 24n13
Buddhism 8, 202
Buonarotti, Phillipe 295–296
Byzantine 10, 58–89

C

Camp, Lee 204
capitalism 6, 34, 80, 82–83, 108, 221, 321
Caputo, John 206–207, 209–210
Carter, Timothy 179
Catholicism 11, 59, 62, 94–125, 173–174
causality 36–37
Cavanaugh, William 134
Chelcicky, Peter 180
Chomsky, Noam 78n88
Christianity 5, 10–13, 26, 58–89, 94–125, 132–169, 173–194, 196–226, 282–283, 288
Christie, Stuart 96
Christoyannopoulos, Alexandre 179, 185, 199
Church, the 58–59, 94–125, 141, 147, 150, 174–176, 220, 241–242, 246, 254, 273, 281
Churchill, Ward 216–217
El Cino Libertario: Cuando las Películas Hacen Historia 97–98, 107–108, 124
civil religion 4
class 81
class struggle 2
clergy 102–124, 244–246, 259–260, 273–274
Coates, Ta-Nehisi 222–223

Cohen, Joseph J 47
communalism 10, 81–83, 86
communism 8, 26, 267, 299
community 67–68, 80, 84–85, 87, 150–151, 160, 190
Confucianism 8
El Corazón de la Tierra 97, 121–122
cosmology 67–68, 70–72, 279, 288–289, 302, 314
Critchley, Simon 319
Crockett, Clayton 207
crucifixion 181–185, 209, 219, 256, 259
Cuerda, José Luis 103, 105
Cvetković, Vladimir 67

D

Damon, S. Foster 240, 242, 248, 255, 263
Darwinism 77–78, 303–304
Day, Dorothy 139
Dear, John 214, 216
decentralism 64, 68
Dee, John 285
desert monasticism 72, 79, 81–82, 83n106, 84
Diggers 282
Dionysos 181–185
Dostoevsky, Fyodor 174–175
domination 10, 20–57, 64, 132–169
druids 290
Duncan, Grace 120
Durkheim, Emile 281
Durruti, Buenaventura 113, 119

E

Eckhartism 285
Eden 175, 252n86, 256, 268
education 22, 25, 28, 30, 33, 34, 40, 47, 49, 67, 86, 94, 101–103
Ehrenreich, Barbara 319
Eller, Vernard 134, 141, 180
Ellul, Jacques 134, 148, 167, 209, 217–218, 224
Elshtain, Jean Bethke 165
Engels, Friedrich 26, 301, 307
Enlightenment, the 9, 12, 37n63, 279–292, 320
Epicureanism 22, 32, 38, 48
equality 3, 11, 68, 76, 135, 147, 165, 212, 293, 320
Ehrman, Bart 198–199
ethics 8, 10–12, 27, 37n63, 40, 42, 49, 58–89, 96, 132, 161, 192, 200, 203–204, 235, 251, 256–258, 263, 266, 269
ethnicity 33–34, 40
ethnography 278
eugenics 310–311
Eurocentrism 13
Evan, Theophilus 239
evil 37
evolution 77–78, 203
Eyges, Thomas B. 34–35
Exegesis 9, 43, 132, 158

F

fascism 104, 117, 311n76
federalism 64, 85
Ferguson, Kathy 30n34

Federici, Sylvia 286
Ferrer, Francisco 102
Feuerbach, Ludwig 33, 49,
film 11, 94–125
Fiore, Joachim de 308
football 8
Forverts 24, 48
Foucault, Michel 105, 320
Fourier, Charles 302–303
Franco, Francisco 95, 100, 102, 104, 106, 107, 115, 118–119, 121, 124
Frank, Herman, 41–42, 50
free thought 27, 32, 35, 44
freedom 3, 23, 65, 69, 74, 84, 102–103, 109, 113, 121–122, 136–138, 156, 160, 165, 174, 176, 180, 197, 225, 236–237, 242–243, 256–257, 259, 263, 267- 268, 273–274, 301, 320
Freemasons 95, 115, 286, 288–300, 305, 320

G

Gandhian, Mohandas 11
Gallie, W.B., 1
Galvan-Alvarez, Enrique 9
Gelberg, A. 45
Gelderloos, Peter 218, 223
gender 13, 69, 69n44, 88, 117, 133, 159, 162–166, 278–322
Gilchrist, Alexander 237
Los Girasoles Ciegos 97, 101–102, 104–105, 110, 112
Gnosticism 207, 248n65, 281
God 3, 21, 25, 26–28, 32, 35–37, 40, 42–43, 46, 49, 65–68, 70–73, 79, 87, 105, 106, 111, 117–119, 133–169, 175–176, 180–181, 185–187, 190, 198, 201, 208, 210–211, 240–241, 248–249, 251, 261, 267, 269–273, 281–282, 285, 301, 315
gods 3
Godwin, William 237
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang van 294
Goldberg, Nathan 22, 39
Goldman, A.L. 35–37, 41–42, 50
Goldman, Emma 12, 21, 29, 140, 174, 197
Golomb, Abraham 35
Goncharok, Moyshe 28
Gordin, Abba 25–30, 36n62, 39, 40n74, 48
Gordon, Uri 215–216, 219, 223
grace 71, 166
Graeber, David 202, 310n73
Grave, Jean 201
Green, Joel B. 134, 161
Gregg, Richard 221
Gregory of Nyssa 69, 84

H

Harvey, David 74
haustafeln 132, 142–145, 149, 152, 156, 160
Hebden, Keith 217
Hegel, G.W.F. 307–311, 320
Hemmingway, Ernest 119

Hermetica 284–289, 299, 322
Heraclitus 257
Herder, Johann Gottfried 294
heteronormativity 6
hierarchy 6, 64, 81, 97, 105, 139, 146, 169, 198, 204
Hindus/Hinduism 7, 306
history 6
Hobbes, Thomas 281, 303
Hobson, Christopher Z. 233, 262, 266
Hoppen, Franziska 9
Horkheimer, Max 37n63
Horrell, David G. 145
Hume, David 41

I

iconography 100, 107n39, 115, 250, 292, 299, 311
Illuminati, the 294–295, 320–321
Imago Dei 160
imperialism 8–9, 13, 312
indigeneity 279–280
individualism 26–27, 201, 282
industrialism/industrialisation 6
Ingersoll, Robert 22
International Workingmen's Association 297–302, 305
intersectionality 13
Irenaeus (Saint) 188
irrationality 33
Isaac 36
Islam 7
Israel 218
Israel, Jonathan 320

J

Jesus 12, 66, 67, 69–70, 72, 73–74, 81–82, 87, 94, 100, 104, 110, 116–117, 119–120, 122, 125, 133, 135, 137–138, 141, 149–150, 152, 156–162, 166, 168–169, 174, 177–179, 181–185, 187, 189–194, 196–198–200, 202, 204–215, 219, 225, 232, 233, 236–239, 243–245, 249, 254–256, 258–260, 262–266, 268–273, 276
Joachimism 285
Job (Book of) 36n61, 49
John (Evangelist) 209, 214, 244
Johnson, Joseph 236–237
Joseph 260–261, 264, 272
Judaism 10, 20–57, 95, 115, 178–179, 187–188, 270, 290
Jun, Nathan 200–201, 204
justice 27, 40n74, 45n95, 76, 101, 106–107, 114, 118–119, 121, 123, 159, 180, 187, 209–212, 219, 251, 255, 259, 263, 269, 272–273, 298, 321

K

kabbalah 288, 306
Kahan, Tsvi 39
Kahan, Yosef 31
Kant, Immanuel 41
Kazin, Alfred 238, 247
Kearney, Richard 206–210
Keener, Craig 150, 161
Kierkegaard, Søren 212

King (Jnr), Martin Luther 222
Kouddous, Sharif Abdel 218
Kropotkin, Peter 10–11, 58–89, 140, 148, 174, 179, 197, 200–204, 303–304, 313

L

La Lengua de las Mariposas, 97, 101–105
labour 76, 86, 283, 289–291
Land and Freedom 95–97, 108–109, 113–114, 114n57, 122, 124
Landauer, Gustav 24n13, 205, 225
Lao Tzu 6, 236
Lavater, Kaspar 240
law 12, 68, 232, 242, 249, 256, 260, 270–271
Lawrence, D.H. 247
Levellers 6
Levin, Shmuel 43–44, 46
Levin, Yankev 45
Lewis, Roman 21n1
Liberation Theology 114–115
liberty (*see* freedom)
Libertarias 95–97, 106, 109–110, 116–117, 119–120, 122, 123
Ligt, Bart de 225
Lipscomb, David 154–155
Long, D. Stephen 205
Loughborough University 13
Louth, Andrew 61n5, 62, 70
Luke (Evangelist) 189, 270
Lutheranism 62
Luxemburg, Rosa 319

M

magic 13, 278, 286
Magón, Ricardo Flores 305–306
Makhno, Nestor 29
Malatesta, Errico 211
Manson, T.W. 270–271
Mark (Evangelist) 189
Marshall, Peter 63, 233, 243
Marx, Karl/Marxism 26, 30, 33, 65, 79, 95n2, 165n110, 282, 296, 298, 301–302, 307–311, 316
Mary Magdalene 264
Mary 261–262, 264, 272
masculinity 278–279
materialism 25–26
Matthew (Evangelist) 208, 211, 261, 270
Maximus the Confessor 10, 58–89
Meggitt, Justin 9
Meltzer, Albert 199–200
Merison, Yankev A., 30–31
metaphysics 8, 10, 25, 59, 87, 280
millenarianism 120, 167–169, 174, 192, 239, 282–283, 286
Miller, David 139
Miller, Henry 247
militarism 28
Milton, John 257
Minyi, Chu 219–220
Modern School 102
Mohammed 290
Momen, Moojan 7
morality (*see* ethics)

More, Henry 285
Moses 187–188, 210, 272, 290
Most, Johann 21
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 294
La Mujer del Anarquista 97, 116–117
Muslims (*see* Islam)
Mutual aid 77–79, 85, 146, 200–204, 299, 303–304
Mutualism/mutuality 26, 259
mysticism 10, 285

N

Nayman, V. 33–35, 39, 48
nationalism 8, 33, 88
Nedava, Joseph 26, 28
Nehru, Jawaharlal 305
Newton, Isaac 285, 310
neoliberalism 6, 74, 83
nihilism 181
Nietzsche, Friedrich 12, 173–194, 245n52, 258
No Borders 68
nonconformism 38, 39n68
non-violence 6, 11–12, 97, 173–194, 196–226

O

occult 13, 278–322
Omer-Mann, Michael 218
ontology 203
original sin 255–257
Owen, Robert 302

P

Paananen, Victor 248, 251
pacifism (*see* nonviolence)
paganism 281–282
Paine, Thomas 236–238
Palestine 61, 218
Pan-Anarchist Manifesto 25
pantheism 289–290, 300, 308n68
Papathanassiou, Thanassis 188
Paracelcism 285
patriarchy 6, 13, 111, 136n11, 159–160, 162–166, 218
Paul (Apostle) 8, 70, 73, 154, 177–181, 185, 213, 249, 252, 254, 268–269, 319
Pauli, Benjamin 9
Penner, Archie 180
Peter (Apostle) 11, 132–169
Pharisees 187, 264–265, 271, 271n172
Pius XII (Pope) 95
Plato 234, 244, 281, 283
Plutarch 162
Podmore, Simon 9
poetry 233–234, 238–247, 251–253, 262, 275
political theory 10
Polland, Annie 24
praxis 2, 7, 58–89
prefiguration 6, 12, 201, 204–212, 220
Priestly, Joseph 237
princes 5
Primo de Rivera, José Antonio 104,
Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph 79, 216, 295, 298, 301
property 74–75, 79–83, 162, 216, 283

psychoanalysis 8
Pythagoras 284–285, 299

R

Rabbis 37
Rabinovitsh, Shlomo 35–36
race 218, 317–319
racism 6, 88, 218, 317–318
Ranters 282
rationality 41–42, 50, 63, 70, 71, 250–251, 281, 309–310
Read, Herbert 12
Redford, James 179
Renaissance, the 13, 278, 284, 286, 313
revolution 27, 45, 136, 156, 190, 192, 233, 259, 262–263, 275, 282–292, 300–305, 316
Rhodakanaty, Plotino 305–306
ritual 7–8, 21
Robinson, Henry Crab 234, 255
Rojava 6
Rosicrucianism 285
Rousseau, Jean Jacques 293
Russia 28, 76
Ryan, Robert 251, 254, 260

S

sacred, the 8
Sáez, Jesús Miguel 103
Sahlin, Marshall 281
Saint-Simon, Henri de 302–303
Salvador 97–98, 118–119
Sandino, Augusto César 306
Sarah 163–164
Satan 175, 254, 257–258, 262
satyagraha 11
Sayman, Shlomo 37–39, 50
Schiller, Fredrich 294
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 39, 49
Schmitt, Carl 280–281, 317–319
science 26, 36–37, 40–41, 49–50, 63, 77–79, 102, 291, 307, 312
Second Vatican Council 117–119, 123
secret societies 278–279
secularism 13, 24, 33, 35, 40, 44, 50, 100, 120, 123, 124, 139, 280, 282, 312
Sermon on the Mount 204–206, 225
sex 100, 104, 110–113, 136n11, 246–248, 251–252
sexism 88, 318–319
Simpson, Audra 317–318
sin 253–258
slavery 132, 145, 160–162
Smith, Andrea 318
social movements 216, 279–280
socialism/socialists 3, 11, 24, 30, 33–34, 118, 288–298, 305
sociology 8, 27, 203
Sophronius 61
Spanish Civil War/Revolution 6, 11, 47, 94–125
speciesism 6
Spencer, Herbert 49, 303
Spinoza, Baruch 41, 289

spirituality 3, 65, 179, 207, 312–315
spiritualism 117, 302, 307
state/states/statism 5, 6, 9, 12, 28, 64, 68, 83, 138–141, 218, 221, 238, 279, 317
Steenwyk, Mark van 202
Stirner, Max 25, 40n74, 174, 203
Strandberg, Hugo 9
subordination/submission 11, 21, 43, 109–110, 132–169, 178
superstition 42
Swedenborg, Emanuel 244n47, 302–303
synagogue 28
syndicalism (*see* anarcho-syndicalism)

T

Tatham, Frederick 234, 237
Ten Commandments 236, 242, 263
Tertullian 139
theodicy 35, 186
theology 5n14, 8, 9, 36, 50, 58, 61–63, 65, 68–69, 84, 88, 115–116, 132, 135, 139, 159, 181, 235, 282
Theosophy 302–312
Thompson, E.P. 266
Toland, John 289
Tolstoy, Leo 11, 116, 135, 139, 179, 217, 224–225, 304
Torah, the 44
Tornet, Maximiliano 121–122
Törönen, Melchisedec 66
Tremlett, Paul-François, 23

U

Ullman, Joan Connelly 106
United States 20–57
universalism 33, 35, 236
utopian socialism 97
utopianism 292

V

Violence (*see also* non-violence) 3, 11–12, 96, 107, 173–194, 196–226
vitalism 285
voluntarism 132, 147, 167, 169

W

war 35
Ward, Colin 64, 86
Weishaupt, Adam 293–294
Western/the West 7–9, 60
Willems, Kurt 198
Wink, Walter 198, 212–213, 221–222
Wollstonecraft, Mary 237

Y

Yanovski, Shoel 23
Yanovsky, Saul 21n1
Yoder, John Howard 136, 136n11, 137, 198

Z

Zametkin, Mikhail 21n1
Zapatistas 300
Zionism 30, 47
Zoroastrianism 306

Anarchism and religion have historically had an uneasy relationship. Indeed, representatives of both sides have regularly insisted on the fundamental incompatibility of anarchist and religious ideas and practices. Yet, ever since the emergence of anarchism as an intellectual and political movement, a considerable number of religious anarchists have insisted that their religious tradition necessarily implies an anarchist political stance.

Reflecting both a rise of interest in anarchist ideas and activism on the one hand, and the revival of religious ideas and movements in the political sphere on the other, this multi-volume collection examines congruities and contestations between the two from a diverse range of academic perspectives.

The second volume of *Essays in Anarchism & Religion* includes essays covering themes such as Yiddish radicalism, Byzantine theology, First Peter, William Blake, the role of violence in anarchism and in Christian anarchism, Spanish anarchist-themed film, and the Occult features of anarchism.

In a world where political ideas increasingly matter once more, and religion is an increasingly visible aspect of global political life, these essays offer scholarly analysis of overlooked activists, ideas and movements, and as such reveal the possibility of a powerful critique of contemporary global society.

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ISBN 978-91-7635-075-1

9 789176 350751

STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY PRESS