THE PRACTICE OF POLYDOXY IN POLYREPRESENTATIONAL PARISHES

A professional project submitted to
Drew Theological School
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

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Madison, New Jersey
November 2020

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Introduction

Karl Jaspers suggested that there was an axial age that occurred “between 800 and 500 B.C..” In the “spiritual process that occurred” in this period who we are “came into being.”[1]

> The most extraordinary events are concentrated in this period. Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including those of Mo-ri, Chuang-tse, Lieh-tsu and a host of others; India produced the Upanishads and Buddha, and like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to scepticism, to materialism, sophism and nihilism; in Iran Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; in Palestine the prophets made their appearance from Elijah, by way of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the philosophers—Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato—of the tragedians, Thucydides and Archimedes. . . .What is new about this age, in all three areas of the world, is that man becomes conscious of Being as a whole, of himself and his limitations. He experiences the terror of the world and his own powerlessness. He asks radical questions. Face to face with the void he strives for liberation and redemption. By consciously recognizing his limits he sets himself the highest goals. He experiences absoluteness in the depth of selfhood and the lucidity of transcendence.[2]

Among the tensions that run through the radical questioning opened up in this axial age is the question of reality. Is reality at base a plurality or a unity? Parmenides argued for a monistic understanding while Heraclitus argued for a plurality. Aristotle, Hegel, and others more or less follow Parmenides, while the existentialists, phenomenologists, and others would follow Heraclitus. This is not to say that they are disciples, or follow as adherents. It is rather to say they move out in a similar direction. In language that will permeate this project we can say their thinking is a repetition with difference.

As our title has already suggested, we will be starting from the banks of this river, which Heraclitus told us we could never enter twice and Cratylus told us “one cannot bathe even once” for “the very fixity of unity, the form of every

[1] Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. Michael Bullock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 1.
[2] Jaspers, 2.

existent, cannot be constituted."[3] Throughout this project we will seek to become "attuned . . . to the vast, material multiplicity of 'all things,' . . ."[4] To learn and embody the melody of multiplicity—the symphony of truth—we are going to enter into a horizon opened by the stories of those whose lives are attuned to "polycosmic sympoiesis."[5] Although informed by difference in all of its multiplicity, the focus of this project is theological difference as captured in the notion of polydoxy. Before we move more directly into the praxis of polydoxy I want to frame this moment in which we are thinking.

In the era of Reaganomics, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower, Jean-Francois Lyotard—in contrast to the seemingly all-encompassing narrative of the rise of the United States and the apparent victory of capitalism over communism—suggested that we were seeing the collapse of the metanarrative. On the one hand this means that we are always telling stories that resist any claims to be master stories. Like Heraclitus's river, we cannot tell the same story, but are always telling different stories because they "take shape differently depending on the point of view that intra-agentially construct" their narrative worlds.[6]

For many people this is liberating. For others it creates anxiety. If everything is just someone's perspective, we end up with a legitimization crisis.[7] We will return

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[3] Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 49.

[4] Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Pantheologies: Gods, Worlds, Monsters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 33.

[5] Truth as symphony comes from Hans Urs bon Balthasar, *Truth is Symphonic: Aspects of Christian Pluralism*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Franciso: Ignatius Press, 1987). This project will move away from von Balthasar's emphasis on orthodoxy and orthopraxy. (109) We also would not want to accept his notion of the oneness of truth. (19) However his idea of truth as symphonic wherein people who "stand or sit next to one another as strangers, in mutual contradiction" who do not make music "in unison" but in a "far more beautiful—sym-phony" is closely related to this project and creates a useful link to the language of sympoiesis, which comes from Rubenstein, *Pantheologies,* 148 and 133-136.

[6] Rubenstein, *Pantheologies*, 173. For the notion that human live in narrative worlds see Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume I*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983). The entirety of this volume argues for the narrative unfolding of worlds. One particular example is Ricoeur's assertion that "human beings" are "entangled in stories." "We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated." (75)

[7] James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 69.

to this later as we seek a way between or beyond the "longing for unchanging, binary difference" as it is articulated in the choice between absolutism and relativism.[8] This false binary does allow us to see at this point the way that with the recognition that "grand narratives have become scarcely credible," and that "narrative is authority itself" a certain way of constructing our world emerges wherein there are only competing truths and thus the emergence of what some are calling a post-truth culture, complete with alternative facts.[9] Yet, there are always other ways to construct this world. We can move "from the universal to the pluriversal," or to the Jamesian multiverse ("a set of different phenomena, relations, and connections that cannot be assembled under a single principle.")[10] We can construct this narrative world through the praxis of polydoxy—however, that is to get ahead of ourselves.

In a synchronous chronotope there has been increased social and cultural polarization. Across multiple metrics, societies, have become more polarized. The twenty-first century has seen an increase in "polarization between and among various perceived groups, whether political, ideological, religious, geographical, racial or economic."[11]

In *At The Existentialist Café*, Sarah Bakewell narrates the coming apart of friendships that occurs for Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. There is the divide between them and Arthur Koestler where Sartre asks how people who disagree can even go and see a film together. Bakewell goes on to show how Camus and Sartre—then Merleau-Ponty and Sartre—end their friendships and enter into silence.

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[8] Rubenstein, *Pantheologies*, 16.
[9] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, trans. and ed. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 29 and 33.
[10] "Pluriverse" comes from Jeffrey W. Robbins, *Radical Theology: A Vision for Change* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), chapter three, Apple Books. "Multiverse" comes from Rubenstein, *Worlds Without End: The Many Lives of the Multiverse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 4. Rubenstein points out that James defines the multiverse on multiple occasions. First as a "chaos of unconnected phenomena" and then as "a casually interrelated, complexly connected system that is coherent yet never 'absolutely complete.'" (5)
[11] Alan Hall, "Negative Social Mood Has Increased Political Polarization on Both Sides of the Pond," *Socionomist* (Jul2016): 1-12. Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2020).

We live in a world where folks are unable to talk to each other. Everyone is, in the words of Simone de Beauvoir, *croisés comme ça*, at cross purposes. Many wonder with Sartre how they can even see a film together. We know that the truth is complicated and reality is ambiguous. Along the lines that one should never say never, that in questions of veracity or fallibility, always, never, and every often signify the fallibility of an apparent truth, we know that everyone does not always mean everyone. Conflict is a part of life. Yet, even if we know that all does not mean all, at times, the affective reality is such, that we echo de Beauvoir. It *feels* like everyone is *croisés comme ça*, even if we *know* there are some—even many perhaps—who are not.

A hundred years before Sartre and Merleau-Ponty parted ways, in part over their assessment of communism, Schleiermacher opens up the *Christliche Glaube* (1830) with a discussion of the church. The church, he asserts, is a community that is simultaneously circumscribed and fluid (we will return to the theme of ecclesial fluidity—or the church in the midst of a fluid modernity). He points out, what may seem obvious, that based on our religious sensibility we have affinity for some while simultaneously being repulsed from others. Yet he argues that "one is repelled by the others only insofar as one is drawn more strongly to the first set than to them, thus in such a way that one could have community of feeling with them too if the first set were not present or in circumstances wherein one were placed especially close to them."[12] Which is to say he sees that it is possible, that there is a way in which we can be in community with those whose religious sensibilities are repulsive to us. Whether or not Schleiermacher correctly identifies the way in which we form communities, his observation opens up for us a promising horizon—an expansive vista within which we may begin.

In the absence of the same, the distancing of the similar, a chronotope opens which allows for the encounter of difference within the networked fluidity of the *ekklesia*.[13] Pushing beyond Schleiermacher, Moltmann suggests that the church

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[12] Friedreich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Terrence N. Tice, Catherine L. Kelsey, and Edwina Lawler (Louisville" Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), §6, paragraph 3, Nook.
[13] I am following Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza here where *ekklesia* functions to deconstruct the hierarchical and patriarchal structures of society and the church. See *Discipleship of Equal: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

actually replaces "*similis a similis cognoscitur*" with "*contraria contrariis curantur*."[14] As opposed to like being known by like, since "God is only revealed as 'God' in his opposite: godlessness and abandonment by God," the community of Christ should also be defined by *contraria contrariis curantur*.

> If a being is revealed only in its opposite, then the church which is the church of the crucified Christ cannot consist of an assembly of like persons who mutually affirm each other, but must be constituted of unlike persons. . . . for the crucified Christ, the principle of fellowship is fellowship with those who are different, and solidarity with those who have become alien and been made different. Its power is not friendship, the love for what is similar and beautiful (*philia*), but creative love for what is different, alien and ugly (*agape*). Its principle of justification is not similarity, but the justification of the other (Hegel), the creative making righteous of the unrighteous and the attribution of rights to those who are without rights. Consequently, the church of the crucified Christ cannot be assimilated to what is different and alien to it. Nor can it shut itself away from what is alien in a social ghetto, but or the sake of its own identity in the crucified Christ, must reveal him and itself, by following him, in what is different and alien.[15]

In many ways, all that follows will attempt to focus in on the questions raised by the juxtaposition of Moltmann and Schleiermacher. Is there a way within the field of *croisés comme ça*, that we can embrace the church as a community of the cross constituted in difference? How can we build community with those that are emphatically and defiantly different?

Circa 2009, the ninth Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium at Drew University asked if thinking about the field of force or network of ideas that makes up Christianity should not be considered as polydox instead of orthodox. This was certainly not the first time that anyone has challenged orthodoxy. Yet, there was something different, a celebration of difference, a turn toward multiplicity in and through a process of difference which "jubilantly" privileges "becoming over being, difference over sameness, novelty over conservation, intensity over equilibrium, complexity over simplicity, plurality over unity, relation over substance, flux over stasis."[16]

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[14] The Latin phrases here are literally translated as "like is known by like" and "the opposite is cured with the opposite."
[15] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1974), 28.
[16] Catherine Keller and Anne Daniell, eds., *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernisms*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 6.

Finding Polydoxy before, between, and beyond Orthodoxy

There are a lot of different ways to tell the story of orthodoxy. According to Harnack, it was Justin—for whom martyr is capitalized and functions like a surname—circa 150 CE, who "insisted on the absolute necessity of acknowledging certain definite traditional facts and made this recognition the standard of orthodoxy."[17] One could argue then that orthodoxy emerged in opposition to heresy—a product of Christianity's early apologists—although Pelikan suggests this would be an oversimplification.[18] The early community of faith was characterized by "a unity of life, of fidelity to the Old Testament, of devotion to its Lord, as he was witnessed in the Old and New Testament."[19] It was only over time that this shifted. Perhaps Cyprian signifies the shift when he made the link that "where there is no unity there is also no truth."[20] This moment we refer to as the "period of the apostolic fathers"—with all of its patriarchal complications—is an era in which "the great visions of the first ecstatic breakthrough had disappeared, leaving in their place a given set of ideas which produced a kind of ecclesiastical conformity . . ."[21]

If we can attribute Harnack's assessment of Justin to the entire field we find it necessary to move the emergence of orthodoxy to a later date. Harnack suggests that if we pay attention to the polemic of the writings of this era, and are honest about what this polemic reveals, we would have to conclude that "it seems very unlikely" that they were "already successful in finding a fixed standard for determining orthodox Christianity."[22] Thus it is only when Christianity becomes Christendom, when Constantine makes Christianity the official religion—the

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[17] Adolf Harnack, *The History of Dogma, Volume 2*, trans. Neil Buchanan (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 24.
[18] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, 1 The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600),* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 119.
[19] Pelikan, 71.
[20] Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought: Volume 1, From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 245.
[21] Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 17.
[22] Harnack, 24.

religion of the empire—that orthodoxy emerges as successful.[23] It is the moment of Nicea, a council called by the emperor to create orthodoxy with the power to propagate and enforce hegemony. When "dogma receives legal sanction" it is used to "rule thought and behavior."[24] Prior to that "the substance" of doctrine and dogma "was fluid . . . everything was in motion."[25]

In the first three centuries of the Christian experience there were faithful disciples of Jesus as the Christ who did not all agree on a variety of theological positions—who could not agree as the doctrines themselves were fluid and in motion. Although there were arguments and conflict, there was no authority to end the debates and so the conversation remained open. When the event of Nicea occurred, there was now power and authority to declare what was orthodox. Those who were wrong were excommunicated, declared heretics, exiled, and although rarely, some were also executed. In complex and ambiguous ways some went from being orthodox to heretical and back to orthodox depending on who was in power.

Some might object that this is too crass. They would want to see the work of God to bring the church into orthodoxy. I am just not sure that the goal was to move away from the *contraria contrariis curantur* of the cross, to a chronotope of *croisés comme ça*. As Karl Popper has so aptly put it, the danger of historicism is that its sees what has happened as what had to happen, as what was supposed to happen. This way of understanding things is one of the ways in which societies are locked down and the status quo is baptized.

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[23] Mircea Eliade attributes this position to Walther Bauer circa 1934. See *A History of Religious Ideas, Volume 2: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 398. Eliade points out that André Benoit critiques Bauer on this assessment, but I find Bauer's position more convincing. "Bauer comes to the conclusion that three great Christian centers—Edessa, Alexandria, and Asia Minor—were heretical during the first two centuries: orthodoxy was not introduced until later. From the beginning, the only orthodox center was Rome. Hence the victory of orthodoxy in antiquity is equivalent to the victory of Roman Christianity. 'Thus in a primitive Christianity, with many and shifting forms, with man and often opposing currents, Rome succeeded in fixing a particular form that takes the name of orthodoxy because it succeeded in fixing a particular form that takes the name of orthodoxy because it succeeded in imposing itself and over against which the other tendencies were then termed heretical.'" (398) Event with Benoit's critique, orthodoxy "appears bound up with a juridical institution . . ." (399)

[24] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, xxxix.

[25] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, xxxix.

Following the Protestant Reformation there was a move toward orthodoxies as the disciples of Luther and Calvin sought to define what was right Lutheran teaching and what were the official positions of Calvinism. As many have pointed out, in these moves to orthodoxy, the very founders—Luther and Calvin in themselves—would have been excluded for not being appropriately orthodox Lutherans or Calvinists, respectively.

In the twentieth century we saw the rise of neo-orthodoxy, and as the chronotope changed into what we now know of as the twenty-first century, we saw the rise of a radical orthodoxy. Yet for all of the claims to newness or radicality, there was the same old sectarian drive for purity of thought.[26]

Yet Christianity has never been defined by singularity of thought. It has been defined by difference from the beginning, and even before the beginning. As has been said and documented countless times, the field represented by the scriptures of the Jewish people do not represent a monolithic position but contain, in the words of Walter Brueggeman, witnesses and counter-testimony.[27] There are nightmarish calls for purity and protests against those calls for purity.

The nascent Christian movement was no different. There are strands of thinking—schools of thought and theological traditions—which formed. They are readily identifiable, and many students of the early church have had to identify and distinguish them from one another. Attempts have been there from the beginning to create a monolith, yet such attempts have been undermined by the principle of difference rooted in the foundational events of Christ.

So, on a quiet September day in 2009, a small group of scholars asked if maybe it wouldn't be more honest to speak of a polydoxy instead of an orthodoxy. They asked what it might mean "to live into the self's constitutive vulnerability to

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[26] Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau, eds. *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to "Radical Orthodoxy"* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).
[27] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). The point at hand underlies the very structure of the text, but one small example may be worth citing. Brueggemann points out that in the Hebrew scriptures "every religious question" is disputable and there is therefore "no agreed-on consensus point." (64) John Dominic Crossan also advocates this counter-testimony in *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus became fiction about Jesus* (New York: Harper One, 2012), Kindle. There he uses Ruth, Jonah and Job as examples of "challenges to the Bible, from the Bible, by the Bible, in the Bible." (chapter four)

a shifting multitude of others."[28] Understanding that there is always more than one story, these scholars recovered, revitalized and repeated in a repetition of difference the work of those who have resisted orthodoxy. They rooted the polydox in the paradoxical wherein it is "tuned to the clash of perceptions, lack of cohesion, the recognition of disorienting difference, and the coincidence of (seeming) opposites."[29] Here they sought to articulate that the theology "that has grown over the course of millennia cannot help but result, in hindsight, in a kind of 'polyphonic bricolage'" wherein "the polysemic intersections, dissonances, relations, and syncretic accretions of multiple stories, experiences, presences, cultures, religious traditions, and modes of reasoning" is better named as polydoxy.[30]

Five years after that quiet day in September, as the July heat was bordering on oppressive, the journal *Modern Theology* released a response to the event of the naming of polydoxy edited by Mary Jane Rubenstein and Katherine Tanner.[31] Virginia Burrus asked if polydoxy became a new form of orthodoxy.[32] Graham Ward pointed out that orthodoxy was never really one, never really claimed to be one, so why did we need the language of polydoxy?[33] What his analysis missed is the seeming way in which orthodoxy has always been about power and control. The right way to think, is monolithic, even if it claims otherwise. As we have known for a long time, names matter, and polydoxy both better names reality and removes the need to cast out heretics. It allows us to hold to dogma and doctrines in and with differences "in such a way" that they do not become "a suppressive power which produces dishonesty or flight."[34] In hindsight—a hindsight that

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[28] Mary-Jane Rubenstein, "Undone by each other: Interrupted sovereignty in Augustine's Confessions," *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation*, eds. Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider (New York: Routledge, 2011), 105.
[29] Marion Grau, "Signs taken for polydoxy in a Zulu Kraal: Creative friction manifested in missionary-native discourse," *Polydoxy*, 218.
[30] Laurel C. Schneider, "Crib notes from Bethlehem," *Polydoxy*, 21.
[31] Perhaps we could ask why this conference and book created an event and response when Alvin J. Reines, *Polydoxy: Explorations in a Philosophy of Liberal Religion* (New York: Prometheus, 1987) and Gary Pence's "Constructing a Christian polydoxy," *Dialog* 40.4 (WINT2001): 264-269, did not.
[32] "History, Theology, Orthodoxy, Polydoxy," *Modern Theology*, 30.3 (Jul 2014): 7-16.
[33] Graham Ward, "Receiving the Gift," in *Modern Theology*, 30.3 (Jul 2014): 74-88.
[34] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, xli.

understands polydoxy as a locution with perlocutionary promise of a more expansive differentiated and differentiating *ekklesia*—we choose to tell the story of Christian thought and practice with the locution polydoxy.

The truth of the matter is that in every chronotope the church has practiced polydoxy in one form or another. Even at the heights of heresy trials, there were always multiplicities accepted within the field of power to declare what was right. Within every congregation there have been those who provided one witness, while there were others who provided a counter testimony and multiplicities that confound any attempt to let polarization along the two positions solidify in a false binary.

The goal of this project is to locate not simply the practice of polydoxy, but the *intentional* practice of polydoxy. Who is preaching sermons that are hospitable to difference instead of espousing official doctrinal positions? Where is the eucharist being celebrated in an openness that is hospitable to multiple traditions? When are communities inviting democratic agonism that emphasizes difference without splintering or becoming antagonistic?[35]

As I have already stated, the intentional practice of polydoxy can be found in many congregations.[36] There are semiotic clues that reveal them. One such signifier is found in the choice to exist in a community marked by hybridity and multiplicity. The symbolic field generated in and by multi-denominational congregations offers one horizon within which the probabilities for locating a praxis of polydoxy increases. Therefore, I have situated this exploration of that praxis within that horizon.

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[35] Catherine Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). Keller is thinking with Chantal Mouffe and William Connolly to imagine "an emergent public" wherein the divergence of "critical differences . . . demands fresh acts of self-organization." See also Kristen Deede Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism: Beyond Tolerance and Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Although Johnson seeks a way beyond agonism, she provides a very readable review of the position.

[36] The classic study of theological diversity in congregations is W. Paul Jones, *Worlds Within a Congregation: Dealing with Theological Diversity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

Federated Congregations and Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Sometime shortly before the twentieth century federated churches emerged as one manifestation of the movement for church unity in the United States. By 1932 over one hundred federated congregations were identified in seventeen different states.[37] In Great Britain the emergence of Local Ecumenical Partnerships occurred circa 1965. The two contexts are quite different with nonestablishment being the official position in the United States and establishment and lawfully dissenting religious bodies coexisting being the norm in Great Britain.

In the United States much of what drove the movement for federated churches was the acknowledgement that in rural parts of the country there was a real problem of overchurching.[38] Based on community assessments, financial planning, and a variety of other factors the ecclesial leaders of this era suggested that there should be one church for every one thousand people. Communities where this ratio was smaller were considered overchurched. These churches often operated with part-time pastors, budget deficits, and were unable to thrive in their independence.

Not all congregations chose the route of federation and as much of the literature points out there were multiple options. David Piper lists five options for congregations seeking to find a way out of the impasse created by overchurching: the denominational (in this model community churches chose to associate with one denomination), federated, Union or Independent, “Latitudinarian” and “Burbanked.”[39] In this schema the latitudinarian church “omits any definite requirement of personal acceptance of Christ as Savior, but acknowledges the supremacy of the Ten Commandments and of Christ’s teachings as a guide.”[40] The Burbank model is one in which multiple congregations continue to exist within a “super-organization” that “acts as a sort of holding corporation for the

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[37] Albert Edward Campion, “A Study of One Hundred Federated Churches” Masters Thesis. Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. 1933. P.60-66.

[38] David R. Piper, *A Handbook of the Community Church Movement in the United States* (Excelsior Springs, Missouri: The Community Churchman Co., 1922), 62.

[39] Piper, 22-54.

[40] Piper, 51.

churches."[41] These two are particularly rare, and we simply note them as Piper does.

Hoyt simplifies the field to three: "(1) a denominational Community Church, (2) an undenominational or independent Community Church, sometimes called a Union Church, and (3) a Federated Church."[42] Ralph Felton uses this simplified model on one occasion, and further delineates it on another. In that case he identifies four primary configurations for the community church: union, federated, denominational, and non-denominational. He also provides the added classification of yoked congregations wherein one pastor serves two congregations with different denominational identities (although some yoked situations will involve two different congregations within the same denominational tradition).[43]

A more recent publication by Beardsall, Buddle and McDonald traces the multiplicity of polyfaithful parishes along lines of institutional agreement. They look at congregations that combine faith traditions where full communion agreements have been reached between the denominations. These are then contrasted with those local congregations that unite traditions that have not been able to achieve such agreements.[44]

In some places congregations would unite and over the course of history either the traditions that were united in their congregation would also unite, thus transforming their identity from one of congregational multiplicity to one of denominational simplicity, or they would reformulate their identity as denominational institutions evolved and transformed. One such example is the United Community Church in Broadlands, Illinois, where a Methodist, an Evangelical United Brethren and a United Church of Christ congregation united,

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[41] Piper, 15-16.
[42] John W. Hoyt, Jr., *Uniting for Larger Service: A book telling what can be accomplished by Federated Churches, and how to organize them* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), 28.
[43] Ralph A. Felton. *Cooperative Churches* (Madison, New Jersey: Department of the Rural Church, Drew Theological Seminary, 1947). The simplified threefold designation is from *Local Church Cooperation in Rural Communities* (New York: Home Missions Council of the Methodist Church).
[44] Sandra Beardsall, Mitzi J. Buddle, and William P. McDonald, *Daring to Share: Multi-Denominational Congregations in the United States and Canada* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2018), Apple Books.

in 1965, only to see the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist church unite into the United Methodist Church in 1968.[45] Another example, along a different line, is the Union Church of Hinsdale which "was formed in 1918 with the consolidation of area Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Unitarians."[46] However today, they are simply identified as a congregation within the United Church of Christ and there is a Unitarian and Presbyterian church in town. Another example is Faith Community Church in Milford, Iowa. When Ralph Williamson did his dissertation on the "Factors of Success and Failure in Federated Churches," they were known as Milford Union Memorial Church. Following "a temporary union in 1924" they officially federated the Congregational and Methodist congregations in 1947.[47] Circa 2018, the congregations decided to become "an independent church with no denominational affiliation."[48] If one is so inclined, there are congregations like these, whose one-time institutional and theological multiplicity were more apparent, that can be found. Some, like the congregation in Hinsdale still call themselves a union church. Certainly, some of these congregations would be sites where we could identify practices of polydoxy. However, these denominational congregations now fall out of the limits we are placing on this study as they are in many ways now identified within one denominational identity instead of within multiple.

For the purposes of this discussion we are going to think about polyfaithful communities as federated or united. In federated congregations, identity is different, and maintained. Denominational membership is counted and identified (ie. 30% of the congregation are Baptists, 20% are Episcopalians, etc.) In united congregations, the multiplicity of identity is hypostatic, one is at the same time fully all (everyone is counted as being affiliated with the United

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[45] Horace S. Sills, *Grassroots Ecumenicity* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1967), 51-66.
[46] https://hinsdale.church/history/ (accessed September 23, 2020).
[47] Ralph Leroy Williamson, "Factors of Success and Failure in Federated Churches," (Dissertation, Drew University, 1951), 73.
[48] https://faithcommunitymilford.com/about/ (accessed September 23, 2020). Williamson describes the congregation as having "suffered the peril of neglect by the denominations, some pastors who were ill-prepared for the ministry, two pastors of doubtful private morals, cheap, shoddy buildings and a lack of faithful, able men in the pews." (73) Perhaps that history in 1951 sheds light on this later decision.

Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church, for example). This spectrum will also be helpful in thinking about local ecumenical partnerships, for we will see the same patterns of holding multiple identities there. However, we should look just briefly at the difference of their situation.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships began as "Areas of Ecumenical experiment" circa 1964. The experiments became "projects," and in 1994 "partnerships" replaced "projects."[49] In 1985 the British Council of Churches identified four main types of LEPs. At the most simple or basic is the sharing of buildings. The second type is one congregation "sharing fully in life and mission, and where sacramental ministry is shared." The third is where the focus is on sharing in "mission to their community, having some sharing of ministry and sacrament." The final form, is like the previous, the key difference being "full Roman Catholic participation."[50]

Although it is beyond the scope of this project it is worth pointing out that all of this was occurring against the backdrop of the ecumenical movement. In particular in Great Britain talks of unity between the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches on one hand and the Church of England and Methodist Church failed to unite the denominations.[51] In the United States there was the Consultation of Church Union. What began as an attempt to unite the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, and the United Presbyterian Church; and grew to include the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Evangelical United Brethren, African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church in the U. S., African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, and the International Council of Community Churches.[52] It remains, in Keith Watkins's words, the church that might have been.

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[49] Elizabeth Welch and Flora Winfield, *Traveling Together: A Handbook on Local Ecumenical Partnerships* (Suffolk: Tyndale Press, 2004), 17.
[50] *Ministry in Local Ecumenical Projects* (British Council of Churches, 1985).
[51] David Hawtin and Roger Paul, "The Origin and Development of Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPS): Telling the Story" (October 2011).
[52] David W. A. Taylor, "COCU's 30th anniversary: a service of worship; presidents and staff, 1962-1990; a brief summary of the journey," *Mid-Stream*, 30.4 (Oct 1991): 391-399. See also Ketih Watkins, *The American Church That Might Have Been: A History of the Consultation on Church Union* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

In Canada, Australia, India, and many other places movements toward unity were more successful and today the World Council of Churches has identified more than forty such religious bodies. Beardsall et al., point out that it was within this ecumenical movement that some congregations got ahead of their denominations, only to find that the denomination's efforts to unite ceased. Yet these congregations chose to continue to live out their lives within the complexity of a multi-denominational congregation.

As Martin Marty points out, "ironically," the ecumenical movement "that was to have restored wholeness to a *broken* church and world came to be seen as one more novelty, one more contending party . . ."[53] Furthermore, "much ecumenical activity went on at a distance from the local church, so apathy about details and energies was endemic."[54] Much like "insistence on *difference* can produce an *indifference*," the insistence on Christian unity led to apathy.[55] Others argued that "the ecumenical movement proved" theologically "disastrous as mainline Protestants ratcheted their distinctive doctrines down to the lowest common denominator of agreement."[56] This created "blurred" identities where it was "virtually impossible to distinguish between a Methodist and a Presbyterian or a Lutheran and an Episcopalian."[57]

With a post-ironic awareness we are thinking within the ecumenical horizon opened up in by these congregations. I am seeking to recover and retrieve a symbolic field that "for too long . . . has been imprisoned in misunderstandings" and indifference.[58] Through a repetition "that is not the transmission of some already dead deposit of material but the living transmission of an innovation

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[53] Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, Volume 1: The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 297.
[54] Marty, 272.
[55] Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 235.
[56] Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 32.
[57] Balmer and Winner, 33.
[58] Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Trinity: To Let the Symbol Sing Again," in *Theology Today*, 54.3 (Oct 1997): 311.

always capable of being reactivated by a return to the most creative moments"[59] we may set the symbol "free to sing again."[60]

I am coming at the practice of polydoxy having gone all the way into and through the ecumenical movement.[61] There are of course, always, other ways to come at polydoxy—but for this project an ecumenical attunement shapes the chronotope. The work we do here, thinking together, should provide clues to the ways in which the praxis of polydoxy can be constitutive in other fields of force.

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[59] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume I*, trans Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 68.
[60] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 311.
[61] This project always contained the temptation to chart a different course, to converse more and more on the ecumenical and less on the practice of polydoxy. Setting aside my personal ecumenical attunement, the works consulted for this project include: J. E. Lesslie Nebigin, *The Reunion of the Church: A Defence of the South India Scheme* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1960); John T. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism: A Study in Our Religious Resources* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930); S. D. Chown, *The Story of Church Union in Canada* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930); Hans Küng, ed. *The Future of Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1969); Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical* Movement: 1517-1948 (London, SPCK, 1954); Harold E. Fey, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical movement, Volume 2: 1948*-1968 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970); John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and George Tsetsis, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004); Claris Edwin Silcox, *Church Union in Canada: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933); and Samuel McCrea Cavert, *Church Cooperation and Unity in America, A Historical Review: 1900-1970* (New York: Association Press, 1970).

Chapter 1: Praxis in Polyfidelity

As we look with full awareness at the churches that are, as opposed to the church that might have been, a few more introductory remarks are in order. The first is that theology matters.

One of the interviews I did early on put me in conversation with an interim pastor in a small rural church in New Hampshire. When I asked her about the practice of theological diversity she told me that people don't care about theology. The parishioners are not theological beings. "Doctrine is less important" to the people, she said, "than a sense of community and ethics." The implication is that theology is private. People do not talk about what they believe in public—even in church.

In her perspective, I should have abandoned the project at that point (although she was polite enough not say that in those words). Like Alice, I was chasing a rabbit down a rabbit hole and would most likely find that, like the Queen of Hearts and her court, it was just a house of cards. Yet, I think Anthony Robinson is right to argue that there is "an integral and absolutely vital relationship" between a congregation's theological being and its health.[62] The truth was, as the project went on, I found that both realities exist. There are multidenominational congregations that practice and live with a faith centered around least common denominators. They seek an unconflicted core of shared identity—or emphasized institutional identities rather than theological. On the other hand, there were congregations who adamantly asserted an identity that maintained multiplicity. Without negating those experiences found in the first set of congregations, I am simply going to ask us to look at the latter, for it is in them that we find the intentional praxis of polydoxy.

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[62] Anthony B. Robinson, *What's Theology Got to Do With It?: Convictions, Vitality, and the Church* (Herndon: The Alban Institute, 2006), 4. Similar arguments have been made by John B. Cobb, Jr. See: *Becoming a Thinking Christian: If We Want Church Renewal, We Will Have to Renew Thinking in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); and *Reclaiming the Church: Where the Mainline Church Went Wrong and What to Do About It* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

Often as the conversations took place and I inquired about the practice of theological multiplicity within a single parish, my interlocutor would point out that they already existed within a tradition that has been honest about this multiplicity for some time. There are four such identities and traditions that I want to identify before we proceed. They are mainline Protestantism itself, the Anglican tradition, the Liberal-Evangelical tradition, and the liberal theological tradition, particularly as it has been found within Protestant churches.

Protestantism qua Protestant

In practice one could have visited any church, even the most sectarian, and one would have found theological difference. Yet, there is something particularly hospitable about Protestant congregations to theological diversity. "Protestant denominations try to allow a fairly wide spectrum of beliefs. In this way the denominations are more like brands—convenient labels for a shared religious tradition—than like focused belief systems."[63] Furthermore, mainline Protestantism "remains a repository for diversity. In a society that is increasingly retreating to homogenous communities, mainline congregations persist as one of the few institutional locales that provide both the opportunity for, and practice in, deliberation among diverse perspectives."[64]

> The adjective "mainline" specifies a particular branch of American Protestantism in contradistinction to evangelical Protestantism especially but also to African American and other more sectarian forms of Protestant Christianity in the United States. Surprisingly, the term "mainline" as an indicator of religious identity is relatively new, only becoming part of religious discourse in the 1960s. The term finds its origins in the Pennsylvania Railroad's Main Line, running from the center of Philadelphia outward along the Northwest corridor. Home to some of the wealthiest families in America, these towns were associated with the country's elite white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) establishment. These suburban towns each had their well-appointed, tall steeple churches where this culture was weekly displayed. The term "mainline" then, was first used to indicate both the historic genealogy and the cultural prominence of the religious forms of East Coast social elites, distinguished from the more evangelical and sectarian piety of the lower classes.[65]

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[63] Daniel Sack, "A Divided House," *The Future of Mainline Protestantism in America*, eds. James Hudnut-Beumler and Mark Silk (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 109.
[64] Graham Reside, "The State of Contemporary Mainline Protestantism," *The Future of Mainline Protestantism in America*, 53.
[65] James Hudnut-Beumler, "Introduction," *The Future of Mainline Protestantism in America*, 5.

Although "mainline" has been a signifier of cultural center, especially when considering "the middle of the twentieth century," this place of prominence "was transitory and, to some extent, illusory."[66] On the one hand, "In the 1940s and 50s, mainline Protestant denominations grew faster than the general population."[67] On the other "Evangelicalism has been the most influential social and religious movement in American history."[68] More than one-third of the population in the United States identifies themselves as Evangelical while less than ten percent identify as Protestant.[69]

What is particularly relevant in this tradition is the Protestant habit of "building a deeper sense of community *across* differences while evangelicals are more effective at nurturing strong internal communal cultures by suppressing differences."[70] This practice of producing "*bridging* social capital" has allowed those congregations and Christians within the mainline to be particularly proficient at the practice of polydoxy.[71] This is only heightened and made more conscious in multi-denominational parishes.

Anglicanism

Anglicanism was viewed and constituted as a third-way, a mediating path from its inception. Thomas Hooker and the mediating tendencies of Queen Elizabeth sought to create a church that accommodated theological diversity by uniting around an established liturgy. As years of conflict between Catholics and Protestants in England produced far too many deaths, Elizabeth sought to establish the church as a third way between them. As I talked with folks in Local Ecumenical Partnerships about theological diversity within the parish, they would often refer back to this older disposition. Being a part of traditions, within the tradition, subsumed within the Church of England, they were always already in a chronotope of recognized theological diversity.

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[66] Balmer and Winner, 36.
[67] Graham Reside, "The State of Contemporary Mainline Protestantism," in *The Future of Mainline Protestantism*, 18.
[68] Balmer and Winner, 28.
[69] Reside, 24.
[70] Reside, 54.
[71] Reside, 54. Reside is working with Robert Putnam's concepts of bridging and bonding social capital here.

Liberal Evangelicals and Evangelical Liberals

Around the middle of the twentieth-century several folks identified themselves as being a part of the Liberal-Evangelical, or Evangelical-Liberal tradition. Theologically some of the heavyweights were Harry Emerson Fosdick, Georgia Harkness, and L. Harold DeWolf. Although the tradition fell by the wayside, or never really caught on, there have been some like Wesley Wildman who have sought to revive it.

Wildman and Garner suggest that the best way to think about those "who are both liberal and evangelical" is as moderates. They are between the polar extremes of liberals and evangelicals and constitute a large, neglected, majority within modern polarizing discourse. Just like news organizations generate hyperbolic headlines, and those at the oppositional extremes get the most oxygen, it is theology at its most polarizing that dominates public or social conversation while moderate positions get relegated to silence.

What I think they get wrong here, is that at its best the evangelical/liberal tradition focused not on carving out a space in the middle, seeking the Aristotelean virtue in moderation. Rather, they found their identity hypostatically constituted. They were fully both. As much of this conversation mirrors the political reality, I want to look just briefly at a political metaphor here.

Within the history of the United States there have been several moments where religion featured quite prominently in the national discourse. Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Baptists in which he articulated a separation between church and state that was good for both, better for both than the alternatives, is among them. In recent history I would highlight three. There is John F. Kennedy's articulation of what it meant to be a Catholic as he became the first Catholic to become President of the United States. Mitt Romney's statement when he voted to find President Trump guilty during the impeachment trial of 2020 is another. The other one is former President Barak Obama's response to a homily and some comments by his pastor Jeremiah Wright during the presidential campaign of 2008, entitled "A More Perfect Union."

In that speech Obama talked about what it meant to be a child of white and black parents in America. He did not talk about being half white, or half black. He

talked about how the fullness of those traditions were a part of him and the impossibility or disingenuousness of disowning either part of the communities that have shaped him. I think, that this is the best way to think about what it means to be in the liberal/evangelical tradition. It is not as partially constituted, but fully incorporating all of the traditions. It is the quest toward a more perfect union.

Two questions at present are pressing here. Has the evangelical tradition become bankrupt?[72] Is it worth salvaging? If it means fundamentalist, and we cannot control what it means, how do we understand what it means to be a liberal evangelical?[73] Unfortunately we do not have the time or space to pursue these questions any further, but any assessment of the viability of liberal evangelical positions today must reckon with these shifts.

Theological Liberalism

The fourth tradition is that of theological liberalism. As it so happens, it is precisely this tradition that was highlighted as being particularly relevant to the praxis of polydoxy. As I talked with pastors in polyfaithful parishes about

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[72] This conversation has taken place in many forums. I will just cite a series of articles from *The Atlantic* here. Alan Jacobs, "Evangelical Has Lost Its Meaning: A term that once described a vital tradition within the Christian faith now means something entirely different," September 22, 2019. Peter Wehner, "The Deepening Crisis in evangelical Christianity: Support for Trump comes at a high cost for Christian Witness," July 5, 2019 and "The Cost of the Evangelical Betrayal: White, Conservative Christians who set aside the tenets of their faith to support Donald Trump are now left with little to show for it," July 10, 2020. One could also look at "The Boston Declaration" organized by Pamela Lightsey and Susan Thistlewaite in 2017. Nancy Bedford offers a global perspective when she points out that "the close connection in Spanish between *"evangelio*" (gospel, good news) and *evangélico* (adjective and noun related to the good news)" as well as in German for "*evangelisch"* allow them to function differently than the English "evangelical" which "has come to mean primarily a conservative or fundamentalist and thus does not include all Protestants." ("The Reformation and Theological Epistemology: A Latin American Perspective," in *Journal of Latin American Theology*, 13.1 [2018]: 82.

[73] Tony Campolo, *Can Mainline Denominations Make a Comeback?* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995), 69: "Many evangelicals, myself included, are upset over . . . [the fundamentalist appropriation of the term "evangelical"] . . . and are trying to rescue the term 'evangelical' from the narrow limits it has when it is made synonymous with 'fundamentalist.' However, in the end, neither those of us who define 'evangelical' in broader terms than the fundamentalists do, nor the fundamentalists themselves decide the meaning of the word or whom in designates. Such designation is made by the society at large. And like it or not, within the societal context of our times the word 'evangelical' had come to mean 'fundamentalist,' with overtones that connote politically conservative views." I would only add to this the note that time has served to confirm and strengthen this assessment. Much of the discussion we highlighted in the previous citation has come to share and strengthen this assessment.

hospitality to theological difference, it was often the liberal locution they used to signify their attunement to this praxis.

Like the Anglicans, in so many ways, the liberal theological tradition has sought to offer a third way. Theirs was always already a path of mediation. One takes away at least that much from Gary Dorrien's monumental review of the field. In his view, the liberal theological tradition—which is larger than liberal Protestantism—is a "mediating Christian movement." It "reconceptualizes the meaning of Christianity in the light of modern knowledge and ethical values." Within the field of its force "fluid boundaries and hybrid identities became the norm."[74] Which is to say, that the liberal tradition was always already, liberal/evangelical (although liberal named the slash created by the juxtaposition or hypostatic union of evangelical/modern).

All of these traditions have been hospitable to theological diversity in their own ways. Certainly, particular congregations have manifested these traditions differently. As stated in the previous section, we are approaching the praxis of polydoxy through an ecumenical attunement. As we can see, we could just have easily chosen to explore it within any one of these traditions—all of which have been hospitable to polydoxy, even if they have not always used that language.

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[74] Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, & Postmodernity, 1950-2005* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 3.

Chapter Two: Liturgy

Circa 1917, as World War I was underway and the United States entered the conflict, Rudolph Otto published *Das Heilige*. His interrogation of the concept of the numinous, although not uncontested, has remained a classic in the field. He looks at the human encounter with the numinous in the experiences of awe and the *mysterium tremendum*—"a specific creature feeling, a sense of awe, fear, terror or of abject dependence."[75]

As Flanagan points out, it is liturgies as "orders of belief" in and through "which the sacred is handled and realized in a knowable manner . . ."[76] The very operation of the liturgy is to "render the ordinary extraordinary."[77] We certainly want to avoid supernatural notions here (to which Flanagan is partial). To that end, it is better to understand the liturgy as a symbolic system.[78]

Not only do liturgies create chronotopes in which the holy may be encountered. They are theological acts.[79] "Thus the gathered church at prayer is doing theology."[80] Insofar as the theological action of the liturgical practices are rooted in this encounter with "a hidden depth, inaccessible to our conceptual thought" they will by necessity be opaque.[81] Symbols are constituted in "the depth" of "opacity" which makes them "inexhaustible."[82] When we lose sight of this, the symbolic system runs the danger of "becoming a prison."[83]

In 1975, one of the major works on federated congregations done at Drew University—with which this project offers a repetition—was completed. Gerald

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[75] Kieran Flanagan, "Liturgy, Ambiguity and Silence: the ritual management of real absence," *The British Journal of Sociology* 36.2 (1985): 195.
[76] Flanagan, 194.
[77] Flanagan, 195.
[78] George Mantzarides, "The Divine Liturgy and the World," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 26.1 (Spr-Sum 1981): 62-70; and Don Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality (*Akron: OSL Publications, 1984)*,* 28-42.
[79] Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). Although this is the argument of Saliers's entire monograph, the explicit arguments are made in the Introduction and chapter four.
[80] Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 86.
[81] Otto, 58.
[82] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 15.
[83] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, xxxvii.

Stone, the pastor of the Federated Church of Castleton, Vermont, submitted his project on “Administration in a Multi-Denominational Parish.” He had been the pastor there since 1969, when he was ordained by the newly formed United Methodist Church. He would move on from the congregation in 1975 as Donald Snyder came to be the pastor. Stone suggested in his project that creeds and sacraments—central components of most liturgies—provided hinderances to theological cooperation.[84] Yet, as Geoffrey Wainwright has pointed out, Christian identity must discern “between the diversity of different but symphonic voices, and the clash of contradictions which becomes a cacophony.” In the shaping of identity “unilateral emphasis amounts to a distortion.” It is treating as lucid the opaque. Christian identity is forged in the systemic symbolic field of liturgy by determining “where additions are enrichments and where dilutions; where simplification is purification, where truncation” and “where tentative exploration opens up new vistas and where it misses its way and passes into error or nothingness . . . Christian identity is achieved only dialectically, through a self-surrender which becomes a reception of the self from the Other.”[85] Which is to say that it is the plurality of belief in worship that creates the chronotope of *altarity*.[86]

Perhaps there is a certain form of irony that within federated congregation and local ecumenical partnerships they intentionally practice polysemy around Eucharistic praxis. It is important to some of these congregations to alternate between a “Baptist communion” service or liturgy one week with an “Episcopal communion” another week. Depending on the number of traditions present, the diversity only increases. In other congregations is it important to sing from the

[84] Gerald T. Stone, “Administration in a Multi-Denominational Parish: Toward an Ecumenical Theology,” (A Professional Project, Doctor of Ministry, Drew University, 1975), 25-28. To be fair, Stone charts his course by moving dialectically from “Theological Factors Which Favor Church Cooperation (Federation)” and “Theological Factors Which Hinder Church Cooperation (Federation).”

[85] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 11-12.

[86] Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987). “’Altarity’ is a slippery word whose meaning can be neither stated clearly nor fixed firmly. Though never completely decidable, the field of the word ‘altarity” can be approached through the network of its associations: altar, alter, alternate, alternative, alternation, alterity.” (xxviii)

hymnals representing the multiplicity of traditions represented in their multidenominational congregation.[87]

Wainwright becomes an integral interlocutor at this point for multiple reasons. In part for his focus on worship as “the point of concentration at which the whole of the Christian life come to ritual focus” and simultaneously the “proper mode of attaining and expressing agreement in the Church’s doctrine and community life.”[88] The second is his experience as a pastor at an “early Anglican-Methodist partnership on the outskirts” of Liverpool and at an “interdenominational and multi-cultural anglophone parish: in Yaoundé, Cameroon.”[89] He has done much work in the ecumenical field, and so again, opens up to us an ecumenical attunement of the practice of polydoxy, particularly in the praxis of public worship through liturgy.

Provisionality

What Wainwright recognized as he reflected from within these ecumenical fields is that in the liturgical chronotope “the ‘theology’ expressed in official worship must be acceptable to the broadest possible range in the present Christian community . . .”[90] We will explore more of this broad-hospitality, or openness, in the next section. In the negative, this means that “the Church’s worship must not be tied to one particular theological school or be reduced to the limits set by passing theological fashions.”[91] In the positive it opens up the provisionality of worship.

Building on the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg and E. Schlink, Wainwright emphasizes the proleptic and provisional nature of worship. In the words of Pannenberg, the mood of adoration common to worship fosters a humility that resists claiming one has “comprehended the eternal truth of God by means of human words.”[92] The provisionality of doxology provides a way of addressing the

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[87] Ralph Leroy Williamson, “Factors of Success and Failure in Federated Churches,” (Dissertation, Drew University, 1951), 398. This was also something that came up in several of my interviews where pastors talked about how they had to sing one hymn from each hymnal every week.
[88] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 8, 7.
[89] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 10-11.
[90] Wainwright, 344.
[91] Wainwright, 344.
[92] Cited in Wainwright, 282.

question of fallibility and infallibility, which Wainwright suggests is one of the chief aims of his project, and as I suggested above, is one of the pressing concerns of the contemporary culture. As Wainwright concludes his project and seeks to articulate a solution to the "perception and practice of the truth," he roots it in the personal character of established—and expressed in—Christian worship.[93] He argues that "the personal character of Christian worship constitutes a threefold reminder: of God's freedom to give himself or to withhold; of the only partial adequacy of human language to express personal relationships; and of our own failures in fidelity towards God."[94]

I think the latter two points here are more obvious than the first. I also think that there is more revealed in the first, in divinity withheld, that is helpful for the practice of polydoxy. In contrast to a superabundant emphasis on presence, it is through the cultivation of, or at least the appreciation for, the experience of God's absence that strengthens the humility and awareness of human infidelity and fallibility.

In the opening to his work Wainwright identifies eight "moods and attitudes characteristic of Christian worship."[95] Alongside the attitude of "adoration" and "thanksgiving" Wainwright includes as the penultimate attitude that of absence. Among the foundational attitudes of worship is "a sense of God's absence."[96] Yet, no sooner does he emphasize this reality than he begins to speak of "*apparent* god-forsakenness" and "the dialectic of God's (*apparent*) absence and his presence." All of this is because God "is *never really* absent from a creation which he never ceases to love."[97]

As Wainwright admits, the "official liturgy" often stresses and emphasizes "the sureness of the goal and therefore also the certainty of God's accompanying presence along the saving way."[98] This then in turn cultivates a sense of certainty

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[93] Wainwright, 442-443.
[94] Wainwright, 443-444.
[95] Wainwright, 37. We will return to this language of moods and attitudes in the next chapter.
[96] Wainwright, 42.
[97] Wainwright, 43. Emphasis added.
[98] Wainwright, 43.

and infallibility. I think that a stronger emphasis on the hidden/absent God (*deus abscondítus*) is important and so will expand on the theme briefly.

deus absconditus

In *The Practice of Christianity*, Kierkegaard, argues that one cannot access "Christ in glory." The conclusion of the book consists of seven reflections on the passage from the gospel according to John where we find Jesus proclaiming that when he is lifted up from the earth, he "will draw all to myself." Initially the reflection turns to the ascension. Kierkegaard will contrast Christ in loftiness with Christ in abasement. To this is added the contrast of admirers and imitators. Admirers correlate to loftiness while imitators correlate with "abasement and lowliness."[99]

Kierkegaard asks us to imagine a person who could only love Christ "in his loftiness." As he goes on to describe this person, he uses language quite pertinent to this project and the link we have identified between orthodoxy and power. What does it mean, he asks, if "someone can only love" Christ "in his loftiness."

> It means that he can love the truth—only when it has conquered, when it is in possession of and is surrounded by power and honor and glory. But when it was struggling, when it was foolishness, to the Jews an offense, to the Greeks foolishness; when it was insulted, mocked, and, as Scripture says, spat upon—then of course such a person could not love it; then he wished to stay far away from it.[100]

At this point we have already journeyed with Kierkegaard through the invitation and the halt. He has already told us "no one can become a believer except by coming" to Christ "in his state of abasement."[101] One can only access Christ through the historical person of Jesus, in whom and through whom the glory of Christ is obscured. It is in the confrontation with the all too human Jesus that one must decide whether or not to be an imitator.

In 1901, fifty years after Kierkegaard published *Indøvelse i Christendom* under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, William Wrede suggested, not the same thing, but something that adds another dimension to Kierkegaard's argument when he published *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*. Wrede argued, like

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[99] Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, 237.
[100] Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, 154.
[101] Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, 24.

Kierkegaard, that one would not have realized Jesus was the messiah until after the resurrection. We can follow those who would say that Christ was obscured in Jesus, or find some other way of saying that to encounter Jesus was an all too human experience. Thus, the gospel is written in such a way as to show this. The primary text is Mark's gospel, but Wrede shows how the theme is present in the other gospels as well. The gospels are written by those who know Jesus is the Christ, but tells the story about how people who encounter Jesus do not realize this. Although Wrede would acknowledge that that for us on the other side of the resurrection there is a difference, every reading of the gospel, especially Mark's, invites us, like Kierkegaard, to encounter Christ in obscurity, unrecognized.

The theme of hiddenness in Mark is expansive, thorough, complex and ambiguous.[102] There are many readers who want to move away from the full impact of this combined effort. They cannot accept that Kierkegaard is correct, that one can only approach Christ in his obscurity. Christ crucified may be μωρὶαν (foolishness) for the Greek and a σκάνδαλον (scandal/stumbling-block) for the Jew, but they cannot imagine that Christ is a σκάνδαλον for them.

For those who would argue that the *Messiasgeheimnis* is a tool of irony, one then has to deal with the problem of parables, where *Markusevangelium* cites prophetic passages on people listening without understanding and says that this is why Jesus speaks in parables.[103] At the surface level the whole point of using parables is so that people will not understand. At a deeper level, if we follow Deleuze as well as Kierkegaard, we can come to a place where obscurity is necessary.[104]

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[102] Greg Steele, "The Theology of Hiddenness in the Gospel of Mark: An Exploration of the Messianic Secret and Corollaries," *Restoration Quarterly*, 54.3 (2012): 169-185. Steel includes Jesus' teaching about parables and tendency to seek privacy as the corollaries and thus his list of relevant texts is more exhaustive than Bickermann's. Although Bickerman includes the teaching on parables, he does not include the texts on privacy. See Elias Bickermann, "Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Komposition des Markusevangeliums," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*, 22.1 (January 1923): 122-140.
[103] As previously cited, Steele and Bickermann both include the parables as part of the *Messiasgeheimnis*. On the *Messiasgeheimnis* as irony see Robert Fowler, "Irony and the Messianic Secret in the Gospel of Mark," *Proceedings*, 1 (1981): 26-36. The prophetic passages that make up the intertextual substance of Mark 4: 12 are Isaiah 6:9, 43:8; Jeremiah 5:21; and Ezekiel 12:2.
[104] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 146. This singular citation is one point at which the recurring theme of obscurity can be identified in this work by Deleuze.

Ward states that the Christological model of polydoxy escapes him.[105] He argues that apophasis is not "some darkness within which God hides Godself. God does not hide Godself."[106] The "life, work, and teachings of Jesus Christ as God" provide us with what we need for a "cataphatic discourse" on what we know of God.[107] It is Wainwright's "*apparent* absence."

What Kierkegaard and Wrede reveal, in direct opposition to and anticipation of Ward, is that specifically in Christ, God hides.[108] The cataphatic discourse of the *Messiasgeheimnis* leads into an apophatic discourse, for secrets are about what is hidden, not spoken, and perhaps not known. I agree with Ward, that in Jesus as the Christ we see God. It is just that I read Christ through Wrede and Kierkegaard, through the gospel of Mark even, and through that reading I find *deus abscondito*, a God who hides. In the language of Wesley Wildman, we see the eclipse, not that which is eclipsed. I encounter the hiddenness, not the hidden one.

Not only is Christ encountered as "the *divine incognito*" but all apprehension of "ultimate reality . . . only appears kaleidoscopically fractured in pseudo-rational glimpses."[109] Wildman would argue that obscurity is necessary because we require some way to subdue the "unruly ultimacy" and "bliss untamed" because "to see reality as it most truly is—as grounded , pervaded, relativized, deconstructed, and negated by bliss—is emotionally uncomfortable, psychically destabilizing, and socially disruptive."[110] Yet, Kierkegaard seems to point us toward an obscure Christ precisely because Christ in obscurity makes us emotionally uncomfortable and is socially disruptive. There is no place we can go to escape this discomfort. Within worship that means the practice of polydoxy

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[105] Ward, 87.
[106] Ward, 81.
[107] Ward, 82.
[108] Gary Dorrien emphasizes a similar theme in the work of Barth in his conclusion to *The Word as True Myth: Interpreting Modern Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997). However, as he points out, he is developing this "Barthian argument in a direction quite different from Barth's own purpose." (5)
[109] Wesley Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 2018), 197. The reference to "Christ as the *divine incognito*" comes from Wildman's engagement of K. Barth (190).
[110] Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable*, 210.

prevents sentimental, superficial assurances of comfort and harbors a space for people to encounter the uncomfortable. As we will see when we come to apophaticism itself later, the practice of polydoxy at personal and communal levels cultivates courage to stand within the chaosmos and accept it, without imposing a false order.

It is precisely as Christ is lifted up to draw all persons that we hesitate, almost as if we are psychically destabilized and are unable to act. In the face of this encounter we experience the cognitive ineffability, emotional multivalence, and moral inassimilability.[111] And, in the face of these moral possibilities we must "engage axiological depth structures and dynamics in everything we do and all that we are."[112]

The encounter with the obscure Christ becomes our own *Messiasgeheimnis* as "it *must not function as a causal explanation*." It must remain a secret. It "is untraceable and therefore uncontrollable and unavoidable." If we refer to it at all, it functions as "a non explanatory explanation."[113]

This excursus on divine absence and divine incognito may seem to have pressed further afield of liturgy, and yet, it was Wainwright's situation of absence as an attitude of worship that compelled us to pursue this path. Toward that end I would like to conclude this section reinforcing the argument, from a different approach.

In one of his more devotional publications, *A Cry of Absence*, Martin Marty makes reference to an uncitable interview with Karl Rahner. The interview comes amidst the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church. In his response Rahner suggests that there are two types of spirituality. As in all typologies, they help us to see and think about what we encounter. They do not exist in human beings in purity. Rahner suggests that there are summery and wintry Christians. For our

[111] Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable*, 203-209. Wildman sees these as resulting from encountering "bliss" or ultimate reality. Here, following Kierkegaard, it is to accept that these are responses to the hidden secret. Yet we could just as well follow Wildman's own "conviction that that which is revealed, whatever it is, cannot be grasped fully and is only ever received as somehow unknown and unknowable." (190)
[112] Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable*, 208.
[113] Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable*, 90. At this point Wildman is working on his theory of a narrative slip. I think the language works just as well when applied to the *Messiasgeheimnis*.

discussion here, we can say summery Christians experience God's presence while wintry ones experience absence. In Rahner's language, they live within a horizon in which God is excluded. Today we would use language that speaks of existing after the death of God. As Rahner points out in that interview, the church has not always been hospitable to the wintry type.

What Wainwright shows us, as we follow the path opened up by my interlocutors, is that the praxis of polydoxy is found in liturgy, and especially in a liturgy that opens up space for the experience of the absence of God—is hospitable, open to, wintry souls. The honesty is good for all insofar as "praying begins not so much with a sense of presence, but with some intuitive or even painfully concrete sense of God's not being immediately present."[114] Classically this occurs for many on Good Friday as altars in countless congregations are stripped bare and people are invited to leave in silence. We would do well to look for other places to make experiences of the absence of God more accessible. Perhaps some are able to capture it in Advent with a focus on the one who is to come. Others perhaps find moments at the ascension to feel the absence. Yet, our praxis of polydoxy will be more robust if we find ways to practice the absence of God in our liturgy more often than once or twice a year. As our journey with Kierkegaard and Wrede suggested, there is good reason to do so.

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[114] Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 108.

Chapter Three: *Gelassenheit*

Among the language that people use to describe the praxis of polyfidelity is that of openness. This locution was developed through two distinct trajectories. On the one hand they spoke of being good neighbors. How can they be good neighbors, hospitable to those who disagree with them? On the other hand, they spoke of practicing welcome—of learning to "assume the posture of open-handedness and open-endedness that a logic of multiplicity engenders."[115] They also talked about being-open, inhabiting their chronotope with, and in, openness. Within these fields of discourse the interlocutors talked about openness as a way of "letting be."

As this point, turning to Heidegger will prove helpful as we seek to understand openness, and although it runs the risk of jargon, his language of *Gelassenheit* will help us to understand the practice of openness that is key to the praxis of polydoxy.[116]

Stimmung

However, before we discuss *Gelassenheit*, it will be important for us to approach the topic from Heidegger's thinking around attunement—a locution we have already been employing—which is the translation of *Stimmung*, *Grundstimmung*, and *Gestimmtheit*. Sometimes *Stimmung* is translated as "mood," while at others it is translated as "attunement."

> The modern German *Gestimmtheit* carries a rich set of semantic connotations. Most basically it is derived from *Stimme,* meaning a "voice" of either a person or an instrument. The corresponding verb *stimmen* is used transitively to describe the act of tuning an instrument; intransitively, it refers to a state of order or lightness *(richtig sein)*. From *Stimme,* moreover, comes the polyvalent notion of *Stimmung,* which in modern German is most often translated as a "mood" or a

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[115] Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*, chapter ten.

[116] One takes up Heidegger with an awareness of the problem of Heidegger. Heidegger was a Nazi. Although we may see his "dalliances with Nazism" as "short-lived," they are not insignificant. (Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001], 10.) One seeks at this point "a more chastened, disciplined, suspicious reading of Heidegger." (John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* [New York: Fordham University Press, 1978], xxi.) Habermas's assessment is even stronger. He suggests that "it is time to think with Heidegger against Heidegger." (cited in Wolin, 197.) I find it very difficult not to think with Heidegger and so I can simply pray that my reading is chastened, and when necessary, contra Heidegger.

> "humor" and in this sense refers to a psychological state of mind. But *Stimmung* can also refer to an objective unity that extends over and unites an observer and her environment, such as the unity of a landscape. Related to this sense is the phrase *gestimmt sein,* "to be attuned," which, with its implication of a relative solidarity or agreement with something more comprehensive, distinguishes it from a state of mind. Thus one can speak both of "my *Stimmung"* or of the *"Stimmung* of a landscape," and in either case an underlying musical connotation is present in the sense of tuning an instrument or voice.[117]

Stimmung is not feeling (translated by *Gefühl/fühlen*). *Stimmung*, mood, attunement is something that is not "related to the psychical."[118] Rather it is a "fundamental existentiale."[119] Here it is helpful to remember that existentiality for Heidegger signifies "the state of Being that is constitutive for those entities that exist."[120] Existentialia belong to beings that have subjectivity as opposed to categories which belong to objects. Thus, Heidegger can assert that mood is "a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself prior to all cognition and volition, and beyond their range of disclosure . . . we are never free of moods."[121]

Wrapped up in his discussion of *Stimmung* is Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit* (translated as states of mind—although the more awkward "the state in which one is to be found" is a better translation).[122] The relationship here is complicated, but essentially we can say that "*Befindlichkeit* is manifested through moods insofar as the intelligibility of moods (or being in a mood) already presupposes *Befindlichkeit*"[123] Or as Heidegger puts it: "In a state-of-mind [*Befindlichkeit*] Dasein is always brought before itself, and has always found

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[117] Boyd Taylor Coolman, "Gestimmtheit: Attunement as a Description of the Nature-Grace Relationship in Rahner's Theology," *Theological Studies*, 70.4 (Dec 2009): 785.
[118] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1962), 176.
[119] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 173.
[120] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 33.
[121] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 175.
[122] Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989): 80.
[123] Andrea Elpidorou, "Moods and Appraisals: the Phenomenology and Science of Emotions Can Come Together," *Hum Stud*, 36 (2013): 583

itself, not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood [*gestimmtes*] that he has."[124]

Gelassenheit

What this prelude, or interlude sets up for us is the understanding of *Gelassenheit* as *Stimmung* or *Gestimmtheit*—although I am unaware of any point where Heidegger makes this point explicitly. However, in *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, a work which has grounded this work, Heidegger speaks of the "grounding-attunement" that comes from the "essential swaying of truth" and "to be placed before *self-sheltering-concealing*, re-fusal, hesitation, and to be steadfast in their *open*."[125] In this context Heidegger speaks of the "openness of the open" as "the clearing for self-sheltering-concealing."

> But the open, which hides itself and in which beings—and indeed not only the nearest handy thing—always stand, is in fact something like a hollow medium, e.g., that of a jug. But here, we recognize that it is not a random emptiness that is merely enclosed by the walls and left unfilled by "things," but the other way around: the hollow medium is the determining framing that sustains the walling of the walls and their edges. These are merely the efflux of that originary open which lets its openness hold sway by calling forth such a walling (the form of the container) around and unto itself. In this way the essential swaying of the open radiates back into the enclosure.[126]

There are two ways that Heidegger often uses to speak of the openness of the open. The first is *Lichtung*, or clearing. As early as *Being and Time* he speaks of being "'illuminated' ["*erleuchtet*"]" meaning "as Being-in-the-world it is cleared [*gelichtet*] in itself, not through any other entity, but in such a way that it is itself the clearing [*Lichtung*]."[127] Again in the "The Origin of the Work of Art" he will speak of the "poeticizing essence of truth" that creates a clearing, or through which, "an open place is thrown open, a place in which everything is other than it

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[124] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174. As the translators note: "In this sentence there is a contrast between "wahrnehmendes Sich-vorfinded' ('coming across itself by perceiving') and 'gestimmtes Sichbefinden' ('finding itself in the mood that it has'). It may be helpful to include the original sentence here. "In der Befindlichkeit ist das Dasein immer schon vor es selbst gebracht, es hat sich immer schon gefunden, nicht als wahrnehmendes Sich-vorfinden, sondern als gestimmtes Sichbefinden." (*SZ*, 135)

[125] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989),, 239.

[126] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 237.

[127] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 171.

was."[128] "Truth happens *only* by establishing itself in the strife and space itself opens up."[129]

Another way Heidegger speaks of openness is *Gelassenheit*. The word is often translated as releasement.[130] It originates in the work of Meister Eckart. For Eckart "human beings must release themselves, *sich gelassen*, and make themselves unfettered and separate, *abgeschieden*" in order to find or experience God.[131]

David Michael Levin provides an additional way of thinking about *Gelassenheit* that is important for the way it corrects Heidegger. Levin comes to *Gelassenheit* as he reflects on our "visionary being as a spiritual vocation."[132] Thus for him *Gelassenhiet* describes a gaze.

> The ideal of *Gelassenheit* calls for a gaze which is relaxed, playful, gentle, caring; a gaze which moves freely, and with good feeling; a gaze which is alive with awareness; a gaze at peace with itself, not moved, at the deepest level of its motivation, by anxiety, phobia, defensiveness and aggression; A gaze which resists falling into patterns of seeing that are rigid, dogmatic, prejudiced, and stereotyping; A gaze which moves into the world bringing with it peace and respect, because it is rooted in, and issues from, a place of integrity and deep self-respect.[133]

This "gaze which is alive with awareness" is one more way in which *Gelassenheit* operates as a *Grundstimmung*. One can see that becoming attuned to *Gelassenheit* in this way opens up the chronotope of polydoxy.

> The political significance of *Gelassenheit* as a practice is that letting be would overcome positions of rigidity, dogmatism, and intolerance; that it undoes the will to coercion, manipulation, mastery and domination; And that it transforms the pathological compulsion to secure, to make certain, to seize, capture, and possess: in *Gelassenheit*, there is a neutralization of the desire to totalize.[134]

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[128] Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44.
[129] Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 36.
[130] John Caputo, "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought, Part Two," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 13.1 (January 1975): 65.
[131] Hans Ruin, "The inversion of Mysticism—Gelassenheit and the Secret of the Open in Heidegger," *Religions*, 10.1 (2018): 15.
[132] *The Openning of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 13.
[133] Levin, 238.
[134] Levin, 248

For Levin, *Gelassenheit* is "an ideal . . . not a way of life which can ever be completely achieved."[135] In this way *Gelassenheit* bridges the provisionality of worship with the need for the church to be *reformata semper reformanda*. We shall turn to that topic in our next chapter. Yet before we make that move, let us linger in the liminal chronotope of *Gelassenheit*.

For Eckhart, *Gelassenheit*/detachment (*Abgeshiedenheit*) is the cardinal virtue because "God Himself is pure detachment."[136] God is for Eckhart the Aristotelian unmoved-mover, first cause. But what if Eckhart was wrong? What if Eckhart misunderstood God? What if Heschel was right and we should understand God as the most moved mover? What if God is not detached and dispassionate but profoundly passionate?

As Caputo points out, for Heidegger and Eckhart "the way to deal with the transcendent and 'simply other' reality (of God or Being) is not to deal with it at all, but to let it deal with us."[137] This detachment, Versényi points out, leads to the "rejection of all human experience and thought."[138] At this point I hear echoes of neo-orthodoxy. Let us see if we can find a way through or beyond to polydoxy.

Gelassenheit as the Stimmungheit of Polydoxy

Just as this conversation is rooted in an ancient conversation between Parmenides and Heraclitus, it at this point comes to another tired conversation, that the early apologists articulated with the question: "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?" In other terms, it pits revelation against reason. In the twentieth century, it was Karl Barth who picked up the argument saying that human beings, could not find God, reach God on their own. God revealed Godself, and it was only in and through revelation that any knowledge of God is possible.[139]

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[135] Levin, 248.
[136] Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 12.
[137] Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 25.
[138] Cited in Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 42.
[139] Dorrien's brilliant reading of Barth points out that for Barth, even in this revelation, even in Christ, "the hidden source of revelation is apprehended only indirectly." (*The Word as True Myth*, 239) Which is to say, even Barth can be mustered to support much of the previous argument on the hiddenness of God.

Is Heidegger in this way Barthian? I would argue that Heidegger's commitment to thought and the openness of thinking that "thinks more originally" situates his being in time, his chronotope, in opposition to Barth. Furthermore, it is the turn toward absence and nothingness (as we saw in the previous chapter) that changes the topography and shifts the horizon.

Yet this turn toward nothingness is not without its problems, as Heidegger's critics have pointed out. Does Heidegger become simply another nihilistic prophet, or prophet of nihilism? As Caputo points out, Heidegger reformulates "'*ex nihil fit*' to read: *ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit*"—which may rephrase as the move from "becoming out of nothing" to "out of nothing all being as being comes to be"[140] For Heidegger this is because "Pure Being and pure Nothing" are equivalent, undifferentiated.[141] Is *Gelassenheit*, releasement, letting be and letting go necessarily an embrace of the *nihilum*?

As Catherine Keller has pointed out, *creatio ex nihilo* is problematic. In opposition to Barth and many others who have located their project in the *nihilum*, she points out that "the nothingness of the *ex nihilo* produces its own nihilating effects."[142] It can "collude all too readily with the requisite" endorsement of, turn toward, "an*nihil*ation."[143] This annihilating tendency is the polar opposite of *Gelassenheit*, the open that lets be. The turn toward nothingness is disruptive and detrimental. What is needed is a *creatio profundis*, a creation from the deep. A creation that is deeply connected.

> Selfhood in an apocalyptic age is in transition from a psychological to an axiological or moral conception of the I pole. This by no means implies that the self will necessarily perform acts of resistance to violence. To the contrary, such resistance becomes increasingly difficult since in the face of pandemic humanly contrived death, resisting violence requires ever larger quanta of fresh energy from an already depleted self.[144]

In the midst of a moment of depletion it is well to pause and reflect on the way in which the self is depleted. As Bauman suggests, "the most sinister and painful

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[140] Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 21.
[141] Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 21.
[142] Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 18
[143] Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) , 172.
[144] Edith Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes, Hegel, Heidegger, and Man-made Mass Death* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 215.

of contemporary troubles can be best collected under the rubric of *Unsicherheit*."[145] As Bauman points out, *Sicherheit* represents a moment "uncharacteristically frugal" semiotics within the German language as "it manages to squeeze into a single term complex phenomena for which English needs at least three terms – security, certainty and safety – to convey."[146] The result of *Unsicherheit*, or *precarité*, is the creation of an "incapacity to make plans and act on them."[147]

"To cut a long story short: at the heart of life-politics lies a profound and unquenchable desire for security; while acting on that desire rebounds in more insecurity and ever deepening insecurity."[148] To insecure security, Bauman adds uncertain certainty and unsafe safety as the hallmarks of the current contours of the public chronotope. Thus "living in uncertainty is revealed as a way of life, the only way there is of the only life available."[149] Our *Unsicherheit* has been privatized and we are sold, and promised security, certainty, and safety. Yet, as Bauman points out, "the privatization of fears has a self-perpetuating capacity."[150]

The practice of polydoxy, through the *Stimmung* of *Gelassenheit*, is a way of living within communities that do not participate in the "perpetuation of division, separation, isolation and estrangement."[151] Those who live within the praxis of polydoxy "find the play of uncertainty at the heart of faith refreshing, compelling, and even quickening."[152] The gaze of *Gelassenheit*, as Levin showed us earlier, is always open to the other. As Schneider points out, this means that polydoxy is rooted in an incarnational theological praxis where "multiplicity exceeds abstract

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[145] Zygmunt Bauman, *In Search of Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 5.
[146] Bauman, *In Search of Politics*, 17.
[147] Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure* World (Malden: Polity, 2001), 42. The use of *precarité* here draws in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bauman makes the same point in *In Search of Politics* when he argues that *Sicherheit* provides the very condition "on which the ability to think and act rationally depends." (17)
[148] Bauman, *In Search of Politics*, 23.
[149] Bauman, *In Search of Politics*, 18.
[150] Bauman, *In Search of politics*, 47.
[151] Bauman, *Community*, 142
[152] Laurel Schneider, "Crib Notes from Bethlehem," in *Polydoxy*, 29.

principles" and takes seriously the embodied—material—lives of others.[153] Thus it is reflected in being a good neighbor— in openness, in letting my neighbor be, but simultaneously in being for my neighbor. It is being hospitable—being a good host and a good guest.[154]

At this point however, we are moving ahead of ourselves. *Gelassenheit* as openness to the other leads us to thick connections, in Keller's language, within the dense web. There is an attunement of openness, but in itself it does not necessarily lead to the praxis of polydoxy. Polydoxy is never a necessity. It is only, always, ever, a non-coercive possibility—within various space-times a possibility with greater probability. The probability of the emergence of the praxis of polydoxy increases when openness attunes the network within which we live and are connected. The attunement of the fields of force within which we live is precisely the topic of our next chapter.

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[153] Laurel Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), Nook, chapter one.
Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*, 23/342.
[154] On being a good guest see Amos Yong, "Guests of Religious Others: Theological Education in the Pluralistic World," in *Theological Education*, 47.1 (2012): 75-83; and Beardsall, et al., *Daring to Share*, chapter 12.

Chapter Four: Networking in the Nexus

One of the key developments in the English Reformation and early American Christianity was the emergence of the theological idea of congregational autonomy. One of the doctrine's clearest and earliest articulations was in the Cambridge Platform of 1648.[155] As Elizabeth Mauro points out, this commitment to the autonomy of the local congregation remains among the hallmarks of congregationalism today.

Several churches today emphasize this local autonomy. Sue Phillips, who was the regional lead for the Unitarian Universalist Association in New England and taught UUA polity at Harvard University, points out that an overemphasis on local autonomy can be distorting if it neglects what it means to be in covenant with the larger congregational community.

> Somewhere along the line, congregational polity became conflated with the autonomy of individual congregations. The rich dimensionality of mutual covenant and interdependence has been sheared off, leaving only the barest bones of isolated self-governance and independence. Congregational polity is a bird grounded with a broken wing.[156]

Congregational autonomy, or congregationalism, is not the problem here. It is a certain form of autonomy, as Phillips puts it. An "autonomous culture" will "attempt to create the forms of personal and social life without any reference to something ultimate and unconditional, following only the demands of theoretical and practical rationality."[157] As Nietzsche and all of the readers of Nietzsche have pointed out, this leaves us in a situation where there is only will to power. Autonomous institutions will seek to act unilaterally when they are not rooted in or connected to "something ultimate and unconditional."

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[155] Elizabeth Mauro, "The Art and Practice of the Congregational Way," Center for Congregational Leadership, National Association of Congregational Churches, 25; and R. R. Burg, "The Cambridge Platform: A Reassertion of Ecclesiastical Authority," *Church History*, 43.4 (1974): 470-487. See also Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Volume II,* trans. Olive Wyon (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 656-673.
[156] The reference is from a transcript of a seminar on UUA polity. https://www.uua.org/print/leadership/library/congregational-polity-and-myth-congregational-autonomy. Accessed 14 July 2020.
[157] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 57.

For Tillich the movement is from heteronomy (rule of the other), through autonomy, to theonomy. Thus, "a theonomous culture expresses in its creation an ultimate concern and a transcending meaning not as something strange but as its own spiritual ground."[158] Theonomy does not impose "an alien law, religious or secular" on human minds, as heteronomy does.

Tillich will often use these terms to describe a process. A person, or a culture, exists under a heteronomous opposition. They are compelled to obey this foreign law, and so they protest. They appeal to autonomy, to be able to rule themselves. Yet over time autonomy tends to lose "its ultimate reference, its center of meaning, its spiritual substance."[159] What is then needed is the theonomous solution, that provides the meaning and connections.

Ricoeur talked about the process as beginning with a certain naïveté. One then becomes disillusioned. Yet, much like Tillich's read of autonomy, one cannot remain in this state of disillusionment. For Ricoeur we must find a second naïveté. This language certainly resonates with Elisabeth Johnson's suggestion that we find a way to let symbols sing again.

Nietzsche spoke of three metamorphoses of the spirit. The spirit must become a camel, which we can read as heteronomous. It must learn and carry the weight of all that came before. Then the spirit must become a lion and sound forth a roaring "no." This is the move of deconstruction, and here it bears some similarity to Ricoeur's disillusionment and Tillich's autonomous culture. Finally, Nietzsche says, the spirit must become a child and say "yes"—it must create.

There is such a thing as theonomous congregationalism that practices self governance and yet is connected. It understands that churches, like all institutions are like biological organisms. They are "not isolated systems but are imbricated in constitutive and transformative networks that both encompass and surpass them."[160] The practice of polydoxy works within this network choosing theonomous connectivity over heteronomous control.[161] With the "broken

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[158] Tillich, *Protestantism*, 57.
[159] Tillich, *Protestantism*, 58.
[160] Taylor, *After God*, 326.
[161] Keller, *From a Broken Web*, 200. "Control is the age-old alternative to connection. The denial of internal relations issues in external manipulation."

fragments of what might have been" bequeathed to us by "the massive historical breakage" we start "from a broken web" connecting, "reconnecting, connecting *again*."[162]

Riverside

Circa 1918 "three Presbyterian churches in midtown New York . . . decided to combine."[163] They invited Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Baptist, to be their guest preacher for the better part of six years while Dr George Alexander and "one or more associates would be called to carry the parish work."[164] In May of 1922 Fosdick preached a sermon in that congregation entitled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Over the next two years opponents of Fosdick accused him of being "a foreigner" and "usurper" within a denomination to which he did not belong.[165] His opponents felt they had " a right to demand that those who serve as pastors of our churches shall 'hew to the line.'"[166] To the heteronomous culture of the fundamentalists, Fosdick was "a religious outlaw." Some even called him "the Jesse James of the theological world."[167]

It is no wonder, that after his resignation Fosdick was "rather difficult" as he worked out the conditions under which he would be the pastor of the new Riverside Church. He "had been caught once in a position where he could not be honest without raising an ecclesiastical storm,"[168] and therefore he wanted this to be a congregation where "control of church by any denominational group could not be guaranteed or even expected."[169]

On the one hand Fosdick wanted an individual congregation "where Christian union can be put into effect at once and given persuasive illustration." Yet, on the other hand, he knew that "one danger confronting an individual congregation which adopts this policy is that it may become an isolated unit, lacking effective

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[162] Keller, *From a Broken Web*, 223.
[163] Fosdick, *The Living of These Days: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 132.
[164] Fosdick, 133.
[165] Fosdick, 153.
[166] Fosdick, 152.
[167] Fosdick, 153.
[168] Fosdick, 181.
[169] Fosdick, 196.

relationship with the Christian church as a whole." Thus, Riverside church sent delegates to the Northern Baptist Convention "until a better method appeared."[170]

Under the leadership of the second lead pastor, Robert James McCracken, the church became affiliated with the American Baptist Convention and the United Church of Christ.[171] Although they eschew "creedal requirements and doctrinal rigidity" while simultaneously seeking to be "self-consciously international, interdenominational, and interracial"[172] they have made "several attempts to form official alliances with a number of [other/additional] denominations."[173] They have continued to connect, reconnect and repair the broken web.

The Danger of Democratization

If Riverside shows us the way an autonomous congregation can practice polydoxy and find theonomous solutions, in the democratization of American Christianity we have seen that autonomy often leads to "atomistic tendencies in American Christianity."[174] "Increasingly assertive common people wanted their leaders unpretentious, their doctrines self-evident and down-to-earth, their music lively and singable, and their churches in local hands."[175] Within this environment "many denominations maintained their authority only by seldom exercising it."[176] Yet, as Hatch points out this "popular" form of religiosity is "ambivalent, even paradoxical. Whether in politics or religion, self-made leaders who gained prominence by appealing to the hopes, fears, and interests of plain folks have walked a fine line between authentic servanthood and exploitive

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[170] Fosdick, 197.
[171] Peter J. Paris, et al., *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 2 and 82
[172] Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 226. For Rockefeller's involvement in the wider ecumenical movement, see Samuel McCrea Cavert, *Church Cooperation and Unity in America: A Historical Review: 1900-1970* (New York: Association Press, 1970), 30, 38, 43, 222.
[173] Paris, et al., 2.
[174] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 164.
[175] Hatch, 9.
[176] Hatch, 63.

demagoguery."[177] Autonomy, rather than leading to theonomy, can lead to heteronomy.

> The rise of democratic Christianity in the early Unites States is riddled with irony, unrealistic hope, and unfulfilled expectations.... Attempting to erase the difference between leaders and followers, Americans opened the door to religious demagogues.... an egalitarian culture has given rise to a diverse array of powerful religious leaders, whose humble origin and common touch seem strangely at odds with the authoritarian mantle that people allow them to assume.[178]

From a much different perspective, and with a different horizon, Popper points out that this is the paradox of democracy and freedom which goes back to Plato. Simply put it is the notion that a free people can choose to give up their freedom.[179] Unlimited freedom, independence, autonomy, defeats itself.[180] Therefore, Popper suggest that it is "only by planning, step by step, for institutions to safeguard freedom, especially freedom from exploitation, can we hope to achieve a better world."[181]

Institutional Necessity

One of the pastors I talked with for this project asked his congregants if they just wanted to be a non-denominational church. Did they want to continue to be a multidenominational polyfaithful parish? They communicated to him their commitment to continuing to be in the world in this way. They would rather fly than be a bird with a broken wing.

What polyfaithful parishes have embodied at intuitive levels, is the need to remain in institutional networks. They understand that "once the task of coping with human existential unsafety has been privatized and left to individual resources, individually experienced fears can only be 'head-counted', but not shared or melted into a common cause and the new quality of joint action."[182]

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[177] Hatch, 208.
[178] Hatch, 16.
[179] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, 1 Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 123.
[180] Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, 2 Hegel and Marx* (Princeton: Princeton Universtiy Press, 1966), 124.
[181] Popper, *Open Society, 2*, 143.
[182] Bauman, *In Search of Politics*, 47.

What is necessary is the "reforging of private troubles into public issues."[183] They embody a "deeper, darker solidarity" in institutional participation.[184]

Karl Popper understood that institutions, "like machines" can "multiply our power for good or evil."[185] Institutions are also the way in which the future is built.[186] Which is to say, that if we are so opposed to institutions because of their tendency to evil, or self-contradictory nature, we choose the evil of not choosing to make the future as good, just, and righteous as we can. Ricoeur will concur with Popper at this point. Institutions seek to correct the problem of *praxis* that is "an activity in common that that leaves no work behind it and . . . exhausts its meaning in its own exercise."[187] Thus for Ricoeur, our ethical intentions are found in "aiming at the 'good life' with and for others, in just institutions."[188] As opposed to "political atomism" Ricoeur asserts that it is "only in a specific institutional milieu that the capacities and predispositions that distinguish human action can blossom; the individual . . . becomes human only under the condition of certain institutions; and . . . if this is so, the obligation to serve these institutions is itself a condition for the human agent to continue to develop."[189]

Different congregations have maintained these institutional commitments in different ways. One of the institutional benefits to the church is the preparation and certification of clergy. Leveraging these institutional resources in a pastoral search is not unique. Leveraging multiple denominational institutions is. During a recent pastoral search the Peoples Church in East Lansing Michigan, did just that working within the four denominational institutions that they embody. The United Christian Church of Austin Texas has posted links to both the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on their website and in their newsletters. Many of the pastors talked about attending multiple gatherings of clergy and regional ecclesiastical gatherings—they visited the synod,

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[183] Bauman, *In Search of Politics*, 7.
[184] Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the struggle for a New Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 164.
[185] Popper *Open Society, 1*, 67.
[186] Popper, 127.
[187] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blaney (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 196.
[188] Ricoeur, 172.
[189] Ricoeur, 254-255.

the presbytery and the Methodist Annual Conference, for example. Not all federated or united congregations are successful in maintaining these institutional connections, but all multidenominational congregations are committed to these institutional networks, and in this we have come across another dimension that is helpful for the practice of polydoxy.

Churches/Congregations as Institutions within Liquid Modernity

Six years before Rudolf Otto published *Das Heilige*, Ernst Troeltsch published *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, which has been translated as *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. In that work Troeltsch famously lays out three types or ways Christianity is encountered. Those three types are church, sect and mysticism. Moving in reverse order, mysticism is found in "radical religious individualism" that produces "no desire for an organized fellowship" and is concerned solely with "freedom for interchange of ideas" and the "isolated individual."[190] The sect, likewise emphasizes "religious individualism," but this form of community also values "moral rigorism."[191] The sect is a voluntary community, opposed to the church. One can be born into a church. One has to join a sect. It is worth noting however, that as Troeltsch speaks of the increasing predominance of the mysticism-type in the early twentieth century, he states that the only option remaining is "voluntary association with like-minded people, which is equally remote from Church and sect."[192] James Gustafson has made much the same point. In the current religious environment, all faith communities are voluntary.[193]

Many interpreters of Troeltsch focus on the difference between Church and sect around the issue of compromise.[194] Churches compromise. In this way they

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[190] Troeltsch, 377.
[191] Troeltsch, 339.
[192] Troeltsch, 381.
[193] James Gustafson, *The Church as Moral Decision-Maker* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), 109.
[194] John A. Coleman, "Church-Sect Typology and Organizational Precariousness," in *Sociological Analysis*, 29.2 (1968): 55-66; William R. Garrett, "Maligned Mysticism: the Maledicted Career of Troeltsch's Third Type," in *Sociological Analysis*, 36.3 (1975): 205-223; Paul M. Gustafson, "The Missing Member of Troeltsch's Trinity: Thought Generated by Weber's Comments," in *Sociological Analysis*, 36.3 (1975): 224-226 and "UO-US-PS-PO: A Restatement of Troeltsch's

can be understood along the lines of Niehbuhr's Christ of culture, accommodated to the culture of the contemporary world.[195] Churches that choose another way of being in the world (Christ above culture, or transformer of culture, for instance) depart from the Church-type as Troeltsch and his interpreters describe it within the typology.

As Niebuhr, Troeltsch, and Marty point out, typologies are heuristic tools. They help us understand. Sometimes they are derived empirically, even phenomenologically, seeking to describe certain realities. Even in these cases, the phenomena do not exist as chemically pure types.

There is something that is missed in the way most interpreters read Troeltsch that I think is particularly important to how we think about congregations as institutions. What many miss by focusing on churches as monopolar, versus sects as multi-polar, or churches as accepting and universal as opposed to sects as rejecting and exclusive is the way in which for Troeltsch the Church is the institutional and the sect the anti-insitutional.[196] "The essence of the Church is its objective institutional character."[197]

It is the difference between these two realities that is constitutive of the difference of the practice of polydoxy. There are forms of polydoxy within sects, although they are often denied, sublimated. The focus on voluntary agreement and social purity make it much more inhospitable. It is the institutional church on the other hand that offers a chronotope for multiplicities and pluralities.

Church-Sect Typology," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 6.1 (1967): 64-68; Benjamin Nelson, "Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, Georg Jellinek as Comparative Historical Sociologists," in *Sociological Analysis,* 36.3 (1975): 229-240. Warren S. Goldstein, "Reconstructing the Classics: Weber, Troeltsch, and the Historical Materialists," in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 26 (2014): 470-507; Theodore M. Steeman, "Church, Sect, Mysticism, Denomination: Periodological Aspects of Troeltsch's Types," in *Sociological Analysis*, 36.3 (1975): 181-204; Paul Gustafson,; and Willaim H. Swatos, Jr., "Weber or Troeltsch?: Methodology, Syndrome, and Development of Church-Sect Theory," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 15.2 (1976): 129-144.

[195] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper One, 1951). It is worth noting that in his acknowledgements Niebuhr offers this book as "a supplement" and correction of Troeltsch's *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. It should further be added that the relationship to culture is more complex as both Troeltsch and Niebuhr point out.

[196] See Troeltsch 361: where he speaks of the "dissolution of the institutional church" paving "the way for the sect-type."

[197] Troeltsch, 338.

As Troeltsch makes clear, there is a lack of choice and freedom in belonging to an institutional church. Reading Troeltsch through Bauman we can say this means that to "identify oneself with" a church "means to give hostages to an unknown fate which one cannot influence, let alone control."[198] Yet maintaining individual choice contains its own irony within a liquid modern world marked more by consumption than production.

> In a society of individuals everyone *must* be individual; in this respect, at least, members of such a society are anything but individual, different or unique. They are, on the contrary, strikingly *like* each other in that they must follow the same life strategy and use shared – commonly recognizable and legible – tokens to convince others that they are doing so. In the question of individuality, there is no individual choice. . . . Paradoxically, 'individuality' is a matter of crowd spirit' and a demand enforced by a crowd. To be an individual means to be *like* everyone else in the crowd – indeed identical with everyone else.[199]

This crowd forced appearance of individuality and our lack of willingness to yield our autonomy, to give others a claim over our lives, has led to less belonging. In 2001 Robert Putnam suggested that folks no longer wanted to join organizations or be members. Chronicling this reality within the churches he points out that "Americans are going to church less often than we did three or four decades ago, and the churches we go to are less engaged with the wider community."[200] Within the mainline Protestant field, if one tracks membership from 1960 until 2010, this has translated into a loss of 8 million members within "seven major mainline denominations."[201] Much of the focus today is on the rise of the 'nones' and the 'dones.' "Looseness of attachment and revocability of engagement are the precepts guiding everything in which they engage and to which they are attached."[202]

Within liquid modernity the event—as a social happening, something we would want to distinguish from the event qua *Ereignis*[203]—replaces the

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[198] Zygmunt Bauman, *Identity*.
[199] Bauman, *Liquid life*, chapter one. Italics in original. It would be worthwhile to compare Bauman's work here with Arendt's work on the mob in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.
[200] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbooks, 2000), 79.
[201] Reside, 19.
[202] Bauman, *Liquid Life*, Introduction.
[203] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 2-6. Events have 8 elements for Caputo including uncontainability and translatability derived from their polyvalence, complexity and

institution. “Events, like all *bona fide* consumer products, bear a ‘use-by’ date; their designers and supervisors may leave long-term concerns out of their calculations . . . planning and catering for . . . ‘maximal impact instant obsolescence.’”[204] Events are “a short-term meeting of strangers.”[205] They allow for nothing that outlives them but memories and additional forms of insecurity. “If relationships (including communal togetherness) have no other guarantee of durability than the individuals’ choices ‘to make them last’, the choices need to be repeated daily, and manifested with a zeal and dedication which would make them truly hold.”[206]

This level of zeal is unsustainable. The kind of institutional community we need necessitates “long-term commitments” and “unshakeable obligations.”[207] It allows for the “messiness of real intimacy” and the ability to become “a long-term witness to another person’s life.”[208] As Žižek put it, “the problem with the church” was not *that it* organized, but “*by the type*” of its organization.[209] What is needed are better organizations and institutions, not no institutions. A non-institutional or anti-institutional form of Christianity is actually Christianity best adapted to and supportive of late modern Capitalism in Žižek’s assessment.[210]

The institutional shelters of polydoxy—such as federated and united congregations, or local ecumenical partnerships—accept Popper’s piecemeal engineering as the way forward, as the way to inhabit institutions without allowing them to become enemies of the events which they have come to represent.

> In all matters, we can only learn by trial and error, by making mistakes and improvements; we can never rely on inspiration, although inspiration may be

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undecidability. Events qua *Ereignis* are excessive. “They overtake us and outstrip the reach of the subject or the ego.” They are not consumable. They are beyond being and constitutive of truth.

[204] Bauman, *Liquid Life*, chapter three.

[205] Kees De Groot, “Three Types of Liquid Religion,” in Implicit Religion

[206] Bauman, *Community*, 99.

[207] Bauman, *Community*, 72.

[208] Bauman *Community*; “messiness”, 52; “long-term witnesses”, 46.

[209] Slovoj Žižek, “Dialectical Clarity Versus the Misty Conceit of Paradox,” in Slovoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?,* ed. Creston Davis (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009), 283.

[210] Cited in Katharine Sarah Moody, “Retrospective Speculative Philsoophy: Looking for Traces of Žižek’s Communist Collective in Emerging Christian Praxis,” in *Political Theology,* 13.2 (2012): 197.

> most valuable as long as they can be checked by experience. Accordingly, it is unreasonable to assume that a complete reconstruction of our social world would lead at once to a workable system. Rather we should expect that, owing to lack of experience, many mistakes would be made which could be eliminated only by a long and laborious process of small adjustments; in other words, by that rational method of piecemeal engineering . . . those who dislike this method as insufficiently radical would have again to wipe out their freshly constructed society, in order to start anew with a clean canvas; and since the new start, for the same reasons, would not lead to perfection either, they would have to repeat this process without ever getting anywhere. Those who admit this and are prepared to adopt our more modest method of piecemeal improvements, but only after the first radical canvas-cleaning, can hardly escape the criticism that their first sweeping and violent measures were quite unnecessary.[211]

The process that Popper walks through is one that we have witnessed in both the democratization of Christianity and the way in which the American value for entrepreneurial efforts have influenced the way in which people choose to inhabit their faith in community. Congregations and spiritual entrepeneurs have set out, and broken away from institutional networks, sought forms of institutional autonomy only to find that they then create a new institutional network, and Popper's question, why they found it necessary for sweeping and violent measures, haunts their efforts and the landscape—*especially in overchurched communities*.

Thinking about reforming institutions as opposed to jettisoning them also reinforces Popper's concept of piecemeal engineering. When we recognize the interconnectivity of institutions and think through our inability to control our action (each action has secondary and tertiary effects and so on, and we cannot control the first action let alone the chain of follow on actions) we see the wisdom of making small moves within the living systems.

> Living systems are always embedded in complex social, cultural, and technological milieux that comprise multiple networks. All of these networks as well as their interrelations are, in different ways, information-processing systems, which when fully deployed are global: everything—absolutely everything—is entwined, enmeshed, interrelated, interconnected. Within these coevolving networks, different systems codetermine each other.[212]

As Taylor points out, "if the real world is a relational network, it cannot be comprehended through conceptual grids that create divisions and oppositions

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[211] Popper, *Open Society*, 1. 167-168.
[212] Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 343.

rather than linked connections." Our knowledge is constituted by "constantly changing interrelations that create greater complexity."[213] "Cognitive processes, therefore, are implicated in objects and events through recursive feedback loops that constantly reconfigure them."[214] This means that "there is no privileged access to a *hyperousios*, beyond the name of God, to some deep truth that arrests the play of traces in the text."[215] Here we do well to remember that for Derrida, whom Caputo is following and thinking with at this moment, everything is a text, including our institutions.

What is needed is not an absence of institutions, but better ways of inhabiting institutions. This is what Popper and Ricoeur point toward over the course of their careers. We cannot stop the fluidity of life. Seeking to maintain institutions according to older patterns will not work. These older institutional patterns cannot create chronotopes rooted in *Gelassenheit* that create an opening into which the praxis of polydoxy may emerge. In the words of a proverb attributed to Jesus: you cannot put new wine into old wineskins . . . and yet, we do not want to jettison the institutions. These tensions and their complexity are part of what makes Taylor's symbolic framing of the networks so very important for how congregations think about their institutional identity and role.

Polyfaithful parishes practicing polydoxy incarnate *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. They understand that "institutions tend to become the enemy of the very event they are supposed to embody, intent on preserving their own existence, even at the cost of the very purpose of their existence."[216] Yet they understand that the process is to reshape the institutions we have, to make them transformative networks of polycosmic sympoiesis. When this is not possible, rather than wiping the slate clean and starting again they can "choose other institutions or forms of organizations and orders at the margins."[217]

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[213] Taylor, *After God*, 30.
[214] Taylor, *After God*, 30.
[215] John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 34.
[216] Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?,* 136. See also Erving Goffman, who discusses how we do not do what we say we do, to capture the contradictory way they often carry out their existence.
[217] Marcella Althaus Reid, *The Queer God*, chapter five.

It is precisely this turn to the margins which offers the best options for our institutions and what makes polyfaithful congregations so promising. By inhabiting multiple traditions, they are simultaneously both/and and neither/nor. Their multiplicity brings them into the generative chronotopes of the margins wherein *creatio profundis* can occur as it hovers over and within the liquidity of the world. "Life is lived on the edge between order and chaos, difference and indifference, negentropy and entropy. This margin between figuring and disfiguring is the site or, more precisely, non-site of emergent creativity."[218] By inhabiting institutions in these marginal non-sites multi-denominational congregations recreate their constitutive institutions as "auto-deconstructive, self-correcting, removed as far as possible from the power games and rigid inflexibility of institutional life, where a minimal institutional architecture pushes to some optimal point, near but not all the way to anarchy, some point of creative 'chaosmos.'"[219]

Our journey through the networked institutional praxis of polydoxy has brought us to the place of negation where we must "learn to translate negative theology."[220] It is to the apophatic tradition that we now turn.

[218] Taylor, *After God*, 328.
[219] Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?,* 137.
[220] Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, 41.

Chapter five: Apophaticism

Within the polyfidelity of pluridenominational parishes "theology breaks into an indigenous multiplicity."[221] It is constituted as "a plenary continuum of others that is nonetheless riven by radical difference, giving rise to a pluripotent field of ethical relations."[222] This ethical move returns us to Wainwright's language of liturgical fallibility. If I am open (*Gelassenheit*) to the other, I am open to their truth.[223] I am open to the possibility that I am wrong. I am fallible and undone by the other.[224]

The approach of the infinite by the finite, has been worked out along the apophatic path. It is theological thinking that has found "within itself something which it *cannot* think, something which is both unthinkable and that which must be thought."[225] The way to think the unthinkable is negation. It is rooted both in Hebrew theology and Greek philosophy where the "invisibility of truth in the Hebrew religion is as axiomatic as its ineffability in Greek philosophy."[226] As Meister Eckhart put it: "What one says about God is not true; but what one does not express is true."[227]

There is an appeal within the apophatic tradition to silence. "Too many words drown out what is being said." "The voice of Being," or the voice of God, or the unknown voice, "is quiet, and so it can only be heard in quiet. The more words,

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[221] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 228.
[222] Donovan O. Schafer, "The Fault in Us: Ethics, Infinity, and Celestial Bodies," *Zygon*, 51.3 (September 2016): 787.
[223] Marianne Moayaert speaks of the awareness that others in their alterity "may relate to what is truthful, valuable, and good in a manner that surpasses the finitude of my own understanding." (*In Response to the Religious Other*, 45.)
[224] Judith Butler: "We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something.... One does not always stay intact. It may be that one wants to, or does, but it may also be that despite one's best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, but the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of touch, by the memory of the feel." *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 19. Brandy Daniels uses this sense of being undone to construct an apophatic "space for political transformation." "A Poststructuralist Liberation Theology?: Queer Theory & Apophaticism," in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 64.2-3 (2013): 108-117.
[225] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 192. Italicization in the original.
[226] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1971), 119.
[227] Cited in Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 117.

the less likely it is we shall hear Being's address. The only possibility of a 'response' (*Entsprechen*) to the silent peal of Being lies in keeping silent."[228]

Thus, apophasis "breaks speech open to a logos that exceeds it."[229] It is the path of negation, the language of *Gelassenheit*. It is quite simply, the language of polydoxy. In fact, one could argue that this entire project has been spiraling around the theme of the apophatic while not speaking the deep name of this dark abyss.

> In naming the desert of the Godhead, negative theology becomes itself a desert, a desertification, a kenosis, or self-emptying, which empties itself of every predicate or attribute of God, every accusative category, and this because God is *not* whatever we say God "is." Praying God to rid us of God, apophatic theology empties itself of god, because God is the *Gottheit* beyond God, and then of the Godhead, because God is an *Über-Gottheit*.[230]

All of our conversations have been moving toward, or around this topic, and so the goal is now to pull them all together. Moving through the theory of an apophatic faith, we will then move into the implications for the praxis of polydoxy.

Our turn to Troeltsch was not just for his church-sect-mysticism typology, as crucial as that was to our discussion of churches and congregations as institutions. Troeltsch was a part of the rise of the history of religions school in theology and religion. What Troeltsch argued was that we as human beings do not have access to the absolute, universal, except as we encounter it within the particular relative moments in history. It is a reinforcement of the Wainwright's point about the fallibility of the liturgy—its provisional nature. In another way the historical consciousness anticipates Lyotard's critique of metanarratives.

Otto's argument was that "religion is not exclusively contained and exhaustively comprised in any series of 'rational' assertions."[231] Holiness, the numinous, "completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts."[232] The encounter with the *mysterium tremendum* "strikes us dumb, amazement

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[228] Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 167. Caputo is working through Heidegger's thinking in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* here.
[229] Keller, "Theology's Multitude: Polydoxy Reviewed and Renewed," *Modern Theology*, 30.3 (July 2014): 131.
[230] Caputo, *Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, 45.
[231] Otto, 4.
[232] Otto, 5.

absolute." If fills the "mind with blank wonder and astonishment."[233] Holiness "relies on something quite different from anything that can be exhaustively rendered in rational concepts, namely, on the sheer absolute wondrousness that transcends thought, on the *mysterium*, presented in its pure, non-rational form."[234]

As Keller points out, "Mystery can turn to mystification, invitation to prohibition, boundlessness to boundary."[235] Certainly Otto may seem to get close to setting up boundaries and foreclosing options with his "knowledge of not-knowledge."[236] Yet I think he is not beyond redemption. But redemption is a radical project.

Pannenberg insists that theology must keep "as an open question and not decide in advance" any truth claims that it would seek to make.[237] We take this position farther recognizing that to be radical is not to be afraid for God.[238] Being radical means of necessity transgressing theology's own boundaries and becoming an "outlaw itself," to itself.[239] Like Fosdick, we become the Jesse James of our theological multiverse.

The apophatic path suggests that we cannot know God. It is not simply that God remains hidden, the infinity our finitude cannot grasp, but that God hides—chooses to hide, or remains hidden—what is revealed is a concealing (as we argued in chapter 3). The apophatic path points to a "dark place" where we "dare not actually go."[240] If our truth claims are open and we are not trying to protect God, then we may very well find ourselves "in a kind of night of truth, where the truth is less something I seek than something I cannot escape."[241]

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[233] Otto, 26.
[234] Otto, 79.
[235] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 60.
[236] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 61.
[237] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1*, trans.Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 50
[238] This sense of radical draws heavily on the work of Marcella Althaus Reid, some of which is already cited. It also draws on Katharine Sarah Moody, *Radical Theology an Emerging Christianity: Deconstruction, Materialism and Religions Practices* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015).
[239] Althaus Reid, "A Saint and a Church for Twenty Dollars," 111-113.
[240] Wesley J. Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable*, 138.
[241] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 284.

This being grasped echoes Tillich and Bultmann's emphatic articulation of the existential element to faith/theology. When we come to theology we "must look where that which concerns [us] ultimately is manifest."[242] The apophatic paths of wintry souls who know the dark night of the soul are paths of seriousness. Their very lives, the meaning of their lives, hang in the balance. When we think seriously, if we did not begin in apophatic attunement, we find ourselves being retuned.

Three articulations of the apophatic vision (Wildman, Keller, and Caputo)

> … when we think deeply and systematically about our situation and what it must mean about its fundamental nature, including divinity—in short, when we do serious theology—we always end up at roughly the same family of insights under various descriptions: we don't know much, we can't control much, we make things up to comfort ourselves, and we deny it all in amazingly sophisticated ways.[243]

Just a few lines earlier in this essay Wildman suggests that "God is present as absence, as the blissful source of love, as the abysmal undoing of us all, as the fecund depths from which every chaotic and creative force emerges."[244] As Keller told us, the ability to "abide the oscillation" of presence and absence "is to face the chaos."[245] It is to "no longer avoid" the questions we encounter in "the monsters of chaos."[246] We must even learn to "love the sea monsters and their chaos-matrix."[247] It is at that point that we realize when one turns "to God in prayer one must be willing in return to be overturned by God, to be submitted to an infinitely subversive turn in things, which destabilizes the present order."[248] In "the divine milieu" we find a "medium" or a "complex mean" in which "opposites, that do not remain themselves, cross over into each other and thus dissolve all original identity."[249] So, that would mean, as a more mature Wildman puts it

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[242] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I: Reason and Revelation, Being and God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 23.
[243] Wesley Wildman, "Theological Literacy: Problem and Promise," in *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Rodney L. Peterson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 342.
[244] Wildman, "Theological Literacy," 342.
[245] Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 153.
[246] Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 40.
[247] Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 28.
[248] Caputo, *Weakness of God*, 287
[249] Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 116.

"Luminescent creativity and abysmal suffering are co-primal in the divine nature as they are in our experience."[250]

> This God is not good in a humanly recognizable way, nor personal in character, yet when we defer in worship to this God despite its congruity with our anthropocentric ways of thinking, our minds are led higher to larger patterns and wider virtues in which suffering is no longer merely an unwanted side effect of otherwise wondrous physical processes but a creative source in its own right. This God is beautiful from a distance in the way that a rain forest is beautiful, but just as it is unpleasant for humans to live unprotected in a rain forest, so it is perilous to be in the direct presence of divine glory. We suffer there as well as surrender in bliss. The truth about this God is deeply disconcerting, not easily assimilated into our humanly configured cultural worlds and religious habits of thinking. Yet this is the truth that sears our souls, that awakens us again from our anthropomorphic theological slumbering, and that drives us to love that which destroys even as it creates.[251]

We want to follow this line of thinking, understanding that repetition "intensifies the difference it unfolds."[252] Operating from within the field of quantum physics and process theology/philosophy (a position with which Wildman is quite antagonistic) Catherine Keller reaches a position that represents a "non-separable difference, a relation of difference" to Wildman's. Although this "relation does require a repetition," the "differential relation is not a resemblance or a similarity nor a slide toward sameness."[253] In the repetition on the theme, we find that we are staying "open to the *ébranler*, the wavering and fluctuating," and keeping ourselves "ready for the fear and trembling, the anxiety by which" we "are shaken."[254]

> Field of fields, ground, *Ungrunt*, abyss, negative infinite, Hashem, possibility itself, the superimplicate or the supreme complication: it *is* not, cannot be identified as the personal God. Indeed it cannot be identified, only darkly suggested, with nick-names that widen the apophatic opening. Especially in the hazy fold between physics and theology, any language of God the Person, the Being, will shut down conversation.[255]

Within this fold Keller is suggesting "God is process, but not the only one. The process God, then, is neither transcendent creator," and specifically contra-

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[250] Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable*, 62.
[251] Wildman, *Effing the Ineffable*, 61.
[252] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 194.
[253] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 177.
[254] Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 12
[255] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 164.

Wildman's vision, "nor indifferent Creativity." What Keller sees, as she enters into the Cusan cloud of unknowing, as she does serious theology, is that when God is process, God is "a consequence of creativity."[256]

Returning to Whitehead Keller suggests that "God is not the first cause or the hidden reason behind what happens." Preferring the process suggestion of God as lure, we can understand "'God's immanence in the world . . . is an urge towards the future based upon an appetite in the present.' God as this appetite, this eros, makes possible and urges the actualization of possibilities but does not actually *perform* them."[257] In this movement, Keller invites another repetition to differentiate the apophatic entanglement. This repetition picks up on these themes in difference as we turn to Caputo's *Weakness of God*.

> I treat God, not as an eminent omnipotent onto-power capable of leveling tall buildings and reducing his enemies (no need for gender-neutral language here) to ashes, but as the weak force of a call. If pressed by the Lord Cardinal, His Eminence the Grand Inquisitor, to say what then God "is," I would nervously defer because I prefer to say not that God "is" but that God "calls," that God promises, not from beyond being but from below, without being or sovereignty.[258]

As Caputo goes on here, he suggests that the "name of God harbors an unconditional appeal without the sovereign force to enforce it. God is without being, of unconditional import and the stuff of unconditional desire."[259] God as event, as "a call from below being to what is beyond" calling "us forth to what is promised up ahead, and" calling "us back to the long-forgotten" is not disinterested for Caputo.[260]

> The name of God, the word of God, the event that is astir in this name, is the call to goodness, beyond or below or without being. God is an event, not in the order of power or being, but in the order of the good, the order of the order or command or call or appeal for the good, which calls for the good even when, especially when, things are going badly.[261]

Wildman would not accept Caputo's weak God. He would see this attribution of goodness as a projection. Caputo's God as the event of the call is similar to the idea found in process theology that God lures—persuades, never coerces. Yet

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[256] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 189.
[257] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 190
[258] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 38;
[259] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 38.
[260] Caputo, *The Weakness of God,* 13.
[261] Caputo, *The Weakness of God, 53.*

there is still difference between Caputo and Keller (although they seem much more harmonious with each other than Wildman is with either of them). "Although there is considerable overlap and compatibility between these three [thinkers], they are nevertheless irreducible to one another."[262] It is as if they are walking "in the same direction, following different paths."[263] The irreducibility of their differences reveal the complexity of what is concealed in its revealing. Their paths offer us ways into the complexity and provide the orientation to make our own way in the entangled intricacy of the apophatic. For all of their irreducible difference it is this point toward which they move. We must make our own way—although we do not have to go on our own. It is always better to go together, networked and networking in polycosmic sympoiesis.

Keller cites Bertrand Russell to make the point that living within the apophatic chronotope we must learn "how to live without certainty, and yet without being paralyzed by hesitation."[264] As Wildman puts it, we must choose. The "fulcrum for human moral action" is located within "human decision."[265] Caputo suggests that "the truth of the event releases us from the order of names and transports us to another level, where truth does not mean learning a name but making truth come true, making it happen."[266] Following Mark Wallace, Keller speaks of a "performative truth."[267] This performative truth is situated within truth as process wherein "the fluidity of the process" means "we cannot possess," the truth, "neither in propositions nor in practices, neither in creeds nor in prayers. We belong within it. It does not belong to us."[268] Yet, by being in truth and performing truth we "transform our reality."[269]

As opposed to being paralyzed between the dichotomy of absolutes or relative nihilism Keller holds out the option of resolution. Here, "undecidability is a

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[262] Robbins, *Radical Theology*, chapter three.
[263] Walter Mignolo, cited in Robbins, *Radical Theology*, chapter three.
[264] Keller, *Cloud of the Unknowing*, 26.
[265] Wildman, *In Our Own Image*, 210. The same passage appears in *Effing the Ineffable*, 49.
[266] Caputo, *Weakness of God*, 299.
[267] Keller, *On the Mystery*, 43.
[268] Keller, *On the Mystery*, 33.
[269] Keller, *On the Mystery*, 43.

condition of choice, not an excuse for staying on the sidelines."[270] Perhaps at this point we would do well to return to Kierkegaard.

Leaps

Circa 1840 Kierkegaard provided us with *Fear and Trembling*, published pseudonymously under the name Johannes de Silentio. Beginning with a reflection on Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac on mount Moriah, Kierkegaard begins to flesh out the knight of faith. The knight of faith must make a leap of faith. Faith cannot be learned. It is paradoxical. "Faith is preceded by a movement of infinity; only then does faith commence, *nec opinate* [unexpected], by virtue of the absurd."[271]

In the leap of faith, Kierkegaard repeats the enfoldment of resolution. Insofar, as this leap is one of "infinite resignation," it returns us to the non-volitional *Gelassenheit*, letting be.[272] The paradoxical movement of faith does not actually mean to "renounce anything."[273] The "courage of faith" takes "a paradoxical and humble courage to grasp the whole temporal realm by virtue of the absurd."[274]

As Tillich points out, in Kierkegaard the "leap" appears as a doctrine.[275] As doctrine "leap is simply another word for paradox."[276] For Tillich the paradox par excellence is in the event of Christ "the appearance of that which conquers existence under the conditions of existence."[277] Thus for Kierkegaard the leap is "into the reality of the Christ."[278] This leap into the paradoxical reality of Christ "is objective uncertainty and personal, passionate experience or subjective certainty."[279] Can we see resolution in this leap as the paradox of possibility that emerges between the false binary choices of the absolute and the dissolute?[280]

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[270] Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics: On not Knowing Who We Are* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 237.
[271] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 69.
[272] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 45.
[273] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 48.
[274] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 49
[275] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 464.
[276] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 471.
[277] Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, 57.
[278] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 471.
[279] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 470.
[280] Keller, *On the Mystery*, 173-176.

Tillich suggests that Kierkegaard's religious writings "are as valid today as they were when they were first written." He also suggests that among the other reasons for Kierkegaard's continuing relevance is his inspiration of dialectical theology and Heidegger.[281] It is in this inspiration of Heidegger that we find the doctrine of the leap not only enlightening the existential engagement of our apophatic resolution. Insofar as "the leap into the abandonment by being" is the only way to reach "be-ing" we find the leap as a leap into the hiddenness and absence we have been rehearsing throughout this project.[282] Insofar as the leap "is projecting open- the essential sway of be-ing to the utmost," we find the leap of apophatic resolution as an enactment of *Gelassenheit*.[283] Finally, insofar as enowning, is a way of saying *Ereignis*, of naming the event, Heidegger brings us back to the flux and multiplicity of Cratylus and Heraclitus's swirling watery tehomic chaos-matrix. "The leap" Heidegger writes, "gives rise to preparedness for belongness to enowning."[284] An enowning which is "the swaying of be-ing itself."[285] And finally, we are reminded that enownment, or en-ownment, is "to *own* the domain of decision."[286]

We have returned to the event, the event qua *Ereignis*. It is no longer a consumable. It is an event in which we encounter the name of God, Hashem, "an event that comes calling at our door, which can and must be translated into the event of hospitality."[287] This event prevents us from accepting that community "is nowadays another name for paradise lost."[288] The holiness—experience of the *mysterium tremendum*—of the event is experienced not in failing to participate

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[281] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 460.
[282] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 172.
[283] Heidegger, Contributions to Philosophy, 163.
[284] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 166. Enowning is the "approximation" more than a translation of *Ereignis*. "Above all it is the prefix *en-* in this word that opens the possibility for approximating *Ereignis*, insofar as this prefix conveys the sense of 'enabling,' 'bringing into condition of,' or 'welling up of.' Thus, in conjunction with *owning*, this prefix is capable of getting across a sense of an 'owning' that is not an 'owning of something.' . . . is a 'going all the way into and through' *without possessing*. . . . the always ongoing movement 'in' and 'through' without coming to rest in a 'property' or possession.'" (xx) *Ereignis* is also an event or happening, although when Caputo uses "Event of Appropriation," we can see why Emad and Parvis used enowning. (Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 4.)
[285] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 6.
[286] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 161.
[287] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 269.
[288] Bauman, *Community*, 3.

actively in the life of one's community, but through dissent, though demanding that we see the world differently.[289] It is to that vision that we turn as we conclude this journey.

[289] Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, chapter nine.

Conclusion: House Hunting in Heterotopia

Apophatic entanglement creates an opening into which we leap—accepting our responsibility. The praxis of polydoxy emerges within this open through a critical polycosmic sympoiesis. The perichoretic movement of theory and praxis progresses through silence and speech, rest and action, introduction and withdrawal. Accepting that "all thinking demands a stop-and-think," we do well to pause in this moment.[290] As we saw in the conclusion of our previous chapter, the praxis of polydoxy in and through apophatic entanglement is the practice of paradox. "To learn the practice of paradox, the difficult discipline of waiting until undecidability lifts enough to decide in the face of ambiguities which remain, requires 'a head of wisdom.'"[291] This "epistemology of wisdom" is cultivated in and "serves the endlessness of counter-apocalypse."[292]

Given the choice of neo-apocalypses and anti-apocalypse, Keller claims "the space of a counter-apocalypse." The counter-apocalyptic move is dis/closive in ways that mirror *Gelassenheit*. The open of the open as a dis/closive counter-apocalypse avoids "the closure of the world," keeping it open.[293]

As Keller points out, the counter-apocalyptic *Stimmung* seeks "patterns of possibility" with a "topical eschatology" that finds "vital space" in the "potentiality at the edge of (our) time where place comes to life."[294] Typically these places, have been no-places, utopias, a reality of which Keller is all too well aware.

In the fall of 1975 Paul Ricoeur gave a series of lectures that followed Karl Mannheim's work in *Ideology and Utopia*. In those lectures Ricoeur traces ideology through Marx, Althusser, Manheim, Weber, Habermas and Geertz, before turning to utopia. In Ricoeur's analysis "ideology and utopia converge finally on one fundamental problem: the opaque nature of power."[295] The

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[290] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 78.
[291] Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 271.
[292] Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 271l
[293] Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 19.
[294] Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 173.
[295] Ricoeur, *Ideology and Utopia*, 309.

difference is that "ideology is the surplus-value added to the lack of belief in authority, utopia is what unmasks this surplus value."[296] The "main value of utopias" lies in their ability to reveal "the contingency of order." "At a time when everything is blocked by systems which have failed but which cannot be beaten—this is my pessimistic appreciation of our times—utopia is our resource."[297]

Marcella Althaus-Reid uses utopias precisely in this sense. She argued that the "prescriptive Christology, of a closed order . . . served us to order the past, and give an identity to the Christian community." The problem with this closure and identity of the same was that it "fixed the horizon of the future and closed the doors many times to new collective utopias."[298] She proscribes a "construction of a utopia of the Reign of God" through a "process of christological re-symbolization."[299] This "critical Christology" is "a theology of difference."[300]

The problem with utopia is that it is not a place. It is literally a no-place, a nothingness, promising *creatio ex nihilo*; and if we have learned anything from postmodernity, it is that we always stand somewhere. We think from a particular chronotope, and even if we imagine utopia, it is in an imaginary born out of that chronotope. We create from places—some of deep profundity, some of shallow thoughtlessness—not from nowhere and nothing. Although we would always be wise to avoid literalism, the significance of utopian no-place has a far deeper semiotic significance. It is better to work to change from this place, some place, any place, somewhere else even.

Toward this end, Keller's counter-apocalyptic approach leads us into the practice of polydoxy precisely as it resists utopian thinking "configuring instead

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[296] Ricoeur, *Ideology and Utopia*, 298.
[297] Ricoeur, *Ideology and Utopia*, 300.
[298] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 58.
[299] Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, 58.
[300] Althaus-Reid, 45. This theology of difference is "a human and divine discourse which is essentially feminine" where "Christ" is "stripped of his masculinity." I agree with Althaus-Reid, that it is "by liberating women and finding their identity, the whole community of men and women will transform itself at spiritual, political and economic levels." (59) This project is rooted in the theological work and vision of Althaus-Reid.

the complexity of a communing polyphony."[301] Throughout her work in the apocalyptic imaginary Keller continues to emphasize the importance of place. Although we are reading her backward, the move from *creatio ex nihilo* to an erasure of all that is (however it is apocalyptically imagined), makes matter and bodies (terrestrial and fleshy) irrelevant. Refusing to accept this irrelevance, redemption in this counter-apocalyptic chronotope is more like recycling, wherein what is used-up, spent, and dirty is made new, restored, refurbished. The retrieval is more than merely the retro images or products, in which the new often appears old, even as the old is replaced. Redemption is a return and a repetition, where the old is made new without being destroyed. Configuring a polyphonic community where *contraria contrariis curantur* happens precisely because we choose not the path of the schismatic, the sectarian, but we choose to stay in this place, with these people. What would happen then and there?

Heterotopia

If what is needed is the "subversion of the political and social discourses of our society" that "challenges the symbolic structures of oppression," in "a new aesthetic of rupture with an authoritarian discourse," then is it possible that we can go beyond the limits of utopian hope in a pantopian vision of difference that seeks the emergence of difference in every place?[302] I believe that such a way exists, and we might call such a chronotope heterotopia (which is another way of saying a communing polyphony, or the praxis of polydoxy within polyrepresentational parishes).

Heterotopia chooses to root its thinking in this world, this place. It seeks to identify the difference that rejects monolithic ideology on the one hand and false dichotomies and binaries on the other. It seeks to find possibilities in the present that emerge from difference (natality). Heterotopia accepts utopia's commitment to make the world better, but it does not accept a vision of an inevitable future. Heterotopia invents the future "from within the disjunctive of an ununifiable

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[301] Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 275. Keller sets up counter-apocalyptic thinking against "the binary of utopia and individualism," not just utopian thinking here. Given the time and space this could be worked back to ideology and utopia.
[302] Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, 58-59.

present."[303] Where utopian thinking is founded on hope, heterotopia is compatible with hopelessness and is able to be articulated in Sysophian resolve and existential commitment. Heterotopia's focus on the here and now, the emergence of difference in this kairotic chronotope, allows it pantopic possibilities that are not contingent on naïveté but make it compatible in both the horizons of critical realism and protreptic imagination.[304] By creating a rupture in the appearance of the same that allows the recognition and participation of the different, heterotopia "permanently opens a project of being in the world, according to our historical circumstances."[305] Heterotopia teaches us that sometimes we find love in a hopeless place. Where utopia is no place, heterotopia emerges in all places where multiplicity and difference find an opening in which they can appear.

Circa 2013 Tanya van Wyk suggested, much as I am here, that the church can exist "as heterotopia." Like Judith Butler, and Catherine Keller, van Wyk argues that utopian thinking is problematic insofar as it operates within binary thinking—a binary thinking from which we must escape. The *ekklesia* as heterotopia is able to become a chronotope in which "there are no binary opposites."[306] If utopia is "the function of the nowhere," heterotopia chooses, with a head of wisdom, amidst the ambiguities of life, to construct a counter-apocalypse here and now.[307] It seeks to create "an elsewhere," where else, where anything else is found "not as utopian fantasy or relativist escape, but an elsewhere born out of the hard (and sometimes joyful) work of getting on together."[308]

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[303] Ross Abbinnett, *Culture and Identity* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc., 2003), 177.
[304] At this point heterotopia follows Derrida's theory of culture wherein "There is no culture or cultural identity without this difference *with itself*. A strange and slightly violent syntax: 'with itself' also means 'at home (with itself)'. In his case, self difference . . . , that which differs and diverges from itself, would also be the *difference (from) with itself*, a difference at once internal and irreducible to the 'At home (with itself)'. In truth, it would gather this centre, relating it to itself, only to the extent that it would open it up to this divergence. Jacque Derrida, *The Other Heading*, trans. Pscale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Nass (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 9-10. Cited in Abbinnett, 203, where Abbinnett speaks of "a certain inescapable difference from itself" that structurally informs culture.
[305] Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, 18.
[306] Van Wyk, 7.
[307] Ricoeur, *Ideology and Utopia*, 310.
[308] Donna Haraway, cited in Rubenstein, *Pantheologies*, 135.

As it so happens, heterotopia, as a concept within which we choose to think, comes from Foucault—or sends us back to Foucault, which amounts to much the same reality. For Foucault, heterotopias were real places. They were prisons, ships, monasteries, gardens, brothels and other places. They are "spaces of alternative ordering."[309] We can see from these examples how heterotopias provide "escape routes from the norm."[310] Furthermore, these "unsettling spaces" are chronotopes in which "a certain type of resistance-practice becomes possible or takes place."[311] "These spaces are threatening to the order of things, whilst simultaneously necessary for the establishment of a *new* order."[312] Insofar as "Heterotopias can be understood as real experiments in thinking and being differently, lived in the present," they can be seen as forms of Popper's piecemeal engineering. They "effect a rupture in the current order of things" from within the current order, from the onetimeness of the historical moment. Heterotopia is home to Keller's counter-apocalyptic and Althaus-Reid's dissenting holiness.[313]

The reality of heterotopias means that these experiments take on institutional forms. They are constructed to exist in the present in a way that takes up the "fluid dynamics" of our modern liquidity. At the conclusion of *After God*, Mark C. Taylor turns to the "ethical issue of water."[314] The conversation is situated within the horizon of global warming. He thinks through the pollution of the water and the change in water as glaciers melt all while keeping in the forefront of our minds the reality that water is "not only creative but can also be destructive."[315] One hears echoes in the deep fluidity of the prophetic commission to destroy and overthrow, to build and plant.[316] It is precisely in this place of where we see the fluidity of emergence. Taylor argues that emergence does not follow a

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[309] Angharad E. Beckett, Paul Bagguley and Tom Campbell, "Foucault, social movements and heterotopic horizons: rupturing the order of things," in *Social Movement Studies*, 16.2 (2017): 170.
[310] Beckett, et al., 172.
[311] Beckett, et al., 172.
[312] Beckett, et al., 174.
[313] Which is to say that I wish she were still with us and that my critique of her use of "utopia" is friendly. I am thinking with Althaus-Reid, in the direction of her thinking, in the *Gelassenheit* or *Lichtung* opened up by her thinking—not against her.
[314] Taylor, *After God*, 359.
[315] Taylor, After God, 367.
[316] Jeremiah 1.10.

heteronomous law and goes beyond mere autonomy in an endosymbiotic and sympoietic theonomy. Here is where we see that as a theonomous process life generating emergence "is always in some ways aleatory. The aleatory event disturbs, disrupts and dislocates patterns to create different figures that constitute new organisms."[317] It is at this point that Taylor's project reminds us of Caputo's vision that calls us "to stop thinking about God as a massive ontological power line that provides power to the world," and instead to think "of something that short-circuits such power and provides a provocation of the world that is otherwise than power."[318] It is precisely in these moments of disruption and short-circuiting rooted elsewhere and not nowhere that emergence occurs through "a certain destruction."[319] "Creative emergence occurs along the margin of neither/nor: neither too much nor too little order, neither too much nor too little disorder."[320]

Returning to the ethics of water we see that through the emergence of institutions just at the edge of chaos we are able to create homes as it were. We need shelter and places to live. So we build houses we can "live in for a while." They are not permanent, or forever. They are shelters for the swaying of our being here in the matrix of multiplicity where we can keep the "windows partly open and the doors ajar." These homes would become prisons if we were no longer able to "come and go" or "add a room or take one away."[321] "To live within the confines of the expected, which seems to provide stability, security, and certainty, is to be dead even when alive; to be exposed to the unexpected"—to difference in heterotopia—"is to be open to the chance of life—and of death."[322]

As Bauman suggests our world is one defined by liquidity. We may not like this. The liquidity may not be healthy for us. It may be more destructive than creative. Yet it is precisely within this liquidity that sites of heterotopia through

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[317] Taylor, *After God*, 342.
[318] Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 13.
[319] Taylor, *After God*, 342
[320] Taylor, *After God*, 339-340.
[321] Sallie McFague, *Models of God*, 27. Cited in Dorrien, *The Word as True Myth*, 221.
[322] Taylor, *After God*, 345

their substance can increase the viscosity of our liquid life. Maybe the way we can name this process is through the locution of fluidity.

Heterotopia creates sites of emergence through autopoietic, autotelic processes that are renewed through the depth of theonomy. In this way they are always already sympoietic. On the one hand, heterotopia is the chronotope par excellence that makes the praxis of polydoxy possible. On the other, simultaneously, chronotopes of heterotopia are created through the counter-apocalyptic practice of polydoxy. All of this occurring in the multiplicity of relation that occurs in the *ekklesia* where we are called together, called out, called on—a calling that often echoes when we come to the water and embrace its fluidity to mark us and our lives.

Radicality

We started this project with the question of orthodoxy, asking if there was not a better way. The argument was that polydoxy is a more honest and liberative term. In conversations with pastors in multidenominational congregations, augmented by looking in and eavesdropping on other similar congregations, listening to sermons, reading newsletters, and reading additional research in the field, I have sought to work through a phenomenology of the praxis of polydoxy. This praxis is rooted in an entangled apophatic, that is itself enfolded in and enfolds a *Stimmung* of *Gelassenheit*. These two enfolded *Stimmung* find their expressions in the liturgical practice of these congregations and their institutional embodiment.

At several points we have taken a turn toward radicality. This should not have been surprising. We were using, or borrowing, radical hermeneutics and more radical hermeneutics. If in this recycled repetition the original radicality remains as a free radical with robust reactivity, I could not be more pleased.

I know that radicals bring discomfort. Free radicals can be "expected to produce adverse changes . . . manifested as diseases."[323] Why would we want to preserve them? Wouldn't we be better off if we detoxed? Wouldn't our public

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[323] V. Lobo, A. Patil, A. Phatak, and N. Chandra, "Free Radicals, Antioxidants and functional foods: Impact on human health," in *Pharmacognosy Review*. 4.8 (Jul-Dec 2010), https://doi.org/10.4103/0973-7847.70902. Accessed September 27, 2020.

spaces be better without the extreme elements? But, then again, isn't it actually that our freest and most radical have opened and transformed our public spaces into vital chronotopes?

It is never simple—always complex and ambiguous. For starters, "the radical message comes packaged in the Christian-conference-publishing-celebrity-industrial-complex."[324] It not only sells, it is a best seller. We consume radicality. In the liquidity of our modernity, the radical as the new and extreme—"Tonight, for the first time ever, bigger, better, faster, more super than anything . . ."—is anything but. If there is an appeal to radicality at this point it is not to increase the sex appeal of this project. To be radical, theologically speaking, "is not to engage in self-styled posing but to align and engage with an identifiable tradition of thought."[325]

Along a different trajectory, Mary-Jane Rubenstein traces "the lineage of 'radical theologians' . . . from Bonhoeffer and Tillich through Altizer, Hamilton, and Vahanian; Taylor, Raschke, and Wyshogrod; and Westphal, Kearney, and Caputo" to Crockett and Robbins.[326] The radicality of this lineage is different than that of Platt, Chan and Claiborne, referenced by Anderson—who criticizes the radical literature associated with Claiborne for neglecting the theme of the absence of God.[327] I do not think anyone will accuse this project of underrepresenting absence. Nor would they then criticize those in Rubenstein's lineage. As Anderson writes, the underrepresentation of divine absence in the best-selling literature of radicality is so very disappointing for its overrepresentation in the real lived lives of people.[328] It is this experience that has caused us to ground this project in radical hermeneutics, which in turn now informs our understanding of radicality.

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[324] Matthew Lee Anderson, "Here come the radicals!: David Platt, Francis Chan, Shane Claiborne, and now Kyle Idleman are dominating the Christian best seller lists by attacking our comfortable Christianity: but is 'radical' faith enough?" in *Christianity Today*, 57.2 (Mar 2013), 25
[325] Robbins, *Radical Theology*, introduction.
[326] Mary-Jane Rubenstein, "The Rebirth of the Death of God: Radical Theology Politicized, Political Theology Radicalized, and Radical Politics Theologized in the Work of Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey Robbins," in *Comparative and Continental Philosophy,* 4.2 (Nov 2012): 274.
[327] Anderson, 23.
[328] Anderson, 23.

Radical hermeneutics "makes no claim to have won a transcendental high ground or to have a heavenly informer."[329] For radical thinking "everything rises slowly from below, is formed and reformed and remains subject always to discreditation . . ."[330] Could we even repeat at this point that radical thinking recycles? At this level, the kind of radicality I am thinking of, is rooted in the soil of apophaticism like a radish.

For projects like this one, radicality is realized in an attunement to the reality that "God is always and everywhere, in all the epochs, essentially withdrawn from the world . . ."[331] Jeffrey Robbins roots this radicality in Bonhoeffer's challenge (which echoes Rahner's challenge) "to live in the world without the working hypothesis of God."[332] Having entertained this argument in much greater depth earlier in this project, I want to move on to the implications for the church as heterotopia.

Daniel Peterson echoes these moves toward divine absence as constitutive of radicality insofar as being radical leads to rejoicing "in the shattering of otherworldly, vertical transcendence for the sake of finding the 'Beyond in our midst," as Dietrich Bonhoeffer would say."[333] He goes on to state that radical Christians make "a wager for the world by seeking the presence of Christ here instead of in heaven."[334] Radical thinking does not "try to situate itself above the flux or to seek a way out of *physis*." What it does is "to get up the nerve to stay with it."[335] Here Tillich's radicality—the very kind of radicality I am seeking to embody—is seen in his risking "tracing out God's transcendence so deep in the fabric of existence (at times, even in the abyss) that the meaning of 'transcendence' [is] stretched beyond recognition."[336] It is precisely in this

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[329] Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 3.
[330] Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics,* 4.
[331] Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 279.
[332] Robbins, *Radical Theology*, "Conclusion."
[333] Daniel J. Peterson, "Paul Tillich and the Death of God: Breaking the Confines of Heaven and Rethinking the Courage to Be," in *Retrieving the Radical Tillich: His Legacy and Contemporary Importance*, ed. Russell Re Manning (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 32.
[334] Peterson, 32.
[335] Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 3.
[336] Mark Taylor, citer in Peterson, 38. See also Rubenstein, *Pantheologies*, 180. Rubenstein working with Tillich's concept of God as the ground of being—which is also central to Wildman's

stretching of transcendence that the chronotope of heterotopia displaces and replaces utopia in all of its immanence.

In a counter apocalyptic move this vision of God "works from the 'bottom-up' as the wellspring of life and the renewal of being that appears in nature and history."[337] There is no need to destroy creation in order to get a new creation. "Rethinking Tillich in radical terms" opens up a clearing within which creation is not seen or apprehended as "an echo or the afterthought of a victory God has achieved eternally; it is the context in which the dialectical unfolding of the divine life shares our fate and reconciles itself to itself through us instead of beyond us."[338]

It is in this threefold way that the practice of polydoxy is radical. It transforms and recycles the chronotopes of our lives, creating heterotopias "wherein utopia becomes visible and tangible, real and traceable."[339] Perhaps within these heterotopias free radicals may not cause disease so much as reveal it. After all, proper physiological function results from free radicals being present in equipoise, not in their absence.[340] Through *contraria contrariis curantur* perhaps we can recycle, rebuild and regrow. If we can foster the emergence of congregations as heterotopias—as I would suggest some of the communities behind this project have—I believe we might just find redemption in all of our recycling.

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project—reaches a similar conclusion, although she focuses on the inconsistency of Tillich's thinking while lifting up its trajectory toward immanence.

[337] Peterson, 38. We do not have the time or space here to fully incorporate Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Pantheologies: Gods, Worlds, Monsters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). That is unfortunate and one of the detriments of this project.

[338] Peterson, 44.

[339] Van Wyk,4.

[340] V. Lobo et al.

Appendix: A Summary of the Research

As has been alluded to several times throughout this project, this project is situated in line with a series of projects that have been completed at Drew University over the years. There have been at least three major works done by students at Drew University on federated congregations, and if one includes the minor works, at least five. These projects were primarily undertaken under the tutelage of Ralph Felton. The focus of their work was on rural churches.

This project has sought to focus its gaze on difference. We have seen the rural setting of some of the congregations, yet we have allowed the rural or urban settings to create the horizon or opening into which the practice of polydoxy in polyrepresentational parishes could emerge, revealing and concealing the phenomena. This project is rooted in the Drewid chronotope shaped both by Felton and the "dis/closive space" opened up in the thinking of Catherine Keller "that can be inhabited but not enclosed." Keller arrived at Drew circa 1986. She came from Claremont and is associated with John Cobb and the school of Process Theology. Her work provides an exceedingly expansive intersectionality that referring to her only as a process theologian would be so reductionistic that it would be misrepresentative and lead ultimately to misunderstanding her work. She remains in process as she thinks in apophatic, counter-apocalyptic, and tehomic registers that, pending a major failure on my part, should have come through in this project.

This project has sought to perform a phenomenological exploration of the practice of polydoxy with a particular focus on congregations with plural denominational identities. Following John Cobb, who has argued against the division of intellectual work into disciplines; Pierre Bourdieu who argued for the integration of theory and practice; and the feminist acknowledgement that one of the best ways to recover those who have been silenced through erasure is to allow the lives of those historically silenced to serve as equally, if not more important, texts in one's work.

This phenomenology of the praxis of polydoxy is examined from multiple angles. The first lies behind the work in this project. It comes from many years

ministering as a local pastor and as a chaplain in federal institutions, where as a "Protestant Chaplain" I am leading services for congregations that contain much diversity and multiplicity. Although chaplains will often lead worship in the manner and form of their tradition, I have always found it important to practice a radical hospitality—*Gelassenheit*—to those with theological differences. At the same time I have often found the chronotopes of chapels to be sites wherein there are battles to establish a reigning orthodoxy.

This personal frame opened up a space, a clearing, into which the phenomena of a practice of ministry shaped by polydoxy could emerge. To this end, much of the relevant literature has been reviewed. This work and the contours of the phenomena should be readily apparent within the preceding work.

Finally, I spoke with several people who inhabit the praxis of polydoxy within their ministries. These are all religious leaders who are working within congregations of multiple identities as detailed within the introduction of this work.

I contacted approximately 40 Congregations. Sixteen of the pastors were responsive. I then did interviews with the clergy and a very small number of laity; logging over 60 hours of interviews. Three of the congregations represented were Local Ecumenical Partnerships from England. Included was a congregation that is Methodist, United Reformed, Church of England, and Baptist. Seven churches were federated congregations. The central congregation here being The Federated Church of Marlborough, New Hampshire, which is affiliated with the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church and the Universalist Unitarian Association.

Finally, Trinity Church in Austin, Texas, is a Union Church, sharing some similarities with the Cambourne LEP wherein they do not count denominational identity but all members are hypostatically simultaneously UCC and UMC. They represented a unique example as their multiplicity was derived not from unification but from an existential demand to become more differentiated.

The themes that emerged from these conversations formed the structure of this project. These structural themes then provided a sheltering within which the profundity of the field could emerge and play. With a perichoretic understanding

that form and substance are mutually formative the two approaches provided a "polycosmic sympoiesis" of the phenomena of the praxis of polydoxy.

Like all projects this one was always already under way, and does not reach an end so much as an open-ended invitation to begin again. There is a responsibility, certainly as response and echo, to the work we have done. On the one hand, if the phenomena that signify the praxis of polydoxy emerged from ecclesial heterotopic chronotopes, can they be signs that would guide those seeking these practices into an opening wherein the swaying of their being would move from possibility to actuality? Perhaps, those signs were too implicit and subtle.

Heidegger liked to talk about thinking as if one were making paths, finding trails in the woods. Perhaps this is why he liked the image of the clearing so much. The signs in this project would allow those seeking an embodied praxis of polydoxy to "walk in the same direction, following different paths." It encourages them to embrace erring where they wander, roam and deviate "from the right or intended course." In echoes from Luther and Daly they are invited to sin boldly, "missing the mark."[341]

The praxis of polydoxy can be inhabited in a variety of ways. One of the arguments made here, based on my research, is that the most congenial phenomenon is the attunement of apophatic theology. This is followed in importance by the cultivation of the attunement of *Gelassenheit*. To this we can add a review of all of the other elements of this project: such as finding innovative ways to inhabit institutions, developing multicentered practices of worship, focusing on immanent ways of transforming the world (heterotopia instead of utopia, radical theology). Again, these particular phenomena can be incorporated in near infinite ways by errant wanderers seeking the praxis of polydoxy.

Insofar as this project focused on bringing theological diversity into view it retained a theoretical dimension even in its focus on praxis. I do not think of this

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[341] Taylor, Erring, 12: "Erring, then is wandering, roaming; deviating from the right or intended course; missing the mark." "To saunter is to travel about aimlessly and unprofitably. The wanderer moves to and fro, hither and thither, with neither fixed course nor certain end. Such wandering is erring—erring in which one not only roams, roves and rambles but also strays, deviates and errs. Free from every secure dwelling, the unsettled, undomesticated wanderer is always unsettling and uncanny." (150)

as a weakness of the project. As we said early on: theology matters for the life and health of our churches. Learning to think well together is good for our churches.

The other way in which this project calls us to be responsible to the work that has been done calls for to sketch out a few of the possible chrontopes for a *creatio profundis* within this multiverse. Within the limits of the chronotope of this project we did not reflect on multiple religious belonging. That would be the first place to correct a deficit, or oversight of the current project.

In a more expansive horizon, this project kept alluding to W. Paul Jones and the worlds within congregations. I think, given the resources, it would be useful to spend time looking at how various traditions exist as multiverses that make the practice of polydoxy possible. My hunch is that these would exist on a spectrum with all making the practice of polydoxy possible in one way or another. How does Unitarian Universalism or the Society of Friends provide openings into which the praxis of polydoxy can emerge? What about other denominations and faith traditions?

Finally, several times I found my writing getting carried along by the reality of mainline Protestantism in the United States and the failure of COCU. How can federated churches and the praxis of polydoxy inform visions for these institutions? Is it possible that they can show a way into heterotopias instead of empty annihilating utopias and dystopias? What would happen if work toward unity sought not so much agreement but a way to live together with differences? Could we find an *ekklesia* where *contraria contrariis curantur*?

Acknowledgements

My work has suggested that institutions are important. So I am ever mindful of the institutions I inhabit and within whose shelter this project has been completed. I am grateful to the Drew Theological School at Drew University and the space it has provided me to do this work. I was particularly struck time and again of the ways in which this project took up the work of Ralph Felton and those who studied with him within the shelter of this institution years before the possibility of my inhabiting this chronotope even began to take shape.

Most Doctor of Ministry programs are situated within one's immediate setting. I am grateful for those who could see the application of an aspirational project, looking more and where one might go than where one was or had been. To that end this project depended on the kindness of strangers. To those who took time, or who at some point at least were willing to make time I am forever grateful. This project could never have even gotten off the ground without the time, hospitality and vulnerability of Olivia Coles, Deborah Hoffman, Bill Ketchum, Matt Orendorf, Sid Hall, Bill Miller, Laura Barnes, Joseph Shore-Gross, Charles Mather, Brennen Guillory, David and Natalie Moon-Wainwright, Shawnthea Monroe, Laura Kyle, Jack Acri, Deborah Haffner Hubbard and Kathleen Clark.

Another aspect of these projects is the context consultation committee. Once again, I ventured into a chronotope that created its context, found its event horizon beyond those people and place of my quotidian life world. I am truly humbled and forever grateful to John Young, Susan Maginn, and Margaret Rose for agreeing to be in this context and helping me think about this project.

I was unaware of Ralph Felton and those who studied with him when I came to Drew. I have been reading Catherine Keller for decades and wanted to share a chronotope and think with her. Before such a reality was assured, when decisions had to be made Kate Ott and Susan Kendall were ever gracious and revealed to me just how wonderful and rich the community at Drew was. To Javier Riviera who heard me and approached Professor Keller on my behalf and offered hope, I am truly grateful.

As this project was getting underway, Meredith Hoxie Schol came in to shepherd the program. I am truly grateful for her empathetic leadership as she sought to help us think about being courageous leaders. Her patience, graciousness, assistance with bureaucratic hurdles, and care in designing elements of our experience were truly appreciated.

Cohorts, so important to so many DMIN programs, were less integral to this particular program. We were forming and re-forming our cohorts as we undertook our own experiments in courageous leadership. To all who shared this journey with me, who shared their learning, argued with me, forced me to clarify and better articulate my own thinking, and offered their friendship I am especially grateful. We were going to do the work either way. In many ways you all made the work more joyful. Marisa Thompson and Elizabeth Breakey came alongside me and provided several very patient, gracious, and attentive readings of cascading drafts of this paper. Their astute comments reminded me that subtlety is not always a virtue and they saved me from some embarrassing oversights as I became blind to my own errors and helped to find better words for my writing.

Penultimately, I am grateful for Catherine Keller's willingness to think with me. Not since my opportunity to study with Jürgen Habermas was I so humbled to think about what it meant to ask someone to read my work. Every time the possibility of working with her came up early on I was told we would see but Professor Keller does not usually work with DMIN students. For allowing me to be an exception I am grateful, but more than that for thinking with me and in turn letting me think with you, I am deeply grateful.

Finally, to Mindy and Hannah, thank you for providing the sheltering of my being in the opening of your love. I know that I stole time from you to do this and even when present was sometimes absent. For giving me a chronotope to call home in heterotopia, thank you.

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