REGENT COLLEGE

HEART RELIGION:

CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND THE PROCESS OF INTROVERSION

A COMPREHENSIVE PAPER IN

INDS 790: COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

WINTER SEMESTER 2014

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VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

APRIL 11, 2014

PART ONE:

READING SUMMARIES

Abrams, M.H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*.

    New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971.

       In his work, *Natural Supernaturalism*, Abrams explores the secularization of inherited theological ideas in the four decades of Romanticism that followed on the heels of the French Revolution. He contends that the Romantic writers strived to save concepts and values that had been based on traditional Christian belief in a relational Creator by reinterpreting them through notions of a deified human mind and its relation to nature. Using the poet Wordsworth as his central case study, Abrams traces throughout the poetry and philosophy of the Romantic Age the exalted view of human consciousness and its unfettered ability to make manifest its own "heavenly" paradise for the individual person.

       For Abrams, Wordsworth typifies much of the thinking and goals of the Romantic Age. His poetry followed in succession of Milton's epic, *Paradise Lost*, but he replaced the divine elements with decidedly naturalistic ones, and he based the construction of a new world on the "procreative marriage" of mind and nature. Within this relationship, nature played a mothering role to the mind, and existed as a means by which the mind was nurtured and developed. This was not to suggest that the mind was in some way captive to, or dependent upon nature. Rather, from this developmental process the mind emerged dominant and preeminent, capable of transforming nature by its own power, or at least able to alter its perception of nature. Therefore, the mind proved itself to be a self-salvific and transcendent aspect of humanity in the midst of a not-always-cordial material existence. Amid the bloodied battlefields and the failed hopes of the French Revolution, Wordsworth considered himself the prophet, or evangelist, of a new salvation and a new hope made possible by the imaginative and transformative power of the

human mind. By naturalizing the supernatural and humanizing the divine, Wordsworth stood alongside other poets of Romanticism, such as Coleridge, Shelley, and Carlyle, as well as beside Romantic thinkers, such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, in the pursuit of a transvalued redemption rooted in the individual self rather than the person of the Christian God.

Central to the program of the Romantic Age was a circuitous view of reality and human progress, derived from both pagan and Christian Neoplatonism, and the Esoteric tradition. In this fall paradigm, the root of humanity's malaise was found in a division from nature, from people, and from oneself, and reconciliation was accessed through a return to an earlier Edenic state of wholeness. Such a return was realized in the ability of the mind to reinvest the world with "the modifying colors of the imagination"; the old was made new again by appropriating a child's sense of wonder and novelty, and was evidenced in a perception changing "Moment" in which the mundane was invested with a heretofore unobserved revelation. Humanity's salvation lay in the circuitous pilgrimage back to the primordial state, but the return existed at a new, higher level of consciousness. Abrams sees this Romantic idea reflected to a particular degree in American literature, especially in regards to the notion of the awe-inspiring vision of the child. He suggests the impetus for such a continuation of thought can be found in the millennial hopes of the first American immigrants and subsequent Transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau.

Drawing from both biblical examples and Christian thought, the poets and philosophers of Romanticism appropriated the ideals and aspirations of the Christian faith, and reformulated the means by which such hopes were reached. Through the transformative power of the mind, the hardships of material existence were harnessed for self-formulation, and the mundane of daily life was reinterpreted as the sublime in a circuitous, yet progressive, journey to the New Jerusalem.

Barth, Karl. *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*.

London: SCM Press, 1972. [Chapters 1-4]

In the first few chapters of *Protestant Theology*, the focus and content of this particular reading, Barth outlines factors within the preceding eighteenth century which subsequently impacted the Protestant theology that emerged in the nineteenth century: the conception of human beings, the attitude toward the subject-matter of theology, and the nature of the theological discussions that occurred over such subject-matter. Running throughout Barth's writing is the contention that what characterized the eighteenth century was an unfettered belief in human omnipotence, which he designates as, "absolutism."

Barth recognizes in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz's teaching on the monad the characteristic understanding of the human person, namely a self-sufficient "emanation" of God Himself, who is similarly uninhibited by external factors. He sees such understanding reflected in the external form of eighteenth-century life. Here, for example, there was a close relationship with nature, but it was a nature that was formed according to human sensibility and the human will for form. Language, literature, and poetry were all things to be mastered, and art was primarily a celebration of skill and manipulation. Internally, the people of this century considered themselves rational, and similarly found their world to be rational. So, in some sense this century was a type of revival of tenets of the sixteenth-century Renaissance; it was an age that celebrated humanism, and a humanism understood in its broadest sense. This was a decidedly anthropocentric world, both in its internal and external manifestations.

Regarding the subject matter of eighteenth-century theology, Barth sees the characteristic absolutism at play in the attempts that were made to "humanize" theology. By "humanizing"

Barth is referring to a process of transformation in which what was once a rigid, superior authority is turned into a malleable reality that can be experienced and understood by the individual human. That such an alteration occurred can be seen in the efforts to incorporate theology into the state through territorialism and collegialism; these were efforts to subsume the Church in the state. Such "humanizing" also sought to have Christianity incorporated into morality and the bourgeoisie. In this context Christianity was identified with the molding of human life, and it was charged with the responsibility of meeting human needs. Science and philosophy functioned as yet another method of humanization in which a "natural" or "reasonable" theology was pursued, resulting in an understanding of Christ as merely a moral instructor. Finally, the eighteenth-century push to alter Christianity is evidenced in the turn to inwardness and the individual, which functioned as a way of appropriating the faith for the individual such that it existed as an object for human mastery. The attempt at total assimilation, however, remained an incomplete project as internal contradictions, an inability to fully co-opt the Bible to one particular view, and the tenacity of various early elements of Christianity resisted the pressure to conform.

What becomes clear is that eighteenth-century theology did not so much guide the age as it sought to catch up with the various movements already affecting change in both Church and culture. Through the work of Johannes Franz Baddeus human reason was conceived of as the controlling factor in faith and revelation, and the rise of subsequent neologists only furthered a process in which dogma and revelation was whittled down to what could be considered rational truth. As a result of this process of humanization, propelled by eighteenth-century absolutism and the belief in human omnipotence, Christianity was equated to little more than a variety of ideas about God, freedom, morality, and immortality.

Berger, Peter, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner. *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and*

      Consciousness. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

In *The Homeless Mind*, Berger contends that modernization, understood as the development and spread of institutions resulting from the ascendency of a technological society, necessarily involves, and impacts, human consciousness. The result of the process of modernization on consciousness is one of segmentation and anonymity, necessitating the creation of a private realm in which individual wholeness may be maintained and the threat of anomie mitigated, and culminating in a sense of metaphysical homelessness.

The primary carriers of modernization are technological production and bureaucracy. Technological production is such that it facilitates the segmentation of human life into different sectors, not the least of which is the segregation of work and private life. From such a situation emerges the sense of anonymity, whereby within the public realm one's identity is driven more by one's function than by one's character and personal traits. In order to preserve an integrated sense of self, the creation of a private world is required in which one might fully express one's subjective identity. Bureaucracy, which demands anonymity for the continuation and proper functioning of its operations, further compounds the need for an individual private realm. Other, secondary, factors also come into play. Perhaps of most significance are the plurality of social-life worlds that characterize modern public spheres, and their concomitant plurality of "home worlds," or constructed universes by which identity and meaning are derived. The culmination of these carriers is such that what results is an estrangement of the individual from the larger social reality, and thus there exists an increasing sense of homelessness within the world.

The implications of modernization are well exhibited among emerging Third-World societies, where the process can be seen as one that radically reorients former ways of thinking, former ways of living, and former ways of conceiving of oneself within the world. It is ultimately a process of destabilization whereby the world is redefined and other humans are completely reclassified. Furthermore, one loses sense of one's self, resulting in uncertainty regarding reality. Thus the threat of meaninglessness is always near at hand. The irony of movements that are established in attempts to mitigate, or even combat, the emerging modernization and its impacts, is that they themselves are indicative of the modern notion of the manipulation of process; thus these protest movements are themselves explicitly modern. This exemplifies just how pervasive and inescapable a force modern consciousness is, despite attempts to resist it.

Nonetheless, there are many, even within "modernized" societies, who might be labeled as the "Discontents" of modernization. In general the impulse for de-modernization can be equated to a desire for the reversal of the process of modernization that leads to alienation. This desire is expressed in the pursuit of the underlying "natural" being as a way to free oneself from the constraints modernization imposes on consciousness. Such a pursuit is evidenced in modern society in the revival of occultism and the centrality of ecological movements. That the de-modernizing impulse is limited to movements within society is telling of the fact that the complete dismantling of contemporary society is largely impossible, for it would involve untold amounts of suffering for millions of people. However, if the impulses that seek to counter modernization are bound by limits, so too is modernization. The very existence of discontentment guarantees it.

Berlin, Isaiah. *The Roots of Romanticism*. The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts. Edited by

      Henry Hardy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

      In *The Roots of Romanticism,* Berlin suggests that amongst the varieties of the Romantic

Movement there exist two central tenets: the notion of an unconquerable will, and the notion of a

lack of structure in the world. He suggests this movement, originating in a pietistic Germany, is

one of the most impactful in western history, and that its influence is still being felt today.

      In order to evidence his assertions regarding Romanticism and its origins, Berlin points to

a shift that occurred in German thinking between the 1760's and 1830's. Where once German

values could be characterized as grounded in the centrality of knowledge, the advance of science,

political power, happiness, discovering one's place within society, and living in loyalty, by the

late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries different values rose to ascension: integrity,

sincerity, a willingness to sacrifice one's life for something higher, dedication to an ideal. While

dedication to particular ideals could be said to have been exalted as early as the sixteenth

century, what characterized its latest manifestation was a change in emphasis. By the early

nineteenth century it was of little consequence what one held as an ideal, and all the more

important the fact that one held an ideal at all. Clearly something had changed.

      Implicit in these shifts of thinking is an undermining of the perception that there exists

such a thing as universality. As Berlin notes, this disdain for universality runs counter to the

propositions of the Enlightenment and the belief that there is structure and an ability to

comprehend it, built into reality, and that it is merely a matter of humanity discovering which

piece of the jigsaw puzzle fits where. The strongest push against such thinking, Berlin contends,

came from the Germans. The background to this lies in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War,

and an increasingly embedded pietism that took root, as many reacted against the emergence of pedantic scholasticism and sought solace within the inner sanctum of the soul. From this context emerged several thinkers who, whether willingly or not, contributed directly to the Romantic Movement.

Of particular importance for Berlin are figures such as Johann Georg Hamann, Johann Gottfried Herder, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schiller, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Friedrich Schelling, each of whom were profoundly shaped by their surrounding context. Ultimately what emerged from their, at times, seemingly disparate visions of reality, was the centrality of the free and unconquerable human will, and the notion that this world was not comprised of a discernable structure. Essentially then, Romanticism existed as a revolt against any imposition of organization, or universality, and against anything that suggested determination or an impinging of human autonomy; it espoused notions of the plurality, but ultimate incompatibility, of valid ideals in response to declarations of order, progress, structure, and perfection.

The contemporary world and its thinking owes much to the Romantic Movement. For one, Berlin suggests, it undermined the idea that there exists some sort of objective, universal criteria by which values and ideals can be evaluated, and the implications of such an undermining continue to be experienced today. Certainly we are much more comfortable with notions of imperfection, inexhaustibility, and plurality than our classical predecessors. As a result our societies tend to reflect greater degrees of liberalism, tolerance, and appreciation for different ideals. Berlin celebrates the fact that we understand there can be no universal solution for all peoples for, as he suggests, it makes us much more willing to compromise our own ideals, and therefore much more capable of cooperation.

Buckley, Michael J. *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*. New Haven: Yale University Press,

    1987.

In *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, Buckley seeks to determine how the idea of atheism emerged in the modern world, and how it has maintained cultural prominence. He contends that foundational to its emergence was an explicit shift in the discourse of Christian theologians in their defense of religious belief. With the recovery of ancient philosophy, and the rise of natural philosophy through Descartes and Newton, evidence for the existence of God came to be argued primarily from within the philosophical realm, passing over hundreds of years of Christian tradition, relativizing the witness of the person of Jesus Christ, and invalidating the testimony of religious experience. In doing so, suggests Buckley, religion admitted its own insufficiency and thus initiated a process of self-alienation whereby the philosophy that theology aligned itself with sought to free itself for the sake of its own integrity and, in turn, came to negate the necessity of religion in explaining reality and ordering human life.

With the retrieval of the Stoic topics, and the Platonizing of Epicurus, two Catholic theologians, Leonard Lessius and Marin Mersenne, began the process of the philosophizing of theology. Foundational to their endeavor was a particular reading of Thomas' *Summa theologiae*, in which the philosophical arguments were shorn from their theological context. What was initiated was a philosophic consciousness by which Christianity sought to defend the existence of God without recourse to anything particularly Christian. Consequently the rise of natural philosophy, marked by the advent of René Descartes' Universal Mathematics and Isaac Newton's Universal Mechanics, came to form the main battleground of Christian apologetics for the next four hundred years. By means of Descartes, theologians sought to correlate the existence

of mind and thought with the existence of the divine. Through Newton, on the other hand, warrant for God was pursued through the exploration and investigation of nature and the cosmos.

Various other figures followed, and appropriated and adapted aspects of both Newton and Descartes' philosophy to come to some form of certainty regarding the existence of a divine being. Nicolas Malebranche took Descartes further and united the perceiving of the infinite with the existence of the infinite. Using Newton, Samuel Clarke explicitly grounded the evidence for God in the material world, both within and external to the human person. In attempting to synthesize Descartes and Newton, Denis Diderot, came to the conclusion that the underlying and unifying factor to each was dynamic matter, and that this notion rendered the God hypothesis unnecessary and an attempt to disguise ignorance. With Diderot, suggests Buckley, emerged the first real alternative to the notion of supreme intelligence, and thus the first introduction of atheism.

Paralleling the thinking of Diderot, and in some ways more effectively propagating atheistic understanding, was Baron Paul Henri d'Holbach and his anonymous publication of *La Système de la nature*. His tome existed as a "masterly summary" of the increasingly popular atheism, as it co-opted the philosophical evidence used by the apologists for centuries, and argued from that same source that God, in fact, did not exist. Nature became the "total concrete universal," and *La Système* advocated a strictly causal theory of reality. Even the philosophical shift from metaphysics to epistemology did little to stem the rising tide of atheism, for the grounds on which God was defended was still outside the fold of religion, and so separate from the necessary witness of Jesus Christ and religious experience. The question of God, suggests Buckley, cannot be properly engaged apart from the "external presence" of the saints and Jesus Christ, and the "internal orientation" of individuals toward the ultimate.

Cuddihy, John Murray. *No Offense: Civil Religion and Protestant Taste*. New York: The

Seabury Press, 1978.

Cuddihy's concern in *No Offense* is to examine what results from the immigration of European religious and political beliefs to the shores of America. He contends that, when confronted with the particular pluralistic context of America, European beliefs and ideologies underwent a process of "civilization"; they were made to become civil. This process of taming also entailed a process of theological conversion, whereby justification was sought for the new, emerging practice of civility. Cuddihy suggests that while "believers" populated the European continent, America is better understood as a nation of "behavers."

Religion in America, argues Cuddihy, is a largely private affair, as a result of the immigrating traditional religions encountering, and having to live alongside, a diversity of other religions. Gradually such pluralism came to be accepted, not only as inevitable, but also as good. The outcome of this process, which Cuddihy refers to as differentiation or denominationalism, is a type of religion that functions as a mere "aspect" of total society, and thus is relegated to particular contexts rather the complete sphere of human existence. Given such a diversity of religious belief, no single expression can come to be held above the rest—necessitating the separation of church and state—and what comes to form the foundation of society is not religious, ethnic, or class solidarity, but rather "fraternal socialization." This is, Cuddihy suggests, "a solidarity for the interim," or civility. Therefore pluralism exists as the *de facto* religion of America, the one to which all others must accommodate.

Exemplary of the blunting of the rough edges, or taming, of religion can be found within the Protestant camp in Reinhold Niebuhr's call to abandon evangelistic activities directed toward

the Jews. Within Catholicism Cuddihy finds a similar accommodation in John Courtney

Murray's attempts to demythologize the First Amendment, such that it could become an "article

of civility" to which Catholics could fully adhere themselves. Judaism, however, rather than

raiding its own religious tradition to justify its accommodation to the modern world, did just the

opposite and made use of the values of the world to further justify its religion tradition of being a

chosen people. Such a designation of special status echoes with American civil religion, itself a

type of secularized Christian religion, which at one point also considered itself to be set apart.

Thus Judaism does not sit as comfortably within the American context as both Protestantism and

Catholicism. Nevertheless, it too has gone through the process of modernization, whereby its

public claim of uniqueness has also had to be blunted for the sake of participation in the New

World, though not to the same extent as its religious counterparts.

The effect of the American context on European religions is much the same as the effect

on European ideologies; such ideologies are characterized as obsessions, and those obsessions

are held publicly in low esteem. Thus they too have lost their sharpness and any hint of

triumphalism. Both these political shifts, and their previously mentioned religious counterparts,

exist as a result of the secularized "self-effacing modesty" found within Puritanism, namely, the

virtue of humility. In view here is an interim solution that hinges on the anticipation of the future

Parousia and the renewal of all things. True, and deep, community and solidarity is good and

something to be desired. However, it is not something to be expected in the present; it can only

be hoped for in the future. These notions of the Puritan "half-way" covenant led to the strangling

of religious public action and political work, as if such endeavors in some way were indicative of

the violation of the separation of church and state.

Lee, Philip J. *Against the Protestant Gnostics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

In *Against the Protestant Gnostics*, Philip J. Lee contends that North American Protestantism, throughout its development, has been susceptible and even open to gnostic influence, and that its current manifestation exists as a gnostic type. Thus, he suggests, it exhibits many parallels to the ancient Gnosticism that the leaders of the early Church so greatly feared.

Gnosticism tends to emerge in contexts in which the prevailing mood is one of despair, that is, in a culture of diminishing hope. Thus the gnostic spirit is one characterized by a sense of metaphysical alienation. Such exile is experienced because the created world is believed to exist only as some divine or cosmic accident, and the question that plagues the gnostic human is where one can find salvation if the god of creation did not intend for materiality to exist. Belief in the existence of a concealed divine spark within the human person leads Gnostics to seek salvation from within the self and abhor the unintended created order. Consequently, Gnosticism exists very much as Christian heresy, for it pits an alienated humanity against a biblical understanding of creation as both intentional and good. However, Gnosticism is considered heretical for other reasons as well. For example, it locates salvation within the self, it construes salvation as escape rather than pilgrimage, it pits the "knowing self" against the community of belief, it segregates the "spiritual elite" from the rest of society, and, finally, it embraces syncretism while eschewing particularity.

Existence of similar gnostic themes can be found and traced throughout the Tradition, and particularly within Protestant history. For the most part, however, there continued to function other emphases that blunted the hard edges of these gnostic ideas or tendencies, and held them in check. Nonetheless, once the Christian religion, and specifically its Protestant form, landed on

the shores of the New World, the challenges of the novel context allowed for theological shifts that facilitated the emergence of the gnostic type. Lee suggests that what occurred in the American context was a deepening divide in the conception of creation and God, resulting from the doctrine of total depravity, and culminating in the emergence of a sense of alienation. Within such a context, the gospel became less an issue of "objective cosmic reality" and more and issue of subjective knowledge; consequently, the spiritual experience of conversion and sense of assurance became the qualifying markers of the Christian.

Salvation then, became a matter of escape from the evils of creation: escape from time, history, politics, the body, sex, and family. The only place where such an escape could occur was within the self. Thus the realm of Christianity shifted from the sacred community to the individual, and began to exhibit the gnostic characteristics of elitism and syncretism. This resulted in the rejection of the good of creation, and it led to the ascendance of private illumination; it segregated religion from the larger public life, and it promoted the leveling of ultimate truth claims and their call on individual life. The only way, suggests Lee, that Protestantism can correct its expression as a gnostic type, is to be willingly and openly self-critical, and to mount an active campaign against the gnostic tendencies that emerge in an unbalanced Christianity: to preach grace, to teach with authority, to emphasize the creeds, to initiate an apostolic defense of the Church, to emphasize the continuation of God's activity, to promote the Church as the organizing center of Christian life, to affirm the notion of a daily and ordinary Christianity, and to restore participation in ritual.

Luckmann, Thomas. *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*.

New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967.

In his book, entitled, *The Invisible Religion*, Luckmann argues that the religious problem in the modern context is not an issue of the slow disappearance of religiosity at the hands of secularization, but rather that the religious problem has more to do with the emergence of a new religion. He contends that in the context of the Western industrial world, autonomous individualism has come to function as society's new official religion as adherence to an individualistic "sacred cosmos" has overcome what was once a Christian system of meaning.

Recognizing that his sociological assessment of religiosity in the Western world appears rather unique, Luckmann points out the theoretically, and methodologically, inadequate approach of the sociology to religion up until this point. He suggests that the focus has been exclusively on church-oriented religiosity as a result of a failure to distinguish between church and religion. Consequently it is of little surprise to find numerous studies concluding that religion is in decline, for the rubric has been participation in an institutional church. None of this is to say, however, that what is learned in such an examination of church-oriented religion is of little use. Based on the findings of such studies, Luckmann asks whether something that might be called religion has come to replace "traditional church religion," and seeks to find a solution in a functional rather than substantive definition of religion.

By the term, "functional," Luckmann is referring to the construction and adoption of systems of meaning. Luckmann suggests that, theoretically, it was only by means of social interaction that we were able to transcend our biological nature, and, examine and interpret the flow of experience such that we began to form some system of meaning and gain some sense of a

self. From this first, anthropological condition of religion emerged the condition we are more familiar with: socialization. Here we found ourselves to be inheritors of particular systems of meaning, which allowed us to transcend our biological nature and interpret our various experiences of reality. Within these systems the ultimate significance of life and the meaning of the experience of extraordinary events was found in what Luckmann refers to as the "sacred cosmos." In turn this sacred cosmos directed and influenced the sense of the self and the understanding of one's relation to society.

As human society grew in complexity, more and more forces came to play against any unified understanding of a sacred cosmos, and thus it becomes necessary to pursue the "institutional specialization of religion" in order to safeguard those particular systems of meaning. However, in increasingly complex societies, institutional specialization occurs in all realms, not just the explicitly religious. Over time this led to religion becoming an increasingly private, or subjective, reality as it came to be seen as simply one institution among many from which one could choose one's preference. Consequently, the institutions that were once charged with the protection and mediation of ultimate meaning were no longer a source for the sacred cosmos of the individual. Rather, that source came to be found in the private sphere of one's own self.

Luckmann suggests that the interior turn for meaning, and the subsequent sense of autonomous individuality, functions as the new religion of modern society. He finds it articulated in the goals of self-realization, self-expression, and status achievement, and expressed through sexuality and, somewhat ironically, familism; it is espoused in phrases like "getting along," and "a fair shake for all." He surmises that modern society has not lost religion; rather the once decidedly Christian sacred cosmos has come to be replaced by that of individualism.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. New York: World Publishing, 1957.

The contention of Niebuhr's work in, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, is that denominationalism equates to little more than a cultural accommodation to division along national, racial, and economic lines, and that denominationalism itself remains oblivious to the ways in which it has allowed the gospel to be co-opted by social norms. He argues that denominationalism represents a failure of the Christian Church to rise above the conditions of its social situation, and he sets out to articulate the ways in which this may be evidenced.

One aspect of the process of denominationalism can be explained by means of a decidedly economic interpretation of Christian history. Niebuhr suggests that various economic classes comprise the majority of congregants within various denominations. For example, those who were economically disenfranchised formed Christian denominations that aligned with their particular needs and desires. Here he cites the Anabaptists, the Quakers, the Methodists, the Salvation Army, and the like—at least in their origins. Characteristic of those initially sect-like denominations was the centrality of emotional, or inner, experience and a hopeful millenarianism. The impulses and emphases that drove the formation of the sect, however, declined as the economic status of its participants improved; and the Reformation's affirmation of an "intra-worldly" asceticism, whereby work was designated as a fundamental duty in service to God, almost guaranteed economic ascendance. Thus the sect soon became a church of the middle-class, and concern for the upkeep of economic mobility combined with a theologically justified notion of work by which cultural accommodation was baptized.

However, there were other factors that similarly contributed to the formation of churches and denominations along lines that are seemingly more representative of worldly accommodation than the realization of the gospel. One was the cultural character of nationalism. The post-Reformation alliances that formed between religion and nation-states led to the integration of religious and national concerns, and ultimately to the subservience of Christianity to politics, and therefore public opinion. Sectionalism was another social factor contributing to the emergence of denominationalism. The sectional split of the New World into not only North and South, but also East and West, led to further schism within the Church. The reality of life on the Western frontier produced a Christianity that was unique in some of its emphases. In general, the Western denominations were more representative of sects and the Eastern denominations more reflective of established churches. The spread of development from East to West never brought to the two together, for as the frontier passed away in the West, urbanization was taking root in the East. In terms of the division between North and South, slavery functioned as the largest social factor influencing religious division. Consequently, the color line and the continuation of racial schism similarly fuelled the perpetuity of religious factions.

Niebuhr finds a necessary response to this situation in a decidedly gospel-oriented Christianity. The proclamation of the gospel is dependent upon a Christianity that reflects the realities of the gospel, a Christianity that does not accommodate cultural interests such as class, race, or nation, but which rather seeks to align itself to the tenets and focus of God's kingdom. Consequently, the road forward for Christianity is a road of repentance and realignment with God's redemptive purposes.

Noll, Mark A. *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity*.

   Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

   In *The Old Religion in a New World*, Noll seeks to explore the history of Christianity in North America, from its landing on the eastern shores to its contemporary manifestations, by tracing a broad outline of significant events and developments, while also addressing issues that arose as Christianity was transported to the New World. Focusing particularly on the American context, he contends that Christianity had to undergo numerous changes in its transplantation in a new land that demarcate it from its Continental counterpart.

   Foundational in Noll's writing is the idea that the new environment of America necessitated the adjustment of what had once been traditional Christian practice. Newfound space to develop religious visions, an intermingling of ethnicity, a plurality of religious expression, and the lack of confessional conservatism shaped a context to which the incoming tide of Christianity had to respond. The Christianity that came to, and developed on, American soil was already particularly diverse, and the various responses to the new context of America only perpetuated the process of diversification. Coupled with the advent of the American Revolution, what came to characterize American churches was a suspicion of European assumptions that once functioned as foundational tenets, namely the notions of inherited authority, reverence for tradition, and historical precedent. Amongst the colonies, evangelicalism (or, pietism) flourished in such a context, and thus began the age of revivalism.

   The diversifying of American Christianity meant that there could be no one denomination favored by the state, and the "heart religion" of the Awakenings, as well as the Enlightenment principles that put pressure on "traditional coercive establishments," led to the celebration of

religious freedom as a necessity of American democracy. Revivalist denominations experienced continued development as spirituality took an inward turn, and it was hoped such inner transformation would manifest itself socially. Civil war, however, shattered such dreams, and the changing character of post-war religion from a rural to an urban setting brought new challenges to the once successful American Protestantism. Protestant churches sought more ways through which they might deal with a continuing religious, ethnic, and political pluralism, but this was met with evermore diversification as the disparate approaches of modernists and fundamentalists began to emerge.

Central to the description of Christianity, as it took shape in America, is an extensive plurality, and this in turn had impact on emerging American theology. Despite its vastly different context, American theology continued to appeal to the intellectual life of its European cousin until the Revolution. As trust of tradition began to wane, a new foundation for churches and their theology was increasingly sought in the sciences. However, science itself came to be viewed as an autonomous power and Christian theology was soon to become its subservient partner. The American context also enabled the emergence and proliferation of what Noll describes as "popular theological innovation," by which he is referring to dispensationalism and Pentecostalism, on the one hand, and the balancing counterpart of "elite popularization" of mediating theology, within the American religious academy, on the other.

Noll concludes that the unique expressions of American Christianity can be viewed either positively, as an example of the successful transfer and translation of God's message to a new society, or it can be viewed negatively, as little more than an instance of secularization and the replacement of theocentric religion with one that is decidedly anthropocentric. Whatever the case may be, the way forward is found in the ability to hear the gospel, and a willingness to act on it.

Scott, Nathan A. *The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature*.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

By means of an examination and survey of modern literature, Scott contends, in *The Broken Center*, that the modern ethos is characterized by a sense of abandonment and isolation as a result of a lost, or damaged, Christian center that once provided reality with stability and meaning. Now faced with a cold external world, the modern person, he suggests, has turned inward, and the representative literature of the period in question is replete with evidence of just such a response. Hope, Scott argues, lies within the artistic community.

For the writers of the modern period, in which the world has become an inhospitable place, time is problematic. Exemplified in Joyce's *Ulysses*, or Eliot's "Burnt Norman," is a desire to negate or banish time, for it is experienced by the modern as constant flux over which one exerts no control. So the modern rebels against it, and attempts to destroy the traditional structure of time as concrete and historical, opting instead for an understanding of time as spatial: the eternal present—seen in the writing, for example, of Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, and Thomas Mann. This profound distrust of time is symptomatic of a distrust of creation, and the modern perspective of the world, characterized by the experience of isolation and abandonment, leads to the understanding of reality as markedly tragic. Outmatched, and faced with immanent danger, the tragic hero of modernity stands to face nature and attempts to wrest a victory from her by means of the triumph of the human spirit. Of course victory is not guaranteed, and often despite the most ardent commitments and strong defenses, nature prevails—such as in Kafka's *The Trial*—sending the modern into a spiral of despair.

The center is broken: God is dead and the world has been desacralized, affording no ultimate significance or purpose. The ensuring secularization of consciousness, which Scott finds evidenced in literature, is followed by the subsequent secularization of theology that is represented by the emerging conviction that simply doing right by others is a sufficient foundation for construing reality and investing it with meaning. Religion as it has been traditionally known and experienced, suggests Scott, is coming to a close, and he – like Bonhoeffer – sees the way forward as standing in, and for, the world in much the same way Christ did. However, being able to stand with the world is contingent on having knowledge of it. Such knowledge is the purview and vocation of the artist, for the artist is concerned with making known the fundamental order of reality. Thus the artist, for Scott, is the indispensible conversation partner of Christianity.

The reality revealed by such modern authors (artists) as have already been mentioned, but also by others such as Proust, Sartre, Purdy, Salinger, and Ellison, is that the greatest challenge facing the theological community is the necessity of reshaping the modern understanding of reality in which society sees itself isolated and adrift in a meaningless, fractured world. Scott sees in the artistic community a way forward here as well, for the medium of the artist has a way of pushing beyond the art itself, and helps us to see things anew; it deals with the particular in such a way that it provides new depth, a sense of transcendence, and an interconnected wholeness to reality. So the artist and theologian share the similar goal of reviving trust in the world, of resuscitating a sense of purpose and belonging. The role of the Christian in this matter is to model Christ's selflessness for the sake of others, in order to show that it is in Christ's life, a life we live together, that the structure of true life is revealed.

Stoeffler, F. Ernest, ed. *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*. Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1976.

Stoeffler and the contributors to *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* seek to describe the impact that Pietism had on the formation and shaping of America. The resulting compendium on the topic contends that Continental Pietism was at least as significant for America as was the Puritan tradition, and in fact blended with Puritanism in such a way as to revitalize some of its emphases. It was both these religious, or spiritual, movements, in combination with other factors—such as the Enlightenment and Romanticism—that culminated in the distinct life, institutions, and Protestantism of America, and that, in particular, led to the emergence of evangelicalism.

In order to highlight its contribution to American Protestantism in general, the authors first address Pietism's influence on some of the first religious groups to reach the shores. Within Lutheranism, while there was little or no alteration to doctrine, Pietism worked in such a way as to create a shift in emphasis from the head to the heart. In Reformed circles, the doctrine of election came to focus on the individual, and the believer's certainty of faith largely came to rest on an experience of assurance. Amongst the Mennonites, quietist Pietism provided rationalization for an emphasis on the subjective experience of Christ for things such as comfort, peace, and forgiveness.

The tradition of Pietism was continued on American soil by other means as well. The first Moravian settlement was established by 1735. While under Zinzendorf this collective did not intend the initiation of another church, but rather sought a union with both the established Lutheran and Reformed churches, disagreement led to the founding of exclusive Moravian

settlements. Yet Moravian endeavors that transcended typical bounds, such as boarding schools, colleges, and seminaries, ensured that the influence of Pietism continued to flow out. Another example of the perpetuation of pietistic tenets is found in the dawning of American Methodism. It was interaction with the Moravians and other Pietists that led to John Wesley's famous awakening experience, but the Wesleys were also introduced to Pietism's emphases in their childhood, and in interactions with it on the Continent.

The presence of Pietism in the early life of America also led to the emergence of the German Brethren, who formed through the numerous experiential awakening and revival movements that preceded the well-known Awakenings of English-speaking Christians. An "awakening" consisted of intense, inner experiences of the realization and conviction of personal sin, and came to be the determining factor in whether one was considered a truly regenerate Christian. This particular expression of Pietism was particularly critical of organized religion and its conforming pressure on human conscience. In the wake of the Revolution, the German Brethren displayed an increasing propensity for isolationism and escapism.

The history of American Protestant history is such that it is hard to overstate the impact of both church-related and radical Pietism on the subsequent emergence of evangelicalism. Central to the movement was an explicit focus on the experiential as a means by which to identify salvation, as well as an emphasis on the regenerate life of the Christian. While Pietism certainly made several positive contributions to American Protestantism, such as an emphasis on Scripture, and a concern for personal ethics and social need, it also, at times, functioned more negatively in its tendency toward escapism, sectarianism, and anti-intellectualism.

PART TWO:

COMPREHENSIVE ESSAY

      "It has been the endeavor of Satan, from the beginning of the world, to put asunder what God hath joined together; to separate inward from outward religion."[1] With these words John Wesley introduced his sermon on the Christian practice of fasting, its nature, and prescribed use.[2] Wesley helps bring to the fore the fact that the question of the relationship of *fides et praxis* ("faith and practice") is by no means a strictly contemporary issue; rather it is a perennial problem to which the Church has attempted to respond throughout the Christian Tradition. This dialectic, as it were, is representative of a recurring tension that exists within Christianity as two seemingly contradictory ideas are held together in balance. Paradox abounds when one considers some of the central tenets of the Christian faith: law and grace, Christ as human and divine, God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Of course, as G.K. Chesterton aptly notes, "Christianity got over the difficulty of combining furious opposites, by keeping them both, and keeping them both furious."[3] This serious pursuit of maintaining balance between two poles similarly applies to the issue of faith and practice. However, as even a cursory glance at Church history reveals, there are times in which equilibrium is lost and, as a result, heresy, or at least heterodoxy, arises. It seems to me that in the contemporary context, we face, or continue to face, the existence of a particularly "thin" Protestantism; that is to say, there appears to function within society a form of Protestantism that is content with a Christianity defined as mere intellectual assent to propositional statements of belief, and that is satisfied with manifesting itself through a privatized devotion in which the more social or public aspects of the religion are largely relativized if not all together abandoned. It is my contention that for at least the last five hundred

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[1] John Wesley, "Sermon 27," quoted in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern* Culture, Vol. 5 of The *Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 135.
[2] Cf., "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse Seven," Wesley Center Online. http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-27-upon-our-lords-sermon-on-the-mount-discourse-seven.
[3] *Orthodoxy* (New York: Image Books, 1959), 95.

years, particularly in the tradition of the Western Church, and specifically in the American context, Protestant Christianity has been subject to various interiorizing pressures that have led to an acceptance of disjunction between faith and practice. This "process of introversion," as I have called it, whereby focus comes to rest on the interior state of belief, is the result of the confluence and interaction of various theological, historical, and sociological factors: namely, Pietism, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Pluralism, and Modernization. Consideration of the influence these factors have had will form the content of this paper.

As with any explanatory investigation, it is fitting to begin with a few caveats. The first is that what is offered here is no doubt insufficient in both breadth and depth. The intent, however, is to identify *some* of the factors which may have contributed to the phenomenon of introversion, and to offer *some* sense in which those factors may have done so. Consequently, engagement with historical figures and events is not meant to represent a treatise on the subject; rather, the examination of each topic is meant to merely offer a glimpse into its nature and context. Second, it is assumed, although not always explicit, that there exists a dialectical relationship in our investigation between theory and practice. While it may be convenient to suggest that a particular practice emerged from a certain theory, it is just as acceptable to assert that the theory arose from a preceding practice.[4] Finally, it must be acknowledged that the history we will trace is not deterministic in the sense that the events and ideas to be explored necessitated the present state of affairs. Nor can it be said that Christianity is predestined to a privatized form in the future. What can be said, however, is that as with all "fall paradigms," or with all assertions as to "where we went wrong," one has to keep in mind the original rock-thrown-into-the-pond of Genesis chapter three; everything that follows is simply the ensuing ripples. All is not lost

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[4] Cf., Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 154.

however. After all, the Christian religion is not without a God who exhibits mastery over both wind and wave.

Pietism and the "Inward" Turn

Some thinkers, such as Philip J. Lee, have argued that particular to Protestantism is an inherent tendency toward Gnosticism, or at least gnostic thought, which was successfully kept in check throughout the Magisterial Reformation, but which came to fruition in the context of early North American Puritanism.[5] Regardless of the accuracy of Lee's assessment regarding the reemergence of a gnostic type, or his chronology, he does highlight the widely attested fact that there began on American shores an intense preoccupation with individual knowledge and personal experience that is made explicit in the occurrence of a series of spiritual revivals and Awakenings.[6] While Lee succeeds in illuminating several factors that contributed to this somewhat novel situation in Christian religion, he seems to have missed the undeniable impact that Pietism has had on all the religious traditions that travelled across the Atlantic, including Puritanism.[7] It is here that our investigation begins; for Pietism is what colors the faith and practice of American Christianity, and it would seem that the foundation for the inward turn lay within it. This is the pretext of the introversion of Christian belief.

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[5] Cf. Chapter Five, "Protestant Gnosis: From Holy Event to Private Illumination," in *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 101-114.

[6] Cf. Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[7] Cf., F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American* Christianity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976)., Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); on Pietism's influence on the Continent: cf., F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965).

Pietism emerged against the backdrop of the Thirty Years War (1618-48) and its ensuing

political turmoil, as well as in reaction to a predominant Protestant scholasticism.[8] The origins of

this movement are often attributed to Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and the publication of his

Pia Desideria, his "heartfelt desires" for the Church.[9] Stoeffler describes the pietistic ethos as

"experiential, biblical, perfectionistic, and oppositive."[10] This was a group concerned with the

meaningful experience of the divine, that sought the simplicity and authenticity of the

Christianity they saw articulated in Scripture, that pursued an personal and social ethic as

foundational to the faith, and that revolted against what they saw to be an established Church that

was both highly rationalistic and ethically indifferent. [11] Consequently Pietism was a revival

movement of sorts; it sought to reinvigorate the centrality and relevancy of the purity of life

within the Protestant tradition.[12] This purity of life, however, was not limited to the internal state

of the believer, but had a similar concern for social issues, such as care for the poor and

oppressed, and was ultimately wrapped up in addressing the spectrum of human suffering.[13]

It is quite clear that this movement was not primarily concerned with the escape from

reality with which it is sometimes charged.[14] While there certainly was emphasis on the personal

and the experiential, there was also an equal and opposite emphasis on the corporate and the

social. Take the words of John Wesley, with which we started this investigation, as an example.

This Methodist preacher and theologian, deeply indebted to and influenced by the pietistic

tradition, sought to maintain the balance within the apparent paradox of belief and action.

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[8] Ahlstrom, *Religious*, 236.
[9] Ibid., 237.
[10] *Continental*, 9.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ahlstrom, *Religious*, 236.
[13] Stoeffler, *Continental*, 269.
[14] There was of course variation of expression and emphasis within the movement itself, for example, Radical Pietism was distinct from church-related Pietism; cf., Stoeffler, *Continental*, 164-183.

Engagement with society and the larger world was not foreign to pietistic sensibilities. This it not

to say, though, that the proper tension and balance was universally and eternally maintained.

Pietism was not a new tradition, nor did it seek to alter or adapt the doctrine of the Church;

rather, it was a shift in emphasis.[15] This shift advocated a turn to the self and the self's

experience, and there occurred over time what Isaiah Berlin refers to as "a retreat in depth,"

which, when faced with various oppositional circumstances, came to center more and more on

personal experience and subjectivism; that is to say, it became a religion of the heart.[16] It is to

those circumstances that we now turn.

The Process of "Disenchantment": Dividing the Sacred and Profane

The period of the Enlightenment marks a historic change in the thinking and outlook of

humanity, and it entailed crucial transformations of understanding about the functioning of the

natural world. Often referred to as the Age of Reason, this period was characterized by the

ascendency of the "rationalistic spirit," and the exaltation of scientific thought and natural

philosophy.[17] Subsequent to the earth-shattering cosmological discoveries made by figures such

as Copernicus and Galileo, and taking shape in the philosophy of Bacon, Descartes, and

Spinoza—to name only a few—the Enlightenment mounted a frontal assault on previously held

notions of the world and the cosmos that had been informed by a variety of religious and

mythological convictions. Central to this emerging rationalism was the certainty that all

questions could be, and would be, answered; and that all the answers were knowable in the sense

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[15] Theodore G. Tappert, "The Influence of Pietism in Colonial American Lutheranism," in *Continental*, 13.
[16] *The Roots of Romanticism,* ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 36.
[17] Ahlstrom, *Religious*, 351.

of being both discoverable and teachable.[18] In this context, mystery became anathema, and the interpretation of reality, which had once been sourced in revelation and tradition, came to exist in the deduction of the mathematical sciences and the induction of natural science.[19]

Coexistent with the new ways of thinking and of conceiving the world was the opening of realms in which God's presence and creative acts were no longer assumed, nor necessary; thus emerged the first harbingers of a budding atheism. Theologians who set out to counter these rumblings assumed them to be little more than a retrieval of ancient philosophical positions, as up until this point atheism had been largely a philosophical issue.[20] Leonard Lessius (1554-1623), for example, left aside Christology and fifteen hundred years of theology in order to establish a philosophical argument for the reality of the divine, which he derived from the Stoics.[21] Similarly, Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) formulated a Christian apologetic in which theology and religious experience did not factor, and that instead centered on the Platonizing of Epicurus.[22] Such philosophizing of theology found its impetus in the reading of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*, but it was a decidedly unbalanced reading. While Aquinas did indeed propound and explicate the doctrine of the one God philosophically, he did so through the integration of theology proper.[23] It was that synthesis which theologians like Lessius and Mersenne lacked in their own approach. Instead they initiated a process whereby the defense of the existence of the Christian God was engaged on strictly philosophical grounds, devoid of an appeal to anything explicitly religious.[24]

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[18] Berlin, *Romanticism*, 21-22.
[19] Ibid., 22.
[20] Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 47.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 64.
[23] Ibid., 66.
[24] Ibid., 67.

Faced with growing external pressures, a concomitant decline in plausibility, and an increasingly rational and mechanized cosmos—all of which threatened to undermine the Christian faith—efforts to evidence the reality of the divine continued, although not within the traditional realm of religion and theology, but rather, as indicated above, in the newly discovered expanse of natural science and philosophy. It was assumed by some that the developing sciences and mathematics not only provided an appropriate means by which God's existence could be communicated, but also provided the evidence necessary to prove it. Furthermore, the "rationalistic spirit" was such that anything that could not be squared with reason was seen as largely illegitimate. Consequently, there was pressure to ensure that the efforts exerted in order to "save" religion were exercised in a field of knowledge that was considered valid; thus the transfer of Christian apologetics to the realm of reason and the natural sciences.[25] René Descartes for example, through the employment of a radical skepticism, sought to determine how it might be possible to propose that something exists, with any sort of certitude, and concluded, rather famously, that what could be known with certainty was *cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am."[26] Descartes built out from this principle in order to uphold the notion that God does in fact exist, and from there was able to posit the existence of the physical universe.[27] Important for our purposes, however, is the change in thinking that Descartes instituted through the application of his methods. Yes he had, at least for the time being, successfully argued for the existence of God, but this was not exacted without a price. Where once the world itself was considered the source

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[25] Buckley, *Atheism*, 46.
[26] Cf. Ibid., 84-88.
[27] For a thorough and detailed examination of Descartes' employment of Universal Mathematics see ibid., 68-98.

of divine evidence, it was now the mind that functioned as the primary source, and the world

became little more than the "the field of mechanics"; God had been effectively removed.[28]

Similarly, Isaac Newton's work within the realm of the new natural philosophy paved a

way by which God, again for a time, could be "proved." Newton took the results of his

predecessors and systematized the universe.[29] That is to say, he took the notion of a mechanical

world and formed it into a universal system of mechanics of motion and space.[30] But what

initiated motion? What accounts for space? In answer to this Newton proposed a "non-

mechanical," intelligent Cause.[31] Newton's system could account for neither its own existence,

nor for its own instigation apart from what might now be referred to as a "God of the gaps."[32]

While his notion that the existence of God is demonstrated through His setting into motion the

mechanized universe differed from Descartes' rendering, Newton's work similarly came at a

cost. Certainly God was involved with nature, at least insofar as He formed it and set its course,

but nature was by and large self-sufficient and self-sustaining. God may not have been removed,

but His immanence was radically circumscribed.

Through subsequent thinkers such as Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) and Samuel

Clarke (1675-1729), the process of philosophizing theology continued largely unabated, and with

Denis Diderot (1713-1784), it took a decidedly naturalistic, and therefore, atheistic turn.[33]

Diderot appropriated aspects of both Descartes' and Newton's systems, but he understood the

"god [sic] hypothesis" to be little more than an attempt to hide the unknown.[34] In place of deity,

Diderot was able to posit dynamic materialism, an emerging theory at the time, which

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[28] Buckley, *Atheism*, 97-99.
[29] Ibid., 101.
[30] Ibid., 118.
[31] Ibid., 135.
[32] In particular see ibid., 99-143.
[33] Buckley traces their thought, and highlights their unique contributions in ibid., 145-193.
[34] Ibid., 222.

understood matter to be its own generative principle.[35] So with Diderot's rendering there was no longer any need for a powerful first Cause, nor an intelligent Author of the universe; rather, creative and self-actualizing matter was a sufficient explanation, and one that could stand up to the empirical requirements of scientific inquiry. Diderot was not alone. More popularly, Baron Paul Henri d'Holbach published *La Système*, which, like Diderot, posited nature as a sufficient and total reality.[36] D'Holbach employed a strict theory of causality, which he defined as a "chain of motion, guided by the constant and invariable laws peculiar to each being."[37] Everything was determined by this all-encompassing system of cause and effect, and initiated and sustained by the dynamism of matter. Particularly damaging in d'Holbach's *La Système* was the way in which it appropriated the work of earlier Christian thinkers, who had waded into the realm of natural philosophy in order to defend Christianity, exposed their theoretical shortcomings, and corrected the mistakes that existed within their theory; in doing so d'Holbach was able to undermine the work of the theologians and expose within it an inherent atheism.[38] Consequently, the mistake of Christians such as Newton and Clarke, at least according to *La Système*, was not so much their systems as it was the fact that they had simply failed to consider that matter might be one day shown to account for itself.[39] Clearly their having relied on natural philosophy for proof of the divine had unintended consequences. Building on the thought of religious figures such as Descartes and Newton, as well as their subsequent followers, Diderot and d'Holbach appropriated the "proofs" of divine presence and used them as evidence of divine absence. Thus, they inaugurated a process of disenchantment, whereby the divine was thrust from reality, and after which, all that remained was dynamic matter and a thoroughly natural world.

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[35] Buckley, *Atheism*, 223.
[36] Ibid., 276.
[37] Qtd. in ibid., 279.
[38] Ibid., 319-320.
[39] Ibid., 320.

At least one of the results of Enlightenment thinking, at the hands of theologians and philosophers alike, was the emergence, or, perhaps more accurately, the enlargement of the realm of the profane.[40] The world was at one time the logical foundation from which to begin to speak of God's existence, for it was considered to be replete with evidence of His presence. Once it came to be understood that the world was a mechanized system undergirded by an energizing dynamic matter, and once the mystery, magic, and miracle of creation was interpreted as simply natural law, the term "sacred" ceased to function as a valid qualifier of reality. Consequently, if God was not to be found in the external world, perhaps the true site of Christian devotion lay in the inner person. In light of the concomitant development of both Pietism and Enlightenment thinking during the eighteenth century, and, given the connection between Romanticism and Pietism that we will explore below, it would appear that the influence of the Enlightenment functioned in such a way as to reinforce Pietism's turn to the self by expanding the area in which God could no longer be posited. As the divine was banished from the public realm, it came to play an ever more prominent role in the inner life.

Romanticizing Reality: Re-enchantment or Retreat?

Romanticism emerged very much in reaction to, and opposition against, the tenets of the Enlightenment period. Isaiah Berlin describes it as, "a passionate protest against universality of any kind"; whether notions of a universal understanding of fulfillment, or the existence of universal truths, or even the idea of universal canons of art, Romanticism rejected them all.[41] Central to such a protest were the writing and thought of various philosophers and poets, but

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[40] Despite the fact that it is often Enlightenment thinkers who are charged with the introduction of secularism, meaning the division of sacred and profane realms, some have argued that the secularist impulse is evidenced much earlier in history, even within Judaic and Christian religion; cf., Berger, *Sacred Canopy,* 113ff.

[41] *Romanticism*, 8.

perhaps most profound were the unexpected results of the French Revolution. Instead of ushering in a new age of human flourishing by means of a peaceful universalism, society was marred by disenfranchisement and violence of all types.[42] What emerged was an increasing suspicion of the Enlightenment principle that there existed a body of knowledge that, when properly accessed, would provide the means by which to cure humanity of all its ills.[43] As the Revolution progressed, such a vision for the future began to appear as little more than a mirage.

As with all epochal shifts, however, the Romantic Age was never a wholesale rejection of what preceded; there are some things, it would seem, that were nearly impossible to forget, or to disregard, once they had been revealed in, and through, the Enlightenment. Karl Barth contends that if there were one term to characterize the eighteenth-century person, it would be "absolutism"; that is to say, humanity at the time of the Enlightenment had the utmost confidence in the omnipotence of its own power.[44] The repeated successes and continued development of the natural sciences had provided a means by which the world could be known and nature made to be supple in human hands. The geocentric and theocentric models of the universe were replaced by one that was largely anthropocentric: geographical territory had been discovered and conquered, and scientific and technological achievement afforded humans even more power over their own existence, and therefore over the world.[45] The natural world, at this stage of history, was becoming humanity's world, and such humanistic aggrandizement considered nothing to be outside of its grasp. Even human jurisdiction over theology was sought, as various attempts were made to make theology more provisional and relative by "humanizing" it.[46] As Barth paints the

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[42] Berlin, *Romanticism*, 109.
[43] Ibid., 119.
[44] *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 36.
[45] Ibid., 37.
[46] Ibid., 84.

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picture, the absolutism of the Enlightenment period sought to construct bounds by which Christianity might be controlled and relativized. Theology was of use to the eighteenth-century person so as long as it continued to meet expectations and reinforce the new knowledge wrought by scientific success. This Enlightenment absolutism would continue on in the Romantic Age, but not without having undergone some important transformations.

The continuity that exists between the Enlightenment and Romanticism is captured by Berlin in his assertion that at the heart of the Romantic period was the notion of "will and man as activity, as something which cannot be described because it is perpetually creating."[47] There is a striking, and perhaps telling, parallel that exists between the descriptions of matter, as articulated in the Enlightenment, and the Romantic depiction of the human person: dynamism. Eighteenth-century humanity had found in the sciences a way in which the natural world could be manipulated to particular ends. For the Romantics, however, science was little more than submission to nature, for science was necessarily dictated and limited by natural law. So while science allowed for newfound power over nature, humanity was still ultimately, and unsatisfactorily, subservient to it.[48] Against such capitulation the Romantics posited an indomitable and dynamic human will. Instead of merely discovering, humanity could now create; instead of responding to reality, humanity could make manifest its own.[49] Surely this was human absolutism at its pinnacle, for its early nineteenth-century expression extended even beyond the absolutism exhibited in Barth's description of the eighteenth-century. The creative attributes that had made dynamic matter so foundational in the construction of the world were now to be found in the human person. So despite seeking to set itself in opposition to Enlightenment thinking, it would seem Romanticism actually intensified a preexisting sense of human omnipotence, and

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[47] *Romanticism*, 138.
[48] Ibid., 119.
[49] Ibid.

rendered the human mind and will completely autonomous. Central to our investigation, however, is the fact that in the Romantic Age the source of reality and meaning shifted from dynamic matter and the interpretive and explanatory power of the sciences, and came to rest within the individual person. The thrust of Romanticism, therefore, was decidedly inward.

The fact that such a shift occurred can be seen in brief survey of Romantic thought and poetry. However, as with any emerging movement, the first volleys are thrown, and the initial discontentment is expressed, long before any formal protest is noted. Thus it is of little surprise to find that the Enlightenment demand for a strict adherence to rationalism functioned in such a way as to lead some people to seek spiritual satisfaction and fulfillment outside of the vaunted realm of natural philosophy.[50] Beneath the calm of the Enlightenment's rationalistic surface lay a "peculiar and widespread" engagement with the mysterious.[51] This was the age, after all, which found itself home to all types of "necromancers, chiromancers, and hydromancers," to various emerging sects, and to other movements of the occult.[52] In intellectual circles as well, there were some who found discontentment with the preponderance of rationalism. One of the first to level a serious assault on Enlightenment thinking was Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788). Hamann found scientific propositions to fall far short of being able to adequately address the "actual living, palpitating of life"; the general categories and classifications of the sciences were crude and insufficient descriptors of real life, for they left out the particular and the unique.[53] Even language and words were overly rational; they attempted to tidy up, to systematize, and to generalize that which could not be captured by a clever turn of phrase.[54] What Hamann had found so problematic in Enlightenment doctrine was the inherent withdrawal of the mysterious,

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[50] Berlin, *Romanticism*, 47.
[51] Barth, *Protestant*, 35.
[52] Berlin, *Romanticism*, 47.
[53] Ibid., 41.
[54] Ibid., 49.

the idea that all could be known and classified, that the great diversity of life and experience could be organized and integrated into tidy systems of meaning. For him, rationalism was an insufficient means by which to try to unravel the inherent mysteries of reality; only the arts were fit to facilitate human engagement with the mysterious.[55]

Hamann was but the first of several notable Romantic philosophers, each of which sought to deny the notion of the unity, harmony, and the compatibility of ideals that the Enlightenment espoused.[56] Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) very much followed in Hamann's steps, although not without his own unique contributions. Of interest to us is his assertion that one's duty is to articulate or express truth as one comes to understand it, and that that truth is as valid a truth as anyone else's.[57] Another significant and contributing figure, and a friend of Hamann, was Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). His focus on the "inner, moral life" led him to repudiate any form of determinism and any notion that nature necessarily enslaved humanity.[58] Consequently, Kant's work also functioned as a protest against Enlightenment thought; for in seeking to protect humanity's moral freedom, he fought against the notion that certain external factors limit the individual person.[59] Of course many other thinkers followed, such as Schiller, Fichte, and Schelling, but fundamental to each was the centrality of the individual, and the human ability to construct, or reconstruct, reality in a variety of ways and to various degrees.[60]

The shift in emphasis, inward, toward the will of the individual, is also evidenced in the poetic program of the Romantic Age. Many of these poets attempted to preserve "traditional concepts, schemas, and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his [sic]

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[55] Berlin, *Romanticism*, 49.
[56] Ibid., 67
[57] Ibid., 66.
[58] Ibid., 73.
[59] This occurred somewhat ironically as Kant himself was quite derisive of the Romantic Movement, cf., ibid., 68.
[60] Cf., ibid., 46-92.

creatures and creation," and which they understood to be threatened or undermined by the Enlightenment agenda.[61] This preservation, however, was not one that sought to adopt traditional understanding in an unadulterated state. In fact, the Romantic poetic program could be defined as a process of secularization, for it sought to naturalize the supernatural elements of the tradition it attempted to protect. This would, of course, indicate another way in which Romanticism carried on certain aspects of the Enlightenment tradition. Of most significance, however, was the source in which such naturalization occurred. Contra the Enlightenment's attribution of creative power to dynamic matter, poets such a Williams Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) endeavored to replace the traditional, creative God with the human person. As M.H. Abrams writes regarding Wordsworth's poetic epic, "the heights and depths of the mind of man are to replace heaven and hell, and the powers of the mind are to replace the divine protagonists."[62] Not only was the poetic program one of secularization, it was also one in which traditionally divine prerogatives were attributed to the human person, and thus traditional supernaturalism became naturalized in the individual.[63] According to the Romantic poets, humanity, for all intents and purposes, could become gods.

In examining the thought and literature of the Romantic period, it is hard to overemphasize the significance of the French Revolution. As has already been alluded to, its failures only functioned to solidify, or perhaps intensify, disillusionment with Enlightenment doctrine. It made apparent the insufficiency of reason and scientific knowledge as a means by which to bring about solutions for human tribulation, and it also led to a concomitant and widespread sense of hopelessness. The early successes of the revolution allowed for a rising optimism in the prospect of the dawning of a new age, of a flourishing and regenerate humanity,

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[61] M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971), 13.
[62] Abrams, *Natural*, 25.
[63] Cf., ibid., 65ff.

in which peace and amelioration were within reach.[64] Its ultimate failure, consequently, left

society utterly demoralized and, as Wordsworth describes it, in a state of complete

"Despondency."[65] However, despite the disasters of the attempted "apocalypse by revolution,"

hope continued on in some, and, at the hands of Romantic poets, such hope came to expression

in a new "apocalypse by imagination or cognition."[66] Here was the high argument of the

Romantic Age: "the mind of man confronts the old heaven and earth and possesses within itself

the power, if it will but recognize and avail itself of the power, to transform them into a new

heaven and a new earth, by means of a total revolution of consciousness."[67] Faced with the bleak

reality of a failed revolution, figures such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, and Shelley, found

within the human person the ability to fashion a new world, one wrought by a revolution of

imagination in which perception itself was altered.[68] The outer world still remained much as it

was, what changed was the individual's vision and interpretation of it; humanity became the

creator of its own inner reality.

Having moved from the traditional concept of a divinely fashioned creation, to the self-

originating and self-sustaining power of dynamic materialism in the Enlightenment, we have

returned nearly full circle to some sense of the divine in the Romantic period, but it is a divinity

that is to be attributed to the human person and not some superior being. The creative power

once attributed to deity, then to matter, was now to be found within the individual. By means of

the imagination, one could fashion the world as one saw fit, and there was no longer need of

recourse to the external, whether that be another being or the natural realm. It is difficult to

contend that Romanticism left the Pietist movement untouched, or vice versa. In fact, it would

[64] Abrams, *Natural*, 330.
[65] Ibid., 328.
[66] Ibid., 334.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Cf., ibid., 337ff.

appear the Romantic Age came about by means of thinkers who themselves had been significantly influenced by Pietism. Many of those attributed with having had a defining role in shaping Romantic thought came from the same German context from which Pietism arose: Hamann, for example, was born in a pietistic environment in East Prussia, and both Herder and Kant were raised in a similar atmosphere.[69]

Much like the Enlightenment, it would seem that Romanticism also functioned as a contributing factor in the interiorizing of belief. While it may have initially seemed as though Romantic thinkers sought to re-enchant the naturalized world from which the Enlightenment had banned the divine, it would appear they actually furthered the naturalization that had already been initiated, and sought instead to enchant one's inner perception of the world. Despite being a protest against Enlightenment doctrine, and, at least as one might have assumed, a rally cry against the expanding sphere of the profane, perhaps Romanticism represents for the religious realm little more than further retreat, and no less than a furthering of the process of introversion.

Pluralism and a New Denominationalism: Accommodation and Privatization

We have seen how Pietism, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism not only opened the door to the possibility of a process of introversion, whereby Christian belief comes to be understood as a religion of the heart, but also how they may have reinforced and encouraged the propensity for such interiorizing within the Western tradition of Christianity. While these movements and epochs may have begun in localized Continental settings, their influence and impact were significantly widespread, reaching even as far as the New World. Not only were the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries home to upheavals and revolts in the human understanding of the world and the self, these centuries were also a time in which there was a

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[69] Berlin, *Romanticism*, 68.

huge flood of emigration to America.[70] The wave of Continental thought and Christian religion

that landed on American soil certainly had impact on the shaping of the new land, but equally,

and in turn, the American context also exerted influence on those who settled there. The

incredible pluralism with which new immigrants were faced represents yet another factor

contributing to the process of introversion.

Tied to the great transatlantic migration, and to American colonization, was the pervasive

presence of Pietism. The case was not simply that the pietistic sects comprised the majority of

those who travelled to the new land in hopes of religious freedom; the Moravians, for example,

did not even settle in America until 1735, a decidedly late date.[71] Rather it would seem Pietism

had already made its presence felt in the established churches of the American colonies.

American Lutheran churches, in desperate need of ministers, would appeal to various charitable

societies on the continent, most of which were made up of Pietists.[72] Pietism also arrived

amongst the Reformed churches with the influx of both the pilgrims and the Dutch.[73] The near

omnipresence of pietistic influence led to a Colonial American Protestantism of a somewhat

unique nature. Religious revival erupted, and the doctrinal indifference of Pietism was evidenced

in the travelling Anglican preacher, George Whitefield (1715-1770), who worked alongside any

who would join him, regardless of denominational affiliation.[74] A shift occurred in American

Protestantism, represented by movement toward a "personal, inward, and heartfelt religion," and

away from the traditional religion that was more "formal, outward, and established."[75] This shift

was indicative of the passing of Puritanism and the ascendance of Pietism, or, as Noll

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[70] Cf., Mark Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

[71] John R. Weinlick, "Moravianism in the American Colonies," *Continental*, 123.

[72] Tappert, "Influence," ibid., 14.

[73] James Tanis, "Reformed Pietism in Colonial America," ibid., 34.

[74] Noll, *Old Religion*, 51.

[75] Ibid.

synonymously refers to it, "evangelicalism," as the prevailing expression of American Protestant Christianity.[76] Pietism was a widely felt, and hugely influential, movement in Colonial America. As to whether its attractiveness came about as a result of religious pluralism, or whether it fed it, perhaps both are true to some degree.[77] In any case, it is sufficient for our purposes to simply note its all-encompassing nature and its deeply felt impact.

That the social and religious scene of America was one of extensive plurality is captured in Ahlstrom's writing:

> A traveler in 1700 making his way from Boston to the Carolinas would encounter Congregationalists of varying intensity, Baptists of several varieties, Presbyterians, Quakers, and several other forms of Puritan radicalism; Dutch, German, and French Reformed; Swedish, Finnish, and German Lutherans; Mennonites and radical pietists [sic], Anglicans, Roman Catholics; here and there a Jewish congregation, a few Rosicrucians; and, of course, a vast number of the unchurched.[78]

The organizing principle for Continental religious life had been the state church, whereby there existed a single church for a given area.[79] In the new American context, however, this model, which had been attempted by both Puritans and Anglicans, was beginning to disintegrate, if it had even been attempted at all.[80] The boom of different Protestant groups ensured that each made its presence felt throughout all realms of Colonial America, and political support for the disestablishment of churches grew.[81] The practice of religious pluralism was slowly becoming conventional, even if the notion of it as an ideal was still largely nonexistent.[82] By the late eighteenth century, however, this too changed, and the multiform nature of American Protestantism presented a situation in which such incredible diversity made civil and political

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[76] Noll, *Old Religion*, 51.
[77] Noll, for example, suggests it was both, cf., ibid*,*, 51.
[78] *Religious*, 4; contra Ahlstrom, Noll argues the religious make-up was predominantly Protestant, and virtually exclusively Christian, cf., *Old Religion*, 51.
[79] Noll, *Old Religion*, 50.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

support of one Christian expression impossible. "Religious freedom" became an ideal

foundational to the success of American democracy, and was written into the constitution as the

First Amendment.[83] Thus there emerged the formal separation of church and state.

From this context of incredible plurality emerged the unique and distinctly American

form of church: the denomination. Neither a true "church," nor a true "sect," the denomination

appropriated characteristics of each to define itself, such as the distinction between religious and

secular spheres, as well as voluntary association.[84] Noll defines it as, "a single product of an

environment defined by…the absence of formal church-state ties, and competition among many

ecclesiastical bodies."[85] Such an atmosphere inevitably leaves the church susceptible to cultural

accommodation for the sake of cultural appeal. H. Richard Niebuhr suggests that the issue with

American denominationalism is that it represents a failure of churches "to transcend the social

conditions which fashion them into caste-organizations," a failure to avoid sublimating "their

loyalties to standards and institutions only remotely relevant to the Christian ideal," and a failure

"to resist the temptation of making their own self-preservation and extension the primary object

of their endeavor."[86] Berger agrees: "The pluralistic situation [from which denominationalism

springs] is, above all, a *market situation*. In it, the religious institutions become marketing

agencies, and the religious traditions become consumer commodities."[87] Such a context carries

with it both individual and denominational implications.

The history of America is one characterized by an increasing and seemingly perpetual

pluralism based on its founding principle of freedom, and a similar pluralism seems to result

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[83] Cf., Noll, *Old Religion*, 75-83.

[84] John Murray Cuddihy, *No Offense: Civil Religion and Protestant Taste* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 17.

[85] *Old Religion*, 23.

[86] *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: World Publishing, 1957), 21.

[87] Berger, *Sacred*, 137; emphasis original.

worldwide simply with the advent and march of modernization, and its ensuing globalization.[88]

The point is simply that the pluralistic issue, over time, has only compounded. On the individual

level, and in the market economy of religious goods, no longer is religious adherence expected or

enforced by the state. Rather, it is left up to individual preference. Once the issue of religion

becomes privatized in this manner, once it becomes a matter of personal choice, it is unable to

provide a common world in which ultimate meaning for life is shared across the social order.[89]

Consequently, religion is necessarily relegated to "specific enclaves of social life."[90] It becomes

an aspect of life rather than a totalizing reality. The "world building potency" of religion

becomes constrained to the manufacturing of "sub-worlds" of meaning.[91] Thus religion is

interiorized. This process is compounded, however, when the market of religious goods and

services, in seeking to find purchasers of its product, adjust its religious commodities in order to

meet the "needs" of the consumer. Since a pervasive pluralism relegates the "relevance" of

religion to the private sphere, religious institutions limit their social emphasis and applicability in

order to better reach potential consumers, which only furthers the process of introversion.[92]

     Moving out from the individual to the communal implications, it may be said that

denominationalism can, and has, run according to certain socio-cultural factors more than it has

biblical or doctrinal ones, which is to say that the emergence of various denominations can

perhaps be attributable to a variety of social and economic factors. "Each religious group," writes

Niebuhr, "gives expression to that code which forms the morale of the political or economic

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[88] Here modernization is defined as, "the growth and diffusion of a set of institutions rooted in the transformation of the economy by means of technology," cf., Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 9; it is a topic we will address in more detail below.
[89] Berger et al., *Sacred*, 132.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 133.
[92] Ibid., 146.

class it represents."[93] In denominationalism it is not necessarily the concerns of the Church that drive the state; it is the concerns of the state, or perhaps the social class, which drive the Church.[94] For example, some modern denominations were formed in the particular interests of the middle-class, and the psychology of this class contains features that influence the shape of its Christianity.[95] First and foremost, this is a class that is characterized by a highly developed individual self-consciousness, which is cultivated in a working environment that carries a high degree of personal responsibility.[96] The result is a religion that is "intensely personal," and an understanding of salvation that is geared more toward the individual, rather than any sort of "social redemption."[97] "Its martyrs die for liberty," writes Niebuhr, "not for fraternity and equality; its saints are patrons of individual enterprise in religion, politics, and economics, not the great benefactors of mankind or the heralds of brotherhood."[98] In this instance, Christianity's primary concern is the self, and the self's salvation, as a result of the personalizing pressure created in the free market of religious choice.

The fact that Pietism was very much part of the early American landscape should simply highlight the force that would have initially been felt on the interiorizing impulse. An increasing pluralism, and the concomitant increase of religious choice and meaning-giving systems of reality, only functioned to make the issues of cultural accommodation and individual privatization more acute. Once again there seems to be a confluence of emphases that both promote and consecrate the propensity for the introversion of Christian belief. While some of these emphases may have originated in the unique context of Colonial America and the founding

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[93] *Social*, 24; see also Lee, *Against*, 104, 166.
[94] Cuddihy says as much in his contention that civility, the requirement to recognize the legitimacy of other religious organizations and belief, "tames" traditional religion. Cf., *No Offence*, 6-7.
[95] Cf., Niebuhr, *Social*, 78-85.
[96] Ibid., 80.
[97] Ibid., 82.
[98] Ibid., 87-88.

of a New World, it seems safe to assume that at the hands of modernization their spread and

dissemination is now incomprehensibly broad.

Modernization: Manufacturing Metaphysical Homelessness

Modernization can be defined as the development and promulgation of various

institutions as a result of "technologically induced" growth in the economic sphere.[99] Berger

describes it as, "the growth and diffusion of a set of institutions rooted in the transformation of

the economy by means of technology."[100] The primary means by which the process of

modernization is carried out is technological production and bureaucracy.[101] To properly

understand a social reality, such as the one brought about by modernization, one needs to explore

more than simply the external factors by which such a reality is evidenced; it also requires the

examination of the consciousness of its human participants.[102] The individual experiences social

reality as something that exists outside of oneself, or as "objective givenness", on the one hand,

and experiences social reality in the realm of consciousness, or as "subjective meaning" on the

other.[103] Therefore, modernization, while experienced as a certain set of external factors, also has

a concomitant experience in, and impact on, the consciousness of the individual. The ways in

which modernization shapes consciousness is best captured in a brief examination of the effects

that its principal carriers have on individual consciousness.

One of the primary carriers of modernization is technological production. Regardless

whether one works on a manufacturing production line, or whether one works in the retail sector,

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[99] Cf., Berger et al., *Homeless*, 9.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 12.
[103] Ibid.; consciousness in this case is not referring to the construction of various theories or models by which to gain meaning, but rather speaks to the "pre-theoretical" consciousness of everyday life.

modern society is such that technological production shapes consciousness, even despite a lack

of direct contact with the technological process itself.[104] To think "technologically" is simply

part and parcel of participating in a modern world, for nearly all aspects of normal, everyday life

are inundated with technological material and thinking. Furthermore, the consciousness of

technological production has "carry-over effects" that can be felt in all realms of life, whether

social, political, or religious.[105] So by its sheer pervasiveness, human consciousness is inevitably

impacted by the technological production of modernization. Central to a consciousness pressed

in such a way is the notion of "componentiality."[106] Technological knowledge is such that it does

not easily transfer from the realm in which it is being applied, although the type of thinking

associated with it does.[107] Therefore, life becomes segmented, both on the social and the intra-

subjective level.[108] This means that not only are different and segregated roles created for the

individual within society, but different and segregated spheres are also created within the self.[109]

What results is a disintegration of the individual's sense of self, and the attendant requirement for

the creation of a private world in which one's true, and whole, person might be fully expressed

and safely preserved.[110]

      Bureaucracy, the other primary carrier of modernization, similarly creates the necessity

for the refuge of a private sphere, for one of the key notions inherent to bureaucracy is that of

anonymity.[111] In order to preserve its orderliness, its predictability, and its ability to organize,

bureaucracy requires the eradication of all markers of peculiarity and uniqueness from the

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[104] Berger et al., *Homeless*, 39.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., 33.
[107] Ibid., 29.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid., 34; see also Cuddihy, *No Offense*, 15.
[110] Ibid., 35.
[111] Ibid., 46.

individual.[112] The individual must be made anonymous in order to ensure that the bureaucratic processes will function with equality and run without personal bias or favoritism.[113] Thus the anonymity of bureaucracy is a morally charged anonymity, and not simply a pragmatic necessity.[114] In order to combat the anonymity that has become obligatory in the external world, the individual brings into existence a private realm in order to provide refuge for individual identity. So both technological production and bureaucracy require alteration and suppression of one's subjective identity in order to allow one to function within the social reality shaped by modernization. Reprieve from such a demand, and the recovery of a balance to life, is consequently sought in a private sphere where sanctuary from disintegration and anonymity might be found.

Apart from the two primary carriers of modernization, there also exist important secondary carriers, such as the modern city and its associated socio-cultural pluralism.[115] These we will address somewhat simultaneously under the heading of institutionalization.[116] Coexistent with the vast diversity within modern society, are the institutions by which the numerous and varied "universes of meaning," and their affiliated societal structures, are protected and preserved. In situations of increasing heterogeneity regarding what constitutes the "ultimate significance of everyday life and meaning of extraordinary experiences," the threat of the disintegration of any one "sacred cosmos" is mitigated by its "standardization into doctrine."[117] Along with a host of other religious traditions, such a process has also occurred in the history of

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[112] Berger et al., *Homeless*, 46.

[113] Ibid., 52.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid., 9.

[116] Cf., ibid.; the term, "institutionalization," refers to the response of modern society to the reality of pluralism, and it is the results of such institutionalization which concern us here.

[117] Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967), 65; for a further in-depth discussion of the institutionalization of religion, particularly the Judeo-Christian form, see ibid., 50-76.

the Christian religion, and perhaps even to an extent not realized elsewhere.[118] Both the volume

and variety of such institutions within modern society pose a unique difficulty for an

institutionalized Christianity. Regardless whether these institutions are religious or secular, say

political or economic in nature, the interaction of these institutions will only function to further

the process of introversion for the Christian believer.

Within the context of a plurality of specialized institutions, religious standards and

representations are amalgamated within particular social roles.[119] That is to say, the religious

institution, while seeking to make itself visible amongst the specialized functions of various

other institutions, unintentionally restricts the "habitual applicability" of its standards and

representations to isolated realms.[120] Consequently, within the society segregated by

institutionalization, those specifically religious roles and their associated realms of relevance,

when taken in the context of a whole life within society, are necessarily granted "part-time"

status.[121] When faced with such a prospect, some religious groups opt to initiate a partial, if not a

total, withdrawal from the world in order to maintain the integrating function of their religious

belief.[122] Christian history is compromised of many of these monastically oriented groups. Those

who are willing to continue in their engagement with a society that demands the segregation of

religious belief and action, tend to respond by seeking out realms in which the "jurisdictional

claims" of competing institutions have not yet taken hold.[123] As the Enlightenment,

Romanticism, and the plurality of the American context has already made clear, when there is no

longer room in the public sphere for God or an associated sacred cosmos of meaning, a retreat

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[118] Cf., Luckmann, *Invisible*, 67: Luckmann categorizes the Church in Judeo-Christian tradition as "an extreme historically unique case of the institutional specialization of religion."
[119] Ibid., 84; also Lee, *Against*, 194.
[120] Ibid., 85.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.; see also Berger et al, *Homeless*, 79-81.
[123] Ibid., 86.

occurs whereby religion becomes a largely privatized affair. This too is the case in an institutionalized modern society.[124]

Technological production, bureaucracy, and institutionalization, as characteristics of the modern world, have all exhibited the propensity to force an inward turn for relief from "componentiality," anonymity, as well as the for the survival of one's overarching meaning-giving structure, or "sacred cosmos." Not only has modernization resulted in a type of alienation within social reality, it has resulted in a sense of metaphysical homelessness: humanity has become displaced within the cosmos.[125] Where there once existed the explanatory power of some form of deity, where there once existed the possibility of theodicy, now there is nothing. That such a sense of cosmic alienation exists is evidenced in much of the writing of the modern period. Speaking to this issue, Nathan A. Scott writes, "What underlies most of the representative [literature] of our period…is a sense that the anchoring center of life is broken and that the world is therefore abandoned and adrift."[126] As he describes it, the literature of the modern age is a "literature of metaphysical isolation."[127] Writers such as Mann, Lawrence, Kafka, and Faulkner, inherited no tradition of meaning on which to attach the significance of things, and thus cast into a context without any overarching "beliefs, sentiments, and valuations," these writers were faced with the task of creating for themselves novel ways of interpreting experience.[128] Very much following in the footsteps of their Romantic predecessors, modern artists were left with the task of providing shape and giving meaning to the variegated and segregated modern world.[129] God was dead, to borrow from Nietzsche, and the world had become a reality in which there was no

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[124] Luckmann, *Invisible*, 86.
[125] Berger et al, *Homeless*, 185.
[126] *The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), ix.
[127] Ibid., 8.
[128] Ibid., 2-7.
[129] Ibid., 15.

longer any sense of "ultimacy," nor any notion of "radical significance."[130] The emergence of such a perspective in the modern period ought not be completely surprising given the tenets and world-altering nature of the epochs that preceded it.[131] Perhaps it is not until the modern age, and with the emergence of the modern writer, that the narrative of "estrangement and alienation" is fully realized.[132] Homeless in both the social world and the cosmos, the modern individual has nowhere to turn but the self. The evacuation of any sense of deity, let alone the Christian God, from not only the public sphere, but also reality itself, is a modern situation from which the only relief to be found comes from the creation of a private realm. This is a realm in which there are no threats to one's sense of self, no threats to one's sacred cosmos, no threats to one's God.

Tentative Steps Toward Mitigation

So what is one to do in the face of such interiorizing pressure? How does one stem the swelling tide that has carried this process of introversion? The phrase is oft repeated in many a historical exercise: "we cannot go back." Unless one is willing to fully separate oneself from social reality and to affect an escape from the modern world, or perhaps society itself, there can be no return to some previously realized Edenic state. Despite the ambiguity with which he sets forth his notion, it seems to me that John Murray Cuddihy is inescapably correct in suggesting a way to move forward, and perhaps the only way, can be found in an "esthetic for the interim," or a "polity of imperfection."[133]

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[130] Scott, *Broken*, 148.
[131] Of course there were precursors to those eras as well, and perhaps they can be found in the articulation of nominalist theology, cf., Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay on the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
[132] Scott, *Broken*, 19.
[133] Cf., *No Offense*, 191-211.

As Genesis three makes clear, and as history has taught us, this world is such that there will never exist a humanly constructed Paradise in which external pressure will have no impact on the locale and expression of Christian belief. Consequently, just as the Puritans constructed their "half-way" covenant and gave up, in the interim, any notion of a perfected state, so too must we. This is not to say, however, that we ought to simply resign ourselves to the state of affairs and accept the idea that Christian belief is properly and definitively relegated to the realm of the private. In fact it would seem that such an impulse would be anathema to Holy Scripture and the majority of the Christian Tradition. Rather, what I propose are intentional attempts to bring Christian practice back into focus, to re-infuse and re-invest it with ultimate significance.

One particular approach I think beneficial can be found in the work of James K.A. Smith. Appropriating the thought of St. Augustine, the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), and emerging neuroscience, James K.A. Smith makes the argument that our practices have impact on our preconscious brain, which in turn influence or shape cognition.[134] This has serious implication for Christian worship and Christian pedagogy. If we want to faithfully instruct succeeding generations, if we want to worship well as God's people, then we must take seriously the way in which our practices shape both our thoughts and the desires of our heart. Perhaps such a focus on the importance and centrality of practice to Christian formation can begin to function as a necessary corrective to the contemporary severing of faith from practice, and curtail the impact of interiorizing pressures we have just explored.[135]

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[134] Cf., *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

[135] I do think there are other, and perhaps concurrent ways of going about re-investing practice with significance, but Smith's articulation seems the best place to begin. For an argument espousing sacramental ontology, see Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). Also consideration should be given to a re-appropriation of the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life, cf., Craig Gay, "Christian Reflection and Modern Technology (Part I): The Affirmation of Ordinary Life," (lecture, Regent College, Vancouver, BC, June 3-14, 2013).

Conclusion

What this small exercise has hoped to make clear is that the process of introversion, and its subsequent acceptance of disjunction between faith and practice, is not attributable to one single thought or event; rather, it exists as a result of a confluence of theological, historical, and sociological factors, largely particular to the Western tradition of Christianity, and especially its American expression. Mostly due to the process of modernization, the world is now such that it is difficult to maintain that the interiorizing of Christian belief is not a pressure felt with varying intensity across the globe. While there seems to exist within Pietism the first theological justification of the inward turn, the myopic inner focus of heart religion exists only as a result of it being severed from its counterbalancing emphasis on social action and participation in the public realm. The first cut was affected as the realm of the profane was made manifest in the Enlightenment. Here the creative and sustaining work of God became explainable through dynamic matter. A second cut was made in Romanticism as humanity turned to its own mind and will as a corrective for the despondency it experienced at the hands of the external world. In this age the divine was not so much deemed unnecessary, as it was reinterpreted to rest in human faculties. The original balancing tension between faith and practice was also negatively impacted in the context of Colonial America and the proliferation of its newfound pluralism. The separation of Church and state led to denominationalism and a new propensity for cultural accommodation. The fourth and final wound inflicted was at the hands of modernization, and its concomitant pluralism and institutionalization, resulting in a sense of metaphysical homelessness. It is certainly not the case, however, that the Christian religion is doomed to be interiorized. As I hope to have clearly suggested, albeit somewhat tentatively, there are ways in which the divide between faith and practice might be lessened, and the importance of practice to

biblical faith rediscovered. And undoubtedly, the God whom Holy Scripture has shown to be actively involved in the redemption of His creation continues His good work even now, ushering this world toward its intended renewal.

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