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What is Saeculum?

*"So five Ages of the saeculum are ended."
St. Augustine of Hippo*



THUS SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, at the cusp of the fifth century CE, introduced new Christians to life in the contemporary era of human history, a "sixth age" that begins with the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ and ends only with this same Christ's return at the end of time. Until this return, the holy "city of God" remains enmeshed in the saeculum, a passing world of social and political life. And, at least for Augustine, this saeculum is also necessary a place of profound tension and ambiguity. Since boundaries cannot be discerned with any certainty in this life, every dimension of human existence is defined by the intermingling of divine communion and earthly commotion, of sacred and secular, of faith and culture.

This journal, a collaborative venture of undergraduate students in the Christianity and Culture programme of Saint Michael's College and the University of Toronto, offers a venue for scholarly conversation about life in the saeculum. In these pages, you will read about the critical engagement between Christian tradition and the broader cultures in which it always and inevitably remains intermixed, including scientific discovery, music and the arts, philosophy and theology, politics and society, and the perennial task of Christian education.

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From the Editor's Desk

IT IS FROM within the Christianity and Culture program at St. Michael's College that profound ideas are born and brilliant minds flourish. Our fellow undergraduate students put tremendous effort in their academic work and we refuse to let their achievements pass unnoticed. At *Saeculum*, we recognize the intellectual contribution of these undergraduates and continuously strive to give recognition to their academic achievement by offering a platform from which to introduce their ideas to a wider audience.

This issue of *Saeculum* explores diverse themes in current theological discussion and debate. One of the dominant themes addressed in this issue is the creative arts. Too often, the creative arts have been misconceived as non-academic, but we firmly believe that the arts can be very much academic. The arts have the remarkable ability to convey insights about humanity and the world in which we live that otherwise cannot be effectively expressed in other ways. Several of our authors examine not only the academic value of art, but also the Christian traditions that are rendered within it, whether it is explicit, implicit, or a combination of the two. Margaret Hirst, for instance, analyzes the 1973 Scottish film, *Wicker Man*, from a Christian perspective and shows how an inexpensive "horror film" can stimulate complex theological reflection. In addition, Jenny Gilbert makes a comparison to illustrate that Eugene Smith's tragic photograph "Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath," reflects the Christian tradition of Michaelangelo's *Pieta*. Natalie Merglesky, on the other hand, looks at the music of 50 Cent and heiress Paris Hilton, and examines how the Christian crucifix's infiltration of popular culture has resulted in its being used to ideologically divorce itself from Christ and to assert different kinds of power. Another prominent theme discussed in this issue is the relationship between soteriology and interreligious dialogue. Here, Rebekah Bedard compares two theologians, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya and Bede Griffiths, to show how the way in which a Christian theologian's understanding of salvation can inform the way in which one approaches the ideas of other religious traditions.

We are eternally grateful to the University of St. Michael's College, the Rabanus Project, and the faculty of the Christianity and Culture Program for their continuous generosity and support. I, personally, will always be grateful to have had the opportunity of collaborating with an Editorial Board composed of such passionate and dedicated individuals. It has truly been a rewarding experience. Welcome to the spring issue of

Saeculum. Enjoy.

Leila Wong-Ko-Nang, Editor-in-Chief 2006/07

The Wicker Man

Margaret Hirst

The 1973 Scottish film *The Wicker Man*, directed by Robin Hardy, produced by Peter Snell, and with a screenplay by Anthony Shaffer, is usually categorized as a horror film. It also qualifies, however, as a musical (due to its thirteen song and dance numbers), a melodrama, and a fantasy, winning the grand prize at the Festival of Fantastic Films in Paris, in 1974.ⁱ This film provocatively depicts a rigid Christianity in opposition to a liberated Paganism, reflecting two realities of the 1970's: sexual liberation and declining church attendance. Although only one man, an Episcopalian, represents Christianity in the film, his faith is accurately portrayed; and Paganism is depicted sensitively, without mockery.ⁱⁱ The old religion, Paganism, "serves as the new foundation" for faith, and the new religion, Christianity, is discarded as ineffective.ⁱⁱⁱ This unusual premise has prompted studies of the film from different perspectives, including Christian, Pagan, Feminist, and Folkloric. This paper will examine *The Wicker Man* through a Christian lens, using Gordon Lynch's functionalist and revised correlational methods, to discuss two prominent themes in the film: redemptive violence and a reversed subversion of Christianity. A stunning musical score and skilled cinematography provide essential amplification of these themes.^{iv} As a result, this inexpensive "horror" film stimulates complex theological reflection.

Talented actors enhance the film's effectiveness, notably Edward Woodward as Sgt. Neil Howie, a devout Episcopalian mainland policeman, and Christopher Lee^v as his antagonist, the Lord of a remote Scottish island called Summerisle. Lured to the island to investigate the disappearance of a young girl, Howie discovers a staunchly Pagan populace led by the charming and sophisticated Lord Summerisle. To the amusement of the islanders (and occasionally the viewer) Howie is horror-struck and shaken by the sexuality, Pagan symbolism, and phallic worship he encounters. More importantly, as a representative of Christianity he appears severe and judgmental compared to the easy-going Pagans. Howie's investigation is thwarted at every turn, but by utilizing various clues he concludes that the

missing girl is to be sacrificed to Pagan gods as a propitiation to restore a failed harvest. He rescues the bound girl, and they escape, only to be cornered by a waiting crowd. Howie is seized and told that he has been cozened and manipulated by everyone, including the girl, and that *he* is the intended sacrificial victim. In an appalling climax, Howie and several terrified animals are burned alive inside a giant wicker man structure.

These themes of sacrifice and subversion make *The Wicker Man* particularly appropriate for Christian theological reflection. First, Lynch's *functionalist* approach will be applied in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the Pagan faith by validating it on the basis of its "ability to perform certain functions for individuals," specifically, social, existential, and transcendent.^{vi} The second approach is a dialogical one, termed *revised correlational*, which, as Lynch notes,

values a complex conversation between the questions and insights of both religious tradition and popular culture and allows for the possibility that both religious tradition and popular culture can be usefully challenged and transformed through this process. Questions that have previously been regarded as important in religious tradition can be put to contemporary culture... [and] implicit answers to contemporary struggles that are offered within popular culture are also treated seriously as a resource for thinking about issues of meaning and value.^{vii}

This approach is especially apposite because many "parallels [exist] between the rites and beliefs of early cultures and those of Christianity."^{viii} Using these methods, the film's complex sub-text is uncovered, exposing layers of meaning and stimulating theological reflection.

An understanding of this sub-text necessarily depends upon a validation and understanding of the Pagan religion, or the sacrifice becomes gratuitous violence and the film loses a crucial component of its theological meaning. To this end, Lynch's *functionalist* approach uncovers real societal, existential, and transcendent functions of Paganism. First, the people are united in the common social undertaking of restoring the failed harvest. This failure is succinctly demonstrated in the film through a display of photos depicting several years' harvests, with the last year's picture conspicuously absent. Secondly, an existential function is evident in Pagan beliefs, symbols, and rituals. The Pagans live their faith daily, for example, using only non-Christian names and practicing sympathetic magic, such as placing a frog in a child's mouth for transference of a sore throat.^{ix} Pagan symbols are abundant in the film, and

include fertility stone circles, phallic structures, and the wicker man colossus, which was described by Julius Caesar in his *Gallic Wars*.^x Most striking, however, are Pagan rituals, sacralized by the film's music; these include sexual initiation, Maypole festivities, and fertility dances. Finally, a sense of transcendence is represented by the Pagans' bliss at the scene of the sacrifice, as they sing, sway, and rejoice. Without doubt, music conveys the sacredness in all the Pagan rituals, and is especially evident in three scenes to be discussed below: a seduction, a sexual initiation, and the sacrifice.

The functionalist approach reveals Paganism's legitimacy as a religion, which enables viewers to understand the islanders' need for redemptive violence. Howie has been chosen to save the island due to his purity, which denotes him clearly as a Christ-figure. Lloyd Baugh has noted that filmic Christ-figures possess certain characteristics, "each of which serves as an appropriate metaphor of the totality of the Christ-event or of some dimension thereof".^{xi} Although Howie possesses many Christ-like attributes, it is in the area of redemptive violence that the most pertinent Christic parallel exists. In fact, the filmmakers cast Howie as an Episcopalian in order to accurately depict him receiving the body and blood of Christ because in Scotland at that time, only Episcopalians received both the bread and wine during services. Using "the potent imagery of Christ's sacrifice", they parallel Christian and Pagan belief in redemptive violence.^{xii} Thus, in church, Howie recites: "Take, eat. This is my body, which is broken for you...". These words are interspersed with extreme close-up shots of him receiving the host and the wine. This scene underscores Howie's appreciation of redemptive violence, since an "act of violence [is] at the heart of the Christian faith".^{xiii} Howie both reverences Christ's sacrifice and is revered as one by the Pagans, and both acts represent a healing function. For Christianity, redemptive sacrifice is transformed to universal and eternal grace by means of Christ's voluntary death. In contrast, the Pagans' essential ritual of appeasing their gods cannot evolve beyond human sacrifice, even in the twentieth century.

This ritual sacrifice, though "portrayed in a negative light... [supports] redemptive and righteous violence", as understood by the islanders.^{xiv} Lord Summerisle notes that mere animal sacrifice is not enough – the disaster that has befallen the island requires a perfect human sacrifice, the "right kind of adult", a virgin who has willingly come to the

island, albeit under false pretenses. Hence, Howie's virginity is established early in the film: colleagues privately joke about his chastity and mock his virility, a clear nod to the sexual revolution of the era. Conversely, so crucial is his virginity to the islanders that Howie is tested: Willow, the island's beautiful "Aphrodite", played by Britt Ekland, attempts to seduce him. In an unforgettable scene, which reinforces both Howie's chastity and the Pagans' solemnity of purpose, Willow dances naked in a bedroom adjacent to Howie's, tapping an urgent drumbeat on the wall and singing a beautiful and poignant refrain of sexual longing called "Willow's Song." Gary Carpenter, Assistant Musical Director of the film, attributes the song's haunting quality to a "destabilizing yet mesmeric 'wrong note' harmony... [which] oscillates strangely between B minor and A major".^{xv} During this sensual dance, the camera alternates between one room and the other, sometimes so quickly that as Willow beats on the wall, the camera quickly shows Howie's reaction on the other side, as he trembles with temptation. Thus, the music's beauty and the bold yet sensitive camerawork capture, without sleaziness, the reverence that both Howie and the Pagans hold for his virginity. His suitability as a sacred sacrifice is established.

Yet, the film's artistry serves another function. Utilizing Lynch's *revised correlational* approach, a second major theme in the film emerges: a subversion of Christianity, until its sudden reversal. This subversion is suggested in various ways; for example, Howie is portrayed throughout as "uptight", repressed, and intolerant, providing a stark contrast to Lord Summerisle's sophistication and intelligence. Furthermore, Howie is "at odds with [his own] secularized mainland culture", while the Pagans are united throughout the film.^{xvi} Additionally, when Howie expresses shock at the islanders' belief in parthenogenesis, Summerisle dryly reminds him that Jesus was born of a virgin and conceived by a ghost, thereby creating parity between the two religions.

This subversion of Christianity is further advanced by music and camerawork in an off-camera sexual initiation of a teenaged boy by Willow. The scene communicates the sacramental nature of the ritual through music and a brilliant three-layered juxtaposition of short and long shots of three simultaneously occurring scenes. While muted sounds of pleasure are heard from the bedroom above, people in the tavern reverently sing "Gently Johnny", a soft, but bawdy ballad which "captures... the fear and solemnity" of adulthood.^{xvii} Outside, Lord Summerisle

watches two snails, photographed in extreme close-up, sensuously intertwine while he recites poetry in praise of animals: “They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, / They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God...”.^{xviii} During this recitation, the camera intermittently shows Howie kneeling and praying beside his bed, disgusted by the sinful ritual. This scene unequivocally subverts Christianity as joyless and sexually repressive, while showing Pagan love to be natural and guilt-free, a concept that clearly resonates with the 1970’s sexual revolution. Christianity also suffers in the portrayal of a beloved Christian hymn, “The Lord is My Shepherd”, sung earnestly but without nuance by the Episcopalian congregation at the beginning of the film. Conversely, from the outset, Pagan music, both incidental and diegetic, is joyful, sensual, and rhythmic. Finally, the lighting in the film provides an understated but significant amplification of the subversion model. Mainland scenes are filmed in blue tone, and set in institutional places: church and police stations and vehicles, while most island scenes are filmed in bright colour, outdoors in sunshine, or other pleasant locales: the tavern, bedrooms, gardens, or Lord Summerisle’s magnificent castle.

The subversion undergoes a dramatic reversal, however, beginning with the Mayday procession, leading to the sacrifice. In contrast to his former suave persona, Lord Summerisle appears ridiculous as he dances clumsily, costumed in a long black wig and woman’s dress, while Howie, desperately seen searching for the young girl, has begun to gain audience support. This reversal, augmented by music and cinematography, occurs most strikingly during the sacrifice scene. First, a series of short camera shots juxtaposes scenes of unsuspecting animals in the structure, with Howie’s growing realization of its purpose.^{xix} Secondly, after a futile struggle to escape, his shouts of “Oh God! Oh, Jesus Christ! No...” are counterpointed by Pagan prayers: “mighty god of the Sun... accept our sacrifice and make our blossoms fruit”, creating a crescendo of rising dread in the audience. Thirdly, an extreme close-up of Howie’s face, upside down, as he is carried toward the colossus, portrays his disorientation, now felt also by the viewer. Finally, as the dreadful dénouement approaches, the Pagans’ lack of mercy and barbarism force viewers to question their initial assumptions about both faiths.

In addition to these camera angles and shots, the key role of music in this film contributes to the reversal of the Christian/Pagan paradigm. As the flames rise, the Pagan congregation sings its final song, “Summer is Icumen In”, a rhythmic tune accompanied by a somber drumbeat, with lyrics utterly incongruous to the violent scene. The singing is accompanied by unpleasant, exaggerated swaying and grinning. Howie’s response and the islanders’ joy are contrasted in a series of point-of-view shots showing Howie inside the burning colossus, praying and shouting with his arms extended eerily through the wicker. He is watching the Pagans below and the singing congregation is excitedly watching him, adding emphasis to their shocking brutality. Suddenly, above the cacophony of singing islanders and shrieking animals, Howie loudly and defiantly sings, “The Lord is My Shepherd”. The lyrics are now movingly pertinent, providing a stark contrast between the deep meaning of the hymn and the triviality of the Pagan lyrics. His last agonized screams of “Jesus!”, accompanied by a “heraldic voluntary for trumpets” and a symbolic blood-red sunset end the film; Christianity is given the triumphant final word.^{xx} Lord Summerisle’s “joyous old gods” have demanded the murder of an innocent man, and Christianity, in spite of its depicted austerity, has maintained its relevance in the face of the unthinkable.

Thus it is that this “horror” film, supported by music and cinematography, communicates deep theological meaning and provokes reflection. First, when viewed through a functionalist lens, the Pagan faith is legitimized as serving functions of societal, existential and transcendental importance, contributing to the crucial understanding that, for the Pagans, the sacrifice is justified. For the viewer, however, the sacrifice is flawed, not only as senseless murder, but also theologically due to its forced nature. It is noteworthy that no islander has offered to be sacrificed, in contrast to the generosity and holiness of Christ’s voluntary Passion. Significantly, in Pagan lore, an unwilling sacrifice constitutes a very bad omen, though this point was not pursued in the film.^{xxi} Secondly, a revised correlational approach to the film unveils a useful dialogue between theology and popular culture in its criticism of both Pagan violence and Howie’s intolerance, which represents the attitude of the majority religion. These failings of violence and intolerance foster alienation from God, especially in a modern secularizing or multi-faith society, and as Detweiler and Taylor have noted, Christianity can only remain relevant by embracing popular culture as a way of finding the

“reality of the lived world rather than in the safety of old assumptions”.^{xxii} In addition, although the island minority certainly employs the “creativity of the weak in using the resources provided by a disempowering system” to obtain their sacrifice, the act is understood as murder by the viewer.^{xxiii} This perception is instructive: as viewers reject the violence of Paganism, the corollary is a rejection of the subversion of Christianity because its flaws appear minor in comparison to its strengths.

In conclusion, it is useful to note that, due to its originality and depth of meaning, *The Wicker Man* has won awards and in 2003 inspired a cross-disciplinary conference to discuss the film.^{xxiv} Recovering from initial distribution problems, it has become a cult classic, due in part to its provocative plot and sexual themes, but mainly attributable to its depth and enduring theological significance in today’s post-rational, post-sexual, post-Christian world.^{xxv} Without its theological/cultural dialogue, the film would have remained simply in the genre of horror, but *The Wicker Man*’s popularity continues precisely because it transcends horror, offering material for serious reflection on several levels.

^{xxvi} As a result, numerous websites are devoted to the film, a newly released soundtrack is available for sale, and critiques from a wide variety of perspectives have emerged, uncovering hidden layers of meaning in this extraordinary motion picture.

Appendix A -The Music of the Wicker Man^{xxvii}

Willow's Song – Paul Giovanni

Heigh ho
 Who is there?
 No one but me my dear.

Please come
 Say how do the things I'll give to you?

A stroke as gentle as a feather
 I'll catch a rainbow from the sky and tie the ends together

Heigh ho
 I am here.
 Am I not young and fair?

Please come
 Say how do the things I'll show to you?

Would you have a wond'rous sight?
 The midday sun at midnight

Fair maid, white and red,
 Comb you smooth and stroke your head
 hmm

How a maid can milk a bull
 And every stroke a bucketful
 Gently Johnny (Medieval English Folk Song)

I put my hand on her knee

And she says do you want to see

I put my hand on her breast

And she says do you want a kiss

Gently gently gently Johnny

Gently Johnny my jingalo

I put my hand on her thigh

And she says do you want to try

I put my hand on her belly

And she says do you want to fill me

Gently Johnny...

Summer is Icumen In – 13th c. English song

Summer is Icumen in

Loudly sing cuckoo

Grows the seed and blows the mead

And springs the wood anew

Sing cuckoo

Ewe bleats harshly after lamb

Cows after calves make moo

Bullock stamps and deer champs

Now shrilly sing cuckoo

Cuckoo, cuckoo

Wild bird are you

Be never still cuckoo

Notes

¹ David Bartholomew. "The Wicker Man" in *Cinefantastique Magazine*. Vol. 6, Issue 3. (Chicago: Clarke Publishers, 1977), On-line: http://www.wicker-man.com/articles/cinefantastique_TWM_article_1977.pdf (accessed November 25, 2006).

¹ Robin Hardy. "The Genesis of the Wicker Man" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited 2006), 21-22.

¹ Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. "Methodology: A Matrix of Meanings" in *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 29.

¹ American composer Paul Giovanni composed the original music and adapted many folk songs, some by Robert Burns, for the film. Please see Appendix A for lyrics of the songs discussed in this paper.

¹ So highly did Mr. Lee regard the film that he worked for free; indeed he and Mr. Woodward feel the film was a highlight in their careers, as indicated in an interview on *The Wicker Man DVD*.

¹ Gordon Lynch. *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 28.

¹ *Ibid*, 105-105.

¹ Richard Sermon. "The Wicker Man, May Day and the Reinvention of Beltane" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited, 2006), 26.

¹ *Ibid*, 27.

¹ Julius Caesar. *De Bello Gallico*, trans. W. McDevitte and W. Bohn (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1869) referenced in Sermon "May Day", 37.

¹ Lloyd Baugh. *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film*. (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1997, in SMC305H1F Course Reader). 205.

¹ Hardy, "Genesis" 21.

¹ David John Graham. "Redeeming Violence in the Films of Martin Scorsese" in *Explorations in Theology and Film*. Ed. Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 88.

- ¹ Jon R. Stone. "A Fire in the Sky." In *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*. Eds. Eric Michael Mazur and Kate McCarthy. (New York: Routledge, 2001, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 3.
- ¹ Gary Carpenter. Personal e-mail message, November 9, 2006.
- ¹ Steven J. Sutcliffe. "Religion in *The Wicker Man*: Context and Representation" in *Constructing The Wicker Man: Film and Cultural Studies Perspectives*. Eds. Jonathan Murray, Lesley Stevenson, Stephen Harper, and Benjamin Franks. (Glasgow: Crichton Publications, 2005), 39.
- ¹ Gary Carpenter. Quoted in "Heathen earth" by Frances Morgan. *Plan B Magazine*. (London: Plan B Publishing, October, 2006), 78.
- ¹ Walt Whitman. "Song of Myself" in *Leaves of Grass* (1855). (New York: New American Library, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2005), 51.
- ¹ So ominous was the wicker structure that Anthony Schaeffer recalls in an interview on the DVD, that local residents, fearing that the animals were actually going to be burned, contacted the RSPCA.
- ¹ Melvyn J. Willin. "Music and Paganism with Special Reference to *The Wicker Man*". In *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited 2006), 150.
- ¹ Paula James. "Ritualistic Behaviour in *The Wicker Man*: A classical and carnivalesque perspective on the true nature of sacrifice" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited, 2006), 52.
- ¹ Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. "Music: Al Green makes Us Cry" in *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003: 125-53, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 152.
- ¹ John Fiske. "Commodities and Culture. In *Understanding Popular Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1989, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 47.
- ¹ Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. "Introduction: The search for *The Wicker Man*" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Edited by Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited 2006), 7-8.
- ¹ Detweiler and Taylor, "Methodology", 31.
- ¹ The artistic and commercial failure of the 2005 remake of the film, starring Nicholas Cage, may have been caused by the omission of sacralizing music and religious faith of the protagonist, rendering it just a bad horror film.
- ²⁷ Declan McCafferty, Music of the Wicker Man website: <http://www.wicker-man.com/musicofthewickerman.php> (Accessed on November 25, 2006)

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Christianity, Arts and Letters

A Modern Pietà

Jenny Gilbert

What makes art Christian? Must the artist be a self-identifying Christian? Or can there be something present within the art itself that points to Christian concepts or ideals? This essay will look at W. Eugene Smith's famous photo *Tomoko Uemura in her Bath*:¹ a black and white image of a mother cradling her daughter who had been crippled from mercury poisoning in-utero. I will argue that this image is in the tradition of the pietà, and as such, it is an example of Christian art. W. Eugene Smith was an internationally known photographer, who was renowned for his dramatic photo essays which were shot with tremendous compassion and respect for his subjects. His photographs were exhaustively researched—he would often spend months, if not years with a community. Smith's photos confront war, poverty, pollution, and injustice, but his photos also document love and compassion. *Tomoko Uemura in her Bath* was the result of several years spent photographing a community of victims of environmental pollution. Susan Sontag argued that the ultimate effect of the series of photos taken in Minamata is to distance us. She argued that though the photos move the viewer because they document suffering, the viewer is distanced from them because “they are superb photographs of Agony, conforming to surrealist standards of beauty.”² (Susan Sontag is a well known critic and essayist on the subject of photography, and is the author of *Illness as Metaphor*, *On Photography*, and *Regarding the Pain of Others*.) This essay will show how and why I disagree with this statement. The photograph in question is a representation of a mother's grief; furthermore, it is also a representation of suffering, which alludes to the suffering of Christ. In the depiction of a child disfigured as a result of human negligence and indifference, the image also represents the innocence of Christ. I will give a brief history of the events at Minamata, where this photograph was taken. I will also briefly discuss the tradition of the pietà in western art. In order to argue for the Christian-ness of this image, I will discuss what makes this photograph a work of art that portrays values important to the Christian tradition.

In the town of Minamata, in Japan, a petrochemical company, the Chisso Corporation, knowingly and continuously dumped industrial waste into Minamata Bay over the course of several decades. Minamata was a fishing community, and as the chemical byproducts poisoned the food chain, so too was the community poisoned. The first confirmed case of what is now known as Minamata Disease was recorded in 1953, though there were certainly earlier deaths that were connected to this disease, which was caused by eating fish that were poisoned with mercury.³ The disease ate away at the victims' brains, usually causing a long, slow, agonizing deterioration of both the body and the mind. W. Eugene Smith and his wife Aileen traveled to Minamata to photograph the victims of this disease. They lived there for three years and became very involved in the community's struggle for acknowledgment and compensation from the government and from the Chisso Corporation. Smith and his wife became close with many of the families as they documented their suffering.

H.W Janson's *History of Art* defines pietà as follows, "Italian word for both pity and piety. A representation of the Virgin grieving over the dead Christ."⁴ The pietà image of Mary holding her son's broken body after he is taken down from the cross does not emerge from a biblical passage, rather it emerges from changing devotional practices in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The shift to a more affective piety "gave rise to a spiritual climate of tender inwardness" while at the same time "drawing on currents in medieval Byzantine spirituality, it inclined toward violent, even lurid, religious sensations."⁵ These grotesque aspects were certainly present in the pietà sculptures that came to be placed in churches, particularly in Northern Europe. The grotesque was not limited to the pietà, it was present in paintings and sculptures of the crucifixion. Christ was increasingly shown as bleeding and emaciated, his body contorted in pain. The emergence of the pietà image represented a cultural shift "away from the vocabulary of hierarchies, rulers, and heavenly powers."⁶ The humanity of Jesus, particularly the suffering Jesus began to be emphasized more than ever before. The *Christus Patiens*—the suffering Christ—became a more common vision of Christ than the *Christus Victor*—victorious, triumphant Christ which had, for hundreds of years, been the predominant typology. The clergy as well as the laity in this period desired a stronger connection to the human side of God, and placed an increased emphasis on the divine suffering of Christ. "Christ as man, son, infant, mortal sufferer— these

were characteristics of divinity the late medieval believer hungered to know, to feel, and to see.”⁷ The pietà image is a potent symbol for suffering, it acts as an invitation to relate to Christ’s suffering as well as his mother’s. It functions as a meditation on the fact that because Jesus became man, he suffered: just as humanity suffers, so too does Christ.

The image of Tomoko Uemura’s twisted body bears close resemblance to medieval pietà imagery, and this was because Smith wanted to show how physically damaged Tomoko was. Victims of Fetal Minamata Disease, like Tomoko, absorbed the poison their mothers ingested and were born with central nervous system damage that left them with contorted limbs and brain damage, some unable to walk or talk at all.⁸ Tomoko absorbed all of the poison from her mother’s body, leaving her mother and her future siblings unaffected by the disease. Knowing this fact, it is tempting to view Tomoko herself as a kind of unwitting martyr. Smith and his wife were neighbours with the Uemura’s and occasionally helped the family care for Tomoko. At one point during their stay in Minamata, Smith told his wife that he wanted to make a symbolic picture of Tomoko.⁹ He said that he “wanted somehow to symbolize the best, the strongest element of Minamata.”¹⁰ Smith told Tomoko’s mother that he wanted a photo that would show what had happened to her body, and she suggested the bath. The natural lighting that came in from the high windows in the room was supplemented by two electronic flashes. Smith asked the mother to raise Tomoko’s legs slightly out of the water.¹¹ The subsequent exposure was one that Smith “knew instantly would become his final print, a rectangle of light, the reflection in the water of a window, framed precisely one of Tomoko’s twisted hands.”¹² In his own words he explains his process: “Now this does not mean in any way I was posing the picture in the sense of posing a picture. It meant interpreting what by now I knew full well to be true, because I would never have done it otherwise.”¹⁴ As an experienced photographer he knew what he was doing when he composed Tomoko and her mother in the viewfinder of his camera, and the fact that he was raised by a Catholic mother and attended parochial school meant that he was certainly aware of the religious connotations of the image he was composing.¹⁵ *Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath* was to be Smith’s last important photograph.

Smith’s biographer notes that with the image *Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath* “the references to the crucified Christ were unmistakable; invariably, people over the years would compare the photograph to Michaelangelo’s

pietà.”¹⁶ In discussing this image’s resemblance to a *pietà*, it is useful to bring up the ways in which this image is not an “accurate” representation of a *pietà*.” The Christ-figure in the image is female, not male. She has not been beaten and scourged but was born handicapped. She is not being held dead in her mother’s arms, but is very much alive. What is *pietà*-like about this image is the positioning of course, but it is more than that. It is the eyes of the mother gazing lovingly at her daughter. It is the love that the mother conveys to her daughter, which is so clearly *agape*, the kind of self-giving, self-sacrificing love that Christ had for humankind. The traditional image of the *pietà* is an echo of Mary holding Christ as a baby. Tomoko, because her disability makes her infant-like, recalls not just the death, but also the infancy of Christ, in that infancy is innocence and purity. What strikes the viewer when looking at a *pietà* is the fact that Christ was innocent and pure both at the beginning of his life and, unlike us, at the end of his life as well. When looking at the image *Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath* one must face the unbearable idea of innocent suffering. We are intended to see Tomoko as, in a way, representative of all of our suffering. The question of whether or not she was actually physically suffering in that moment is moot: we imagine ourselves into her twisted body and we imagine ourselves into the mother who is caring for the child. This is the suffering child, the suffering human. Tomoko is a stand-in for Christ, and since this is the case, in a way Smith is implicating us all in what has happened to Tomoko. It is an indictment of the viewer. If, because we are sinners, we are all responsible for the death and suffering of Christ, so too are we responsible in the suffering of Tomoko and other innocents.

William Dyrness argues that “successful art then is that which is able to fuse a vision of what might be, or in some fundamental sense what ought to be, onto a keen sense of what really is.”¹⁷ Dyrness argues that the synthesizing of these two elements— reality and vision—what is and what might be are possible, because of hope.¹⁸ “Hope takes faith seriously enough to put it into a practice as love.”¹⁹ Hope is what enables artists such as W. Eugene Smith to create the work that they do. It is this hope that permits one to struggle and to fight injustice. One would not fight if one did not have some hope that there would be some kind of justice, some kind of resolution, some kind of positive effect on the world. The photograph of Tomoko and her mother is one that reflects Smith’s indignance at the

world for letting such a tragedy happen. An oft quoted statement by W. Eugene Smith offers a glimpse of his understanding of his role as a photographer, particularly in relation to his work in Minamata:

Photography is a small voice, at best, but sometimes—just sometimes—one photograph or a group of them can lure our senses into awareness. Much depends upon the viewer; in some, photographs can summon enough emotion to be a catalyst to thought. Someone—or perhaps many—among us may be influenced to heed reason, to find a way to right that which is wrong, and may even be inspired to the dedication needed to search for the cure to an illness. The rest of us may perhaps feel a greater sense of understanding and compassion for those whose lives are alien to our own. Photography is a small voice. It is an important voice in my life, but not the only one. I believe in it. If it is well-conceived, it sometimes works. That is why I—and also Aileen—photograph in Minamata.²⁰

His photos are an affirmation of life, despite their subject matter. As photographer Robert Adams has pointed out: “Photography as art does address evil, but it does so broadly as it works to convince us of life’s value; the darkness that art combats is the ultimate one, the conclusion that life is without worth and finally better off ended.”²¹ While the photo of Tomoko is a horrific image, because it represents suffering, it is also a hopeful photograph, because it also shows such powerful love, a love that makes life worth living. After Tomoko died (at age 21), her father noted that aside from medicine for her pain, he felt that the only thing Tomoko had to live for was the love of her family, which he felt is what helped her to live as long as she did.²² This is a photograph that represents that love, and therefore that glimmer of hope that exists for humanity. Smith himself noted: “I lend myself to tragic confrontations. I photograph many sad situations that have within them the opening of a hope. I believe in humanity. I am affirmative.”²³ Pope John Paul II, in his open letter to artists noted that artists are “obedient to their inspiration in creating works both worthwhile and beautiful, they not only enrich the cultural heritage of each nation and of all humanity, but they also render an exceptional service in favour of the common good.”²⁴ This is precisely what Smith achieved with his mother and child photograph. It is in favour of the common good because it sought, and does seek, to tell the truth, to confront the madness of the world. It is both beautiful and horrifying. It demands something from the viewer, and though it is in some respects an “awful” image, it still implies a sense of hope. As one critic noted, “a symbolic image” which this image surely is, “is above all an interior one, and therefore does not rely solely on its ‘visual impact.’”²⁵ This photo is not just an image; it goes beyond the image and engages the ‘interior’ of the viewer. Even

taken out of context, even if the viewer is not aware of the story surrounding this photo, it is still a poignant portrait of a child's suffering and a mother's love.

Can this photograph be considered a great work of art? More specifically, can it be considered a great piece of Christian art? And if so, how is that ascertained? I would like to use three concepts to argue for the greatness as well as the Christian-ness of this photograph: honesty, integrity, and transcendence. Honesty refers to the artistic tradition, and reflects the artist's commitment to a connection with tradition (even if in some cases the art is subverting the tradition). In this case, the photograph is indeed honest. It is faithful to the tradition of photography, and it also clearly conveys a commitment to other forms of visual representation, evident in Smith's use of *chiaroscuro* and the fact that the image references the tradition of the pieta. Smith's work evokes so much that is essential to western art. The whole tradition of western art (with the exception of the modern period starting in the mid-eighteenth century) is somehow associated with the Christian tradition. In particular, this is evident, in the medieval and renaissance art discussed in this essay, which was produced with the patronage of the church.

Does the photograph have integrity? Yes: Smith's empathy for humanity is evident in this portrait; he is not seeking to make a clever or solely aesthetically pleasing image. His compassion and engagement with his subjects is apparent in the respect and dignity that come through clearly in the photograph. Whether or not Smith himself was a Christian is irrelevant. His compassion and love of neighbour is evident in his work, the important Christian message of love and hope is present.

The last concept I will discuss is transcendence, does this image point the viewer beyond itself? As I have argued throughout the essay: this photograph does point beyond itself, to an encounter with the idea of *agape*—the self-giving love of the mother, as well as the self-giving love of Christ, and in the resemblance to Christ, it points to the divine. The fact that Smith "posed" his subject has been problematic for some critics. It is seen as dishonest, but because he was so invested in his subjects, Smith wanted to portray a perfect vision of beauty and suffering. To do so required that, in some cases, he had to set the scene. Does this take away from the "truth" of the photograph? One can certainly argue that the viewer has been manipulated in a way, but is that a bad thing? "Such interference is often

regarded as incompatible with the documentary photographer's job, and raises doubts about trusting his [or her] evidence: photography should allow us to see exactly what the photographer saw. Smith, however, added something slightly different: it is honesty which matters above all, rather than objectivity. To convey his feelings most effectively and thereby capture our attention and make us aware, he often decided to heighten his effects, accentuate the contrasts, underline certain features of the image, and even introduce other made-up ones.²⁶ The fact is that all photography is staged, even a photograph that is snapped in the moment has been staged by the photographer by her use of composition. By its very nature, framing a photograph is taking something out of a larger context; this does not, in Smith's case, remove the truth from the image. It has been argued that documentary photography is exploitative of the subject. Susan Sontag argued that the camera "is a kind of passport that annihilates moral boundaries and social inhibitions, freeing the photographer from any responsibility toward the people photographed. The whole point of photographing people is that you are not intervening in their lives, only visiting them."²⁷ Sontag's assertions applied to W. Eugene Smith, are not accurate. Smith spent several years in Minamata fully immersing himself in the community. Not only that, but he fought with the community for justice, to the point that he was severely beaten by people who worked for the Chisso Corporation.²⁸ One critic has pointed out that because photography is linked to particular times, places, and events, it is limited in its power. It does not "have the power that painting has to perpetuate an idea, using the symbolic overtones and strong aesthetic presence that can come from being able to construct the whole image."²⁹ He goes on to argue that Smith constructed his photographs using a painting-like aesthetic. Smith "attempted to but time with his pictorial allusions, creating images whose aesthetic relevance would override their factual ones."³⁰ By making reference to a long tradition of religious paintings, particularly, as many critics have noted, in his use of light, which has been compared to Rembrandt, Smith has created an image that will transcend time and place.

The pietá image is a reminder of an earlier time, when the use of the pietá image, was related to changing devotional practices. The desire and need to see Christ suffering was a result of a desire to meditate on the humanity of Christ, where previously his divinity had been emphasized. The fact that the photograph *Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath*

bears great resemblance to the pietá form is not an accident, but an intentional positioning by the artist, does not mean the story it tells is a lie. The use of the pietá evokes thoughtful compassion which can point the viewer beyond the image itself. By constructing such an image, Smith was able to articulate an evocative idea, while maintaining the dignity and courage of his subjects. As one critic noted, Smith's photo-story Minamata, of which the Tomoko image is a part, is "a statement of personal revolt; he went beyond a plain account and cast himself in the role of visionary."³¹

I have attempted to look at this 'text' on its own terms, and despite the fact that at first glance one may want to turn away from images such as this one in revulsion, an engagement with it on its own terms reveals much that would have been missed. The beauty of a photograph is that, as with many art forms, it offers a multiplicity of meanings. The pieta image creates ambiguity because Christ himself is not an entirely unambiguous figure. We do not know, for instance, what interpretation of the meaning of salvation Smith ascribed to, if any. We do know that Smith sacrificed himself financially, emotionally, and physically for this photo series.³² We can know that we are meant to think of Tomoko's as stand in for the suffering Christ, but not just his suffering, Smith chose this image because it is a symbol of Christ, who lived and preached a life of love. We do not know if Smith wanted us to see ourselves in Tomoko, the same way we are should aspire to be Christ-like ourselves. Or if Smith wanted to implicate us in Christ's death, and therefore in the innocent suffering of Tomoko and the other innocent sufferers in her community, and around the world. Is this a piece of art that can be called Christian? Christ is associated with advocating for the poor, the diseased, the distressed, and the marginalized. At the heart of Christianity is the demand to love your neighbour with a self-sacrificing love. W. Eugene Smith exemplified this kind of love in his struggle for justice for the people of Minamata, and in this photograph he demonstrated his most important philosophical concern: humanity "I try to take what voice I have and give it to those who don't have one at all."³³

Notes

¹ This image has also been called *Tomoko is Bathed by Her Mother*.

² This image has also been called *Tomoko is Bathed by Her Mother*.

- ³ Susan Sontag. *On Photography*. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977): 105.
- ⁴ W. Eugene Smith, and Aileen M. Smith. *Minamata*. (New York: Alskog-Sensorium and Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975): p.26
- ⁵ H.W. Janson. *History of Art*, 5th ed. Revised by Anthony F. Janson. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995): 940.
- ⁶ Timothy Verdon. "Christianity, the Renaissance, and the Study of History." In *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson, 1-37. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990): 10.
- ⁷ John W Cook. "What is Christian about Christian Art?" In *Interpreting Christian Art*. Ed. Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, 187-208. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004): 193.
- ⁸ Joanna Ziegler. "Michaelangelo and the Medieval Pieta: The Sculpture of Devotion or Art of Sculpture?" *Gesta* 34 (1995): 29.
- ⁹ Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 484.
- ¹⁰ Ben Maddow. Let Truth Be the Prejudice: W. Eugene Smith, His Life and Photographs. (New York: Aperture, 1985): 72.
- ¹¹ W. Eugene Smith. *Dialogue with Photography*, ed. Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper. 253-281. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979): 281.
- ¹² Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 486.
- ¹³ Ibid. pp.486.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 486
- ¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 5
- ¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 486
- ¹⁷ William A. Dyrness. "The Christian Imagination." In *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion* 15 (1996): 91.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 93.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 93.
- ²⁰ Ben Maddow, Let Truth Be the Prejudice: W. Eugene Smith, His Life and Photographs. (New York: Aperture, 1985): 233.
- ²¹ Robert Adams. *Beauty in Photography: Essays in Defense of Traditional Values*. (New York: Aperture, 1981): 70.
- ²² Yoshio Uemura. "The Transfer of Control." *Aperture* 160. (Summer 2000): 15-16. This article discusses the fact that the iconic image of Tomoko has been withdrawn from circulation. The rights from the photograph were transferred from Smith's widow, Aileen Smith, to the Uemura's. Part of their desire was to quell rumours that they had profited from this image (they had not), but in large part because their wanted put their daughter's image to rest, and thus have closure.
- ²³ Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 482.
- ²⁴ Pope John Paul II. "Letter to Artists" (April 1999).
- ²⁵ Serge Tisseron. "What Is a Symbolic Image?" In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 66-73. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 70.
- ²⁶ Gabriel Bauret. "The Influences of a Legend." In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 314-321. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 319.
- ²⁷ Susan Sontag. *On Photography*. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977): 41.
- ²⁸ Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 488.
- ²⁹ Gilles Mora. "The Arrogant Martyr." In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 6-27. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 16.
- ³⁰ Ibid. pp. 16.
- ³¹ Gabriel Bauret. "The Influences of a Legend." In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 314-321. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 318.
- ³² Ibid. pp. 316.
- ³³ W. Eugene Smith. *Dialogue with Photography*, ed. Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper. 253-281. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979): 280.

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“By This Sign Ye Shall Conquer”: 50 Cent and Paris Hilton Cross the Line

Natalie Merglesky

Throughout the history of Christianity, the cross (or crucifix) has been upheld as a symbol of power. Its explicit allusion to Christ’s sacrifice for humanity implicitly evokes his Resurrection and in so doing, visually represents his authority over death.² Traditionally, those who wore the cross did so out of a desire to identify themselves as Christians, distinguished recipients of this power over finitude.³ Today, many believers still participate in this custom. The cross continues to be worn on necklaces, bracelets or pairs of earrings as a way of conveying the bearer’s faith and his or her acceptance of a providential victory over death. But what does it mean when this symbol is worn by a Christian who acts in an un-Christian way or when it is appropriated by a non-Christian as a mere fashion accessory? In particular, pop icons 50 Cent (aka Curtis Jackson) and Paris Hilton present interesting case studies for an examination of how the cross’s infiltration of popular culture has resulted in its being used to assert different kinds of power.

50 Cent, for example, pairs his trademark, diamond-studded cross with a gun on his *Guess Who’s Back?* album cover (see Figure 1).⁴ Given that 50 Cent is a self-proclaimed Christian, one could argue that his use of the cross is not wholly divested of its traditional significance.⁵ However, the implications that arise from his pairing a cross with a weapon suggest that he is also using the symbol to justify a sense of his own personal power that expresses itself through acts of violence rather than through an imitation of Christ’s exemplary love. Similarly, Paris Hilton’s new line of crosses effectively demonstrates how the cross, when worn as a fashion accessory, becomes a symbol of self-promotion rather than of Christ’s salvific act (see Figure 2).⁶ Because Hilton has nowhere professed to be a Christian, her use of the symbol essentially distances its affiliation with Christianity through strengthening its relationship with her and the *Heiress* label. By commodifying the cross as a piece of jewellery, Hilton downplays its significance as a devotional tool, evidencing her power to supersede and replace religious tradition with her own social and commercial

persona. Consequently, while both 50 Cent and Paris Hilton have continued to use the cross as a symbol of power, the ways in which they have chosen to appropriate it ultimately impose new meanings on the cross that appear contradictory to its original message. While scholars generally refrain from presenting any hypotheses regarding this particular dilemma, scholarship has been conducted on the history of the cross and popular culture's relationship to religious imagery. Notably, this body of work necessitates that an applicationist approach be taken to an examination of the stated issue. Such an approach dictates that a given popular cultural text must be evaluated in terms of its fidelity to a fixed theological belief or doctrine.⁷ Consequently, 50 Cent's and Hilton's use of the cross must be read against the backdrop of the symbol's historical context if one is to infer how these contemporary translations of the cross either modify or completely alter the type of power that it was originally used to express.⁸

A brief overview of the history of the cross as a religious symbol indicates how it has consistently been aligned with Christ's authoritative position as humanity's saviour and the son of God. For the early Christian community, the cross underwent a transformation. What had been a common symbol of degradation and pain became one of victory and triumph, as Christ's resurrection turned a Roman instrument of death into one that promised life.⁹ In his article on the Cross, in the fourth edition of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, C. Meinberg explains just how powerful its message of life proved to be when he notes Constantine's adoption of it as "the sign of the Empire" in the fourth century. Claiming to have seen the cross in the heavens, Constantine had it inscribed on the shields of his soldiers, believing that it would keep them from defeat in battle. In the Middle Ages, the crusaders imitated this practice in their quest for the Holy Land, while members of the mendicant orders used the cross as the focal point upon which their meditation of Christ's salvific act concentrated.¹⁰ It adorned the rosary that monks and other Catholics used to aid their prayerful reflections, and provided a model for those seeking to imitate Christ in the hopes of participating in his victory over death.¹¹ As Thomas Fawcett summarizes in his work entitled, *The Symbolic Language of Religion*, for Christians, the cross essentially, "expresses Jesus' character and the nature of his mission:" his power as the son of God and his provision of salvation.¹²

In light of this historical context, 50 Cent's use of the cross on the cover of his album *Guess Who's Back?* (2002) proves incredibly problematic and requires that he also be placed into context, if one is to accurately assess his appropriation of the symbol. Born in Jamaica in 1980 and raised in Queens, New York, 50 Cent was exposed to the hostility of gang-life early on when, at the age of eight, his mother was killed in the middle of conducting a drug deal.¹³ He moved in with his grandmother and began trafficking drugs, carrying guns and committing gang-related crimes until the birth of his son gave him "a new perspective on life" and motivated him to develop his talent for rapping.¹⁴ He began his hip-hop career with JMJ, moving onto Columbia Records in 1999, only to be dropped by the label in April 2000 after being shot nine times in front of his grandmother's house.¹⁵ The attack was allegedly gang-related and his remarkable recovery was promptly followed by the release of *Guess Who's Back?* (2002), an album recorded and produced under Eminem's label, Shady Records.¹⁶

Understandably, much of *Guess Who's Back?* serves as 50 Cent's response to April 2000.¹⁷ The cover features a picture of him pointing a gun and a diamond-studded cross at the viewer. It is an image that seems visually to communicate the threat that he issues in the track "That's What's Up," saying, "Beware of my wrath, I'm gonna school you n*****/ Prepare for class."¹⁸ Evidently, the theme of violent retaliation is visually and lyrically expressed throughout this work, but how is the cross implicated in the outworking of this "wrath" and more importantly, what kind of power does it symbolize as a result?

In his book entitled *Virtual Faith*, Tom Beaudoin provides a useful starting point in attempting to answer these questions. He states, "After having our elders ignore, trivialize, and domesticate our suffering, our generation reacts by finding solidarity with Jesus."¹⁹ Though Beaudoin's comment is made in reference to Gen X Christians and not African-American hip-hop artists, his basic argument—that X-ers tend to identify with Christ as a result of society's having wronged them in some way—can be applied to 50 Cent. In particular, his cross resonates with the title *Guess Who's Back?*, working with it to implicitly or explicitly evoke ideas of a resurrection and a "second-coming." Given the biographical context in which 50 Cent released this album, one is prompted to interpret these elements as expressions of his felt "solidarity with Jesus."²⁰ Like Christ, he was subject to the violence of his oppressors and

“killed” by them, later undergoing a “resurrection.”²¹ While one might rightly argue that in this way, 50 Cent’s use of the cross largely conforms to its traditional purpose of connecting the Christian with Christ’s victory over death, the fact that he couples the symbol with a gun ultimately complicates this assertion.

Specifically, the gun evokes the gang-environment to which 50 Cent is still connected.²² Not only does it draw attention to the hostility needed to survive in this realm, it also implies the life and wealth that needs to be protected if one is to succeed within its boundaries. In all of his albums, 50 Cent asserts that money and the ability to survive catapult one into a coveted social position that, in turn, affords one power over other gang-members and gang-life. A particularly good example of this is given in the track “I’m Supposed to Die Tonight” from his album, *The Massacre* (2005). 50 Cent says,

N***** wanna stick me for my paper/ And pray for my downfall, I understand it all/ But me, I’m a little more flashy a n*****/ So chances are, I’m a have to blast me a n*****/ I’m on that keflon vest shit, that wild wild west s***/ And eighty-one one karat stones in my necklace/ I shine so hard, I make motha***** wanna kill me.²³

Evidently, wealth elevates one into a position that provokes the envy and violence of others, indirectly bestowing authority. Moreover, 50 Cent’s ability to survive the violent attacks of those envious of his power only strengthens his authority over them and the gun, pointed out towards the viewer, works visually to assert this authority.

Within this context, the cross appears to implicitly authorize this exercise of power by the way it symbolically represents 50 Cent’s triumph over the poverty and life-threatening violence inherent in his gang-environment. His cross, as previously discussed, aligns him with Jesus and the ability to overcome death while the “eighty-one one karat stones” that adorn it attest to his material wealth. Through this one symbol, 50 Cent is elevated above his environment and placed into a position of power where the judgment and punishment that his cocked gun promises are made possible within the logistical framework of his gang-environment. Consequently, the cross is disassociated with Christ’s salvific act and message of sacrificial love, as it is made a mere appendage to 50 Cent’s weapon and a mouthpiece for his personal sense of power.

Similarly, Paris Hilton’s appropriation of the cross as a line of fashion accessories under her *Heiress* label complicates the meaning that the symbol conveys. Notably, Hilton does not profess to be a Christian, which

essentially draws attention to the ambiguity inherent in her wearing the cross. In particular, her “Sterling Silver Rosary Bead Necklace w/ Crystal Cross, 18”” presents a problematic rendition of the devotional tool (see Figures 4 and 5).²⁴ As previously stated, the development of the rosary in the early Middle Ages profoundly shaped the prayer-lives of Catholic Christians.²⁵ To briefly elaborate, the rosary facilitates a form of prayer and meditation upon the sacrificial offering of Christ that is visually aided by counting-beads, an image of the Madonna with child, and a crucifix (a cross that holds the body of Christ).²⁶ The crucifix marks the point at which the Apostle’s Creed is said and one professes “who Christ is, and tells the story of his life, death and resurrection, his ascension into the rule of the universe, and his last coming to judge us.”²⁷ It thus communicates the power of the cross by visually representing the central image of the Christian faith: Christ’s sacrificial body.²⁸ What does it mean that Hilton’s “rosary” removes Christ’s body from the cross?

The design works to dislocate the symbol from its historical Christian context, which results in its being indirectly located within a popular cultural framework. As Vincent J. Miller asserts in *Consuming Religion*, one must take note of whether consumer culture appropriates religious imagery in a way that accords with religious tradition or if it adapts these symbols to the norms and standards of popular culture instead.²⁹ The body of Jesus being replaced with an outline of a heart marks a break with tradition (see Figure 5).³⁰ Admittedly, one could argue that this exchange does not withhold the original significance of the cross, as the heart can be understood as an allusion to Christ’s salvific act. However, the fact that Hilton does not appear to adhere to the Christian faith undermines the notion that she is concerned about conveying the original message of the cross in her design. While author Colleen McDonnell might contest this argument stating that Hilton’s “empty cross” nevertheless evokes the “empty tomb,” Miller reminds us that one needs a Christian ideological framework in order to make this connection between the “empty cross” and Christ’s resurrection a meaningful one.³¹ Consequently, Hilton’s supplanting Christ’s sacrificial body with a general symbol of Love renders the meaning of her cross ambiguous and ultimately distances it from the Christian narrative.

This displacement opens up an interpretational gap that the viewer becomes dependent upon Hilton to fill. Because of the way in which the *Heiress* cross’s design physically and ideologically divorces the cross from Christ, Hilton becomes the only person or figure with whom it is explicitly associated. She is made the focal point upon which all potential meanings of the *Heiress* cross must be referenced. Perhaps her authority over the symbol is even illustrated in the cut-out heart at its center. Interestingly enough, *Heiress* makes another necklace that features this same heart though apart from the cross (see Figure 3).³² The fact that it bears the inscription “Paris” is also interesting as it posits this heart as a kind of personal brand which works to under-cut its being interpreted as a modern-day representation of Christ’s salvific act even more. If this observation is legitimate, one can argue that Hilton is symbolically embossed on the *Heiress* cross, replacing Jesus and all that he represents with herself and all that she has come to signify within the arena of popular culture.

Consequently, the *Heiress* cross serves as an extension of Hilton's own identity as a social dominatrix rather than an affirmative symbol of Christ's character and mission.³³ In *Living it Up*, James Twitchell identifies "mass-appeal" as the "heart of materialism," the tool of power in a consumer culture.³⁴ In light of this definition, the *Heiress* cross becomes representative of Hilton's social power. Its design prioritizes whom the cross is on over whom is on the cross, granting the wearer authority to assign the symbol whatever meaning they choose. As a result, non-Christians are able to adopt the *Heiress* cross just as easily as the devout are. Like Hilton, they appropriate the symbol in accordance with their own context, using it as a fashion accessory that in turn becomes a commercial product, mass-produced in order to facilitate mass-consumption.³⁵ Thus, under the label of *Heiress*, the cross is commodified, divested of its salvific significance and used to financially contribute to Paris Hilton's fashion enterprise.

Both 50 Cent and Paris Hilton exemplify how the original power of the cross has been altered or completely removed in its being appropriated by popular artists in ways that connote meanings of self-power. While 50 Cent uses his diamond-studded cross to assert his solidarity with Jesus through suffering, it is also used to communicate and justify his own violent exertion of authority over his gang-environment when it is paired with a gun. Hilton appears to entirely remove the cross's message of salvation by issuing a "rosary" that distances itself from Christ's sacrificial body and its historical context as a devotional tool. The result is a mere fashion accessory that is wholly identified with Hilton and used to increase her wealth and status as the owner of *Heiress*.

Although it is important to be aware of the ways in which popular culture distorts the cross's original meaning, one must not ignore the role that Christianity itself has played in contributing to this phenomenon. As evidenced by a historical overview of the cross as a religious symbol, one can see how Christians too have used it to justify and communicate a plethora of heinous acts and unholy messages.³⁶ Many of the crusaders, for example, donned the symbol in order to "consecrate" their acts of violence and materialistic gain.³⁷ Does one really see a vast difference between this use of the cross and 50 Cent's? Has not the sword and gold simply been translated into a gun and diamonds? McDannell summarizes this point well in *Material Christianity*: "when we look at how Christians use objects, rather than merely what they say about them, we find that the similarities [between their treatment of the cross and popular culture's treatment of it] outweigh the differences."³⁸ She continues to illustrate this point when she draws the reader's attention to the notion that Catholic ignorance regarding the iconography of the Church is partially responsible for popular artists like Paris Hilton, being able to reduce the cross to a piece of jewellery.³⁹ Essentially, Hilton's ability to uproot the cross from its historical context is in part aided by Catholic youth who remain unschooled in its ideological framework and connection to the institutional church.⁴⁰ Thus, just as an applicationist approach to popular culture's appropriation of the cross seeks to hold popular culture accountable to the traditional meaning of the cross, so does popular culture work to hold Christianity accountable to its own traditions and theological framework.

Evidently, an examination of the ways in which 50 Cent and Paris Hilton alter or completely change the cross's original meaning invites discussion regarding how these treatments resonate with some of the historical and contemporary practices of Christians. Perhaps it is within this forum where one might delve deeper into some of the complex issues that surround popular culture's relationship to the cross. For example, what exactly does the prevalence of the cross among African-American hip-hop artists signify and how is it related to notions of violence and African-American feelings of oppression? Moreover, do celebrities who use the cross to assert their own power essentially foster or engender an environment in which their idolization by an adoring public is made more likely? Such questions might serve as useful starting places for continued research with regards to this phenomenon.

NOTES

¹ In 312, upon entering into the battle of the Milvian Bridge, Emperor Constantine is said to have been struck with a vision of brilliant light in which the *chi-rho*, the monogram of Christ, appeared. According to Constantine, the cross bore the inscription: *hoc vinces*—"by this sign ye shall conquer"—a message that he responds to by adorning the shields of his army with the symbol in hopes of victory. He engages in the battle and triumphs, attributing his success to the Christian God as represented by the symbol of the cross. Evidently, Constantine initially identified the cross as a symbol of Christianity, a divine ensign that aided him in achieving and maintaining a position of authority over his adversaries. What this essay will attempt to argue is that 50 Cent and Paris Hilton view the cross in much the same way. Both appear to use the symbol as a means through which they will conquer what they have set out to overcome though in the process, each essentially "crosses the line" in attempting to re-define the cross as a signifier of his or her own personal power.

² Thomas Fawcett. *The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study*. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970).

³Ibid.

⁴ "50 Cent Online," (2002), <http://www.50centonline.com> (accessed November 30, 2006).

⁵Ibid.

⁶ "Sterling Silver Rosary Bead Necklace w/ Crystal Cross, 18" by Paris Hilton," <http://www.amazon.com> (accessed November 30, 2006).

⁷ Gordon Lynch. *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Thomas Fawcett. *The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study*. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970).

Fawcett helpfully points out that the cross attests to the resurrection ideographically as well as ideologically as "its combination of the vertical and the horizontal expresses the meeting place of history and eternity."

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Francis Beaufort Thorton. *This is the Rosary*. (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1961).

¹² Thomas Fawcett. *The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study*. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970).

¹³"50 Cent Online," (2002), <http://www.50centonline.com> (accessed November 30, 2006).

- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ “50 Cent Online,” (2002), <http://www.50centonline.com> (accessed November 30, 2006). “That’s What’s Up,” *Guess Who’s Back* (2002).
- ¹⁹ Tom Beaudoin. *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998).
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ “50 Cent Online,” (2002), <http://www.50centonline.com> (accessed November 30, 2006).
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ “50 Cent Online,” (2002), <http://www.50centonline.com> (accessed November 30, 2006). “I’m Supposed to Die Tonight,” *The Massacre* (2005).
- ²⁴ “Sterling Silver Rosary Bead Necklace w/ Crystal Cross, 18" by Paris Hilton,” <http://www.amazon.com> (accessed November 30, 2006).
- ²⁵ Francis Beaufesne Thorton. *This is the Rosary*. (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1961).
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Vincent J. Miller. *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2004).
- ³⁰ “Sterling Silver Rosary Bead Necklace w/ Crystal Cross, 18" by Paris Hilton,” <http://www.amazon.com> (accessed November 30, 2006).
- ³¹ Colleen McDannell. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 1995. ; Vincent J. Miller. *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2004).
- ³² “Sterling Silver and Crystal Heart Pendant on Satin Chord, 16" by Paris Hilton.” <http://www.amazon.com> (accessed November 30, 2006).
- ³³ Thomas Fawcett. *The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study*. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970).
- ³⁴ James B. Twitchell. *Living It Up: Our Love Affair with Luxury*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).
- ³⁵ Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).
- ³⁶ Thomas Fawcett. *The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study*. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970).
- ³⁷ Ibid.
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- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.

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A Hindu Saviour: The Christologies of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya and Bede Griffiths

Rebekah Bedard

As Christians grow increasingly aware of the fact that Christianity is one among many flourishing religious traditions, there is a growing sense of the need “to rethink, theologically, the relationship of the religious traditions of humanity to the mystery of Jesus Christ.”¹ Many have begun to think about Christ in new ways in light of one of the oldest and most diverse religious traditions: Hinduism. The Benedictine monk, Bede Griffiths, is an example of such a thinker. Some people of Hindu background have also begun to form Christologies. The Neo-Hindu, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, is a prime example. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya and Bede Griffiths relate Christ to Hinduism in somewhat different ways because of their differing soteriologies. While both Upadhyaya and Griffiths contrast Christ with the avatar Krishna and to relate Christ to the Hindu concept of *advaita* (non-duality), neither Upadhyaya’s theory of atonement nor Griffiths’ theory of recapitulation is entirely adequate in these attempts.

Some background on Upadhyaya and Griffiths will help to shed light on their understandings of Christ and of Hinduism. Upadhyaya was born Bhawami Charan Banerji in Khannyan, India in 1861. From his youngest years, he was one of the most brilliant members of the Brahmo Samaj.² During these years, he became deeply attracted to Jesus Christ.³ In 1891 he joined the Roman Catholic Church. Despite his conversion to Christianity, Banerji insisted that he had remained a Hindu.⁴ He became a *sannyasi* (religious ascetic) in 1894 and adopted the name Brahmabandhab (Friend of God) Upadhyaya.⁵ In 1902 he went to the Vatican to argue the case for an inculturated expression of the Christian faith and message in a India, but his proposal was discouraged.⁶ He died in 1907.

Shortly before Upadhyaya’s death, Bede Griffiths was born Alan Griffiths in 1906 in Britain to a family of Anglican background. After attending Oxford, he joined the Roman Catholic Church. Attracted to monastic life, he entered Priknash Abbey in 1933 and became Dom Bede. As a monk, he developed an interest in Eastern spirituality

and began to look to India as the land of promise where he could find “the other half of [his] soul.”⁷ Griffiths moved to India in 1955. Like Upadhyaya, he assumed the life of a *sannyasi*. He later became the leader of the Saccidananda Ashram at Shantivanam (Forest of Peace), and remained there until his death in 1993.

The differing backgrounds of Bede Griffiths and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya influenced their notions of salvation. Upadhyaya, a late nineteenth-Century convert to Christianity, held the traditional Western theory of atonement. Atonement literally means “at-one-ment,” a bringing together of parts originally divided against each other.⁸ Like Anselm and Aquinas, Upadhyaya interpreted atonement in terms of satisfaction for sin.⁹ He expressed the problem that human beings face, saying:

It is universally agreed that *karma* (deed) cannot undo the bondage of *karma* (deed). By choosing the finite (*anatman*) as our goal we incur spiritual death and darken our understanding (*viveka*). No punishment, however intense, can adequately compensate the breach of justice by a creature. If it could, where would be the majesty and sanctity of law?¹⁰

Upadhyaya argues that human suffering cannot compensate for sin, for “God almighty alone can satisfy his desire for vindicating justice.”¹¹ Human beings can only be saved if their suffering is joined to divine suffering. Christ, who is sinless and “perfectly divine as well as perfectly human,”¹² makes this redemption possible by suffering for the sins of humanity.¹³ Through the atoning life and death of Christ, God pardons the guilt of human transgression. In order to avail oneself of the adequate satisfaction of divine justice, one must believe in Christ as the God-Man, and “compassionate [this] compassionating God,”¹⁴ thereby making his humiliations one’s own. According to Upadhyaya, the doctrine of vicarious atonement teaches that God was reconciled with humanity in suffering so that they might be reconciled with Him in joy.¹⁵

While Upadhyaya’s soteriology is more akin to those of Western thinkers such as Anselm and Aquinas, Griffiths’ soteriology is more akin to the mystical theories of Eastern thinkers such as Irenaeus. According to Irenaeus, Christ recapitulates human history by sharing in all human experiences except for sin.¹⁶ By uniting human beings to himself, Christ saves them from sin and death and brings them to divinization and immortality.¹⁷ This redemption transforms not merely the lives of individuals, but the history of the human race.¹⁸ Like Irenaeus, Griffiths argues that Christ “took upon himself the sin and suffering of the whole world; he recapitulated all its stages

and brought it into the Consciousness of the Word.”¹⁹ Griffiths sees Christ as the Second Adam. While Adam is humanity, which falls away from God and is involved in sin, suffering, and death, Christ is the new Adam who reconciles humanity with God.²⁰ “We bear the sin of Adam in us – the sin of man – but in Christ our human consciousness has been opened to the divine.”²¹ Through Christ “the whole of creation”²² has been redeemed.

Bede Griffiths’ and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya’s theories of redemption affect their understandings of how Christ is related to Hinduism. Upadhyaya’s theory of satisfaction leads him to see Christ as the God-Man who has come to save a somewhat deficient Hindu tradition. According to Upadhyaya, Hinduism is primitive and flawed, but sets the stage for the coming of Christ. Upadhyaya argues that the Vedas (the oldest and most highly respected Hindu sacred texts) serve, like the Old Testament, as evangelical preparation for the mystery of Jesus Christ.²³ He also regards Vedanta (a Hindu philosophical school) as a “[t]utor unto Christ”²⁴ and asserts that all of the religious teachers of India implicitly point to Christ. In him alone can all Hindu spiritual hopes be fulfilled.²⁵ In his early writings, Griffiths, like Upadhyaya, asserted that Christ came to the Hindus “as he came to the Jews, as the fulfillment of their hopes and desires.”²⁶ However, Griffiths later began to argue that Christ was “hidden at the heart of Hinduism.”²⁷ This assertion reflects Griffiths’ notion that Christ redeems all of humanity by embracing it and opening it to the divine. Because Christ is already present, “our call is to draw out that presence of Christ, to make them realize it more fully. In India you sometimes meet the most Christ-like people, and there is no doubt that the presence is already there.”²⁸ While Griffiths argues that the grace of Christ is present in other religious traditions,²⁹ he asserts that Jesus Christ, as he is attested to in the Christian tradition, remains the fullest expression of the divine presence of the Word of God.³⁰

Griffiths and Upadhyaya relate Christ not only to Hinduism in general, but also to specific Hindu concepts. Both Upadhyaya and Griffiths attempt to demonstrate that incarnation is distinct from, and superior to, the Hindu notion of *avatara* (a ‘descent’ or incarnation of a deity in earthly form). Griffiths’ central argument is that, while Christ and Krishna are both manifestations of the divine Mystery in human form, “Krishna is a mythological character without any real basis in history.”³¹ Even if Krishna existed in history, he now belongs to the realm of myth since the

stories that have grown up around him are legendary. Christ, on the other hand, is an historical figure. Unable to draw on his theory of recapitulation, which focuses not on the incarnation, but on the Christ event as a whole, Griffiths makes the inadequate claim that Christ is unique simply because he existed in history.

Upadhyaya makes a stronger argument than Griffiths. According to Upadhyaya, Krishna is a unique manifestation of rational wisdom and power, while Christ is the saviour of sinners.³² Upadhyaya contrasts *avatara* with incarnation, saying:

The Hindus hold that God incarnates himself from time to time to protect the true religion, to destroy the wicked and reward the righteous, while Christians believe that God incarnated himself only once to save sinners by virtue of his sufferings which are of infinite value in the sight of divine justice.³³

Many elements of Upadhyaya's argument, not least his references to the "infinite value" of Christ's suffering in the sight of "divine justice," recall his theory of satisfaction. By drawing on this theory, Upadhyaya is able to distinguish the purpose of incarnation from that of *avatara*. While Griffiths' argument leads to endless debate about whether or not Christ and Krishna are historical or mythical figures, Upadhyaya's argument stands on fairly firm theological ground.

Upadhyaya's atonement theory is not so helpful in his attempts to relate Christ to *advaita* (non-duality). According to Sankara's interpretation of *advaita*, there is only reality, Brahman, with which the *Atman* or self is identical; the notion that the two are separate stems from *maya* (illusion). Upadhyaya does not draw exclusively on this interpretation.³⁴ His profession as a Catholic *sannyasi* (religious ascetic) leads him to focus on the Hindu mystical experience of *advaita* as *Saccidananda*: Being (*Sat*), Knowledge (*Cit*), Bliss (*Ananda*). Upadhyaya relates *Saccidananda* to the Trinity, seeing the Father as *Sat*, the Son as *Cit*, and the Spirit as *Ananda*. Christ is central to the human understanding of God, for it is he who has revealed that "God is self-related by means of internal distinctions that do not cast even a shadow of division on the unity of his substance."³⁵ Although Christ reveals the mystery of the Godhead to human beings, he does not call them to participate in it, as there can be no foreign intervention in the act of divine self-knowledge. Because Upadhyaya maintains that God and created reality remain distinct, his argument can hardly be characterized as non-dual. Upadhyaya fails to make a clear link between Christ and *advaita*.

Griffiths connects Christ and *advaita* more successfully. His theory of recapitulation is in harmony with Aurobindo Ghose's interpretation of *advaita*: that the world does not dissolve like a dream, but is taken up and transformed.³⁶ Griffiths argues that as the Hindu experience of *advaita* is pushed deeper, it opens into an interior mystical realization of the Godhead as a communion of love.³⁷ Christ reveals this depth in John 17:20 when he prays that "they may be one, as thou, Father, in me and I in thee, that they may be one in us."³⁸ Drawing on his theory of recapitulation, Griffiths argues that Christ brings humanity into the living relationship that he shares with the Father.³⁹ According to Griffiths, the Christian doctrine of incarnation can resolve the problematic lack of emphasis on created reality that he believes is inherent in *advaita* Vedanta.⁴⁰ Human beings do not disappear in the Godhead, but "discover a personal relationship of love."⁴¹ Griffiths' notion that the Godhead is a communion of love is richer than Upadhyaya's notion that the Godhead is related through self-knowledge. His assertion that Christ calls created reality to participate in this communion of love also maintains a sense of non-duality that Upadhyaya's argument lacks. While Upadhyaya's doctrine of atonement provides little basis for linking Christ and *advaita*, Griffiths' mystical theory of recapitulation enables him to do so more fruitfully.

The soteriologies of Bede Griffiths and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya help and hinder their attempts to relate Christ to Hinduism. Griffiths' theory of recapitulation enables him to link Christ with *advaita*, but does not help him to distinguish Christ from Krishna. While the satisfaction theory of Upadhyaya helps him to make a strong case for the uniqueness of Christ *vis-à-vis* Krishna, it hinders his attempts to relate Christ to *advaita*. Neither Upadhyaya's nor Griffiths' soteriology is entirely adequate. Perhaps, in light of developments in interreligious theology, it is time to reexamine traditional Christian models of redemption. Different soteriologies provide different ways of relating Christ to other religious traditions. Models of salvation that focus on Jesus' life and ministry may open up ways of relating Christ to other religions that theologians such as Upadhyaya and Griffiths have overlooked. Whether theologians draw on traditional soteriologies or look to new ones, they must be open to using different models of redemption when thinking about the mystery Christ in light of other religious traditions.

Notes

¹ Jacques Dupuis S. J. , *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 3.

² Dupuis, 37.

³ Brahmachari Animanda, *The Blade: Life and Work of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya* (Calcutta: Roy and Son, 1940), 31.

⁴ Dupuis, 17.

⁵ Dupuis, 37.

⁶ M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Hindu Renaissance* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), 331.

⁷ Beatrice Bruteau, ed., *The Other Half of My Soul: Bede Griffiths and the Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1996), 15.

⁸ *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1987 ed., s.v. "Redemption."

⁹ *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2003 ed., s.v. "Atonement."

¹⁰ Lipner, *Writings*, 194.

¹¹ Lipner, Julius and George Gispert-Sauch, ed., *The Writings of BrahmabandhabUpadhyay* (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 1991), 194.

¹² *Ibid.*, 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁵ Thomas, 105.
- ¹⁶ *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2003 ed., s.v. "Redemption."
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1987 ed., s.v. "Redemption."
- ¹⁹ Bede Griffiths, *Return to the Centre* (Springfield, Illinois: Templegate, 1976), 51.
- ²⁰ Bede Griffiths, *Essential Writings*, with an introduction by Thomas Matus (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 117.
- ²¹ Griffiths, *Return to the Centre*, 51.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Dupuis, 39.
- ²⁴ Thomas, 108.
- ²⁵ Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, 79.
- ²⁶ Bede Griffiths, *Christ in India: Essays Towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 75.
- ²⁷ Judson B. Trapnell, *Bede Griffiths: A Life in Dialogue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 105.
- ²⁸ Griffiths, *Essential Writings*, 117.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Trapnell, 153.
- ³¹ Griffiths, *Return to the Centre*, 82.
- ³² Animanda, 184 -185.
- ³³ Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, 188.
- ³⁴ Dupuis, 39.
- ³⁵ Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, 193.
- ³⁶ Trapnell, 94.
- ³⁷ Wayne Teasedale, "Towards a Christian Vedanta: The Convergence of Hinduism and Christianity According to Bede Griffiths," *Mystics Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1985): 84.
- ³⁸ Griffiths, *Essential Writings*, 121.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 124.
- ⁴⁰ Trapnell, 96.
- ⁴¹ Bede Griffiths, *Essential Writings*, 120.

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She is a mature student in the third year of a Christianity and Culture Specialist/English Lit Major program, and is a member and Past-President of The Rabanus Project. She was born on the island of Malta and came to Canada with her parents as a baby. Her primary interests are theology, literature, poetry, music, films, and all things Scottish, especially Robert Burns. She loves spending time with family and friends and studying at the U of T. Her future aspirations are to attain a post-graduate degree, visit Scotland and Malta, and dance at her granddaughter's wedding!

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Jenny Gilbert is a 4th year student at St. Michael's College doing a double major in Christianity and Culture, and Book and Media Studies. She plans to do graduate studies, either in the field of Book History, or Religion, or both. She is interested in the ways in which post-modern culture has appropriated and adapted aspects of Christianity and the ways in which post-modern Christians have blended aspects of other Faith traditions into their Christian beliefs. She is currently completing a research project in the ROP program examining how some early 20th century liberal Protestants combined their faith with spiritualism, the occult, and alternative healing methods. Her other research interests include: 19th and early 20th century printing and publishing, book production and design, typography, as well as censorship and the cultural reception of books.

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- ⁱ David Bartholomew. "The Wicker Man" in *Cinefantastique Magazine*. Vol. 6, Issue 3. (Chicago: Clarke Publishers, 1977), On-line: http://www.wicker-man.com/articles/cinefantastique_TWM_article_1977.pdf (accessed November 25, 2006).
- ⁱⁱ Robin Hardy. "The Genesis of the Wicker Man" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited 2006), 21-22.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. "Methodology: A Matrix of Meanings" in *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 29.
- ^{iv} American composer Paul Giovanni composed the original music and adapted many folk songs, some by Robert Burns, for the film. Please see Appendix A for lyrics of the songs discussed in this paper.
- ^v So highly did Mr. Lee regard the film that he worked for free; indeed he and Mr. Woodward feel the film was a highlight in their careers, as indicated in an interview on *The Wicker Man* DVD.
- ^{vi} Gordon Lynch. *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 28.
- ^{vii} *Ibid*, 105-105.
- ^{viii} Richard Sermon. "The Wicker Man, May Day and the Reinvention of Beltane" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited, 2006), 26.
- ^{ix} *Ibid*, 27.
- ^x Julius Caesar. *De Bello Gallico*, trans. W. McDevitte and W. Bohn (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1869) referenced in Sermon "May Day", 37.
- ^{xi} Lloyd Baugh. *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film*. (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1997, in SMC305H1F Course Reader). 205.
- ^{xii} Hardy, "Genesis" 21.
- ^{xiii} David John Graham. "Redeeming Violence in the Films of Martin Scorsese" in *Explorations in Theology and Film*. Ed. Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 88.
- ^{xiv} Jon R. Stone. "A Fire in the Sky." In *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*. Eds. Eric Michael Mazur and Kate McCarthy. (New York: Routledge, 2001, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 3.
- ^{xv} Gary Carpenter. Personal e-mail message, November 9, 2006.
- ^{xvi} Steven J. Sutcliffe. "Religion in *The Wicker Man*: Context and Representation" in *Constructing The Wicker Man: Film and Cultural Studies Perspectives*. Eds. Jonathan Murray, Lesley Stevenson, Stephen Harper, and Benjamin Franks. (Glasgow: Crichton Publications, 2005), 39.
- ^{xvii} Gary Carpenter. Quoted in "Heathen earth" by Frances Morgan. *Plan B Magazine*. (London: Plan B Publishing, October, 2006), 78.
- ^{xviii} Walt Whitman. "Song of Myself" in *Leaves of Grass* (1855). (New York: New American Library, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2005), 51.
- ^{xix} So ominous was the wicker structure that Anthony Schaeffer recalls in an interview on the DVD, that local residents, fearing that the animals were actually going to be burned, contacted the RSPCA.
- ^{xx} Melvyn J. Willin. "Music and Paganism with Special Reference to *The Wicker Man*". In *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited 2006), 150.
- ^{xxi} Paula James. "Ritualistic Behaviour in *The Wicker Man*: A classical and carnivalesque perspective on the true nature of sacrifice" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Eds. Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited, 2006), 52.
- ^{xxii} Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. "Music: Al Green makes Us Cry" in *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003: 125-53, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 152.
- ^{xxiii} John Fiske. "Commodities and Culture. In *Understanding Popular Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1989, in SMC305H1F Course Reader), 47.
- ^{xxiv} Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray, and Lesley Stevenson. "Introduction: The search for *The Wicker Man*" in *The Quest for the Wicker Man: History, Folklore and Pagan Perspectives*. Edited by Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray and Lesley Stevenson. (Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited 2006), 7-8.
- ^{xxv} Detweiler and Taylor, "Methodology", 31.
- ^{xxvi} The artistic and commercial failure of the 2005 remake of the film, starring Nicholas Cage, may have been caused by the omission of sacralizing music and religious faith of the protagonist, rendering it just a bad horror film.
- ²⁷ Declan McCafferty, Music of the Wicker Man website: <http://www.wicker-man.com/musicofthewickerman.php> (Accessed on November 25, 2006)

Notes

¹ This image has also been called *Tomoko is Bathed by Her Mother*.

² This image has also been called *Tomoko is Bathed by Her Mother*.

³ Susan Sontag. *On Photography*. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977): 105.

⁴ W. Eugene Smith, and Aileen M. Smith. *Minamata*. (New York: Alskog-Sensorium and Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975): p.26

⁵ H.W. Janson. *History of Art*, 5th ed. Revised by Anthony F. Janson. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995): 940.

⁶ Timothy Verdon. "Christianity, the Renaissance, and the Study of History." In *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson, 1-37. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990): 10.

⁷ John W Cook. "What is Christian about Christian Art?" In *Interpreting Christian Art*. Ed. Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, 187-208. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004): 193.

⁸ Joanna Ziegler. "Michaelangelo and the Medieval Pieta: The Sculpture of Devotion or Art of Sculpture?" *Gesta* 34 (1995): 29.

⁹ Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 484.

¹⁰ Ben Maddow. Let Truth Be the Prejudice: W. Eugene Smith, His Life and Photographs. (New York: Aperture, 1985): 72.

¹¹ W. Eugene Smith. *Dialogue with Photography*, ed. Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper. 253-281. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979): 281.

¹² Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 486.

¹³ Ibid. pp.486.

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 486

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 5

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 486

¹⁷ William A. Dyrness. "The Christian Imagination." In *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion* 15 (1996): 91.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 93.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 93.

²⁰ Ben Maddow, Let Truth Be the Prejudice: W. Eugene Smith, His Life and Photographs. (New York: Aperture, 1985): 233.

²¹ Robert Adams. *Beauty in Photography: Essays in Defense of Traditional Values*. (New York: Aperture, 1981): 70.

²² Yoshio Uemura. "The Transfer of Control." *Aperture* 160. (Summer 2000): 15-16. This article discusses the fact that the iconic image of Tomoko has been withdrawn from circulation. The rights from the photograph were transferred from Smith's widow, Aileen Smith, to the Uemura's. Part of their desire was to quell rumours that they had profited from this image (they had not), but in large part because their wanted put their daughter's image to rest, and thus have closure.

²³ Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 482.

²⁴ Pope John Paul II. "Letter to Artists" (April 1999).

²⁵ Serge Tisseron. "What Is a Symbolic Image?" In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 66-73. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 70.

²⁶ Gabriel Bauret. "The Influences of a Legend." In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 314-321. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 319.

²⁷ Susan Sontag. *On Photography*. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977): 41.

²⁸ Jim Hughes. *Shadow and Substance: W. Eugene Smith—The Life and Work of an American Photographer*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989): 488.

²⁹ Gilles Mora. "The Arrogant Martyr." In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 6-27. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 16.

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 16.

³¹ Gabriel Bauret. "The Influences of a Legend." In *W. Eugene Smith: The Camera as Conscience*, ed. Gilles Mora and John T. Hill. 314-321. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998): 318.

³² Ibid. pp. 316.

³³ W. Eugene Smith. *Dialogue with Photography*, ed. Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper. 253-281. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979): 280.

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