

PRISM

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REAPPRAISING THE RIFT BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON: Could Science Help Us Think About Religion?

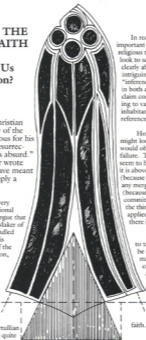
Keith J. Cooper

Tertullian, an African Christian writing in the second century of the Church, is perhaps most famous for his defiant one-liner about the resurrection, "I believe it because it is absurd." The only trouble is: he never wrote those words, and wouldn't have meant them if he had. They are simply a misquotation.

In fact, Tertullian had some very positive things to say about our rational capacities, even going so far as to argue that "there is nothing which God, the Maker of all . . . has not willed should be handled and understood by reason." But his phrasing of the age-old question of the relationship between faith and reason, such prominent facets of human existence, has helped to shape the discussion ever since:

What has Athens to do with
Jerusalem? What concord is
there between the Academy
and the Church?

Faith, or reason? The question Tertullian poses is easy to ask, but has proven quite difficult to answer suitably.



In recent years, some have suggested that important parallels between scientific and religious theorizing make it possible for us to look to science for help in thinking more clearly about religion. One of the most intriguing of these approaches argues that "inferences to the best explanation" are used in both areas; theists, for example, might claim confirmation for their beliefs by pointing to various features of this world and its inhabitants most adequately explained by reference to a monotheistic God.

However intriguing such an approach might look at first glance, though, many would object that the enterprise is doomed to failure. The three most common objections seem to be that religion is *inaccessible* (because it is above reason), that science is *inapplicable* (because it deals with probabilities), and that any merging of the two is *inappropriate* (because of the demands of unconditional commitment). In this essay I will consider the third of these objections, especially as it applies to Christian belief, and argue that there is in fact no incompatibility.

How could it *not* be inappropriate to take belief in God as a hypothesis to be tested? Faith, many would say, is a matter of commitment, unconditional commitment that precludes discussion about the strength of its rational support. Since adherents of religious faith are not prepared to conclude that their beliefs are quite improbable, they should be equally unprepared to look for empirical confirmation of their faith. As William Austin has summarized

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THROUGH THE PRISM

In the Division of Humanities, we have decided the moment has come to establish an endowment and to encourage grant writing. As never before, the 1990s call upon us to exhibit imagination and energy in identifying and cultivating resources to improve the learning environment.

The humanities endowment will guarantee stable income into the future, in support of our students and in support of faculty development. We have set an initial fundraising goal of \$20,000. With this fund balance, we will be able to award two scholarships annually to humanities majors. Our alumni and friends are invited to join with the faculty in helping us reach this initial goal during 1991.

Grant writing is hardly new to the division. In the 1970s, for example, a major grant was received from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop PLU's interdisciplinary core curriculum. In the 1980s, the same government agency aided innovations in writing across the curriculum. Private foundations have supported research projects like the Scandinavian oral history collection featured in this issue of *Prism*. Within recent weeks, humanities faculty have submitted two grant applications; if funded, they will help faculty prepare to teach experimental freshman writing seminars and to integrate foreign language materials into their classes.

Through initiatives like the endowment fund and external grants, we are committing ourselves to significant ongoing efforts to enhance undergraduate education in tough financial times. All across America, institutions of higher learning are trimming operating budgets and restructuring to achieve greater efficiency. Pacific Lutheran University is no exception. But our educational goals and standards remain uncompromised. I hope our readers will agree to participate in the fund drive and will share with us additional ideas for program support.

May you enjoy this spring potpourri, which opens with fundamental questions of faith and reason and sweeps on to examine the family background of Scandinavian immigrants and the achievement of a major Spanish poet. As usual, we also offer a tantalizing look at recent humanities publications. Special thanks to colleagues Charles Bergman, Keith Cooper, and Rochelle Snee for their fine service on the *Prism* editorial board this year.

Janet E. Rasmussen
Dean

HUMANITIES

Reappraising the Right
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this objection,

it is of the nature of religious faith that adherence to religious doctrines must be *unconditional*, come what may in the way of evidence. . . . The religious believer is committed to the doctrines of his community in the sense that it would be faithless for him to abandon them in the face of evidence; to hold them subject to falsification is not to hold them as religious beliefs at all. [*The Relevance of Natural Science to Theology*, p. 94]

Many have agreed with this perspective, pointing out that Christians begin their confession of faith with the words "I believe," not with anything like "I have inquired, and found it reasonable to conclude." On this view, anyone who would say the latter might be said in one sense to *believe*, but would have no religious faith at all. The very essence of religious faith involves believing without regard for the facts -- even, as a tongue-in-cheek William James defined faith, "believing what you know ain't so."

What is usually claimed here is that religious faith is guilty of one of two things: either believing *against* the evidence in the first place, or being unwilling to adapt one's commitment to *changes* in the evidence -- such compliance including, as a limit, the abandoning of one's beliefs. The second of these charges, however, is ambiguous. That one begin to doubt, suspend judgment on, or even abandon a particular belief when the evidence for it becomes scanty enough (or evidence against it full enough) accords well with W. K. Clifford's famous dictum that "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence." But it is something else again to demand -- as David Hume did in saying that "A wise man proportion[s] his belief to the evidence" -- that one continually revise one's attitude towards a belief according to its epistemic relation to the evidence at hand. One could be reasonable while living only by the first of these aphorisms, which George Maxwell calls the "threshold principle," and not also by the second, "proportionality principle."

In our deliberations about the relationship between reason and faith, it will not do just to invoke the common perception that religious believers, unlike scientists, make blind leaps of faith and cling to their beliefs no matter what difficulties they face. One could easily parody this point of view by contrasting theological sophisticates with those unschooled in science, who have their own "sacred texts" -- and gurus -- to consult in time of need. Granted that plenty of religious adherents may hold beliefs that go against, or beyond, the evidence, is there any reason to think that educated and thoughtful believers must do the same? Have they no option in being faithful, due to what it means to *be* faithful, but to believe come what may?

Some have argued that opening religious beliefs to critical scrutiny requires viewing theism as a hypothesis,

and that the provisional and tentative acceptance this would allow conflicts with the decisive adherence the theist owes to God. As Alasdair MacIntyre has put it,

the acceptance [of Hebrew-Christian belief] must be of a kind compatible with the practice of worship. Thus it cannot be in any sense a conditional or provisional acceptance, for this would perhaps make it possible to say "O God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have one"; but it would not make it possible to worship in the sense already described. ["The Logical Status of Religious Beliefs," p. 193]

On this account, what is demanded of the believer -- for the worship rendered to be acceptable -- is unconditional belief; but this runs counter to an allegiance to truth. To suggest an obligation to be loyal both to one's religious beliefs and to the quest for truth is troublesome, worries Basil Mitchell, for the only way to reconcile unconditional belief with the requirements of truth is if the beliefs in question are logically immune from refutation (and so from confirmation as well).

Robert Adams, in discussing Kierkegaard's opposition to objective reasoning about religious beliefs, says that he can understand something of the appeal of a view such as MacIntyre's.

There is undoubtedly something plausible about the claim that authentic religious faith must involve a commitment so complete that the believer is resolved not to abandon his belief under any circumstances that he regards as epistemically possible. If you are willing to abandon your ostensibly religious beliefs for the sake of objective inquiry, mightn't we justly say that objective inquiry is your real religion, the thing to which you are most deeply committed? ["Kierkegaard's Arguments Against Objective Reasoning in Religion," p. 235]

On the other hand, Adams suggests, Kierkegaard (and by extension, MacIntyre) also seems to leave something out. An important part of religious teaching is that one ought to be humble and teachable, he says, open to correction and growth of insight. But this would have to be abandoned if we were to agree that religious commitment requires "an unconditional determination not to change in one's important religious beliefs."

Can these two elements be reconciled? One might begin by clarifying what an "epistemically possible" set of circumstances would be. There are -- and must be, given the sorts of beliefs involved in religion -- situations that could be envisioned whose occurrence would give one pause, would lead one to reconsider the correctness of one's beliefs. Denying this prevents not the idolatry of worshipping reason, but the very possibility of worship being more than guesswork, a dumb and unthinking act directed to an unknown god. So it is clearly possible,

logically, that there be a situation in which the epistemically correct thing to do would be to abandon one's faith. But if we take *epistemically possible* to mean something along the lines of *likely or plausible given one's current set of beliefs*, we get a different result: one need not deny that a faith-threatening situation is conceivable, but only that it is easily conceivable that one know what one now knows and yet be mistaken in one's beliefs. For example, I find it hard to imagine being mistaken in thinking that there is no logical contradiction in affirming the existence of both God and evil; I understand what it would be like to have a proof to the contrary, but in a real sense I do not regard it as at all possible that I be wrong about this.

Put this way, all that is required of the believer is that he or she not regard being wrong as presently a live option. This is not an abandonment of religion for objective inquiry, but rather a recognition that serious religion -- faith authentic enough to care about being right -- involves careful inquiry. (My feeling this way about the problem of evil is a result not of some irrational commitment, but of my having good reasons for believing what I do about the issue, and for believing that it is unlikely I have missed something crucial.) A religious commitment is not to be abandoned lightly because it should not have been adopted lightly, and a sign of the latter is that one find it difficult to think that one could be mistaken. Not all tenacity of belief is undeserved.

If religious commitment requires belief in those claims underlying one's commitment, then unreasonable belief would seem to yield unreasonable commitment. But, one might object, doesn't then *unconditional* commitment require unconditional belief? MacIntyre, for example, contends that "part of the content of Christian belief is that a decisive adherence has to be given to God. So that to hold Christian belief as a hypothesis would be to render it no longer Christian belief" (p. 181).

As they say, it all depends on what you mean by "unconditional," but it also depends on what is involved in "commitment." It may be true that unconditional commitment to a given proposition requires not only that one never give it up, but that one never think of doing so. But MacIntyre speaks of decisive adherence being given to God, not to any proposition. The object of faith, in any theistic religion, is not a belief or attitude, but God; it is belief in God, and not (at least primarily) belief *that* there is a God, which ought to be non-tentative. And we cannot assume that such commitment is only appropriate when the beliefs it presupposes are held non-tentatively, come what may in the way of evidence.

On the contrary, others have suggested, there is no necessary connection between the sincerity of commitment and an unreasonable tenacity in belief. Genuine faithfulness, on this account, involves being ready to make sacrifices for one's beliefs; to risk comfort and safety,

maybe even one's life; and to examine oneself critically in the light of the demands of faith. But these are very different from any requirement that one resist changing one's mind even when there is good reason to think that one is mistaken. Declining to live out one's faith in the face of inconveniences shows a lack of commitment; but backing down from religious commitments when experience or reflection renders those beliefs highly questionable is not unfaithfulness at all.

After all, if one's central religious beliefs are mistaken then there is no one, or no ideal, *there* to whom to be committed. (As Roger Trigg points out in *Reason and Commitment* (p. 55), "If my doubt reaches the point where I lose my beliefs, it is true that I must lose my faith. I cannot have faith in anything which I am certain is false or in anybody who I am sure is merely a character from legend.") It is one thing to say that true faith commands allegiance; but to insist that faith expects allegiance even though it is clearly false is to demand both the philosophically ridiculous and the psychologically sublime. While Christians have a responsibility to trust in God, this is not the same as an unconditional duty to go on believing there is a God, no matter what the evidence shows.

We might put it this way: once a religious conceptual system is adopted, there may be within that system a requirement of (some form of) unconditional faith. But such a requirement is not "detachable" -- it would be a mistake to construe it as an obligation, imposed from outside, always to embrace that particular religion, let alone to embrace it unconditionally.

Can this be so, and it still be proper to think of faith as unconditional? (And if not, isn't that a telling criticism against my position?) Austin argues well that the possibility of criticism, and of religious beliefs that are always less than certain, does not rule out a legitimate sense in which faith is unconditional.

To say that religious commitment is unconditional is to say, I would suggest, that the actions and attitudes to which one is committed by his religious assertions *take precedence* over all others. . . . It gives us a sense in which a man could properly say that he is unconditionally committed to his religious beliefs, while yet acknowledging that evidence might sometime compel him to abandon them. *So long as he holds* *alms*, the actions and attitudes to which they commit him cannot be set aside in deference to those implied by other self-involving assertions he might make. (So long as he believes in God, he owes Him a "decisive adherence".) But it would not show that his commitment was defective, if at some later time he ceased to hold them, on the grounds that they did not (and some other set of beliefs did) make sense of his experience. [p. 113]

This perspective is, so far as I can tell, true to traditional theistic accounts of faith, and it succeeds in making religious faith important (which, to its adherents, it clearly

is) without making it unthinking (which, to perhaps fewer of its adherents, it is not). It retains an understanding of faith as involving MacIntyre's "fundamental conviction," without -- by equivocating on "fundamental" -- leaving that faith unsupportable by evidence.

One might plausibly hold that belief in God should be basic or fundamental; but in what way? Some seem to think that this means something like "foundational," without support from other beliefs one holds. But others suggest that it means something more like "central" -- perhaps along the lines of a well-entrenched belief in a scientific research programme's core. On this view, whether a belief is basic (and how basic it is, if there are degrees) is a separate issue from that of epistemic support; rather, it is a question of how far through one's conceptual scheme the belief ratifies, how much would have to be changed if the belief were abandoned.

If this is so, then those beliefs central to a religious conceptual system end up just about where one might have thought they would: with other metaphysical beliefs. We all have beliefs about what there is, what is of value, and how knowledge may be obtained, that play a crucial role in our worldview. Though they are not closely tied to experience in the way a low-level scientific theory is, most of us would insist both that we really did have some reason for accepting them, and that we were open to being shown wrong. They are beliefs on which we continually act, not waiting around for further confirmation or disconfirmation (but willing to accept it if it comes). We do not worry about accusations of inappropriate commitment, but trust that others will be able to distinguish between that tentativeness always present in the absence of certainty and that which would impede our living in accordance with our beliefs.

Mavrodes suggests that we may have a psychological disposition to live according to what he terms the proportionality principle -- in Locke's words, to regulate our degrees of assent according to a belief's epistemic standing. But he suspects that there are also tendencies to make the strength of belief a function of the content of the belief rather than a function of its evidence. "I suspect," he writes, "that one important [instance] is the tendency to hold fundamental religious beliefs rather strongly if one *holds them at all*. This tendency may itself be just a special case of a still more general tendency, that of holding one's 'life-orienting' beliefs strongly." ["Belief, Proportionality, and Probability," p. 65]

Such beliefs, whether religious, ethical, or even scientific, are ones for which most of us, most of the time, think we have good reasons; but they do not tend to be beliefs that are often or easily changed. Mavrodes argues that this gives us no reason to think that we would be unlikely to give any of them up should enough of their support be removed. Nor should we think that one would be likely to act impudently on beliefs not subject to the proportionality principle: that a belief is strongly or passionately held does not entail that one will act on that

belief unwisely. To object that a person who does not proportion his or her belief to the evidence will take unwarranted risks confuses the strength of belief that a given claim is true with the belief in the strength of the evidence.

These matters need further discussion. But I have suggested here that there is no reason to think that the degree of commitment often involved in religious belief should prevent one from looking at the evidence, or from reacting to that evidence. There is, in fact, reason to think that belief central to one's worldview, religious or not, are not and should not be subject to a roller-coaster ride based on the latest epistemic perturbations. The factor of personal allegiance peculiar to theistic religious faith need not be a major culprit here.

I conclude that there is nothing about the nature of religious belief that should prevent a more careful exploration of the attempt to learn from the philosophy of science how better to do the philosophy of religion. Whenever sort of commitment it is that authentic faith demands does not preclude an honest assessment of the reasonableness of thinking that faith's metaphysical claims true. To paraphrase G. K. Chesterton, there may well be occasion at a later time to pronounce such an approach tried and found wanting; but we ought not be satisfied -- either out of misplaced reverence or mistaken philosophy -- to pronounce it wanting and leave it untied. ■

A 1909 receipt for transfer of funds from family bank loans (John Bjorn) to Johannes Bjorn newly arrived in America.

FINLAND STEAMSHIP COMPANY
15 STATE STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.
GENERAL AGENTS FOR
Series A No. 26498
FINNISH MARKS.
76.
Received from
John Bjorn
for which we will send
JUN 3, 1909



SEPARATION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY: Scandinavian Family life and the Immigrant Experience

Janet E. Rasmussen

Ingeborg was born in Näs, Sweden in 1904. In an oral history interview she describes her upbringing: "I remember a small house and a lot of kids. We were twelve at the table. My grandmother, my mother's mother, lived with us. We had a couple of cows and some sheep and a pig every year and things like that. I started when I was seven to stay with my auntie, my mother's sister. They had a big farm, eight or nine cows and two horses. I used to be there in the summer and come home and go to school in the wintertime. After I got through school, then I stayed with my auntie altogether and worked on the farm, learned to milk, and things like that." Together with two brothers and a cousin, Ingeborg emigrated to the United States at the age of seventeen. She settled in Tacoma, Washington, where she worked as a domestic servant and later married a fellow Swede.

Ingeborg from Näs is one of more than 240 Scandinavians whose taped life histories we are preserving as part of the Scandinavian Immigrant Experience Collection in the Pacific Lutheran University library. By focusing on individual human experience, these oral histories can inspire rich new interpretations of social history. A consideration of family life in turn-of-the-century Scandinavia offers an example of the power and importance of this type of research. Ingeborg and other immigrant women in the PLU collection relate personal stories that suggest an interesting link between old-country family patterns and the immigrant experience -- stories of separation and self-sufficiency.

In past generations, the household unit was in great flux. One reason households fluctuated was the early departure of children to live and work outside the home. Large families and limited resources made it practical, even mandatory, for children to leave home. A young person might be attached to another household as an apprentice. Ingeborg's description of a childhood spent moving between two households, that of her mother and that of her aunt, illustrates how a young person might receive training and in turn provide labor. In an urban environment, the arrangement for pre-conformation age children would not necessarily involve boarding elsewhere. Bergljot, for example, grew up in Trondheim, Norway, the daughter of a sea captain: "There was another captain's

wife whose husband was gone and she had a little girl; and mother asked this lady if she would have the patience to teach me to cook, clean, and take care of her little girl, when I was ten years old. I worked there four years. My mother said, 'Don't pay her; if you teach her, don't pay her.' I went there after school and helped and in the summer."

Children who remained at home were charged with specific responsibilities there. Work was a way of life, also for children: "As soon as we could walk, we had to carry branches from trees every time we go home. We had to carry wood to fire. So it was a struggle, but it went fine. Well, that's all we done -- struggle. We always have worked hard, all of us." Once schooling and confirmation were finished, however, usually around age fourteen, it was the norm for young women to move out of their parents' home and take paid employment. Johanne from rural Denmark explains: "I worked in houses from I was fourteen till I was twenty-five. See, this was the custom. As soon as you were confirmed, out on your own. Then you take care of yourself."

Often the employers were relatives or neighbors. The employment pattern might be erratic. Sometimes the available work was seasonal; sometimes the parental household continued to exert demands. The daughter of a fisherman-farmer and one of seven children, Olga came from Kvanøy in northern Norway. She learned dressmaking from a sister who had a shop in the nearest town. From there she went to Harstad where at age seventeen she was employed as a cook: "But then my dad was gotten so old, he couldn't go to Lofoten [fishing] anymore, so he just lived out of selling the milk. And then we helped out, had jobs. I was sewing in between. In the summertime I used to go out and work for the farmers to rake the hay. All the girls was raking hay; you got so much a day. You made big money that way. Cause I was at home all the time until the haying was over, about six weeks. Then I got other jobs." Frequently, through their work as farm servants, housemaids, and cooks, young women like Olga grew accustomed to an itinerant lifestyle.

A second major reason for such a volatile household composition was parental absence, caused by work, emigration, or death. Seamen and fishermen were absent for long periods of time; and their occupations, like many others, carried physical risks. The death of a parent was a childhood experience faced by a remarkably high number of our interviewees. Father, born in Finland in 1901, lost her mother when she was two years old: "He was a very good father. He tried to take good care of me. But he always had to hire a place to put me in and he didn't know how they took care of me. He came to see me very often, but I don't know, I was so funny, I didn't dare to complain and some places was so cruel." A recurring pattern of loss is conveyed by Linnea: "My daddy worked on the sawmill and he was on a barge. That's where he was when he died. They figured that he slipped and fell overboard; there was no fence or anything. When he died, the youngest girl was nine months old. Three of the children

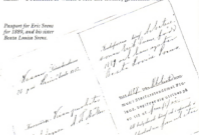
had died when they were small, so we were eight. The two biggest girls were working when daddy died and my oldest brother, he was getting confirmed. Then we were five. I really don't know how mother managed."

In the face of such crises, a family might support itself. Clara remembers: "My father was a fisherman. There were six children -- five girls and one boy. My dad drowned. That's how we happened to come over. He was drowned in 1898. My brother was born one month later. My aunt in Aberdeen [WA] kept writing to my mother to come to America. She says, with all those children you have a much better time making a living over here, off the farm, than you would there. So my mother decided that she would do this. She sold the little old farm." But two of the girls stayed behind in Norway: "One was eight and the other ten. The oldest one, she was already working quite a bit for these people. As long as they had been living out with others, they stayed behind."

Overseas migration was yet another unstable element in the lives of Scandinavian families. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the typical Scandinavian emigrant was a young, unmarried adult, motivated by economic pressures to emigrate. Women made up an increasing proportion of this population; by 1905, between thirty-five and fifty percent of the emigrants from the individual Nordic countries were female. The geographical and cultural space that came to separate family members as a result of emigration distinguished the transatlantic move from the partings otherwise woven into the pattern of family life. Not surprisingly, then, the leaving-taking sparked emotions that were otherwise kept in check. These unusual circumstances made a solemn impression upon the departing daughters. Gunhild recalls: "Mom felt so bad when I was gonna leave, she went right to bed. She got sick, poor thing. I was the baby and that's what bothered them so bad when I left. I never saw them cry before."

Two images of the departure are imprinted in Anna's memory. She left her home in northern Norway in 1914 at the age of twenty-three. Her sister and mother accompanied her on the first leg of the journey, but she last saw her grandmother as they rowed away from the farm: "I remember when I left the home, grandma was

Passport for Eric Svens for 1909, and his sister Beata Linnar Svens.



sitting with a cane on kind of a high hill above the water. She was just sitting there. She didn't cry or anything. She just turned and walked up the hill with her cane." The next day, Anna left Rævik on the coastal steamer: "We went down to the dock and I said good-bye to my mother and my sister and mother fainted on the dock. So they got an ambulance and took her up to the hospital. And that's the last I saw her. Isn't that awful? And that I thought of, all the way going over."

Such stories suggest the strong emotional bonds that knit together members of the immediate family. The degree of intimacy and sharing was not as great as we would expect today, in part because children assumed independent responsibilities at an earlier age and because economic survival often mandated separations. But while such circumstances may have made it easier to accept the fact of emigration, it could be a wrenching experience, in particular for the parent or parents who stayed behind. To judge by their testimony, the emigrants themselves found that excitement and anticipation overshadowed much of the pain and guilt of departure. As Ellen, who left Denmark in 1925, says: "When you are eighteen, you are full of expectations and adventure and all that. It really didn't sink in too much [about leaving]." What is more, the expressed intention was often to spend only a few profitable years in America: "I was coming home in five years."

Then, too, the emigrants could look forward to contact with relatives or neighbors in America. Most interviewees report joining siblings, aunts and uncles, or cousins who had already settled in this country. Encouragement for, and help with, emigration was often provided by the American branch of the family. Money for the ticket, a place to stay, and job referral were usual forms of practical assistance. But just as the fact of common household occupancy was not essential to the maintenance of kinship ties in Scandinavia, so the sharing of a household, or even frequent association, was not an essential part of the kinship relationship in America. Both pride and economic necessity drove the new arrivals into the job market right away: "I have never been used to depend on people. I like to be able to depend on myself. So I went to Seattle and started to work in houses." In a similar vein, Ida states, "I didn't want to be beholden to anyone. I wanted to earn my own money and I felt I was imposing. I just wanted to be on my own."

As domestic servants, the women lived in American households and associated with friends and relatives during their scheduled time off, Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Even if they had no relatives in the area, the immigrants found that the ethnic community offered opportunities for interaction and support. For Ida, Seattle was almost like settling in an extension of her *lygd* or home community: "One of the girls I had gone to confirmation with and her brother and her sister were in Seattle. So many from my part of Norway, from off the mainland, were fishermen in Ballard. You just got acquainted with an awful lot of people from back home."

In the new land, the childhood home was not forgotten. Letters passed back and forth. Some, like Ester, even managed visits back from the Åland Islands: "I promised mother that I would come home as soon as I paid for my face coming over and saved enough money. And that I did. I saved every penny I possibly could, and I went home to visit my mother and sisters and that was really a lovely, lovely time. I came home for Christmas. There was so much snow and we went to church at night with a horse and sleigh. I forgot how beautiful it was in the wintertime." Homesickness was tempered by associations in the ethnic community and, most importantly, by the eventual establishment of a home and family in America. Ina says, "I got so lonesome for Finland. I tell truth, I like here and everything good; but I don't stay here if I don't have my daughter here and if I don't have two grandson and four great grandchildren and I love children."

The immigrant women express admiration for parents who, in spite of economic difficulty, personal loss, and separation, cultivated a family identity and communicated clear values to their children. Elsie's childhood in Västergötland, Sweden, was marked by repeated partings from members of the immediate family, by her mother's infirmity and eventual death, and by economic instability. Yet she articulates a positive legacy: "We were taught as children to be very dependent upon ourselves, not to ask for anything, always be able to take care of yourself, never be afraid to work, and everything will come out all right; and always trust in God and everything would be all right. That was the attitude my mother had." The values spawned by such home environments equipped the Scandinavian women well for the challenges of a new country. Self-sufficiency, the commitment to hard work, repression of emotions, and faith in God — these provided a valuable foundation, particularly during the early years of adjustment.

Naturally, the home environment could be sufficiently unstable so as to create psychological and other problems for the young women. Two interviewees who emigrated as children after their fathers had died, and who were raised in America not by their mothers directly but in a series of foster homes, remind us that trauma and bitterness follow when individuals perceive themselves as unloved. The other narrators I have quoted are frank about the hardships and even the loneliness they experienced, but express these as the products of necessity, not as flaws in familial love.

An interesting commentary on family patterns like these is offered by two researchers from the University of Vienna. As reported in *Family Form in Historic Europe* (ed. Richard Wall, et al., Cambridge, 1983), Reinhard Sieder and Michael Mitterauer have used serial household lists to examine the "family life course" or changes in households over several generations in rural Austria. This work demonstrates a high degree of household fluidity, owing both to the frequent movement of children and servants and to high mortality. Sieder and Mitterauer

speculate about the consequences of this constant flux in and out of the household: "One might perhaps go further and suggest that the experiences of death and separation must have had a different quality in the nineteenth century. What did people feel on the death of parents, a marriage partner, or a child? How did parents react to parting with a child at an early age? It would seem that, because there was little stability, there were also little privacy and intimacy among members of the nineteenth-century rural family, certainly less than what would be true of many present-day middle-class families."

8 The oral history material suggests, however, that Sieder and Mitterauer's speculations concerning the emotional consequences of a fluid household pattern are not correct, at least as far as Scandinavia is concerned. There, family ties were strong and remained so in spite of separation. In a strict sense, intimacy was not a pronounced characteristic of family life, but both commitment to the well-being of the family unit and identification with it can be documented.

Historians interested in European family patterns know how difficult it is to identify and analyze kinship bonds retrospectively; for that very reason, some scholars argue that the logical unit of study is not the family but rather the household, as defined by shared residence and meal consumption. Typically, detailed studies of historic households, and of kin relationships within those households, depend upon the painstaking review of census and other records. Studies of this type, like those conducted by Sieder and Mitterauer, generate important culture-specific information about household formation and demographic composition, but they leave unexamined the quality and range of interpersonal ties. In allowing examination of family bonds that transcend the household unit, and in inviting consideration of intangible aspects like emotions and values, oral history research helps us to draw a more nuanced picture of the past.

Scandinavian women who emigrated to North America in the early decades of the twentieth century grew up in fluctuating household circumstances and were socialized to move into other households, first as servants and later as wives. Their network of relationships extended to the distant western United States, where relatives and neighbors had established new households. For these women, emigration was not abandonment of the family; by and large, it was an extension of well-established social patterns and priorities, including an ardent commitment to self-sufficiency. The most fortunate individuals also brought with them familial affection and goodwill. Ina shares this poignant memory: "I have in mind, when my daddy say good-by to me, when I left Finland. He gave a prayer. We went to Kokkola, where the train left. The steps for the train, I stand there, and he stand one step lower. Then he put his hands over my head, and he say, 'Now our little girl is going to the world. I can't give you riches or gold or silver, but take my blessing and keep it. Remember the old folks' prayers and this will always help you.' No matter what happens, I have my father's blessing." ■

THE DEATH OF DON GUIDO A SPANISH POEM: Text and Translation

James Predmore

A secondary school teacher of French in the small provincial cities of rural Spain, Antonio Machado (1875-1939) is better known as an essayist, philosopher, playwright, and perhaps twentieth-century Spain's best poet. He was born in Seville in southern Spain; however, he spent most of his adult life in Spain's central region of Castile, a somber, harsh land that was to provide the principal inspiration for his best poetry. Reacting against the elitist, art-for-art's sake poetry so much in vogue at the beginning of his career, Machado's poetry tends to be as unadorned, melancholy, and thought-provoking as the land and people that inspired him.

In 1898 Spain suffered a disastrous and overwhelming defeat by the United States in the Spanish-American war, dramatizing her precipitous and seemingly inescapable decline from world power and prestige that had started in the late sixteenth century. This defeat also accelerated a process of national soul-searching already under way. Machado's generation, the Generation of 1898, became obsessed with the desire of understanding Spain: her people, her land, her history. Although behind all their writing lay a fervent hope for her regeneration, both material and spiritual, their literature also frequently expressed a brooding pessimism.

The majority of Machado's best collection of poetry, *Lands of Castile*, was written between the years 1907 and 1912. However, not only did he continue to add to this collection throughout his life, he also included material that was not, strictly speaking, confined to the boundaries of Castile. Such is the case of the poem translated below. Nevertheless, Machado's mocking portrayal of this "Andalusian nobleman" is very consistent with the spirit of *Lands of Castile* and his preoccupation with the regeneration of Spain.

Don Guido is an Andalusian nobleman, an aristocratic representative of an older feudal society, still surviving and still visible in twentieth-century Spain. In this mocking, satirical portrait, Machado shows himself to be a merciless critic of the frivolity, hypocrisy, and emptiness of this "noble" way of life and its values. He knows that the old Spain of Don Guido must die out (indeed, he welcomes its demise) and be transformed, if a new Spain, a revitalized Spain of liberal and democratic ideals, is to be fully realized.

LLANTO DE LAS VIRTUDES Y COPLAS POR LA MUERTE DE DON GUIDO

Al fin, una pulmonía
mató a don Guido, y están
las campanas todo el día
doblando por él: ¡don-dan!
Murió don Guido, un señor
de mozo muy jaranero,
muy galán y algo torero;
de viejo, gran rezador.
Dicen que tuvo un sermón
ese señor de Sevilla;
que era diestro
en manejar el caballo,
y un maestro
en refrenar manzanilla.

Cuando murió su riqueza,
era su monomanía
pensar que pensar debía
en acortar la cabeza.

Y asentóla
de una manera espóliola,
que fue casarse con una
doncella de gran fortuna;
y repintar sus blasones,
hablar de las tradiciones
de su casa,
a escudillos y amoros
poner tasa,
sordina a sus devoratos.

Grin pagano,
se hizo hermano
de una santa cofradía;
el Jueves Santo salía,
llevando un cirio en la mano
— ¡jaquel trueno! —
venido de nazareno.
Hoy nos dice la campana
que han de llevarse mañana
al buen don Guido, muy serio,
camino del cementerio.

Buen don Guido, ya eres ido
y para siempre jamás...
Alguien dice: ¿Qué dejaste?
Yo pregunto: ¿Qué llevaste
al mundo donde hoy estás?
¿Tu amor a los alamares
y a las sedas y a los ocos,
y a las sangre de los toros
y al humo de los altares?

Buen don Guido y equipaje,
¡buen viaje!...

El acá
y el allá
caballero,
se ve en tu rostro marchito,
lo infirmito:
cero, cero.

¡Oh las rejotas mejillas,
amarillas,
y los párpados de cera,
y la fina calavera
en la almohada del lecho!

¡Oh fin de una aristocracia!
La barba canosa y lacia
sobre el pecho;
metido en tosco sayal,
las yertas manos en cruzar,
¡tan formal!
el caballero andaluz.

LAMENT ON DON GUIDO'S VIRTUES, AND VERSES FOR HIS DEATH

In the end, pneumonia
killed Don Guido, and
all day long the bells
do toll for him.

That aristocrat Don Guido is dead.
In youth he was a rowdy
gallant, a gentleman bullfighter;
in old age, extremely devout.

They say he had a sermon,
this aristocrat from Seville;
that he knew how
to handle a horse,
and was a master
at tugging manzanilla.

When his wealth ran out,
he was obsessed by the thought
that he really should think
about settling down.

And he did,
in a very Spanish way.
He married a wealthy young maiden;
touched up his coat of arms,
spoke of the traditions
of his lineage,
covered up
his scandals and love affairs,
hushed up his extravagances.

A great pagan,
he became a member
of a holy brotherhood.
On Holy Thursday he would go out,
carrying a candle in his hand
— that hypocrite! —
dressed as a Nazarene.
Today the bell tolls,
for tomorrow they will carry away
noble Don Guido, so solemn,
bound for the cemetery.

Noble Don Guido, now you are gone
forever and ever...
Someone may say: What did you leave behind?
But I ask: What did you take
to the world where you now reside?

Was it your love for clothes,
for silk and gold,
for the blood of the bulls,
and the incense of altars?

Noble Don Guido, with all your effects,
fare thee well!...

The here
and the there,
Sir,

are seen in your withered face,
the infinite:
nothing, nought.

Ah, your wizened yellow
cheeks,
your waxen eyelids,
that fine skull
upon the pillow of your deathbed!

An aristocracy's end!
Your hoary link beard
resting on your chest;
wrapped in coarse sackcloth,
your rigid hands form a cross,
so very proper!

This Andalusian nobleman. ■



Recent Humanities Publications

Jack Cady

"The Sons of Noah"

Omnii 13:4 (January 1991).

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hands are they delivered.

Genesis 9:2

This verse from the Bible, in which God gives humans dominion over the earth and its creatures, has served as text for sermons ever since the days of the Reformation. It is also interpreted by historians as a religious injunction to subdue nature.

In America, it is said, this injunction combined with the Puritan, Calvinist ethic to produce a society that would regard nature as an enemy. Nature (and natural resources) should not merely be subdued. They should be defeated and exploited.

In narrative that carries patriarchal and antique tones, my story remembers the eternal grandeur of God. It tells about a congregation that calls itself The Sons of Noah. In the 19th century the congregation settled a valley in the Olympic Mountains. The floor of the valley floods every seven years. It lies above a mountain lake that contains water as old as the creation.

Through reverence and hard work the congregation actually achieves the peace that passes all understanding. As the 20th century progresses, however, that peace becomes more and more threatened by technology. When a wealthy visitor arrives to change and modernize the valley, the forces of flood rise from the underground lake. The creation is protected as the intruder is destroyed. The congregation understands that although God has promised never to again destroy the earth by flood, there is no promise that humans will not do so with the greenhouse effect.

The story examines the other side of Genesis 9:2 in a statement that seems simple but true. Great power carries great responsibility. The story asks that we assume responsibility commensurate with our power. ■

Paul O. Ingram

"Nature's Jeweled Net: Kūkai's Ecological Buddhism"

The Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies (Fall 1990): 50-64.

Traditional Christian interpretations of the Genesis creation myth and the mechanistic world view of classical Newtonian science, which on major issues go hand-in-hand intellectually as well as historically, everywhere raised the standard of living but cut down on the fun. The origins of the modern ecological crisis lie here. Christianity and science hushed the bushes and gagged the rocks, razed the sacred groves and killed their priests, and drained the flow of meaning right off the planet. Schools were built, and people learned to measure and add, to write, to pray to an absent God. The function of knowledge became to "de-spookify nature," and Christianity and Newtonian science began this process.

We are, however, enfolded in a living, terrestrial environment in which all things are mutually implicated and implied. This conclusion, drawn from contemporary ecological thinking, is also a statement about the nature of reality, altering our understanding of ourselves, individually, and of human nature, generally. In this essay I develop several metaphysical implications from contemporary ecological research and relate them to contemporary physics and Shingon Buddhism.

The essay is based on four assumptions: (1) there now exists an ecological crisis that threatens the planet-wide extinction of all species of life; (2) engineering and technology alone cannot prevent the extinction of life on this planet; (3) neither mainstream Christian views of nature nor modern Western secularism provide relevant responses to the ecological crisis; and (4) only a major paradigm shift toward an organic world view is capable of providing resources for resolving the biological, ethical, social, political, and religious issues posed by the contemporary ecological crisis.

An organic world view conceives the "things" that constitute the universe as a series of mutual processes of interrelationships and interdependencies. In the West, modern physics (relativity theory and quantum theory) and ecological studies, as well as a movement within modern Christian thought known as process theology, have contributed their own specific and technical interpretations of an emerging organic paradigm. Since environmental destruction is planet wide, my thesis is that dialogue with Eastern religious traditions, most of whose teachings and practices assume an organic world view, can help the West shift its mechanistic view of nature toward an already emerging organic paradigm.



I begin with a typological characterization of the central elements of mainstream Christian and classical scientific views of nature, showing how both views coalesce in modern secularism and why neither is a competent response to the ecological crisis. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of what I call the "ecological" Buddhist world view of Kūkai, the ninth-century establisher of Japanese Shingon ("Truth Word") Buddhism. According to Kūkai, the cosmic reality "in, with, and under" all things and events at every moment of space-time is the supreme Buddha, *Mahāvairocana* (Japanese, *Dainichi Nyorai*, "Great Sun Thus Come").

Kūkai employed the well-known metaphor of Indra's net to illustrate what he meant. In the heavenly abode of the great Hindu deity, Indra, there is a wonderful net hung in such a manner that it stretches out in all directions. The clever weaver of the net has hung a single jewel in each eye, and since the net is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. If we look closely at a single jewel, we discover that its polished surface reflects all other jewels in the net. Not only that, each of the jewels reflected in the one we are looking at is simultaneously reflecting all the other jewels, so that there occurs an infinite reflecting process. In other words, we are this universe looking at itself.

The environmental destruction of traditional Christianity's and Newtonian science's mechanistic world view has been largely delayed. But the ecological limits of the Earth are now stretched, and in some cases, broken. Dialogue with Eastern organic views of nature such as Kūkai's can engender the process of Western self-criticism by providing an alternative place to stand and imagine new possibilities about humanity's place and role in nature. In doing so, we might discern deeper organic strata within our own inherited cultural biases and assumptions, and apprehend that we neither stand against nor dominate

cares for its individual members, but which entails little or no social constraints or challenges. These Christians have confused a culturally informed idea of community with the theological reality of church. They are unaware that the Christian tradition's understanding of community is much broader and deeper than their idealized expectations. This collapse of the dialectic between cultural ideas about community and theological understandings of church seriously undermines Christians' ability to comprehend and work toward the realization of the vision of God's universal rule of compassion and justice.

This situation presents crucial pastoral and theological challenges. In the United States the lack of opportunities to experience and practice the skills for community -- understood as medium-sized social organizations that combine characteristics of both large formal associations and small primary groups -- means fewer persons being these skills with them to congregations. Further, people come to the church seeking experiences of community not provided in other realms of their lives. The pastoral challenge is to provide healthy experiences of community and thus to increase members' skills for creating and sustaining such communities.

The situation also presents a theological challenge. The church community is to be a human group which is the effect in the world of God's self-communication in Christ and the Spirit. That human group is authentically church when it effectively embodies the call of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the gospel, the celebration of the eucharist, the fellowship of love, and ministry in the apostolic tradition. The embodiment of these constitutive principles of church requires of congregational members a wider range of skills than most have.

Christian congregations must nurture in their members the capacity for sustained commitment and the ability for steady contribution to a vision or project in easy and difficult circumstances. Congregations must cultivate in their members the sturdy integrity of self required to nurture and create without demanding control of the outcome. These are human characteristics essential for authentic Christian community. Without them individuals and groups cannot grasp in a participative way the redemptive and life-giving meaning of the paschal mystery. Without them, they are likely to miss the intensifying and universalizing claims of faith. Without them, they will not know the delight of self-transcending love and care.

Christian congregations must retrieve an understanding of the dialectical relationship between cultural experiences of community and the theological vision which they aspire to embody. To do so requires an exercise of critical, creative imagination. To fail means the increasing irrelevance of Christian congregations in the contemporary United States. ■

* * * * *
Patricia O'Connell Killen

"The Practice of Christian Community"

St. Luke's Journal of Theology 34 (March 1991): 115-30.

For Christians, cultural experiences of and ideas about community exist in dialectical tension with theological understandings of church. Awareness of that dialectical tension, however, waxes and wanes. Many Christian congregations in the United States today have an unrealistic vision of Christian community, conceiving of church as an idealized primary group which completely accepts and

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