

"Spiritual, But Not Religious" Identities in U.S. Faith-Based Activism:
Case Studies in the Nipponzan Myohoji Order and the Catholic Worker Movement

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Abstract (Academic)

Within the field of American religious studies, a growing area of scholarship has been that of “spirituality” as a category distinct from religion. Scholars have examined the sociological, cultural, and historical features that characterize Americans’ use of the concept of “spirituality.” Within this field, one subject of study is the growth in the number of individuals who identify themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” This phrase is used to denote a rejection of organized or traditional religion and an interest in a variety of belief systems. Via ethnographic methods, this dissertation analyzes this self-styled identity in the context of two phenomena: the Protestant legacy in the United States, and “engaged spirituality,” in which individuals’ spirituality is integrally linked to engagement with social activism. The early Protestant history of the United States and the “Protestant ethic,” per Max Weber, have shaped how Americans define and perceive religion and how Protestant values persist as cultural norms. American “Spiritual but not religious” individuals who are also “engaged” reject organized religion and find activism necessary due to issues that originate in this Protestant legacy. Evidence for this can be found in cases in which these individuals participate in activism by collaborating with non-Protestant religious groups. In this dissertation, I present this finding through three case studies featuring two radical religious groups which are active in peace protests: Nipponzan Myohoji, a Japanese Buddhist monastic order, and the Catholic Worker, a lay movement that assists the poor and homeless. The case studies are: the 50th anniversary Selma to Montgomery Civil Rights March; Catholic Worker protests in Washington, DC, on the anniversaries of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings; and events at the Buddhist Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda. I argue that these individuals form these alliances because in working with a Catholic and/or Buddhist group, they find a venue for activism which both accommodates their spiritual motivations and includes a critique of the Protestant-based elements of American culture.

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Abstract (Public)

Beginning in the 1970s, the topic of spirituality as a distinct area of study has developed within the field of American religious studies. One subject within the study of spirituality is the growing number of individuals who identify themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” This dissertation is an effort to further explore what roles these individuals play in American society. To accomplish this, this study addresses the relationship of “spiritual, but not religious” individuals to religion in the context of social activism. Through ethnographic methods of interviewing and participant-observation, this dissertation presents cases of spiritual but not religious individuals who identify activism as a key part of their spirituality. Specifically, these individuals participate in activism by collaborating with two radical religious groups which are active in peace protests: Nipponzan Myohoji, a Japanese Buddhist monastic order, and the Catholic Worker, a lay movement that assists the poor and homeless. Although “spiritual but not religious” individuals are defined by their rejection of organized religion, they choose to ally with these religious groups for the purpose of activism. I argue that these individuals form these alliances because the underlying social problems and elements of organized religion that they reject originate in the Protestant legacy in American culture. Therefore, in working with a Catholic and/or Buddhist group, these individuals find a venue for their spiritually-based activism that includes a critique of mainstream American culture.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past fifty years, a profound shift has taken place in the religious landscape of the United States, as increasing numbers of people have come to identify as "spiritual" rather than as a member of a formal or organized religion. Simultaneously, attendance at formal places of worship has dropped precipitously, seemingly reflecting a growing dissatisfaction with organized religion among Americans. (Fuller, 2001; Roof, 1999; Stanczak, 2006) As a result, scholars of religion in the United States have increasingly studied spirituality, both as a phenomenon in and of itself, and also as a medium for the expression of social and political attitudes. One continued area of study interrogates the configuration of spirituality, religion, and secularism in the United States, both as theoretical subjects and as lived practices. This dissertation seeks to contribute to research on the dynamic tension between organized religion, secularism, and spirituality by exploring the relationship of 'spiritual' individuals with two radical religious groups: The Catholic Worker movement, and the Japanese Buddhist order Nipponzan Myohoji. Both groups practice social justice activism. This dissertation further examines the role of the "spiritual but not religious" individuals who participate in activism with these two groups and the Protestant "haunting" of United States society that tacitly motivates these groups' and these individuals' modes of activism.

The use of the term spiritual as an identificatory category has grown to the extent that its implications in United States society continue to motivate social, political, ethnographic, and genealogical study. One debate within this domain of research is over the ways and the extent to which spiritual individuals value community, particularly when community is tied to social justice activism. Robert Bellah (2012), incorporating the research of Robert Putnam (2000), Robert Wuthnow (1998, 2006, 2015), and Wade Roof (1999), argues that what is at stake

regarding religion, spirituality, and community in the United States is nothing less than the future of American civil society. He points out that even self-avowed religious individuals frequently dismiss the necessity of congregational religious practice, or what has been termed the "unchurching" of American religion. (Fuller, 2001) Bellah (2002) states, "Just when we are in many ways moving to an ever-greater validation of the sacredness of the individual person, our capacity to imagine a social fabric that would hold individuals together is vanishing" (p. 20). Even within established religion, the importance of a deeply connected community of believers with shared values and with practices affirming those values is waning. Robert Wuthnow (2006) argues, "Religion among native-born Americans is often a means of retreating from civic responsibilities. It is so highly personal and so deeply private that it fails to generate the frank give-and-take in the public arena that is probably necessary to enrich the culture" (p. 7). I argue that American Protestantism is, in one sense, deeply public, but I also assert that, sometimes in spite of and sometimes because of this public nature, organized religion in the United States does not provide a conducive environment for cultivating meaningful community, dialogue, and social engagement, at least to the extent that the individuals in this study desire. The spiritual-but-not-religious population, then, may surpass the traditionally religious one as a force of social cohesion and change in the United States.

While the body of scholarship (discussed below) on the spiritual-but-not-religious largely defines individuals identified in this fashion by their rejection of organized religion, I focus in this study on three case studies in which these individuals commune specifically with organized religious groups (one Buddhist, the other Catholic) for the shared purpose of social justice

activism.¹ The question then arises as to why these spiritual individuals choose to pursue activism and seek community with organized religious groups as opposed to working with activist groups that identify as secular or spiritual. I address this question by examining the beliefs, values, and practices that spiritual-but-not-religious individuals reject as religious versus those that they embrace as spiritual. Based on this study's findings, I identify a salient common denominator in this rejection: the persistent legacy of Protestantism in mainstream United States society.² I present the three above-mentioned case studies in light of this Protestant influence, focusing on the elements which make these non-Protestant groups attractive to spiritual-but-not-religious groups and individuals. This approach helps to elucidate certain factors among spiritual individuals who place high importance on social justice activism, and sheds light on how these individuals' desires for community can be satisfied through participation with these religious groups.

From here on, I mobilize the concept of “engaged spirituality” (Stanczak, 2006) to describe the belief system of these participants. Gregory Stanczak has coined this term to refer to individuals who incorporate social action as a key part of their spiritual practice, and who consequently do not compartmentalize the spiritual from the political, or private morality from public action. I use the acronym “SBNR” to denote spiritual-but-not-religious as both an adjective and a noun, per Fuller (2001). I use this term in discussing the scholarship on SBNRs. For clarity and specificity, I refer to the SBNR individuals discussed in my case studies as

¹ I use the term ‘members’ to refer to those who live in Catholic Worker communities as Workers (as opposed to guests or residents) and to those who are ordained monks in the Nipponzan Myohoji order. I use the term ‘participants’ to mean those who choose to actively partake in events with these groups.

² “Mainstream” is a term used in similar contexts by both religion scholars and by the individuals they study. However, it is rarely explicitly defined or bounded. For my purposes, the term ‘mainstream’ indicates attitudes and ways of living that correlate with the concept of Western modernity. Thus, mainstream United States culture is that which does not conflict with or significantly challenge the status quo of government, social structure, institutions, capitalism, or ideology in the United States.

“spiritually engaged individuals,” abbreviated as “SEIs.” This term denotes that these individuals are SBNRs, and more specifically that they practice engaged spirituality.

I utilize scholarship on the role of Protestantism and spirituality in the United States because both topics engage the question of how spirituality, secularism, and religion shape, and in turn are shaped by, one another. In order to understand how these elements function and evolve, one must explore how the distinctions and imbrications among them are perceived by individuals and are manifested within the framework described here. Within these fields of inquiry are agents and practices that illustrate the shifting, at times even illusory, boundaries between spirituality, secularism, and religion. Below I introduce the components of my analysis: the traits of secularism and modernity in the West; the role of Protestantism in secular modernity, specifically in the United States; transmodernity as an alternative to modernity and its importance to SBNRs; the further defining features of SBNRs and their positionality in the United States; and the relevance of Catholic Worker and Nipponzan Myohoji to this analysis.

Religion, Secularism, and Spirituality

In social science research, the terms religion/religious, spirituality/spiritual, and secularism/secular have multiple definitions and usages. (Cannell, 2006; Chakrabarty, 2000; Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2008; Keane, 2007) The implications of each word are determined by disciplinary convention, related scholarship, and comparisons or contrasts within a given scholar’s work. (Fuller, 201; Wuthnow, 2005; Yang, 2008) In order to analyze both scholarly and popular concepts of these three terms, it is essential to understand the theoretical and cultural elements of the religious and the secular, beginning with the universalist assumptions tied to both words since their early modern usage. In Roman antiquity, the Latin word *religio*, “re-tying”, referred to rituals and commitments which maintained important bonds in society. Throughout

the Middle Ages, Christian scholars similarly used *religio* to refer to worship, i.e. practice. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the dimension of individual belief became prominent. (Cavanaugh, 2009; Asad, 1993) Subsequently, the word religion was used by Western conquerors and scholars to categorize the beliefs of other societies. However, religion's normative foundation was Christianity. Thus, other cultures' beliefs and practices were often labeled superstitious, primitive, absurd, or barbaric by those who wrote about them. This colonialist Christian-based viewpoint influenced the study of religion until the postmodern era, and some scholars such as Webb Keane (2007), Fenella Cannell (2006), and Talal Asad (1993, 2003) argue that this perspective persists in the social sciences. Therefore, there is a conundrum for scholars in discussing "religion," yet a suitable more inclusive word is elusive.

Scholars now often acknowledge that religion is a construction, not a natural or universal category. It is also a category defined by its purported opposite, secularism. The word secularism originates in the Latin *saeculo*, a word used by Christian monastics to denote that which is "of the world," as opposed to that which was of the cloister. (Cavanaugh 2009) Secularism from its inception has been defined as a sociopolitical system that is separate from religion, and by extension, a secular state seeks to define and assert itself via an ongoing definition and regulation of religion. (Agrama, 2012; Cavanaugh, 2009) The separation of church and state, with the state exerting control over religious practices and institutions, is certainly a reality. However, the decline of the secularization thesis and the interrogation of the genealogy of religion, secularism, and related words, means that scholars must often deal with questions of definition and implication. Neither religion nor secularism, nor religiosity or spirituality for that matter, can be definitively separated or defined. Yang (2009) suggests the term "religiosity" in place of "religion" in order to step away from the Christian connotations of the latter word: "Since

'religion' is often predicated on a deep mind-body division that seems central to Christianity, it does not work well for [other] religiosities... which do not uphold the mind-body division" (p. 19). Yang (2008) states that "throughout most of human history, [religion and state politics] were intimately linked and mutually embedded. (p. 9)" Within this larger sphere of interaction and power relations, religion emerges not just as an isolable institution, but as a conduit for competing ideas about the individual, the nation-state, and the relation between heaven and earth. Western administrators and scholars influenced Eastern religions (and transmitted them to the West) by acts of describing and categorizing religion through "secular" anthropology; by regulating practices through law; and by recording, translating and transmitting certain texts and traditions (while ignoring or suppressing others). (van der Veer, 2001; Josephson, 2011; Masuzawa, 2005) Recently, scholars have proposed alternatives to these terms that more aptly convey real-world manifestations. For example, in political science and international relations, scholars have increasingly used the term "post-secularism" to refer to operational aspects of government and society now that the secularization thesis has been deconstructed and critiqued. (Cady & Hurd, 2010; Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2008) Post-secularism in this disciplinary context presents alternative, pluralist views of how secularism manifests in society, but it does not necessarily focus on a critique of the inherent Western-oriented epistemology behind the core concept of secularism. In this vein, Asad, in his influential book *Formations of the Secular* (2003), asks not what secularism is or is not, but rather what powers are enabled or suppressed by the modern concepts of "religion" and "secularism." He writes that the study of religion and secularism has failed to recognize the "haunting" of the secular by religion. Namely, the Judeo-Christian model of religion is arguably compatible with modernity and thus represented or active in secularism more than is commonly acknowledged (discussed further below). (Asad, 1993,

2003) Not only are current secular societies infused with religion, but they also fail to recognize that many of the ways in which they structure and analyze the world originate in religion.

Spirituality, to the same effect, is a highly malleable term. William James provides a functional definition of spirituality as of phenomenon which involves "attitudes, ideas, lifestyles," and practices rooted in two beliefs: one, the significance of the visible world is subject to that of a larger spiritual world; and two, connecting with that spiritual world is a primary goal of life. (Fuller, 2001) It is used by some authors, such as Stanczak (2006), to indicate an element or mindset within religion that goes beyond dogma or tradition. Others such as Fuller (2001), Wuthnow (2005), Roof (1999), have recognized its emic usage by individuals to indicate something outside of, yet related to, religion. "Spiritual, but not religious" originates as emic, but has also become an etic category as scholars have observed, researched, and analyzed its usage. The United States has a long-standing tradition of unchurched spirituality. American religious history often focuses on official churches and religious institutions, but many beliefs and practices were not church-centered. By 1776, church attendance was as low as 15%. Use of the occult was common. Across socio-economic classes, there was interest in astrology, dowsing, divining, fortune telling, and varieties of hermeticism. Such practices addressed the desire for protection against misfortune and for control in daily life. Thus, perhaps contrary to popular belief, a "consumer market" for unchurched spirituality developed early in America's history. (Fuller, 2001, ch1) This trend continues today. In Fuller's (2001) survey, over 50% of churchgoers reported engaging in some form of occult activity (palmistry, tarot cards, Ouija boards, etc.). Supernatural beliefs often seem not to affect individuals' daily functioning, and moreover, do not put demands on the individual. This is in contrast to the ways in which traditional religions require a specific set of beliefs and behavior that are generally not intended

to be added to or subtracted from. Attempting to forge one concrete definition of spirituality has the effect of also trying to define religion more concretely. However, studies of religion have proceeded unencumbered without one single agreed-upon definition. Likewise, spirituality need not be exhaustively defined to be a useful term, nor should it be the "signifier of all that is indeterminate in [religion]" (p. 20). (Bender & McRoberts, 2012) Bender and McRoberts (2012) suggest investigating spirituality by looking at its genealogy rather than focusing on it in comparison with religion. Similar to Asad's challenge to scholars of secularism, Bender and McRoberts (2012) suggest that future research examine

...how spiritual discourses, practices, and identities are produced, reproduced, and circulated. This type of investigation aims to situate spirituality within particular configurations of culture, place, and history, rather than assume that spirituality inherently lacks such specificities... By freeing spirituality from its default status as an independent variable opposed to religion, we emphasize that all kinds of identities, practices, and experiences should be understood also as resources and energies that can be deployed in complex ways to justify and fuel a wide range of civically significant activities. In short, we challenge future scholarship on spirituality to elaborate the dynamic & relational aspects of the latter as well as its possible operation as an independent, causal variable" (pp. 19-20).

Modernity

Protestantism and secularism can be argued to be integral to the project of modernity developed in the West. It should be noted, however, that modernity, like secularism and religion, is a contested concept in scholarship. (Asad, 2003; Berger, 2012, 2014; Latour, 1991) However,

for the purposes of this study, I define it within the conceptual framework of a political, social, and economic project created by the West—which itself is an entity defined by those within it—that seeks to normalize or institutionalize certain concepts of rationality, social and technological progress, participatory government and markets, individual autonomy, and secularism. This definition of modernity also includes the epistemologies and disciplinary categories created by Western scholars. Thus, many present-day scholars who seek to question the norms and definitions produced by the modern secular West face the challenge of doing so from within the very system that created the epistemology in question. (Cannell, 2006) Nonetheless, they are identifying the ways in which those epistemologies and categories, expressed by academics, administrators, missionaries, and others, both shaped and also adapted to non-Western culture. (Asad, 2003; Keane, 2007; Van der Veer, 2001 & 2013; Yang, 2008) They utilize genealogy, ethnography, non-Western epistemologies, and interdisciplinary methodologies to attempt to step outside of the framework created by Western scholarly hegemony.

Latour (1991) describes the difficulty of this in light of the modern trait of artificial categorizations and distinctions, such as that between nature and humanity and between the rational and irrational. However, such categorizations are rarely, if ever, neatly reflected in reality. Rather, in Latour's terminology, culture and society are populated with "hybrids" of different classifications that modernity asserts do not overlap. This includes hybrids of "rational" Protestantism (Roberts, 2013) and other religious or spiritual traditions. But more importantly for this study, this includes hybrids of modernity and non-modernity, of secular and spiritual ways of interpreting and acting in the world, and of rational and irrational perceptions, experiences, and actions. These hybrids that escape the bounds of traditional religion are suppressed at the least, persecuted at most. In the United States, spiritual hybridity can seem inexplicable or absurd.

Stanczak, drawing from Latour (1991) and Barber (1996), asserts that the spiritually-engaged are “hybrids that do not fit within an overarching Western, modern approach that keeps God at bay... Rather than accept these hybrids as normal realities, individuals condense them into their modern framework by denouncing them as primitive, regressive, or sometimes even superstitious” (2006, p.16). Robert Wuthnow (2012) focuses on this element of modernity in his book *The God Problem*, in which he describes the tension between modern rationality and religious belief. Discursively, he states, religious language is not isolated to religious situations. It pervades other realms of speech, but it is suspect. An American who wants to express their religious beliefs “has a God problem... because affirming her faith requires her to find ways to declare that she is not bigoted, dogmatic, stupid, thoughtless, and heartless” (p. 19). Mainstream religious individuals in the United States, Wuthnow (2012) states, put conscious and subconscious mental effort into making their beliefs sound “reasonable,” in the sense of compatible with modern rationality. This requires a sometimes dissonant separation of “certainty and doubt, knowing and unknowing, natural and supernatural... [which] applies scientific explanations to some questions and not to others” (p. 20). I would argue, as does Roberts (2013), that this rationality includes mainstream Protestantism as a “reasonable” religion, one whose values and beliefs are considered normative, even with their “supernatural” and unscientific aspects.

While scholarship on modernity reflects this self-critique by scholars and examines how Western modernity manifests in society, non-academics also question modernity and its effects on a more personal level. Individuals’ positionality is informed by their identity as subjects of Western modernity. Being born in the modern Western world involves immersion and inculcation into a comparatively homogenized mass consumer culture, and into a society that

often bases legitimacy on instrumental rationality. SEIs' search for identity outside this *Weltanschauung* proves to be problematic. As Bellah (1985, 2012), Cimino and Lattin (1998), and Roof (1999) have discussed at length, even attempts to reject modern Protestant values in favor of a holistic spirituality can still align with the very origins of Protestantism, such as criticizing the religious status quo or seeking an individual relationship with the divine. Bellah's statement mentioned in the beginning of the introduction echoes the sentiments of other authors on spirituality (Bender, 2010; Bender & McRoberts, 2012; Cimino & Lattin, 1998; Fuller, 2001; Roof, 1999) regarding the actual and potential social impact of SBNRs: "Just when we are in many ways moving to an ever-greater validation of the sacredness of the individual person, our capacity to imagine a social fabric that would hold individuals together is vanishing" (2002, p. 20). Stanczak (2006) observes that spiritual-but-not-religious as a designation "has become reified by detractors of spiritual individualism as a new foreboding standard, a cultural idiom of an individualized and rootless society" (p. 2).

The Protestant Haunting of American Culture

I will briefly describe the scholarship in United States religious studies on the "Protestant haunting" of the nation and its connection to modernity, which includes secularism, the sacralization of the nation-state, and the concept of the rational liberal self. In subsequent chapters, I analyze in more depth how the nexus of the Protestant-secular-modern acts as a foil that draws out underexplored elements of SEIs' sense of identity, perception of mainstream culture and religion, and challenges in pursuing a lifestyle based on a transmodern ethos.

Following Max Weber's (1905) seminal text, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," scholars have discussed the continuous influence of Protestantism on unconscious affects and embedded norms in United States society from multiple vantage points: history,

sociology, anthropology, religious studies, and psychology. (Asad, 2003; Bellah, 1985; Berger, 1979; Cannell, 2006; Keane, 2007; Klassen, 2011; Wuthnow, 1998) The initial and strongest Protestant influence in the United States came from the early Puritan settlers of New England, whose Calvinist morality and “gospel of prosperity” seeped into the growing (white, Anglo-Saxon) population. Most 17th and early 18th century immigrants were Protestant and, upon settling in New England, had to conform to some extent to the dominant Puritan culture. (Bellah, 2002; McCrary & Wheatley, 2017)

Eric Luis Uhlmann and Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks (2014) have compared this phenomenon to a “founder effect” in environmental sciences. The characteristics of the initial population of a geographic region influence subsequent generations, even when new incoming groups come to outnumber the founding population. The founder population has already laid a groundwork of practices, structures, and values that incoming populations often assimilate to in order to thrive, or what the authors describe as a “cultural inertia” (p. 993). Uhlmann and Sanchez-Burks (2014) state that for this analysis, they identified features of Protestant morality through historical and sociological literature and studies of implicit cognition in controlled experiments with American research subjects. These features include religious traditionalism, individualism, and a belief in the superiority of Western Protestant society.

The authors’ meta-analysis of collected statistical studies shows that Americans, Protestant or not, are more likely to make judgments and display affects corresponding with Puritanical values than members of other Western countries. (Uhlmann & Sanchez-Burks, 2014) Even Americans who verbalize liberal or permissive morals and reject values associated with Christianity often gave responses in experiments that reflected far more traditional, conservative, and judgmental beliefs and affects than found in other economically-developed democratic

states, and even among other Protestant-dominant nations. Those judgments connect implicit Protestant values with moral valence: subconsciously, many Americans view actions or beliefs dualistically. They are good or bad, right or wrong, one or the other. More than half the American participants in the 2005 World Values Survey agreed with the statement: “There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. These always apply to everyone, whatever the circumstances” (Uhlmann & Sanchez-Burks, 2014, p. 996). In practice, applying such moral views to United States society ignores the realities of inequality and privilege across class, race, gender, and other demographics. This absolutist morality is one feature of established religion, and of United States culture, that SEIs reject and sometimes identify as a contributing factor to persistent social injustice.

The expression of these Protestant values or morals in mainstream United States society is an example of the entanglement of religion and secularism. Peter Van der Veer (2001) asserts that “Protestant conceptions of guilt and atonement, of ‘the few elect,’ of God’s grace were transformed into conceptions of progress... of the ‘white man’s burden’” (p. 25). Early settlers envisioned the nation as a “city on a hill,” a new land that would be an exemplar of morality, piety, and hard work. (Bellah, 2002; Weber, 1905) As with the founder effect discussed above, the United States as a nation-state propounds its secularism and exceptionalism while tacitly conforming to Protestant norms about the prosperity gospel, individualism, and institutionalized expressions of moral judgments about issues such as poverty, sexuality, and self-reliance. Secularism as conceived by Enlightenment scholars and statesmen was intended to isolate statecraft and civil governance from religion. Matters of religious identity and belief, according to this philosophy, would be confined to the private sphere of domestic life. However, the proponents of secularism forged the concept within their own early modern Western Protestant

paradigm. Secularism was not only shaped by the pre-existing historical and social role of religion, but also defined by its contrast with religion. (Agrama, 2011; Asad, 2003)

Transmodern Spirituality

A defining feature of SEIs is their critical stance toward mainstream American culture and organized religion. Based on their own statements and on the theories above, this includes a critique of modernity.³ SBNRs often embrace what may be termed “nonmodern” or “premodern” knowledges and practices. (Bender, 2010; Fuller, 2001) Like modernity, the premodern and nonmodern are constructed designations. Asad (2003) includes in his working definition of modernity the quality of “‘disenchantment’—implying a direct access to reality, a stripping away of myth, magic, and the sacred...so that images of a ‘pre-modern’ past acquire in retrospect a quality of enchantment” (pp.13-14) I use the designation “transmodern spirituality” to describe SBNRs’ rejection of some elements of modernity and affinity for certain characteristics of the premodern in the context of their spiritual beliefs. The term originates with Enrique Dussel’s (1994, 2003) concept of “transmodernity,” discussed here as the basis for transmodern spirituality. Dussel directly connects Western modernity to current sociocultural problems and also identifies the Western Enlightenment origins of the academy as obfuscating scholars’ ability to critique or think outside the paradigm of modernity, as I discuss further below. Dussel (2003) also argues that even the concept of the postmodern is in fact another stage of modernity, rather than a transcendence or reformulation of it. In contrast to postmodernity, transmodernity includes a re-examination and re-incorporation of certain pre-modern or non-modern values, technologies,

³ For examples of SBNRs’ criticisms of modernity/affinity for the nonmodern, see the interviews and ethnographies in Bellah et al. (1985), Fuller (2001), Roof (1999), and Wuthnow (1998).

and concepts. It includes a critique of consumerism, neoliberalism, and of the unassailable virtue of scientific/technological progress. Dussel (2012) stated:

The dialogue, then, between the critical cultural innovators is neither modern nor post-modern, but rather in a strict sense “*trans*-modern,” because, as we have shown, the creative force does not come from the interior of Modernity, but rather from its exteriority, or better yet from its exterior “borderlands.” This exteriority is not pure negativity. It is *the positivity rooted in a tradition distinct from the Modern...*

[Transmodernity] can also integrate the best of Modernity (and it should not refuse all elements of Modernity from the perspective of a pure, substantialist cultural identity), in order even to construct scientific and technological growth that emerges from the very experience of Modernity. (pp. 57-58)

Theoretically, transmodernity looks to postcolonial and non-modern elements of societies as sources for new approaches to studying culture and cultivating different ways of living outside the bounds of modernity. In applying transmodernity to SEIs, I correlate this idea with SEIs’ expressed respect for, and even reverence of, non-Western cultures, often those that have been subjected to United States imperialism and exploitation (SEIs’ perception of and relationship to these cultures will be discussed further in chapters three, four, and five). Dussel (2012) expresses this idea of valuing cultures that have been colonized and dismissed by Western hegemony:

Europe’s crucial and enlightened hegemony scarcely lasted two centuries (1789-1989). Only two centuries! Too short-term to profoundly transform the “ethico-mythical nucleus” (to use Ricoeur’s expression) of ancient and great cultures like the Chinese and others of the Far East (like the Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.), the Hindustanic, the Islamic, the Russian- Byzantine, and even the Bantu or the Latin American.... These

cultures have been partly *colonized*, but most of the structure of their values has been excluded—*disdained, negated and ignored*—rather than annihilated... That alterity—always existent and latent— indicates the reality of an unsuspected cultural richness, which... is not merely a substantive, uncontaminated, and eternal “identity.” It has been evolving in the face of Modernity itself... Since they are not modern, these cultures cannot be *post-modern* either. They are simultaneously *pre-modern* (older than modernity), *contemporary* to Modernity, and soon, *transmodern* as well... They respond from the perspective of their own cultural experiences, which are distinct from those of Europeans/North Americans, and therefore have the capacity to respond with solutions that would be absolutely impossible for an exclusively modern culture. (pp. 42-43)

Thus, transmodernity does not, in Dussel’s terms, view these non-modern cultures as destroyed by the West or as idealized societies frozen in time, but rather as living societies which engage and respond to modernity while retaining their own paradigm of culture and history. For SEIs, transmodern values do at times cohabit with a romanticized or fetishized view of non-Western cultures, but often SEIs recognize the complex realities within and between cultures that Dussel describes.

In addressing culture and society, transmodernity applies to concepts and lived experiences of religion. Tyler Roberts (2013) observes: “Excluded from the discipline [of religious studies] then, or relegated to the margins as ‘primitive’ or ‘immature’ are those religions that don’t measure up to the rationality, tolerance, peace, and ‘spirituality’ of... Protestantism” (p. 9). For SBNRs, this perspective is inverted: SBNRs view Protestant American culture as devoid of tolerance and spirituality, as violent and militarized, and as fanatically committed to convincing itself and others of its superiority.

Transmodern spirituality thus includes the practices and beliefs of engaged spirituality that define SEIs. Transmodern spirituality, as I define it, encompasses their rejection of mainstream culture and organized religion, the pursuit of holistic spirituality, and the de-compartmentalization of modern life. Elements of modernity that are rejected in transmodern spirituality can be summarized as those which contribute to alienation or compartmentalization in life. This includes the separation of religious/spiritual beliefs from daily practice (personal behavior and choices, not the political or social spheres), separation of individuals from one another, separation of individuals from the environment, dichotomizing the present from the past, and holding a dualistic view of good/evil, us/them, ideal/real. The separation of beliefs from actions is seen in those who espouse certain religious or ethical beliefs, yet do not employ those beliefs in how they conduct themselves when it is inconvenient or unconventional. Separation of individuals from one another refers to breakdown of community and empathy, which perpetuates reification, dehumanization, or the ability to ignore others who are different from oneself (e.g. in racism, sexism, class conflict, and other forms of discrimination). Dualistic views, found to be prevalent in American Protestant-derived culture far more so than in other Western nations (Uhlmann & Sanchez-Burks, 2014), can be correlated with the Protestant haunting of the United States that I describe above.

Transmodern spirituality does not dispense with all modern concepts or inventions. It is necessarily grounded in the modern insofar as SEIs are born into a modern world and their cognition and experiences are thus subsumed in modernity. As Dussel states, transmodernity does not oppose the developments of modernity as a whole. It still recognizes the value of innovations that reduce unnecessary suffering and foster community or cooperation, such as global communication, medicine, sanitation, education, and the concept of the rights of the

individual. This hybridization of elements of culture and technology is essential to the application of transmodernity in the context of SEIs. Their positive view of non-modern cultures is balanced with a recognition that some of these cultures lack relatively simple resources and technologies (often as a result of imperialism and the present globalized economic system) which would drastically improve quality of life. SEIs generally acknowledge that they are privileged to live in circumstances where their basic needs are easily met, and their interest in transmodern ways of living usually does not include idealizing an entirely pre-modern way of life.

SBNRs and Spirituality

Within the United States, spirituality continues to grow as a sociocultural phenomenon, and thus the study of both current developments in and the historical context of spirituality in the United States has become a more cohesive and robust area of American religious studies.

(Bender, 2010; Bender & McRoberts, 2013; Fuller, 2001) Spirituality as a term and concept can be found throughout American history in various movements⁴. As discussed above, the distinction between spirituality and religion reveals more about shifting religious and social attitudes in the United States than about how to define either entity. Fuller (2001) identifies four commonalities between spirituality and religion. These are: a belief in an omnipresent force or spirit in the universe; a desire to connect with that spirit; a concern with moral behavior in keeping with that spirit; and engaging in practices and actions for the purpose of developing a connection with that spirit. (Fuller, 2001, p. 5)

Although the terms are sometimes used similarly or even interchangeably, religion and spirituality, in the context of personal belief or practice, are often framed as contrasting or opposing concepts. This is evidenced by the self-identification of up to 20% of Americans with

⁴ See, for example, Bender (2010), Fuller (2001), Modern (2011).

the phrase spiritual-but-not-religious, based on survey statistics. (Fuller, 2001) Among Americans since the 1960s, the term spiritual has increasingly been used to refer to a person, affect, or practice that is not involved with a religious institution, while engaging in beliefs or practices that share purpose, appearance, or creed commonly associated with those of a formal religion. (Fuller, 2001) Reflecting this trend, scholars of United States religion now generally recognize terms such as SBNR, unchurched, or religious nones. (Bellah, 2002; Fuller, 2001) However, these terms are often derived from survey wording, and their meaning is malleable and contextual.

Regarding SBNRs, Robert Fuller (2001) constructs five characteristics that summarize the commonly shared attitudes and beliefs of SBNRs. First is the belief that individuals have a right, even a responsibility, to establish personal beliefs, particularly through experience. It is not important that there be uniformity of belief between individuals. Second, SBNRs describe spirituality as a process or "sensitivity" rather than a creed or ideology. In other words, SBNRs are open to changing their spiritual beliefs and practices in response to their personal experiences, but do not perceive this as "conversion" or dissonance with their prior beliefs. Third, SBNRs express frustration with or antipathy towards religious institutions. Fourth, SBNRs believe that the self has unlimited potential. They reject the concept that humans are inherently flawed, evil, or sinful. Fifth, SBNRs express a persistent interest in or passion for metaphysics and learning about unseen energies or structures of the universe. As John Modern (2011) and Courtney Bender (2010) observe, spirituality as a phenomenon in the United States has had similar traits that ally it with subcultural or counterculture movements, likely because the "spiritual" individual is less fixed and more responsive to such movements than are established religions. (Bellah, 2002)

My construction of spiritually-engaged individuals adds engaged spirituality as a subcategory of SBNRs. I utilize this term in a slightly altered way from its original context. In his book *Engaged Spirituality* (2006), Stanczak analyzes spirituality as a part of religion. His study, largely based on interviews, addresses mainstream American religious groups, not the spiritual-but-not-religious population. However, his criteria for “socially active” or “engaged” spirituality translates across the categories of the religious and the spiritual. These characteristics largely overlap with those of SBNRs. Engaged spirituality is transcendent; active and ongoing in individuals’ lives; unlimited in place, time, space, tradition, creativity, and experience; pragmatic and applied; and also emotional and affective. What is key to defining it is social action (which I use interchangeably with activism, social justice, and social change) as shorthand for service work which is “mandated by deeply held transcendent values to bring about change in this world” (Stanczak, 2006, p. 5).

The SEIs discussed in this study also identify as different from mainstream American culture in ways that are both observable and self-reported. For example, they reject materialism, consumerism, imperialism, nuclear weapons, and white privilege (discussed in depth in chapters three through five). Part of SEIs’ spirituality involves challenging the dominant sociopolitical order, specifically challenging the rhetoric of United States exceptionalism and imperialism and the wider narrative of superiority embedded within the modern Western worldview. These SEIs hold the United States accountable for systematic oppression and exploitation of marginal populations both domestically and abroad. They often protest United States military actions as aggression and mass murder. They also believe that official and popular nationalistic rhetoric brainwashes or misleads the American public, further reinforcing the belief that the status quo is both acceptable and necessary.

These SEIs' views are unpopular in many settings. In voicing and acting on these beliefs, SEIs are thus often left in a position of having to seek like-minded or accepting community. Additionally, SEIs are primarily Caucasian, college-educated, white-collar, and from Protestant families of Northern European descent. (Fuller, 2001) Based on the beliefs described above, they are also highly aware of their racial and class privilege, and some express strong feelings of "white guilt." These aspects of their identity often differ from the demographics of those whom they wish to help via their engaged-spiritual activism. This leaves SEIs with a cultural and historical vacuum with regards to the way they wish to self-identify. One outcome of this phenomenon is an affinity with transmodernity, discussed in the next section. A second outcome, observed among the participants in my research and discussed in my case studies, is that SEIs have developed a shared pantheon of non-white and/or non-Protestant exemplars who serve the function of metaphorical or adopted ancestors. These exemplars include Mahatma Gandhi, Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, Catholic Worker founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, Martin Luther King, Jr., workers' rights leaders such as Cesar Chavez, and other figures in activist and spiritual/religious movements, such as liberation theology, Engaged Buddhism, and the civil rights movement.

Spiritual-but-not-religious individuals do not find this sense of cultural ancestry in mainstream religion. In a broader sense, SBNRs in the United States often say "religion" in general when verbalizing these critiques. However, when they say this, they are usually alluding to Christianity, often Protestantism. (Fuller, 2001; Stanczak, 2006) In terms of SBNRs' rejection of mainstream religion, although secular rhetoric once relegated religion (again, particularly Christianity) to the private sphere, some scholars of religious studies argue that religion is now popularly considered public. (Bellah, 1985, Fuller, 2001, Roof 1999, Stanczak, 2006) The

general populace of the United States sees religion as an institution, and particularly sees Protestantism as normative. Additionally, people widely acknowledge that Protestantism and other faiths, particularly Islam, are highly politicized. In the place of religion, spirituality has come to denote private belief and practice.⁵ (Bellah, 1985; Fuller, 2001; Roof 1999; Stanczak, 2006) This public-mainstream view of Christianity further contributes to SBNRs' lack of affinity with it.

Additionally, fundamentalist Christianity in the United States, which often seeks to influence the political realm, is in many ways the polar opposite of SBNRs' belief system. The proliferation of conservative Christianity in the mid-twentieth century has paralleled the growth of the spiritual-but-not-religious trend, heralding a still-growing divide between traditionalist religious groups and SBNRs, while moderate religious denominations have continued to see their membership decline. (Fuller, 2001)

In terms of individual or experiential perspective, SBNRs' common criticisms of organized religion are that it is rigid, hierarchical, dogmatic, regressive, and hypocritical. Many SBNRs who, as adults, have attended traditional religious services have found them too limited in diversity or thought to constitute a desirable spiritual community. Some also find religious services tedious and uninspiring, or perceive the congregational community as stagnant and lacking in discussion of personal spiritual discovery. Some feel, and dislike, that established religion often focuses on repetition of the value of faith and worship, and on adherence to one set of behaviors as the goal of faith. To this effect, Bellah (2002) argues that a significant problem with contemporary Protestantism is its "near-exclusive focus on the relation between Jesus and the individual, where accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior becomes almost

⁵ To what extent this shift is conceptual rather than actual, i.e., a shift in terminology rather than demonstrable change, see Asad (1993), Cavanaugh (2009), and Taves & Bender (2010).

the whole of piety” (p. 21). Bellah then asks a key question: in light of the decline of Protestant churches as a hub of social cohesion, can non-Protestant groups be a driving force to revive community and civic involvement in the contemporary United States? Bender and McRoberts (2012) suggest that they can. They write: “As an attribute of the liberal subject, ‘spirituality’ thus could be used to frame and bolster the individualism of modern life or to redound upon it in ways that complicate and challenge its own self-conception” (p. 9). SEIs’ spiritual engagement in the sociopolitical sphere, in tandem with the activities of activist religious groups such as the Catholic Worker movement and Nipponzan Myohoji, described above, can contribute to providing a beginning of an answer to this question while continuing to analyze United States spirituality in conjunction with sociopolitical activism.

The Catholic Worker Movement and Nipponzan Myohoji

The history of both of these groups is discussed in detail in chapter two, but a brief overview here serves to inform the subsequent sections. The Catholic Worker movement originated in New York City in 1933, the brainchild of journalist and labor activist Dorothy Day and itinerant Catholic priest Peter Maurin. The movement grew out of their mutual concern with poverty, workers' rights, and peace activism, fueled by belief in the Catholic Social Gospel. (Piehl, 1982; Troester, 1993) Never endorsed by the Catholic Church, the movement challenged mainstream Catholic and Protestant attitudes toward marginalized people. Most Catholic Workers live in "houses of hospitality," (Day, 1939a) where they practice voluntary poverty and provide direct assistance to the poor and homeless in the form of food, shelter, and other basic necessities. This mission is based on a belief in imitating the life of Jesus as told in the gospels of the New Testament. (DiDomizio, 1988) The Catholic Workers engage in nonviolent protest against nuclear weapons, military installations, and war. They also practice civil disobedience as

both a strategy of nonviolent protest and as an act of conscience. At present, there are over 150 Catholic Worker houses of hospitality in the United States, many located near military bases, weapons-production facilities, and in urban neighborhoods with high rates of poverty. (Riegle, 2013)

Nipponzan Myohoji is a monastic order of Japanese Nichiren Buddhism, founded by monk Fujii Nichidatsu in 1918.⁶ Fujii created the order in opposition to growing nationalism in Japan. Fujii continued the traditional Nichiren practice of chanting and beating a handheld drum, not simply as a meditative practice, but also under the auspices of protesting war and unjust government policies. (Fujii, 2007; Green, 2000) Committed to Buddhist teachings which assert that just and ethical leadership is vital to cultivate a just and ethical society, Fujii and his followers protested at government sites, such as the imperial palace, and held lengthy “peace walks” across Japan to spread their message. (Denise Laffan, personal correspondence, May 2017) After the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, Fujii focused the order's peace activism on anti-nuclear actions. Nipponzan Myohoji grew to become an international movement that includes the building of “peace pagodas” worldwide as public emblems of the goal of nuclear disarmament and world peace. (Fujii, 2007) The order's approximately 150 monks are spread across Asia, Europe, and the United States, where they continue to hold peace walks, construct pagodas, and participate in peace protests.

The missions of the Catholic Worker movement and Nipponzan Myohoji are not limited to their members. Both groups are crucially supported by SEIs who participate in both day-to-day group activities and in protests. Because of this relationship, the Catholic Worker movement

⁶ There are few records of the history of Nipponzan Myohoji, and almost all are in Japanese. Two compilations of selected essays and speeches by Fujii have been published in English. These were selected and translated by a Japanese translator and several members of Nipponzan Myohoji. (Fujii, 2007, 2009)

and Nipponzan Myohoji provide a fruitful context for a discourse on manifestations of engaged spirituality. They are religious communities, but not ones that focus on creating a congregation or proselytizing in order to recruit participants or members. They are decidedly religious groups, but they welcome individuals of any belief system as guests or participants. Their core beliefs and attendant practices are compatible with the spirituality of SEIs, as shown by the high rate of participants who identify as SEIs. The reasons why these groups and their practices are attractive to SEIs is discussed further in chapters 3 through 5. The Catholic Worker movement and Nipponzan Myohoji conduct service work, group spiritual practice, and nonviolent protests that focus on a combination of the following issues:

- Oppression of and war against peoples in nations that have been subject to Western militarism and colonialism, most prominently the countries of the “Central American Crisis” of the 1970s-1980s (Weeks, 1986), Muslim-majority countries, and Native Americans.
- Racism in the United States, usually focused on African-Americans and Hispanics, with emphasis on institutionalized racism (such as police violence, civil rights, and the prison pipeline).
- The United States military’s policies and power, particularly regarding nuclear weapons (the effect of their past and potential future use, their environmental effects, their cost, and their symbolic meaning).

The Catholic Worker movement and Nipponzan Myohoji provide a locus or gathering place where SEIs tackle issues that they face: lack of a cultural and historical past that they can draw from for a sense of continuity and heritage; lack of like-minded communities with similar backgrounds; and access to networks and events for activism on the above issues. (Bellah, 1985;

Roof, 1999; Troester, 1993) The Catholic Worker movement and Nipponzan Myohoji become spheres in which individuals can conceive of and act out religion, spirituality, and politics in particular configurations that stand in contrast to mainstream United States society. (Fuller, 2001; Kosek, 2009; Mollin, 2004; Riegle, 2012, 2013; Troester, 1993)

Autoethnography and Methodology

I began my PhD with a background in nonprofit management. I had gotten a job in the nonprofit field and begun earning my master's in public administration because I wanted to do work that demonstrably improved other people's lives. But what I felt was often missing in nonprofit practice and pedagogy was a sense of what these "other people" actually wanted, what they felt would provide more quality and meaning to their lives. There are people in need, and there are those who can help those people meet their needs; yet those in the position to help are also in the position to dictate what it is that others need, what it is acceptable for them to have, and what it is permissible for them to desire. I came to see that, while many nonprofit groups did valuable and sincere work, too many efforts at social change were based in fixing symptoms and ignoring deeper causes and processes in society.

These concerns about social justice ended up dovetailing with my passion for the study of religion. I had a strong interest in lived religion and its inseparability from other areas of life. Religion, in this context, was not just about the beliefs of a specific tradition. It was about worldviews that shaped how people lived, ethics that did not just guide individuals, but that propelled them, demanded of them, that they act in the world in certain ways. The idea that religion creates, or is at least prone to, violence and

oppression is taken as an obvious and dangerous truth in the contemporary world. But religion's role in peace and human flourishing is often portrayed as incidental, unusual, or inconsequential. Religion as an influence in social movements is sometimes treated as an outdated, but sometimes useful, tool in Swidler's iconic "cultural toolkit," a quaint instrument for drawing on shared history and culture in order to motivate and unite members. But I wanted to talk about religion as something people lived within, something that could not be entirely reduced or explained theoretically. I wanted to explore the relationship between religious belief and compassion, and how these two phenomena intersected in the environment of social movements.

In my fieldwork, the participants, rather than the members, of Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker became the group that stood out. The word spirituality was so common that I began to interrogate it and found that not only was it already a significant term in religious studies, but that books had been dedicated to theorizing it. What was "spiritual, but not religious"? What did it mean to those who identified themselves with the term? What did its growth say about changes in US culture? What did it mean in relation to religions?

My starting point was in Talal Asad, Hussein Agrama, and William Cavanaugh on the relationship between the religious and the secular. My ethnographic interests drove me to put them at the same table with anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner and scholars of lived religion such as Robert Orsi. None of these authors invoked nonviolent activism or radical leftist religion, but I dragged them into conversation with engaged Buddhism scholars Christopher Queen, TNH, and Sallie King, as well as Catholic

Worker historians such as Rosalie Riegle and Mel Piehl. As the theme of “SBNR” emerged, Gregory Stanczak’s “engaged spirituality” and Fuller’s “SBNR” became indispensable terms. Robert Wuthnow had to be at the table as one of the preeminent scholars of American religion. Lastly, Robert Bellah would not leave me alone with his questions about the decline of Protestant congregations and the dismal fate of American social cohesion.

Based in these academic works, my dissertation hopefully answers these questions of what “spiritual, but not religious” means to certain people, in a certain sociocultural context, in relation to certain religions. What kept me motivated were the interactions, in my mind, between these scholars and the people I met in my fieldwork, my “spiritually-engaged individuals.” The SEIs had asked similar questions and drawn some of the same conclusions as these eminent academics. They critiqued the secular state, they interrogated the idea of religion, and they reflected on their own positionality and subjectivity. My SEIs kept me confident that spirituality and religion could be subjects of serious study while at the same time being experiential, irreducible, and to an extent, personal.

I have tried to be methodologically consistent and as objective as possible in my analysis. However, it would of course be disingenuous to claim that my scholarship is completely unbiased or without agenda. To quote religious scholar Rita Gross (1997) at some length:

I maintain that the most significant contemporary religious scholarship... refuses to buy the false dichotomy between descriptive scholarship and reflective world construction...

One does not have to choose between accurate scholarship about religious phenomena and passionate, personal involvement with those same phenomena. By routinely combining disclosure and autobiography with reflection and analysis, one can ride that supposed dichotomy without pretending to more universality than is appropriate... The dialogue often plays itself out in story, in tracing the developments that lead to one's own unique stance... In using this method, we differ from conventional scholars who try to convince us that the results of their thinking are independent of personal experience and are applicable universally... In other words, I want both to understand 'the other' as best one can, and to explore questions of meaning and truth. Furthermore, I cannot really separate these two tasks and goals. Nor can I imagine anyone caring about religion enough to go through the horrors of obtaining a PhD in the field unmotivated by both visions simultaneously. (pp. 103-4, 106)

In conducting this study, I utilized standard ethnographic methods of participant-observation and interviews.⁷ (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012; Smith, 1999) I began with a general set of interview questions, but found as my research progressed that it did not correlate with my fieldwork findings and, consequently, was not instrumental in acquiring the data I needed (See Appendix A). I therefore switched to semi-structured interviews and to recording spontaneous conversations (with permission). This led me to develop the concept of SEIs. More so than the structured interviews, participant-observation provided me insight on what was transpiring around me. Participant-observation is defined by the anthropologist's immersion in the research setting and direct involvement with participants. (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012) Participation serves several purposes: it gives the anthropologist an insider perspective on participants'

⁷ IRB protocol and notes on citations of ethnographic data are located in Appendixes A and B.

activities; it helps to develop trust between the anthropologist and the other participants; and it can foster one-on-one relationships with participants that can lead to one-on-one discussion or interviewing. (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012) The goal of acquiring an insider perspective must be realistic and respectful. In a study such as mine, wherein I could not live with my participants for an extended time, my insider perspective is limited and I cannot make claims or generalizations outside its scope. This includes particularly the daily lives of the Nipponzan Myohoji monks and the Catholic Workers. While I learned about their routines and ways of living, I conducted my fieldwork around events, and thus had minimal experience with their daily lives. However, by volunteering to participate in a variety of activities, I tried to experience as much of their normal lives as possible. This meant that in addition to participating in protests and other activities, I also cleaned, cooked, gardened, and did other chores. This allowed me to partake firsthand in the groups' transmodern lifestyles and to understand the resources they had to work with while living in voluntary poverty. Observation occurs when the anthropologist watches and listens without direct engagement. It thus provides opportunities for a more comprehensive perspective by adding an "outside" lens to the inside view afforded by participation. (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012)

There are multiple organizational frameworks which I could have employed to present this research, but in light of the centrality of social action to the two religious groups and SEIs, I have structured the chapters around events (rather than themes, chronology, etc.). I recount these events based on my participant-observation and supplemented them with interviews in order to carry out my analysis. I conducted and recorded eight semi-structured interviews of 40 to 100 minutes in length (See Appendices A and B for details). Interviewees were participants and members at the events listed below who agreed to be interviewed after I explained my research

to them (see index for confidentiality agreement). I spent approximately twenty days doing participant observation, which included the following activities.

With Nipponzan Myohoji:

- Biannual “Work Parties,” Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda, Cosby, TN, 2014-2017
- Flower Festival & Ancestors Ceremonies, Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda, 2015-17
- School of the Americas Peace Walk and Protest, Ft Benning, GA, November 20-25, 2014
- Selma to Montgomery Peace Walk, AL, March 6-13, 2015

With the Catholic Worker:

- Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House, Washington DC, August 5-10, 2014
- Sasako Sadaki Catholic Worker House, Norfolk, VA, March 6-9, 2014

At these events, I took field notes, recorded audio and video materials (with permission), and took photographs. I transcribed my interviews personally, then coded and organized the material by event and theme. Because my schedule permitted fewer hours with the Catholic Worker than with Nipponzan Myohoji, I have supplemented this research with additional oral histories and ethnographic sources such as Rosalie Riegle’s (1993,⁸ 2003) extensive studies of the Catholic Worker. Further sources include newsletters published online or given to me by various Catholic Worker members.

Chapters

In chapter two, I discuss in further detail the histories of Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker movement. Both groups’ origins lie in an interweaving of social justice work

⁸ As Rosalie Troester.

with religious tenets and practices. Moreover, their histories demonstrate the continuities and changes at the intersection of spirituality, radical religion, and nonviolent activism in the United States since the early 1900s. They also contextualize the issue of contesting modernity, in particular the manifestations discussed above, in a transmodern and transnational context. This historical view helps to situate the members and participants in these two groups in temporal, spatial, and sociocultural terms.

Chapters three through five illustrate the configurations and manifestations of the theoretical framework described above via analysis of three activities, two with Nipponzan Myohoji and one with the Catholic Worker. These events were chosen because they center around three different activist issues which are at the heart of both Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker: race/civil rights, war, and building community based on transmodern values. These different events thus also evoke different aspects of SEIs' spirituality and how that spirituality interacts with mainstream American society and with religion.

In chapter three, I examine the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, which involved walking the same route as the original march in 1965 over the course of five days. I explore how the following elements manifest and intersect over the course of this event: the tensions and effects thereof among those of different races, genders, sexualities, religious and spiritual beliefs, and ages; the presence of transmodern spirituality; the role of Protestantism in the march; and the impact of the Nipponzan Myohoji monks' participation. Nipponzan Myohoji's participation in the walk has its own history and purpose, which dovetails with the individual purposes and aspirations of the SEI participants, who participated in large part because of identification with the civil rights and anti-racism movements. The combined spiritual and activist elements enacted by participants (mostly

Caucasian) drew out certain tensions, assumptions, and incommensurabilities surrounding their involvement in an African-American-centric event. Among other things, it engages the SEI mindset with that of evangelical Protestantism. It also demonstrates the role and value of transmodern techniques in this setting. These elements combine to show the complexity and irreducibility of interactions among participants, the marginalized groups with which they wish to engage and for whom they want to advocate, and religious institutions. They also bring into further relief contrasts with mainstream American society.

Chapter four involves the Washington, DC Catholic Worker's annual vigils on the anniversaries of the 1945 nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Selma march was a literally moving event centered on lived experiences of racism. In contrast, the DC vigils were commemorative and static. They addressed United States military history and current policy in two highly symbolic locations: The White House and the Pentagon. I discuss in this chapter how the Catholic Worker movement reframed the nuclear bombings in religious terms as the worst kind of war atrocity and how they apply Catholic concepts to the global social order. Members' rhetoric around peace, war, and society reflected both an appeal to and a divergence from the Protestant-based mainstream. I analyze the transmodern themes in the protest and at the Catholic Worker more broadly. I also discuss the ways Catholic Workers and SEIs collaborate in protests and how their respective beliefs create both connections and barriers. I analyze the areas of affinity that bridge the gap between the SEIs and Catholic Worker members, and in particular their created symbolic heritage, nonviolence, and strong transmodern beliefs and practices.

Chapter five examines participants' role at Nipponzan Myohoji's Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda in the rural community of Cocke County, Tennessee. The Peace Pagoda's 'work parties' (which involve the ongoing construction of the actual pagoda) and its

two annual ceremonies draw a wide variety of participants. I use this setting to analyze how participants maintain, embody, and develop their spiritual beliefs while living in tension with mainstream United States society. I described the ways in which transmodern spirituality is present here, particularly in ways of meeting basic needs, performing labor, and engaging in non-Western religious and spiritual practices. I analyze how participants engaged with one another to discuss, challenge, share, and reaffirm sociopolitical and spiritual beliefs, as well as formed and maintained networks with one another. This case shows how and why SEIs value the spaces and activities provided by Nipponzan Myohoji (and the Catholic Worker) for spiritual fulfillment, thus creating a web of shared aspirations, actions, and convictions.

Conclusion

SEIs seek to be engaged in a process of reconciliation or negotiation of their life circumstances, their commitment to social justice, and their search for spiritual fulfillment. The Catholic Worker movement and Nipponzan Myohoji are both, in their own words, radical manifestations of their respective religions that attract significant numbers of SEI participants. Members and participants articulate a perception of themselves as outside of mainstream American society and religion in that they hold different values and aspire to a different way of life than those supported by American norms. The case studies presented in this study provide significant value for scholarship on United States spirituality, partly because they engage spirituality from the perspective of marginal locations in United States society. I would suggest that while mainstream movements illuminate certain trends, smaller and more radical movements can be more illustrative. These groups' relationships with their SEI participants are complex and wide-reaching, both geographically and temporally. As outposts of sorts in contemporary questions of and challenges to spirituality and religion, these groups and their SEIs mark an

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active field of resistance. They challenge mainstream United States society via values, practices, and ideas that complicate the common dyads of secular versus religious and religion versus spirituality. In this way, Protestant culture becomes the counterpoint to the “spiritually engaged, but not religious,” to transmodernity, and to non-Protestant religion, which often critiques Protestant culture.

Chapter 2: History of Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker

In order to understand the relationship between SEIs and Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker movement, it is useful to trace the histories and understand the worldviews of these two groups. In the introduction, I gave an overview of the history of SBNRs and spirituality in the United States. This chapter describes the groups' structures, their histories, and the practices that motivate the events detailed in chapters three through five. I also give attention to the religious elements in both groups. As mentioned in the introduction, both Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker movement consider themselves radical religious movements in general. Below I also address the ways in which they are radical in comparison to mainstream Nichiren Buddhism and American Catholicism. I also describe how specific elements of this radicalness counteract the features of established religion which SEIs generally reject.

The differences in beliefs between Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker movement sometimes determine which group(s) SEIs choose to participate with and what events they decide to take part in. Some SEIs focus on certain causes and participate in both groups' activities that focus on those causes. Other SEIs are only involved with one group and may attend events with members of that group regardless of cause. Still other SEIs have freely moved from one group to the other over time. Similarities between Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker movement explain their overlapping spheres of activism and the fact that they draw participants from similar population groups. Some of these similarities rest on the radical elements in the two groups, but others are shared among mainstream Buddhism and Catholicism. These similarities underscore the differences between the two groups and mainstream Protestantism in the United States. They further highlight the opposition of both to elements of normative Protestant modernity in the United States.

The history of the two groups also establishes a sense of historical precedent about SEIs' connections between spiritual belief and activist practices. The histories of Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker demonstrate that religiously- or spiritually-motivated protest about social justice issues is not an isolated phenomenon. This type of protest is also not limited to recent decades or to scattered geographic locations. Rather, in the case of these two movements, protest spans the 20th century and is a transnational phenomenon. (King, 2006; Queen, 2000; catholicworker.org/communities) The specific histories of Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker movement, as I show below, help to explain why these groups are appealing to SEIs.

The present chapter is divided into two parts: first, a section about the history, beliefs, and practices of Nipponzan Myohoji; and second, a section about the history, beliefs, and practices of the Catholic Worker movement.

Nipponzan Myohoji

History

In Japan in 1917, a 32-year-old monk named Nichidatsu Fujii (Fig. 1) resolved to seek enlightenment on a retreat alone into the mountains. The monk spent a week in seclusion beneath a waterfall in the mountains near Kyoto. One day, at dawn, he saw a man with a box on his back climbing the mountain trail, beating on a handheld drum. Fujii emerged from the waterfall and asked the man who he was and what he carried. The man replied that he was a *bodhisattva* (enlightened being) and that he carried Lord Buddha on his back. This vision was the sign Fujii had been waiting for; he took it to mean that he should separate from his monastic order and found a new sect that would spread the Buddha's message through the simple practice of walking and beating a drum. (Fujii, 2007 & 2009)

Inherent in Fujii's mission was a multi-layered critique: of contemporary Buddhism, of

the Japanese government, and of aspects of modernity and Westernization which had flooded Japan in prior decades. (Green, 2000; Josephson, 2011) The creation of Fujii's sect, Nipponzan Myohoji, can be situated in the context of the increasing interactions between East Asia and the West from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. These exchanges encompassed efforts by the Japanese military, governmental officials, and academic elites to understand and deal with pressures from the West, including the forces of Christianity. (Doak, 1994; Isomae, 2002) Japan accepted and adopted some aspects of Western culture in order to preserve its autonomy and to prevent a loss of economic and political clout. (Yang, 2008) Christianity and Western civilization seemed to go hand-in-hand, and thus understanding Christianity was important in dealing with the United States and Europe. (Isomae, 2005; Josephson, 2011)

In the Meiji period from 1868 to 1912, Japan was struggling with internal political and social upheaval, and it began to strategically employ Western ideas within its own conflicts. The government sought to balance Westernization and modernization of the Japanese government and military with the formation of a Japanese national identity. (Beasley, 1995) The concept of religion played a significant role in this process. (Isomae, 2002 & 2005; Doak, 1994; Krämer, 2013; Josephson, 2011) The Meiji government revived the status of the Emperor of Japan as the divinely appointed leader of the nation. Yet while they returned to this traditional, absolute monarchical view, they also instated a parliamentary system and a constitution. The Meiji Constitution of 1890 included an article protecting freedom of religion. (Beasley, 1995) However, until the push for Westernization during the Meiji period, the Japanese language did not have an equivalent to the English word "religion." Japanese scholars translated it as *shūkyō*, "the teachings of a lineage," and they utilized Western categories to interpret religion and to incorporate it into Japanese law. (Krämer, 2013; Masuzawa, 2005) Scholars of the history of

religion in Japan, such as Isomae Jun'ichi (2002, 2005) and Hans Krämer (2013), have discussed the important role that Buddhist priests and scholars took in this process of nomenclature.

Japanese Buddhist priest Shimaji Mokurai (1872) captured some of the essence of the social and political ideas bound up in the idea of *shūkyō*:

The difference between politics (*sei*) and religion (*kyō*) should never be obscured. Politics is a human affair and only governs outward forms. Moreover, it separates countries from each other. Religion, however, is divine action and governs the heart... That both Japan and China have traditionally erred in [the relationship between] politics and religion seems to me to stem from their having frequently confused the two. In the old days, the Europeans had erred [here] as well, and their culture was enormously backward. In recent times, however, they have come to see this and have now reached great results. I wish this for our country as well. (pp. 235–36, in Krämer, 2013, pp. 91-92)

By persuading the government to classify Buddhism as a religion, leaders in the Japanese Buddhist community attempted to retain some autonomy. Simultaneously, government authorities employed these categorizations of religion in order to exert greater control over certain elements of Japanese life. For example, in this process, the government designated the Shinto tradition as a civil, not religious, tradition. Thus, worship in Shinto temples was made compulsory without violating Japan's new precept of freedom of religion. (Krämer, 2013) This institutionalized exaltation of the state was part of the enforced nationalism that Fujii Nichidatsu would protest in the early 1900s.

When Nichidatsu Fujii had his vision below the waterfall, on the one hand he had a profound personal religious experience. On the other hand, his story was part of a larger narrative about religion, politics, and changing society. At the individual level, Fujii's experience

parallels that of quite a few other founders of world religions; Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i faith were all founded by men in their thirties who were troubled by the conditions of the society around them. They all had spiritual experiences that led them away from the status quo of their societies and embarked on a path that often subjected them to misunderstanding, ridicule, and persecution. Like these leaders, Fujii holds a place of high honor among his followers as a unique messenger. (Green, 2000; Denise Laffan, p.c.)

When Fujii became a monk at age nineteen in 1904, the Japanese government and society were increasingly subsumed in the militarization and nationalism discussed above. (Isomae, 2002; Josephson, 2011) According to Fujii (2007, 2009), becoming a monk was not a respected choice in Japanese society at the time. It was not laudable for a young person to devote their lives to an ancient, cloistered institution rather than be a part of mainstream Japanese society. In 1917, when Fujii had his revelation, young men in Japan were expected to join the military. (Fujii, 2007; Kim, 1986) By following his vision, he embarked on a path that took him ever further from the mainstream of Japanese society—sometimes dangerously so.

Like the founders of many religious sects, Fujii sought a return to, or revival of, the oldest and most foundational principles of his faith, a goal that conflicted with the secularizing Japanese state at the time. (Fujii, 2007; Kim, 1986) Fujii's training and teachings were in the Nichiren school of Buddhism. Nichiren was a Japanese Buddhist monk who lived during the thirteenth century, a time of widespread governmental and social upheavals as well as of multiple natural disasters in Japan. (Nichiren, 1999) Nichiren asserted that Buddhists had become too preoccupied with achieving their own enlightenment, and that Buddhism needed to return to the Buddha's core precepts, which focused on how to conduct oneself in one's current life. (Nichiren, 1999)

Nichiren's teachings are distinct from those of other Buddhist groups. Nichiren Buddhism's practice of chanting a phrase called the *daimoku* is the hallmark of Nipponzan Myohoji and other Nichiren groups. (Green, 2000; Nichiren, 1999) Nichiren had a revelation that the collection of the Buddha's teachings known as the Lotus Sutra contained the essence of the Buddha's teachings. It was the only sutra needed to understand Buddhism and was the most sacred of writings. (Fujii, 2007) Based on this, Nichiren taught chanting the mantra "Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo," the *daimoku*, as the primary practice for his followers. Mantras are intended to express far more than the literal meaning of their words, and are often in stylized or abstract language. (Green, 2000) The *daimoku* can be approximately translated as "I take refuge in the wonderful law of the Lotus Sutra." Nichiren (1999) explained its meaning:

Myō is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and hō, to its manifestations. Renge, which means lotus flower, is used to symbolize the wonder of this Law. If we understand that our life at this moment is myō, then we will also understand that [all] life is the Mystic Law. This realization is the mystic kyō, or sutra. (p. 4)

Chanting the *daimoku* therefore demonstrated one's devotion to the Buddha's teachings as found in the Lotus Sutra. It also expressed the belief that all life is connected, and thus chanting the *daimoku* embodied the intention for all life to coexist in peace. (Nichiren, 1999) Nichiren Buddhism flourished in Japan and eventually split into multiple schools. (Kisala, 1999)

Nichiren Buddhists consider Nichiren to have been an incarnation of a *bodhisattva*, a being who has achieved enlightenment but remains in the world to aid others in reaching enlightenment. (Fujii, 2007; Kisala, 1999) Fujii is considered by his followers to be a reincarnation of Nichiren, and thus a *bodhisattva* himself. (D. Laffan, p.c.) His beliefs and practices were firmly grounded in Nichiren's teachings and in his notable challenging of the

Japanese government. Fujii too spoke as a critic of the Japanese government, particularly of its glorification and promotion of nationalism, modernization, and militarization at the expense of the wellbeing of the Japanese people. (Fujii, 2009) As a result of its tenets of social justice, Nipponzan Myohoji's practices were troublesome to the Japanese government. Fujii taught that the leaders of a nation must work for peace in order to lead society by example. (D. Laffan, p.c.) Therefore, a central part of Fujii's mission was to raise the government's consciousness of what he saw as a misguided path of for Japan, based in the Buddhist belief that wrongdoing is the product of ignorance of truth, or a failure to comprehend truth. (Fujii, 2007, 2009) Truth, in this instance, is the Dharma or laws of the universe, which the Buddha revealed. In Nichiren Buddhism, the Dharma includes the concept of Buddha-nature, which asserts that all sentient beings will eventually become enlightened. Therefore, every person has Buddha-nature, and thus no person should be treated with disrespect, even enemies. This practice of universal respect is called *tangyo-raihai*. (Fujii, 2009; Kim, 1986) Fujii's writings express his application of *tangyo-raihai* to the modern state. In 1951, when Japan was considering re-armament against the threat of both Western and Communist powers, Fujii wrote:

When we stand unarmed before forces of violence, we must be willing to suffer... The pain, humiliation, and brutal death that may follow our nonresistance and non-killing will not be in vain. Without doubt, they will awaken the Buddhahood inherent in the hearts of the Communist troops or of the troops of the 'free world,' who now believe in violence... The world situation today demands that eighty-four million Japanese as a nation choose non-armament, so that they will be victorious over hatred with the power of mercy and over violence with justice... This will be none other than the realization and manifestation of our Buddhahood. (Fujii, in Kim, 1986, p. 202)

Therefore, Fujii's protests both confronted the government's policies and ideology and sought to awaken them spiritually. (Kim, 1986) This combination of creating earthly change and spiritual awakening to eliminate suffering is the core belief behind Nipponzan Myohoji's practices of walking, drumming, and chanting the daimoku. This practice manifests the Dharma. When people hear the drum and daimoku, they may be attracted by it, or they may reject it because they are not open to hearing the Buddha's teachings. (Fujii, 2009)

In pursuit of this mission, Fujii led his disciples on "peace walks" across Japan, and even stood in protest outside the imperial palace, drumming and chanting until he and his followers were forcibly removed. Civil disobedience like this was uncommon in modern Japanese society. (Kisala, 1999; D. Laffan, p.c.) Nipponzan Myohoji faced reprisal from the government and received little sympathy from main-stream society for its criticism of government and militarism. (Kisala, 1999) Despite this, the small order persevered through the world wars. At the end of World War II, a new focal point of protest emerged: nuclear weapons. Far from initiating efforts for peace and reconciliation, the end of World War II instead ushered in a new threat of massive proportions in the form of nuclear armaments in the context of the Cold War. Far from viewing this as a defeat, Nipponzan Myohoji's monks entered the second half of the twentieth century by organizing more and larger peace walks, spreading to other countries, and building "peace pagodas" (Fig. 1) (discussed below) around the world to continue pursuing peace. (Fujii, 2007; Green, 2000)

The History of Engaged Buddhism

Nipponzan Myohoji can be considered part of a larger movement known as Engaged Buddhism. Analyzing the order under this aegis provides more context for its presence in the United States today. Engaged Buddhism, so named, is most simply defined by a belief that

working for social justice is inherent to Buddhism. (Green, 1999; Queen, 2008) Traditional Buddhism does not inherently concern itself with social reform. (King, 2005; Nhat Hanh, 2008) Hunt-Perry and Fine (2008) summarize Engaged Buddhism's purpose as "mindfulness practices, social service, and nonpartisan advocacy to reduce and stop injustice" (p. 36). In this way, Engaged Buddhism connects core Buddhist concepts to social justice and political engagement.

Although this approach to Buddhism already existed in disparate forms, the term Engaged Buddhism originated in the late 1960s. The term was coined by Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the best-known figures in 20th century Buddhism. (Ingram, 1990) He led nonviolent actions during the war in Vietnam, which made his name inseparable from peace activism. His dedication to social justice was not without precedent. Vietnamese Buddhist monks have taken part in nonviolent social and political dissent since the 1000s CE, including in the "Monks' War" against the French in colonial Indochina from 1895 to 1898. This legacy of political resistance influenced Nhat Hanh's spiritual philosophy and his willingness to take action in the sociopolitical sphere. (Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000)

Nhat Hanh was a dedicated monk, but he also had experienced Western culture firsthand. He had studied at Princeton and taught at Columbia University. (Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000) He returned to South Vietnam in 1963 in light of the growing political conflict there. In that year, Vietnamese monk Thich Quang Duc publicly immolated himself, an act which focused the world's attention on the violence in Vietnam, as Quang Duc had hoped it would. (Nhat Hanh, 1999) In this climate of political instability and increasing violence, Nhat Hanh acted in the spirit of the Buddhist belief in "interbeing," or the interconnection of all individuals and, indeed, of all life. He founded the School of Youth for Social Service, a volunteer organization that provided services to anyone in need of aid as a result of the war, regardless of their political affiliation.

(Chan Kong, 1993; Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000)

In his work, Nhat Hanh challenged several conventions. He and his supporters went against much of traditional Buddhist thought which prescribed neutrality and avoidance of involvement in political matters. (King, 2005) Thich Nhat Hanh's most radical act was tying Buddhist philosophy to government and international politics. He presented public dissent and direct action for peace as integral to Buddhism, rather than simply advocating peace in general or abstract terms. (Nhat Hanh, 1999; Simmer-Brown, 2000) He also worked closely with a Vietnamese nun, Sister Chan Khong, who would remain one of his closest associates. Their collaboration and her public activism challenged patriarchal conventions both within Buddhist monasticism (in which female monks are usually less publicly seen and less respected than male monks) and in the surrounding Vietnamese culture. (Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000) Nhat Hanh, Chan Khong, and the members of the School of Youth joined others who spoke out against the conflict in favor of Vietnamese self-determination. They organized nonviolent protests and strikes and also promoted writing and art expressing the effects of the war on the Vietnamese people. (Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000; Nhat Hanh, 1992, 1999)

Nhat Hanh perceived a need for teaching and community in Buddhism, not just in Vietnam but worldwide, which would allow Buddhists to address conflict constructively and effectively. To address this need, he found the Order of Interbeing in 1966. (Chan Kong, 1993) This new monastic order emphasized Buddhist practice that took into account current societal conditions and worked for social justice within those conditions. (Nhat Hanh, 1993; Simmer-Brown, 2000) Also in 1966, Nhat Hanh traveled to the United States to speak publicly about the conflict in Vietnam and about the peace movement there. He addressed Congress and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, as well as public audiences around the country. His message was

poorly received by many United States officials and citizens, who viewed war as the primary means to create peace and who saw opposition to the war as a rejection of democracy. (Coleman, 2001; Hunt-Perry and Fine, 2000) The trip did afford Nhat Hanh the opportunity to connect with a range of influential United States peace activists: Catholic monk Thomas Merton, musician Joan Baez, Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day, and civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (who subsequently nominated Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize). (Chan Kong, 1993; Simmer-Brown, 2000)

Nhat Hanh's efforts earned him enemies on both sides of the conflict in Vietnam. By 1967, the danger to his life if he returned to Vietnam was such that his associates convinced him not to go back. (Chan Kong, 1993) He, Chan Khong, and other members of the Order of Interbeing established a Buddhist community in France, called Plum Village, which became the new home of their social justice work. (Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000) By the 1980s, over five hundred individuals had been ordained into the Order of Interbeing, and thousands had traveled to Plum Village and other locations to attend retreats led by Nhat Hanh. In the 1990s, he led and participated in many interfaith projects. He also again spoke publicly in the United States, something he had not done since the discouraging 1966 visit. (Simmer-Brown, 2000) He addressed Vietnam and Gulf War veterans, speaking about their suffering and lasting trauma through the lens of engaged Buddhism. He stated that soldiers and other perpetrators of violence deserve compassion and the opportunity for reconciliation. (Nhat Hanh, 1992, 1999)

While Nhat Hanh played a large part in Americans' awareness of Buddhism, other social and cultural changes laid the groundwork for Engaged Buddhism to take root in the United States. (Queen, 2000) Throughout the twentieth century, Americans became interested in a variety of elements of Asian thought and culture which fomented awareness and practice of

Buddhism in the United States. Aside from the longstanding phenomenon of orientalism, specific interest in Buddhism developed with the beat generation of the early 1950s. (Queen, 2000; Said, 1978; Simmer-Brown, 2000) Interest in Asian philosophy and spirituality grew through the 1960s with the hippie movement and the outcry against the Vietnam War. (Fuller, 2001; Simmer-Brown, 2000) Several groups and individuals were pivotal in this process: American Zen practitioners, Shambhala International, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and Nichiren sects Soka Gakkai International and Nipponzan Myohoji. (Coleman, 2001; Hunt-Perry and Fine, 2000; Simmer-Brown, 2000)

Zen Buddhism's popularity in the 1940s and 1950s paved the way for other schools of Buddhism to emerge in the 1960s. After World War II, some veterans of the Pacific theater and servicemen stationed in Japan became interested in Japanese Buddhism. Artists, writers, and scholars followed suit. (Queen, 2000; Simmer-Brown, 2000) Of particular note is author Gary Snyder, who traveled to Japan specifically to study Zen and who became a significant influence on popular writers Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Snyder's 1961 article "Buddhist Anarchism" precedes the term Engaged Buddhism but reflects the growing sentiment among groups in Asia and America that Buddhism could be a powerful force for social change. (Coleman, 2001; Simmer-Brown, 2000) Snyder presents Buddhism in distinctly Western terms and articulates the activist concerns of the emerging Left and antiwar movements of the 1960s:

The national politics of the modern world maintain their existence by deliberately fostered craving and fear: monstrous protection rackets. The "free world" has become economically dependent on a fantastic system of stimulation of greed which cannot be fulfilled, sexual desire which cannot be satiated and hatred which has no outlet except against oneself... or the revolutionary aspirations of pitiful, poverty-stricken marginal

societies like Cuba or Vietnam. The conditions of the Cold War have turned all modern societies — Communist included — into vicious distorters of man's true potential... The joyous and voluntary poverty of Buddhism becomes a positive force [which] has nation-shaking implications. The practice of meditation... Wipes out mountains of junk being pumped into the mind by the mass media and supermarket universities... and points the way to a kind of community which would amaze "moralists" and transform armies of men who are fighters because they cannot be lovers. (Snyder, 1961, n.p.)

Snyder decries modern politics as the product of institutions that foster greed, violence, and oppression. He presents Buddhist practice and ethics as alternatives to shallow morality, consumerism, and exploitative globalization. Buddhism, Snyder asserts, counteracts the deterioration of Western society through voluntary poverty, meditation, and community. Fujii (1983) wrote a similar critique:

It is imperative that we replace materialism and the economy-centered way of thinking, which have served as the fundamental principles of social organization--what European nations are long accustomed to; we replace them by community based on human solidarity and mutual aid, and develop the life of tangyo-raihai and giving of alms and offering, this adding a religious aspect to such communal existence. (p. 217, in Kim, 1986, p. 198)

Snyder's paean to Buddhism echoes the Western focus on individual enlightenment via meditation (discussed further below), and he may well not have agreed with Fujii on the importance of the religious aspects of Buddhism (also discussed below). Nonetheless, both he and Fujii criticize the dual problems of consumerism and individual alienation in Western society and speak of community as an ultimate outcome of Buddhism.

The popular manifestations of Buddhism, especially Zen, in the United States did not unilaterally produce peaceful communalism or freedom from greed. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Zen centers sprouted up around the country, particularly in California. Some Zen teachers mainly sought profit and power over followers, charging high fees for instruction or exerting control by instilling obsessive devotion or fear. (Simmer-Brown, 2000) Additionally, Zen as taught in the West is arguably a privileged and Westernized form of Buddhism. (Fuller, 2001; Nhat Hanh, 2008; Prebish & Baumann, 2002) In Japan, Zen Buddhism was comprised of many sects. Zen monasteries were strict, hierarchical, and ascetic. Younger monks had to persevere through periods of fasting, hours or days of silent meditation, and manual labor to maintain the monastery. (Prebish & Baumann, 2002) But as a lay practice in the United States, Zen was often stripped of the Japanese rituals which went against American individualism, egalitarianism, and material comfort. (Coleman, 2001; Fuller, 2001) Zen Buddhism in the West is often limited to a focus on one's own mind and the sole goal of personal enlightenment, in contrast to Engaged Buddhism, which center on one's relationship with others and on the alleviation of all beings' suffering. (Nhat Hanh, 2008; Queen, 1996) Additionally, the most basic requirement for practicing Zen as a layperson is the time to sit, usually in private, for long periods of time on a regular basis. (Prebish & Baumann, 2002) Throughout Buddhist history, meditation was not expected of laypersons because their daily lives rarely left time for such practices. (Nhat Hanh, 2008)

In addition to American adoption and adaptation of Buddhism, Asian Buddhists who came to the United States also influenced the growth of Engaged Buddhism in the country. One such group, Soka Gakkai, arrived in the United States at the apogee of the counterculture movement. Soka Gakkai, a sect of Japanese Nichiren Buddhism, was among the few religious

groups in Japan that protested pre-World War II nationalism and the war itself. (Chappell, 2000) In 1960, the group established its first United States center in California and grew quickly. Soka Gakkai later expanded and founded centers in almost every state. Soka Gakkai is often counted among Engaged Buddhist sects because of its history of protest and because some of its precepts are inherently concerned with social justice. (Chappell, 2000; Hammond & Machacek, 1999)

While not directly a practitioner of Engaged Buddhism, Tibetan monk Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's role in expanding Americans' awareness of Buddhism contributed to the growing interest in the religion as a whole. Trungpa had been exposed to social and political strife early in life, having led a contingent of Tibetan refugees into India during the Tibetan uprising in 1959, at which time he was only 20 years old. (Coleman, 2001) In 1970, Trungpa moved to the United States and began to lead intensive education and meditation courses around the country. In 1974, he founded Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, and recruited high-profile teachers including Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, and well-known Buddhist writer Jack Kornfield. Trungpa began to call his lineage of teaching "Shambhala Training," incorporating various mystical Tibetan teachings and practices. His students included one of the most revered female monks in Buddhism, Pema Chodron, along with figures such as author John Steinbeck IV, musicians David Bowie and Joni Mitchell, and composer John Cage. (Coleman, 2001; Goss, 2000)

Trungpa altered the representation of Buddhist teachings as exotic and detached from mainstream culture by wearing Western business dress in public and by transgressing Buddhist monastic conventions of abstaining from intoxicants and sex. He had renounced his monastic vows in 1969 and drank alcohol heavily, smoked, and engaged in sexual relationships with students. (Coleman, 2001; Goss, 2000) Trungpa Rinpoche was far from the only Buddhist leader

to be the object of criticism and accusations of misconduct. Several famous California Zen centers would dissolve by the 1980s due to scandals related to sexual relationships and abuse of power. Trungpa himself died in 1987 of alcohol-related liver failure. While his methods and actions were controversial, Trungpa greatly widened American awareness of Tibetan Buddhism. (Coleman, 2001; Goss, 2000) Many of his students went on to practice Engaged Buddhism (without carrying on Trungpa's more contentious activities).

A key organization in the effort to create a cohesive Engaged Buddhist community has been the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. The Fellowship began as, and is still comprised of, a network of independent grassroots movements started by Buddhists across the United States who felt driven to work for social justice. (Coleman, 2001) It originated in 1977 in Maui, Hawai'i, at a Zen center operated by military veteran Robert Aitken. Aitken's interest in Buddhism came not from its proponents in America, but rather from his experiences as a prisoner of war in Japan from 1941 to 1945. (Simmer-Brown, 2000) In 1950, Aitken returned to Japan to study under a Zen master and in 1959 founded his own Zen center in his home in Maui. Aitken became the de facto leader of the nascent Buddhist Peace Fellowship, a group of Buddhists who had found they shared a determination to engage in social activism and to find other Buddhists who wanted to do the same. Buddhist practice and philosophy could and had become an escape from the world for some, but Aitken's group saw it as a vehicle for social reform as well as a personal spiritual path. (Prebish & Baumann, 2002; Simmer-Brown, 2000)

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship stands out because it has brought together practitioners of different schools of Buddhism under the aegis of peace activism. Previous developments had primarily been within sects, primarily among Zen, Tibetan, or Nichiren Buddhist groups who did not necessarily communicate with one another. (Simmer-Brown, 2000) The Buddhist Peace

Fellowship put the issue of peace work at the forefront of its mission and fostered communication and cooperation between different Engaged Buddhists groups and practitioners. This reflected the maturation of the movement beyond an intra-group focus to emphasize shared social and political concerns. (Coleman, 2001) Its avoidance of sectarian affiliation has helped the Buddhist Peace Fellowship steer clear of some of the issues with hierarchy, patriarchal tendencies, and power issues that emerged in some of the United States Buddhist schools discussed above.

In its early years, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship adopted the term Engaged Buddhism that Thich Nhat Hanh had coined a decade before. The group utilized texts from multiple schools of Buddhism to build a philosophy of activist spirituality that was relevant to American practitioners. (Coleman, 2001) Therefore, from its outset, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship was inspired by Asian Engaged Buddhism, but it expressed and enlarged these ideas in its own American voice. In 1983, 1987, and 1989, it was the Buddhist Peace Fellowship which sponsored Thich Nhat Hanh to tour the United States, thus honoring his continued prominence among Engaged Buddhists. (Simmer-Brown, 2000)

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship can be said to embody some of the challenges that face engaged Buddhism as a whole: the difficulty of maintaining an equanimitable view of the oppressor and the oppressed; achieving a balance between action in the world and adherence to traditional Buddhist philosophies of non-attachment; and adapting Buddhism to the modern life of laypersons. (King, 2005) Like most groups, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship has generally consisted of United States Buddhists of Caucasian background, with a handful of Asian-American members. (Hammond & Machacek, 1999)

For many Engaged Buddhists, the United States represented the seat of imperialism and

violence in the world. The growth of Engaged Buddhism in the United States made the country more accessible to Asian Buddhist groups. (Coleman, 2001; Queen, 2000) It was under these circumstances that Nipponzan Myohoji came to the United States in the 1970s. Its mission in the United States was specifically to address the country's leading role in war and imperialism. Its purpose was to address United States sociopolitical issues through a combination of spiritual and political action. (Green, 2000; Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000)

Ethics and Beliefs

Engaged Buddhism is characterized by several departures from or reinterpretations of traditional Buddhism. The Buddha taught that suffering is caused by undue attachment to one's desires, feelings, and possessions. The external material world is constantly changing; all conditions in it are temporary. (King, 2005; Nhat Hanh, 1993, 2008; Queen, 2000) In a global and historical scale, unjust and unequal societies have existed for millennia and have often persisted despite efforts for change. Attempts to alleviate others' external suffering are often short-sighted and overlook the large-scale cycle of how to truly escape suffering. Individuals often try to impose goals and outcomes on situations that are outside their control. Efforts to change conditions—such as social and political systems—to fit a particular vision are likely to end in frustration. (Nhat Hanh, 1993, 2008; Queen, 1999)

With this view of the nature of life and the human mind, Buddhism teaches that individuals can escape suffering by focusing on own their internal condition and training the mind not to be excessively afflicted by external conditions. An individual only has the capacity and the responsibility to liberate themselves. Therefore, political protest and activism can be seen as an attachment to these temporary worldly conditions and the emotions one feels in reaction to them. (King, 2005; Queen, 1999) However, these are not the sole precepts of Buddhism.

Engaged Buddhists emphasize a balance between individual spiritual practice and alleviating unnecessary suffering and injustice. They refer to those Buddhist teachings which emphasize compassion, alleviation of needless suffering, and equality of all people.

From these ideas, one can assert that Buddha did not advocate complete withdrawal from the world or ignoring the suffering of others. Rather, he advocated detachment from the results of one's actions. The Buddha's message could serve as a set of spiritual tools for Buddhists who are so inclined to help those who suffer the most in the world. (Coleman, 2001; King, 2005) This is often expressed using the Buddhist term interbeing: different beings and different facets of existence are inseparable, though it requires spiritual practice to keep this in one's mind. Violence and apathy spring from ignorance of how each life, and each scale of life, is interconnected. Therefore, interbeing can be seen as a fusion of the spiritual, the social, and the political. (King, 2005; Nhat Hanh, 1992 & 1999)

As discussed above, Engaged Buddhism promotes compassion not just for one's supporters, but also for one's persecutors: for example, the understanding that the soldier, the police officer, or the government official should not be dehumanized or reified but rather seen as a human similar to oneself. Nhat Hanh (1982/1993) expressed this aspect of Buddhism in one of his most-circulated pieces of writing, the poem "Please Call Me by My True Names," represented in these stanzas:

I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate,
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.
I am a member of the politburo, with plenty of power in my hands,
and I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to, my people,

dying slowly in a forced labor camp...
Please call me by my true names,
so I can wake up,
and so the door of my heart can be left open,
the door of compassion. (n.p.)

Understanding this perspective is vital to appreciating the actions of Engaged Buddhists, particularly the belief that “enemies” are trapped in the same system of violence as those over whom they exert power. In the terms discussed above, they are not evil and to be treated as other, but rather are in a state of ignorance and should be approached with peaceful intent. (Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000; Nhat Hanh, 1993 & 2008) Hostility or alienation on the part of victims, peace activists, and others will never bring peace to the hostile individual or to society, and will only perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Engaged Buddhism is often considered a modern phenomenon. (King, 2005; Queen, 1996 & 2000) The Engaged Buddhist individuals and groups discussed above have been responding, directly or indirectly, to issues caused or exacerbated by colonialism, imperialism, and war between Western and Eastern nations. (King, 2005; Queen, 2000) A question then raised by some religious scholars such as Bardwell Smith (1972) and Joseph Kitagawa (1980) is whether Engaged Buddhism can claim continuity with traditional Buddhism, or whether it is a Westernization of Buddhism, infusing Euro-American social concerns into Asian religion and culture. Engaged Buddhism scholar Christopher Queen (2000) takes the perspective that Engaged Buddhism combines Buddhist spiritual practice with Western concepts of human rights, individual freedom, and democratic governance. Equally well-known Buddhist scholar Sallie King (2005) contends that:

Those who think that Engaged Buddhism is the product of Western influence have in mind a model of cross-cultural encounter that assumes the overwhelming power of Western ideas and culture and minimizes or negates the power of Buddhist ideas and culture... But this set of assumptions negates precisely those things that is most concerned to protect: the alterity and agency of the Buddhist leadership. (p. 3)

Concerns about cultural colonialism or appropriation are, of course, legitimate. However, King (2005) points out that to presume that any interaction between cultures will result in the dominance of Western ideas is to embody the selfsame dominance. Buddhism, she asserts, has spread worldwide and has enlarged its scope and philosophy of its own accord, incorporating values or concepts from other cultures as it has found them to resonate with its existing message. (King, 1996 & 2005) As two of the most prolific scholars of Engaged Buddhism, King's and Queen's perspectives on this point are valuable. As discussed above, Buddhism as understood by Americans is often quite different from that found in Asia, and Engaged Buddhist activism can be argued to be rooted in Western concepts of human rights and sociopolitical change. (Coleman, 2001) However, as Queen and King suggest, this need not disqualify Engaged Buddhism as a branch of Buddhism. In the specific case of Nipponzan Myohoji, this order is considered radical and its activism has been critiqued for its divergence from older Nichiren sects. (Fujii, 2009; Kim, 1986) However, as discussed above, Nipponzan Myohoji monks also follow Buddhist scriptures and practices that originated in the 13th century and apply them to the modern world without substantive alteration. (Fujii, 2007, 2009; Nhat Hanh, 2008)

Practices

As discussed above, based on traditional Nichiren Buddhist teachings, Nipponzan Myohoji monks conduct two primary practices: peace walks and peace pagodas. Monks

undertake peace walks in order to raise awareness about various social justice issues and to support organizations that address these issues. The practice of drumming and chanting expresses the transcendental element of tangyo-raihai to the walks. Fujii developed this practice, which evolved from multi-day events to cross-country and international walks as protest or witness events. (Fujii, 2007; Green, 2000; Sutherland, 2007) Nipponzan Myohoji communities hold peace walks and participate in other activist groups' marches around the world to campaign against social and environmental injustices, such as nuclear weapons, civil rights abuses, and mountaintop-removal mining. Nipponzan Myohoji is notable for inviting all comers to join the walks, and in the United States, for reaching out to partner with Native American and African American communities to address racism and systemic inequality. (Green, 2000)

Nipponzan Myohoji's other primary practice has been the building of peace pagodas at different locations around the world. Pagodas, or *stupas* in Sanskrit, are shrines containing relics of the Buddha and, in this case, serve as a focus for meditations and gatherings for peace. All pagodas are built with volunteer, often amateur, labor. (Green, 2000) The peace pagodas and peace walks are meant to serve as spiritual activities that generate peace, and as embodiments of Nipponzan Myohoji's political and social objectives. Peace walks, pagoda construction, and visiting Nipponzan Myohoji pagodas are open to all, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. (D. Laffan, p.c.; Gyosyu Utsumi, p.c.) In this way, Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker (discussed below) resemble one another in their openness to people of all faiths and all walks of life.

Participants

Nipponzan Myohoji participants can be broken down into several categories, as is also the case with Catholic Worker members (discussed below). Some participants in Nipponzan Myohoji's activities have a knowledge of or interest in Buddhism, but it is not a deciding factor

in their participation. Around the world Nipponzan Myohoji is primarily represented by monks and nuns who have trained with the order and taken vows. In Japan, Nipponzan also has some lay members who attend the temples' annual festivals. These are rarely found outside Japan. (D. Laffan, p.c.) In other countries, there are individuals who participate in Nipponzan Myohoji's protests and peace walks, and who help to build peace pagodas. These are Buddhists of various denominations, peace activists, and individuals who have met the monks and joined activities despite no previous affiliation with Buddhism or activism. (Green, 2000; D. Laffan, p.c.) In describing members of Engaged Buddhist sects, Hammond and Machacek (1999) found via surveys that there are certain commonalities among members of these groups: most were not brought up in strictly religious households, did not have strong religious beliefs when they first learned about Buddhism, had moderately liberal but not radical political views and social values; and rated career and making money as relatively unimportant to them.

There are traits specific to Nipponzan Myohoji that participants cite as appealing: it is accepting of all religions and spiritualities; it has very little hierarchy or formal organization; and it has little dogma or formality. Activities are generally communal and egalitarian; anyone can take part in the practices of walking, drumming, and chanting. No doctrine or creed is imposed on participants. Buddhism in general emphasizes the primacy of personal experience and individual insight. (King, 2006) Nipponzan Myohoji in particular performs ritual without being rigid or elaborate, and demonstrates principles without being dogmatic. These aspects of its spiritual nature attract those who reject the authority, misogyny, and/or hierarchy of the Abrahamic religions.

Participants also cite the meditative nature of peace walks and the importance of spending time at Nipponzan Myohoji temples as restorative or fortifying complements to more

overtly political activities. Monks and participants alike work on cooking, cleaning, and other chores at the temples, where the monks live in voluntary poverty and try to be self-sustaining through means such as collected or grey water systems, gardening, and energy conservation. Voluntary poverty reflects monks' focus on the spiritual, rather than on the material, and their connection with the oppressed and poor in the world. Similarly, their environmentalism reflects a respect and care for the earth and other living beings. Participants often follow similar practices in their own homes, connecting spirituality with environmentalism. The political element of these practices is the critique of government policies that create or promulgate poverty, pollution, and misuse of resources. (Kaza, 2000; King, 2005)

Nipponzan Myohoji's particular emphasis on African Americans' and Native Americans' civil rights is another point of attraction for some participants. Nipponzan Myohoji enables participants to experience local or communal interbeing with individuals whom they would not otherwise meet (discussed further in chapter three). (Green, 2000; Sutherland, 2007) White, usually middle-class, Americans often do not have an inroad into participating in events or protests with minorities, and are hesitant to make overtures that may be seen as appropriation, co-optation, or another assertion of white privilege. (Sutherland, 2007) Participating with the Nipponzan Myohoji monks is thus a safe haven for SEIs who seek involvement with minority groups, have an affinity for Buddhism or an aversion to Western religions, and feel restored or re-energized sharing in the monks' activities and way of life.

The Catholic Worker

History

The church of Our Lady, Help of Christians is a Catholic church located in Staten Island, New York. In July 1926, twenty-nine-year-old Dorothy Day watched as a priest poured water

three times over the head of Day's infant daughter, Tamar, baptizing her into the Catholic faith. Day's cousins stood alongside her as the child's godparents. (Day, 2008) The sacrament of baptism in the Catholic Church meant Tamar had received the Holy Spirit, the element of the Christian Trinity that imparted God's grace to humans. She had received remission of the original sin that all humans were born with which would otherwise condemn her soul to torment after her death. The infant was now part of a community that stretched through almost 1900 years of history and spanned the globe. This element of community had deep meaning to Tamar's mother. Day (1952) wrote in her autobiography about the growing importance of Catholicism in her life at this time. She carried a rosary, prayed multiple times a day, and studied the Catholic catechism with a nun. A statue of the Virgin Mary had pride of place in her house on Staten Island, where she walked the beach and contemplated God's glory. (Day, 2008)

But in 1926, Day was not a confirmed Catholic, nor would many have predicted she would become so. She was not married to Tamar's father, had been divorced, and had had an abortion. The cousins who became Tamar's godparents were almost strangers to her; she had asked this of them because they were the only Catholics she knew. (Day, 2008) The circles in which she moved generally had little consideration for or patience with religion. Day had been a journalist for several radical publications, being passionately involved in the movements for workers' rights and social progressivism. She had been arrested multiple times and served jail time for her participation in radical activism. (Day, 1952; Egan, 1988) Yet, by the time she was 30, Day was not only a noted writer, radical, and single working mother, but also a devout Catholic. Day's baptism in 1927 was the culmination of a lifelong fascination with religion, a passion unforeshadowed by her upbringing in a lax Protestant family and her largely secular circle of friends and colleagues. (Egan, 1988) In converting, she took a vital step closer to the

work that would become her life and her legacy: a movement that interwove Catholicism, anarchism, nonviolent political protest, and a radical approach to charity.

Day's conversion was not an occasion of unmitigated celebration for her at the time, nor was it a choice easily understood by those close to her. Becoming Catholic meant severing romantic ties with Tamar's father, an atheist who opposed marriage. Day struggled with doubts about her religion. She saw shortcomings in the Catholic Church. She felt a sense of perpetual inadequacy and guilt for what she perceived as her sins. Her deep devotion to a traditional religious institution warred with her opposition to hierarchical power structures. (Day, 1952, 2008) In her personal and professional life, she felt that she was losing her place in the activist community. She wrote of a protest against unemployment in Washington, DC that she witnessed in 1932:

On a bright sunny day the ragged horde triumphantly with banners waving... paraded three thousand strong through the tree-flanked streets of Washington. I stood on the curb and watched them, joy and pride in the courage of this band of men and women mounting in my heart, and with it a bitterness too that since I was now a Catholic, with fundamental philosophical differences, I could not be out there with them... Where was the Catholic leadership... for the actual works of mercy that the comrades had always made part of their technique in reaching the workers? (1952, p. 165)

Day had reason to ask why this lack of Catholic leadership existed. Catholicism in the United States was primarily the religion of poor immigrants, of the working-class neighborhoods of Irish and Italians. The plight of workers was acutely felt in Catholic communities. However, as discussed below, the American Catholic Church at this time did not take a political stance based on the needs of its parishioners. (Piehl, 1982)

Anti-Catholicism reached back to the colonial period in the United States. Northern and Western European immigrants of the 17th and 18th centuries bore the Protestant-Catholic enmity that had reached its peak after the Protestant Reformation. (Beneke, 2011) This opposition was not solely religious; it was based in social and political divisions that corresponded to divisions within Christianity. (Cavanaugh, 2009) Casanova (1992) wrote:

At least in colonial America, the category "Protestant" masks fundamental differences and mutual intolerance between the various Protestant groups. But there was something which practically all Protestant groups, irrespective of doctrinal or ecclesiastical differences, shared, namely, a virulent anti-popery... all viewed the Catholic Church as the "Anti-Christ" and the "Whore of Babylon." Indeed, at times, the external enemy, Catholicism, was the only thing that could cement internal Protestant unity. (p. 77)

The most prevalent anti-Catholic rhetoric throughout American history has centered on Catholics' allegiance to the church hierarchy and the Pope, claiming that Catholics could not be full citizens of the modern nation-state when they obeyed the laws of the Church as much as those of secular government. The Catholic clergy, anti-Catholics argued, could thus use its power over parishioners for subversive, un-American purposes. (Beneke, 2011; Fogarty, 2003)

In the colonial era and the early decades of the United States as a nation, Catholics were a relatively small minority. (Fogarty, 2003; Piehl, 1982) But beginning in the 1830s, Catholics began immigrating to the United States in large numbers. The growing American Catholic Church actively tried to assimilate into American society, promoting patriotism and aligning itself with mainstream American culture, and thus too with Protestantism. (Casanova, 1992) However, Protestants and secularists alike continued to regard Catholicism as deviant from mainstream American society. The waves of thousands of immigrants in the 1800s exacerbated

anti-immigration sentiments and brought them to the forefront of politics. Many of these immigrants were of ethnicities that were generally vilified and stereotyped as lazy, uncivilized, and criminally inclined. (Casanova, 1992; Jenkins, 2003) By extension, Catholics were once again perceived as un-American. They were considered to lack the work ethic of Protestant Americans. They were accused of blind allegiance to the clergy and Pope rather than their adopted nation. The Catholic hierarchy, in turn, was suspected of brainwashing its parishioners with an anti-democratic agenda. (Jenkins, 2003) Furthermore, Catholicism's rituals and aesthetics—the Latin liturgy, elaborate decor, sacraments, transubstantiation, and veneration of saints—seemed antiquated, superstitious, or even pagan. (Beneke, 2011; Fogarty, 2003)

Fogarty (2003) analyzes 20th century trends in anti-Catholicism, particularly noting that direct anti-Catholic rhetoric and hate crimes have declined over the past century. However, a linchpin of Fogarty's argument is that many of the social norms and legislation that affected Catholics were not anti-Catholic measures, but anti-religious measures. Fogarty frames citizens' and legislators' oppositions to Catholic private schools and other initiatives by the church outside of worship as being largely “secularist.” However, as previously mentioned, this secular agenda was firmly rooted in the Protestant tradition. Efforts to curtail religion in the public sphere disproportionately affect non-Protestants, since Protestant values are already the norm embedded in mainstream American society and government.

At the same time as the status quo looked askance at Catholicism, social movements like the labor movement eschewed the church as well. The Communist, socialist, and anarchist factions generally agreed with Marx's (1844) view of religion as “the opium... of the people” (n.p.), an institution which kept the poor docile and apathetic. Activists blamed wealthy industrialists and exploitative company owners for the system that oppressed and impoverished

workers and a lax, unresponsive government that failed to regulate businesses or assist the unemployed. (Piehl, 1982) The modern ideologies of capitalism and individualism contributed to secularism's separation of morality and welfare from public life.

Day's activist associates of the time, she noted, generally did not view religion as a potential asset for achieving their goals. (Day, 1952, 2008) Nonetheless, in the midst of this anti-Catholic environment, Day had come to see the social issues that most concerned her through the lens of Catholic beliefs. Inequality, oppression of workers, poverty, and an exploitative ruling class created widespread suffering like that which Jesus had opposed in his lifetime. In Day's view, the spirit of Christianity was the message of Jesus's life as told in the Gospels, and this message mandated social action. (DiDomizio, 1988) She had seen secular activist groups created and dissolved due to members' conflicting priorities and lack of consensus on principles. In contrast, Catholicism held a potential guide in its morality, its cohesive structure, and its allegiance to a divine order that was higher than any human plan. Day found solace and joy in these aspects of the Church. It was a body almost two millennia old that drew millions of people worldwide to its churches every week. (Day, 1952) It offered strength and hope to the suffering through its consistent rituals, its message of love, and its ability to connect individuals with one another and with a divine, eternal spirit. Day would never uncritically endorse or blindly conform to Church teachings, nor would she condone the Church's great wealth and power. (Day, 1952; Egan, 1988)

Day continued to struggle to live as both a social radical and a member of a traditional religion. In 1932 when she attended the unemployment protest in Washington, DC described above, Day had not yet found a way to resolve these tensions in her life. After the protest, she went to the national shrine at Catholic University. She wrote: "There I offered up a special

prayer, a prayer which came with tears and with anguish, that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor... When I returned to New York, I found Peter Maurin” (1952, p. 166).

Peter Maurin was the answer to Day’s prayer. When Day returned to New York, she found Peter Maurin waiting in her apartment, where he had been sent by an acquaintance who felt he should meet Day. Day (1939a) describes him: “He was wearing a khaki shirt and shabby stained pants and an overcoat... He wore a pair [of reading glasses] which had one ear-piece missing so they sagged on one side of his face” (p. 6). Maurin was an itinerant French street preacher in his sixties and a lifelong devout Catholic who passionately preached social reform wherever he went. (Ellis, 1988; Piehl, 1982) At first, Day found Maurin’s frequent visits to her home to be something of a nuisance; he talked at length about his extensive social and religious ideas regardless of his audience’s attentiveness. But Maurin’s fervent faith would come to provide a counterweight to Day’s lingering doubts about her faith. For his part, Maurin believed Day was a nascent saint of social reform. (Piehl, 1982; Troester, 1993)

Maurin’s social reform beliefs were similar to Day’s, and he had an understanding of sociopolitical theory that added depth and detail to Day’s ideas. (Ellis, 1988) Maurin championed a return to the Gospel’s radical message and the core mission of the historical Jesus. This message, he felt, was the bedrock of the Church. It included voluntary poverty, charity, emphasis on liberating the oppressed, and spreading the Gospel. He did not advocate a break with or overhaul of the Catholic Church. Rather, he insisted to skeptics that what he advocated was “tradition, not revolution” (Ellis, 1988, p. 17). One of Maurin’s ideas was the creation of “houses of hospitality” (Day, 1939a & 1939b; O’Gorman & Coy, 1988) for the needy, based on the model of medieval Christian hospitals which offered aid and shelter to the poor, the sick, and

travelers. (O'Gorman & Coy, 1988) In Maurin's vision, the workers in these houses would be members of the middle and upper classes. By working with the less fortunate, they would acquire personal experience that would give them greater understanding of poverty and other social ills. This understanding would ideally have a "trickle-up" effect and bring more people to the cause of social justice. (Ellis, 1988; Piehl, 1982)

Maurin suggested that Day, with her journalistic experience, start a radical Catholic newspaper as the vehicle for the ideas the two of them shared. Day agreed, and applied her noted pragmatism, social insight, and journalistic skills to craft the publication. (Ellis, 1988) The first issue of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper⁹ was published in May 1933. (Day, 1952) It sold for one penny (and does to this day). The paper proved highly successful for some years. In November 1933, the paper sold 20,000 copies, and by 1936 it was selling 100,000 copies per issue. (Day, 2008; Piehl, 1982)

The *Catholic Worker* began as a newspaper, but it quickly became a multifaceted movement. Day and Maurin implemented the idea of the houses of hospitality in mid-1933. (Day, 1939a) Part of Maurin's and Day's vision was to create the Catholic leadership and social involvement that they had seen lacking in the American Church. In 1933, there were innumerable people who were homeless and destitute in New York City due to the Great Depression. Since the 1800s, urban Catholic parishes had established church-based aid societies to assist members in need. (Piehl, 1988) But this local Church tradition of community support was limited to Catholics of each parish. Day and Maurin sought to implement a truly 'catholic'

⁹ Members and scholars of the *Catholic Worker* rarely append the term with the word "movement," "organization," or similar. (See, for example, Piehl [1982], Riegler [2013], Troester [1993]) They use the term "Catholic Worker" to refer to several things: 1) The *Catholic Worker* movement as a whole. 2) The *Catholic Worker* newspaper. 3) Individuals, when used as "a Catholic Worker," "Catholic Workers," or just "Workers." I use the term "the Catholic Worker" to refer to the movement. I use "member(s)" or "Worker(s)" for individuals, and "*Catholic Worker* newspaper."

Catholic program where anyone in need could receive aid, in what they felt was the spirit of unlimited Christian charity. (Day, 1952)

Others were quickly drawn by the Catholic Worker's message, and they raised enough money by October 1933 to rent space for the first houses of hospitality, one for men and one for women. (Day, 1939a, 1939b) (Fig. 4) The contributors to this effort were mostly other Catholics of modest means and members of the clergy. (Piehl, 1982) Day (1939b) recollected:

We had rented an old apartment in a condemned tenement on Fourth Street to put up three of the men who had joined with the work. Already three more were sleeping in the little store on Fifteenth Street which was also an office, a dining room and a kitchen where meals were being served.... The large apartment for women was down the street and could accommodate fifteen. It had steam and hot water: comforts we have never had since. The rent was paid by contributions from working girls in the parish of the Immaculate Conception Church, girls who themselves lived in cold water flats. (p. 1)

As awareness of the Catholic Worker's houses of hospitality grew, so did the number of people showing up for food, blankets, and other necessities. The houses of hospitality moved to larger spaces several times in the ensuing years, thanks to donations and charitable landlords. (Day, 1939b) By 1938, the house served approximately twelve hundred people per day in its soup kitchen. (Troester, 1993) The Catholic Workers found substantive support from Communist activists, despite their differences in opinion on religion. These activists joined them in protests and individually made donations of furniture, clothing, and other goods needed in the houses of hospitality. (Day, 1939a, 1939b)

The houses of hospitality faced certain challenges based on socioeconomic and ethnic factors, hurdles which still exist today. (Troester, 1993; Yukich, 2010) The first houses of

hospitality were located in poor neighborhoods of New York City, and soon after, in other Northern and Midwestern cities. In many cases these neighborhoods were predominantly Catholic, since as in New York, sympathetic Catholic clergy and laypersons helped Workers find affordable property and donated time, goods, and money. (Day, 1939a; O'Gorman & Coy, 1988) Many of the Catholics in these neighborhoods were European immigrants, while most Workers were born in the United States and of Northern European descent. (Piehl, 1982; Day, 1939a, 1952) Therefore, even though both residents and Workers were Catholics, the differences in background meant that the Workers had to earn the trust of those they served. They were initially regarded with skepticism by people who had experienced prejudice and whose experiences with charitable groups was often rife with condescension and prejudice. (Troester, 1993; Steve Baggarly, p.c.) As individuals founded houses of hospitality across the United States, they found themselves amidst non-Catholic, non-Caucasian poor who had even less reason to trust the Workers' motives or see them as allies. However, the Workers who operated the houses of hospitality usually gained local trust and support as they persisted in their mission with humility and a spirit of equality. (S. Baggarly, p.c.)

The Catholic Worker movement did not continue to grow in popularity, however. The Catholic Worker explicitly supported socialist and anarchist views on social reform and connected them directly to the Gospels and the Church. These developments drew the Catholic Worker support from more progressive individuals and clergy, but also brought criticism and condemnation from others. (Piehl, 1982) During World War II, support for the war was almost equivalent with patriotism, and part of the American Catholic Church's efforts to blend into mainstream American culture was by supporting war and other patriotic causes. (Fogarty, 2003; Piehl, 1982) But the *Catholic Worker* newspaper advocated pacifism, and thus it became highly

unpopular among the general public and particularly among Catholics. Many houses of hospitality dissolved as members disagreed on the United States' involvement in the war. (Piehl, 1988)

The Catholic Worker movement did not regain much favor during the 1950s and early 1960s, when its anti-nuclear, pro-peace stance was starkly at odds with the mainstream Cold War mindset of American society. (Troester, 1993) Additionally, the growing issues of civil rights and desegregation brought race to the forefront of American consciousness. Catholic Workers had a keen awareness of racism, both as a social problem and sometimes as a prejudice within themselves which they sought to overcome. Day (1939a) mentions this issue in an anecdote about a black woman named Mary who arrived at the women's house of hospitality. Day saw she was in need of shelter and went to the women's dormitory, where all the current residents were white, to ask if Mary could stay there. Day (1939a) wrote:

I did not want to run the risk of submitting [Mary] to insult on account of her color— nor did I expect too much of the girls in the way of freedom from race prejudice, since I know very well that Catholics of means and better education are not free themselves from it. I remind[ed] them how our Lord washed the feet of His disciples... and told them how we all should serve each other, whether we are white, black or yellow. The girls were perfectly happy to welcome the new guest, and it was [a gift] to find this continuing of the cooperative spirit among them. (p. 92)

Racial equality aligned with the Catholic Worker's interpretation of Christianity and with their social and political goals. In this instance, the American Catholic Church did fulfill Day's and Maurin's wish that the Church show leadership on a social issue. The Church supported civil

rights throughout its ranks, and clergy, nuns, and lay Catholics joined the civil rights movement. (Day, 1963; McGreevy, 1984)

At the same time, the American Catholic community was diversifying. The GI Bill in World War II had given a generation of Catholics the education needed to rise to the middle class. This demographic shift and the growth of suburbia in the 1950s meant fewer Catholics lived in close-knit parishes or predominantly Catholic neighborhoods. (Piehl, 1982) Catholic schools and civil and professional organizations proliferated, establishing a more “American” Catholicism that was integrated into the Protestant-ethic society of social and material achievement. Deliberate anti-Catholicism had receded, and continued to recede due to this integration and mainstream America’s perception of the much greater threat of Communism. (Fogarty, 2003; Martin, 1985) The Church further assimilated itself with the Protestant-secular view of religion, particularly in light of growing Protestant fundamentalism. Gerald Fogarty (2003) wrote that “In some ways, Catholics adopted a Protestant ecclesiology in which religion was ultimately private and invisible, as opposed to the Catholic position that the Church was visible and inserted in the world” (p. 42).

While the American Church sought to keep its standing through accommodation to mainstream American values, the Catholic Worker resurged in the 1960s for opposite reasons. Their radical pacifist ideology found acceptance and popularity in the counterculture and peace movements. (Klejment, 1988; Troester, 1993) Day, now in her sixties, continued to write and speak in favor of nonviolent action for peace. (Troester, 1993) The Catholic Worker’s stance as both a Catholic movement and a social activist group was strengthened by Pope John XXIII’s 1963 encyclical “Pacem in Terris” and by the Vatican II Council’s re-interpretation of Catholic doctrine. (Jenkins, 2003; McGreevy, 1994) These two statements by the church affirmed a

departure from the “just war” doctrine that had been part of the church since St. Augustine, including condemning nuclear weapons. The Church also updated some Catholic social doctrine and modified liturgy from Latin to the vernacular. These changes made the Church more relevant to a wider range of churchgoers and more accommodating of Catholic involvement in social justice and peace movements. (Jenkins, 2003; Mollin, 2004)

Catholic Workers became better known to the general public during this time due to the overall increase in political protests, particularly against the Vietnam War. (Fogarty, 2003; Troester, 1993) Many young, poor Catholics joined the military in order to take advantage of the GI Bill, and young men of all backgrounds were traumatized by their experiences in combat. (Fogarty, 2003; Troester, 1993) Between civilian opposition to the war and a surge of disillusioned veterans, both as protesters and recipients of Catholic Worker aid, the Catholic Worker grew in membership and notoriety in the 1960s and 1970s. (Fogarty, 2003; Piehl, 1982)

The protests against the Vietnam War introduced conflicts within the Catholic peace movement. The Plowshares movement, led by brothers and priests Daniel and Philip Berrigan, vociferously condemned the war and nuclear weapons and advocated nonviolent protest, as did the Catholic Worker. But some of their actions, such as breaking into and decimating a draft office in Catonsville, Maryland, created divisions. (Klejment, 1988) Day wrote that she did not view the destruction of property as a nonviolent means of protest. It was not in keeping with the goal of nonviolence, which is to witness and persuade through peaceful means. (Klejment, 1988) Catholic Workers’ principles of autonomy and respect meant that the issue did not cause permanent fractures.

Beginning in the 1970s, the Catholic Worker became increasingly involved in the Latin American liberation theology movement. Liberation theology developed from Catholic doctrine

and scripture in response to the "Central American crisis" of the 1970s and 1980s. El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua experienced civil strife and violence between rival factions seeking to install either democratic or Communist governments. (Weeks, 1986) These factions arose in response to international politics and unstable postcolonial governments, but also in protest of the harsh circumstances experienced by citizens of these nations, including widespread poverty, lack of workers' rights, and government use of the military to suppress protest of these conditions. (Nepstad & Smith, 2001) In response, thousands of civilians were killed by militias and state militaries. (Weeks, 1986)

The Catholic Church became embroiled in this international crisis because Latin America was predominantly Catholic and church leaders often played important sociopolitical roles. (Nepstad & Smith, 2001) The term liberation theology was coined by priest Gustavo Gutierrez in 1971 to describe an approach to Christianity that originated in the perspective of the poor and oppressed, a "bottom-up" social theology. (Gutierrez, 1971) Liberation theologians¹⁰ and their supporters emphasized the important Jesus placed on the poor, the scriptures and doctrine of the Catholic Church that supported intervention on behalf of the oppressed, and the Catholic traditions of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. (Gutierrez, 1971; Joyce, 1912)

Discord developed within the Church due to conflicting priorities and interpretations of Catholic doctrine surrounding liberation theology. In 1979 at the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, Pope John Paul II stated in his address: "People claim to show Jesus as politically committed, as one who fought against Roman oppression and the authorities, and also as one involved in the class struggle. This idea of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth, does not tally with the Church's catechesis"

¹⁰ See, for example, the writings of Leonardo Boff, Gustavo Gutierrez, Penny Lernoux, Oscar Romero, and Jon Sobrino.

(1979, n.p.). In this document, the Pope sought to clarify the church's support for certain aspects of liberation theology while condemning those elements that emphasized earthly freedom over eternal freedom through Christ. The Catholic Church doctrinally took a moderate stance, but also censured clergy who were outspoken on liberation theology, including barring them from Church conferences and public speaking. (Cox, 1989)

The liberation theology movement and the United States' involvement in Latin America had several far-reaching effects on the Catholic Worker. First, these developments raised a new issue in the Catholic Worker's opposition to the United States government. Due to its emphatic opposition to Communism, the United States provided funds, training, and weapons to guerrilla groups and state militaries who perpetrated much of the violence in Latin America. (Nepstad & Smith, 2001) Much of this training took place at the School of the Americas (now officially named WINSEC) in Fort Benning, Georgia. (Dear, 2008) Catholic Workers protested to raise awareness of the School's activities, and many attended the annual multi-day protest at the School of the Americas over the past 27 years, thus developing relationships with Latin American clergy and with survivors of the conflicts who travel to the protest each year. (Dear, 2008) (Fig. 5)

Second, Catholic Workers have adopted liberation theology into their rhetoric and beliefs. They quote authors and clergy who have written on liberation theology and they cite church social doctrine that supports liberation theology. Catholic clergy who were killed are considered martyrs and are depicted in portraiture in some Catholic Worker houses alongside figures such as St. Francis of Assisi. (S. Baggaly, p.c.) Third, Catholic Workers have become increasingly active in helping Latin American immigrants and refugees in the United States. Some houses of hospitality specialize in helping these individuals. About half of the Catholic

SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

Workers whom I met for this study had learned some Spanish because they placed importance on being able to communicate with Latin American guests and activists. Finally, some individuals, many of them 'lapsed' or 'cradle' Catholics, and some not Catholic or even Christian, have participated in mission-type trips to countries like El Salvador and Guatemala where there is still rampant poverty and violence stemming from the Latin American crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. (Nepstad & Smith, 2001) Some of these individuals have become involved in the Catholic Worker as a result of these experiences.

In the past several decades, the Catholic Worker has continued to receive support and to be an important resource to marginalized people, as issues of poverty, homelessness, and undocumented immigration in the United States have not abated. As of 2017, there are approximately 200 houses of hospitality in the United States and about 30 in other countries. (www.catholicworker.org/communities) Many are urban houses or apartment buildings which offer some combination of living space, soup kitchen, clothing and necessities, and organizing protests and publications. (Troester, 1993) In many cities, houses of hospitality are located in the poorest neighborhoods. Different houses often focus on the needs of a specific population in their region. In Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Texas, houses often offer shelter and assistance specifically to undocumented immigrants. In Washington, DC, the house of hospitality offers housing for single mothers who are refugees. All operate independently, without central authority, hierarchy, bureaucracy, and usually without regular income. (S. Baggarly, p.c.; Troester, 1993)

Ethics and Beliefs

Founders Day and Maurin created the Catholic Worker to respond to social issues that surrounded them. The combination of a consistent mission and adaptable techniques for

addressing the needs of the poor have kept the Catholic Worker alive and relevant in United States society. Yet it is important to recognize the extent to which the Catholic Worker drew from longstanding Catholic doctrine and Christian scripture to address social issues. (DiDomizio, 1988; Piehl, 1982)

Catholicism as a religion emphasizes both faith and action. It is defined by its theology, by a moral code, and by specific rituals. Catholic belief includes the doctrine of the Trinity— God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit— which is found in most branches of Christianity. (Joyce, 1912) This doctrine emphasizes the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of God; the divinity of Jesus Christ as God’s son; and the mystical connection of humans to God and Jesus via the Holy Spirit. God the Father is accessible through the rituals of the Catholic sacraments and through prayer. Jesus’s divinity and crucifixion mean several things: that all humans’ souls were saved by Jesus’s death on the cross; that after dying on the cross, Jesus was resurrected by God; and that Jesus suffered like a human as a sacrifice to save humanity. (Joyce, 1912; Pohle, 1912)

The Holy Spirit, the third part of the Christian Trinity, is the emissary of God’s grace and presence on Earth: since humans cannot see or hear God directly, they can perceive God by seeing, hearing, or feeling the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also a reminder of grace: that humans were redeemed by Jesus’s sacrifice and God’s will, not through their own efforts. People are ‘saved’ by the unearned benevolence and forgiveness of God. (Pohle, 1909) Thus, for Catholics, including those in the Catholic Worker, the Holy Spirit can be felt by humans, and Jesus’ human life can be emulated.

These tenets of Catholicism are reflected in the key values of the Catholic Worker: emulation of Christ, charity, compassion, and personal commitment to carrying out these values. (DiDomizio, 1988; Piehl, 1982) Catholic Workers incorporate scripture into social and political

action, as in the passage called the Beatitudes from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew (5:3-12):

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Holy Bible, NIV, 1973)

This passage summarizes Catholic Workers' belief that Jesus favored the poor, oppressed, and marginalized and that God would particularly reward them. The example of Jesus's life is the cornerstone of radical Catholic doctrine. The acts and teachings found in the Gospels should form the basis of Christians' approach to life. (Day, 1972; Piehl, 1982) This includes living in voluntary simplicity and giving what exceeds one's needs to the poor, sacrificing of oneself to help the innocent, and loving one's enemies. Theologically, the Catholic Worker also refers frequently to the Works of Mercy in Christian doctrine. (Day, 1952; DiDomizio, 1988) It is found printed in artwork in many houses of hospitality. Drawn from chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew, the Works of Mercy are: to give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty; to shelter the stranger; to clothe the naked; to comfort the sick; to visit the imprisoned; and to bury the dead. (Day, 1952; Piehl, 1982)

Catholic Workers employ the term "personalism" to describe these values and beliefs. Personalism means that the biblical ideals of compassion and charity must be actively pursued,

not passively preached. (DiDomizio, 1988; Piehl, 1982) Day (1939b) wrote of the workers and unemployed:

These are Christ's poor. He was one of them. He was a man like other men, and He chose His friends amongst the ordinary workers. These men feel they have been betrayed by Christianity. Men are not Christian today. If they were, this sight would not be possible. Far dearer in the sight of God perhaps are these hungry ragged ones, than all those smug, well-fed Christians who sit in their homes, cowering in fear of the Communist menace.

(p. 1)

Under the philosophy of personalism, each Christian is responsible for living in emulation of Christ: they are called to witness to Jesus's teachings through the practice of nonviolence, through voluntary simplicity, and through charity—the true and complete meaning of the phrase “loving one's neighbor.” Peter Maurin wrote what he called “Easy Essays,” simply-worded short commentaries on various themes that resembled free-form poetry. (Troester, 1993) In one, he underscores the responsibility of wealthy Christians and the value of the poor:

Modern society calls the beggar
bum and panhandler
and gives him the bum's rush.

But the Greeks used to say
that people in need are
the ambassadors of the gods.

Although you may be called bums
and panhandlers

You are in fact the Ambassadors of God.

As God's Ambassadors
you should be given food, clothing and shelter
by those who are able to give it.
Mahometan teachers tell us¹¹
that God commands hospitality.
And hospitality is still practiced
in Mahometan countries.
But the duty of hospitality
is neither taught nor practiced
in Christian countries. (in Day, 1939a, pp. 8-9)

Maurin here establishes the Workers' philosophy that Christians' lives were not meant to be spent in church pews, with some small percent of their money given to charity, and secure in their own salvation. Catholic Workers embody the messages of the Beatitudes and the Works of Mercy in their tenets of unqualified hospitality and service to the poor. Scriptural authority is complemented by some Catholic Church doctrine, such as the "preferential option for the poor," described in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (2004):

The principle of the universal destination of goods requires that the poor, the marginalized and in all cases those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern. To this end, the preferential option for the poor should be reaffirmed in all its force. This is an option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate

¹¹ Maurin's reference to 'Mahometan' -- Muslim -- teachings is both evidence of his broad knowledge and an added barb in his criticism of Christians.

the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social responsibilities and hence to our manner of living... Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the social question has assumed, this love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without health care and, above all, those without hope of a better future.

(n.p.)

The extent to which the Catholic Worker emphasizes this doctrine parallels that of liberation theologians and earned it some similar criticism from American Catholics and clergy. (Piehl, 1982, 1988) The Catholic Worker relates this message to the impoverished whom it serves in the United States, and also to people whose quality of life and human rights have been harmed by global capitalism, imperialism, occupation, and exploitation, particularly by the United States. (Troester, 1993) Examples include those who have suffered as a result of the Central American crisis, the war in Vietnam, the nuclear bombing and subsequent occupation of Japan, and the more recent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Catholic Worker is infused with a prophetic spirituality, whereby the Christian concept of a “kingdom of God” is believed not to be a celestial future destination bestowed on Christians by Christ but rather an earthly era of peace and equality created in the here and now by humans who manifest Christ in their words and deeds. Thus, Catholic Workers seek to fulfill this divinely-given mission through faith-based social action. (DiDomizio, 1988; Egan, 1988) It is this dedication to action and manifestation of deep faith (though not necessarily the actual beliefs of Catholicism) that draws participants to the Catholic Worker.

Participants

There are several ways in which individuals participate in the Catholic Worker movement. There are Workers who permanently live in and operate the houses of hospitality; there are those who participate in protests; and there are community members, often from local churches, who volunteer with the soup kitchens and other charitable activities. (K. Boylan, p.c.; Yukich, 2010) Individuals' involvement in the Catholic Worker generally stems from a combination of spiritual, social, and political features. Members are often Catholics who have struggled with certain tenets of the church, such as the subordinate role of women, support of 'just war,' cover-up of scandals, or wealth. (Troester, 1993; Yukich, 2010) The Catholic Worker's focus on action based in this life, not the next, resonates spiritually with them. Some who protest with the Catholic Worker are Christians, some are spiritual-but-not-religious, and some are of no faith. (Troester, 1993)

Individuals' interest in the Catholic Worker is deeply tied to ideas of belonging and community. The concept of personalism leads Catholic Worker participants to transcend the self-other dichotomy that often exists in charitable or nonprofit settings. (Yukich, 2010) Grace Yukich (2010) identifies Workers as setting themselves apart from certain entities, namely social services, the official Catholic Church, and mainstream American culture. Catholic Workers typically define themselves and one another as nonviolent, simple in needs and lifestyle, peaceful, Catholic, and personalist. (Troester, 1993; Yukich, 2010) Members of the Catholic Worker may voice opposition to certain groups in the abstract, such as the military, the intolerant, and the wealthy privileged. However, Workers often still try to connect authentically with individuals in groups or demographics that they may disagree with. (Lancione, 2014; Yukich, 2010) In other words, they may vilify ideas, but attempt not to essentialize or demean people. It can be extrapolated that the Catholic Worker attracts people who have at least a fairly

nuanced understanding of nonviolence, social change, and interpersonal relations. People also describe being attracted to the Catholic Worker's more "authentic" and empowering approach to helping disadvantaged members of society, as opposed to many social service and nonprofit organizations. (Lancione, 2014) The Worker also lacks the bureaucracy and hierarchy often found in such organizations. Participants value the ability to serve others with mutual dignity and equality, rather than as worker and client or donor and recipient. (Troester, 1993; Yukich, 2010)

Catholic Worker participants often take part in protests against the United States military. These nonviolent protests often are held at military or government sites, such as drone testing areas, uranium refinement sites, or nuclear weapons facilities. (Troester, 1993) Protests may also be held at more symbolic locations such as CIA headquarters, the White House, the Pentagon, or other military bases around the country. (A. Laffin, p.c.) A frequent tactic which has its own name and protocol is "crossing the line." Crossing the line is the act of a protester deliberately violating a law— often nominally trespassing on government property, literally stepping over the property line— with the goal of being arrested. (Riegle, 2013; Troester, 1993) Harking back to Gandhi's and Thoreau's civil disobedience strategies, as well as to Jesus's arrest and death, crossing the line is considered by Catholic Workers to be a powerful assertion of faith and conviction. (Riegle, 2013) Many Catholic Workers (and allies) have served. (Riegle, 2013)

For those who live in Catholic Worker houses and for some of those who participate with them, both spiritual belief and political convictions are expressed in daily life. The Catholic Worker movement's precept of voluntary poverty continues Dorothy Day's and Peter Maurin's early decisions about the houses of hospitality. (Piehl, 1982) Simplicity and charity evince the precept that one has greater devotion to God than to material possessions or social status. It is meant to challenge the materialist, consumerist, and capitalist mainstream culture of the United

States, and the policies that give Americans greater access to possessions and wealth via exploiting the poor in the United States and abroad. Catholic Workers' poverty and lack of income also mean that they rarely owe taxes to the government, which they believe misappropriates funds to the military. (Klejment, 1988; A. Laffin, p.c.; Troester, 1993)

Furthermore, living without a financial safety net is cited as an act of faith: that God will provide for the faithful, and that through following Catholic doctrine and practice, Catholic Workers will find ways to continue their work.

Conclusion

The histories of Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker show ways in which radical religion and social activism have developed and persisted through the 20th century in the United States. The founding of the Catholic Worker in the 1930s demonstrates some Americans' sustained interest in combining politic and social engagement with lived religion. It also can be seen as a precursor to, or herald of, the growth of the SBNR trend beginning in the 1960s. The arrival of Nipponzan Myohoji in the United States in the 1970s underscores the continuity of this movement. Nipponzan Myohoji's engagement with Native American and black populations attracted activists in the same circles, many of whom practiced engaged spirituality. This support was sufficient to foster the building of the Peace Pagodas in Leverett, Massachusetts and Grafton, New York, major undertakings which further demonstrate the commitment and enthusiasm that Nipponzan Myohoji inspires in its participants (discussed further in chapter five).

History highlights both the traditional and radical elements of both groups. Both live under the precept of voluntary poverty and survive largely on charity, which are preceded in both Catholic and Buddhist monasticism. Both view their faiths as the ultimate source of human

liberation: the Catholic Worker through Christ, and Nipponzan Myohoji through the Buddha's teachings as expressed by Guruji. Their employment of Christian and Buddhist scripture focuses on those passages which support their way of life and the primacy of social justice in their faiths. They also look to examples of individuals in scripture and history, such as various saints, clergy, and liberation theologians for the Catholic Worker, and Nichiren, the bodhisattvas, and Engaged Buddhism leaders.

Despite the groups' traditional religious beliefs and practices, their grounding in religious history and scripture, and their self-stated identity, they are regarded as radical by mainstream Catholics and Buddhists. Some leaders in these faiths and some scholars view them as modern phenomena that break with the faiths' traditions and follow a highly revised theology. Others view them as embodying a vital element of each faith, living according to a calling that is felt by only a small percentage of people. Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker, while not condemning mainstream adherents in their faiths, believe their way of life is the true purpose or heart of the religions.

Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker began under disparate conditions, on opposite sides of the world with very different individuals as founders. The Catholic Worker grew from Dorothy Day's newfound Catholicism and radical sociopolitical views in the context of the Great Depression and the urban labor movement in the United States. Nipponzan Myohoji was founded by a longtime Buddhist monk who sought visionary guidance for his path. His order began by challenging nationalism and Westernization via religious ritual, writings, and protest. The Catholic Worker also spread its message through writing, but its protests were often alongside other groups, both religious and secular. While they invoke Christianity, Catholic Worker protests do not center around religious display, nor are its members officially part of any

religious institution. Despite these differences, both groups have converged on the issues they protest and the causes they support in the United States, namely poverty, racism, nationalism, and nuclear weapons. Both groups espouse nonviolence, particularly the nonviolence derived from Gandhi, in their protests and views of the sociopolitical problems around them.

Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker perceive that the underlying cause and continuation of the problems they identify are Western, and particularly American, society. Both believe that the modern state and Western society have produced a culture of state-sanctioned violence, structural inequality, corporate capitalism, and a type of individualism that erodes community. Both protest the United States government and military on a broad scale by perpetuating these condemnable conditions in the United States and around the world. Therefore, invoking the theory of the pervasive embedded Protestant legacy of the United States, Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker stand in opposition to mainstream United States society, both in their own words and in their observable actions. These critiques of the mainstream bring them into the same circle of protesters, and particularly into activist events that involve or welcome spirituality. Thus, while both groups have deeply rooted theological and spiritual traditions and practices, they also have concerns with present-day social and political issues and they reject mainstream society in ways that attract SEIs to participate with them.

Chapter 3: The 50th Anniversary Selma-to-Montgomery March

“Who do you think is most oppressed in the United States today?” asked the man walking beside me. His name was Jeffrey, and he was a tall, heavy-set black man in his sixties. We had been walking for five miles down the right lane of United States Route 80 under the warm Alabama sun, discussing violence and social justice.

“I’d say black men,” I replied. “So much in American society is stacked against African-Americans, particularly young men.” Jeffrey nodded.

“See, I’d say women. I’d say definitely women, whatever color. Men and women are different. I have a grown-up daughter, and raising her, things are still hardest for women.”

“So you think it’s me, and I think it’s you!” We smiled wryly at each other.

Jeffrey and I were part of a group of about 75 people walking from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1965 civil rights March on the same route. Jeffrey had traveled up from Mobile, Alabama, where he was born and raised. I had come with a group organized by two monks from Nipponzan Myohoji. We found common ground in the spirit of the march: remembering the struggles of the early civil rights activists, raising awareness of the continued issue of racism, and seeking an experience of solidarity among the others who had chosen to march for those five days and 54 miles.

In this chapter, I use the Selma to Montgomery 50th Anniversary March to identify some of the motivations that lead SEIs to participate in activism with religious groups. The dynamics between SEIs, Nipponzan Myohoji, and the others involved in the march demonstrate how participating with Nipponzan Myohoji facilitates SEIs’ expression of their beliefs. This participation provides a space in which SEIs can more comfortably both critique the elements of mainstream Protestant culture that they reject and seek a sense of belonging based in their

practice of engaged spirituality. The march also showed what tensions can arise between spiritual-but-not-religious and traditionally religious individuals even in support of a common cause.

One of the defining characteristics of the spiritual-but-not-religious is an exploration of various types of spiritual traditions, and often the adoption of a mixture of practices from different sources. (Fuller, 2001; Stanczak, 2006) For SEIs, these features of activism and eclecticism result in a variety of beliefs, affects, and motivations when they participate in activist events. Despite the inseparability of activism and spirituality that SEIs express about their own worldview, they do recognize the separation of the categories, and in the discussion below I refer to activism and spirituality separately for analytic purposes (following the research by Fuller, 2001, Stanczak, 2006, and Wuthnow, 1998). SEIs on the march each placed different significance and weight on spirituality and activism in the march, which affected how they related to the other marchers and how they interacted with the monks.

This analysis is also framed by relevant elements of the history of race in the United States. This history includes black-white relations and the role of Protestant Christianity in the era of slavery, the civil rights movement, and the present day. I analyze these dynamics in four parts. First is the background of Nipponzan Myohoji's involvement in race activism and the historical context of the march. Second, I address SEIs' search for belonging and community, which is expressed here in two processes: an engaged-spiritual "ancestry" and solidarity with marginalized groups. Third, I discuss the ways in which the march reflected SEIs' multifaceted spirituality, namely through combining spiritual concepts with activism in the specific context of civil rights in the United States. Fourth, I examine how manifestations of Protestantism and elements of modernity conflicted with SEIs' beliefs and desires related to the march.

Throughout, I show the significance of the Nipponzan Myohoji monks' presence and of their facilitation of SEIs' participation.

Nipponzan Myohoji and Civil Rights

In the early 1990s, two Nipponzan Myohoji monks, Brother Gyosyu Utsumi and Sister Denise Laffan, resolved to found a temple in the city of Atlanta, Georgia. The location had two purposes. One, both monks felt a strong call to the cause of African-American equality in the United States; and two, there was no Nipponzan Myohoji temple in the American South. Atlanta was surrounded by people and sites that embodied issues of particular concern to Nipponzan, particularly poverty and racism. These manifested in communities of illegal immigrant laborers, impoverished African-Americans, the School of the Americas, and historic centers of the civil rights movement. A temple in Atlanta would provide a valuable location for other monks and participants in Nipponzan Myohoji to conduct their spiritual practice in the region. (D. Laffan, p.c.)

The monks were able to buy a small, dilapidated former crack house in the low-income neighborhood of Little Five Points. While Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi personally rebuilt the house, they were housed at First Iconium Baptist Church, a historically black church overseen by Rev. Timothy MacDonald III. (Green, 2000) Reverend MacDonald was well-known among ecumenical and African-American church organizations for his leadership in multiple social justice movements. (Dias, 2013) Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi's time among the First Iconium congregation deepened their personal understanding of and commitment to the cause of civil rights.

As part of their mission, Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi planned a peace walk that would commemorate the civil rights movement. They would follow the path walked by the civil

rights activists from Selma to Montgomery. The 1965 Selma march was an important event in the civil rights movement. It could also be seen as a “peace walk” in its own right as it was a nonviolent protest action in a movement in which religion (Christianity) was a vital force of strength and organizing. (Combs, 2014) The monks began to make the peace walk from Selma to Montgomery each year in late March around the Selma march’s anniversary. Each year a handful of SEI participants joined the monks on the walk. The monks had made a friend in Selma, Khadijah Ishaq, who welcomed them into her home each year the night before they began the march. Sister Denise, Brother Utsumi, and the SEIs walked the fifty-four miles along the side of the highway and spent the nights at local churches. (K. Ishaq, p.c.; G. Utsumi, p.c.)

The 2015 march was significantly different from the monks’ usual walk. Sister Denise had been in contact with the march organizers to confirm their attendance, but she received little information on the logistic details of the trip. The march would, obviously, be much larger than the monks’ peace walk. Also, more SEIs asked to join the monks on the walk. Some had participated in peace walks before; some knew the monks only by mutual acquaintance. The monks planned to spend the first night in Selma as they always had, and Khadijah invited the other participants to come with tents to camp in her yard. The other participants and I rendezvoused with the monks at the temple in Atlanta and carpoled to Selma in two vehicles, a passenger van and a pickup truck both owned by participants. Both age 32, Brandon Dillon and I were the youngest members of the group. The others were between ages 50 and 70, and most lived in or near Asheville, North Carolina. All had been active for a number of years in peace protest and social justice activism. (Fig. 6) Like many SBNRs, all were Caucasian, college-educated, and from lower-middle to middle class backgrounds. Their present economic circumstances differed. Claire Hanrahan and Coleman Smith both lived in low-income senior

citizen housing in Asheville. Despite little disposable income, Coleman was part of an activist group that did performances at protests, arriving at sites early and constructing life-sized puppets, props, and costumes to enact skits illustrating the cause of the protest. Red Moon Song had spent most of her adult life living “off the grid” in intentional communities and doing part-time work for money or room and board. Rae Hearne owned 16 acres of land outside Asheville which she maintained as a wildlife refuge. Jim Brown and Jean Chapman were both retirees. Ken Jones was a retired professor of education at the University of Vermont. Taking a week to travel to and from Atlanta and participate in the march presented a different degree of difficulty or effort for each. I, Brandon, Ken, Jean, and Rae could drive to Atlanta and did not lose income in doing so. Red Moon Song, as she had done much of her life, hitchhiked. Coleman, Jim, and Claire carpooled in Coleman’s van.

Selma, 1965

Selma, Alabama, had been a site of resistance to black voting rights, and local groups had tried repeatedly to register African-Americans to vote, but were thwarted by local law enforcement and judges. In 1964, Selma teacher and activist Amelia Boynton reached out to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), who traveled to Selma and set up temporary SCLC headquarters in Boynton’s home. (Combs, 2014) Along with King, future United States representative John Lewis and Malcolm X both traveled to Selma to support local efforts to register black voters, and President Lyndon Johnson had publicly stated his support of the Selma campaign. (Carson, 1991)

After the murder of activist Jimmy Lee Jackson on February 17, 1965, the two lead civil rights organizations in the South, the SCLC and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), organized a protest on Sunday, March 7, 1965. Six hundred activists assembled in

downtown Selma, led by Lewis. (Carson, 1991) They intended to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and follow United States Highway 80 to Montgomery to raise national awareness of the continued racism and violence in the area. However, at the foot of the bridge, state and local police obstructed them and attacked them with tear gas and billy clubs. Lewis and Boynton were both seriously injured along with more than 60 others. The event received international media coverage and was dubbed “Bloody Sunday.” (Carson, 1991; Combs, 2014)

In response, several thousand people, about half of them white and 500 of them members of the clergy, traveled to Selma to support the activists. Martin Luther King, Jr. returned to Selma to assist in re-attempting the march. After delays, 3,000 troops from the United States Army and Alabama National Guard were sent to Selma to escort the marchers to ensure their safety. (Combs, 2014) On March 21, King and 8,000 supporters successfully marched across the bridge. Because Highway 80 was a two-lane road, only 300 were permitted on the rest of the march. They reached Montgomery on March 25, where 25,000 people gathered to hear Dr. King speak on the steps of the Capitol. In August 1965, President Johnson signed the watershed Voting Rights Act with Amelia Boynton as guest of honor. (Carson, 1991)

Selma, 2015

The historic events in Selma are enshrined as a lauded episode in the history of civil rights. However, the celebration in 2015 overshadowed the reality of life in the town. Selma was, locals told us, much the same as it had been in 1965. Much of the black population was impoverished, local factories had closed, leaving few jobs. Racism was still a fact of life. The name of the Edmund Pettus Bridge was never changed, even though Pettus was the head of the Alabama Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction. (Hebert, 2010) Before the celebration on Sunday, Selma residents found white supremacist flyers on their car windshields. (Fig. 7) WFSA-12 news

reported that fliers were put on vehicles and street signs in "neighborhoods in Selma on March 8, prior to the Bloody Sunday commemoration there... The fliers, identifying the Loyal White Knights of the KKK, make statements about crime relative to race and solicit membership in the KKK" (2015). This incident was a powerful reminder that racism was not only present, but was also being disseminated in an organized, public way that would provoke fear. A national judicial regression in civil rights, *Shelby Co. v. Holder* (2013) had also stirred many Americans' concern.

Those present at the march expressed anger and worry over the Supreme Court's 2013 decision that two sections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act were no longer necessary and therefore not constitutional. (*Shelby Co. v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 2). The lawsuit was brought by Shelby County, Alabama, on the basis that the Act was unconstitutional because it violated the state's right to self-government. The Supreme Court decided in favor of the county in a 5-4 vote. The two sections in question served the following purpose:

Section 5 prohibits eligible districts from enacting changes to their election laws and procedures without gaining official authorization. Section 4(b) defines the eligible districts as ones that had a voting test in place as of November 1, 1964 and less than 50% turnout for the 1964 presidential election. Such districts must prove to the Attorney General or a three-judge panel of a Washington, D.C. district court that the change "neither has the purpose nor will have the effect" of negatively impacting any individual's right to vote based on race or minority status. (2013, oyez.org, n.p.)

The majority opinion held that the two sections were no longer enforceable because the racial discrimination that impelled the Voting Rights Act was no longer significant. The minority opinion, authored by Justice Ginsberg, argued that Congress had collected sufficient evidence to demonstrate that all parts of the Act were still necessary. (2013, oyez.org, n.p.)

The case opened up the possibility for all states impacted by the Act to change their election laws without federal review and set a precedent to challenge other sections of the Voting Rights Act and anti-discrimination statutes. President Obama voiced his disappointment and concern over the decision. In his speech at Selma on March 8, 2015, he asserted that “the march is not over” (Obama, 2015, n.p.). The 50th anniversary marked a continuation of the fight for civil rights, not only a celebration of its triumph.

On the afternoon of March 8, we arrived on the street of brick ranch houses where Khadijah lived. For those traveling with the monks, the time we spent in Selma provided a valued time to meet people who lived in the town and participated in the civil rights movement. Most had never been mentioned in the history books, but for several years before Bloody Sunday, they had been meeting around the same kitchen table where we gathered in 2015. Khadijah's mother, Leola Robertson, had held organizing meetings at the house. This link resonated with participants' desire for personal, spiritual connection with the events which had taken place and were now being commemorated. The SEIs on the trip eagerly engaged with the steady stream of people coming through Khadijah's house. Brother Utsumi, Jean, and Claire leapt to help with cooking, Brother Utsumi wearing his "What Would St. Francis Do?" t-shirt over his traditional white monk's pants. Brandon played with Khadijah's grandchildren and their friends in the street. I sat on the front porch with several 'foot soldiers,' as the original Selma marchers were often called, listening to their memories. Khadijah's older brother, Charles Robertson, described his participation in the Selma march, at which time he was only 15 years old. This engagement enhanced the personal dimension of the march for SEIs. They had now met and connected with people who were part of Selma's past and present, and the SEIs had shared their own stories of involvement in civil rights with contemporaries.

On the morning of March 9, our small group gathered on a street corner in sight of the Edmund Pettus bridge. (Fig. 8) Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise drummed and chanted the *daimoku*. We stood under the gendaiki, an eight-foot-high vertical purple banner emblazoned with Japanese kanji. At the far side of the bridge, two rabbis in Orthodox dress stood on the railings at each side, blowing the *shofar* horn in an expression of celebration. This was the first of two times on the march that I would have cause to reflect on a theme often shared between African-Americans and Jews of slavery, diaspora, freedom, and faith in God. Following the bridge crossing, Brother Utsumi wove his way through the crowd to find Amelia Boynton Robinson, now age 103, seated in her wheelchair on the outskirts of the crowd. He took her hand and spoke quietly with her. (Fig. 9) From speaking to him, I had gathered that his respect and admiration for this woman were perhaps even greater than if he had met, say, Dr. King. I reflected on the fortunate opportunity of their meeting in August when Ms. Boynton passed away.

The next morning, around 100 marchers set out. We would walk about twelve miles per day for four and a half days, arriving at the state capitol in Montgomery on Friday afternoon. The majority were African-American. Some were members of the SCLC. Others had come in small groups from activist and church groups around the United States. Khadijah walked with her school-aged grandchildren, Desiree, Tosh, and Zion. Desiree often walked at the head of the march carrying a large American flag. Several of the original “foot soldiers” who had been in attendance at the opening events walked with us partway or visited in the evenings. Also in attendance was a group of about a dozen high school students from a private school in Colorado, who were participating in the march as part of a course on the civil rights movement. None of the students or their two teachers had been to the United States South before, let alone rural

Alabama. A handful of others, discussed further below, had come because of their commitment to civil rights. They included: William Marshall, an African-American activist and hair stylist from Washington, DC, who had attended multiple events with Nipponzan Myohoji; Grace Nichols, who was the LGBTQ coordinator at Georgia College and an organizer in a nonprofit group called Southerners on New Ground; and Michael Ta'bon, who went by the moniker G. Law and who participated in civil rights and community activism around the East Coast.

The participants in this diverse group expressed, in both words and actions, their dedication to protecting African-Americans' civil rights, their spiritual and religious values, and their perspectives on the meanings of equality and solidarity. Both the intersections and variations in these factors influenced the events of the march.

Spiritual Heritage and Belonging

I use the concept of a "spiritual lineage" or symbolic ancestry to explain SEIs' cultivated connections to individuals and cultures that resonate with their spiritual identities. This spiritual lineage makes up a part of SEIs' sense of belonging, which is a cornerstone of their spirituality. SEIs appear to often feel a lack of inherent belonging. One dimension of this is the sociocultural background of many SEIs. As previously stated, most are white, college-educated, and middle class. Despite campaigns to show diversity as the standard in the United States, being white and middle class has been and is still the norm associated with being 'American,' reaching back to the Protestant origins of the United States. To be lumped into the demographic category which is most associated with traditional Christianity, exploitation, colonization, privilege, and racism is undesirable. Jeanne Kay Guelke (2016) writes, "Euro-Americans are increasingly represented merely as perpetrators of racism, segregation, and white supremacy movements against people of color, as foils for people who do have an ethnicity" (p. 14). SEIs commonly dislike or reject

being part of the mainstream, and for them majority white United States culture is tantamount to no culture.

This dissatisfaction with their racial and sociocultural genealogy impels SEIs to look for other meaningful heritage or cultural connections in several ways. Like a growing percentage of Americans who use resources like ancestry.com to trace their family histories, SEIs may find meaningful identification in their genealogy. (Guelke, 2016, pp. 14-15) However, because of the traits of SEIs' self-imposed spiritual and sociopolitical identities, they may find their literal genealogy to be unfulfilling or unrepresentative. In such cases, they may seek evidence for non-white ancestors. Some SEIs are among those who, in even tangentially related conversation, will drop references to Native American ancestry with phrases such as "I'm one-thirty-second Cherokee," with the implication that this makes them less white and, often, that it gives them legitimacy to incorporate Native American traditions into their spirituality. Therefore, part of the adoption of exemplars is a search for a meaningful family history of sorts.

Aside from or in addition to this approach, SEIs may seek out symbolic relations based in engaged spirituality, usually including individuals from other cultures and traditions which they admire or wish to feel connected with. SEIs express connection to certain 'exemplars' related to engaged spirituality, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, Dorothy Day, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and a handful of less widely-known authors in each of the fields of civil rights, nonviolence, liberation theology, and Buddhism¹². These figures also connect SEIs to Nipponzan Myohoji and to the Catholic Worker, both because they invoke exemplars from Buddhism and Catholicism and because the members of the two religious groups share the same exemplars. While some of these exemplars were firmly religious, rather than spiritual, they were also radical

¹² See, for example, Jon Sobrino, Thomas Merton, the Dalai Lama, Pope Francis, Malcolm X, bell hooks, Don Helder Camara, Pema Chodron.

or progressive members of their faiths. (Gutierrez, 1971; Hunt-Perry & Fine, 2000; Ingram, 1990; Kapur, 1992; Kim, 1986; Piehl, 1982) SEIs' invocations of these figures include paraphrasing or quoting from writings, discussion of their lives and actions, and application of these words and actions to current situations. SEIs express a reverent, often passionate affect toward these individuals. They may refer to them almost as authoritative or as the final word on a subject, comparable to religious individuals' reference to prophets, clergy, or scripture in their faith: these exemplars' words provide guidance and solace, and their lives stand as examples to be emulated. They establish a set of models of spirituality and social engagement that SEIs generally share, which contributes to the community and belonging that SEIs seek. (Fuller, 2001) Collectively, these shared exemplars form a network of concepts and applications of engaged spirituality in the world that extends into history and across cultures. It thus establishes historical precedent as a kind of anchoring ancestry to which SEIs can turn for confirmation of their beliefs: they are not the first to combine spirituality/religion and activism, and these historic individuals achieved significant social change through it. (Stanczak, 2006)

A certain spiritual kinship or lineage connects both Nipponzan Myohoji and SEIs to the civil rights movement. For the monks of Nipponzan Myohoji, one paramount event in the life of their founder, Nichidatsu Fujii, was his journey to India in which he stayed at Wardha Ashram and met Mahatma Gandhi, who is said to have given him his nickname “Guruji” (the name by which he is called by the monks and many others). (Fujii, 2009; Kim, 1986) Gandhi, according to Fujii, accepted a drum from Fujii and chanted the daimoku with him. For Fujii, this was fulfillment of his dream that he would return Buddhism in some way to India.¹³ Fujii also had long agreed with and adopted some of Gandhi’s spiritual and sociopolitical philosophy in terms

¹³ Although Buddhism was founded in northern India, it did not flourish there, and is still a minority religion.

of nonviolent protest and the damaging effects of Western imperialism. (Fujii, 2007, 2009) In other words, the monks see Gandhi as a spiritual contemporary and kindred spirit to Guruji and afford him great honor. Similarly, African-Americans who sought civil rights looked to Gandhi's philosophy and strategies. While being far from the first African-American to do so, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was strongly influenced by Gandhi's works. (Kapur, 1992) As the figurehead of the civil rights movement, King thus also became an heir or kin to Gandhi. Thus, the shared belief in nonviolence and in the ills within Western society connect the three figures.

For the SEIs I encountered, Gandhi takes pride of place as a spiritual exemplar or ancestor. His acceptance of all spiritual paths and his extraordinary insight and perseverance in implementing nonviolent civil disobedience embody SEIs' core values. He represents an ideal of what engaged spirituality can accomplish, both in inspiring others, in changing society, and in living a cohesive, authentic life. SEIs who have spent some time with Nipponzan Myohoji speak of Guruji with reverence, but he is somewhat less accessible and far less well-known than Gandhi. His writings and actions centered, of course, around Buddhism as a religion (rather than as a spiritual influence, as Buddhism is for many SEIs). He was also a monk and lived according to a monastic rule. (Fujii, 2007, 2009) In contrast, while Gandhi delved deep into asceticism in his later life, he was also a husband and father who had given up his career as an attorney. He writes with insight about his struggles with the Western, and particularly British, model of life and culture which was promulgated as the ideal in colonized societies. (Gandhi, 1993) SEIs similarly struggle with questioning and rejecting elements of the culture they were born into: they question the Protestant-ethic model of a full-time, lifetime career as a marker of life success; they feel discontent with modern materialism; they cannot accept one religion as having a

monopoly on truth; and they are unable to ignore the injustices and inequalities in society.

(Fuller, 2001; Stanczak, 2006)

Martin Luther King, Jr. also holds SEIs' respect. For SEIs who are African-American, he may hold a more important place as a forebear. While King is highly respected, other less well-known activists often are greater inspirations to SEIs—and indeed, to the monks. Brother Utsumi, for example, professed a deep fondness for Malcolm X's writings. King's legacy among SEIs is less the sanitized version of a peaceful minister and more the critic of poverty, militarism, and American culture (discussed further below). (Kohls, 2013; West, 2011) Utsumi observed during a conversation in Selma that sites related to Martin Luther King and to Gandhi are sacred in a sense, because people sacrificed there—they risked their safety to protest nonviolently, and people who visit subsequently feel that. Sister Denise observed, however, that the spiritual importance of such sites does not necessarily translate into long-term social change.

Spirituality, Religion, and Incommensurability

Some SEIs' respect for other people's struggles stems partly from awareness that they are, in many ways, privileged. (Stanczak, 2006) The SEIs in this study had not been subject to institutionalized discrimination, socioeconomic oppression, poverty, and other hardships to the extent that many others have, both in and outside of the United States. Their race can be a benefit: a demonstration that not only the oppressed care about alleviating their oppression. (Clark, 2009; Ken Jones, p.c.) However, at other times, their SBNR perspective and other factors such as privilege can create tensions or disagreement, both about activism and about religion/spirituality. (Blum, 2009; Clark, 2009; Sutherland, 2008)

While it is important to understand that Nipponzan Myohoji is a monastic order that does not partake in many parts of the outside world, it would be a mistake to assume that the monks'

lifestyle and beliefs keep them unaware of social realities. Nor are they blindly optimistic about what spiritual beliefs can accomplish. (Green, 2000; Kim, 1986) None whom I met claim that the peace walks can erase the scars of injustice and atrocity; rather, they emphasize the aspect of witnessing, of honoring others' suffering. They also know that complex feelings and thoughts emerge on these spiritual journeys: both positive and negative new awareness of oneself and the world, and painful recognition of one's desires, ego, and perspective that collide with other people and with events on the walks. (Green, 2000; Sutherland, 2008)

There are at times boundaries which SEIs cannot cross in their quest to integrate different cultures and causes into their identities. The monks were acutely aware of these tensions, both from the perspective of spirituality and of praxis. This was clearest during the only instance in which I had heard Brother Utsumi raise his voice. Our group was gathered together for dinner and discussing the walk. One woman said, "I feel like I understand what black people have been through now." Brother Utsumi slammed his palm on the table:

"No! No. We can never understand. We can't say we know what other people feel," he said emphatically. "We cannot know their suffering."

Brother Utsumi's statement was motivated by at least two things: his experience in anti-racist activism and his Buddhist beliefs. This instance shows one way in which traditional religion can conflict with spirituality, even when it is a radical branch of religion. Buddhism seems to be particularly disarming to many people in the West who are primarily exposed to Westernized models of Buddhism, as discussed in Chapter 2. (Coleman, 2002) Buddhist monks, too, are easily idealized or exoticized as if they all are permanently serene, wise, jovial, or devoid of typical human flaws or experience. However, those who expect monks not to have strong opinions and beliefs are often surprised. Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise both strongly and

articulately express their views on social issues. They rarely discuss Buddhism, but the issue raised by the woman in the preceding incident touches a core part of Buddhist doctrine. Namely, to claim to understand another via a spiritual experience is to fall into a trap of what Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (2002), drawing from Buddhist doctrine, termed “spiritual materialism.”

Spiritual materialism occurs when an individual's goal in spirituality is to develop or improve the self. It involves a conviction that one's internal spiritual state and practice can raise one above suffering. The greatest ego trap in spiritual materialism is seeing oneself as more enlightened than others, or crediting oneself for particular insight due to one's expansive spiritual perspective. (Trungpa, 2002) However, in Buddhism, there is a much more basic conflict: the self is not something to be nurtured, but rather to be uprooted. (Nhat Hanh, 1999) Therefore, the woman's statement was problematic for Brother Utsumi on one hand because it was somewhat insulting toward the African-Americans who personally experienced racism (and their ancestors who experienced torment and death). But, on the other hand, the statement ran counter to his religious beliefs. To pursue or claim an 'understanding' of others to the self is like adding an adornment to the ego. (Trungpa, 2002) SEIs often invoke personal growth and development as vital to their spirituality, and this element can conflict with any religion. They also reject the constraints of Western religious doctrine and rigidity of belief. (Bellah, 1985; Fuller, 2001) Many individuals, including some SEIs, appear to expect a laxer attitude toward religion among Nipponzan Myohoji (and the Catholic Worker, as will be discussed in Chapter 4). For those who view Buddhism as uncritical or mystical, it can be disruptive to their worldview to encounter its doctrine. A willingness to abandon attachment to the self is at the heart of Buddhism, and despite SEIs' passion for different spiritual traditions and experiences, the individualism inherent in this path does not easily mesh with the Buddhist denial of the importance and autonomy of the

individual. (Bellah, 2002; Coleman, 2002; Trungpa, 2002) To believe in an “I” that has the ability to truly comprehend a “they” is, in Buddhism, essentially false—there is no I to do the understanding, no monolithic they to be understood, and no ability of an individual to transcend their ego to inhabit the reality of another. (Nhat Hanh, 1999; Trungpa, 2002)

This incident raised an issue much discussed in the literature on the spiritual-but-not-religious: that of spirituality as an individualistic or even narcissistic “pick and choose” mentality. Authors who have written on American spirituality address this question to a greater or lesser extent,¹⁴ almost always citing Bellah’s (1985) discussion of what he termed “Sheilaism.” An interviewee named Sheila described her religion as “Sheilaism,” a belief system composed of a mix of religious and spiritual elements that made sense to her, but were not part of any established tradition. Bellah and authors after him who have addressed the phenomenon of spirituality have asked to what extent spiritual individuals engage in disciplined spiritual practice, self-reflection, and civic engagement, questioning whether spiritual-but-not-religious is part of a decline in community correlated with a continued growth of a culture of individualism. Authors such as Fuller (2001) and Stanczak (2006) argue that spiritual individuals show as much variation as religious individuals do in the depth of their understanding of and commitment to their beliefs and practices. SEIs adhere to elements of spirituality that appeal to them and satisfy their psychological needs, just as all people adhere to beliefs and ways of life that meet their desires and needs. (Fuller, 2001)

Employing the psychological research of James Fowler (1981), Fuller (2001) describes stages of spiritual maturity. One criterion of maturity is the ability to recognize multiple truths and be open to community beyond one's own ideology or identity. However, Fuller qualifies,

¹⁴ See, for example, Drescher (2016), Fuller (2001), Bender & McRoberts (2010), Stanczak (2006), Wuthnow (2006).

“This readiness must acknowledge the self-sacrificing cost of true community and be prepared to translate values and beliefs into risk and action” (p. 169). In my experience with SEIs in the context of religious groups, markers of maturity such as openness, tolerance, and a developed sense of ethics can coexist with a conviction of one's own spiritual, perceptual, or emotional abilities. While the level of egotism or narcissism thus expressed certainly does not exceed a typical degree of self-centeredness for any individual, nonetheless it undermines these SEIs' relations with others in the context of social activism. Assumptions and expectations of what one's spirituality permits them can backfire when its expression comes across as arrogant, flaky, or ignorant. If one can adequately judge others using these criteria, SEIs are often spiritually mature. Some SEIs, even with the best of intentions, do remain in an ego-satisfying or spiritually materialistic state. They may either be oblivious to or dismissive of the importance of cohesive doctrine to those who identify as religious (more on this below). (Fuller, 2001)

The disarming kindness, tolerance, and unassuming practices (drumming and chanting) of the Nipponzan monks seem to lead these types of SEIs to think that the monks have no religious traditions, or perhaps not to consider whether they do. However, Buddhism, and particularly monastic Buddhism, has over 2,500 years of tradition, scripture, and practice informing it, and the monks follow many precepts of which laypeople are simply not aware. (Kisala, 1999; D. Laffan, p.c.) Some SEIs do not participate in the monks' prayer services because, for them, these practices are too ritualized or otherwise similar to organized religion. The formal prayer service does not, in one person's words, “do anything for” them. The monks do not discuss some of their beliefs and practices, Sister Denise explained to me, because they are usually misunderstood by Westerners, including Western Buddhists.

At the incident at dinner, it was clearly upsetting for the woman and several others at the table to be told that they cannot understand others. To participate in a pilgrimage and be denied a sense of fully belonging, to be confronted with an acute sense of one's own ancestry as shameful or undesirable, presented a challenge to SEIs. Others expressed defensiveness, hurt feelings, and anger at a sense of being excluded or rejected. Here was a reminder that to be of a middle class white Christian background was to be the historical oppressor, to be adrift in search of a positive historical and transcendent identity.

Other participants integrated this into their thoughts and affect as an opportunity for spiritual growth. SEIs had an understanding of the complexities of solidarity in activism involving both marginalized and non-marginal people. (Fuller, 2001; Sutherland, 2008) Jean Chapman is a retired doctor who grew up in the 1950s in Alabama. Her story demonstrates the path from traditional religion to exploration to engaged spirituality that many SEIs describe. (Stanczak, 2006) Jean has had an exceptional range of life experiences that give her a particular insight, commitment, and respect for black Americans. Of her childhood, she said:

I was raised in a very small Protestant denomination in rural South Alabama. And my ancestors were all rural Southern poor farm people from time out of mind... My father was an elder in the church, and the people at your local church were all your cousins and family and people. It was a very good church to grow up in. I was very, very, very religious growing up. We went to church Sunday mornings, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, summer camp, reunion. It was wonderful. There was no hell fire and brimstone. It was very friendly and very kind and low key. So it was very lovely for a child to grow up in. (p.c.)

Jean discussed with me the fact that her father was also a member of the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. He served as a chaplain in the white supremacist organization. Jean recalled the time when she and her siblings saw their father's wardrobe door hanging open and for the first time saw his white Klan robe hanging inside. However, Jean explained, it seemed strangely compartmentalized from other areas of his life. She did not recall racist rhetoric or behavior from her father, and black employees from his business were invited to their home. Therefore, while Jean's upbringing was steeped in the status quo of racism and segregation in the South, she did not seem to internalize strong messages of racism. She remarked that she also was oblivious to much of the sexism around her. Of going to college at age 16 and then to medical school, she said, "If I had realized how sexist everything was, I probably wouldn't have made it!" In medical school, Jean traveled outside the United States South and experienced other ways of life. After getting her MD, she moved to New York City and after several years joined the Communist Workers' Party. Subsequently, she moved to a Communist community in North Carolina. I asked her whether her peers there were anti-religion. She responded,

Because we were in the South, I think, and worked predominantly with working class whites and with African-American folks, everybody was religious... We didn't put a lot of energy into thinking religion was not a good thing. Most of us were not religious-- a lot of Jewish intellectual people. But it's just not something we talked about very much. It just didn't seem important... I wasn't sort of violently anti-religious. I just sort of left that.

Marxist Leninism was the new religion. (p.c.)

Later, Jean's marriage dissolved and she left Communism to work more and raise her two daughters. Wanting to give her children some spiritual community, she joined a Unitarian Universalist church, where she became interested in religious literature, particularly Catholic

authors such as Thomas Merton and women of the Catholic feminist mystic tradition who interpreted Catholicism through an experiential, liberatory, and socially engaged lens. She also met members of the Catholic Worker and the Plowshares anti-nuclear movement and participated in nonviolent protest for the first time.

As a result of these experiences with Catholicism, she converted in 1986. She participated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), an education program required for adult conversion to Catholicism. Even in joining a traditional organized religion, Jean followed an unconventional path. The Catholic church she joined was predominantly African-American and the RCIA class was led by two women, both uncommon circumstances in the patriarchal and predominantly white Church. (McGreevy, 1994; Mollin, 2004) Jean's Catholic belief and practice were largely centered around her participation with Catholic peace groups. She raised the issue discussed above on spirituality having a superficial or pick-and-choose mentality. In Jean's case, her spiritual and social awareness have been honed by decades of study, participation, and activism. However, when I asked if she had encountered Catholics who disagreed with her perspective on the religion, her response did not precisely answer my question but instead looped back to her own beliefs:

I didn't really think much about all the things wrong with the Catholic Church. It just didn't affect me. There's that way of thinking that says you can't be a "cafeteria Catholic." You can't just pick and choose. And I would always say to myself, "Well, why not?" I don't understand why that's such a big deal. One of the pluses about not being a cradle Catholic was I just wasn't bothered by priestly authority or... I just didn't grow up with it. I didn't pay attention if it didn't make sense to me. It was kind of picking and choosing. I had the piece of it that spoke to me and I didn't pay much attention to the rest of it. (p.c.)

Picking and choosing is perhaps the only way that many SEIs can relate to traditional religion. Their rejection of dogma, hierarchy, and beliefs that exclude or condemn certain groups means they must either reject many organized religions entirely or find ways to focus on the elements of religions that they do believe in. (Bellah, 2002; Fuller, 2001) Some find exceptional religious communities, such as Jean's Catholic church and the Catholic Worker, where the majority of members acknowledge undesirable elements of the religion and focus on the elements they do identify with. Even so, for SEIs, the lack of adherence to a cohesive, permanent set of practices, scripture, and doctrine means that they may change their beliefs and practices drastically over time. (Drescher, 2016; Fuller, 2001)

Jean's involvement in religion shifted in this way. In the early 2000s, she realized she had stopped attending church often and was participating in fewer Catholic peace gatherings. She explained, "I just kind of looked around one day and said, 'That's interesting. I'm not going to church anymore.' I'm sure at the time it felt more definite and clear than that, but looking back, I don't remember a decision not to go" (p.c.). She had also begun reading Buddhist authors, particularly Thich Nhat Hanh, and practicing Soto Zen alongside Catholicism, but she did not feel that there was any conflict between the two disparate religions or that Buddhism drew her away from or replaced Catholicism in her life.

Then, at the School of the Americas protest in 2005, Jean saw Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi drumming and chanting. She said, "I was standing there listening to them and I literally went up and tugged at Denise's robe and said, 'Can other people do this?'" (p.c.) The answer, of course, was yes. Later that year, Jean participated in her first peace walk and recounted:

I took a vacation and did a week of the Oak Ridge walk¹⁵ and I thought I was going to die, and I promised to the God I didn't pray to very much anymore that if I just survived this, I would never do it again. We were walking from somewhere in the deep South to Oak Ridge in August... I've never been so hot in my entire life. But of course, I didn't die and I did come back! (p.c.)

After that, Jean began participating in the annual Selma to Montgomery peace march as well. While she said she was not completely sure when she stopped being invested in Catholicism, Jean observed that she felt dissatisfied with some traits of the Catholic peace movement. It was, she explained,

...such a white, white, white organization. [An African-American man] came [to a Catholic peace retreat] once and said, "It's fine for you people to talk about faithfulness, but for us it's a matter of survival, and we have to look at strategy and being effective." (p.c.)

Jean had sought out interracial and anti-racist groups, both activist and religious, throughout her adult life, and this made Nipponzan Myohoji particularly appealing to her:

I was very moved by [the monks'] involvement in the anti-racist and black freedom struggle. Because we'd always been very focused on that in the Communists Workers Party, and that was still an immense focus for me... While we live in this phenomenal world, for me we have to be about looking at the issue of race, racism, particularly in this country in the south. I think it's just not possible to have integrity and call yourself a peacemaker if that's not something-- for me. I'm not judging, this is for me. So I need to be very aware of that, and listen and listen and listen... We always need to be thinking

¹⁵ A peace walk to the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, near the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda.

about how to do things creatively that will make a difference for people in this world and their suffering. And the most important thing is always behaving in a way-- the Buddhists would say, to be of benefit to yourself and others. So I think I see them as a single path.

(p.c.)

In describing her approach to anti-racist activism, Jean said she looks to African-American leaders to guide her:

I need to put time and energy into things that my brothers and sisters who are people of color... feel is crucial. So if Reverend Barber [a North Carolina civil rights organizer] calls for people to go sit in at the Senate chamber over redistricting, I will do that. I will go do that... I need to be side by side with my communities, my brothers and sisters of color for whom that is life and death. Who gets elected is life and death. (p.c.)

In contrast to some of the SEIs on the walk, Jean made no claims to understand African-Americans' struggle. This may be either despite or because of her extensive involvement in race issues. Another factor was Jean's self-professed Buddhist practice of mindfulness, which included a continuous practice of observing one's reactions to events and examining one's resulting feelings and thoughts. The intention is to become more aware and in control of one's mental processes in which one's ego drives beliefs and actions. (Nhat Hanh, 1992) In activism such as the Selma march, this meant, as Jean put it, "listening and listening and listening." For Jean and some other SEIs, it is essential in activism to understand what an oppressed or disenfranchised group needs and wants, and to participate in action that is approved or led by that group. Interestingly, this follows Dussel's (2012) and Mignolo's (2011) theories of transmodernity (introduced in chapter one), particularly in regards to respecting, and furthermore seeking out, the perspectives and practices of the colonized Other. Jean explained:

I just think for people like me who grew up in the deeply segregated South, there is no end—I have to— One of the Buddhists said, “The more you listen, the more you hear. The more you hear, the more you understand.” So I need to always, always be listening to issues about race because of where I live and the country I live in and the region I live in and the way I grew up. That's a very big part of my own spiritual journey and the justice piece of that. (p.c.)

In contrast, some SEIs (not unlike many others in society) approach activism with a sense that they know what others want or need. This attitude often correlates with racial or socioeconomic privilege. These SEIs seem to focus on "feel-good" elements of spirituality and their desired self-image over the reality of the sometimes uncomfortable or painful engagement with those around them. (Bellah, 2002; Russell, 2009; Trungpa, 2002) In regards to socially engaged spirituality, Larry Russell (2009) wrote: “Our effort is not a measure of heroic self-denial but of the practical distance between the suffering of others and the discomfort of our own self-interest” (p. 592). For Jean, engaging African-Americans activists on how she can be an effective ally is essential to her spirituality, which includes her morality and sense of fulfillment in life. Jean’s commitment to racial equality is reflected in the major spiritual and political commitments throughout her life: her time with the southern Communist Workers’ Party, her Catholicism, and her participation with Nipponzan Myohoji. For her, the Selma walk was an annual return to her origins, to an Alabama that was still at the center of the struggle for civil rights.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a transhistorical practice found in cultures and religions around the world. (Eade & Albera, 2016; Morinis, 1992; Turner & Turner, 1978) In traditional organized religions, pilgrimage is usually defined by a particular broad narrative: leaving ordinary life; adopting

humble or even ascetic daily practice, clothing, and affect; walking to one or more sites associated with sacred individuals and/or events; engaging in specific prayer, offerings, and ritual regarding the object and purpose of the pilgrimage; and receiving the benefits one sought from the pilgrimage, such as the satisfaction of experiencing the sacred site(s), a transcendent or mystical psychological experience, physical healing, or spiritual/emotional insight. (Turner & Turner, 1978) In addition to the study of traditional religious pilgrimage, there has been a recent growth in research on “secular” pilgrimage,¹⁶ which venerate a range of phenomena: sites of popular culture (Graceland, film locations, sites of celebrities’ deaths), of politics (sites of famous leaders’ deaths or of revolutionary events), of war (battlefields, historical and modern), and of social justice (sites such as Auschwitz, the killing fields of Cambodia, Gandhi’s walks across India). (Eade & Albera, 2016; Morinis, 1992)

In describing modes of spiritual or religious expression, Robert Wuthnow’s (1998) concepts of “dwelling” versus “seeking” spirituality are useful.¹⁷ Dwelling spirituality is based in a permanent place and community. It is the religion expressed, in Abrahamic tradition, in the era of kings and priests. Inhabited spirituality is that of the ancient Israelites’ Temple of Solomon on Mt. Zion, of contemporary congregational communities, of believers in both an earthly and heavenly Kingdom. Dwelling also indicates a permanence of belief, represented by hierarchy, authority, or intermediaries between God and common people. It describes an environment bound by liturgy, dogma, fixed tradition, and clear claims to truth.

Wuthnow (1998) contrasts this with seeking spirituality. Biblically, seeking is associated with the Hebrew Prophets and Judges, the unofficial and charismatic leaders of people unified in

¹⁶ See, for example, Albera & Eade, 2016; Badone & Roseman, 2004; Hyndman-Rizik, 2012; Margry, 2008; Morinis, 1992.

¹⁷ Wuthnow (1998) skims over a substantive definition of either religion or spirituality in this work, but he roughly correlates “seeking” with spirituality and “dwelling” with religion.

their identity, but without a land of their own. Seeking spirituality is that of the Exodus, of the tabernacle in the wilderness, of a group of nomadic believers held together by shared faith and hope despite adversity. The metaphor of a journey or quest, one that may never end, also characterizes SEIs' spirituality. (Fuller, 2001; Roof, 1999)

Both types of spirituality were present on the march to Montgomery. The history of African-Americans in the deep South is that of a people who were enslaved, trying to salvage their hope, dignity, and culture in secret. Slaves were often forced to attend church and were frequently ministered to by missionaries. The manipulation of the Christian message to serve the purposes of whites is well-documented. (Raboteau, 1978/2002) There continues to be a schism (certainly found across Christianity, not only in that of African-Americans) between the Jesus who makes himself present with the enslaved, the poor, and the suffering, and the Jesus who is concomitant with God the Father, the lord and master who permits or causes suffering for purposes that may be impossible to understand, but who must still be obeyed and revered. (Clark, 2009; Raboteau, 1978/2002) From the vantage point of slaves, these were two very different Christs and Christianities. One was on the side of the blacks, against the hatred and oppression of whites, as Jesus had embraced the outcasts and rebuked the powerful. (Clark, 2009; Raboteau, 1978/2002) The other was on the side of the prevailing social order, a Christ-God who made the white man master over the black. African-Americans often chose the former and built their own interpretation of Christianity. This was a seeking spirituality that moved, hid, and emerged in symbols and codes. As blacks became emancipated and slowly gained rights, their Christianity in some ways became a movement from seeking to dwelling, from the wilderness to the temple, from "hush harbors" to churches. (Raboteau 2004) Across the centuries, African-Americans in the deep South risked even their lives to maintain their religious communities. On the 2015

Selma march, the spirit of seeking, of resistance to an oppressive social order, was alive and well. But dwelling, represented by Protestantism, was also present in less than welcoming forms.

The Selma to Montgomery walk is an example of a pilgrimage commemorating political and social justice events. The purpose of the pilgrimage for many marchers, in their own words, was to commemorate the individuals involved in the events of 1965 and to reflect on the civil rights movement as a whole. For some, the march was more a political protest without the primary intent of spiritual meaning or personal growth. In either instance, secular or spiritual, the observable characteristics of the march echo those of pilgrimage. The march's origin and end were both sites of particular significance. Selma and Montgomery were both locations of multiple civil rights events. The walkers followed a historic path and passed sites of individual events from the civil rights movement. The walk ended as the 1965 march had: on the steps of the Capitol building, a political site, followed by a gathering at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s church, a spiritual/religious site. Additionally, religion did play a role, insofar as churches and church leaders played an important part in supporting and organizing the civil rights movement. King and several other leaders were Christian clergy, and several clergy participated in the march. The majority of marchers participated in Christian worship events and group prayer during the march, although this was not directly indicative of their personal religious convictions. The walkers in 1965 left their usual daily lives behind in order to participate. They had to travel with limited possessions and few of the conveniences of modern life. For food and shelter, they relied on what was given by donors and hosts along the way and at times did not know when the next meal or break would occur or who would provide it.

For the present-day pilgrims, some of the trials of pilgrimage recurred across centuries and miles. Choices of food and stopping places were limited. At night, beds were uncomfortable

and lines formed outside the showers. There was little privacy at the overnight accommodations. The weather was alternately cool and windy, hot, and rainy over the four days. Some individuals had challenges they could not anticipate or had underestimated: appropriate shoes and clothing, overuse injuries, and fatigue.

Certain difficulties in 2015 were more modern. The schedule required waking earlier than many were accustomed to. Food variety was generally limited to southern-style fare, often without a substantive option for vegetarians, diabetics, etc. Coffee ran out in the mornings. Hot water was in short supply. There were long stretches on the road with no restroom facilities. For those who disliked the conditions, there were limited options for leaving or satisfying their needs. Whenever we approached a convenience store, some ran for bathrooms, coffee, or snacks. Some rode in the accompanying vehicles for some stretches. A few only walked for one or two days. The majority took any challenges in stride as part of the march. As in many religious pilgrimages, walkers compared their suffering to that of the people who were the subjects of the march. The original “foot soldiers” of 1965 faced more uncertainty, discomfort, and substantive dangers compared to the present day participants. (Fig. 10)

This non-religious pilgrimage differed from its counterpart in some ways. The marchers were also witnesses to the cause of civil rights; the act of walking the road was a protest to the outside world as well as a journey of internal or intra-group purpose. There were no conventions of ritual or offerings. The monks and those who had walked with them before had a routine they usually followed in terms of what sites they stopped to honor, where they stayed each night, and at what pace they walked, but this routine was set aside in this instance. In practical terms, pre-modern pilgrims would stop at different locations each night, whereas on the Selma march the walkers returned to a single accommodation each evening by vehicle and were driven back to the

stopping point the next day. Those who had participated with Nipponzan Myohoji before, and some of us who had not, would have preferred to stay at points along the route in keeping with a more traditional pilgrimage experience. One of the SCLC organizers said in a regretful tone that on other memorial walks (such as the 40th anniversary of the march, when the SCLC had organized the same walk), the SCLC had followed this practice. However, she said, some of the march coordinators had “burned some bridges” with local contacts and then opted to stay at the one megachurch every night. As opposed to ancient pilgrimage routes where local businesses profited from the pilgrimage trade, this walk asked for charity on the part of churches and corporations.

Thus, in many ways, the Selma march can be categorized as a pilgrimage for many participants. SEIs’ perception of it was compounded by participating alongside the monks, who regularly practice pilgrimage in the form of their peace walks. The most observable component of pilgrimage is walking, which may seem so obvious and commonplace a human act as to merit little attention. (Green, 2000; Sutherland, 2008) However, in pilgrimage this locomotion takes on meaning and consequence; it involves embodied intention, memory, and meaning-making in an ever-changing landscape. Larry Russell (2009) observes that on pilgrimage,

We learn how we might sacrifice our lives. Stripped of job titles, status, and possessions, we can only offer our effort and our thought. We burn with passion to manifest compassion in the effort of our walking and the ardor of our meditation. It is our connection to others and to a communal framework of religious performance. (p. 592)

Participants also expressed the concept of pilgrimage. Grace Nichols said:

To me, the 50th Anniversary Commemoration march was not merely symbolic or gestural. It is pilgrimage to honor the organizers, freedom fighters and revolutionaries that came before us, and a commitment to struggle forward in honor of their work. (p.c.)

Grace here identified pilgrimage as a substantive phenomenon, in contrast with events that only superficially recognize a cause. In keeping with their view of spirituality as inherently engaged, SEIs do not invoke specifically religious language around the word “pilgrimage.” Yet it still connotes a journey in which both the past and future coexist with the present. President Obama stated similarly in his speech at Selma in 2015, "We respect the past, but we don't pine for it. We don't fear the future; we grab for it. America is not some fragile thing; we are large, in the words of Whitman, containing multitudes. We are boisterous and diverse and full of energy, perpetually young in spirit" (2015, n.p.).

Nipponzan Myohoji's Role in Activism

The Nipponzan Myohoji monks' participation in activist events has varied impacts. At peace walks and protests, the monks often have pre-existing relationships with organizers or other participants. At some events, some SEIs participate via their affiliation with the monks. In some instances, such as the Selma march, the SEIs may not know other participants. Furthermore, in activities involving minority or disenfranchised groups and causes, some SEIs may have participated because the monks provide an introduction and a facilitation of sorts.¹⁸ This role as facilitators can be subtle or elusive to define; interactions and solidarity between individuals of different backgrounds does not, of course, need facilitation in many instances. Participants' commitment to a common cause and open dialogue can be the only requirements for

¹⁸ At present, there are few citations on the idea of 'facilitation' below as it is not a concept I have been able to find in this precise form in the relevant literature. For related concepts, see Green, 2000 and Sutherland, 2007.

social justice efforts to succeed. However, as discussed above, SEIs are often individuals with relatively high privilege in comparison with those whose causes they wish to support, and this can cause hesitation on either or both sides. Marginalized individuals may have little reason to trust outsiders who arrive with the intention of joining their cause. SEIs may be concerned with being effective allies, with being respectful, and with wanting to feel a sense of empathy and/or meaningful contribution without straying into appropriation or overstepping their bounds.

In such circumstances, the monks most obviously facilitate by performing actual introductions and serving as a social 'buffer' as all parties find their footing together. More subtly, the monks occupy a unique space separate from the other parties. Several factors determine this space. As discussed above, Buddhist monks are often viewed through certain stereotypes propagated by media which make them seem almost otherworldly. They are visually distinct with their shaved heads and bright robes. They represent a life of religious devotion and asceticism not often seen in the West (particularly with Christian monasticism having declined sharply and modern nuns often wearing everyday secular clothing). Therefore, non-Buddhist Westerners of any demographic group often regard the monks in the same way: they behave toward and speak of the monks with a distinct respect bordering on awe, and often timidity or curiosity. Whether individuals are religious, spiritual, or secular, they have highly similar responses.

In this way, the monks' presence at times lessens any sense of otherness that might lurk between other participants. Whoever the participants may be, they all appear to hold an admiration for the monks and a persistent awareness of their presence. While clergy of Western faiths may be regarded with the same respect, admiration, or awe, the monks hold an exoticism or novelty, to the extent that strangers will ask to pose with the monks for pictures. Some

approach them almost as if any interaction is a privilege or bestows some spiritual merit. This is enhanced by the practice of drumming and chanting, particularly in public with the gendaiki banner flying. In short, it is bright and loud. The monks' particular ritual activities are often accepted and even welcomed without hesitation by other activists at protests. However, at times the monks' practices conflict with others. At one point on the Selma march, a participant came back to the monks to say that the SCLC group at the front would like them to be quieter so the political chants could be heard better. In this instance, the monks' presence was entirely participatory; unlike other years, they had not organized the walk, and they deferred to the SCLC leadership. In some walks, however, the division between non-SEI activists and the monks, and between these activists and SEIs, is more prominent.

Another peace walk in which Nipponzan monks occupied a role as facilitator or bridge between a minority group and SEIs shows how these divisions manifest. One of the most ambitious peace walks organized by Nipponzan Myohoji was the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage, a year-long journey in 1998-1999. This eponymous pilgrimage showed the tensions and conflicts that can emerge on peace walks as participants grapple with often-unexpected personal and intra-group emotions and beliefs. It also shows how SEIs and other activists view and engage with the monks under different circumstances. In this pilgrimage, members of Nipponzan Myohoji and a group of sixty activists embarked from the Nipponzan Myohoji Peace Pagoda in Leverett, Massachusetts to trace the Middle Passage route of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in reverse. They planned to walk South from Massachusetts to New Orleans, travel to the Caribbean, then across the Atlantic to Western Africa. The project was developed by Sister Claire Carter, a monk at the Leverett Pagoda, and Ingrid Askew, an African-American

activist and performer. (Farrell, 1998; Sutherland, 2007) Askew's description of how she became involved with Nipponzan Myohoji is similar to accounts from many other SEIs:

I've never been a joiner of any organized religion. And I came to Buddhism after meeting Sister Claire Carter and [Brother Kato], my two teachers, and visiting the Peace Pagoda, and looking at what this order stands for, and how it is not judgmental, how it celebrates and honors every religion, how it honors and celebrates humanity. I got such a sense of respect. And as an African American, that means a lot. (1998, n.p.)

There are two major sources that discuss this pilgrimage, and they show how these activities can be interpreted through different lenses. One source is Episode 6, "Rise Up and Call Their Names," in the six-part documentary series *This Far by Faith* (Farrell, 1998). This series explored different facets of African American religion, and thus focused particularly on the experiences of the African-American participants in the pilgrimage. The second source is a paper by Peter Sutherland (2007), which is one of the few academic examinations of Nipponzan Myohoji.¹⁹ Sutherland (2007) gives significant attention to the conflicts present on the walk: between white and black activists, between the monks' ideology of the peace walk versus its meaning for black participants, and on the feasibility of an "interfaith" pilgrimage. Sutherland, who did not participate but who corresponded with participants via email, details Nipponzan Myohoji's philosophy or intention in the peace walks as it was envisioned for the pilgrimage:

The Indian Buddhist practice of walking-meditation was re-inscribed in the pilgrimage by combining it with the Gandhian idiom of non-violent protest and the transformative Myohoji practice of beating drums and chanting... [W]alking was adapted [by those with Nipponzan Myohoji] in the Middle Passage pilgrimage to the goal of transforming the

¹⁹ Other sources that substantively discuss Nipponzan Myohoji are Kisala's (1999) *Prophets of Peace* and articles by Green (2000) and Kim (1986).

psychic legacy of slavery in two ways. It not only involved praying for the souls of the ancestors to release them from suffering; it also provided an introspective practice for recognizing the concepts and habits of racism internalized by black and white populations... and endeavoring to transcend them. (p. 53)

In “Rise Up and Call Their Names,” (1998) Ingrid Askew and Sister Claire explain how they conceived of the pilgrimage:

Ingrid Askew: What if we were to get a group of African Americans, or people of African descent, and people of European descent, together to walk the history of slavery?

Sister Claire Carter: And I thought walking, in the case of the history of the enslavement of African people in the Americas, if we walk this history, at least for white people, this is a— I mean, the truth shall make us free, you know.

Ingrid Askew: The idea was to begin a process of healing the wounds of slavery, looking at racism, which is the legacy of slavery.

Narrator: Ingrid and Sister Claire Carter spent five years organizing the pilgrimage. They knew that a pilgrimage would attract white activists, but this pilgrimage was to focus on the African ancestors, and so they hoped that black people would come. They did. Each with their own faith mission. (n.p.)

This goal of transcendence was not easily achieved on this pilgrimage, as both the documentary and Sutherland recount. However, Sutherland’s approach underscores the ‘otherness’ of the monks and minimizes the extent of their perception and diplomacy. He does illustrate the important division that still exists regarding questions of race. In this, black participants’ own narratives show the malleability of the monks’ role and importance, and black participants’

internal conflicts about whites' participation. African-American participant Louise Dunlap stated:

Well, in some ways I thought it was less important for white people to go than for black people to go because the history is more painful and because I knew that white people would get in the way of black people exploring their history. But at the same time, I think the biggest difficulty in dealing with racism in this country and healing the legacy of slavery, the biggest difficulty is that white folks don't get involved with it... In the African part of the pilgrimage, African-Americans came more into their own as leadership. Part of it was that Myrna became the prayer leader. The Buddhist prayer, in the morning prayer, kind of, they still chanted for 15 minutes, but then they moved into a circle. Myrna put on the kente cloth and offered a prayer from the African tradition and poured libations. The spiritual balance and the spiritual energy of the pilgrimage had changed dramatically and become more Afro-centric. (1998, n.p.)

Ingrid Askew's teenage daughter Raina Askew describes the mix of 'spiritual maturity' of the white participants in the walk and its importance:

There were the people who honestly wanted to confront the racism that they had. There were people who were just like in total denial. And there were people who were like totally ready to confront it and to deal with that. And the people who were in denial fell off after awhile, and the people who were honestly ready to confront made it to the end. (1998, n.p.)

Much of the dialogue in the documentary, "Rise Up and Call Their Names," (Farrell, 1998) focuses on individuals' experiences and their interactions, showing how the black and the white participants sought to relate to one another and how both engaged with the monks. However,

Sutherland's (2007) approach in his article underscores the more esoteric, cosmological, and "magical" (p. 38) elements of Nipponzan Myohoji's traditions and of broader Buddhist beliefs. The purpose of the walk for the monks, he claims, "was to reinvest the Middle Passage journey with new psychic structures of energy and emotion as part of the larger Myohoji project of transforming the world by compassion" (2007, p. 42). However, he goes on to assert that,

Despite their compassionate intentions, however, Myohoji views of changing the world were viewed by some participants in the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage as intrusive and colonial. For most U.S. African-Americans, the Middle Passage journey traditionally evokes a threshold of terror, a trajectory of subjection, a place of memory, but also a ground of heroic resistance and diasporic identity. The pilgrimage organizers sought to transform this historical field of enslavement and deracination associated with peoples of African descent into a universal Buddhist field of liberation for all who have suffered at the hands of western greed, war, and modernity, thereby depriving it of its particular significance for African-Americans. To maintain such an ethnocentric identification with the Middle Passage journey, Buddhists would argue, only prolongs the suffering it represents by preserving the self-oriented consciousness of attachment, which causes suffering in the first place. The discontinuity of universalist Buddhist and ethnic African-American conceptions of suffering, memory and identity, I shall argue, requires rethinking Turnerian *communitas*. (2007, p. 42)

My experiences with the monks contradict Sutherland's assertions to some extent. His approach minimizes the extent of their perception and diplomacy, and it maximizes the influence of abstract Buddhist concepts on the monks' behavior. My fieldwork shows, to the contrary, that the monks remain pragmatic, attuned to others' emotions, and grounded in present reality when

engaged in activism. They do not seek out the role of counselors or mediators for participants, but neither do they act out or verbalize the Buddhist doctrine of non-attachment or the universality of suffering. Below I will also discuss why Victor Turner's term *communitas* is still a relevant and important concept in examining why and where SEIs participate in activist events, with mention of why Sutherland's interpretation of *communitas* has been incorrectly applied.

In addition to illustrating the tensions of race and the question of religion's role in the Interfaith Pilgrimage, this journey also highlighted the issue of real and imagined ancestry. Ancestry was a crucial component of the pilgrimage for African-Americans, and the sites where the pilgrims stopped served to enhance this awareness of the suffering and dehumanization that enslaved Africans endured. While many black participants did not know their genealogy before emancipation, the symbolic ancestry of their race created a strong sense of connection. At one point, the pilgrims had run out of money and were staying in temporary accommodations in Jamaica. Raina Askew stated in "This Far by Faith" (1998):

"It was raining and I was wet. I was just like, 'Mommy, I want to go home. I think I'm finished. I can't do it anymore.'" Ingrid replied,

"I was like, 'Baby, I'm sorry. I can't make it easy for you. It's hard, I know. But you have to go all the way, because the day that you committed to this pilgrimage, you didn't just commit on a piece of paper. You didn't just commit to me and all these other people. You didn't just commit to yourself. You committed to your ancestors'" (n.p.). Ingrid, Raina, and other black participants found strength in this connection. Many participants shared the feelings of transcendence and interconnectedness that Askew and Sister Claire had hoped the pilgrimage would produce. These impressions reflect the combination of spiritual traditions that SEIs often hold. Participant Laura Brown wrote of embarking on the pilgrimage in her diary:

Today I set forth on a year's journey to reclaim my ancestry, restore my hope and spirit, challenge the restrictions and conformity of life and to awaken and develop my spiritual self. This is an ancestral calling. Monks praying, drums beating, dancing. Dear Divine Creation... I am attempting to follow the path that you have laid out before me. And as your child I cannot help but recite my favorite Psalm. "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 1:10. (1998, n.p.)

As Brown expresses, the presence of the Nipponzan Myohoji monks on the Selma march was similarly generally appreciated as a spiritual contribution to the march. Regarding this phenomenon on the Selma march, Grace Nichols stated that the monks' presence

was incredibly calming and powerful. I think they created an important cross cultural experience. When traditional movement songs rooted in Black American civil rights movements/gospel/Black folk religion and Black church traditions and chants [from movements like] the labor movement were not taking place, the monks chanting gave an opportunity to reflect and experience the march more internally. It was nice to be able to just listen and to learn the chant and participate as well. A notable memory was cows approaching a fence and lining up to listen to the monks chanting as well. (p.c.)

Similarly, William Marshall said:

The monks are a great spiritual presence to the march each year. I first met them in 2012 and spent a lot of time that week talking and building a long term relationship with them. I've been to Tennessee to visit them [at the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda] and see them each year in Selma. They've come to Ebenezer [Church] to worship and in 2018 I marched in the King Day parade with them. I love Denise Laffan and Gyosyu Utsumi very much. (p.c.)

Protestant Culture: The State and the Church

The monks, SEIs, and other participants shared the above-mentioned concerns not only with history or cultural racism, but also about the legal regression of civil rights. It was again a present-day fight, not only a memory. For the monks and SEIs, this concern fell under the auspices of their critique of the United States as socially regressive and as perpetuating misleading messages about American equality and exceptionalism. This sentiment is poignantly expressed in Carl W. Hines' poem "A Dead Man's Dream," written in 1965 (in Kohls, 2013) after the assassination of Malcolm X, but the words have also often been applied to the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. Indeed, they could be applied easily to the civil rights movement as a whole:

Now that he is safely dead,
Let us praise him...
Dead men make such convenient heroes.
For they cannot rise to challenge the images
That we might fashion from their lives.
It is easier to build monuments
Than to build a better world.
So now that he is safely dead,
We, with eased consciences will
Teach our children that he was a great man,
Knowing that the cause for which he
Lived is still a cause
And the dream for which he died is still a dream.

This criticism of the appropriation of the civil rights movement was reflected in the role of federal and local officials in the 2015 march. As in 1965, the march had police protection. There were always several police cars driving ahead and behind the line of marchers in order to keep traffic in the left lane of the highway. A specialist from the Department of Justice's Community Relations Service,²⁰ Mildred de Robles, also accompanied us. We were initially uncertain as to Ms. de Robles' purpose on the march. Brother Utsumi began a conversation with her with reserve; the monks and many activists regard government agents with some suspicion about their motives. Ms. de Robles's job, she explained, was to make sure that the marchers were properly protected by law enforcement and that we were not harassed or obstructed in any way. Part of her responsibility was to monitor the various police departments' conduct, ensuring that we were not daunted by those assigned to help us. She walked the entirety of the march alongside us. There were no incidents along the road, and the police who escorted us were helpful and friendly. They posed repeatedly with marchers for photos.

However, the supportive demeanor of the officials on the march recalled the conflicted role of government and law enforcement in United States race relations. Local officials, police, and judges were often agents of obstruction or violence against blacks in the South. In this context, the police and Ms. de Robles can still be viewed as agents of disciplinary measures. (Foucault, 1975) David Dellinger (1970), a prominent American nonviolent activist, wrote that the American state had become able to absorb protest, to change leadership and superficial policies without addressing the deeper underlying issues. Protest, then, had become the opiate of the radicals. Protest and equal rights are part of the rhetoric of United States society, but in practice, protest since the Vietnam War has, by virtue of this very rhetoric, often been co-opted

²⁰ For more information, see <https://www.justice.gov/crs/what-we-do>.

and de-fanged by the state.²¹ (Kohls, 2013; West, 2011) In light of the high profile of police abuse in 2015, it was to the federal government's and the police's benefit that they be seen as safeguarding this cause.

Historically, the relationship between blacks and whites in racial issues and the role of Protestant Christianity have been complex. (Clark, 2009; Combs, 2014) The centuries-long experience of slavery influenced African-American society in many ways, including religion. (Raboteau, 1978/2002) On the 2015 Selma to Montgomery march, African-American Protestantism played a significant role. (Combs, 2014) Blum (2009) writes that, although many texts and oral histories by blacks are wholeheartedly positive about Northern whites' education efforts,

Several historians characterize the post-Civil War educational missions to southern African Americans as bourgeois efforts of Victorian control. Most bluntly, historian Ronald Butchart contended that education was given to freed people... in an effort to avoid granting African Americans 'meaningful power.' ...Education was merely a means of class control in which northern capitalists sought to inculcate time management, sobriety, thrift, and the Protestant work ethic into the newly freed slaves so that they would become a manageable and reliable workforce in the South. (p. 91)

Similar analyses are directed in far greater measure at the work of white Protestant ministers in the south, particularly before emancipation. As in the Protestant ethic, those people who prospered were assumed to be those whom God favored. Therefore, the fact that slavery existed showed that whites were superior. Those who were subordinate were preached the gospel of

²¹ The question of the purpose and efficacy of protest will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

future equality: Jesus would bless them, the poor and meek, in Heaven, as long as they stayed poor and meek on earth. (Clark, 2009; Raboteau, 1978/2002)

On the ground in the civil rights movement, there were mixed feelings about the role of white supporters, many of whom were Northerners who visited the South specifically to help in the civil rights struggle. (Blum, 2009; Combs, 2014) While African-Americans often welcomed this support, there was also critique from several perspectives. Events such as the Freedom Summer of 1964, when numerous white youth traveled to the deep South to volunteer, can be viewed as a brief, feel-good experience for these participants, who could then return to their own homes with a sense of virtue, while African-Americans remained in the same harsh circumstances with little option but to continue struggling against oppression. (Clark, 2009) Nonetheless, white Americans continued to join the movement, even after the murders of white activists such as Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman in 1964 showed that no one was immune from violence in this cause. Some joined the cause because of the growing conflict and thus the growing need for support among the activists. (Blum, 2009; Clark, 2009)

Grace expressed the concerns of the SEIs on the march about the ways in which issues of discrimination intertwined with messages of liberation:

I think it's important to name that the mainstream civil rights movements stem from a legacy of organizing within Black churches. As an organizer who understands this legacy, I think it's important to honor our civil rights history and to name the nuance of harm created by the collusion of Christian supremacy and white supremacy/patriarchy/misogyny/sexism... Any actual or perceived notions of the Black church being "more" sexist, homophobic, transphobic, etc. than non-Black churches is a direct result of white supremacy. I witnessed many unfortunate examples of this along the march. (p.c.)

The first instance that put some marchers on edge was at lunch on Monday. The march stopped at a high school, where organizers had brought lunches. It soon became apparent that there were not enough lunches or seats for everyone present. A pastor got to his feet at the front of the room and said, “All of you who are real men need to give your lunches and seats to the ladies. This is a time when men need to start standing up.” Our group gave away our lunches; thanks to Sister Denise’s forethought, we had food in our pickup truck.

The second instance of dissonance was more pervasive. We were to stay each night at the Macedonia Miracle Kingdom and Worship Center, an evangelical African-American megachurch. Wherever the walk ended that day, we then rode in our vehicles back to the church. The next morning, we would ride back to where we had left off the previous afternoon. At the end of the first day of walking, we crowded into the van, hungry, tired, and dusty from the road, and drove to the church. Some surprise and dismay arose as soon as we pulled into the long drive of the gleaming modernist-style church. Alongside a flagpole flying the American flag was another flying the flag of Israel. Among the oppressed and vilified groups that SEIs champion, Palestinians are prominent. Most SEIs I had met voiced strong objections to the Israeli government and military, similar to their criticisms of the United States. In keeping with the Gandhian and Buddhist view of interpersonal and intergroup violence as caused by ignorance, SEIs might describe the people of Israel as trapped in the same system of a modern, secular, Western-style state that Americans are enmeshed in. Similarly, the plight of ordinary Palestinians was worsened by Palestinians who used violence against Israel, which gave the Israeli state fodder to continue its military actions. Several members of our group protested for Palestinian freedom. Every day, fellow marcher and SEI Rae Hearne wore an azure-blue scarf that was woven by a Palestinian woman who sold them online to support nonprofit work. Ken Jones was

in the process of planning a trip to Palestine with his partner, where they had been invited to live with a Palestinian family in the West Bank. Regarding the role of this church and on Christianity in the march, Ken reflected:

Christianity was the predominant religion of the walkers and those who fed and housed us, and I was grateful for their comradery and care. I was raised as a Catholic and felt very comfortable with people's beliefs and guiding lights. I did, however, find the fundamentalist/evangelical/Zionist nature of the pastors and congregation that housed us in Montgomery to be contrary to my own value system. It was telling that the connection between religion and politics during the walk felt congruent with my own worldview, but not the religion/politics of the hosting church. (p.c.)

The church's display of support for Israel was perhaps a sign of the congregation's identification with the Jewish people based on both groups' history of oppression and slavery. However, to some in our party, the display of the Israeli state flag was in conflict with their perspective on peace and oppression of civil rights. At most, it could be seen as hypocritical. At least, it was bemusing.

Elements of dissonance between SEIs and the host church continued. Grace observed: "At the megachurch where they housed people, there were ample heteronormative, homophobic, transphobic and sexist/patriarchal/misogynistic messages" (p.c.). In the foyer of the church was a massive banner stating "Save the Black Seed," with pictures of young black men who had been killed by the police over the preceding several years. (Fig. 11) Grace's perception of this was that, despite the vital message about police brutality, the implication was heteronormative. Young black men needed to be "saved" partly to pass on their "seed." Grace, I, and others observed the lack of attention to black women, and indeed, the repeated insistence by pastors that

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men "step up" and be "real men" by taking charge of tasks that were being performed by women—a disempowering and disparaging message, particularly in light of the fact that the majority of the SCLC organizers and church volunteers were female.

This issue came to a head for several participants when we were shown where we would stay. There were two large rooms with cots, and the organizers explained one was for men and one for women. This would of course be the normative set-up for such an event, presumably partly as a matter of privacy for each gender. However, the separation was also somewhat exaggerated or prohibitive. A female organizer went to the extent of shoing men away from the women's space. The instance thus again highlighted the question of heteronormativity. Whether the purpose of the gender separation was about gender or about sexuality, it ignored the reality of the gender identities and sexual orientations of multiple individuals on the march. Several marchers, including myself, found alternative sleeping arrangements; I camped in a tent on the lawn behind the church.

This question of intersecting perspectives on tolerance, discrimination, and spiritual/religious values arose again in one notable instance. At the lunch stop on our first day of walking, I found several of the high school students huddled together with Coleman and Grace standing alongside them, speaking in hushed tones. One student, Julia, had her arms folded tightly and was crying. Another, Charlie, had a look of fury on her face, and a third, a young man, looked at a loss. Grace turned a cynical gaze on me. "The coordinator told them they couldn't carry bottled water." The angry-faced girl snapped,

"She said the men would do it. She said we would damage our ovaries if we carried heavy things!"

"She's a woman!" Julia blurted. "How could she do that?"

“I carried them anyway,” Charlie added.

Grace reflected on the incident: (Fig. 12)

One particularly sexist incident involved the young people being told they needed to help carry water for others. When two young women from a high school in Colorado offered to put extra bottles of water in their backpacks, they were told that this was a role for the boys and were not allowed to carry water. After this incident, another organizer... and I, with the consent of their teacher, created space for the young people to process. One of the young women expressed, "I never thought I would come here and feel this broken."

(p.c.)

How to explain the painful reality that one could be anti-racist but still be sexist? How to soften the blow of these young people realizing that others did not necessarily recognize all forms of discrimination in the same way? In that somber discussion on the march, we had to parse out the issue that even under the roof of an African-American-led church, where the teens had expected an atmosphere celebrating diversity and equality, there were complex layers of history, culture, and experience that influenced how people differentiated or equated different forms of discrimination.

Communitas

The anthropological concepts of liminality and communitas are useful to discuss the particular space and feelings of events such as pilgrimage and protest. On the 2015 Selma march, the contrast between spirituality and religion can be explored in the division between dwelling and seeking, between the permanent and the evanescent, between established social order and unfettered, unpredictable interaction. These seeking, exploratory, and temporary circumstances and experiences can be described as liminality. A concept popularized within anthropology by

Victor Turner (1969), liminality refers to spaces in which the normal social order and individual status are suspended. The dissolution of everyday social structure allows individuals to connect in new ways which they perceive and relate as meaningful. Liminal states are those in which the normal constraints that individuals feel from society are relaxed or altered. Turner saw liminal states as states of potential, in which people could feel new and vital connections. Liminality can create an environment for *communitas*, a spontaneous collective experience of fulfillment and connection with others. (E. Turner, 2012; V. Turner, 1969) Turner (1986) wrote of liminality in terms of its potentially emancipatory properties. The reduction of social strictures therein allows individuals to perceive and manifest alternatives to the social order via the experience of *communitas*. (Seale-Collazo, 2012; E. Turner, 2012; V. Turner, 1969) Edith Turner (2012) follows Victor Turner's assertion that there are certain roles or positions in society that are liminal. Among these roles, Turner (2012) lists monks, who live between the mundane and the sacred. To that, I would add SEIs and Catholic Workers, whose spirituality is integrally linked to a critique of American social structure (as is that of Nipponzan Myohoji). This quality of liminality also applies to oppressed and marginalized groups. Edith Turner (2012) asserts that these persons' "secular powerlessness is compensated for by a sacred power" (p. 183) that is manifested in the transcendent experiences of *communitas*.

Communitas cannot be induced or artificially created, but liminal events such as pilgrimage and protest and/or the involvement of those who occupy liminal roles can make it more likely that *communitas* will occur. *Communitas* is spontaneous, empathetic, and experiential. Edith Turner (2012) emphasizes that we cannot impose the label of *communitas* on a particular experience or activity if the participants do not express the experience of this feeling. It can be inferred based on participant-observation and interaction with informants, but it cannot

be categorically attributed to an event except on the basis of participants' narratives.

Communitas also fosters connection between individuals who might otherwise be separated by social and societal boundaries. (E. Turner, 2012) Communitas, Victor Turner (1969) states, involves both "lowliness and sacredness" (p. 360). It is an experience of the most basic bond between humans, which can be felt by anyone because it is beyond words or ritual.

It is also important to stipulate that communitas can facilitate permanent changes, but the experience itself is temporary. Also, neither liminality nor communitas are inherently "good" or productive. Communitas includes the stipulation of a lack of feelings of enmity, persecution or anger, distinguishing it from destructive communal experiences, which Edith Turner (2012) calls "false communitas." Thomassen (2014) gives the examples of cults such as Jonestown or Nazi rallies as examples of negative outcomes of togetherness in liminality—instances in which a particular social order is reinforced, not challenged, through group feeling. Solidarity, in Turner's (2012) view, meant a unity or community which nonetheless can view an outside group as opponent or enemy—an "us" that is partly engendered by the existence of a "them."

In contrast, communitas expresses the type of transcendence of enmity found in nonviolence and Engaged Buddhism. Communitas in this way corresponds to what Fowler (1981) describes as the highest stage of spiritual maturity, in which the focus of spirituality shifts from development of the self to an absence of self. Humility, service, and the ability to transcend differences and conflicts are its hallmarks. Unmentioned is the similarity between this highest stage of maturity and the goals of Buddhism. The conjunction of nonviolent approach to social change, the potential for communitas, and this element of spiritual maturity as manifested in Buddhism epitomize SEIs' values and spiritual journey.

The purpose and legacy of the march also fostered solidarity. (Figs. 14 & 15) Everyone listened reverently when the former foot soldiers and Freedom Riders spoke. One woman, who was 12 years old in 1965, described how the marchers had passed her family's home east of Selma while she was sweeping the front porch, and she had dropped the broom and dashed to the road to join them. She walked the rest of the way to Montgomery with them. Another woman described how, in 1964, she had showed up to be a Freedom Rider with a switchblade in her purse. John Lewis had told her she could not bring it, and she replied she would not leave it behind. He said he did not think she understood the meaning of nonviolence and recommended she attend a SNCC training class. In 1965, she joined the Selma march—without the switchblade.

Other instances were spontaneous, and the more inspiring for it. At one walk break, I heard a song being sung nearby. I followed the singing and found Grace Nichols and Michael Ta'Bon, better known as G. Law, performing an impromptu duet of the gospel hymn "Hallelujah Anyhow." Grace identifies as non-binary in gender. They are five feet tall and were adopted as an infant from the Philippines by a middle-class white couple. They are college-educated, work at a university, and are a performance artist whose shows involve provocative social topics based around their experiences with their identity. G. Law, a black man over 6 feet tall, always wore an orange prison jumpsuit. (Fig. 14) When I asked what "G. Law" meant, he replied in a rap: "God's Law at Work, God's Love Always Wins!" He was an ardent Christian and a former prison inmate from inner city Philadelphia who had committed himself to fighting racism and breaking the cycle of incarceration of black youth. He traveled the East Coast speaking at schools and events, discussing community and faith. He traveled in a box truck called the "Un-Prison Cell," which had one side fitted with bars and was painted with stone walls and flames. He would stand in it

and talk to those who approached him about his experiences in prison. (Michael Ta’Bon, p.c.; glawmovement.com) For the entire Selma walk, including a day of incessant rain, he carried a crossbar across his shoulders from which cascaded a ten-foot-long canvas banner. The banner had New Testament phrases about love written in massive letters down its length, and as the march went on, marchers added messages of love and peace to it with markers.

Of the event, Grace wrote on their website: “Got to sing with O.G. today. We sang: ‘Hallelujah, anyhow. Never let your troubles get you down. If troubles come your way, hold your head up high and say, hallelujah anyhow.’ He called me little champion” (Nichols, 2015) The diminutive Grace and the towering Michael, spontaneously singing a gospel spiritual, embodied the spirit that the marchers all seemed to seek on the march. Across race, gender, class, and religion, we came together in experiences of solidarity, spirituality, and commitment to social justice.

Discovering Belonging

Whites’ involvement in civil rights activism has at many times been welcomed and lauded. (Blum, 2009; Clark, 2009) Blum (2009) writes: “At least in the land of memory, these were whites who crossed the color line. These were whites who did so to help and not to hurt. These reminiscences had a spiritual tone to them, as if interracialism was more than a dream or desire. It was construed as a holy imperative” (p. 104). One such example is Viola Liuzzo, a woman murdered after the march in 1965 along Highway 80. Many of the marchers, myself included, had never heard her name. A white woman, aged 39, Liuzzo was involved in protests and activism and was a member of the NAACP in Detroit, where she lived with her husband and five teenage children. (Giannino, 2015; Stanton, 2000) Her best friend was Sarah Evans, a black woman, who attended a Unitarian Universalist church which also strongly supported civil rights.

Liuzzo joined this same church. In February 1965, she saw television coverage of Bloody Sunday and resolved to drive to Selma, Alabama, to help the SCLC and activists in any way she could. Evans took charge of Liuzzo's children, and Liuzzo drove her Oldsmobile south for three days until she reached Selma, where the marchers were organizing. She helped with whatever tasks she could: performing first aid, greeting and organizing marchers, and then marching. (Giannino, 2015; Stanton, 2000)

On March 25, she had been helping drive marchers back to Selma, and was driving with a nineteen-year-old black man named Leroy Moton back to Montgomery. (Fig. 17) A truck began to follow them and eventually pulled alongside. The four occupants of the truck were members of the KKK, including one who was also an FBI informant. It remains undetermined who fired the shots into Liuzzo's car, but she was killed almost instantly. Leroy Moton pretended to be dead until the truck's occupants had left, then made his way to town to report the attack. (Giannino, 2015; Stanton, 2000)

The media soon reported negative allegations and opinions about Liuzzo: that she had gone to Alabama to have sex with black men, that she was a Communist, and that she was a reprehensible mother who had abandoned her children. Evidence later surfaced that J. Edgar Hoover had encouraged the FBI to proliferate slander against Liuzzo to detract attention from the FBI's involvement. The FBI refused to investigate the case further or to determine their informant's role in the murder. (Giannino, 2015; Stanton, 2000) After many delays, the cases were brought to court. The FBI informant was given immunity and the other three men were convicted of violating Liuzzo's civil rights. Each received a maximum sentence of ten years. However, the smear campaign against Liuzzo could not drown out the voices that lauded her. President Lyndon Johnson personally called Liuzzo's husband Jim the day after her death and

told him, "I don't think she died in vain, because this is going to be a battle, all out as far as I'm concerned" (Giannino, 2015, p. 51).

About halfway between Selma and Montgomery, a memorial headstone stands near the site of Liuzzo's death beside the Wright's Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. We arrived there on a drizzling gray morning. A Unitarian Universalist pastor and one of the reverends traveling on the march recounted Liuzzo's story. Both Leroy Moton and the FBI informant had stated that when it became apparent to Liuzzo that she was being followed, she had begun singing "We Shall Overcome" at the top of her voice and continued to sing even as the gun was aimed at her. (Giannino, 2015) The minister addressing us outside the chapel here began to speak fervently. After Liuzzo had been shot and the car had crashed to a stop, Moton had been thrown sideways against her body. He realized he needed to feign death as the murderers got out of the truck to see if either occupant was alive. "Leroy Moton lay his head in Viola Liuzzo's lap," the minister told us. When the KKK members looked in the car, they saw only two motionless bloodied bodies. "Leroy survived because Viola's blood had dripped onto his face," the minister finished.

At this moment, standing in sight of where Liuzzo had died and Moton had faced death, I began to shake. I had been shivering, bones aching in the cold rain, but now I was quaking with unexpected emotion and felt hot tears running down my face. In evangelical Christian terms, infant baptism is known as being "washed in the water." It is important, but adult baptism is required in order to be "born again" as someone who is saved from Hell by accepting Jesus as their personal savior with full adult understanding. When adults are baptized, sometimes by pouring of water over the head, sometimes by full immersion, they are said to be "washed in the blood" of Christ. Leroy Moton was saved by being "washed" in Liuzzo's blood. (Fig. 18)

This memorial and the story offered a touchstone to the white participants on the march, including myself. As anti-racist activists, they were heirs to Liuzzo's legacy. Like her, they were white and active in nonviolent protest. Like her, they had traveled to Selma to make the march to Montgomery out of their deep convictions about civil rights. Liuzzo had moved from a Protestant background to active Catholicism to the broader inclusive spirituality of the Unitarian Universalist church, just as many SEIs sought a spiritual dwelling place that matched their beliefs in social justice. Some of us, as we stood in the rain, thought about the decision at the heart of Liuzzo's story. She had decided to go to Selma even though she knew she could be killed. Our journey, in contrast, was safe. We sacrificed little besides our comfort on the march. But the stories of the marchers reminded us that there were times and places when fighting for peace, justice, or liberation could become far more dangerous than anyone could predict.

Within this grander narrative of the civil rights movement, Liuzzo's story reminded the SEIs that white people, too, had taken risks and made sacrifices to further the cause of civil rights at no personal benefit to themselves. For me, Liuzzo's story raised a perennial and unanswerable question: Would I risk my life for my belief that alleviating human suffering was paramount to all other aspects of life? Would I and the SEIs around me wholly dedicate ourselves to a cause that did not directly affect us? While the questions of legitimacy, acceptance, and so on have no clear answers, the recognition of Viola Liuzzo provided all the marchers with a poignant factual example of dedication to the civil rights movement by someone who stood to gain nothing from it but the knowledge that they had honored their own sense of truth.

Conclusion

The 50th anniversary Selma to Montgomery march showed several themes in SEIs' spiritualities and relationships with religion. These relationships, as discussed in the introduction, are at odds with some elements of organized or traditional religion, yet are conducive to others. Religion, as it is practiced by the Nipponzan Myohoji monks, is largely in harmony with SEIs' defining beliefs, such as equality, inclusivity, and open-mindedness, and the necessity of social justice activism. Therefore, participating in the march alongside Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise gave the SEIs two guides whom they knew shared their spiritual values. The monks' religious affiliation also provided a bridge between the SEIs and other marchers, both because of the monks' status and because of their religious affiliation. That is to say, Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi's visible identity as monks set them apart from the other marchers, yet at the same time facilitated communication between the SEIs who accompanied the monks and the other marchers, as the other marchers were interested to learn about the monks. There was also a balance between religious and secular motivations and expressions due to Nipponzan Myohoji's presence. The monks' approach to the march was based in their religious beliefs, and they performed the religious practice of drumming and chanting for the entire walk. Some of the other participants were religious, but their religiosity was not explicitly expressed during the walk. They did engage in non-religious discourse on civil rights and sang and chanted some of the classic protest songs. For the SEIs, for whom the walk was both a sociopolitical protest and a spiritual journey, Utsumi and Denise embodied the spiritual side of the journey, and the other marchers in a way represented the secular motivations of the event.

The peace walks reflect the spiritual tradition of pilgrimage, first via the practice of walking, and second, in developing relationships with fellow pilgrims. The liminal space of the

pilgrimage and the growing solidarity between participants fostered instances of *communitas*, a transcendent experience which drew people together despite differences.

The array of races, ethnicities, ages, genders, and sexualities among the participants on the march appealed to SEIs' desire for solidarity with those of different racial and cultural backgrounds and with the marginal groups for whom they advocate. This approach applied specifically to the African-Americans on the march and to the historical legacy of the civil rights movement. The SEIs' seriousness about contributing to this cause and their sincerity in interacting with other marchers brought about significant connection between the groups.

In several cases, the reverend who met us on various daily stops made the aforementioned statements about what men needed to do—and tacitly about what women should not do. Others, such as the female SCLC member who told the girls not to carry water and female megachurch members who insisted on binary gender segregation, enforced these stereotypical gender roles. For the SEIs and others, notably the high school students, this discriminatory attitude disappointed and frustrated them in its failure to uphold their beliefs in the equality of all people. This belief was underscored by the racial identity of the perpetrators. The students and some of the SEIs had not expected these attitudes at an event based around a campaign for equal rights. The SEIs see equality not only as a social and political issue, but also as an integrally spiritual one. The interbeing of all life particularly means the interdependence of all people. That interdependence also means that all human life is sacred and that no human is less inherently capable or worthy than another. While SEIs do not expect to encounter this attitude in everyday life, the march was certainly an occasion in which many expected to find an inclusive or egalitarian environment. The lack thereof at times underscored SEIs' doubts or dislikes about organized, and particularly Protestant, religion.

The dichotomy of spirituality and religion as described in this study was thus on display during the march in the contrast between the more organized, repressive, or narrow attitude found at the stops on the march and the open, flowing dialogue and interactions that occurred as we walked. The march itself was an event in which normal social structure was suspended and daily life was left behind, in an example of Wuthnow's (1998) seeking spirituality. For SEIs, it was a quest to connect with the other individuals who were committed to the same cause and to connect with themselves in terms of spiritual growth and insight. For the SEIs, the combination of a diverse group of participants, the spiritual/religious practice of the monks, and the immediacy and importance of the cause of civil rights made the Selma to Montgomery anniversary march an ever-changing, yet always engaged, spiritual event.

In chapter four, the SEIs discussed also advocate for and bear witness to the suffering of a population as a result of US government policy: the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, these protests do not engage directly with the sufferers of the event, nor are the protests about an issue that continues to cause harm to Americans in daily life. Rather, they show the breadth and depth of SEIs' desire for connection with others of different backgrounds, for demanding social justice on behalf of those others, and for finding spiritual kinship among religious activists, in this case, the Catholic Workers.

Chapter 4: The Catholic Worker Hiroshima and Nagasaki Vigils

This chapter examines the interactions between SEIs and the Catholic Worker in the context of two protests in Washington, DC on the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I explore the factors that attract SEIs to the Catholic Worker specifically and those factors that may deter SEIs' participation. These include the Catholic Worker's overall way of life, its longtime commitment to nonviolent political protest, its infusion of spirituality into that political protest, and its use of Christianity in a way that challenges mainstream attitudes towards Christianity.

These protests also contrast with the Selma to Montgomery march in several ways that demonstrate the range of SEIs' participation. The Selma march was a pilgrimage centering on the intra-national issue of racism and oppression of African-Americans, an issue that manifests itself personally or observably in American society. It also highlighted some of the tensions between SEIs and Protestant culture when both are involved in the same protest event. In contrast, the atomic bombing vigils took place in static locations of great symbolic and literal importance in the United States, the Pentagon and the White House. These two events have a transnational view, emphasizing the global impact of nuclear weapons, and particularly the impact of the bombings on the Japanese people. They also were organized and led by the Catholic Workers of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker house, and specifically invoked Christian, sometimes specifically Catholic, concepts, doctrine, and scripture as the justification for their protest. This last element highlights the ways in which the Catholic Worker's interpretation and application of Christianity rebukes the Protestant modern interpretation of war, and how this application sets it apart for SEIs who eschew traditional Christianity.

Below I discuss these issues, beginning with a description of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker house, the people associated with it, and its activities. I then discuss the two protest events with attention to the enacting of the factors described above.

The Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House

I visited the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House in Washington, DC in August 2014. The house was founded in 1981 when the Trinitarian monastic order donated a large stone house to the Catholic Workers. While the house is named in Dorothy Day's honor, it is not directly connected with her. The house has the same two primary goals as most houses of hospitality: charitable work, and peace protest. (K. Boylan, p.c.) It is run by three Workers: Kathy Boylan, a well-known and longtime leader in the Catholic Worker movement, Art Laffin, also a veteran of the anti-nuclear movement, and Michael Walli, a lifelong peace activist. Michael was absent during my visit because he was incarcerated for breaking into a government facility as part of a protest (discussed further below).

The house's size allows the Workers to accommodate both long-term residents and guests. It also houses single mothers who are refugees. At the time of my visit, there were six women and seven children living in the house: four women from Ethiopia, one from Ecuador, and one from El Salvador. All were trying to find adequate employment (and thus housing and childcare) in order to be independent, but in the meantime the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House would accommodate them indefinitely for free. The house also has several dormitory-style guest rooms, Kathy's and Michael's rooms, and an attic apartment shared by Art, his wife Colleen McCarthy, and their son Carlos.

The house's former living room was occupied by a massive dining table that could seat sixteen, thus forming both a communal eating space, a meeting room, and a work space for

preparing protest materials. The basement had a washer and dryer and a large pantry with donated food, which is sometimes used by residents but also distributed to homeless visitors. Several homeless people in the area visit regularly, and Kathy, who takes charge of the operation of the house, often does their laundry or otherwise assists them with daily needs.

Some houses invite individuals to stay as Workers for periods of time, with commitments ranging from three months to two years. (www.catholicworker.org) Many are young, white, and middle class, and join as part of a spiritual and ethical exploration. Questions these individuals ask themselves include: “What do I believe? What do I want to pursue in life? What gives me a sense of meaning?” (Troester, 1993; Yukich, 2010) Speaking to these motivations, the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House leaders write that the house is

...a school where those, inspired by the Catholic Worker vision, have learned about community, solidarity, Gospel nonviolence, resistance, patience, compassion, forgiveness... It has been a place where many have come face to face with their weaknesses, and have experienced pain and joy, hardship and hope.

(dccatholicworker.wordpress.com, n.p.)

Workers live in the same space and manner as residents, with minimal possessions and comforts to distinguish them. They cook, eat, clean, and relax in the same spaces under the same guidelines of personal responsibility and respect. Many Workers, as previously discussed, do not have regular sources of income and live below the poverty line. (Riegle, 2013; Troester, 1993) Residents often end up at the Catholic Worker because they have no other options for housing. It is not a chosen or ethically informed life path for them, and they generally do not wish to remain in poverty. Nor does the Catholic Worker encourage them to do so; the Workers’ ethos of personalism means that they strive to help people to have the means to take responsibility for

their own lives. What the individual then chooses to do is not in anyone else's purview.

(DiDomizio, 1988; Piehl, 1982) In other words, while the house provides basic food, shelter, clothing, and help with resources, it is up to the residents themselves to use those resources and basic physical security to improve their situation.

Generally, Worker houses have rules that originate in the need for safety and mutual respect. Many rules and conflicts revolve around use of communal space. (Troester, 1993) At the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House, this especially involved the kitchen, since the seven women and Colleen all had to cook for themselves and their children. The house's kitchen is spacious, with stainless steel counters and shelves, much like a restaurant or institutional communal kitchen. There is one stove/oven, one microwave, one sink, and no dishwasher to be shared between nine adults—more if there are guests in the house. Unavoidably, being in an older urban house with many residents, the kitchen hosts a significant cockroach population. Each person is expected to clean up after themselves in the kitchen and not take food to their rooms.

The physical environment and operations of the house are evidence of a balance between the Workers' ethos of hospitality and their commitment to voluntary poverty. While residents are not expected to participate in any religious practice, the Dorothy Day house does have religious imagery on the walls and the Workers do say prayers when communal meals take place. In the dining room, facing a woodcut print of St. Francis, hangs a painting of Sister Megan Rice, Greg Boertje-Obed, and Michael Walli, who were at the time in prison for their now-infamous break-in at the Y-12 nuclear facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. (Fig. 19) These present-day workers are thus connected in Workers' minds to their Catholic forebears, particularly those who espoused voluntary poverty and worked with the poor.

Christianity, Catholicism, and the Church

This display of artwork highlights the relationships of Workers to Christianity. Members of the Catholic Worker maintain both a strong connection to Christian scripture and tradition, such as the Gospels, the Christian practice of self-sacrifice, and the institution of the Church. Yet they also hold an independent, challenging attitude toward the Church, just as they do toward the government, inviting it to change and reform in keeping with the message of Christianity as they see it. When I asked Art Laffin about how he became involved with the Catholic Worker, he referred to the principles rather than events that guided him:

I, as someone who was raised Catholic, taught the Catholic faith, I never really heard much about non-violence growing up. To the contrary. So it was really a revelation to me. I met Vietnam War resisters, people like Archbishop Don Hélder Câmara from Brazil. I had the great fortune of meeting Dorothy Day before she died. Then reading Martin King Jr. and Gandhi and then reading about the Berrigans and becoming friends with them. These are all very important moments in helping me to go back and read the Gospels for myself and see, what do I really believe? (p.c.)

As discussed in chapter two, the authors whom Art cites are well-known names among SEIs. Many SEIs encounter the works of these spiritual exemplars, then subsequently become involved in groups such as the Catholic Worker and Nipponzan Myohoji that also have high regard for these exemplars' teachings. Those SEIs with whom I spoke had a variety of upbringings in terms of religion and some had experimented with joining or re-joining organized religions as adults. For reasons largely outside the scope of this project, among individuals with similar life experiences, some return to their childhood faith or join another organized religion, while others diverge onto the path of spirituality. Steve Baggarly, leader of the Norfolk Catholic Worker for

30 years, also returned to his childhood Catholic upbringing, but he also had broader religious and cultural experiences, some similar to Jean Chapman's (discussed in chapter three).

I had a spiritual awakening during high school... That experience did happen in the context that I grew up in the Catholic church, and so I started looking for another church and I started going to the AME church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts. And I still went to the AME church when I started going to college in North Carolina... getting to know people, getting to know African-American folks, which there weren't that many of in Massachusetts... and just seeing that the African-American folks live... it was kind of a classic Southern town, you have the big wealthy college which is almost all white people on this side, and across the other side of the tracks you have African-American folks, many of whom lived in things not too far above the level of being a shack... just kind of having my eyes opened to this kind of systemic injustices, racism. It struck me. My first spiritual awakening was to love of God, loving God, Jesus's commandment is to love God, and the other part of the same coin that's inseparable is loving your neighbor as yourself. Just meeting people whose life experience and historical experience is so different from my own... but there was still being able to appreciate them as fellow human beings and realizing we all share the same stuff on the inside no matter what... That was a second conversion experience, realizing it's not just to love God but it's to love your neighbor. What loving God means is loving people. And so what loving people means is, there's got to be justice for people. Cornell West says "Justice is what love looks like in public."

However, of course, the defining feature of SEIs is that their spiritual and activist convictions do not, for them, fit into one traditional faith. (Stanczak, 2006) This is the point at which SEIs and

religious social activists diverge. Despite this, SEIs and Catholic Workers sometimes share perspectives on religion. Some Workers chose to become Catholic or return to Catholicism after experiences with other traditions—including Protestantism. Steve Baggarly attended several African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches in his young adulthood, but found that the message of the church did not fit with his growing convictions about social justice and its relationship with faith:

The message of the AME church every week was personal salvation, getting ready personally in case you die right now, make sure that you go to heaven. I mean, many different ways of saying that, but that's what they said over and over and over every Sunday. I can certainly understand how that can be some consolation for people who have been so abused and violated, robbed and beaten up and left by the side of the road.

(p.c.)

Workers and SEIs thus share many of their values and goals, but they attribute their motivations to different sources. To generalize, SEIs are motivated by beliefs and feelings about interconnectedness of people and of all types of life, about social justice as innately good or necessary for peaceful society, and about exploring spirituality as a personal, shifting journey of growth. (Fuller, 2001; Stanczak, 2006) For the Catholic Workers, motivation comes from the authority of God and the worldview presented in Christianity. Social justice and preserving life are important, ultimately, because God decreed that peaceful and just society is the intended state of humanity, and violence and oppression are human perversions. Jesus' life highlights these values, and his crucifixion presents a model of protest and sacrifice for Workers. (Ellis, 1988)

Art, too, felt reading works on nonviolence and spirituality to be life-changing, but rather than cultivating a spiritual-but-not-religious mindset, he returned to the faith in which he was

raised. Not only did he return to it, but he applied his changed perspective on society to his renewed involvement in Catholicism. His devotion to a life of nonviolence transcends his religious beliefs into the realm of social justice that SEIs find integral to their spirituality, and particularly their criticism of America and modernity:

You have to renounce all your possessions and live a simple life, not be enslaved to your possessions-- which is really what idolatry is, it's when you're enslaved to false gods. Who do we worship in America? Money and weapons. The Catholic Worker is one attempt to really go back to the roots of the Gospel and try to live simply, embrace a way of non-violence, to resist injustice, and to live with and to accompany people who are poor and who are victims in our society... You know, the Buddhist precept of interbeing is so important to really take to heart-- this whole understanding that all of life is interconnected and all of life is sacred. I just think it's, again, it's the heart of the way of nonviolence. We work with all people who are committed to nonviolence-- Buddhists, Jews, people who have no faith. Certainly within the Christian domain, there are so many who have rejected the teachings of Jesus when it comes to really taking nonviolence seriously. (p.c.)

But Art's beliefs and actions are equally infused with the Catholic Worker's view of the mandates of Christianity (Fig. 20):

The nonviolent witness that I am involved in is really for me first and foremost an act of repentance for my own complicity in the culture of violence. Secondly, it's a prayer of intercession that people can come to see that everybody is a child of God. We're all brothers and sisters. What affects one affects all. Everybody has to stand for life and no one is expendable... Peter Maurin said-- I think this is really important-- "The future will

be different if we make the present different.” We can't make the present different without first of all changing our own minds. That's really the challenge of the Gospel too. Jesus says, “If you're going to be a follower of me you have to take up the cross and live differently.” (p.c.)

At a vigil held at the White House on February 14, 2018, Art gave a speech that emphasized this imbrication:

We greet everyone here at the White House in a spirit of peace and nonviolence. Today is Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent. Lent is a time for personal and societal repentance, radical conversion and transformation. Living under the brutal occupation of the Roman empire, Jesus declared: “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.” Living in the U.S. empire, we need to heed Jesus’ proclamation now more than ever. Today is also Valentine’s Day, a day in which the Catholic Church and many other churches commemorate St. Valentine, the 3rd century Roman martyr. We, people from different faith-based communities committed to nonviolence, social justice and peace, summon the cloud of witnesses as we come to pray and witness outside the White House, calling for repentance and conversion of ourselves, our society and our churches to the Gospel way of love, justice, and a reverence for all life and creation. We now offer our Ash Wednesday prayer and we beg forgiveness of our own sinfulness and that of our nation, O merciful God. As we stand outside the White House, and in proximity to other seats of political, economic and military power in this area, we implore You, O God, to banish every diabolic power and every evil influence from these places. Help all Your people, who are made in Your very image, to respect the sacredness of all life and reject the idols of death. (Laffin, 2014, “Reflection...”)

Art makes a point in his speeches and writing to acknowledge unity among all those who seek peace through nonviolence, but Catholicism is integral to how he frames this cause. The vigil's date was chosen based on the symbolism of Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day. He quotes the Gospel and references the early centuries of Christianity: The Roman Empire, in comparison to the "U.S. empire," and the martyr St. Valentine in connection to the sacrifices of those committed to nonviolence. He also uses Catholic concepts and affect: the importance of repentance and the self-denial of Lent as a means to "transformation;" the need to ask forgiveness based on the sinfulness that pervades humanity; and taking onto himself complicity in the actions of the powerful. He frames the injustices and violence of the United States as "evil" and "diabolic," and the violent culture of the United States as idolatry.

SEIs and the Catholic Worker

While some SEIs may believe in a higher power, universal spirit, or even God or gods, they do not refer to this power as justification for why they are activists. (Fuller, 2001; Roof, 1999; Wuthnow, 2005) In my fieldwork with SEIs, none connected their protest of social injustice and the United States military to an ultimate system of good and bad, or to a mandate about what is moral or immoral. The concept of evil as a substance or entity seems perhaps too religious in its black-and-white contrast with good, and thus may not fit with many SEIs' usually contextual view of morality: people are not plagued with evil so much as they are part of a system whose methods and effects are evil insofar as they cause human suffering. Indeed, some SEIs' view of religiosity is that it is a choice partly or wholly determined by social and psychological factors. This is largely irreconcilable with Workers' view of God and Jesus as external truths that have been revealed to them. (Walker, 1912) Jon Blickenstaff, an SEI from Ohio, says of his beliefs:

I believe that people and me adopt certain beliefs and gain certain spiritual guidance from things that we were receptive to. So if reading the Bible is a spiritual practice because... [people have] been convinced or convinced themselves that that's where you go for spiritual guidance... to me it's all something that comes out of your own mind anyway. So if I'm reading something and it makes sense to me, it's because I kind of already believe that, or that is a good way of articulating a concept that I have... Therefore, it's me that's thinking of the stuff, not the author. The Bible can be interpreted in many different ways and people just take out of it what they identify with. Well, that's them, not the Bible. For me that's kind of true for any kind of spiritual path. It's sort of like, that's what fits you perfectly, so that's where you go. (p.c.)

Even when SEIs offer strong criticisms of organized religion, they do not necessarily dismiss it. These contrasts between religion and spirituality create a “magnetic” situation between SEIs and groups such as the Catholic Worker and Nipponzan Myohoji. That is to say, in one sense, SEIs and the Catholic Worker or Nipponzan Myohoji may meet like opposite poles of two magnets: their differences are what draws SEIs to religious activist groups. SEIs may be attracted to them because these groups have a stable ideology, as discussed previously. The beliefs and practices of Catholicism (or Buddhism) encompass the totality of life and are expressed by these groups in a consistent but non-proselytizing way. Additionally, SEIs can acknowledge the good motives and actions of some organized religion. In Jon’s words:

I'm pretty critical of organized religion and I think it sucks a lot of lifeblood out of our culture and sends us down paths that are destructive, or at least not solutions. On the other hand, we [members of Footprints for Peace, a ‘peace walk’ organization] almost always stay [overnight] in churches when we do our walks. That's partly because, as

institutions, they are out there in the world trying to make it a better place, and one of the ways they do that is by offering their space to whoever asks. So it's a mixed bag... and I also really, really don't want to be critical of anybody's individual spiritual path. (p.c.)

Additionally, those SEIs who were raised Christian, particularly Catholic, may retain an affinity for the familiar language, concepts, and practices found in the Catholic Worker. They can feel comfortable or even inspired by the religious elements of the Worker without compromising their own beliefs, as Jean Chapman and Ken Jones both expressed in chapter three. The Worker and Nipponzan Myohoji can, in this way, be safe spaces, so to speak, for SEIs.

They are also “safe” in a subtle, perhaps largely unconscious, way. SEIs’ spiritual questing is partly characterized by its ongoing, changing nature. In other words, SEIs may never feel that they have found “the answer,” or even any sufficient answers, to their deepest questions about life. In comparison, religions are partly based on a claim to ultimate, universal answers about all aspects of life. (Fuller, 2001) While SEIs cannot reconcile themselves with these religious beliefs permanently, participating with the Catholic Worker or Nipponzan Myohoji provides an experience of community and connectedness with others of like minds that SEIs return to multiple times. Dr. Marian Mollin was a full-time peace activist for 10 years. She was first arrested in 1983. She recounts that after that first experience,

I started getting arrested a lot more. Continued going to the Pentagon with the Atlantic Life Community [the Catholic peace network also discussed by Jean Chapman in Chapter 3]. I was raised Jewish, very secular Jewish, but there was something about how the Catholic radicals practiced their nonviolence that I found really appealing. They seemed so centered and so totally committed to nonviolence. I had the sense that they wouldn't

freak out in a crisis, that you could count on them to act in certain ways. So solid. And they'd been doing it for years! (Mollin, in Riegle, 2012, p. 256)

The Catholic Worker often uses the word “anarchist” to describe itself. (Ebinger, 2014; Piehl, 1982; Troester, 1993) This term applies to its structure as well as its philosophy. Houses of hospitality are independent and there is no overall organizational system. Therefore, houses—and the individual members within them—vary in their religious views. This means that some houses may be more appealing than others to SEIs, depending on SEIs’ comfort with Catholicism. The St. Louis Catholic Worker publishes a quarterly journal, *The Roundtable*. In a special edition, “Catholicism and the Catholic Worker,” St. Louis Worker Jason Ebinger (2014) writes:

Is the movement less “Catholic” than it has been in years past? Many communities do not take a particular stance, leaving it up to individuals within the community to articulate their own thoughts on the Church. Some communities, such as Nashville Greenlands, emphasize that they have no relationship with the Church, while others, such as Unity Kitchen in New York, ardently oppose the presence of non-Catholic Catholic Workers within the Movement. Most fall somewhere in the middle... In a roundtable discussion at the 2006 National Catholic Worker Gathering, Dan McKannan²² recorded that only eight of fifty participants identified as unambiguously Catholic while others' relationships were either more complex or non-existent... In St. Louis, we are Catholic and non-Catholic, religious and atheist. We are eternally frustrated with the church. Some have stayed to call it back to the message of the Gospels, while other have left, scarred and hurt. We all

²² McKannan, D. (2008). *The Catholic Worker After Dorothy: Practicing the Works of Mercy in a New Generation*.

continue to wrestle with this issue, so we continue the dialogue, with all its many voices.

(p. 5)

In houses where this environment prevails, SEIs may feel at home. There is both the stability and commitment that Mollin (2012) discussed, as well as the openness of perspectives on spirituality and religion that Ebinger (2014) recounts. Some Workers continue to have a relationship with the global Catholic Church because it gives them a deep sense of connections across cultures and shared spiritual community, experiences that SEIs seek. In *The Roundtable*, Catholic Worker Brenna Cussen Anglada (2014) describes this feeling:

The Church also offers me an important counterpoint to the individualistic culture in which I am steeped: 2,000 years of a tradition that takes seriously the voices of the living, the dead, and the Divine... I am humbled in the knowledge that my voice, and the voices of others like mine (white, privileged, and American) are weighed along with the voices of the worldwide Church – past, present, and future. The Church teaches the reality of the Mystical Body of Christ: that we are spiritually connected to our sisters and brothers across the world, and that we are responsible to one another. Such an understanding stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing notion in American culture that our conveniences are more important than the basic needs of others. Moreover, the Church's tangible organizational structure actually facilitates our physical connection with others, lest the concept become merely cerebral. I have been to Mass in the white suburbs, in poor inner cities, in Rome, in the West Bank, in Darfur, in Cairo, in Panama, in living rooms, and in Cathedrals – and because the liturgy is the same across the world, I have been able to fully participate. (p. 11)

Amid the continued thoughts, emotions, and actions that comprise SEIs' spirituality, the structure and certainty of religious activist groups reflect the transmodern spiritual values of life as sacred and interconnected, of experiencing connection with those of distant times and places, and of modern United States culture as lacking in compassion and excessive in materialism.

Some of the most distinctive religious elements of Catholicism echo many SEIs' transmodern spirituality in terms of a non-modern connection to the sacred or divine. As discussed in chapter two, the United States has a history of active anti-Catholicism, which began to abate in the mid-20th century. This did not signal an active tolerance or embrace of Catholicism by those of other faiths. Rather, in the later 20th and the 21st centuries, hostility toward Catholicism has given way to a vague acceptance and ignorance of the faith. The American news media, when they cover Catholicism, focus on the Pope and on scandals within the Church. (Jenkins, 2003; Martin, 1985) There are few venues where non-Catholic Americans get a sense of what Catholicism is beyond the conflicts of the Church or the generalized image of the clergy and cloistered. The role of Catholics in education, intellectualism, and community in the United States—as well as their persecution by both religious and secular hate groups-- is minimally taught.

In the view of Robert Orsi (2005), one of the preeminent scholars of lived religion in the United States, Catholicism's influence on the United States has been disproportionately ignored by historians. While religious studies scholars have written robustly on facets of American Catholicism, there nonetheless remains the issue of the Protestant haunting of the academy. The disciplines that examine religion are often based in the modern Protestant perspective. This perspective has traditionally involved a certain categorization of religions and religious practices: those that are modern and rational versus those that are pre-modern and superstitious.

Particularly at issue, Orsi (2005) argues, is the fact that scholarship has not come to grips with the presence of the divine or the sacred in people's lives:

This is especially true of the history of the sacred in late-twentieth-century American Catholicism. Here the lure of the modernist paradigm has been most powerful: from this perspective, Catholics "mature" in the 1960s from an infantile faith focused on bodies and things to a rational faith concerned above all else with justice, from superstition to morality, from the polytheism of the cult of saints to the monotheism of a Christ-centered face. This dream of upward religious momentum is not unique to Catholics: it is as old as the Enlightenment in the West... The modernist story only barely masks its prescriptive edge: modernity is the norm, religions must conform, and it is true that Catholics around the world in the 20th century began to look more and more like well-behaved moderns... But the power of presence in things and places, and in memory, turned out to be stronger than they had anticipated. (p. 9)

Orsi (2005) explores the relationship between "heaven and earth," in the sense that heavenly (and diabolical) forces are, for many Catholics, present and active in the world. The sacred is manifest in the intercession of the saints and the Virgin Mary, who are present in statuary, illustrations, cards, and amulets. Private rituals of prayer, rosaries, lighting candles, and other practices are long-held traditions with deep personal meaning to practitioners. Orsi's goal is to provoke self-examination among scholars of the uncertainty, discomfort, and widespread dismissal of the reality of the divine for many people. In the Protestant tradition, where many such rituals have been purposely eradicated and the philosophy of the Enlightenment declared itself universal and rational, the scholarly attitude towards religion demands disbelief and critical analysis of other religious traditions. In other words, non-Protestant practices and beliefs that

interweave the mundane and the sacred, the divine and the human, are still perceived as primitive, credulous, and symptomatic of the ignorance of pre-modern peoples or, in the case of Catholicism, of oppressive, ancient church teachings unsuitable for the modern world. (Orsi, 2005; Piehl, 1982) In the Catholic Worker, as discussed above, many of these premodern or superstitious beliefs and practices are still a component of faith that gives strength, joy, and inspiration to Workers who are practicing Catholics.

These are the attractive elements of religious activist groups to SEIs. The opposite magnetic phenomenon, the meeting of two same poles, is shown when spiritual and religious ideologies or worldviews conflict. In chapter three, I examined an example of this phenomenon with regards to Buddhism, and it is no less significant in terms of Catholicism. While many Workers who identify themselves as Catholics do espouse some liberal or progressive sociopolitical beliefs, the doctrine of the Catholic Church can be problematic for both Workers and SEIs. (Piehl, 1982; Yukich, 2010) Teka Childress (2014) of the St. Louis Catholic Worker describes her struggle with her beliefs and the Church's ideology:

...I clung to my childhood belief that the church was the people of God. I have remained a Catholic and disassociated myself from the positions and mistakes of the hierarchy, while trying to acknowledge my own sins. I have thought of belonging to a small community of faithful believers as a way to stayed tied to the universe (not just "universal church") and still remain true to what I know is right and just. I treasured the shared prayers and faith, the lives of the saints and the sacraments and I still do... And, yet, I am finally learning that I can no longer divorce myself from the sins of the Church and the profundity of its injustice... Ignoring this was a privileged position, not given to those who have been condemned by the Church for being who they are. (p. 8)

As with the example of the Macedonia Miracle Kingdom church in the previous chapter, this element of allegiance to the Church can catch SEIs and other participants off-guard. Christian dogma can be upsetting to SEIs for multiple reasons. Among those I met, some were raised Christian and, unlike Art Laffin, continued to reject it. Some have strong bitterness towards or criticisms of Christianity as it manifests itself in the modern United States, and others entirely disbelieve the theology of Christianity or the Abrahamic faiths. In contrast to the circumstance above, some SEIs find the Christian traditions of the Catholic Worker an unpleasant reminder of earlier experiences, or a manifestation of dogma that they find false. Lastly, some individuals with no experience of Christianity may simply find it alien and unappealing. These mixed experiences are demonstrated in Worker Jenny Truax's (2014) evaluation of her experience with the Church. Jenny is a lesbian who has had many struggles with the Church's doctrine on homosexuality, and with the way this has been apparent in the Catholic Worker, even in the house of hospitality in St. Louis where she lives:

For years, the issue of homosexuality has been one of the flashpoints in the relationship between the Catholic Worker and the Catholic Church. A conflict at the New York CW is illustrative of a scenario that has surely happened, in one form or another, in dozens of CW houses across the country. The New York CW hosted a 1983 Round Table discussion on "The Church's Ministry to the Gay Community," and then a series of articles on the issue in their publication... Following its publication, several members of the CW editorial board met and created the policy that 1) "no article in the paper on any topic can include any deviation from what is understood as the Catholic Worker view," and that 2) "no one who disagrees with any Church teaching publicly... can be an editor of the CW paper..." The conflict is a dramatic example of the choices that the CW

movement, and individual houses, have to make as we discern our relationship to the Catholic Church. Do we embrace the warm comfort of dogma? Do we ignore the issue of Church oppression (and thereby side with the oppressor)?... Here are some distancing behaviors I've encountered that Catholics sometimes use to skirt the painful truth of the oppression done by the Church: *"I simply don't pay attention to those terrible things the Vatican says about women/gays/lesbians, and besides, I'm not part of the Vatican."* To be able to ignore it - to not be the target of the violent language and hateful campaigns - is a privilege. It doesn't make me feel very supported or loved that you choose to ignore the bombs the Church throws at me. It was certainly easier for men to ignore the fact that women were prevented from voting before 1919, but it did not make it moral or helpful to claim ignorance. *"But Vatican II was so great, and damn, our new Pope is sooooo great!"* (The most popular line of the year.) ... I know that the Church is great in many ways; in some ways, it makes the sting of being excluded worse. (p. 13)

The example of Kathy Boylan further illustrates the complex manifestation of Catholicism in the Catholic Worker. (Fig. 21) Kathy Boylan strongly identifies as Catholic, opposing abortion and homosexual practices, and not permitting unmarried couples who visit the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker from sharing a room. Yet at the same time, Kathy has been officially remonstrated for making political proclamations in church during Mass. (McCarthy, 2007) She recounted to me that, "While my sons were growing up, I always embarrassed them in church. They'd say, 'Mom, can't you sit down and not say this stuff during Mass?'" (K. Boylan, p.c.) But for Kathy, that is exactly where her message most needs to be said: in the presence of her fellow Catholics, clergy, and God. During Sunday Mass at her local church in St. Aloysius parish, Kathy offered

the following prayer: “I pray for the millions of Iraqi brothers and sisters who have been killed in the 16-year war of the United States against the people of Iraq. I pray that all soldiers will put their guns down and refuse to kill. I pray that no young person will join the military. And I pray that we will not pay for war any longer. For this I pray to God” (Boylan, in McCarthy, 2007, n.p.). Kathy has made similar statements against the United States military and its soldiers at various Catholic services for many years. However, Father Thomas Clifford, recently arrived to the parish, wrote in a letter to Kathy:

I had hoped that you would see that your actions are unwelcome and inappropriate. I have since learned that you have in the past been advised of the community's expectations especially in regard to the prayer of the faithful. Your action this weekend interrupting the Eucharist to blurt out your own prayer must be the last time you will ever misuse the prayer of this community. Any further interruptions, demonstrations or inappropriate "petitions" during a liturgy will cause me to ban you permanently from this church. I cannot speak to your motivation, but your actions have on numerous occasions demonstrated disrespect for the liturgy of the Catholic Church in general and members of this community in particular. If there is any doubt in your mind let me recap the basic expectations about personal petitions. They should be:

- Truly prayers, not political speeches and never judgments on others, brief and respectful.
- Offered only at times that prayers from the congregation *are* requested.

I understand that you believe that you must speak out in a particular way no matter how ineffective or counter-productive that may be to the causes which you claim to

champion... If you cannot respect this parish and its worship, you owe it to them to withdraw. (Clifford, 2007, n.p.)

Some clearly find Kathy's actions disrespectful and even hypocritical, as Father Clifford's words convey. St. Aloysius parish is known as progressive and socially engaged, but even such a disposition does not mean the parish dispenses with ritual and liturgy that are foundational to the Church's identity. (McCarthy, 2007) Indeed, Kathy's actions might be far more welcome in a liberal Protestant or Quaker church, but the very defining features of the Catholic Church mean that Kathy's actions are out of place during formal worship. Regardless, over the decades, many within the Catholic Worker and some among the Catholic community at large have supported her for her commitment to her message. (McCarthy, 2007) Overall, despite the corruption and other issues that the Church has suffered over two millennia, and despite Workers' critique of it, many stay in the Church as an institution based in Jesus' edicts and maintained through apostolic succession. (DiDomizio, 1988; Piehl, 1982) Although Workers often disagree with some of its doctrine, they, like Dorothy Day, do not intend to reject the Church, but rather to bring it back into line with the original tenets of Christianity and with those teachings of justice and peace that the Church has at times supported. (Piehl, 1982)

Apart from religion, there are several other reasons why the Worker appeals to SEIs. These reasons are features of transmodern spirituality, namely community based on reciprocity, affinity for the oppressed and other cultures, and the virtues of voluntary poverty. The concept of reciprocity-based community contrasts with community where a capitalist and/or materialist mindset prevails. Regarding the role of materialism and capitalism, the Catholic Worker, as mentioned, firmly rejects capitalism as an economic model that exists in tandem with the Western sociopolitical ills. Concern with possessions, to Workers, has replaced concern with

others. It sustains and exacerbates, if not creates, poverty. And, at its core, materialism was rejected by Christ. (Ellis, 1988; Yukich, 2010) SEIs share this criticism of materialism on spiritual, if not religious, grounds. They seek authentic, naturally-formed instances of shared experiences. (Roof, 1999; Stanczak, 2006) They find this in the ethos of service and inclusivity offered by the Catholic Worker. Their regard for pre-modern cultures invokes an appreciation for a “village” type environment in which survival and flourishing depend on cooperation and sharing without the expectation of direct compensation a la capitalism, and where, on the contrary, an atmosphere of general reciprocity prevails. Individuals think of others as much as, or more than, themselves, and thus many needs are met through mutual aid. Most SEIs whom I met valued and even sought out ways of helping others simply because they felt it was key to a good society and the right way to treat other people. Once again, the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality often specialize in aid for marginalized populations in the United States: undocumented Latin American immigrants, refugees, and the homeless (many of whom, in urban centers, are African-American). (Troester, 1993; Yukich, 2010) Because SEIs seek to redress wrongs or show acceptance and compassion toward such marginalized people, the Catholic Worker provides a welcome place for them to do so.

Lastly, in staying at a house of hospitality, SEIs share the lifestyle of voluntary poverty and communal living of the Catholic Worker. They can temporarily experience this ascetic and service-focused way of life and repay their hosts through actions, rather than money. Or, if their stay is very brief, they know that the Workers’ firm ethic of hospitality as unstinting charity means that guests are not expected to regard their visit as transactional. (Yukich, 2010) SEIs’ characteristic beliefs in social justice, community, and spiritually-infused daily life are enacted in the environment of the houses of hospitality. Experiencing this environment can give SEIs a

sense that even if they personally cannot commit to such a lifestyle, the houses are places where such beliefs are represented in all areas of life. (Troester, 1993; Yukich, 2010) In other words, SEIs may find Catholic Workers' lifestyle admirable, whether or not they themselves live similarly. In this way, the Catholic Worker also offers SEIs an opportunity for a new or revived curiosity about how they can live their own lives: Do they want to pursue a simpler lifestyle? Would they be able to sacrifice their belongings, home, and much of their personal time the way Workers do? Do they want to put more time into direct service work or in the Workers' activist causes? Non-Workers visit the houses of hospitality for a range of purposes: to participate in a protest, to volunteer in the house's operations, or sometimes simply to stay as a guest.

Several SEIs whom I met, primarily young adults, were traveling around the United States taking part in a variety of social justice work. Their travel routes were largely determined by networks among SEIs. Others would give these young people the contact information for the nearest house of hospitality, Nipponzan Myohoji temple, or other similar places which they could contact for temporary housing. If they were trying to get to a certain location, other SEIs and the Workers or monks would brainstorm whom they knew along the route to that destination. I met one eighteen-year-old, J.R., at the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda. J.R. came from Nevada and had lived at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker for half a year before crossing the country via such networking. Another young man in his twenties, Jason, had been traveling from protest to protest around the Eastern United States, catching rides with other activists, many of whom were Catholic Workers. Both J.R. and Jason identified as spiritual individuals and spoke of indecision about what they wanted to do in future. They had taken up their travels in search of greater clarity and the sense of worth and fulfillment that SEIs find from involvement in such activities. Thus, due to the cultivation of these networks, SEIs who are on geographical as well

as spiritual “quests” are often guests at the houses of hospitality. The houses are often places where people of many different backgrounds mix and form community, though often only temporarily.

Catholic Worker Protests

Overview: Catholicism and Protestantism in Present-Day America

While it is apparent that Buddhism is notably different from Protestantism, and thus for SEIs offers an alternative to mainstream American culture, Catholicism’s place in this argument is subtler. The Catholic Worker’s adherence to the Gospel tradition does not inherently conflict with the Protestant view. But Workers’ application of it as manifest in their lives, and as present even on the doorstep of the Pentagon, is dissonant with Protestant mainstream culture.

Nationalistic rhetoric such as “Support the troops” and “American exceptionalism” continue the Protestant tradition of the United States as a ‘chosen’ nation that epitomizes democracy and individual freedom—the Puritan “city on a hill.” This tradition is reflected in the phenomenon of “Christian nationalism” in the United States, wherein Americans identify Christianity as an important feature of what it means to be American, and/or as the founding ideology of the United States. Jeremy Brooke Straughn and Scott Feld (2010) report:

According to a 2006 survey by the Pew Research Center, two-thirds of American adults say they "consider the United States a Christian nation" (Pew Research Center 2006:5), while respondents in another study strongly agree that, “In the twenty-first century, the United States is still basically a Christian society.” (pp. 280-281)

This leads to a conjunction of religious identity and national identity that is not solely rhetorical or a matter of personal opinion. Rather, the assertion of America as a Christian nation is a discourse that creates, maintains, or strengthens boundaries between groups, thus further

reinforcing identity. This creation of a symbolic national as well as religious identity has consequences in everyday life for non-Christians, and in some cases, I argue, non-Protestants, wherein they are denied equal access to institutions, discriminated against, or have their religious beliefs used to cast them as outsiders or possible enemies. Non-Protestants who do not adequately conform to the mainstream may find themselves in a position of having their “American-ness” questioned, or of having to prove their loyalty to the country. Multiple studies have confirmed that the percentage of Christians and non-Christians in the United States has not changed dramatically. (Wuthnow, 2005) However, Straughn and Feld’s (2010) quantitative study shows significant correlations between individuals’ Christian identity and their assertion of Christianity as an important component of being American. This study confirms other scholars’ work²³ on the congruence of national and religious identity under the aegis of symbolic boundaries and imagined community.²⁴ Straughn & Feld (2010) wrote:

By conditioning recognition as an authentic American on adherence to Christian faith, the idea of a Christian America tacitly reinforces the moral prestige of the religious majority, even as it presents Americans of other faiths, or with no formal religion, with invisible barriers to symbolic inclusion. (p. 281)

In the present day, particularly since 9/11, patriotism has often meant not criticizing the United States military or interrogating United States history. While perceived threats to United States security or Christian principles, such as progressive social policies, immigration, or terrorism, have appeared to strengthen the Christian-America assertion, this does not apply evenly across all Christian denominations. In the words of Straughn and Feld (2010), those of non-Protestant religious groups in the United States “are unlikely to respond [to perceived security threats] by

²³ See Kosmin & Keysar (2009), Pew Forum (2008) “U.S. Religious Landscape,” Smith & Kim (2005).

²⁴ See Edgell et al. (2006); Kunovich (2006); Lamont and Moinar (2002); Wimmer (2008); Zimmer (2003).

recognizing the dominant religion as a hallmark of the true American, since this would reinforce their symbolic marginality within the imagined community” (p. 287). This issue is prominent in Catholic Worker-led protests that condemn the United States military and government as sinful and call on Americans to repent and atone for the United States’ wars.

The Worker’s position of fierce protest and the clear delineation in signs, speeches, and so on, of their Catholic affiliation or origins draws attention to the centuries-old American question of Catholics’ allegiance: do Catholics feel beholden first to the Church or to the United States? The question, of course, misses the Catholic Worker’s point that their allegiance is to Jesus’s message and to God above any earthly power, and that their condemnation of the United States system is not the same as wishing ill on the country. However, in the context of Protestant America, the Catholic Worker’s lifestyle and actions are non-mainstream, non-Protestant, and often seen as non-patriotic, leading them to be regarded as, at the least, irrelevant to American life, and at most, an affront to it.

The Catholic Worker’s Anti-Nuclear Stance

The Catholic Worker, as previously discussed, has a strong focus on nuclear disarmament. Catholic Workers have also participated in other actions protesting past and present events in which the United States military or United States military policy have caused the death or suffering of civilians. This includes the unlawful imprisonment of individuals in Guantanamo Bay, anti-drone protests outside the CIA, and actions at military facilities. Some houses of hospitality were deliberately established in certain cities or neighborhoods in order to serve the most disadvantaged populations or to be close to protest locations. (Riegle, 2012) For example, the Norfolk Catholic Worker (discussed further below) was established in Norfolk, Virginia because the city contains the world’s largest naval base. (S. Baggarly, p.c.) Similarly,

the Dorothy Day house's location in Washington puts it in the center of government and military administration. These Catholic Worker houses and others are part of an informal East Coast network of peace activist groups, some religious, some secular. These include Catholic Worker houses in every East Coast state and several other Catholic organizations, such as Pax Christi, the Atlantic Life Community, the Southern Life Community, and Witness against Torture.

Another frequent collaborator with these peace activists is Jonah House in Baltimore, Maryland, founded in 1973 by Liz McAllister and her husband Phil Berrigan as a peace activist community. Jonah House is now populated by a group of American Zen Buddhists who are highly active in peace protest. (Riegle, 2012) Additionally, monks of Nipponzan Myohoji sometimes join the protests when they are able to take time away from their temples. (D. Laffan, p.c.) The primary secular organization that participates regularly is Veterans for Peace, a national organization with 114 chapters whose members are veterans of the United States military who now protest nonviolently against the military. (www.veteransforpeace.org) Many of these groups have no central offices and are entirely protest-focused (as opposed to having a charitable service component, such as Catholic Worker houses usually have). Therefore, because of its permanent locations thanks to the houses of hospitality, the Worker plays an important role in providing physical space for such nonviolent initiatives and a 'base of operations' for visitors coming to participate in protests.

I visited the Dorothy Day house in the month of August in order to take part in the vigils for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings. Each year, the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House and other peace groups commemorate the anniversaries of the bombings, on August 6 and 9 respectively, to bear witness to the deaths of thousands of Japanese civilians and the inception of the nuclear age brought on by the United States through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively. The bombings historically marked the end of World War II, the beginning of the United States' superpower status, the start of the Cold War, and other international political shifts. (Huff, 2008; Nicholson, 2016) For the Catholic Worker and other anti-war activists, the bombings represented a new level of atrocity and murder. It was also confirmation that the United States would continue policies of oppression, exploitation, and military aggression against other nations, rather than help to re-order the chaotic post-World War II world in a more peaceful, equitable way. (Huff, 2008; A. Laffin, p.c.) Furthermore, the United States government has repeatedly stated that it will not offer any apology for the bombings (discussed further below regarding the Nagasaki protest). (Nicholson, 2016) The annual vigil thus has a temporal element: it connects remembrance of the victims in 1945 with a recognition of the continued danger of nuclear bombing in the present. There is also in it a demonstration of engaged spirituality. To those who protest, war is not exempt from the moral prohibition against killing. War has been sanctified by the state as a "holy" violence of sorts, but for these protesters, the state's rhetoric of peace through military violence is not legitimate. (Agrama, 2012; Cavanaugh, 2009) Therefore, these protests can be seen as an example of religious and non-religious individuals practicing Stanczak's (2006) engaged spirituality. Among these individuals, as discussed below, are some SEIs.

The two protests I attended had different participants, purposes, and atmospheres. The Hiroshima vigil on August 6 took place in front of the Pentagon, near the entrance used by military and government dignitaries, while the August 9 Nagasaki demonstration was in front of the White House in a space traversed mostly by tourists. Both locations have designated areas for peaceful protests. Participants at both events were mostly experienced protesters from peace activist groups.

The Hiroshima Vigil

On the morning of August 6, seventeen protesters met near the Pentagon. Kathy Boylan led and organized the group. Participants included several members from Jonah House, the above-mentioned Buddhist activist community in Baltimore that frequently participates in events alongside the Catholic Worker. The members of Jonah House were two couples who had brought their two infant children. In addition to the Jonah House visitors, there were participants visiting the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker for the first time: myself and a man named Terry visiting from Atlanta. Terry was an African-American man in his thirties who aspired to be a pastor. He had been a resident, then a worker, at the Open Door Community in Atlanta.²⁵ The Open Door was a Protestant community much like a Catholic Worker house, and was also well-known for its twenty-plus years of helping Atlanta's homeless. Terry and I talked extensively about religion and social justice (and he urged me to consider the clergy myself). Also present was Liz McAllister, the widow of Phil Berrigan. Liz, in her seventies, still participated in protests and events since Phil's death. Last was Eric Martin, who was a graduate student visiting from Connecticut, where he had been studying the Berrigans' writings. The university wanted to publish a book of the brothers' letters, and on meeting Eric, Dan Berrigan suggested to the university that Eric be the editor/author of the book. Eric had made the trip to DC to meet Liz, Kathy, Art, and others who knew the Berrigans. (Cosacchi & Martin, 2016)

We walked to the Pentagon carrying banners and signs with slogans of remembrance of the bombings and condemnation of nuclear weapons. We assembled in the designated protest space near an entrance to the Pentagon used by employees. It was a grassy square across a wide walkway from the main doors with a moveable metal barricade around it. The group discussed

²⁵ The Open Door closed permanently in 2017 due to lack of new leadership and gentrification.

and generally agreed that this would be a mostly silent protest—we would not chant or sing. Others had also discussed or thought about whether they would cross the line, and several said they would. We lined up along the barricade facing the sidewalk, arranging the banner and signs. Since it was August in Washington, the temperature was above 90 degrees by noon, and the two mothers soon retreated under the lone small tree in the protest area, switching off with others in the group to watch the two infants. Individuals in officers' uniforms from many different countries walked by, as did both United States military officers and employees in civilian business dress. A few slowed to see the signs, but most only glanced at our group or kept their gazes straight ahead. None of those entering the Pentagon made eye contact, spoke to us, or otherwise acknowledged us.

Early in the afternoon, when we had been present several hours, Kathy and Liz said they would go ahead and cross the line. The Jonah House members were not going to do so, and although I strongly considered it, I decided against it for pragmatic reasons. Eric decided at that time to cross the line as well. He had never done so and never been arrested for any reason before. Terry also decided not to cross (the additional consideration of race will be discussed further below).

The two older women and the young man walked around the barrier fence and stood directly in front of it on the edge of the sidewalk with their signs. (Fig.22) After several minutes, a security officer approached and informed them that they needed to return behind the barrier. Kathy said they would not do so. The officer left, and in several minutes a young police officer in higher-ranking uniform and bullet-proof vest approached with two other officers. The name on his badge was Kim. He and Kathy stood eye-to-eye. He greeted her and she said she remembered him from a previous protest at this location. He said he remembered her too, and that she knew

he had to ask them to move to the far side of the barricade. She said again that they would not move. Officer Kim said, "I know. You're under orders," and looked up at the sky, then back down to Kathy. "And you know I'm under orders too." Kathy smiled and agreed. "As you know, if you don't move to the designated area, you will be arrested," Officer Kim said. When the three again declined to move, he began to recite their rights and beckoned the other two officers forward. They took out plastic zip-tie handcuffs. Liz, Kathy, and Eric handed their signs back over the fence to us, then stepped forward to the spot that the officers indicated. I had been observing passers-by throughout the arrest, and saw that very few showed any interest in what was happening. A thought then occurred to me, and I climbed onto a rung of the fence and leaned precariously over it.

"Eric!" He turned. "What's your wife's phone number?" He had told us earlier that he and his wife spoke multiple times a day while he was on this trip, because they had a newborn. "I don't think you can use your cell phone in jail!" I said. Eric's eyes grew wide and he hastily told me the phone number, which I scrawled in my field notebook. The three were then led away.

Officer Kim's words to Kathy stuck with me, in a mental snapshot of the two very different individuals standing face to face. They understood each other's actions, and Officer Kim had seemed to legitimate the idea that the Workers' "orders" came from above—in other words, from God. Kathy's amicable acknowledgement that Officer Kim too was doing his job illustrated the tenet of nonviolence of reconciliation and liberation for all. The officers were performing their job and could not be condemned for their choice of employment, and would likely not come to understand the ethos of peace and disarmament if the protesters were shouting, insulting, or causing a safety hazard. The protesters' peaceful acquiescence did not seem to draw contempt or anger from them. Officer Kim, at least, seemed to have thought about

their motivations and was patient and respectful in return. I asked and was told that Kathy, Liz, and Eric would be booked and probably have to wait some time in the local police station for the charges and their summons back to court. This was the usual procedure, although sometimes judges leveled higher charges or dismissed them altogether. This meant Eric would have to return to DC to appear in court, probably in several months' time. In the van on the way back to Dorothy Day House, I called Eric's wife, unsure how to tell her or how she would react. "Eric will be out of touch for today because, well, he got arrested," I explained. She was slightly concerned but, perhaps because of Eric's research topic, unsurprised.

Conscience and Efficacy: Crossing the Line

Crossing the line is integrally connected to the structure and culture of the Catholic Worker and demonstrates a tangible or practical issue between SEIs and Workers. A significant percentage of Workers are married and have children. (Troester, 1993) I visited with well-known Workers Steve Baggarly and Kim Williams at the Norfolk Catholic Worker, which they founded and have run for 28 years. Steve explained to me in an interview that, if and when he was in prison for his protest actions, he and Kim had agreed that she would take care of their two sons and manage the house of hospitality. He had indeed served several years' jail time, some in a maximum security facility. Other Catholic Workers stayed with Kim for stretches of time to help her during those years. Worker families such as Art and Colleen have made this same choice. Because these families live in or near Houses of hospitality and because they are part of a community with other Workers, they have support when a family member is in prison. Some Workers, such as Michael Walli and Kathy Boylan, are single but do not have much by way of assets or possessions. Therefore, as long as they have a room when they are released from prison, they have few if any obstacles to participate in crossing the line. (Riegle, 2012)

By contrast, many SEIs have more daily obligations that cannot be easily taken over by family or friends: property, caring for children, career, and otherwise managing their lives so as to resume the same manner of living when released from prison. Dr. Marian Mollin (2012) discusses the years when she was frequently arrested: “It was really hard to do this kind of work as a single person. I was getting arrested several times a year, and each time had the potential of jail, so I couldn’t hold a normal job. For ten years, I cobbled together these little jobs so I could leave if I had to, and it got really exhausting” (Mollin, in Riegle, 2012, p. 267). Additionally, of course, a criminal record is not something many people wish to have. Since SEIs generally do not have the same close-knit community of like-minded people who support this type of protest activity as Catholic Workers have, they are less likely to participate for pragmatic reasons. But some do cross because they have been spiritually as well as emotionally inspired. Dr. Barry Roth, a psychiatrist, participated in a 1991 action along with four others, including Kathy Boylan and Phil Berrigan, at the Bath Iron Works naval shipyard in Maine, where he and others boarded an Aegis missile cruiser, poured blood around it, hammered the launching system, and otherwise vandalized the ship. Of the spiritual convictions that have guided him, Barry said:

My heritage is Jewish. My principal practice had been Buddhist. The people I had been most often been involved with in this world for the last fifteen years were the radical Catholics. What’s true is true. Different people have different ways of understanding that and talking about it. But I don’t think there’s a Jewish truth, or a Catholic truth, or a Hindu truth, or a Moslem truth, or a Buddhist truth, or a Native American truth... We [the five protesters] were of one mind and one heart. It was Easter Sunday and nobody was there, other than ourselves and the Spirit. (Roth, in Riegle, 2012, pp. 128-129)

Some SEIs such as Eric may cross the line, particularly in low-risk circumstances, because they feel a pull towards the gravity and commitment to principle embodied by doing so. Ralph Hutchison, an SEI and president of the environmental activist group OREPA (the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, discussed further in chapter five), articulated the dynamics he has seen:

There's a value to [crossing the line in some circumstances] in that it has borne some kind of fruit, but also, I've been there when people have frivolously crossed the line or people cross the line so they can stamp their activist card and say "I've been arrested." I think that's all the wrong reasons to do that. It's inevitable, but it's not particularly helpful. Sometimes you can use it for media, to draw attention to the issue rather than the person... But you know, there came a time when people would say, "I crossed the line. I'm willing to do something else if it's effective, but I'm not willing to just go through the choreographed thing again," which I appreciate. (p.c.)

As Ralph observes, some who participate with the Catholic Worker may do so because within the Catholic peace protest network, being arrested is a kind of status marker or demonstration of how serious one is about the cause. Others take part as a kind of personal test, pushing the bounds of their investment in their spirituality or discerning what beliefs and actions resonate with them. Additionally, crossing the line is attractive as a means of publicizing the message of protest. Ralph observed, "Sometimes you can use it for media, to draw attention to the issue rather than the person. I think most of the people in Oak Ridge who've gone through it have come out saying 'I did this because of the issue, not because of me,' in a good way" (p.c.).

In some cases, other factors influence decisions to cross the line or engage in other relatively high-risk forms of protest. In these factors, the Catholic Worker's demographics play a

major role. Breaking the law in protest in the United States does not have equal consequences for all people. Like many SEIs, most Workers are white. Many are of middle-class background and/or college-educated. (Riegle, 2012, p. 1) Their experiences in the Catholic Worker give them an understanding of the law enforcement and court systems. In contrast, individuals with less education and lower-class backgrounds face several challenges. They may not have the skills to articulate their case in the way they intend, and they face pre-existing race and class discrimination in law enforcement and the courts.

These issues influence some SEIs' opinions on the ethics involved in crossing the line. While many see it as a personal choice that does not reflect on outside issues, others point to some of the societal problems the Worker addresses, such as racism and poverty. To them, Workers' actions show a kind of double standard or a vague disrespect for what prison means to other populations. This topic arose during a group conversation with several SEIs who are frequent participants at the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda: Ammon Russell (a Navajo Indian), Jon Blickenstaff, Ralph Hutchison, and myself.

Ralph: Well, what do you think, Ammon, about those protests? People getting arrested? Like for the drone stuff, where people are getting arrested at the military bases that fly drones.

Ammon: I don't know. *I* don't want to do it. I don't want to get arrested because... I don't have a back-up plan. And once you get in...

Ralph: Not everybody is the same in the eyes of the law. We counseled people who came to Oak Ridge²⁶ [for protests]. We don't ever want one individual— one man or one woman— to go in alone. Always at least two of whichever gender. But also, you know,

²⁶ Oak Ridge, TN, is the site of the aforementioned and frequently-protested Y-12 National Security Complex, which has manufactured nuclear weapons since World War II.

African Americans in the South— it's a whole different deal when they go into jail than it is for white people.

Jon: And is that true in Tennessee?

Ralph: Hell yeah.

Jon: Is that the south?

Ralph: Yep. So I think, if you're serious about doing civil disobedience for a principled reason, you have to think about all those consequences. Everybody is not the same. There are people who just can't do it... and our position [in OREPA] has always been, there are lots of things you can do. Getting arrested doesn't make you more or less 'holy' than anybody else...

Ammon: I ask this kind of question because looking at, say, Leonard Peltier²⁷ — he wants out! He says, let me out! So, you know...

Ralph: Yeah, then the Plowshares people are *choosing* to go in... Thinking that, like Gandhi, this is how the dynamic of nonviolence works. But that's different than being wrongly— falsely imprisoned.

Ammon: Right.

Ralph: The injustice just cuts a different way, I think. (p.c.)

Here several themes are invoked. Ralph, having been raised in the rural South and having been involved in protest for most of his adult life, was keenly aware of the dynamics involved in crossing the line. He articulates the issue of race, which neither Jon nor I had considered in those

²⁷ Leonard Peltier is a member of the Lakota & Anishinabe Nations who was convicted of fatally shooting two FBI agents in 1975 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. There has been an active campaign to give Peltier clemency, supported by public figures such as Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, Rigoberta Menchu, and international entities including Amnesty International and the UN High Commission on Human Rights. ("Amnesty International USA...", 2016)

terms before. This consideration immediately gave me a changed view of crossing the line. Ammon's example of Leonard Peltier was apt. Multiple SEIs whom I met have participated in events with the American Indian Movement, which has championed Peltier's cause since his conviction in 1977. Other SEIs who participate in activism with African-Americans and other minorities are also aware of the high cost of prison to many Americans. Like Ammon, these SEIs are keenly aware that some people have an easier time getting into prison and a harder time getting out. Many who cross the line are not charged or are only fined. (Riegle, 2012) Of the Catholic Workers I met who had gone to prison, none served longer than their originally-assigned sentence, and most were released early. This is not to say that Catholic Workers who cross the line are unaware of or do not care about the issues surrounding prison in the United States. Rather, as discussed above, their religious beliefs make this a valued practice that some feel is worthwhile and/or a spiritual calling. Nonetheless, this practice exemplifies a religion-driven issue on which SEIs have mixed feelings or differing perceptions.

Similarly, Ralph distinguishes between times when it is appropriate to cross the line and times when it is not, based both on participants' motivations and on the outcomes. He points to the religious element for Catholic Workers and other religiously-motivated individuals who may view it as a mark of "holiness" or virtue through sacrifice. But, from his non-religious standpoint, other modes of protest are equally valid and may be more effective, and efficacy matters more in his view than a religious or spiritual statement. Indeed, when protesters plan an instance of crossing the line but recognize that it will not achieve any change related to their goal, then purposefully being arrested could be seen as rather unvirtuous. If other means better serve the purpose of the protest, then crossing the line may appear self-serving rather than a humble sacrifice based in faith.

For Catholic Workers there is a discourse about experiences of arrests, hearings, trials, and prison time. This includes collecting the above-mentioned information and experiences of others. Shared stories of arrest, court, and prison also contribute ideas about the use of religious terminology and further protest behavior in these institutional settings. (Riegle, 2012) Art Laffin says of Catholic Worker/Plowshares actions:

When someone has done an action using the symbols—basically a hammer—we put it in the chronological list. People learn from those who’ve gone before, especially to get a better sense of what the trial and prison experiences are like. The trials have changed over the years, as the courts have become more systematic and used previous case law from other Plowshares trials. Now they repeatedly use an *In Limine* motion, which prohibits any affirmative defense. That means that if we mention certain things, we could be in contempt. In some trials there’s even a list of words we can’t use, like “the Bible,” “poor,” “nuclear weapons,” “United States foreign policy.” But of course people *have* spoken about those things in court, at the risk of being held in contempt. In some trials there’s been resistance in the courtroom where people turn their back to the judge or decide not to continue with the trial and instead begin to read the Scripture and then supporters do the same thing and sing and people are arrested during the trial. See, the jail and prison experiences are a way to continue the witness. None of us wants to go to jail or prison. We don’t do it to be arrested but because it’s the right thing to do. Of course, there’s a long Biblical tradition of people going to prison for their faith, and we act in that tradition and are strengthened by it. A great cloud of witnesses has gone before us.

(Laffin, in Riegle, 2012, p. 120)

As Art mentions in terms of a chronological list, through various communication channels, including articles in Catholic Worker publications, those who cross the line at particular events are named and the outcome is recorded. This is demonstrated in Art's write-up of the Hiroshima protest:

After giving three warnings to comply with the order or face arrest, Pentagon police placed the three under arrest and they were taken to the Pentagon police processing center. They were charged with "disobeying a lawful order" and after being processed were released. They will be tried on October 17 in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, VA. One thing of note during our witness was that numerous soldiers from different countries were either going into or leaving the Pentagon during the hour we were there. This is yet another reminder that the Pentagon is the center of war-making on our planet! (<https://dccatholicworker.wordpress.com/2014/08>, n.p.)

There are shared stories, as well, of particularly unusual or impressive interactions with law enforcement and courts. One recent and oft-recounted example, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is that of the Y-12 break-in. Michael Walli, Sister Megan Rice, and Greg Boertje-Obed were members of the "Transform Now Plowshares" movement, an offshoot of the broader Plowshares anti-nuclear movement. The three broke into the Y-12 National Security Complex, a nuclear warhead manufacturing facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. (O'Neill, 2014) Once inside, they chipped at a wall with hammers, spray-painted biblical messages, then lit candles and sat to await their arrest. The incident elevated all three to legendary status within the Catholic and anti-nuclear peace communities. (O'Neill, 2014) (Fig. 23) Although their sentences were meant to be several years long, Michael, Sister Megan, and Greg were released early following appeals. (K. Boylan, p.c., 4/29/2017) While at times the compassion, conscience, or leniency of prosecutors

or judges are recounted by Catholic Workers, just as often the punitive or critical words of officials are spread, which emphasizes the United States government's role in suppressing peace in favor of protecting militarism.

A further consideration that the Hiroshima protest highlighted was that of efficacy in protest, as mentioned above in Ralph's comments. This is another issue that may unite or divide SEIs and Workers. Some SEIs, as mentioned about Jean Chapman in chapter three, are more concerned with conscience and solidarity than with efficacy in protest. Others place emphasis on strategy and tactics that are most likely to bring about the desired change or persuade an audience. For those who feel a strong spiritual connection to a protest, efficacy may be a secondary consideration, or these SEIs may participate in protests that are symbolic as well as those that are more strategic. Others may be attracted to protest that disrupts government functioning, in the style of Gandhi's civil disobedience. (Klejment, 1988; A. Laffin, p.c.) The Catholic Workers often protest in every area of their lives: actual protests, crossing the line, refusing to pay taxes, and in some cases refusing to vote. Jean Chapman commented on an instance of this (at which I was not present) that involved Art Laffin, Eric Martin, and herself:

One of the hallmarks of privilege is that you have the luxury of not worrying about efficacy... The way this issue came up at [a Catholic peace activist] retreat was about voting. I heard Art Laffin give his most articulate thing about why he would never vote. Eric Martin, who was at the gathering, wrote to me later and said, "I really had a problem with that conversation." And I said, "I was at a gathering once [about voting rights] and a young man said, 'I've been knocking on doors and people say "Why should I vote?" What should I say?' My friend Lucy, she's an old Communist and she's white, stood up and in a heartbeat she said, 'Because people died so we could vote.'" It's just a pure gut thing... I

appreciate Artie's position; I wouldn't fight with him about it. But I can't do that. I will always vote. Always vote. (p.c.)

As the discussions above show, questions about motivation, efficacy, and outcomes in protest activities are part of ongoing debates. Opinions and perceptions of these factors vary, and there are no clear-cut sides. In the spirit of the Catholic Worker, Nipponzan Myohoji, and SEIs, there are no competing agendas or rigid platforms that divide people. For any example or argument about protest tactics, there is an opposite and often equally legitimate response. Kathy, Liz, and Eric's arrests made little to no impact on the Pentagon or the public. It would not be in the news. It only affected the officers and officials who had to perform the arrests and process the paperwork associated with them—tedious tasks that seemed unlikely to provoke sympathy or spiritual reflection in most people. In other words, while the problem of nuclear armament lies at the top of the military and governmental system, the protest affected those at the bottom, namely those who corral and control the deviant elements of society, keeping them from bothering those at the top. However, many who go to prison help change lives—and have their own lives changed—in their experiences with other prisoners.²⁸ Longtime activist Bill Frankel-Streit recounted his experience of going to prison in the wake of the imprisonment and eventual release of Father Steve Kelly, a well-know and beloved figure in the peace movement:

I was sent to Fort Dix. As soon as I got off the bus, I got taken into a separate room and interrogated. They had sensed similarities between myself and Steve Kelly, who had just been there—repeat offender, peace activist, and priest. Steve Kelly, they said, turned the whole place upside down. See, Steve just totally noncooperates. This guy from prison administration said that five hundred prisoners were looking at Father Kelly. In so many

²⁸ See, for example, Rosalie Riegle, 2012, *Crossing the Line*, and 2013, *Doing Time for Peace*.

words, he said that if all of them would do what Father Kelly did, the prison would be in big, big trouble. They were freaked out the whole time he was there because just one man—Father Steve Kelly—was holding that possibility out to the other prisoners. They pleaded with me—and I’m not exaggerating—they were practically on their knees, saying, “Just program. Don’t turn this place upside down.” You know, the powers put up the propaganda that nonviolence is ineffective, but I don’t think the authorities themselves really believe that. They just want *us* to believe it! (Frankel-Streit, in Riegle, 2012, p. 252)

Whether their individual protests effect visible change is largely beside the point for many Workers. As Officer Kim put it, they are “under orders” from the ultimate authority of the universe. Art Laffin speaks of his arrests for protesting Trident nuclear submarines:

I was arrested almost every time a Trident was launched or commissioned, save a few times when I moved to Washington. I remember a reporter asking me when the eighteenth Trident was launched, “What good does it do? You’re out here-- This is supposedly the last Trident that’s being built.” I said, “It’s not being built and launched in my name. The one thing I can do with my life is to say ‘yes’ to the God of life and love and ‘no’ to this weapon of mass murder. (p.c.)

Such actions may not appear to contribute significantly to a cause, but for Christians one need only look as far as the “Parable of the Sower” in the New Testament to find detailed insight:

[Jesus spoke] ...in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground... and they sprang up quickly... ⁶ But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and

brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty...¹⁸ Hear then the parable of the sower.¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it... this is what was sown on the path.²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,²¹ yet... when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.²³ But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. (Gospel of Matthew, 13:3-23, NRSV Bible)

Jesus here explains to a public audience that the message of God (“the word”) is spread among people, but everyone does not understand or adopt that message for different reasons. Some may never understand Jesus’s message—in the case of the Catholic Worker and its protests, some may encounter them and have no interest or comprehension. Others place material comforts, worldly success, and personal desires first in their lives, which are some of the exact obstacles to serving others in the manner of Jesus, in the Workers’ ethos. Regarding the influence of modern United States culture on spiritually-based nonviolent protest, John Heid, an SEI who has been in prison for crossing the line and has worked closely with the Catholic Worker, said:

Our culture is so focused on results. Everything we do is supposed to be a positive, productive solution to a problem. And of course life isn’t that way. So I remind folks that everything we do, period, has an effect, whether we know what it is or not. We can control what we do—maybe not over the way the bell sounds in someone else’s ear, but in what bell we ring. (Heid, in Riegle, 2012, p. 257)

The Hiroshima protest demonstrated both the actual and the theoretical, or desired, interactions between Catholic Workers and United States authorities. The Workers and SEIs practice nonviolent protest against the government for the purpose of drawing attention to what the Workers perceive as transgression against human life and God's will. SEIs connect spiritually to the idea of preserving life and to the horrific outcomes of the atomic bombing. While the issues of strategy, such as crossing the line, and of ideology, as in religion, may not correspond between Workers and SEIs, nonetheless both groups are proponents of nonviolent protest as a time-tested and conscionable way to communicate their message to those in power. The same holds true for the Nagasaki vigil, which shows some pertinent differences regarding participants, activities, and space.

The Nagasaki Vigil

On the morning of August 9, protesters assembled in the park in front of the White House to organize for the Nagasaki vigil. The protesters were mostly members of one of several peace groups: Pax Christi, another Christian peace organization; the Atlantic Life Community; and Jonah House, discussed above; as well as the representatives of Dorothy Day Catholic Worker. Several of us were visitors: Terry, myself, and a graduate student from Cambridge University in England, Imogen. She was studying 16th and 17th century peace and protest writing and was in the United States for research. Peace and protest were personal as well as academic issues for her, and so she ended up at the vigil.

Art Laffin was the main organizer. Art, as discussed above, is a leader in the East Coast anti-nuclear movement. His rise to leadership is attributable on one hand to his fervor and public speaking ability, and on the other hand to his commanding physical presence: he is a tall, large-framed man with a resonating voice. Art explained that we had permission to protest in a space

in the street (closed to cars) with wide-spaced metal barricades to set it off from the surrounding flow of tourists. In this protest, therefore, there would be no crossing the line. To the contrary, the protest space, time, and purpose had been approved by the government. (A. Laffin, p.c.)

Art explained the agenda would be to stand with signs and banners for a while, then he would give a speech he had written. Throughout, there would be chanting of slogans and poetry read by different participants. Then we would stage a “die-in,” an idea most of the other protesters were familiar with, in which whoever wants to lies down and pretends to be dead. In this protest, they would lie on the road and their body is traced in chalk. They then stand and go back to the circle of protesters, leaving a slew of outlines representing the victims.

The focus was commemorating the Japanese citizens who were victims of the atomic bombings and the United States’ continued offensive military policies. Art’s speech, transcribed in the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker blog, describes the event as follows:

[Those present] ... come to the White House today, the 69th anniversary of the U.S. nuclear bombing of Nagasaki, to remember the past, repent the sin and reclaim the future. As people of faith we believe it’s a sin to build a nuclear weapon. We decry the existence and continued possession and threatened use of these and other idolatrous and murderous weapons. (<https://dccatholicworker.wordpress.com/2014/08/>, n.p.)

At this event, the group used multiple media to express the theme of remembrance and atonement. Purposefully or incidentally, the chalk outlines, songs, and speeches over the PA system did attract some public attention. There were several journalists, some of whom I spoke with. These were primarily freelance journalists who usually sold their photos to news sites and blogs. Some asked us questions, and we referred them to Art as our spokesperson. Some took photos.

When it came time for the die-in, I volunteered to outline the protesters' bodies. Some tourists glanced over or paused to watch. The individuals lay in poses of sudden, violent death on the hot pavement as I scraped the chalk hard around each of them, trying to make the outlines detailed and clearly visible. (Fig. 24) Each person I traced then carefully rolled to their feet and stepped back to the perimeter of the protest. While the Hiroshima protest at the Pentagon had been focused on witnessing toward government and military officials directly, or at least toward protesting on their ground, the Nagasaki vigil had a different tone. The space in front of the White House is, of course, public and a popular tourist spot. Few visitors likely come with interest in seeing protests or demonstrations. However, the Workers' Nagasaki vigil put us directly in front of the gated entrance by Lafayette Park, a prime photo spot and pedestrian-only road. Thus, the vigil was both toward the executive government's presence behind us and toward the general public who flowed around us.

Theology in Protest

The Catholic theme of *imitatio Christi*, mentioned above, was particularly evident in the Nagasaki vigil. In early Christianity, when the religion was not yet legal in the Roman empire, martyrdom was the ultimate experience of *imitatio Christi*. Many martyrs saw imprisonment as a spiritual opportunity, and even welcomed their own often slow and painful deaths as the ultimate way of uniting with Christ. (Hassett, 2010; "Imitation of Christ," 1910) Therefore, within the Catholic Worker, where Jesus' life is emphasized, this tradition manifests itself as the willingness to be arrested and to serve jail time, and otherwise to suffer for the sake of Jesus' cause. (Riegle, 2012) Early Christians' interest lay in the promises of Christianity that were not found in other belief systems: a personal, loving, single God who had taken human form and been resurrected. While this broad narrative—a semi-divine son of a deity who is sacrificed or

murdered, then resurrected—is common among European and Near Eastern mythologies, Christianity avowed that Jesus was a god particularly concerned with the fate of humanity and who could redeem souls. (Ehrman, 2015; Musurillo, 1972) The Gospels, both canonical and non-canonical, told of his life and miraculous abilities. The tales of his apostles confirmed the miracles that could be achieved in Jesus' name. The promise of answered prayers in life and a paradise after death were compelling to those who converted to Christianity. (Ehrman, 2015, pp. 82-88)

In comparison, the Catholic Workers similarly adhere closely to the message of the Gospels and to the power of the spirit of Jesus to strengthen and inspire them. The Catholic Workers, like the early Christians, feel that fidelity to their faith is paramount at any cost, and thus they attribute positive value to experiences that others—including most mainstream Christians—might nowadays see as far outside the requirements of the religion. (Hassett, 2010; Riegle, 2012) However, unlike many Christians, the Workers' focus is less on their personal redemption or transcendent experiences of Christ, and more on what they feel called to do in Christ's name. Early Christians were not focused on actively changing the political order of Rome or on applying Jesus' indictments against violence on a societal scale. (Ehrman, 2015; Musurillo, 1972) In the ensuing centuries, as Christianity was legalized and then made the official religion of the Empire, it was also gradually co-opted into the existing cultural and political order. Patriarchal culture pushed out the early days of women as church leaders; wars were justified based on Augustine's just war theory; and church officials and political leaders often collaborated to keep or expand their power and wealth. (Herbermann & Grupp, 1908)

The Protestant Reformation marked a rejection of the Church's practices and traditions that exploited common people and steeped the church in political and economic, rather than

spiritual and moral, concerns. These included the widespread corruption of the church hierarchy and the necessity of liturgy and of officials to connect individuals to God. (Wilhelm, 1911) The institution of the Church had left room for corruption insofar as priests and bishops were the arbiters of the state of the common person's soul. Forgiveness from a priest was necessary to truly be redeemed in the eyes of God. This led to practices such as the selling of indulgences that promised forgiveness of sins, trends that lined the pockets of the ordained by manipulating the fears of common people. (Kent, 1910) However, Protestantism embodied its own set of fears and political collusions, as discussed above. The fear of hell caused an almost-paranoid emphasis on virtue, leading to the reverse logic of the Protestant ethic: poverty showed moral failing while material success and individual achievement showed God's favor. (Weber, 1905) Protestantism also became embedded in some of the political systems of Europe and the Americas, but it was in the United States that it had the opportunity to establish a founder effect that Uhlmann & Sanchez-Burks (2014) described.

Catholic Workers, consciously or not, identify this pattern as the misappropriation or manipulation of Christianity. The alignment or alliance of Christianity with the state led to the religion being shaped by political and social issues, rather than the other way around. (Piehl, 1982) In the Catholic Workers' view, Jesus had intended his followers to continue his works, including opposing all violence with faith and, when needed, self-sacrifice. While Catholic Workers do not debate or criticize other Christians or individuals for not sharing their beliefs, they do critique Church leaders who fail to promote this message, and they do see it as the true expression of Christianity. (DiDomizio, 1988; Piehl, 1982)

Connections: The Hibakusha

An element Art referenced repeatedly during the protest and subsequently during my interview with him was the plight of the *hibakusha*, or bomb survivors. That some people survived the nuclear blast is not widely publicized. Many died of cancer from the radiation in a short number of years, but others survived into old age and spoke publicly about their experience. (Dower, 1995) Art had met some of them and was deeply moved by the experience, which he recounted to me during our interview:

Katie: When you spoke with the hibakusha that you met, do you feel like there's been a connection? Do they connect with how you've approached it and the idea that some Americans are repentant of that?

Art: Yes, many times. I always say, "I'm sorry for what my government did to you and your people." There has never been any apology given by the United States government to the Japanese. We were the ones that ushered in the nuclear age, the only country that has ever used nuclear weapons. Tomorrow we'll be making another statement of apology in front of the White House. The survivors that I have met have been so gracious, so gracious. It's remarkable... When I think about what they have been through in their life, I just marvel at the spirit that they have. I have heard hibakusha say, "We are," — the hibakusha are— "sorry for Japan using weapons at Pearl Harbor." Saying sorry to the Americans. So I have the greatest respect for the survivors. They are the living reminders of the first nuclear war that's happened on Earth, and their plea must become our plea that we rid the world of nuclear technology and that we disarm our hearts of the violence and the fear that created the bomb in the first place. I remember the first time I met one of the survivors, he was describing-- It was in 1978 during the UN session on disarmament... He brought with him the suit coat that he was wearing on the day of the bombing. It was all

in shreds and he showed it to me. I tried to imagine myself being in his position. I couldn't. You just wonder, how was it possible for him to even go on with his life? He lost everything he had-- his family, his community, his work, everything. Just totally destroyed in an instant. There he was, he was still able to smile and he was still able to do something very constructive. He himself had leukemia... as a result of the radiation after the bombing. Here he came thousands of miles to New York City with other survivors to plead to the world to disarm. Thirty-six years later we still have nuclear weapons that are capable of destroying all life on Earth.

While he apologized on behalf of what America had done, the hibakusha whom he met both immediately told him they had forgiven Americans—and asked his forgiveness for Japan's role in World War II. This profoundly moving moment further reinforced Art's belief in his religion and his activism. This man who had suffered so terribly nonetheless not only forgave those who had harmed him, but took onto his own shoulders the responsibility for his country's harm to the United States. This act embodied the humility, forgiveness, and sacrifice which the Catholic Workers see in the life of Christ and thus try to emulate. Despite the differences in age, nationality, and possibly religion that separated Art and this Japanese man, they found common ground in their commitment to the cause of peace.

Conclusion

Like Art and the hibakusha whom he met, while SEIs may not hold the same religious views as Catholic Workers, their spiritual beliefs result in similar feelings, affects, and values as those of Workers. Encounters such as these motivate Workers and SEIs to continue their protest activities and nurture their spiritual/religious lives. Practically speaking, through the Catholic Worker, SEIs find established locations and means to join in protests against war. However,

there is also a more spiritual element to this collaboration. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki vigils were not protests of events that had directly hurt, or were presently hurting, American citizens. The nuclear bombings were an act of war that took place almost seventy years ago and which few Americans, or even many Japanese people, think of in terms of culpability, sin, or atonement. However, for both SEIs and Catholic Workers, the bombings are symbolic of a transgression against humanity and a violation of the sacredness of life. The vigils on the anniversaries of the bombings acknowledge not only the possible future threat of nuclear war, but moreover, the past suffering that the bombings caused. For SEIs and Workers, this past is also the present. They commemorate the bombings in honor of those who died or were devastated by them. In such a protest, the Workers' religious beliefs support or reinforce SEIs' spiritual beliefs about their responsibility to work for peace and about the interdependence of life. The past and the future are both present in these acts of witnessing through the Workers' and SEIs' beliefs and actions.

Although SEIs could participate in secular groups that fight for disarmament, they find the vital spiritual dimension of their activism in collaboration with the Catholic Worker, as described above. This immanent or transcendent element of spirituality also plays an important role at the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda, discussed next in chapter five. Like the Workers' houses of hospitality, the GSMPP offers a retreat or outpost for SEIs in pursuit of their spiritual activities. Similarly, Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker both strategically located their physical spaces near military or government locations that represent war, violence, and other types of degradation of humanity. In this, both religious groups confront negative products of modernity while opening a physical and spiritual venue for SEIs to do the same.

Chapter 5: The Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda

Chapters three and four presented activist events that were temporary in time and place. This chapter focuses on a permanent location, the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda. Hereafter, I will use the abbreviation “GSMPP” to refer to the entire property, which includes the pagoda (still under construction- Fig. 25), the temple, the garden, and other buildings. I will use the term “pagoda” to refer to the peace pagoda building itself. The GSMPP and the monks who live in it play an important role in SEIs’ spirituality, partly because it is a place to which they can return often.

The GSMPP is a site of engaged spirituality insofar as many who visit it are SEIs and they see their activities there as part of their social activism. The activism surrounding the GSMPP extends beyond SEIs, however. The GSMPP is a “node” in the Eastern United States peace activism network generally described in other chapters, and as such, it is a location where activists with a variety of causes meet and network. It is particularly an important site in the large-scale ongoing protest of social injustice and environmental destruction in Appalachia. This is due to the pagoda’s deliberate location near the Oak Ridge Y-12 nuclear facility and Y-12’s impact on the impoverished community and land surrounding it. The GSMPP, and Nipponzan Myohoji as a whole, were created in response to the destructive elements of modernity. Yet the GSMPP’s existence is only possible because of modern technology. Transmodernity is, I will argue, an instrumental concept in discussing the monks’ way of life and SEIs’ affinity for it. The GSMPP and the monks’ way of life foster the transmodern elements of SEIs’ spirituality. As a site with a specific spiritual and activist purpose, the GSMPP is a place SEIs feel comfortable among like-minded individuals, and by extension it offers a contrast between Protestant mainstream United States culture and SEIs’ culture. The GSMPP is a retreat or haven where

SEIs cultivate important relationships, experience *communitas*, and can explore or immerse themselves in spirituality. Its existence is both a protest and a prayer. Life at the GSMPP interweaves modern and premodern epistemologies and techniques of living. The communal spirit generated by SEIs also demonstrates the range of transmodern spirituality.

In this chapter, I first give some background on peace pagodas in general and on the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda specifically, including the monks' rituals and activities. I then discuss the SEIs' relationships with Buddhism, particularly with Nipponzan Myohoji. Next I examine the meanings and purposes of the GSMPP for the SEIs who visit it regularly. For them, it is a site of healing and acceptance, a node of activism, and a place where they can comfortably express and embody transmodern spirituality. Within the discussion of transmodern spirituality, I discuss SEIs' perspectives on interbeing, nature, mainstream culture, and the role of Nipponzan Myohoji in their spirituality. I focus a section of this chapter on the "work parties" that are held several times a year there when volunteers work on the major stages of construction on the pagoda. This section also examines the role of labor in SEIs' spirituality and how the activities and affects at the work parties exemplify core elements of spiritual engagement and transmodernity. I conclude with a summation of how the GSMPP supports and enhances SEIs' spirituality and activism, including in relationship to the events discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

Peace Pagodas: Purpose and United States History

Peace Pagodas, as previously discussed, are an integral part of Nipponzan Myohoji's mission. Building and maintaining the pagodas is the second highest priority in Nipponzan Myohoji, next to the practice of drumming and chanting. The peace pagodas are based on the ancient Buddhist stupas, which were domed burial mounds. Nipponzan Myohoji has built 80 pagodas worldwide, which range from 100 to 400 feet in height. The modern pagodas usually

feature depictions of the Buddha and are topped with a point or spire, symbolically reaching between Earth and the heavens. The pagodas have external walkways but, like ancient Buddhist stupas, they are empty inside. King (2005) describes their purpose as “constant physical reminders of the hope and possibility of peace... they are open to a great variety of interpretations... [and] have the capacity to move the heart without anyone being able to say exactly what they mean” (p. 37). The expression and experience of spirituality and this ‘hope for peace’ without using words are significant features of Nipponzan Myohoji’s daily life.

In some locations, Nipponzan Myohoji has temples but no peace pagoda, such as in Atlanta, Georgia; Bainbridge Island, Washington; San Francisco, California; and Washington, DC. Because there are so few monks in the United States, when they travel, they often have a local friend stay in the temple to maintain it. Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise have regularly provided free housing in the temple to individuals who are recommended to them and are temporarily unable to afford housing. This allows them to participate in peace walks and spend the summers working on the GSMPP without leaving the Atlanta house empty.

The temples and peace pagodas in the United States arose independently over several decades and in different circumstances from one another. The differences in their locations and creation are based on several factors. The two earlier peace pagodas in the United States were built in Leverett, Massachusetts and Grafton, New York. Both areas are relatively socially liberal and thus attracted donors and volunteers with reasonable ease, a vital component since Nipponzan Myohoji never solicits donations from any source. The land in Grafton was donated by owner Hank Hazelton, an activist with the American Indian Movement who had met Sister Jun-san of Nipponzan Myohoji at a protest. (<http://www.graftonpeacepagoda.org/history/>) Other peace activists, individuals who appreciated the idea of the pagodas, Buddhists, and others

donated money and supplies and volunteered help with the construction. (Gyosyu Utsumi, p.c.) Nipponzan Myohoji monks from around the world visited the sites to help keep the projects on schedule. The Nipponzan Myohoji monks and volunteers ideally wished to complete both of these pagodas while the order's founder, Fujii Nichidatsu, still lived. (G. Utsumi, p.c.) Fujii was able to attend the consecration of both sites, but died at age 100 in January 1985 before either pagoda was completed. The Leverett pagoda was dedicated later that year, and the Grafton pagoda in 1993.

The Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda

Origins

The GSMPP is located in Cocke County in northeastern Tennessee. Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise of the Atlanta temple purchased the land in 2001. They found an affordable temple through the unlikely figure of Clarence "Kel" Kellerman, a gruff, grizzled carpenter, always in overalls, who befriended the monks on one of their visits to Oak Ridge for a protest. The monks mention him anytime they are asked about the history of the pagoda. When Kel learned that they wanted to build the pagoda in the area, he began of his own accord to look for property for them. After some months, Sister Denise recounts, Kel called her and said, "I got your Peace Pagoda land." (D. Laffan, p.c.) The monks were able to raise enough money to purchase the property for two reasons: first, an elderly lady who owned many acres on the mountain donated some of her land on the top of the mount. Second, the property was cheap because it sits on a rocky mountaintop, accessible only by four-wheel drive up a steep unpaved road, and it has a massive cell phone signal tower in the middle of it. When it was purchased, the land was a steep slope of clay, rock, and pine trees with the dirt road leading to the fenced-in cell tower at its center. Compared to building the pagodas in Grafton and Leverett, which were on open ground,

constructing the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda temple required vast amounts of work. Since 2001, groups of volunteers have gathered several times a year for “work parties” in which they work on one major construction project. The work began with clearing the land, then the temple building and bathhouse, then the guest house, the gardens, and finally clearing and leveling the land for the pagoda. (Fig. 26) The volunteers and monks laid the foundation for the pagoda in 2011. Each pagoda or stupa, as mentioned above, is intended to hold relics of the Buddha. For the GSMPP, a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple donated a relic and brought it personally to Tennessee, where the reliquary was enshrined at the dedication ceremony. (Jim Toren, p.c.; G. Utsumi, p.c.) Through more volunteer labor over the past five years, the Pagoda is now about two-thirds complete.

The Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda shares the core features of other Nipponzan Myohoji temples and pagodas, but it is a unique site in some important ways. The demographics and accessibility of the area are different from those of Grafton and Leverett. The municipality, Cocke County, is a deeply impoverished area of Appalachia. Even paid construction labor, as used in parts of some pagoda projects, is in short supply due to the absence of economic development in the area. The population of the area is also a significant factor. While Grafton and Leverett are in fairly socially progressive areas, the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda is in southern Appalachia where there is little knowledge of Buddhism and where religion and culture revolve around Christianity. (G. Utsumi, p.c.) The monks therefore faced opposition to the pagoda based on ignorance and prejudice against their religion and its foreign origins. However, some local residents did support the construction. The working-class and conservative residents on the lower slopes of the mountain have mostly become friendly toward, or at least accepting of, the monks. (D. Laffan, p.c.; R. Hutchison, p.c.) The monks give vegetables and

homemade preserves to neighbors, and two residents who have small farms often bring the monks garden produce, eggs from their hens, and honey.

The GSMPP is also important as a major financial and logistical undertaking for only two monks. Because Nipponzan Myohoji has no official hierarchy or organizational system, monks are responsible for their own financial support. Each temple is independent and monks' activities are largely self-directed. Some pagodas, such as those in India, Nepal, and Japan, receive thousands of visitors every month. Donations from these visitors support the monks there. However, in some countries, including the United States, support is harder to find. (D. Laffan, p.c.) Utsumi came to the United States partly because he had a vision of building a pagoda in the South. He told me that many of the other monks thought this was a "crazy" idea, that the culture and socioeconomics of the South would prevent it being possible. (G. Utsumi, p.c.) However, after several years in the United States, Utsumi took on Denise as a novice, and in the ensuing years their partnership made many things that neither of them had anticipated possible. Part of this was Denise's pragmatism, intellect, and organizing skills. Another part was Utsumi's confidence, energy, and knowledge of construction and carpentry. (D. Laffan, p.c.; G. Utsumi, p.c.) But almost all the monks, like the Catholic Workers, would attribute their success to faith: a belief that they would receive what they needed, often from unexpected sources. It is a faith in people and in compassion. For Catholic Workers, this is seen as God's work; for the monks, it is the dharma. When I asked Denise about the relationship between Nipponzan Myohoji and politics, she replied:

[The Buddhist] precepts... exist, these *are*. There's an *is*-ness to it. It's the moral code of the universe, is the best way I can explain it in English. These exist for all, for everything. So [NM's activities] just call others to account to honor the precepts... I think that's

probably what's both radical and great, is that Guruji didn't see something as being *in* the temple and then you have people come and support the temple... Guruji gave a great dharma talk at one hundred years of age in which he said that if Nipponzan Myohoji were to become just fancy clothes and living proper temple life, that it would be better for it to be overrun by rats... It was more [important] to walk out and start to do the walking and drumming and chanting. Just chanting Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo and drumming is spreading the dharma and for those who are ready to receive it, they'll receive it... It could be drumming and chanting outside the Parliament or outside of a military installation or just walking down the street. Anywhere. This is the same practice with the same heart and mind. It's just simply that this is... always going to be a task for somebody in whatever age, and so it happens to be [that] this is the task that is for us... This is an important and necessary role to play within the whole of society, [although] some people have to be presidents or parliamentarians or whatever. Everybody needs to receive the dharma, and the role of the monk is to present that. (p.c.)

Daily Life and Rituals

The monks live in voluntary poverty according to the guidelines which Fujii established, including the financial independence mentioned above. They do not have personal bank accounts or hold employment. They follow limits on their personal possessions and comforts. Many are similar to other Buddhist orders, and indeed to monastic traditions in other religions, insofar as they follow a monastic rule that dictates most of how they live their lives: the time of their prayers, their clothing, what they may own, and the code of conduct they are expected to follow. The monks wear Western-style clothing while at the temple or working on the Pagoda, but for prayers and public activities they wear a white tunic and trousers with a yellow robe that wraps

over one shoulder. All monks shave their heads and do not wear jewelry or other adornments. They sleep on simple futons and bathe daily before evening prayers.

Though the monks often refer to the twice-daily ritual as “prayers,” the practice is quite different from Abrahamic prayer or worship services. It consists of drumming and chanting in the temple room followed by a group reading from the Lotus Sutra and a brief invocation. Other sects of Nichiren Buddhism follow a similar practice of reciting the daimoku and passages from the Lotus Sutra in the morning and evening. Morning prayers are timed to begin in the dark and end after sunrise (in Tennessee, usually 6:00 AM). Evening prayers at the GSMPP are held at 6:00 PM regardless of the time of year.

Those who wish to attend prayer gather on a large carpet in front of the altar, kneeling or sitting on cushions or small Japanese-style stools (which take strain off the knees). Folding chairs are also available. On a bookshelf are small programs containing the prayers and verses of the Lotus Sutra used in the ritual. Drums and drumsticks (made from small tree branches, stripped of their bark, dried, and partly hollowed out) sit in a rack to one side and guests are welcomed to use them. Those who have visited the pagoda before often pick up drums and sticks, along with prayer books, to offer to newcomers. The atmosphere is casual, although the ornate altar and accoutrement often intimidate first-time visitors. Individuals can enter at any time during prayers, change sitting position, or leave if needed. Participants need not observe any particular rituals before entering, except removing their shoes, which is asked of guests when entering any room.

The monks first perform a ritual of lighting incense and candles. One monk then sits in front of a large drum which is used in the temples. Other participants and monks use a hand drum. The chanting has a call-and-response format: one monk (the senior monk of a temple, or

sometimes a visiting monk) chants the daimoku, then the other participants chant it. At the GSMPP, Brother Utsumi usually begins the drumming, but others may take over from him by kneeling and bowing next to the drum. (Fig. 27) The current drummer then rises and continues drumming with one hand while handing the other drumstick to the new drummer, stepping away as the new drummer takes the other stick.

At morning prayers, the chanting lasts a full hour. At evening prayers, it is a half-hour. A second monk (Sister Denise, at the GSMPP) ends the chanting by tapping a wooden drum at a decreasing tempo for the last two chanting cycles, then striking a bell-like “singing bowl” as the chanting stops. The monks then stand in front of the altar and repeat a cycle of bowing and saying the daimoku four times, kneeling and prostrating on the last recitation. They then turn and do so to the audience; many participants bow in tandem with them. The monks then chant the prayer for evening or for morning, followed by a chapter from the Lotus Sutra in Japanese. Participants can follow and participate using prayer books.

In the morning after chanting, those who wish to do so take their drums and follow the monks on a walk around the GSMPP, drumming and chanting while walking. At each stop, they recite the daimoku and bow. They first process up the hill to the pagoda itself, then to a small statue of the revered Bodhisattva Never Despise, then to the altar in a small building called the Forest Temple, down the hill on a wooded path to the Spirit Garden, then to the bedroom in the guest house called “Guruji’s Room.” Fujii Nichidatsu was called “Guruji” by those close to him, including the monks of Nipponzan Myohoji. When he was alive, each temple kept a bedroom ready for him, as he visited temples regularly. After his death, the rooms were kept as they were and usually contain a small altar with his photo. However, as with many material elements in Nipponzan Myohoji, the room is not sacred in the sense of limited to certain rituals or

admittance. (D. Laffan, G. Utsumi, p.c.) Guests may sleep in Guruji's room, which save for the altar is no more elaborate than any of the other sleeping quarters. Some participants, I observed, choose to sleep there when they are feeling particularly reflective, or when troubled, presumably seeking guidance or peace.

In the evening, there is no procession and prayers end in the temple. Brother Utsumi sometimes speaks extemporaneously for a few minutes. In the evening he may make observations about the activities during the day and thank participants for what each of them has contributed. Sometimes he will reflect on a spiritual concept brought to mind by the day's work. A senior monk speaking to an audience is often colloquially called a "dharma talk" by lay Buddhists, but Brother Utsumi, in his habitual deflection of compliments or respectful language, scoffed when I used this term for his reflections. Sometimes, often in the morning, the address is purely pragmatic: he will delineate who will be working on what tasks that day. Utsumi's ability to observe who works best on different types of work is crucial to the work parties. In contrast to the work parties are the formal ceremonies that the GSMPP hosts.

Annual Ceremonies

There are two annual festivals celebrated at the Peace Pagoda: The Flower Festival and the Ancestors' Ceremony. Both festivals are celebrated around the usual date that they are held in Japan. However, because Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi hold each holiday at both the Atlanta temple and the GSMPP, the dates are not exact. Both ceremonies involve a great deal of preparation: banners are hung, some on 12-foot-high bamboo poles which have permanent holders in the ground along the pagoda road. The altar is rearranged and prepared. The temple, kitchen, bathrooms, and the large wraparound deck are all cleaned. Sister Denise and sometimes participants who come early to help prepare make large amounts of food, some Western and

some Japanese. Guests also often bring food. The Flower Festival takes place in April and commemorates the birthday of the Buddha. The Japanese festival is called Hana-matsuri and involves decorating the temple and a special altar with fresh flowers. The wooden altar, the *hana-midou*, houses a brass statue of the young Buddha standing in a shallow basin filled with water. Guests are invited to come up to the altar during the ceremony and pour three ladles of water over the Buddha. This comes from the legend that streams sprang up (or a heavenly rain fell) around the Buddha's mother when she gave birth to him beneath a tree. The pouring of water symbolizes purification, particularly cleansing oneself of hatred, greed, and other vices. The Ancestors' Ceremony takes place in August and corresponds to the Japanese holiday Obon. The Spirit Garden of the pagoda is so named because it has a vault containing the ashes of people who have asked to be interred there. This includes the parents of Sister Denise and of Brother Utsumi, family members of some pagoda participants, and some participants themselves who have passed away. There are also the ashes of several individuals who died without any family to bury them. Friends of the monks who knew these individuals requested to bring their ashes to the Spirit Garden, and the monks welcome this. People's names and their birth and death dates are carved by hand into upright stones. Those who attend the Ancestors' Ceremony are encouraged to bring photos or mementos of loved ones to set on the altar for the day in order to honor and remember them.

Participants

Repeat participants at the GSMPP come from many walks of life and have various reasons for taking part, but about two-thirds of them identify as SBNRs and take part in activism. Almost all the participants are white and many have been involved in peace work throughout their adult lives. Most also show an awareness of their own privilege in having the ability to

come and participate with Nipponzan Myohoji, economically and physically. Traveling to the GSMPP is in a sense a luxury: One must be able to take time off work or be retired, be able to get transportation, and be fairly able-bodied. Some of these individuals are middle-class and college-educated, but a significant minority are working-class and/or do not have education past high school. Most participants met the Nipponzan Myohoji monks at other protests or events.

Differences include what part of the country they come from, what specific professions they have worked in, age, and gender. There are several types of participants who are usually not SEIs. Japanese monks from other temples will visit the pagoda at times, and several Japanese young adults who have interacted with Nipponzan Myohoji in Japan have also visited. I do not count them among SEIs because they are not involved in activism. High school and college students also come to the GSMPP, having learned of the pagoda either through their parents, teachers, or word of mouth. I have generally not included them as SEIs also because they are not (yet) activists and most did not clearly articulate spiritual affinities. (D. Laffan, p.c.; G. Utsumi, p.c.)

Local participants include individuals who met the monks before the GSMPP was begun, at local events such as protests at the Oak Ridge Y-12 nuclear or when the monks stayed with local hosts during such protests. Others have met them subsequently in town and through word of mouth. Again, most of these participate out of friendship with the monks and do not profess particular activist or spiritual reasons for coming to the GSMPP. While there is variation in the specific circumstances that brought participants to the pagoda and keep them coming back, there is a common thread in the responses to the question, "Why do you come here?" Answers include that it is refreshing or rejuvenating, that it helps motivate them to continue activism in their everyday lives, that they enjoy spending time with the others who come, and that "It's a good

thing to do.” Kel, who has contributed his professional construction skills to the pagoda, is not an SEI per se. When I asked why he does this work, he replied: “I come out of love for Utsumi and Denise and to be part of the beloved community they are building. And why not dream the impossible dream?” Kel’s personal relationship with Denise and Utsumi is an important element, and he interestingly describes the people connected to them as “beloved community,” a term most often associated with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. However, the phrase was coined by the late 19th century philosopher and theologian Josiah Royce. Royce’s theories of community certainly could be said to echo what may seem “the impossible dream”: “My life means nothing, either theoretically or practically, unless I am a member of a community” (Royce, 1913/2001, p. 357). The pursuit of world peace and of lasting, altruistic community are dreams to which GSMPP participants aspire. They share a sense of this community on a small scale at the GSMPP. The group labor and activities at the GSMPP can be read as engaged spirituality even though it is not a direct social justice or protest activity. Rather, the symbolism of the pagoda and of Nipponzan Myohoji is of promoting peace and justice through communal, voluntary work. The common beliefs between participants could be viewed as a Venn diagram or piece of weaving: each participant shares one or more beliefs with one or more other participants, and usually the overlap is multifaceted.

Function and Meaning of the Peace Pagoda

Healing and Restoring

Some who come to the GSMPP find emotional, spiritual, and mental rejuvenation there, incidentally or purposely. There are around 15 or 20 SEIs who have been coming to the GSMPP

for many years (and who often participate in the peace walks as well). Over the years, naturally some of them have experienced difficult times and traumas in their lives. Some of them just happen to visit during these times, while others may go at a particular time or for a longer stay than usual because they are under duress and the GSMPP is a place of solace or safety for them. As the stories of the SEIs below show, for some of them this is directly spiritual. For others it is indirectly so: the atmosphere of the GSMPP is peaceful in significant contrast to their daily lives.

Ammon, mentioned in chapter 4, visits the GSMPP regularly for work parties and takes part in other spiritually-engaged events. Ammon described to me a sense of “home” in terms of nature and spirituality at the pagoda. He is of the last generation to have been taken to Indian boarding schools from his home on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico. (A. Russell, p.c.) Most Indian reservations have struggled with poverty due to isolation in rural areas, denial of mineral or water rights to their land, and lack of resources for infrastructure, and the Navajo lands are no exception. Ammon grew up amid this poverty, and subsequently endured separation from his family and culture. He also served in the United States Army after graduating high school. He became involved with the American Indian Movement and has participated in the ‘Sacred Runs’ which they have organized. These began with “The Longest Walk” in 1978, when Native Americans and their supporters walked from Alcatraz in San Francisco, California, to New York City to protest the continuing disenfranchisement of Native Americans. As discussed further below, several SEIs first met the Nipponzan Myohoji monks and Ammon on one of the Sacred Runs. (D. Laffan, p.c.; J. Toren, p.c.) Ammon participated in these endurance events, but not in political protests. In his everyday life, Ammon became a plumber and handyman, and he eventually moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (A. Russell, p.c.)

Ammon, doubtless among many others, is conflicted about modern Indian culture and the commodification of Native American spirituality. (A. Russell, p.c.) These experiences are an epistemic burden even when they are well-intentioned. (DeLoria, 1973) In these circumstances, he is stereotyped and in a way dehumanized in an echo of the sociocultural othering of Indians by Europeans for five centuries. (Fuller, 2001; Gill, 1987) At the GSMPP, he finds a community of people who accept and appreciate him without essentializing him, which is a vital experience for him.

Additionally, Ammon feels isolation from Indian culture because of some who play off of such stereotypes. At various times, Ammon has encountered Native Americans who claim to be shamans or in other positions of power, and who then use Native American rituals and traditions as a business opportunity for whites who want to experience Native American spiritual practices. Jon Blickenstaff, an SEI and regular at the GSMPP and a close friend of Ammon's, described such a story that Ammon had recounted to him:

[There was] this guy that people were paying to come and do sweats [sweat lodge ceremonies]. It was out in Arizona and people paid a bunch of money and then some people got sick and some people died. That kind of stuff to me is not spiritual practice... Healthy skepticism is good. If something that happens on a really spiritual, mystical basis isn't authentic-- if somebody want something to happen so badly that they make it happen, and they make it up... That appearance as this deeply spiritual thing isn't nearly as spiritual as getting up and having breakfast out on the deck of the temple and then going and working all day. (p.c.)

Here Jon alludes to several points about spirituality and what defines it, for him and for Ammon. Jon identifies authenticity as an important attribute, although in practice what is perceived as

“authentic” may vary between people. Jon’s definition of authenticity is partly based on his relationship with Ammon, which has provided one of the inroads into a marginalized culture that SEIs value. Jon’s perspective on his spirituality has been influenced by Ammon’s stories of inauthentic Native American spirituality—not just its appropriation by non-Native Americans, but its abuse by other Indians for prestige and/or profit. Ammon’s resulting feelings can perhaps be summed up in one anecdote. One evening at the GSMPP while several others were discussing spiritual practices and the monks were preparing for prayer, Ammon stood slightly apart from the others. A first-time visitor to the GSMPP, who was also part American Indian, went to stand next to him and asked, “Do you practice any religion?” Ammon replied, “I try not to.”

Ammon also has faced discrimination his entire life, from the poverty of his life in the Southwest to daily racism at his job. He expressed this in a group conversation at the GSMPP with myself, Jon, and Ralph, who is a former pastor:

Ammon: I mean, my reality... I live in the North. When somebody says a racial slur against me, I worry about something [happening]. In the morning I think, what might happen today?

Ralph: The church I served in Dandridge for twenty years is African-American, and we would have conversations sometimes about race. I remember one of the elders of my church saying to me, “I know I’m black the minute my feet hit the floor in the morning.” It was like, whatever kinds of oppression I might run into or disdain I might get from the community because I’m a progressive, it comes and goes.

Ammon: Sometimes I handle it really well. Sometimes it’s just like...

Ralph: Well, that’s another way of handling it well, I think. It probably should bother you.

Ammon: Yeah. I mean I don't try to ignore it. I try to think about it. Sometimes I even think, "Am I causing this?" You know... am I...?

Ralph: The internalization of racism is a huge issue, because it's very difficult not to do that. There are some things that are not about you, though. That ugliness is coming from somebody else, man. And from a not-good place in them. (p.c.)

For Ammon, Jon, Ralph, and other friends at the GSMPP are people with whom he can share his experiences and emotions knowing that they are aware of and firmly allied with Native Americans' struggle for equal rights. (Fig. 28) They also acknowledge, as Ralph did in the conversation above, that as whites they are privileged and any discrimination or negativity they experience is minor in contrast to what other races and ethnicities experience. The SEIs at the GSMPP are also people who do not question why someone would participate in lengthy events like the Sacred Runs—such combinations of pilgrimage and protest are familiar to SEIs. They also provide very real support: Ammon was badly injured at work in 2015, tearing his shoulder to the point of immobilizing his arm. Jon and his partner Angie invited Ammon to stay at their home in Ohio until he had recuperated. (J. Blickenstaff, p.c.)

In contrast to Ammon, who has struggled financially and faces negativity from others through no choice of his own, some SEIs choose to live without financial security and in ways that draw surprise, derision, or bafflement from non-SEIs. Red Moon Song, who is around age 70, has lived an eventful life, including many years of hitchhiking around the United States, living in intentional communities, and often holding down part-time or seasonal jobs only as long as needed to make ends meet. She currently lives in a mobile home without electricity or running water and does not own a phone. She identifies with a variety of spiritual themes, but most visibly with feminist nature-centric spirituality. She chose and changed her name several

decades ago and only wears red, black, and silver, which she explains as reflections of her energy and affinity with the moon. Red Moon Song's strong personality, breadth of knowledge on environmentalism and holistic health, and willingness to speak bluntly on any topic make her sometimes intimidating and sometimes wise and endearing. Regarding SEIs' rejection of mainstream American culture, Red Moon Song embodies not so much a rejection of conformity, but rather a complete diffidence towards it. This is both a product and a cause of her unconventional life.

Her nonconformity and independence, however, have caused difficulties in her personal life. She had a daughter, whose paternity and upbringing she has never discussed. When her daughter reached adulthood, their relationship became strained. The extent of this distancing became most apparent at the 2017 Ancestors Ceremony. Red Moon Song's daughter had struggled with debilitating chronic pain for almost a decade. Doctors could not agree on a diagnosis and kept prescribing narcotics which left her still in pain and also had negative side effects. They said they would probably not be able to find a better treatment. The daughter decided to commit suicide and asked her husband to help her do so. She videotaped herself explaining her choice. Her husband drowned her soon after. In court, Red Moon Song testified on behalf of the husband, citing his support for her daughter and the extremity of her daughter's suffering. The judge noted the unprecedented case of a mother testifying on behalf of the man who was, legally, her daughter's murderer. (Red Moon Song, p.c.)

However, for Red Moon Song, there were no feelings of blame toward him or of anger toward him or her daughter. Emotionally and spiritually, she saw this as her daughter's right. At the GSMPP, this resonated with many of the SEIs who were open-minded to alternatives to conventional medicine and who rejected the Christian-based sensibility of suicide as an

unforgivable sin—attitudes which Red Moon Song encountered from everyone elsewhere.

Spiritually, some SEIs validated that the daughter deserved to be free from suffering which had no end, and that in this case it would have been uncompassionate and selfish for loved ones to pressure her with guilt or platitudes into continuing her life. The freedom of her spirit, to them, was more important than attachment to her earthly presence in this life. Other SEIs who perhaps found the story troubling merely acknowledged Red Moon Song's difficult experience but did not judge or reproach.

For Red Moon Song, the GSMPP was a place where she could recount this series of events with people who could empathize with her beliefs and feelings about it. It was also, she said, the only place she could think to place her daughter's ashes. To have that resting place for her remains was the only element of her story that expressed some closure. Her daughter's ashes were interred at the 2017 Ancestors Ceremony. There were two others whose ashes were being interred, and their loved ones gave moving speeches about their lives. Red Moon Song, when she spoke, did not sugar-coat or censor the facts of her daughter's death or her own feelings about it. She did not paint a romanticized picture of her daughter's suffering now being at an end, nor express grief at the absence of her daughter in her future. She instead stated that she really did not know her daughter, and that now she would never understand who her daughter was. Most of the audience at the ceremony were not regular visitors but rather were guests who knew the other two deceased individuals or locals who visited every year. Red Moon Song's matter-of-fact speech left them silent and uncomfortable. In contrast, the monks and the SEIs at the GSMPP who knew Red Moon Song were perhaps one of the only groups of people who would hear her story with acceptance and without judgment or platitudes.

An SEI with a more common story is Peter.²⁹ Peter began visiting the Pagoda in its early days and often brought his young son Jack. Around 2013, Peter and his wife had a contentious divorce, after which Peter began to suffer deep depression and eventually spent time in a psychiatric facility. After leaving the hospital, he was in the position of putting his life back together while maintaining his mental health. His son Jack was 18 at the time. Peter and Jack came to the GSMPP for the work parties, and Peter explained his life situation to me and others as we worked on rebar construction. Jack, for his part, was clearly concerned about his father and was often parental towards him. Jack too had been deeply affected by his relationship with the monks over the past ten years of his life. Soon after his 18th birthday, he got a tattoo of the daimoku, using a calligraphy painting by Utsumi as a template, that extended down his entire upper arm. The GSMPP provided a familiar place where Peter could feel useful and accepted, as well as spend quality time with Jack. In a time of ongoing transition and difficult emotions, Peter and Jack's space of safety, peace, and re-connection was the GSMPP.

A final example is Mike, whose relationship with the monks began incidentally. In the 1990s, Mike's mother met Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise at one of the protests at Oak Ridge and hosted them at her home during subsequent protests and peace walks that passed through the area. Her son Mike was a young child at the time, and is now in his mid-20's. When the monks began work on the GSMPP, he was a frequent volunteer. (D. Laffan, p.c.) Several years ago, he got married to Kyra, and they now have a five-year-old son and a one-year-old daughter. Kyra identifies as spiritual, although she is not directly involved in activism. Over the past two years, the couple has been trying to get their small organic farm running, but they have struggled to make ends meet and Mike has to work long hours at the farm. Kyra struggles to balance work

²⁹ Peter, Jack, Mike, and Kyra are pseudonyms.

and caring for their children. Due to the work on the farm, Mike has come less and less often to the Pagoda, whereas Kyra has begun visiting more, sometimes with her children, and occasionally as a mini-vacation away from her family. Volunteering at the Pagoda has become a stress-relieving and energizing activity for her. It is also a place where she can get confidential support and advice: the other participants share their relationship experiences without judgment, and Utsumi and Denise offer their compassion and thoughts based on having known Mike for most of his life.

Networks of Engaged Spirituality

Another participant who has been a consistent supporter of and visitor to the pagoda since its inception is Ralph Hutchison. Ralph was raised in a conservative Christian household in the rural South and was a pastor for many years, but he now identifies with a spirituality in which Buddhism plays a large part. His two daughters have grown up coming to the pagoda and are now both college students. They still volunteer at the GSMPP during their breaks. Ralph is head of an organization called the Oak Ridge Environmental Protection Alliance (OREPA), which presses for more oversight and eventual closure of the Y-12 complex. Ralph and others in the anti-nuclear movement protest the site regularly. (Fig. 29) Y-12 was created in 1941 by seizing land from local owners. (Hales, 1997) Even those who were employed there had highly compartmentalized jobs so that they did not know the final product they were creating: enriched uranium for the atomic bomb being designed in New Mexico. Since World War II, it has been a site of nuclear warhead manufacturing. (Hales, 1997; orepa.org) Y-12 has never been inspected by the EPA to the federally mandated standard, and significant radiation levels have been detected in the soil and water in the adjacent town of Oak Ridge. OREPA has assessed that if Y-12 ceased producing nuclear missiles immediately and instead switched to dismantling them,

SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

every person currently employed at the facility could keep their job for 30 more years and retire on their pension plan. (R. Hutchison, p.c.; orepa.org) Ralph's work in analyzing this issue is vital in an area where there are few living-wage jobs. Ralph met Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise through the protests against Y-12. They shared a concern with this particular issue and a commitment to nonviolence to address it. The monks' and Ralph's respective networks of activism have overlapped to create new allies and friends for both parties. Ralph has experience lobbying in Washington, writing both technical reports and opinion articles, and he has volunteered these skills to help Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi with publications and organization of events. (R. Hutchison, p.c.; orepa.org)

Two other adult participants who met Nipponzan Myohoji at a peace event are Jim Toren and Jon Blickenstaff. Jim and Jon work together on a nonprofit group called Footprints for Peace, which organizes its own version of peace walks, often lasting several weeks to over a month, with the purpose of educating the public about and bearing witness to various causes. These causes have included water conservation issues, opposition to mountaintop removal, Native American rights, and nuclear disarmament. They liaise with similar groups in Europe and Australia and several Footprints members have participated in walks in other countries. Via Jon and Jim, members of Footprints now participate in many of Nipponzan Myohoji's walks, and some SEIs involved with Nipponzan Myohoji began participating with Footprints. Jim has close ties with the American Indian Movement, which was the springboard for his activism and spirituality, as expressed in an interview I conducted with him:

Katie: I'm talking about how people's spiritual beliefs shape what they do with their lives.

Like, you don't go to church on Sundays... You bike thousands of miles a year.

Jim: *[laugh]* Right. Well, I got started in 1993 when I saw the documentary on Leonard Peltier, *Incident at Oglala*. Dennis Banks, the co-founder of the American Indian Movement, was also in that documentary and I found out that... his office was only a twenty-minute drive from my house. So after I saw the documentary, I was really ticked off that this guy didn't get this fair trial, and I went over and introduced myself to Dennis and started volunteering in the office. It just so happened that that year they were walking from San Francisco to Washington, DC, getting petitions signed for executive clemency for Peltier. And that was my first walk... You know, I'm just this guy from a little town in Ohio... I mean, I traveled a lot but it was always middle-class white... a little bit of privilege, traveling. And I went out and met native people, Ammon being one of them, who were still living way below the poverty line. The social issues that I thought existed in the sixties and seventies actually still existed in the nineties... It was like I was fueled by knowledge of the difference between the real world and what is taught to us our whole lives, as we're growing up through the public school system. That there was all this social justice that needed to be worked on... I also met Nipponzan Myohoji on that event, too, because they were walking as well. (p.c.)

Jim's nascent spirituality was nurtured by this involvement in the American Indian Movement. He initially joined for social justice reasons, and working closely with Native Americans and their allies also introduced him to a new depth of knowledge about sociopolitical issues. As with Jon's case, Jim's experiences allowed him to bond with a minority that suffered in ways he had not been aware of. This merged into spiritual experience as he became more involved in the Sacred Runs:

After the walk [from San Francisco to DC] was over with, I participated in a bunch of sacred runs all over the world, in Ireland and Scotland and France and then Australia and Tasmania. Before [1997] Dennis asked me to be a little bit more of an active participant, not just running and walking but to organize support groups that the American Indian Movement would recognize, and the support groups were for native and non-native people that wanted to be supportive of AIM. (p.c.)

In 1997, Jim organized another run for Leonard Peltier's cause independent of the AIM. The success of this led him to start Footprints as its own nonprofit organization. Footprints' Sacred Runs have a similar spiritual resonance as the Peace Pagoda work parties discussed below: The physical effort and endurance required connects people to a certain sense of transmodern spirituality by engaging both mind and body with a social cause and a spiritual ethos. The monks and the SEIs who know them have participated in the Sacred Runs as walkers. The combination of walking, running, and biking in the Sacred Runs has its own pragmatic and spiritual significance. As Jim explains:

The way we do the runs we learned directly from the Sacred Runs, which is what they call a crow-hop, which is like a relay. That's how you can cover so many miles in a day. If we had fifteen miles to cover, then me, Jon, and Ammon would take five miles apiece. We'd have one vehicle with all of us in it, and we'd drop a runner off, drive five miles, let the next runner get out, next one finishes, crow-hops past this runner, this runner would catch up with the next runner... then get out [of the vehicle] and finish the miles up through the day. The thing we've got [planned] right now, we're calling it "Moving Towards a Nuclear-Free Future." The cyclists will do the whole distance [every day], the walkers will walk the first thirteen miles, the runners will come out to where the walkers

will stop and they will relay to the overnight. So everything is covered by foot. We'll do about fifty miles a day. (p.c.)

The use of vehicles (both cars and bicycles) is, of course, a modern element to the “runs.” It allows individuals of different fitness levels and preferences to participate fully and feel they are an integral part of the event. Thus, the runs, like the Peace Pagoda, utilize modern inventions as part of addressing modern problems. But they also invoke spiritually-grounded ideas of protecting nature, promoting peace, and nurturing community, as well as drawing from ancient practices. (Fig. 30) Neither Japanese nor Native American traditional cultures saw “religion” as a discrete category apart from other societal or personal norms. (Josephson, 2011; Yang, 2008) Neither, in fact, were Native American cultures averse to new technologies or cultural change. Horses introduced by the Spanish in the 16th century changed the configuration of life for Western and Plains Indian nations, and activities commonly labeled spiritual/religious by scholars also adapted, such as the Ghost Dance cult, in response to European presence and oppression in America. (Fuller, 2001; Gill, 1987) Thus, the use of vehicles in the Sacred Run and the development of the runs as “sacred” blend both spiritual and social causes through modern and nonmodern approaches. Jon explains:

Sometimes in parts of my life, I am more consciously being spiritual about it. I think anytime I'm doing some kind of endurance event, like if I'm either on a Footprints event or another event where we are walking or running or biking all day, on some level, and sometimes more than others, that feels like a very spiritual practice for me. (p.c.)

Individuals at the GSMPP also discuss ways of approaching social justice issues and effectively communicating them through their activities. Liaising informally with the monks, Ralph, Jean, and other SEIs who are strongly grounded in Gandhian nonviolence help Footprints and other

activists hone their approach to engaged spirituality, bringing in the issue of efficacy and Appalachian cultures as well as the personal spiritual elements. Jim explains,

Footprints does a walk every year against mountaintop removal mining. We've learned over the years that we shouldn't say that we're against something. We should put more of a positive feel to it, so the walk is called 'Walking for a Sustainable Future: People, Jobs, and the Environment'... That way we're not saying that we badmouth mountaintop removal mining without some kind of solution to the problem, because if you're putting five thousand people out of work because we don't want mountaintop removal anymore, they have to have something else to do. So if you go from the idea that we're creating a sustainable future, it means we're creating a sustainable economy, it means we're creating a sustainable neighborhood... If we create that first, then the damage that we're doing, we can stop... So, that's what's great about doing the walks. When we do that walk from Oak Ridge to New York, we'll have twenty-six communities that we'll stop at from here to New York, and every night not only will we be able to talk about [mountaintop removal], but the people that are in those communities that might be struggling because of water or because of their brothers in prison that didn't get a fair trial, or all these different issues, they can come to us and say "This is what we're struggling with here" and then we carry that story to the next community. And so it makes our world smaller because we can take those stories with us. (p.c.)

Here, as with the peace walks, the SEIs on the runs are witnesses to or bearers of a message. They are not just on a personal pilgrimage, but rather they are also forging community and solidarity among those they meet who share similar causes. Jim mentions several different issues: unsafe public water and unjust imprisonment, along with the environmental issues around

mining. These causes, as discussed previously, reveal the overlapping areas of SEIs' social justice concerns, which are closely linked and reflect a broader concern with the United States' neo-liberalism, capitalism, and forms of marginalization. (Fuller, 2001; Stanczak, 2006)

This network of engaged spirituality is tightly-knit enough to sometimes result in difficult choices for the SEIs involved. Aside from the privilege of time and money for travel, there are different protest events taking place at the same time, even in just the Eastern United States.

When I asked Jon about his spirituality and the events he chooses to attend, he replied:

That's something I struggle with. I'm not going to **not** do a Footprints event and do the work party [at the GSMPP] instead. But, should I walk to the SOA [School of the Americas protest] or should I do the work camp? Would it be better to do this symbolic thing that really has no effect on the world, other than maybe inspiring somebody somewhere to have some spiritual effect in the world, or should I go actually build this thing, doing concrete work? That is something that I think about, because I can't do it all. I can't be away from home that much. And so what often gets sacrificed is not going to the work camp. I haven't gone nearly as much as I would like to. (p.c.)

Jon also categorizes two events in a particular way. In Chapter 4, I discussed the conflicting opinions on the spirituality and efficacy of crossing the line: What is its intrinsic value for individuals versus its effectiveness as a tool of protest? What factors influence these two variables and shape SEIs' opinions on it? About 90% of the SEIs I encountered knew about the SOA annual protest. Some feel the event, now in its 27th year, is essential to show that the violence against Latin American peoples and the continued work of the School has not been forgotten. Others, like Jon, categorize it as "symbolic," perhaps because it has not led to policy changes or recognition of the United States' role in the Latin American conflicts. At the 2014

SOA protest, Sister Denise and Brother Utsumi were asked to speak to the attendees from the main stage in front of the School's gates. (Fig. 31) During her remarks, Denise quoted Gandhi that "Slow change is often lasting change." However, she also acknowledged privately that she felt the SOA organizers might do best to re-focus their energies on the Mexican border or the United States prisons that were opened to hold undocumented immigrants without charge or trial. Other SEIs present agreed that they had mixed feelings on the SOA protest. Jon's statement above was the firmest: that the SOA "really has no effect on the world." He puts this in contrast to building the Peace Pagoda, where he can "actually build this thing, doing concrete work." He describes the SOA as "maybe inspiring somebody somewhere to have some spiritual effect in the world." However, some SEIs express a similar view of the Peace Pagoda. Its purpose is to draw attention to injustices and to promote peace, but as an entity, it does not accomplish social change by being built. This is not a criticism per se, but rather the place of the GSMPP in some SEIs' lives. It is less important to them for the Pagoda to have a direct effect on society than it is for them to participate in its creation as an expression of their beliefs and a place that supports their spirituality. In either case, the Peace Pagoda is a physical structure that is designed to last for centuries, and having a hand in its construction is a gratifying exercise for many SEIs, many of whose activities may not yield any tangible or visible effect on the world in their lifetimes.

Transmodern Spirituality

While transmodernity in spirituality is a pervasive theme in SEIs' actions and beliefs, the particular expressions of it at the GSMPP are worth discussing. The GSMPP's location, rituals, participants, and activities all factor into different transmodern spiritual features. Here, I categorize these features as: pantheism, interbeing, and rejection of mainstream culture.

Pantheism, the belief in an immanent higher power or sacredness, in this analysis includes the

rejection of organized religion and particularly of an anthropomorphic god. Interbeing, the Buddhist concept of the interdependence of all life, includes ways in which SEIs see their spirituality as integral to every part of life. Rejection of mainstream culture includes both a self-image of oneself as outside of American Protestant culture and also the conscious choices that SEIs make in how they structure their lives and present themselves.

In contrast with the simplified, commercialized utilization of premodernity, SEIs usually seek out a more realistic and nuanced understanding of premodern peoples and ways of life. SEIs often pursue practices, physical spaces, and communities that blend the positive elements of premodernity with the advantages of modernity. (Fuller, 2001; Luyckx, 1999) This is based in a particular understanding of the premodern, which has positive and negative traits, in the worldview of those who espouse transmodernity. The negative elements include hierarchy and rigid authority, including intermediaries between higher powers and common people. Premodernity generally indicates a more stable and cohesive set of values and understanding of the world. However, this also lends itself to rigid adherence to tradition and rejection of new ideas and technology. (Dussel, 2012; Luyckx, 1999)

The positive elements of premodernity that SEIs espouse include: the “enchantment” of the world, a view in which the sacred is pervasive; a sense of community interdependence and mutual accountability; a more sustainable relationship with nature; awareness both of one’s ancestors and of future generations; and connection with the fruits of one’s labor. (Fuller, 2001; Luyckx, 1999; Wuthnow, 1998) Of course, the definition of what is “positive” or better in life is derived from individuals’ needs and society’s values. Some SEIs wish to distance themselves in as many ways as possible from mainstream life, including what we could term technical or technological modernity. This includes both physical lifestyle and community. They may do so

through options like living in intentional communities (“communes”) or going off-grid, as Jean Chapman and Red Moon Song have done. Jean describes her move to her “tiny house” in Western North Carolina:

I lived with my mother [for a year] until she died in May of 2002. Then I had to go back to work part-time, but [I wanted] to do something different. So I was an intern on this organic farm for a year... Living on the farm, we lived in little tiny spaces off the grid... It became something that wasn't mysterious and undoable. So the fast-forward there is I bought two acres of land from the farmer I was working with and built the tiny house [a twelve-by-twelve-foot off-grid cabin]. I moved in in the fall of 2002 and I've been there ever since. So that became an enormous part of the spiritual journey.³⁰ (p.c.)

SEIs whose transmodern spiritual beliefs impel them to change their basic means of living may grow their own food and raise their own animals, build homes from materials like earth berms or straw bales, and avoid traditional employment. Some commit to buying local foods, using as little fossil fuels as possible (e.g., through biking or public transit instead of driving), and otherwise making their lives more ‘green’. The extent to which SEIs engage in premodern ways of life can depend on their life circumstances. Individuals such as Jean and Red Moon Song are able to live off-grid because they have no dependents and are largely retired. Others such as Jon and Ralph are middle-class and able to make moderate lifestyle choices and changes in accordance with their values. Others such as Jim, who is on disability, and Ammon, who is working-class, do not have the means to invest in greener homes, buy local foods, or take extra time to bike or bus to work. Jim explains why the GSMPP is important to him in this context:

³⁰ Jean’s life and the cabin are the subject of the book *Twelve by Twelve* (2010) by writer William Powers (San Francisco, CA: New World Library), although Jean insists Powers’ glowing depiction of her is far too complimentary.

That's really how, for me, coming here and building the Peace Pagoda is part of being a good human being. For me, a lot of the issues are the difference between right and wrong. I think as human beings we all have the ability to do that, but I think we also get stuck in these funks where we struggle put food on our family's tables... That's part of the trap that we get ourselves in. That trap is what keeps us complacent because we are afraid to think about anything else because if we think about anything else then we have to do something else. (p.c.)

Paradoxically, being less focused on money and material success often requires that one already have been successful and saved money. For those who grew up in poverty, such as Ammon and several of the locals who participate at the GSMPP, there may be no attraction to a lifestyle that renounces material security.

Another recurrent idea I observed among SEIs at the GSMPP was a belief in a holistic, immanent sacredness in the world. I describe this as pantheism, defined as the belief that a higher power or universal force is present throughout the world in all living things. This divine power or eternal sacred force is indivisible from matter, and therefore all living creatures and the environment should be treated with respect, as their essence is the same as that of humans. (Levine, 2002) The Abrahamic religions see spirit and matter—in other words, the monotheistic God and that God's creation—as separate entities. God or the sacred is not omnipresent in the world, and animals and the environment do not have a “soul” or sacred nature. (Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, n.d.; Ehrman, 2015) Thus, a spiritual belief in pantheism, or the sanctity of all life, does not fit doctrinally into the Abrahamic religions. However, it meshes with the Engaged Buddhist concept of interbeing and the view of the connection between all forms of life

and the need to respect all people, animals, and the Earth. (King, 2005) Jim Toren discusses experiences of discovering this spirituality within himself. Jim recounts:

My first experience with a group of native people was out in Oklahoma. I never really considered myself a religious person, you know? I never could connect with a church type organization. The first time I'm out in Oklahoma, I'm put in a large group of native people and they say, "Do you want to participate in a sweat lodge?" And I had no idea what I was getting myself into or anything, but Dennis was really nice... He took the time to explain the ceremony and what each part of the ceremony meant, and when I came out of the sweat lodge that night I knew right then and there that this is how I wanted to live my life. (p.c.)

Jon Blickenstaff directly connects his beliefs that reflect interbeing and pantheism to his lack of affinity with an anthropomorphic or Abrahamic God:

I really struggle with the concept of God... Thinking of a Supreme Being is helpful when you think about yourself as a spiritual being, and I don't have that, so I just try to figure out what is spiritual about life and reality and such if there is no God. I grew up going to church in the sixties and... pacifism is such a dominant part of the Church of the Brethren. So probably the way I'm influenced now in my spiritual practice by my religious upbringing is kind of an openness and a tolerance for seeing other things as equally valid as my own... What appealed to me about all of this way more was the political part rather than the spiritual part. I never really bought into any of the spiritual side of it. Like we'd be sitting there praying and I'm thinking about other stuff and not really taking any of it seriously... I didn't absorb personally or deeply the teachings of the church. [Working at the Pagoda] to me feels like a much stronger spiritual thing than

somebody going through some kind of speaking in tongues or something that they're just making it up to impress other people. And I don't want to rule that kind of thing out, that that is not authentic. Sometimes I think it is. But how is it that it happens to be that you were raised in a Christian environment and oh, that pattern that you see happens to be Jesus's face? "Oh, what a miracle!" (p.c.)

Jim describes his guiding belief, but notably contrasts it with the largely conservative-Christian-centered issue of abortion: "The Sacred Run's slogan is 'All life is sacred'... Some people try to turn it into an abortion issue slogan, but that's not what it means. It means that all life is sacred, everything is sacred. The rain is sacred, the trees are sacred, the animals, everything. That's what keeps me motivated."

The meaning of "spiritual" arises when one discusses pantheism or interbeing. For Buddhists, the reality of interbeing is not in question, so for one to identify that sensibility as spiritual is almost redundant. Jean, for example, identifies all of her life as spiritual. She also points out the modern individualist paradigm of each person being "special" or unique, and the alternative offered by Buddhism of letting go of this egoistic quest:

I just love my life now, and I love the fact that it's all a spiritual journey, every bit of it... and I am one of those people who say "I'm spiritual-but-not-religious."³¹ It's just all spiritual, every bit of it. Every butterfly wing, every buzzing bee, every tree, every microbe, science. I love science. It's all amazing. I love the [Japanese] Buddhists, I love the teachings, I love learning tools... to see clearly with compassion, without judgment, beginning with yourself... There's so much suffering caused by wanting to be special and wanting people to like you and so on. (p.c.)

³¹ Note: I had not used this phrase in conversation with Jean.

I asked Sister Denise whether she sees trends in who comes to the GSMPP and the role of spirituality in it. She replied:

I would say probably a lot of the people who do come here are not affiliated with any particular institutional church or program or something. So I think that there are a lot of people that are seeking something, but the institutions feel not comfortable, or they failed them. I think that a lot of people-- especially lately, we're getting the sort of explosion of transgender and non-binary and people like that [visiting the GSMPP] who have been really ostracized by institutions and stuff, and can actually be 'allergic' to religion. Some people don't even want to have *our* religion because... they were so badly hurt by institutions. I can really sympathize with that. But I hear that a lot. I'm not quite sure what to make of it, honestly. I don't know what that means, "I'm a spiritual person." I just feel like naturally we're all... I guess it means that there's some understanding that there's something more than just the material world. Maybe that's what it means. And that's true, I agree with that. (p.c.)

While Jean identifies with the phrase spiritual-but-not-religious, Denise is curious to discern what being “spiritual” means to people. She points out that many GSMPP visitors have rejected, or been rejected by, traditional religious institutions. But outside of that, her experiences with people give her a different insight than many SEIs. To her, most people are seeking spirituality, and certainly this is prominent among those she meets. But when individuals such as Jean identify everything in their lives as spiritual, it draws into question what a non-spiritual life would look like. For Jon, it is a moral or ethical conscience that derives from his sense of connection to the universe:

I feel a part of everything, and in that sense I feel like a spiritual person and that anything that happens to anything else or anybody else, I mean, any part of reality, I'm a part of that same reality, so whatever happens to it happens to me too. I am connected through my soul to the universe. That awareness is sort of in there all the time, kind of making it so that... I'll ride my bike instead of drive a car because I don't want to destroy the planet by using too much carbon. That's the soul connected to the universe part that's telling me "Don't do that, that's not a good thing." Every time, a million times a day, you make these little choices between, do you treat somebody kindly or do you treat somebody harshly? Are you making the world a better place or are you making it a worse place? (p.c.)

For SEIs, the desire to have a non-compartmentalized life, to experience or express their spirituality in all parts of their lives, is part of the reason why they feel apart from mainstream American culture. Denise describes this as an important part of her life: "I don't really see any separation, [like] when I go to Y-12, 'This is a political act,' or something like that. I feel that's just the same as building the Peace Pagoda to me. I think that's what I'm most grateful for, just to have one life where everything is sort of connected and not compartmentalized." Jon feels he even physically separates himself from mainstream culture, although several of his attributes (a tattoo, long hair, vegetarianism) have become more mainstream since he adopted them.

I feel pretty separate, like partly why I got a tattoo... I mean my appearance isn't that different— I used to have long hair, back when that meant something. But I kind of try to make it so that I am pretty obviously "not one of all y'all" kind of thing. That's partly why I'm a vegetarian, to differentiate myself from mainstream American culture. I'm pretty critical of it and don't want to be a part of that kind of consumption-based, accumulation-based competition kind of thing that we seem to be built on. On the other hand, our

culture is so big and complex, I do identify with the subculture that... I identify with. [laugh] The little subculture, kind of counterculture, that other people reject mainstream America in the same way that I do. I feel real connected to that subculture. I try to maintain that connection even when I'm at home and kind of immersed in the dominant culture. It's important to try to stay connected to the culture I do identify with as much as possible and stay in that frame of mind as kind of a survival technique and just a way to stay strong and keep doing stuff, because it's a great culture to be a part of and people are really supportive. (p.c.)

Jim identifies a different element of society, substance use, as mainstream and part of the system of oppression found in the United States:

All of our events are drug- and alcohol- free. And that is in support of indigenous people worldwide, because as we all know, the government uses drugs and alcohol as a way to oppress people. So in support of the people we consider to be family, that are indigenous, we continue that no-drugs, no-alcohol policy. (p.c.)

Another salient element of pantheism and SEIs' transmodern spirituality is a connection with nature. Visiting the GSMPP in some ways is like a vacation in a national park, sharing the modern American sentiment of enjoying nature and a 'change of pace' without sacrificing familiar conveniences. The porch of the main temple has a stunning view of the Smoky Mountains, there is an internet connection, the rooms are comfortable, and there is indoor plumbing.

In this sense, participating at the pagoda keeps the positive aspects of material and physical modernity, the absence of which might deter some participants. However, nature is also often inconvenient and unpleasant. There are mosquitoes, ticks, poisonous spiders, venomous

snakes, and copious poison ivy in the area. Bears occasionally visit at night. In the warmer months, “peeper” frogs, cicadas, the bullfrogs in the koi pond, and whippoorwills can easily keep even a heavy sleeper awake. Generally, SEIs who come to the GSMPP are not bothered by these expressions of nature, a phenomenon I observed multiple times when participants stoically suffered insect bites, poison ivy, sunburn, or snake encounters. Some incidents, such as when Ammon got a severe widespread case of poison ivy, or when one young man found a copperhead snake in a bag of rope, are recounted like folkloric narratives about the GSMPP’s history. This tendency corresponds to the appreciation that SEIs express about the pervasiveness of the natural world at the GSMPP. (Fig. 32) Being immersed in nature is, for many SEIs, either a spiritual experience in and of itself, or a catalyst for it. Robert Wuthnow (1978) in a survey of 1,000 people³² found that 88% reported having “peak experiences,” instances that are intensely transcendental or spiritual, and among these, 80% reported having peak experiences in nature. (pp. 100-101) The SEIs with whom I interacted showed a similar strong positive correlation between nature and spirituality.

Generally, SEIs place the ethics they abide by, the traits they aspire to, the causes they support, and the spiritual experiences they value in contrast to mainstream United States culture, and by extension, to Western modern culture. In an interview, Sister Denise discussed her view of this contrast from the perspective of Buddhism:

I think Western culture is very this-or-that, either-or, black or white, that kind of binary thinking. I think that it's not been healthy for the world, because then there's good and there's bad, and “we” [the West] are good, so wherever we go into, we must be doing a good thing. So, a lack of critical self-understanding, and capitalism and the way we've

³² Randomly selected within the San Francisco Bay area.

oppressed so much of the world... Buddhism, when it moved from culture to culture, it never conquered. It assimilated, and that's why we have so many flavors of Buddhism. There's a cohesion and yet a difference among all of them... it blends in without losing its central aspect. It's just a very good way of growing. And the West is very self-centered, very individualistic, all of these things, so I think it's probably Asian culture. Also Asian culture, as expressed through Buddhism, has a lot to offer. I feel that if we don't overcome this horrible tendency to dominate and conquer and for violence that we will destroy ourselves and our planet. That's why I feel that Buddhism offers another answer. And it's not... anti-Christian; I'm very pro-Jesus. I think the message of the Gospels is extraordinarily good. But I think as an institution, too much of the Christian church has been co-opted into this Western model, and that's a problem that's killing us. So I do think that to plant something like this, of a seed, of an idea of a Peace Pagoda, and then also the building of a Peace Pagoda itself, it gives us some small place to start to work on that transformation. That's what I understand. That's what my hope is, anyway.

(p.c.)

While few SEIs at the GSMPP identify as Buddhists, as mentioned previously, many are interested in Eastern religion/spirituality and culture, and they view non-Western cultures as offering an alternative to the problems of modern Western society. These alternatives may simply bring awareness to others that there are other ways of thinking and living than those most commonly seen in the United States. Alternative practices, beliefs, and approaches to life may for SEIs become preferable to mainstream culture, giving them new perspectives and a sense of belonging in a different, if small, subculture, as Jon describes the SEI community. Many feel a spiritual resonance in Nipponzan Myohoji's practices of building pagodas and walking,

drumming, and chanting. Some, like Jean in prior quotes, particularly try to incorporate Buddhist spirituality into their lives. Jon expresses this desire:

There is something about being in a consciously created spiritual space like the temple at the Peace Pagoda and participating in somebody else's spiritual practice-- there is something that feels spiritual about that to me... For me, definitely there's a big separation between religious practice and spiritual practice. What I would like to do is... more of a Buddhist spiritual practice [that] is constantly happening every day, every moment of my life. (p.c.)

Jon specifically describes his experiences with Nipponzan Myohoji as spiritual practice, that is to say, one which is personal and pervasive in his life, as opposed to religious practice. SEIs frequently remarked that part of their appreciation of Nipponzan Myohoji's rituals is the experience itself, and part of it is the contrast with mainstream organized religion. This is exemplified in a conversation with Ammon, Jon, Ralph, and myself at the GSMPP, in which Ralph describes enjoying the informality of the daily prayers, particularly in contrast with his upbringing in a strict Protestant family:

Ralph: Did I tell you yesterday about drumming? I was doing the big drum and...

[*pantomimes losing rhythm of drumming*] I stopped. It may have just been for a second, I don't know, but I lost the rhythm. I was drumming and all of a sudden I wasn't, and I looked over and Utsumi's looking at me, and he just goes 'bump bum' [*mimes hitting the drum*] and restarts the rhythm. I started in again... I'm doing this and we've been working all day. It was warm... next thing I knew he was looking at me and I was... Where was I?

Jon: "Anytime you're ready, Ralph!"

Ralph: Right! Well, it's not just the rhythm. It breaks up the Na Mu Myo's in there! Not just Ren Ge Kyo. Na mu-- Na mu-- “Hey, Ralph! Na mu...?”

Katie: No, we're doing something different. We're gonna do a little 'Na na na na'... [*tune of “Hey Jude”*]

Ralph: Oh, I teased him about that. I said, “If I'm on the big drum, shouldn't I be able to jazz it up a little bit?”

Ammon: Yeah, yeah, it should be up to you!

Ralph: That's what I thought. Just because he's the old guy in the room, everybody defers to him.

Jon: What's stopping you? You got the sticks in your hands!

Ralph: This is not the kind of civil disobedience I need to be encouraged to participate in, guys! I remember in the early years [visiting the GSMPP], thinking about the formality of the session, of the service, because our church you know was very formal... Utsumi would be drumming and then he would get up and go and get his camera and take a couple pictures! Then go back [to the drum]. And I thought “Well, this is interesting!” And I liked that... Your worship shouldn't be separate from life! It should be incorporated into the life that's revolving around you.

Jon: That's one of the things that I find so refreshing about Nipponzan. There's the appearance of this formality... and at the same time, there's informality. And there's no effort to recruit people, to try to get you to be anything.

Ralph: You just know there's been no effort to recruit **you!** (p.c.)

Ralph identifies closely with Buddhism and frequently shares drumming with Utsumi during the work parties when all the workers, even monks, are tired. His sense of humor and teasing of

Utsumi are also characteristic of Nipponzan Myohoji: the impermanence of life and the deceptive nature of the ego invite a sense of humor and a dose of self-deprecation. Interbeing also means that, as Ralph points out, spirituality is omnipresent, so while respect for all life is paramount, at the same time there is no separate “sacred” or “holy” about which one could be blasphemous or sacrilegious—even by taking photos during prayers.

The Work Parties

The work parties have several distinct features from other events at the GSMPP. The SEIs who attend are present for longer periods of time and are often repeat participants, so there is a network of friendship among them. They also share several reasons why they enjoy attending the work parties. Transmodern spirituality aptly describes a good amount of the appeal. Engaged spirituality is also present; while not a direct protest, working on building the pagoda connects with Nipponzan Myohoji’s larger ethos and particular purpose in building the pagoda near Oak Ridge. The work is a physical expression of values and spiritual connection. It also bonds individuals in a way they variously describe with terms such as community, solidarity, or connection, which I discuss below under the aegis of *communitas*.

The work parties are held in May and October each year, each lasting about three weeks. Brother Utsumi plans what large projects are best completed during the events: setting up concrete forms, laying the rebar frames, and pouring concrete are best completed by a group. Participants come for whatever portion of the work party that they can, some for a day or two, some for a week or more. The work parties are self-selecting: participants who volunteer to do manual labor are those who are comfortable or confident doing so (with occasional exceptions). Those who cannot often help with cleaning, gardening, cooking, or other less physically demanding tasks. Most participants have no experience in the work that they do at the pagoda,

though repeat participants know how to use the tools involved in the work. Despite the frequent change-up in volunteers and other unpredictable factors such as weather, the goals for each work party are usually met.

While the work parties constitute a vacation or a retreat of sorts for SEIs, the events do not sound relaxing or enjoyable to some people. The guest rooms do not have air conditioning or permanent heating. Much of the food is vegetarian and Japanese or Indian. There are no pre-packaged, high-fat, or high-sugar foods, unless participants bring them. Guests are asked to conserve water, remove their shoes before going inside rooms, share bedrooms with other visitors, and follow other conventions that may be inconvenient or foreign to them. These, along with the element of physical labor and cooperative living, are transmodern elements that participants find tolerable or rewarding in some combination. While vegetarianism and international foods are relatively popular in the United States, Japanese and Indian food from restaurants is often quite different from that cooked by those in Japan and India. Utsumi and Denise both spent time in India and Japan, and much of the food reflects this, as well as the local Appalachian cuisine and the food grown in the GSMPP garden. Spicy chutney sent from a friend in India, Japanese style rice and fish, and local squash or okra might feature in the same dinner, along with Denise's homemade kombucha, craft beer or natural soda brought by a visitor, and apple moonshine distilled by a neighbor (which was once given in a glass maple syrup jar, which almost resulted in me making a very interesting batch of pancakes for one work party breakfast).

Communitas, as discussed in chapter 3, occurs in liminal or 'in-between' spaces, ones where the typical structure of society is disrupted. In liminal space-time, participants have the ability to critique societal structures and systems, to leave behind their usually daily roles, and to experiment with new or different ways of being. The pagoda occupies a liminal space insofar as

it exists between the modern and premodern worlds. (Alexander, 1991; Thomassen, 2014; Turner, 2012) In ascribing *communitas* to episodes at the GSMPP, I am drawing from participants' descriptions of their experiences and from my own experience as a participant-observer. I base this on participants' repeated use of words like 'connection,' 'joy,' 'community,' 'solidarity,' 'peacefulness,' and 'spiritual experience' to describe their work at the pagoda.

One instance of *communitas* occurred when several SEIs and I were helping to prepare the GSMPP for the Ancestors' Ceremony in July 2016. Four of us were in the Spirit Garden. One was Denny, from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, who was a member of a small religious group founded in the early 20th century by Meher Baba, a Zoroastrian Indian man believed by his followers to be an incarnation of God. The second was Callie, a twenty-year-old woman with dreadlocks and a nose ring who had just earned her certification as a welder and was trying to decide her next steps in life. The other two were Jean Chapman and myself. I had been given the task of filling in the newly-carved names on the Ancestors' stones with black paint. Two of the names were those of a well-known lifelong peace activist and GSMPP participant, Larry, who had died suddenly, and of a young Japanese man who had been a lay member of Nipponzan Myohoji in Japan and who had also died unexpectedly. The other two were of two elderly women who had died alone during the past year in a nursing home. Neither had any family to collect their remains, and after a series of phone calls, a local woman who had previously visited the GSMPP had asked Denise and Utsumi if the two women's ashes could be interred in the Spirit Garden.

Jean was tidying the paths and circle in the Spirit Garden so that visitors would not trip on stones or branches. Denny arrived with a thoughtful gift for me: one of the small Japanese dishes from the temple kitchen with a mosquito-repellent coil on it. I had been waving gnats

from my face, having entirely given up on deterring the mosquitoes from my arms and legs, and in the process splotted myself with the black paint. I gratefully lit the coil, and the citronella-scented smoke rose from it like incense. Callie arrived with a nylon sleeping bag and explained, “I’m going to sleep out here tonight!” Jean asked,

“Did anyone warn you about the bear?” Callie’s eyes lit up.

“Do you really think it might show up?” Jean, Denny, and I laughed. Unless Callie kept food in her hammock, the bear was unlikely to show her any interest. That morning, as was his habit, Utsumi had designated how we would all line up for breakfast. That day, it was by Chinese zodiac sign. Now, out in the spirit garden, I was reminded of this as Callie jumped and clung onto the trunk of the tree in front of her and shimmied several feet up it.

“Callie, you *are* a monkey!” I exclaimed.

“So is Denny!” she reminded me. Denny and Jean laughed. As Callie began looping her hammock rope around the tree trunk, still clinging to it with her legs, Jean began asking her about sleeping outside and whether her hammock was comfortable. I kept painting the names carved into the stone in front of me, more efficiently now that the insects were out of my face. Meanwhile, Callie was securing the other end of her hammock, and Jean was experimentally pressing on the nylon.

“Come on!” Callie exclaimed, and flung herself into the hammock. Without hesitation, Jean rolled into the hammock next to her, and they both began laughing. Through the stream of smoke from the mosquito coil, I watched Jean and Callie. Callie came across as effusive and open-hearted, but she had expressed to me her uncertainties about this challenging time in her life. Unwittingly, she had now found the person at the GSMPP who had been through the most similar experience to hers. Callie was quirky and open in a way that people did not always

understand, and she had trained for a career in an almost entirely male field. Jean, too, had this independent personality, and had been in similar circumstances when she began medical school in Alabama in 1960. They had met only that morning, were fifty years apart in age, and had few other obvious commonalities. But here in the garden, they spoke like old friends, sandwiched sideways in the hammock with their bare feet hanging over the side.

As Callie and Jean swung in the hammock, Denny sat down on a mossy log at the edge of the garden and took a wooden flute out of a green bag he carried over his shoulder. I knew already that he hand-carved his flutes and that each had a particular story. He began to play, and we fell silent as an ethereal, complex melody wove through the air of the garden. I thought of Larry, a close friend of Jean's and Denny's; of the two lonely women whose faces we had never seen; and of the young man whose family had so dearly loved Brother Utsumi and Sister Denise that they had sent part of his ashes halfway around the world to be buried, all underneath the stones where I sat and painted the memorial to their lives. Jean and Callie watched Denny's moving hands and swayed the hammock gently to the same rhythm. Jean would tell me later that those moments were "magical," and I agreed. Denny and Callie, for their part, both seemed to me to live partly in a world of magic—perhaps it was something about being born in the year of the monkey. I asked Denny later what song he had played, and his mustache twitched up so that I knew he was smiling. "The song that needed to be played," he replied.

Many moments of *communitas* come and go on top of the Peace Pagoda, but I will describe only one here. The work party in August of 2015 was centered around tying curved rebar forms that would hold the concrete of the first-level walkway in place. This involved a multi-step process of carrying and arranging curved pieces of rebar, ten to fifteen feet long, across three sawhorses, with square hoops of rebar spaced along them to form a long, three-

dimensional frame. Each square was tied with looped wire to each of the eight pieces of rebar that made a square inside it. (Fig. 34) Each frame had to be set in its position in the wooden concrete forms, which required six or seven people per frame because of their weight, length, and tendency not to fit in their designated space on the first attempt. By midday, we had formed several unofficial ‘teams’ of four people each, working simultaneously on three sets of rebar frames. On one side, Jim Toren, Jon Blickenstaff, and Ammon were working with Jack, Peter’s teenage son. On the other side, I was working with Peter, Jean, and Ralph. I had only met Peter the previous day. Jean had been asking me how my fibromyalgia (a chronic pain disease) affected my doing physical work, and I explained that activity was one of the only ways to manage the pain and prevent a relapse of severe depression. Peter’s gaze focused on me, and he asked if I had depression. When I answered yes, he slowly began talking about his divorce and his ensuing mental health crisis. He was concerned about its effect on his son Jack. Ralph then spoke up about his own divorce some years ago and its effect on himself and his then-teen daughters. Then, from the other side of the pagoda, Jon yelled,

“Ralph! You know this one?” He began singing the Pete Seeger song “Study War No More.” Ralph, who is known to be a good singer, replied,

“Who sings those old songs anymore?” Then he promptly began singing. Jean, laughing, joined in. Across the way, Jack was grinning as he worked next to the other three men. I looked at Peter and a smile crept over his face. Despite the increasing heat of the sun, we kept tying and moving the rebar at a good pace. At the same time, pieces of rebar had to be set vertically around the inside perimeter of the walkway. This meant navigating the scaffolding on the interior of the pagoda about twenty feet up with nothing below but concrete. Until that point, Utsumi had been doing this job with Mori. Mori was in his early twenties and was from a rural area of Japan.

Utsumi knew his family, and Mori had come to the GSMPP that summer to participate in a peace walk and stay at the GSMPP. Mori was a quick learner, but he spoke little English and was extremely deferential. He also had certain ways of using tools and doing tasks that no one, even Utsumi, could quite comprehend—but Mori would only do things one way. This had made it difficult for him to work with others. On this occasion, there was another new visitor, a graduate student named Ross. While most of us were cautious with new jobs and checked with Utsumi and others on whether we were doing things correctly, Ross jumped in with confidence that, despite never having worked on construction before, he could figure it out. His ability and enthusiasm were welcome, but his eagerness exceeded his willingness to take direction.

By the time we were singing that afternoon, Utsumi had needed to go down from the pagoda to check on other work, leaving the participants working above. As we began moving our frames and carrying more rebar, I saw Ralph lean toward the center of the pagoda and yell, “Looking good, guys!” It suddenly occurred to me that in addition to not hearing Utsumi instructing Mori in Japanese, I had not heard any talking from the center of the pagoda. I stepped over and saw that Ross and Mori had been installing and securing the center rebar pieces. This sometimes meant working in close quarters, passing the wire ties hand to hand, and sometimes working ten feet apart placing opposite ends of the metal rods. They barely spoke, but were performing the work seamlessly, indicating the next step to each other with gestures and nods. They were using their different abilities to their advantage: Ross was unusually tall and strong; Mori was small and very agile. Seeing the odd couple’s progress further drew us together in our work. When I asked Ross how he and Mori worked together despite the language barrier, he replied, “There’s a telos. We both knew what we were doing. The day’s goal is to get those

pieces put up. The big goal is, we don't like nukes." They were inseparable for the rest of the visit.

The previous two examples show the elusive nature of *communitas*. It can occur between only a few people or a dozen, in a small and quiet place or in an open and busy space, amid art, labor, laughter, tears—or all of the above. There is a high degree of active cooperation, openness to deep discussion, listening closely to one another, shared determination, and positivity in individuals' attitudes that indicate a shared and transcendent experience. These attitudes emerge, not during recreational, commonplace, or comfortable activities and spaces, but in the context of sustained manual labor.

The SEIs who visit the GSMPP work parties are, of course, those who find it fulfilling and non-stressful. However, neither enjoyment, friendship, labor, spiritual experience, nor any other factor guarantees *communitas*. Building the pagoda only involves providing a place and purpose in which it might occur. The SEIs there, I would argue, are more likely to experience *communitas* than many groups within mainstream culture would be. This is because SEIs value, and are thus attentive to, interpersonal understanding and putting a group cause or goal before personal preferences. These attributes are part of the sense of interbeing and solidarity within engaged spirituality. Liminality, manifesting as the absence of the roles or compartmentalization that SEIs find in daily life, makes this a space where SEIs can express or experience their spirituality in all their activities, as some discussed above. Acts not usually described as spiritual, such as manual labor, can be experienced as engaged spirituality. Jon specifically identifies the work parties as a spiritual experience:

The spiritual part of community building is the easiest to recognize... like at the Peace Pagoda when people are working all day. Just the whole thing, from morning prayers to

breakfast to going out and working all day to the afternoon bath to dinner and evening prayers. All of this, that little community that exists there doing all that together, has a real deep sense that feels really deeply spiritual to me. To me, that's the essence of spirituality, kind of living out the best of who you are in productive goodness. You know, being good to the world in a community definitely is... that's communing with everything that's spiritual about reality in the best way for me. (p.c.)

The physical labor of construction on the pagoda merits some attention, because it is unusually intense work for unskilled volunteers and a large-scale project. The pagoda is made of concrete and thus fireproof. It is also designed to withstand even a strong earthquake. Using these modern materials and engineering, it is built to last for centuries.

There is a certain enchantment even in this: No one has been injured, let alone fallen off, the pagoda. I myself was certain I would not be able to work on top of it because of a lifelong serious fear of heights and vertigo. However, on my first visit, I found myself following Utsumi to the top of the first level about ten feet up. Within a few minutes, I was working comfortably on the rebar. (Fig. 36) Each time I visited and a new level was in place, I thought, "This time it's too high. I don't know if I can do it." Yet, each time, I found my footing and my vertigo dissipated within minutes.

During the last work party that I attended, Utsumi told me to go be in charge of raising and lowering the hoist, which was now the fastest way to transport materials from the ground to the top of the pagoda. The hoist was at the end of a scaffold and plywood walkway about 30 feet in the air. I was able to continue meeting the challenges I faced in this work for several reasons: the GSMPP was a safe space in which I could calmly and logically debate my fears without being questioned or pressured by others; I observed and absorbed the comfort level of those

around me; and I decided to trust Utsumi's somewhat enchanted view of the pagoda's safety and his apparent assumption each time that I could do more. For persons such as myself—those who are younger, less experienced, or presumably female—to be treated as competent at physical labor and use of tools by the other participants was always refreshing and appreciated.

Other SEIs at the work parties experience at least part of what I did: the changing work as the pagoda grows. The commitment to manual labor here invokes transmodernity in terms of community labor. As they might in a small community, SEIs see the pagoda-building in one way as helping out friends. Like an Amish barn-raising, there is a sense that helping others helps oneself. (King, 2005; Marglin, 2003) While it is unlikely that any of the SEIs will need to call upon one another to help them build their own pagoda in future, the sense of reciprocity is more symbolic. The GSMPP gives SEIs all the spiritual fulfillments and inspiration described above. It contributes to building their own internal pagoda that connects the ground beneath their feet to their highest sense of spirituality. There is also a sense of contributing to something much bigger than oneself, investing some part of oneself in a manifestation of these larger spiritual beliefs. Catherine, who is also one of the trans individuals Denise mentioned above, says that she comes to the work parties for the “personal satisfaction knowing that I had a small part in building a structure for future generations to come together in Peace and Love. I do it for the future!” Part of Catherine's and other SEIs' hope for the future is greater tolerance, even “peace and love,” between those of different faiths and identities. Whereas the premodern and some modern expressions of religion are heteronormative and intolerant of LGBTQ individuals, transmodernity bespeaks a society in which diversity is accepted and even appreciated.

Conclusion

SEIs visit the GSMPP for the same reasons they travel to protests such as the Selma to Montgomery march and the Catholic Workers' protests: to support and be part of a cause that they find important; to be with others who have similar beliefs; and to affirm and expand their spirituality. The GSMPP holds additional value over many events, however, because it is a permanent location. It is a space where many things stay consistent between visits, but others continuously grow and change, particularly the work on the pagoda itself. The pagoda construction affords SEIs an opportunity to contribute tangibly to a physical representation of spirituality. The pagoda represents a search for peace in the world, but also participants' discovery of peace within themselves. As Denise pointed out, it is a place that is joyful because participants bring joy with them. SEIs' spirituality is based in their own experiences, not in the dictates of established religion. This means that when they go to protests, participate in activism, or take part in spiritual/religious events, they may look to others or to the space and activity around them for meaning, but they also look within at their beliefs, emotions, and responses. As Jon and others expressed, they see the work parties and other events as valuable contributions to the world they wish to help create. Their expression of engaged spirituality affects not only them, but also those around them: it can make a place or people feel spiritual, joyful, connected, and significant, because the SEIs already believe the world to be so. The GSMPP thus serves as a touchstone for SEIs among their various spiritually-engaged activities.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have examined events which explore the relationship between spiritually-engaged individuals and religious activist groups. These relationships reflect the role of organized religion in the beliefs and actions of spiritual-but-not-religious individuals who participate in social activism. In this dissertation, I have looked at how some SBNRs further include protest and activism in their spirituality and how this draws them into relationships with radical religious groups. These SEIs' rejection of organized religion correlates with a rejection of mainstream United States culture, which I suggest is partly a way of eschewing the Protestant legacy in the United States, particularly as it is imbricated with modernity.

Fieldwork Findings

My fieldwork shows that SEIs often hold what I have described as transmodern spirituality. Through transmodern spirituality, SEIs question the norms of American modernity. This questioning leads them to gravitate towards non-modern/pre-modern cultural features, to have a strong awareness of social injustice and minority oppression, and to seek a synthesis of modernity and non-modernity in how they live. SEIs' affinity with two religious groups, Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker, which both espouse voluntary poverty and drastic sociopolitical change, shows that being spiritual is, for them, not solely about rejecting all organized religion. Rather, it is about rejecting certain traditional and/or mainstream expressions of religion which they find complicit in the ills of the world today.

In working with Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker, I initially intended to examine how these two religious nonviolent groups engaged with the secular in their activism. Through my research, however, I found that a more complex and often less-addressed question arose: why did so many of those who joined these groups for events and protests identify

themselves as spiritual, but not religious, and what were the shared traits and motivations of these participants, who often seemed to have one foot in the secular and one in the religious? These individuals looked to both tradition and personal experience for their beliefs, valued both self and community as foundations for action, and drew from a variety of spiritual resources, all of which led them to social justice work and activism. This combination of factors pushed me to look deeper into the literature on SBNRs, the unchurched, and religious nones in the United States. But to complete the picture, I relied upon Stanczak's idea of engaged spirituality. Engaged spirituality brought in the element of activism. By applying it to the spiritual but not religious (as opposed to mainstream religion, which Stanczak focuses on), I was able to round out the picture of my participants. This also allowed me to address a recurring question: was spirituality correlated with social detachment? The literature on religious change and on SBNRs in America has repeatedly raised questions about the relationship between individualism and social involvement. (Bellah, 2002; Bellah et al., 1985; Fuller, 2001; Roof, 1999; Wuthnow, 1998, 2012, 2015) For example, Bellah (2002; Bellah et al, 1985) and Wuthnow (1998, 2012, 2015) ask the meaning and implications of the shrinking of "churched" America and the seeming simultaneous decline of social engagement or strong community ties. My fieldwork showed that there was a committed subculture of individuals who represent, not a hyper-individualistic or narcissistic spirituality, but rather a spirituality in which social and political involvement was crucial. In other words, a new kind of "church" was evolving: a present-day tent revival movement of social justice and pluralism, in which the spiritual and the political, the sacred and the mundane, could not be separated. The case studies showcased in this study are just a few instances of places and times where and when these tents are pitched.

Participating in the Selma to Montgomery march and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki vigils, I observed the importance and meaning of protest for SEIs. On one hand, SEIs took part in the same manner as conventional political protesters, with signs, chants, and a socially and politically aware discourse. The spirituality they recounted and expressed about these events was not “fluffy,” (Stanczak, 2006; Wuthnow, 1998) nor were their perceptions of the issues of civil rights and United States military action unrealistic or superficial. This placed the SEIs in a position whereby they could relate to both non-religious and religious elements in the protests. The SEIs were open to others’ religious or spiritual beliefs and practices (although not always participating in or agreeing with them). They also experienced great meaning or fulfillment in the protests by participating alongside Nipponzan Myohoji or the Catholic Worker. The presence of this religious element supported or reinforced the spiritual affects and beliefs the SEIs held about the events, and pragmatically provided an introduction to or facilitation in connecting with others at the protest.

In attending the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda’s ceremonies and work parties, I found a permanent venue where SEIs could build community. In the protests, SEIs were at times the “newcomers” or outsiders trying to engage with victimized or marginalized people and their causes. At the GSMPP, SEIs were the ones doing the welcoming. Their approach to the world was, here, the norm. This outpost provided a space for SEIs to engage one another and to build activism resources. It also served to restore their own sense of motivation, connection, and well-being as people who see themselves as fighting the tide of mainstream American culture.

Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker differ, of course, in the religion that they each practice. I had hypothesized that this would make a difference in who participated with which group, and to a certain extent it did, but not to a starkly apparent degree. The differences

between the SEI participation with the two groups was, in my observation, based on three factors: convenience, activity, and cause. When SEIs espoused a particular cause such as nuclear disarmament or United States military actions, they would participate with either Nipponzan Myohoji or the Catholic Worker, depending on which was accessible to them. Thus, some SEIs such as Jean Chapman had been involved with both because they could drive to events with either group in a few hours. Will Marshall had lived in Atlanta and joined Denise and Utsumi frequently on peace walks, but he now lives in Washington, DC, where he can also participate in Catholic Worker events.

In terms of activity, SEIs' personal preferences and abilities factored into their participation. Some, like Jon Blickenstaff, Ammon Russell, and Jim Toren, were primarily involved in social justice work with an athletic or outdoor component. They were involved in the Sacred Runs and created Footprints for Peace, and they participated with the monks in peace walks and work parties. The more static protests of the Catholic Worker held little appeal to them, and from our conversations, my inference was that physicality, or active embodiment, was important to how they practiced engaged spirituality.

The third factor was cause. While Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker both espouse peace and social justice and are situated within a larger peace activism network, the specific activities around these causes differ. As Jean pointed out, the Catholic peace movement can be "a white, white, white" organization. The Worker does have members and participants of other races and ethnicities, and the houses of hospitality often serve predominantly minority populations. Catholic Workers such as Art and Colleen in Washington, DC and Steve Baggarly and Kim Williams in Norfolk have had important and influential relationships with victims of racism and war violence, for example, the hibakusha whom Art met, or the African-Americans

with whom Steve attended church. However, the Workers themselves are mostly white and their protests are mostly directly aimed at the government. There are no victims of drone strikes or Trident missiles gathering in the United States in protest for Workers to support.

In contrast, Nipponzan Myohoji organizes and participates in actions focused around the victims of oppression or violence, and thereby it includes people of color. The Selma to Montgomery march or the Longest Run are not just about protesting for the rights of African-Americans or Native Americans. These actions include, or are organized by, them. Nipponzan Myohoji places a strong emphasis on developing relationships with minority groups and individuals in order to support minorities' causes. Nipponzan Myohoji's peace walks and the protests they participate in appeal to SEIs' multicultural interests and to their desire to support groups oppressed by the (historically white) United States government and society. As Jean, Ken Jones, and several others expressed to me at different points, it was important to them to participate in these events in person to show what is, essentially, contrition or apology for the legacy of racism that they, as middle-class white Americans, have inherited or implicitly benefitted from.

The religious aspect of the two groups was not obviously influential on SEIs. Nipponzan Myohoji's Buddhist affiliation was visible in the practice of drumming and chanting, as well as in dress, but the monks rarely spoke about any Buddhist beliefs, and many SEIs, such as Jon and Jean, expressed their appreciation of this. I suspected that a deeper discussion of the belief system and rituals of Nichiren Buddhism would disturb some SEIs' view of Buddhism as entirely compatible with an SBNR individualistic, scientific, and/or egalitarian worldview (as it can be as dogmatic, sexist, hierarchical, or plain inscrutable as any other religion). However,

none of the SEIs with whom I spoke were very aware of traditional Buddhism or of rituals such as the incense-burning that some Japanese monks undertake.

While SEIs' common lukewarm or skeptical view of Christianity might lead one to assume that SEIs would be less comfortable with the Catholic Workers than with the Buddhist monks, this was minimally evident in my fieldwork. This prompted my investigation into normative Protestantism in American society, complicating my previous framework that had focused primarily on the religious versus the secular. I found that, for SEIs, the Workers' demeanor and lifestyle set them apart from mainstream culture and from expressions of Christianity that SEIs would find objectionable. The Catholic Worker's ethos of compassion and acceptance meant that the Workers made few statements that could be read as truth claims or as exclusive of other faiths. To the contrary, Workers were exceptionally inclusive, as in Art Laffin's speeches in which he specifically mentioned those of other faiths or of no faith who gathered together for the same cause of peace.

Previous religious affiliation seemed to have little influence either. Several SEIs had been raised Protestant, others Catholic, of varying degrees of intensity in church-going or belief. One or two were Jewish, and some had been raised in no faith. None professed a strong preference or antipathy toward either the Catholic Worker or Nipponzan Myohoji based on these factors. Catherine Smith and one or two others had experienced discrimination and trauma in Christian settings, but they only reported discomfort or dislike of those particular settings and mindsets.

I was interested in the seeming contradiction that I encountered among the Workers, monks, and some SEIs between professing a religious faith (or disbelieving in any, in the case of SEIs) and recognizing other belief systems as valid. However, I did not get direct or substantive answers to my questions regarding incommensurable truth claims. Participants largely glossed

over any underlying dissonance in favor of reaffirming the equality of all spiritual or religious paths, and I did not press the question as it was not central to my research.

Potential 'Real World' and Scholarly Implications

Academically, this dissertation is intended to contribute to the ongoing study of spirituality in America by focusing on minimally-discussed ways in which SBNRs relate to organized religion. Scholars of spirituality in America have examined a variety of factors, including SBNRs' reasons for not participating in organized religion, how they "shop" for beliefs and practices, the history of spirituality as distinct from religion, analyses of the SBNR trend, and the elements of spirituality to which they subscribe. (Bender, 2010; Bender & McRoberts, 2012; Cimino & Lattin, 1998; Fuller, 2001; Roof, 1999; Wuthnow, 1978, 1998) Much of the study of spirituality in America draws from surveys and interviews with SBNRs about their life histories, beliefs, and practices. (Bellah et al., 1985; Drescher, 2016; Fuller, 2001; Riegle, 1993; Stanczak, 2006; Wuthnow, 1978, 1998, 2015; Wuthnow & Evans, 2002) Far less of this scholarship uses participant-observation. (Green, 2000; Wong & Vinsky, 2009; Yukich, 2010) An ethnographic approach including participant-observation allowed me to study, not just what SEIs report about their own beliefs and practices, but also how they enact their beliefs and engage with others, specifically religious groups and the networks in which they are situated.

The type of religious groups in this study is salient. Namely, members of Nipponzan Myohoji and the Catholic Worker identify themselves as radical and non-mainstream in almost every aspect of their lives. I therefore consider them an instance of marginal groups. In other words, if one were to chart either religious or activist movements in the United States, they would be on the outer edge. SEIs, as discussed, identify themselves as culturally non-mainstream and seek to engage with others who are marginalized in society, usually not by choice. Thus,

SEIs collaborating with these religious groups, and with the oppressed peoples associated with them, represent an instance of marginal groups interacting with one another directly. This is a situation in which the peripheries of society work to form their own network and support structure without relying on or being coopted by the center (mainstream structures or political hegemony). This phenomenon could also be described as individuals in intersecting marginal affiliations creating a larger peripheral network of activism. In addition to the Catholic Worker and Nipponzan Myohoji, the diverse affiliations discussed in the case studies here include activist groups such as the SCLC, School of the Americas Watch, Veterans for Peace, the American Indian Movement, and the Oak Ridge Environmental Protection Alliance. Through the activities of SEIs, individuals who belong to only one of these activist groups come into contact with one another more so than they might otherwise. This builds new alliances, reinforces SEIs' commitment to activism, provides new spiritual ideas and experiences, and may increase participation in these activist groups as SEIs find other events in which they can participate. SEIs' activities expand the conversation beyond dichotomy-based analyses such as established religion versus spirituality, individualism versus communalism, or mainstream versus marginal. Other current scholars of spirituality in America, such as Courtney Bender (2003, 2010) and John Modern, (2011) address this conversation as a main theme in their research and as an area for further study in the field.

Nipponzan Myohoji, the Catholic Worker, and SEIs all self-identify as being on the margins of American culture. Indeed, they may strive to stay there. However, SBNRs in general and SEIs in particular may be more socially accepted than they often feel they are, and they may have a bigger impact in social change than they might anticipate. Despite SEIs' rejection of the American mainstream, the continued growth in the number of SBNRs over the past several

decades indicates that spirituality has moved into the mainstream, if only by virtue of numbers (the 20% to 30% of Americans who select this as their religious identity [Fuller, 2001; Wuthnow, 2005]). “Spiritual but not religious” is now an entity in its own right, both in everyday life and in academic study.

I have tried to demonstrate in this study that, within this study of SBNRs, the “spiritually engaged” are a subgroup who have particular motivations, practices, and intentions that distinguish them from SBNRs in general. The experiences of SEIs are, to use Stanczak’s (2006) words, “transformative moments in which engaged spirituality crystallizes in people’s experiences, [to] comprise border positions that allow for an integration of [categories] (p. 19)” such as religious/spiritual/secular, individual/collective, public/private, mundane/sacred. Based on this, SEIs’ potential impact, in practice and/or in research, extends to several areas of social concern. These include systems, paradigms, and institutions that perpetuate discrimination, disenfranchisement, poverty, and violence. Presuming that these problems can be ameliorated by social engagement, there are multiple barriers to greater equality and peace for those who are discriminated against and those who advocate for them. These barriers include: a lack of knowledge or motivation about social justice; a dearth of resources or information on how to effect change; and/or an inability to foster productive dialogue and community between groups with the same goals but with different identities or approaches. SEIs’ frequent awareness of privilege, opposition to discrimination, and pluralist attitude can bridge distances between the non-religious, SBNRs, and religious groups, particularly in collaborative activism. SEIs contribute to overcoming these barriers in several ways.

First, “SBNR” denotes an individualistic and open-minded attitude toward spirituality and (often, but not always) religion. SBNRs gauge beliefs and practices empirically or

experientially rather than based on stereotypes or familiarity with another's beliefs or culture. This is supplemented by their respect for and interest in other cultures. Therefore, they are likely to ally with individuals and groups from different backgrounds and serve as agents to cultivate dialogue and cooperation across cultural barriers. For example, as discussed in chapter five, Jim Toren sought out Dennis Banks in order to become involved in the American Indian Movement. He then engaged Jon Blickenstaff in this cause. Jon then became more involved in racial equality work. SEIs who participate with Nipponzan Myohoji, especially those in Asheville, have frequently brought friends to the work parties and peace walks. Some of these friends have formed ties with other SEIs and guests at the GSMPP, either as allies in their respective activism or as new participants in a cause.

Additionally, because activism is tied to their spirituality, which is a significant and motivating part of their lives, SEIs are often lifelong, frequent, and/or knowledgeable activists. Their commitment has both practical and inspirational value for the broader activist community. This is supplemented by SEIs' desire to engage personally with the groups for whom they advocate. They seek experiences of solidarity and *communitas*, greater understanding of and empathy for others' suffering, and living outside their usual comfort zone in their practices of activism and engagement. This firsthand experience helps them to communicate to others the need for social justice activism. A felt need is essential for individuals to get involved in a change process, and SEIs' insight and passion based on their experiences can inspire this felt need in those who have not been involved in such work before. For example, a white, middle-class American who attends a mainline church may contribute to charity or volunteer at the church's soup kitchen, but they may not understand the system that perpetuates poverty in their community. They may not have spent much time with those of other classes, races, or religions.

If this person meets an SEI who talks about these issues in terms of their experience, such as the people they met and the stories they heard on the Selma walk, this may awaken in the other person the potential to do more for others. If the SEI tells them about the spiritual elements of their experience, the other person may recognize their own spiritual beliefs and desires in this. If the person has the means and desire to do so, they may begin interacting more with those who come to the soup kitchen. They may mobilize a more involved grassroots effort at their own church. Perhaps some of the soup kitchen guests attend one church, and our hypothetical volunteer may take this as an opportunity to build a relationship between the two. This could lead to broader community involvement to alleviate poverty, a base for campaigning or protesting for policy change, and on the individual level, spiritual and personal growth for those involved. Similarly, SEIs' distance from traditional religion allows them to communicate with secular activists, possibly showing the similarities in goals and motivations beyond the differences that may exist between religious and non-religious groups.

Areas for Further Study

As discussed above, there is space in the literature on American religion, spirituality, and social justice for further discussion of the extent and role of SEIs. My fieldwork did not delve far into the role of the marginal individuals with whom Nipponzan Myohoji, the Catholic Worker, and SEIs protest. Their experiences, perspectives, and goals could be an important component in understanding engaged spirituality or in further examining the work of Nipponzan Myohoji in particular, as the monks engage minority groups often and over a long span of time.

As previously discussed, religion and spirituality have mutable definitions that are dependent on context. In observing and analyzing concepts of spirituality or religion for this study, it emerged that part of the difference between the two, as used by SBNRs, could be

described in terms of modalities or networks. Individuals' expressions of spirituality enable them to form or strengthen particular relationships outside of the often congregational-type setting of traditionally organized religion. The strategic, though usually not deliberate or conscious, deployment of spirituality by SEIs merits further study in terms of the structure and function of religion and spirituality in the present-day United States.

Manifestations of transmodernity and discussions of its implications would contribute to the literature across the social sciences and humanities. There is already research on how different cultural and religious groups struggle to balance tradition—particularly religious tradition— and modernity. (Agrama, 2011; Berger, 2014; Cannell, 2005; Doak, 1994; Klassen, 2011; Luyckx, 1999) There is further work to be done on this on two fronts. One is to show that transmodern ideas can contribute to this struggle: how they might be translated into application and how they already appear. (Luyckx, 1999) The second is one of Dussel's (2012) initial proposals about transmodernity, namely the potential to foster dialogue between these groups based on a liberatory transmodern framework. In a similar vein, Berger (2012) suggests that the multiplicity of concepts about modernity can be made constructive, working to bridge cultural gaps such as, he suggests, that between the Islamic and Judeo-Christian worlds.

These issues are, of course, beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the study of SEIs may offer a useful perspective to scholars of religion and social justice and may contribute to the continuing scholarship on American spirituality.

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Appendix A: IRB-Approved Consent Form and Interview Questions

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Religious Social Movements Oral History Project

Investigator: Katharine Cross, ASPECT PhD Student, Virginia Tech

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

These oral history interviews will be part of a doctoral dissertation exploring the experiences of members of the Catholic Worker movement and the Engaged Buddhism movement in the US.

II. Procedures

Participation in this project will involve taking part in an open-ended, digitally-recorded interview. The investigator will pose general questions about your participation in your religious group and allow you to answer as you wish and to speak for as long or as briefly as you like. The investigator will record the interview on a digital audio recorder; no video recordings will be made. Interviews generally run from one to two hours, although some may run longer if you so desire. You will also have the option of dividing an interview into several short sessions if you believe it will run too long for one sitting. The research will take place at a time and place of your choosing.

III. Risks

There is no more than minimal emotional or psychological risk in participating in this research project. You are free to stop the interview at any time that you choose.

IV. Benefits

No promise or guarantee of personal benefits has been made to encourage you to participate. This project's findings will provide a larger societal benefit by broadening understanding of religious social movements.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

These interviews are neither anonymous nor confidential. You may be quoted in my dissertation and I may attribute statements and observations made by you to you. Interviews will be audio recorded on a digital recorder and then transcribed by the investigator. You will receive a copy of the transcription, which you will be able to edit and correct, before I use it in any publication. Interviews will not be destroyed. I will store copies of the recordings and transcriptions on my computer and in my office. It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

There will be no compensation for participating in this research project.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are also free to decline to answer any questions that you choose or to stop the interview.

VIII. Subject's Responsibility

You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Your only responsibility is to answer questions posed by the investigator.

IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I agree to allow the investigator to use my name in the preservation and use of material from this interview, and grant her permission to archive this material for her professional use. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge and give my voluntary consent to participate in this project:

Name (Printed)

Signature

Date

Investigator:

Katharine H. Cross

PhD Student

Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought

Major Williams 212, Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, VA 24061-0117

757-392-6822

kcathar@vt.edu

If I should have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, I may contact:

Dr. David Moore

Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

540-231-4991

moored@vt.edu

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Interview Questions

Title of Project: Religious Social Movements Oral History Project

Investigator: Katharine Cross, ASPECT PhD Student, Virginia Tech

[Investigator will review consent form with interviewee and obtain written consent. Interviews will be audio-recorded with interviewee's consent. Interviewee may stop the interview at any point.]

I am going to start the audio recorder. Just to confirm: If you want to pause or stop the interview at any time, will you feel comfortable telling me that?

Can you tell me your name and age?

How long have you been involved in the [Catholic Worker or Engaged Buddhist, as appropriate] movement? In what locations?

Tell me about how you became involved in the [Catholic Worker or Engaged Buddhist, as appropriate] movement.

Tell me about some of your experiences as a [Catholic Worker/Engaged Buddhist].

What would you say is the importance of compassion in [the Catholic Worker/Engaged Buddhism], if any?

Is there anything else you feel I should know or would like to include?

Appendix B: Citations of Participant-Observation

In this study, I use a variant on the APA’s official style for citing interviews and personal exchanges. In order not to clutter in-line and block quotes from participants, I deviate from APA style in that I use only the designation “p.c.” (personal correspondence) after the quote and do not include the date. The dates of interviews are listed below.

In each chapter, when I first mention an individual either in-text or in a parenthetical citation, I use both first and last names. Subsequently, I cite them with first initial followed by last name parenthetically. In the text, I usually refer to them by first name only after the first use of the name.

Statements or events that are not cited are from participant-observation recorded in my field notes and took place during the fieldwork dates listed in chapter one.

As stated in my consent form (Appendix A), I use individuals’ real names unless they have asked me not to do so. This occurs only in chapter five and is footnoted.

Interviewee:	Date (M/D/YY)
Baggarly, Steve	8/12/14
Blickenstaff, Jon	7/20/14, 4/7/17
Boylan, K.	8/6/14
Chapman, Jean	5/20/17
Hutchison, Ralph	7/20/14
Jones, Ken	4/5/15
Kellerman, Clarence	3/12/17
Laffan, Denise	4/7/17
Laffin, Art	8/8/14
Marshall, William	4/3/15
Nichols, Grace	4/24/15
Russell, Ammon	7/20/14
Smith, Catherine	3/12/17
Toren, Jim	7/20/14