# THE NATURE OF THE SECULAR: RELIGIOUS ORIENTATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of English
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

September 2017

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: The Nature of the Secular: Religious Orientations and Environmental Thought in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

September 2017

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My dissertation argues that changes in the structures and orientations of religious thought, changes commonly understood as secularization, have provided the intellectual underpinnings for the modern exploitation and ongoing destruction of the non-human world, which extend to the underwriting the devaluing and dehumanization of marginalized groups such as Native Americans. My work makes visible the secular assumptions of ecocriticism, which tends to blame Christianity for environmental problems. It also unwittingly relies on state-legitimating constructions of religion, simplistic religious-secular binaries, and outdated, false narratives of secularization. I theorize an ecocriticism "with/out the secular" to analyze secularity in both "secular" and "religious" settings, using the category of "religious orientation," a tacit, pre-theoretical commitment that directs ultimate trust, structures meaning as it coheres in everyday life, and shapes ontological, epistemological, ethical, and other theories.

I examine how certain nineteenth-century authors, including Henry Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and Pequot minister William Apess, resisted this secularization within contemporaneous American culture and Christianity because of its epistemic devaluing of the natural world. Each of these authors has been read as an exemplar of secularization,

but such interpretations reveal more about the secular commitments of literary critics than about the authors and their contexts. I show instead how modern religious constructions do not necessarily correlate with the deeper religious orientation of an author or the secularity or non-secularity of his or her arguments. Dickinson's poetry and Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* challenge dogmatic conceptions of heaven and Sabbath that are structured dualistically so as to devalue everyday earthly life. Yet they do so in non-dualistic ways that accord with a biblically rooted religious orientation of creation-fall-redemption-consummation. Their struggles against the church were against the church's acceptance of dominant secularist ideologies that are ultimately at odds with Christianity and sustainable lifeways. Similarly, William Apess' environmental justice work as a Native Christian against institutions dominated by white nationalist ideology demonstrate the how dualistic structures of secularity legitimate racism in conjunction with an anthropocentric that devalue the natural world.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Too many teachers, friends, colleagues, scholars and loved ones have supported me in myriad ways along the path to finishing this dissertation to thank each by name, but I am profoundly grateful. In particular, I'm grateful to my committee members Bill Rossi, Gordon Sayre, Karen Ford, and Michael Allan for sharpening my writing and thinking and whose respective seminars "Thoreau and Secularization," "Nineteenth-Century American Poetry," "Theorizing Ecocriticism: The Pastoral in America" and "Early American Natural History Writing," and "Secularism and its Critics" contributed to the initial shape of this project. I especially owe thanks to my advisor Bill Rossi, whose guidance has been both rigorous and generous, and my wife Hope, for all her love and support. *SDG*.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

A number of the most important and canonical environmental writers in American literature grew up in Calvinist religious contexts but later distanced themselves from the faith they were raised in or from organized religion altogether: Henry D. Thoreau,[1] John Muir, Robinson Jeffers, Rachel Carson, Annie Dillard, and others.[2] One might very well ask, is this pattern a mere coincidence? or due to some feature of American Calvinism? or reflective of a larger trend of secularization? For these writers, did nature replace God as an object of devotion, or did environmentalism replace the church?[3] Or instead did their religious faith mature in such a way that it fell outside what certain forms of Christianity were able to recognize as legitimate? One purpose of this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive account of this pattern.

This dissertation also reconciles two divergent ecocritical interpretations of this phenomenon. One longstanding and influential ecocritical commonplace, based on the Lynn White Thesis, finds Christianity, including American Christianity and the Calvinist churches within it, to be inhospitable to the kind of environmental work being done by the above authors. In his 1967 *Science* article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," White claims that Judeo-Christianity and its inherent anthropocentrism are ultimately to blame for the world's ongoing ecological catastrophe. White's most important insight was that the environmental crisis is fundamentally a crisis in religion, and requires a religious solution, but perhaps the most influential ecocritical stance bolstered by his argument is that religion itself, both historically and theoretically, is the problem.

A more nuanced version of this strand of ecocriticism has been articulated by Lawrence Buell. In "Religion and the Environmental Imagination in American Literature," he observes a "fundamental and intractable fissiparousness within U.S. religio-environmental aestheticism," largely due to the diversity of environmental discourse within the American literary tradition (231). In other words, he finds that, when held together, the categories "religion" and "environment" tend to wobble apart under scrutiny. In his "Afterword" to a themed issue of *Christianity & Literature* on "Environmental Imagination," Buell wonders whether it is "possible to hold without self-contradiction that religious commitment can and should be a powerful shaper and motivator of environmental concern yet doubt the sufficiency of Christianity to that end?" (364). Rightly rejecting an easy resolution to this by separating faith and reason, Buell nonetheless cannot see a way out of this seeming contradiction. For Buell, the "sheer heterogeneity of both Christianity and ecocriticism" poses a major problem—how can all these positions be reconciled?[4] Buell "question[s] whether any form of Christianity nurtures an environmental(ist) commitment of any kind more readily than religions on the spectrum of faith traditions worldwide," not to mention secular positions (364). Though believing in theory that Christianity contains resources to aid environmental causes, Buell doubts its ability to do so. Indeed, he does not see any form of Christianity as more environmentally fruitful than any other religious tradition. Thus it would make sense for the most committed nature writers to depart from that tradition.

A second, less populous segment of ecocritics has argued that such a form of Christianity does exist and that Calvinism in particular has strongly and positively influenced American environmental thought and activism. Several recent monographs

argue that Calvinism not only fostered but even, in America, originated environmental ethics; the conservation movement; the impetus for significant environmental art; and the most robust theory/theology of creation, desire for God and nature, and participation in the healing of the damaged goodness in the world.[5] And yet the use of Christianity, including Calvinism, to justify environmental harm and injustice continues to this day, as does, therefore, the doubt in Christianity's environmentalist potential.

Considering these two critical diagnoses of the relationship of Christianity to environmental thought together can help account for the existence of interpretive debates surrounding particular authors' arguments regarding religion and nature. For example, should the relationship of Thoreau's ideas on these topics to his Puritan heritage be understood as a continuation, a distancing, or a decisive break? The fact that critics can legitimately make a case for any or all of these readings suggests the expansiveness of Thoreau's thought, certainly, but it also points to the limits of critical categories that underlie these interpretations for asking and answering such questions. Introducing categories like "secular" or "wilderness" complicates rather than clarifies. Formulating more nuanced questions—such as, What Puritan conceptions regarding religion or the natural world do come through in his thought, and how are they modified? And how exactly or to what extent do his ideas about nature and religion differ from the thinkers, including his contemporaries and Puritan forbears, who influenced him?—does not necessarily help. The reason why is that how critics answer such questions will be dictated more by how they define "religion," "nature," or "Puritan" than by what Thoreau actually wrote.

In particular, the pre-existing narratives and structures within which critics situate authors and texts imply definitions for these terms that can severely limit the range of legitimate interpretations. While critics may only tacitly presuppose these structures, articulating them can expose implications that bear not only on the interpretations of texts, but also on personal matters and indeed life's deepest matters of concern, what we might call "religious" matters in the broadest sense. Avoiding the difficult work of articulating deep interpretive structures and their religious implications covers over contradictions (including self-contradictions) these might reveal and results in interpretations that fail to do justice to texts that grapple with such matters of ultimate concern. Unfortunately, the shared ecocritical goal of opposing destructive environmental practices, usually one of the field's strengths, makes it easier to avoid this potentially contentious articulation.

All literary critics—"religious," "secular," environmental, and otherwise—face this task of articulation. One purpose of this dissertation is to aid literary and ecocritical scholars by scrutinizing the definitions of "religion" and "secular" that critics rely on,[6] the better to examine the work of three authors who made influential and nuanced arguments about these concepts. In order to analyze these definitions, I spell out in Chapter 1 the most common deep structures of meaning that render different understandings of "secularity," "religion," and "nature" plausible, introducing "religious orientation" as a category of analysis that makes these structures and their presuppositions visible, while providing an adequate framework for discussing such fraught concepts. In addition to "religious orientations" helping to disentangle the discrepancies among various ecocritical and religious responses to the natural world that

Buell finds so vexing, this category allows ways of reading "religion" and "environment" together that reveals that a third category, "secular," is what drives them needlessly but relentlessly apart.

This dissertation intervenes in the fields of postsecular studies and ecocriticism as well as nineteenth-century literary studies. In the first chapter, I bring these fields into dialogue as well as theorize connections between them that pertain to my readings of relevant literature in the following chapters. As an ecocritical study, this dissertation examines the structures of arguments pertaining to environmental and proto-environmental issues in mid-nineteenth-century United States literature, particularly arguments that rely on "religious" concepts. I suggest that concepts such as secularity must be taken into account in ecocriticism. As a study of secularity, this dissertation examines the role of secularity in these literary arguments as well as in ecocritical and other scholarly interpretations of them. In this I follow literary scholar and former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams' call to pay attention to "what … a thoroughgoing secularity prohibit[s] us from saying … [a]nd why … the resultant discourse [is] not nearly enough" (31) as it applies to ecocritical, literary, and religious scholarship on three authors whose work intervenes significantly in those relevant discourses. I suggest that the assumed secularity latent in much ecocriticism hinders it from an achieving an adequate grounding for its environmental ethics. Furthermore, its laudable ethical stances are inconsistent with its views of "religion" as well as, more importantly, the deeper religious structures that render such an ethics meaningful.

The authors I focus on all lived and wrote in mid-nineteenth-century Massachusetts: William Apess, Henry David Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson. The period

of time covered, 1829-1884, saw the disestablishment of the Congregational Church in Massachusetts and the wane of the church's cultural influence; the rise of industrialism in the region, attendant environmental degradation and social inequality, and the rise of the conservation movement; as well as the expansion of the power and territory of the American state. All these historical developments to which these authors responded, and the effects of which have only intensified up to the present, make their responses relevant to contemporary conversations around religion, secularization, and environment. Born in Massachusetts and raised in a broadly Calvinist southern New England context,[7] all three grappled with the legacy of New England's Puritan religious heritage as well as the relevance of that heritage for thinking about the natural world. All distanced themselves from that tradition in part due to how each perceived it to misguidedly understand and treat nature. Likewise, all three analyzed the dominant religious and intellectual framework of their contemporaneous context and how it justified environmental degradation. Each of these authors wrote to critique changes in religious climate and discourse, on the one hand, and changes in environmental conditions and attitudes, on the other, strenuously resisting this framework and these changes in environmentally significant ways. For that reason, Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson have frequently been interpreted as anticipating, advancing, and exemplifying secularization respectively.

However, I argue that such interpretations miss the deeper import of these authors' arguments and their true commonality: each writer, I will argue, resisted the dominant religious and environmental paradigms of their time *because* these paradigms were increasingly secular. They turned from the church because the church itself was secularizing. In doing so, they were as much resisting changes associated with secularity,

the misinterpretations and injustices undergirded by it, as they were the environmental degradations that followed from it. As a result, each author structured his or her environmental thought according to a non-secular religious orientation. It is this common thread of environmental non-secularity that I trace through the writings of these particular authors. Of course, this argument depends on particular understandings of religion and secularity, which I will examine in my first chapter.

Central to my understanding of religion and secularity is the concept of religious orientations, which are the deepest structures that render ideas, actions, and entities meaningful or legitimate (or not). Following philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd, I argue that three religious orientations exert significant influence in the modern world, including both contemporary criticism and the world the authors of this study inhabited. The dominant religious orientation of this period is a dualism of nature-freedom. "Nature" and "freedom," variously understood, are considered to be absolute, functioning as the source and summit of meaning and existence.[8] For much of the modern dominance of nature-freedom, this religious orientation has legitimated the mastery and subjugation of nature for the sake of human freedom (in other words, anthropocentrism) often at the scale of society using technological or economic means facilitated by the nation-state to achieve that freedom. At the same time as "nature" has been destroyed to enhance human freedom, others have argued that "nature" itself must flourish to enhance human freedom The freedom ideal has often been limited to certain groups (the rich, "white," "straight," male, etc.) to the exclusion of other groups, who might be associated as closer to "nature" or as "unnatural" to legitimate their oppression. But "freedom" also legitimates the ideal of unhindered liberty, equality, and autonomy for individual personalities as well.

Another environmentalist expression of nature-freedom idealizes rational, empirical science as that which explains nature. These positions tend to absolutize the material world itself as self-existent and the ultimate source of meaning. Most theories do this reductionistically, assuming that materiality is ultimately all that exists. Other environmentalist positions seek to elevate "nature" to be included in the "freedom" ideal along with traditionally oppressed human subject positions. Either way, these environmental positions rely on the nature-freedom dualism to legitimate their positions, even as this dualism legitimates environmental destruction. I see this as a major inconsistency that necessitates a different grounding for ecocritical and environmentalist thought and practice.

"Religion" too may be construed as either a "natural" feature of human life or as one enhancing "freedom," but nature-freedom either way tends to construe it as private and a matter of personal belief. Nature-freedom emerged historically from the dualistic religious orientation that was dominant in medieval Europe, nature-grace. In fact, nature-freedom itself originally was justified as replacing nature-grace as dominant because it was supposed to be an improvement over nature-grace in preventing violence, enhancing freedom, and seeking truth. It has arguably done that to some extent, but more accurately it redefined what violence, freedom, and truth mean. Nature-freedom may be understood as a "secular" religious orientation in that it is legitimated as superseding what it calls a "religious" religious orientation. Significantly, this legitimates the shift from cultural dominance of the church to dominance by the "secular" state. Furthermore, freedom and nature are both construed as immanent, and this orientation sees them as self-existent without reference to a transcendent source or *telos*. It is thus "secular" in claiming to be

religiously neutral and making "the secular" or immanent the basis for and highest goal of human life. Secularity as a concept opposed to the religious is also legitimated as normal by this religious orientation in the same way that, for example, "whiteness" is.

The nature-grace religious orientation originated the split between the immanent as "secular" and the transcendent as "religious." More accurately those activities, institutions, and individuals who were seen as closer to the transcendent or as mediating God's grace were seen as "religious" and superior to "nature," which included both the natural world and human reason. The latter came to be seen as independent of participating in a transcendent reality, but even before that, they were seen as "secular" and apart from the domain of the church and Christianity, the dominant. Even so, this religious orientation originated the concept of "secularity" in a process of secularization that involved adopting Greek and Roman structures of meaning (as well as institutions and activities legitimated by those structures) to early Christian structures of meaning. This narrative of ancient and medieval secularization within Christianity is as important to this study as the more widely assumed narrative of modern secularization away from Christianity. Under nature-grace, the natural world was seen as religiously neutral and thus exploitable, which would be carried into the nature-freedom paradigm. For this reason, "religion" (that is, nature-grace) has often been seen as incompatible with environmental thought and practice. This religious orientation, though no longer culturally dominant, still exerts a large amount of influence in "religious" communities, even as it is itself influenced by the prevailing nature-freedom religious orientation.

A third religious orientation, creation-fall-redemption/consummation, unlike the other two, this religious orientation is not dualistic. It avoids dualism by distinguishing

structure (creation, which is good rather than neutral) from direction (fall vs. the goodness of creation and redemption). Creation includes things themselves, time, and the interrelated but irreducible laws that govern the world and give things meaning, including "freedom," the "natural," the "spiritual," the aesthetic, the ethical, and so on—every aspect of life and reality. But creation is not absolute: like nature-grace, creation-fall-redemption acknowledges a transcendent origin to the creation, which is also the ultimate source of its redemption. This redemption culminates in "consummation," the complete eradication of the effects of fallenness and the perfection of the already good creation. This concept is the origin both of the nature-grace notions of salvation and heaven and the nature-freedom notions of progress and utopia. Thus secularity has no place in a creational understanding of reality, which is neither religiously neutral nor independent from transcendent reality. The concept of secularity as opposed to the religious (or the immanent independent of transcendence) is seen as a product of fallenness, a violation of creational laws. This religious orientation originated in the societies given account in the Hebrew Scriptures and early Christian Scriptures. While never truly dominant, its synthesis with Greek and Roman thought lead to the nature-grace religious orientation. And it continues to function in the modern world, even in thought that does not explicitly acknowledge transcendence.

The creation-fall-redemption religious orientation is what I take as the starting point for this study. I find that it is ultimately more consistent with the environmental aims of ecocriticism, or rather I find that this religious orientation renders the goals of ecocriticism meaningful more so than nature-freedom. Because religious orientations render theories and political positions meaningful rather than vice versa, further

methodological justification is difficult. However, I argue that creation-fall-redemption in the context of nature-freedom is the religious orientation that structured the arguments of Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson, and thus adopting it myself will allow for a more comprehensive analysis of their work than the nature-freedom paradigm that most scholars uncritically assume. I characterize their arguments, as well as my own, as "thinking with/out the secular," which I find more adequate than the term "postsecular." This acknowledges that any criticism done must be done *with* the secular since the secular nature-freedom religious orientation is dominant in modernity and strongly influences all the thought that goes on in the academy and public discourse. But this dissertation also foregrounds arguments that function *without* secularity, that is, without the pretense of religious neutrality or a divide between immanence and transcendence, reason and revelation, agency and matter, spirit and body, and so on—in other words, arguments structured by creation-fall-redemption. The final goal of thinking with/out the secular is to bring secularity *out* of its invisible, unmarked status in ecocritical and literary scholarship, and indeed public assumptions and common sense. Only by doing so can the workings of oppressive secular power (in both church and state) be unmasked and resisted or, better yet, replaced. It is such a resistance and replacement that I argue Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson sought in their own ways and contexts.

As mentioned above, their doing so led them to oppose contemporaneous religious doctrines and institutions. One of the earliest works that might considered postsecular literary scholarship is Gauri Viswanathan's *Outside the Fold* (1998), which studies religious conversion as a means of resisting the oppression of the secular state, similar to the position taken by the three authors of this study. The "fold" in the book's

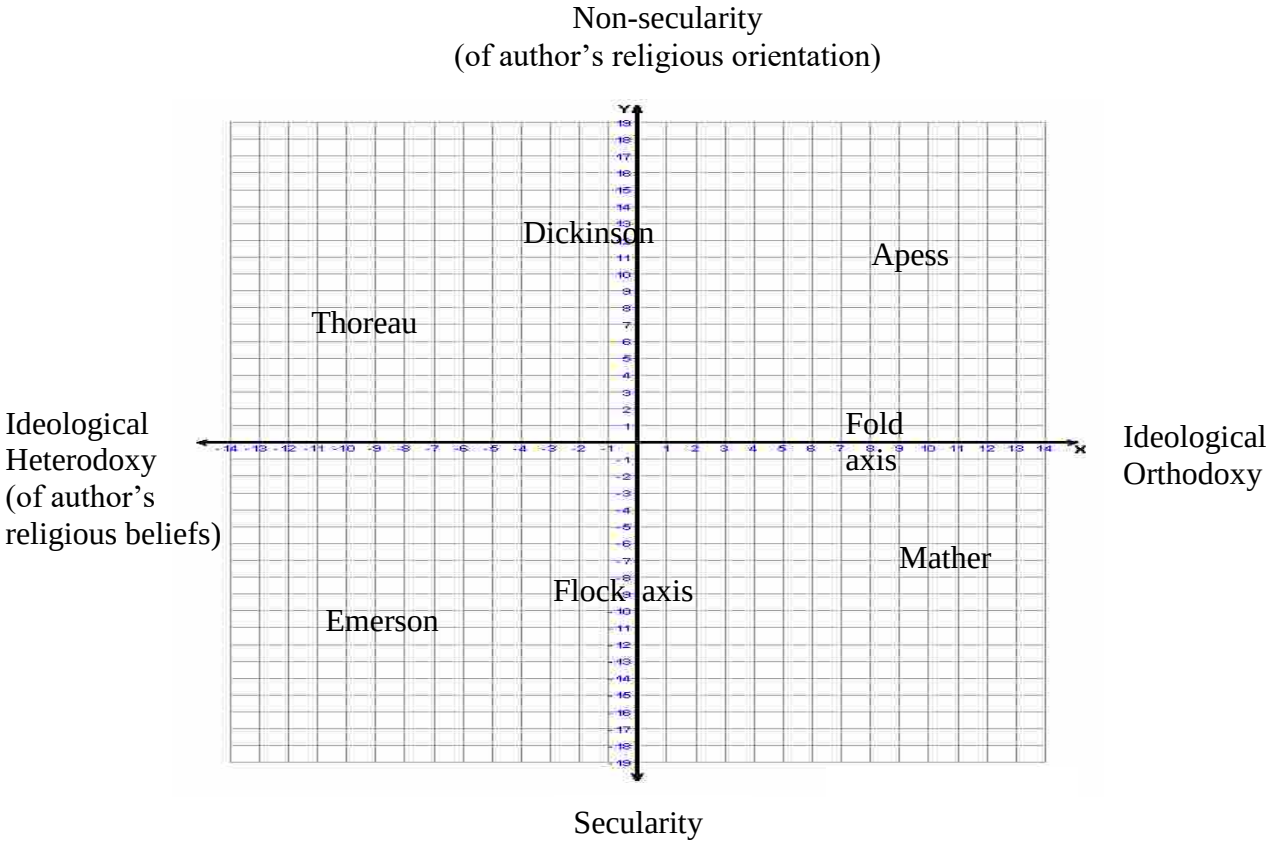
title refers to the common spiritual sense of those included in a "religious" group (rather than a sheep pen). Viswanathan uses this term as a dead metaphor, frequently but always uncritically and without explanation. That is not a problem, of course, but considering the metaphor can help deepen our understanding of the significance of particular relationships to the "fold." The origin of this metaphor is biblical, the words of Jesus in John 10:16. In the *King James Version*, this verse reads: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd." However, the second use of the word "fold" is a mistranslation; the Greek word is actually the word for "flock." Here is how the contemporary *New International Version* translates the same verse: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." There is little disagreement that John's Jesus is referring to the fold as Israel and Gentiles as the "other sheep." But Christians have interpreted the fold as referring to the institutionally bounded nature of the church as well. The *King James* translators, under the influence of emerging secularism, most likely mistranslated the word, following the mistranslation in the Latin *Vulgate*, in order to prop up this understanding of the church as bounded: one was either in the fold—and thus under the authority of the King of England, the head of the church—or out, and subject to state persecution. However, the correct translation reveals a different view of the church and religious identity. If Jesus' people are a flock rather than a fold, then Christian affiliation need not be coterminous with the bounds of the institutional church. The church becomes the members of a congregation rather than the means of containing them. Those who hear Jesus' voice and follow it, the verse suggests, are part of his flock

regardless of whether they are in or "outside the fold" (Edgar). This interpretation has implications for understanding the work of non-Christian writers whose works are nevertheless structured by the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation, including some important environmental writers.[9]

Although members of the non-secular flock, the three primary subjects of this dissertation nevertheless remained outside the fold.[10] They used alternative religious affiliations as a space of opposition to the secularly and constructed institutions of their day, especially the church and the state. Thoreau did not affiliate with any church and had his name removed from the rolls of First Unitarian Parish of Concord in 1841, in part due to his principled objection to paying a special tax to support the church. He left the fold. Dickinson famously declined to join the church as a teenager when most of her peers did during the revivals that swept through Amherst. Although baptized within the Congregational church, she resolutely stood outside the fold's door her entire life. Neither claimed a Christian affiliation or identification. Nevertheless, I believe the structure of their arguments places them within the ancient Christian tradition that produced the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation more firmly than many of their church-going contemporaries. To enter the fold would have been, for them, to distance themselves from the true flock. Their critical thinking with/out the secular could best be done outside the fold. Apess was raised with Presbyterian and Congregational foster families, but converted to Methodist Christianity as a teenager, and indeed became a minister and missionary himself, in order to provide an alternative stance to the dominant modern version of American Christianity, which was founded in a tradition (guided by nature-grace and nature-freedom) that did not recognize Natives as fully human, much

less fully Christian, and legitimated the racism of the nascent American state. While certainly within the fold by contemporary standards, Apess' Native identity, status as a convert who would not easily assimilate into white culture, and affiliation with a minority Christian group, the Methodists, left him excluded from the ideologically constructed fold of early nineteenth-century New England.

This dissertation is not concerned with religion as belief/ideology or the religious beliefs of these authors. Much excellent work has already been done in this area, especially on Dickinson and belief. If ideological orthodoxy or affiliation is one axis of a graph, then these authors are quite dissimilar. Thoreau was highly heterodox; Dickinson was consistently unorthodox and inconsistent in her beliefs; Apess was orthodox but a religious outsider nonetheless. Instead, my focus will be on the religious orientation of these authors' writings, which I argue are non-secular or even anti-secular. I attempt to show this in the following chart.



This chart is intended for comparison of the authors to the axes and each other; it is not an attempt to quantify belief or secularity. As a point of reference, Thoreau's mentor Emerson held beliefs similarly heterodox to Thoreau but espoused a more secular religious orientation. Increase Mather, whose interpretation of King Philip's War is challenged by Apess, held similarly orthodox beliefs to Apess but would fall below 0 on the secularity axis. I will elaborate more on these authors' secularity in the chapters that follow.

One reason Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson distanced themselves from the dominant form of Christianity in their context is that it was structured according to the nature-grace dualism under the influence of nature-freedom. The contemporaneous church took an "in the world, but not of the world" approach to nature, which led Christians anthropocentrically to set themselves apart from nature and to disregard the natural world, as Lynn White Jr. suggested. (This phrase comes from a nature-grace interpretation of John 17:16, which reads "world"—*cosmos*—as meaning created reality rather than fallen reality. A creation-fall-redemption interpretation recognizes that the word has multiple meanings in Greek and is used to mean the world as damaged by fallenness here.) My argument is that the creation-fall-redemption orientation of their writing signifies that they are *of* the flock but not *in* the fold. Likewise they write *in* the immanent frame, "with" the secular, and structured by the nature-freedom dualism, but their arguments are not *of* it. They ultimately make sense "without" the secular. The line of resistance to anti-environmental secularity that I trace through these authors is the same one that can be extended back to John Calvin and Francis of Assisi, and even earlier to Augustine, Paul, Jesus, and the Hebrew prophets. Likewise, it can be extended forward

to the present and into the context of ecocriticism, where the relevance of these author's prophetic critiques still resonates.

I will frame my arguments on each of these three authors in terms of their arguments on three particular doctrinally-based topics where they diverged from the secular nature-grace orthodoxy and subverted its dualisms and hierarchies using the structure of creation-fall-redemption. These topics are ecclesial identity, Sabbath, and heaven: that is, who is to be included in the gathering of the flock (nation, church, the elect, or otherwise), how should they worship, and what is their ultimate destination? Each writer has much to say about each of these topics, but I will focus on Thoreau's arguments about Sabbath, Dickinson's on heaven, and Apess' on ecclesial identity. Apess has much to say about Sabbath and heaven, but his remarks are conventionally orthodox and incidental to his emphasis on Native identity and Christian identity. His environmental concerns are also incidental, but emerge in conjunction with his commitments to Christian faith as well as Native sovereignty. Thoreau writes polemically and Dickinson searchingly against Christian identity structured as being within a bounded fold with beliefs as the criteria for inclusion. Ultimately, they rejected beliefs and practices regarding Sabbath and heaven but maintained a strong commitment to the meaning behind these beliefs as structured by the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation.

The three following chapters examine how William Apess, Henry Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson resisted the religious orientations that enabled the relegation of the natural world to a realm of secularity, particularly when nature was deprivileged in that understanding. Most scholarship regarding religion and these writers has focused on

religion as affiliation or belief. As I mentioned, all three were critical of the dominant Christian institutions of their early to mid-century New England Calvinist context. The three came from very different backgrounds in that context. Dickinson was upper class, her father a prominent lawyer and member of Congress. Thoreau was from a middle or working class background but he enjoyed many cultural privileges nonetheless. Apess came from a broken family and impoverished background. The idiosyncratic beliefs of Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson regarding Christian doctrine differed as well. They might be characterized respectively as orthodox, heterodox, and unorthodox. Dickinson and Thoreau eschewed official church membership, whereas Apess served as an ordained minister, albeit in the still-marginalized Methodist tradition and to fellow Native Americans. Dickinson in particular sustained a lifelong tension between belief and doubt in God (McIntosh, Lundin). Rather than delving further into speculations about the religious beliefs of these authors, as many scholars have already done well, I instead read their texts for the manifestations of different religious orientations. Despite the fact that each of these writers has been read according to the traditional secularization narrative as prefiguring or pushing the secularity that would inevitably follow, I find that the writings of all three grapple with great nuance with religion and secularity, including in relation to their orthodox, heterodox, and unorthodox beliefs. Regarding religion and secularity, each primarily manifests a non-dualist, integrative religious orientation resistant to a secular orientation oriented toward secular autonomy.

My first chapter analyzes William Apess as a religious and environmental figure. Many studies engage to some extent the pervasive religious aspect of his writings as they pertain to his Native identity and political activism, but very few focus on his religiosity

or on secularity as a concept. Likewise those that focus on the environmental aspects of his work do not substantively engage with religion. Two elements of Apess' political and autobiographical writings demonstrate the confluence of religion and environment. I take Apess' *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts; or, The Pretended Riot Explained*, an account and compilation of texts regarding the Mashpee Indian Revolt of 1833, in which Apess played a leading role, as an early work of environmental and religious justice documentation. But more importantly, Apess argued against the supposed inferiority of Indians to whites on religious grounds. He embraces the association of Natives with nature—both Romantic and derogatory—but then construes this as meaning that both Indians and the natural world have been unjustly devalued. In this way, Apess dismantles religious arguments for Indian inferiority made according to nature-grace and nature-freedom religious orientations. He does this in such a way that also critiques the lingering dualistic association of nature with the evils that Christians were supposed to resist. For Apess, the natural world, like humanity, has inherent value in a creational and redemptive Christian sense.

My next chapter argues that Henry Thoreau's writings on religion and nature present a vision that is in many ways closer to the creational vision of Sabbath recorded in the Bible than that of his more-orthodox contemporaries. While Thoreau himself may not have been "more Christian than the Christians," as Slavoj Žižek refers to himself, his environmental arguments in some ways were. A recent movement within Thoreau scholarship has emerged affirming Thoreau's significance as a religious thinker. Beyond a consensus rejection of the common assumption of Thoreau's place in a traditional narrative of inevitable secularization, however, this body of scholarship has done little to

engage Thoreau's writings as they actually regard the secular as a category or the deeper structures of religion in his work. I contend that Thoreau's discussions of religious concepts throughout his writings, usually read as straightforward attacks on institutional Christianity, actually reveal a nuanced critique of the structural dualism between religion and the secular. Thoreau is particularly concerned with how these religious institutions separate people from nature. Rather than rejecting the religious in favor of the secular, Thoreau altogether rejects the division, standard within nature-grace and nature-freedom Christianity, between secular and religious as categories. For Thoreau, all of nature and life has religious significance that, while perverted, has been not destroyed. In theological terms, creation must not be conflated with the sinful effects of the fall. The Sabbath is a primary example of a creational principle that has been misunderstood and misused, as Thoreau discusses in the "Sunday" chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Examining, in this instance, Thoreau's Biblical allusions and how his own idiosyncratic Sabbath practices critique Sabbath practices of the Christian culture around him, I argue he ultimately also reaffirms the meaning of Sabbath. Although Thoreau does not write from a position of Christian belief, the underlying structure of his thought exemplifies a creation-fall-redemption religious orientation rather than move toward a more secular religious orientation.

Whereas Thoreau was most concerned with the conflation of the doctrines of creation and fall, I argue that Emily Dickinson was most concerned with the dissociation of the doctrines of creation and redemption. Although Dickinson's poems resist systematization, they consistently question received doctrines and structures that separate humans from the natural world and thus underlie environmental abuse and neglect. I read

Dickinson's poetry of heaven and immortality as critiquing a dualistic religious orientation that separates a heavenly realm from an earthly, secular realm. While Dickinson has long been recognized as a formidable religious thinker, this chapter goes beyond her personal beliefs to analyze the religious orientation of her work regarding this separation of human destiny from the non-human world. I read Dickinson's poems about God as engaging what she saw as an actual divine referent while questioning the belief that God could only be approached in a religious system disconnected from the natural world. Indeed, Dickinson's poetry affirms a belief in heaven as present on earth, consonant with both orthodox Christian doctrines of creation and the doctrine of the resurrection, which states that heaven consists of a bodily life-after-death on earth.

**Notes**

[1] I use the term "Calvinism" broadly to include particular denominations such as Reformed and Presbyterian as well as the heavily Puritan-influenced religious context in which Thoreau was raised.

[2] J. Baird Callicot has also noted this pattern in relation to Calvinism and writing about wilderness, adding earlier and later Calvinists who wrote passionately about the natural world such as Jonathan Edwards and Holmes Rolston III, the contemporary philosopher and founding figure in environmental ethics. These two figures maintained their Calvinism in their (proto-)environmental writings. These lists could be expanded to include environmental writers from other faith traditions whose careers followed similar trajectories (John Burroughs, Aldo Leopold, Erik Reece) as well as committed Calvinists who have written important works of environmental literature (Marilynne Robinson).

[3] Thomas Dunlap's *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (2004) argues that environmentalism itself became the primary experience of faith for many of those important environmental figures, including those with religious roots.

[4] In particular, the coexistence of "sharply discrepant views across different faith persuasions as to humankind's obligations toward earth's other-and-human environment" is problematic for Buell, especially when the religious commitments of those with political power have been a motivator and shaper of environmental destruction (365).

[5] See Mark Stoll's *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (2015), Evan Berry's *Devoted to Nature: The Religious Roots of American Environmentalism* (2015), Jeffrey Bilbro's *Loving God's Wildness: The*

*Christian Roots of Ecological Ethics in American Literature* (2015), and Belden Lane's *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (2011).

[6] This is not a survey of such definitions. For helpful surveys, see Casanova "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms" and Warner "Secularism."

[7] Dickinson's family was Congregational, a Calvinist denomination. Apess was born into a non-affiliating Pequot family but was raised by Calvinist and Baptist foster families. Thoreau's family was Unitarian, which was not a Calvinist denomination but, like the Baptists in New England, was significantly shaped by the Puritan heritage of the region.

[8] Nature-freedom also tends to absolutize power, construed either as "natural" or as an exercise of "freedom."

[9] For example, Henry Thoreau was not a Christian and argued vehemently against the contemporaneous church. But his arguments against the church were largely against its nature-grace and nature-freedom dualisms, its secularity, its lack of concern for the natural world. Thoreau's conception of the natural world is actually very creational. Likewise, Zitkala-Ša's "Why I Am a Pagan" could just as easily have been titled "Why I Am a Creational Christian" but for the fact that the Christianity Zitkala-Ša had encountered was guided by the nature-grace dualism in the context of the dominant nature-freedom orientation, both of which tend to devalue the natural world. In the twentieth century, Simone Weil refused baptism, official entry into the "fold," but no one would recognize her work as anything but distinctly Christian and indeed Catholic.

[10] The John 10 passage suggests that those outside the fold but within the flock will recognize their status as such, which is not necessarily true of these authors.

# CHAPTER II

# RELIGIOUS ORIENTATIONS AND ECOCRITICISM WITH/OUT THE SECULAR

In this chapter, I elaborate on the theory and methodology that forms the groundwork for my study in the following chapters. After showing that postsecular studies and ecocriticism share similar basic goals, I argue that the former can help refine the latter. I also show how scholarship that falls under the label postsecular also can use refinement that this chapter provides. I go on to explain delineate the religious orientations that structure modern life, rendering certain actions, systems, and arguments meaningful. I then apply these categories to a critique of certain features of ecocriticism, in particular the implications of its unmarked secularity. A delineation of ways of understanding "religion" and "the secular" then follows, concluding with my argument that religion as religious orientation, a definition that accords with the creation-fall-redemption structure, is the most useful for the purpose of studying meaning in literature.

## Postsecular Studies and Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is the field of literary studies that examines the relationship between embodied humans and the more-than-human world they are embedded in, especially the way humans are morally responsible for the degradation of the natural world as well as the injustices of some humans towards others as mediated through environmental relationships. The development of ecocriticism has paralleled the development patterns of other branches of literary criticism (such as feminist criticism) by rehabilitating voices primarily concerned with the natural world and an "ecocentric" perspective, examining human relationships in and with environmental contexts, forming alliances around environmental justice and environmental activism, including more recently in

postcolonial contexts, and formulating literary environmental theory (Glotfelty xxii-xxiv), with a recent emphasis on materialist and post-humanist theory. Such ecocritical theory has drawn on numerous and often very different sources from the hard sciences to phenomenology to feminist theory. Relatively few ecocritics, however, have drawn on the intellectual resources of explicitly religious traditions, despite the environmental potential of various religious beliefs and doctrines, and despite common goals such as environmental justice for the poor and dispossessed (Mabie 280).

Perhaps in part for this reason, ecocriticism and another burgeoning field, postsecular studies, which is attentive to religious configurations and traditions in the modern world, have rarely intersected in the interpretation of texts. Yet these fields of literary study share similar concerns. The first involves a strong critique of intertwined dualisms. Postsecular studies deconstructs the religious-secular dualism, finding it to be a cause of the pervasive misunderstandings of both terms inside the academy and the product of the transition from the nature-grace dualism, with its hard separation of the transcendent and immanent orders (Asad 31-32). Similarly, ecocriticism deconstructs the nature-culture dualism and Cartesian mind-body dualism, finding them to be a root cause of environmental degradation as well as related social injustices in that they privilege human interests as well as the interests of certain culturally dominant groups over nature and other groups. These dualisms are attended by many other dualisms that function in the same way, including reason-revelation, soul-body, heaven-earth, and sacred-profane in the former case and agent-matter, free will-determinism, subject-object, and realism-constructivism in the case of the latter. Further, these dualisms have also been identified as the basis of hierarchies used to justify oppression of one group by another, such as

male/female, straight/queer, civilized/uncivilized, rich/poor, and white/racially non-white. I argue that all these dualisms derive from a dualistically structured religious orientation that is the dominant way in which meaning is structured in the Western world. Ecocritics have also recognized that these latter "secular" dualisms were inherited from a version of Christianity that originally produced the intellectual structure within Christian thought that made such binaries plausible. These binaries typically privileged one state—the more "religious"— over its opposite—the more "secular" state that is devalued as further from God. (Deism accepts the same binaries but privileges the opposite term in each case.) This is the iteration of Christianity that, as it emerged within a modern, secularist context, Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson most strenuously rejected. Environmental intellectual historians such as William Cronon, Roderick Nash, and Carolyn Merchant have also rightly rejected this dualism, both in its historically dominant medieval version and still-influential modern version.

As mentioned above, postsecular studies deconstructs the simplistic uses of religious-secular binaries; constructions of religion as belief, ideology, or affiliation; and outdated, false narratives of secularization that go assumed and unmarked in scholarship, including much ecocriticism. My understanding of secularity builds on recent postsecular criticism that rejects the traditional secularization thesis and the common dualistic understanding of religion as opposed to the secular.

In particular, postsecular studies have reexamined the dominant narratives in which secularization supposedly accompanies the transition from premodernity to modernity and inevitably spreads with modernization. Most accounts of the secularization of the modern West begin with the late Middle Ages on the verge of early

modernity, the European colonial expansion project, the Protestant Reformation, and the Renaissance. In these accounts, this premodern period was somehow more "religious" or "enchanted" than the "secular" and "disenchanted" modernity that emerged from it. Belief in God was assumed; disbelief was not a plausible option in people's experience of the world. For much of the twentieth century, a story of secularization, popularized by social theorists such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, described an inevitable decline or subtraction of religion with the advent of modernization: religion became private and retreated from the public sphere, replaced by other forms of secular culture; fewer people believed in God and attended organized worship services as science made religion less plausible; as a consequence, religious institutions lost their cultural authority, which devolved to various civic institutions; and so on. I will refer to this as the traditional secularization thesis or narrative. In its most common version, secular culture advances, aided by scientific advances, by gradually removing the oppressive, dogmatic elements of religion, leaving freedom and rationality to flourish unhindered.[11]

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, this narrative, especially the elements of religious privatization and decline in belief, has been called into question in scholarship on the secular and secularism. According to Talal Asad, for instance, "If anything is agreed upon, it is that a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable" (*Formations* 1). Asad argues that in modernity religion and the secular are co-constructions of the modern, secularist state. Jose Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) was particularly influential in demonstrating that in modernity, for the most part, people have not lost religious belief and religion has not become private or lost influence in the public sphere.

Charles Taylor extends such critiques in *A Secular Age* (2007) and demonstrates the falsehood of the "subtraction story" version of secularization, in which the modern self supposedly just emerged once superstition was left behind; Taylor details the changing everyday conditions that made belief an option rather than a given. Secularization is the transformation, rather than reduction, of religion. I build on this scholarship that demonstrates that religious-secular binaries and construals of religion as belief, ideology, or affiliation are perpetrations of modern secularism to legitimate the modern nation state.

Despite all this, the traditional secularization narrative and the presuppositions that it generates still underlie many assumptions in literary study and ecocriticism. Professional literary study has tended to take the secularization narrative for granted. Michael Kaufman argues that "[t]he conviction that religion has long ago been left behind renders the secular itself into a transcendent category—a fixed and stable view from nowhere from which we narrate our professional history" (614). In one version of this, made famous by Matthew Arnold, literature replaces religion as the repository of a culture's values (616). Theories of the novel dating back to Georg Lukacs's *The Theory of the Novel* (1916) have assumed it to be an inherently secular form, functioning in a world in which God is absent or irrelevant. Later, literary study itself replaces literature in the same way literature replaced religion. Deconstructive literary study in particular becomes a primary means of critiquing those naturalized values in literature and literary study seen as perpetuating injustice, inhibiting freedom, or otherwise manifesting the problems that religion supposedly had (Fessenden "Problem" 155). This explains away the religious as a mere production of the political. Literary study also tends to operate

within what Charles Taylor calls closed world structures within the immanent frame (551). This refers to the presupposition that reality, meaning, and truth exist within the world without reference to a transcendent source that is somehow beyond the world. It also signifies the uncritical acceptance of this stance as reality and unwillingness to consider otherwise, "spin" as Taylor calls it: "The spin of closure … is hegemonic in the Academy" (549). Scholarship and critique are thereby assumed to exist within a religiously neutral, secular realm upon which religions and theories that include transcendence appear in contrast.[12]

In the mid-1990s, Jenny Franchot challenged literary critics to take up the study of religion as a critical category of equal stature as categories such as race, class, sexuality, and gender. Instead of reducing religion to a political construction that might be useful for studying supposedly more important categories, it should be an object of study in its own right (834). However, to the extent this has happened, often led by Christians, the category "religion" has often been used in the modern sense that studies of secularism have shown to be the production of the modern secularist state.

Even recent literary scholarship that examines the "postsecular" in literature tends to take for granted the assumptions of modern secularism. Don't get me wrong: such studies are an important development in the study of secularity in and via literature. But they remain anchored in the problematic assumptions of secularity. Manav Ratti is explicit about this: "In the wake of [secularism's] crises, [and] the need for faith, awe, wonder, and transcendence … [t]he task then is to explore secular alternatives to secularism" (xx). John McClure's *Partial Faiths: Postsecular Fiction in the Age of Pynchon and Morrison* (2007) and Amy Hungerford's *Postmodern Belief: American*

*Literature and Religion since 1960* (2010) do just that. Both rely on the theoretical differentiation between secularity and religion even as they trouble that distinction and interpret literature that does the same. And although they examine the emergence of spiritual themes in fiction, their postsecular turn, like Ratti's, is still a turn away from religion. Furthermore, their understanding of "religion" is limited to modern, secularist understandings that emphasize, for instance, belief. The "post-" of their "postsecular" has to do with a critical self-awareness of the assumptions of the secular context rather than moving beyond them; postsecular is really just a development of and within secularity (Fessenden "Problem" 155-157). Other recent "postsecular" studies that cover literature from earlier periods and global contexts make similar assumptions about religion that conform to secular assumptions: it is reducible to aesthetics or language (Schrader, Pecora) or, at least, "literature constitutes a *privileged space* in which the return of religion can take place" (Bradley, Carruthers, and Tate 3); it has been stadially superseded by the secular (Ratti); it is attached to violence and ideology (Ratti); and, while it may not be reducible to ideology, other modern, secular conceptions of religion—belief in God or the authority of Scriptures, as a formation of power and historical difference, life-denying, puritanical ascenticism—capture its essence (Vance, Mandair and Dressler, Pecora).

A postsecular scholarship that goes beyond these confines is needed to adequately read literature that pushes against secular assumptions, and I believe it needs to go by a different name. The aforementioned postsecular studies evince the very ethos that Colin Jager finds in Romantic literature and calls "*after the secular*" in that it comes chronologically after secularity, whether that be Enlightenment or twentieth-century

secularity, it "*takes after*" the secular in its form and indeed pursues or chases after secularity as an ideal, "carrying it forward while living into a different future than any it might have imagined." "To be after the secular," writes Jager, "is to start one's thinking from a romantic insight: a cautious, ambivalent recognition that the religious and the secular constitute each other, and that the attempt to pull them apart leads to a level of harm that is (or ought to be) morally intolerable" (*Unquiet* 22-23). Justin Neuman, in *Fiction Beyond Secularism*, likewise writes that "the first step [toward a robust understanding of secularity] is unlearning the habit of conceiving religion and secularity as opposites" (6). "Beyond" denotes a different attitude than "after" regarding secularity. Neuman's "beyond secularism" refers to a recognized need rather than a destination. As Ratti puts it, "The paradox becomes to find a non-secular secularism, a non-religious religion" (xx). Neuman echoes theologian John Milbank's desire to move "beyond secular reason" (189), the subtitle of Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory*. Milbank and the Radical Orthodoxy movement advocate a return to an explicitly theological grounding of criticism, that is, an embrace of the reality of divine transcendence to avoid the nihilism of modern, secular thought. I am indebted to Milbank's work, but the "theology" that he advocates may still be too limited a category to sufficiently account for the pervasiveness of secularity. Furthermore, the modes of thought that he valorizes, dominant centuries ago, are not without their own problems. Instead of criticism "beyond the secular," which also carries the suggestion of otherworldliness that I wish to avoid,[13] I propose criticism "with/out the secular." Such criticism recognizes the dominance of secular assumptions—all criticism takes place "within" the context of a secular age—but questions their validity and seeks to interpret literature "outside" of its confines. Such a

critical attitude not only resolves paradoxes regarding the future direction of criticism, moving beyond secular dualisms, but also provides more adequate resources for interpreting texts written before the ascendancy of modern secularity, including and texts that come "after" the secular but pursue and model other structures of meaning, that are themselves "with/out the secular." So, if "the term *postsecular* describes an environment in which the categories of the religious and the secular no longer divide the world cleanly between them, and signals the need for new ones[, and the] problem of the postsecular … is a problem of definition" (Fessenden "Problem" 156), then the theoretical task of this dissertation is to offer sufficient categories that enable critique with/out the secular.

**Religious Orientations**

The category of religious orientation offers an understanding of religion that enables critics to take religion seriously and adequately account for competing definitions of religion and secularity while also taking seriously the modern co-constructedness of religion and the secular. It will be helpful to introduce the concept of religious orientation in order to have the vocabulary going forward to discuss the secular assumptions prevalent in ecocriticism.

To formulate the category of "religious orientation," I draw primarily on the work of Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd, adopting and adapting his theory of "religious ground motives." However, I use the term "religious orientations" instead because it more accurately suggests the definition of the framework I describe. I do, however, use the same names he used for the particular religious motives/orientations that I discuss: nature-freedom, nature-grace, and creation-fall-redemption.[14] As I will be using the term, a religious orientation is a structure that orients or directs a person or

group toward a reality that functions as absolute (or divine), that is, as something that is self-existent, that preexists everything else that exists, that determines how it will exist, that gives meaning to everything, and that orders and maintains the existence of everything else (Clouser 19). For example, some believe in a personal God as divine; some believe that matter/energy pre-exists and determines the existence of all else; some believe that logical or mathematical laws are the most absolutely fundamental aspect of reality. All of the above may be treated functionally as "divine." In addition to being an ultimate source of meaning and being, this "divine" source usually also constitutes the site of ultimate fullness and flourishing.[15] But the "divine" referent of a religious orientation is not the orientation itself; the orientation structures meaning as experienced in the everyday world. Unlike religion understood as a system of belief or piety or worship, a religious orientation may be consciously or unconsciously held. A religious orientation might be called an ontology or a cosmology or a metanarrative; however, it operates pre-theoretically and is better understood as a "pre-ontology" (Taylor 5). Indeed, one's religious orientation conditions, shapes, and directs what counts as a meaningful belief, perception, or theory. It cannot be proved but rather is that by which anything else is proved or disproved. A religious orientation is that which renders all else meaningful in every aspect of life. It conditions an individual—or an entire society—across all aspects of life, including but not limited to the pistic aspect of life (from *pistis*, Greek for faith or faithfulness). It additionally shapes understandings and experiences of feelings, communication, culture, economy, aesthetics, ethics, and so on. Each and every person and society is shaped by one or more religious orientation.

Religion as religious orientation or ground motive is similar to other concepts regarding religion and secularity. A number of philosophers working in the Calvinist tradition have developed Dooyeweerd's category of religious ground motives in ways that shape the category of religious orientation. For example, philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff writes of "worldviews" and "control beliefs," often held unconsciously, that direct religious and all other kinds of beliefs, including in scholarship (74, 83). James K. A. Smith similarly writes of "fundamental religious commitments" and emphasizes the embodied, affective, and desiring aspects inherent in these commitments as opposed to the construal of these commitments as primarily theoretical or disembodied, an implication of the term "worldview" not shared by Wolterstorff.

Dooyeweerd's ideas resonate with many others working outside the Reformed tradition as well. Another closely related category is Charles Taylor's "social imaginary," which Smith also draws on, What Charles Taylor calls "the whole context of understanding in which" all "experiences take place" (3) and "different kinds of lived experience involved in understanding … life in one way or the other" (5) are similar to religious orientations. Similarly, what Peter Berger calls the nomos of a society (the sum of its worldviews, values, customs, ways of life, what it considers knowledge) is similar to its religious orientation. Berger uses the term "plausibility structures" to refer to the authorities and institutions in a society that validate the existing nomos and police alternative ones in a mutually reinforcing process. Religious orientations are similar to Paul Griffith's characterization of religion as an account that is comprehensive, central, and unsurpassable (7-12).

However, religious orientations build from and go deep to the most fundamental workings of meaning-rendering. For example, religious orientations provide the deep structure and ultimate orientation of how society is imagined as well as the cosmos and the self. But religious orientations are even more fundamental than "social imaginaries": they shape and determine how experiences are understood as meaningful or not, good or bad.[16] Whereas Berger's plausibility structures are infrastructural and physical, religious orientations are structures that generate the plausibility of a nomos or the "conditions of belief" in a society as well as what is considered meaningful or normal for institutions and who or what has authority in a given context. Furthermore, they point toward what is considered ultimately meaningful, absolute, or divine in a society.[17] Building from Griffiths' definition of religion, religious orientations need not be consciously held and one may hold more than one at once, albeit inconsistently.[18]

Religious orientations allow for a more expansive understanding of the category "the secular" as that which is autonomous from a transcendent source, whether that be a source of meaning, knowledge, being, ethics, or otherwise. In other words, the secular is that which has an immanent source of meaning and being, and that which is morally neutral. Most accounts of "the secular" contrast a premodern era with modernity, and for good reason: medieval Europe's dominant religious orientation was different from Western modernity's.

But this makes for narratives with only a single movement of "secularization," from premodern to modern; most accounts of the secular therefore posit only two "basic orientations": one open to transcendence and one closed to it, both of which exist in modernity, despite the dominance of the latter. Taylor's account exemplifies this single-

movement dynamic (548, *passim*). Likewise the Radical Orthodoxy movement contrasts a medieval ontology of deep transcendent participation with a modern ontology of flattened immanence.

Adapting Dooyeweerd, I propose that there are actually three basic religious orientations functioning in modernity and that there were two movements of "secularization" in the West that account for their historical origins: an orientation which acknowledges no secular, and all reality has its source in the transcendent; one which acknowledges the transcendent but also the secular; and one which acknowledges no transcendence, only immanent reality. All of these primary religious orientations acknowledge the reality of immanence, that which is separate from the transcendent.[19]

My goal is not primarily to offer a historical or theological account or genealogy of secularity. But the three primary religious orientations in modernity have historical origins, and I will delineate them by sketching their historical and theological origins. My hope is that this will aid understanding how religious orientations structure understandings of "religion," the "secular," and indeed every aspect of human experience, including those aspects considered by ecocritics, as well as how religious orientations may themselves be secular and non-secular.

*A. Form-Matter*

Before any of the three religious orientations that are most influential in the modernity emerged, the dominant Western religious orientation was the dualism of form-matter, which developed out of two competing Greek religions—the post-Socratic Olympian culture religion and earlier nature religions.[20] Under the Greek form-matter religious orientation, the tension between form and matter was seen as explaining all

being, knowing, activity, and normativity. Form and matter were alternately seen as the source from which all being and goodness followed. As a dualism, one of these poles, usually the form pole, was invariably elevated above the other. Form was good; matter inferior. Forms were absolute and gave matter its existence. Philosophy and reason were the means to reach the forms and as such were assumed to be autonomous. Form performed the function of divinity, although it was also seen to be part of the world.

*B. Creation-Fall-Redemption*

As the form-matter religious orientation was developing in Greece, the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation was developing among the Hebrews of West Asia. In its modern form, this religious orientation is derived from the Hebrew and Christian Bible, which sees God as divine. God is separate from the world; however, God is intimately involved in the world. Thus transcendence and immanence are not the same but are never truly separate. The immanent is at all times dependent for existence and meaning on its transcendent source. God creates the world, keeps it in existence, and declares the entire world to be good (not neutral).[21] Each aspect of the world is structured by divinely given laws by which creatures are enabled to function as subjects and have meaning. These aspects include the quantitative, the material, the biotic, the rational, the lingual, the social, the aesthetic, the justicial, the ethical, and the pistic.[22] Functioning in these aspects actively or passively allows creatures to relate as subjects and objects in ways that unite rather than divide. The myriad diverse ways of functioning allowed by these laws structures creatures' individualities and identities.[23] All selves are "porous," open to the influence of the divine and other creatures. Authority in these areas falls on

different institutions, none of which should dominate the others (as church and state have under the other religious orientations).

Creation's structure is good, coherent, and unified, but the transcendent laws can be broken. Thus creationality also entails directionality, the ability to act in accordance with creational laws and God's will or instead the ability to violate these laws. Evil is not located in one part of the world, but in the human response to the world and God—the fall.[24] However, God actively intervenes in the world to save it and put it to rights—redemption.[25] Thus God, not humanity or the rest of creation, is the primary actor in this orientation. In the creation-fall-redemption orientation, dualisms do not ontologically exist. In this orientation, various dualisms such as individuality-universality, faith-reason, and mind-body are integrated rather than opposite points of dualistic binaries. The dashes separating the terms of this orientation are not the same as the dash between form and matter, which denotes a dualistic relationship. The fall does not cancel out creation's goodness, and redemption does not fully cancel fallenness. This religious orientation is most fully expressed as creation-fall-redemption-consummation. Creation is structural and good; fall and redemption are directional, away from and toward God's will respectively (Wolters 88). The consummation is the final eradication of the fall and its effects as well as the final ultimate union of the transcendent and the immanent. It is thus structurally not just good, like the original creation, but also perfect.[26]

The creation-fall-redemption religious orientation sees all created life as religiously oriented and structured. The category "religious orientation" only makes consistent sense when understood in light of the creation-fall-redemption narrative. Thus I have attempted to write this essay from that perspective, which I understand to be the

most faithful to the story of the gospel. Unlike the other religious orientations, it is non-dualistic, non-reductionist, non-essentialist, non-secular, and non-centric (no aspect is absolute, privileged, or reducible).

*C. Nature-Grace*

Another religious orientation arose as a synthesis of the form-matter and creation-fall-redemption religious orientations in the centuries after the life of Jesus: nature-grace.[27] The nature-grace orientation shifted the role of reason in form-matter from understanding forms to understanding nature. Form itself was replaced by the supernatural as that which suspended the material world. It was experienced as grace and revelation, which, mediated through the church, was seen as higher than reason and material nature. Philosophy and theology became separate disciplines. Seen another way, nature-grace conflated creation and the fall and set this over against redemption and consummation (grace) in a dualism, as opposed to a narrative. In this dualism, the material, the non-human, the ordinary, and all that did not have to do with the church and the revelation it mediated—the secular—were seen as interfering with the spiritual, the fully human, and the divine, and at worst as evil by nature. In this religious orientation, God is the source of meaning and fullness, but God's interaction with the world (grace) is mediated through religious institutions and affiliations and religious belief. Faith and the church were seen as opposed and superior to other "secular" or "natural" aspects of life and their corresponding institutions. In other words, nature-grace absolutizes the pistic aspect of reality and opposes it to the other supposedly "secular" aspects, particularly the material and the rational. The Roman Catholic Church, which saw itself as the mediator of supernatural grace, fostered and took advantage of this to gain cultural dominance.

This immanent dualism between secular and religious mirrored a transcendent dualism between divine and diabolical influences; both mirrored the much harder separation between transcendent and immanent than in creation-fall-redemption (Asad 31-32).

The Church's corruption and sponsorship of violence ranging from the Crusades to the Inquisition to intra-Christian religious wars engendered two primary responses, namely, according to Dooyeweerd, the Reformation and the Renaissance. In Dooyeweerd's estimation, the primary goal of the reformers of the Reformation was to undo the original synthesis of Greek and biblical religious orientations and give prominence in Western thought to the creation-fall-redemption orientation; however, they failed to accomplish this, and their followers reinstituted the nature-grace dualism under different guises in modernity. The other response, giving prominence to the Greek roots, grew in the Renaissance and culminated in the Enlightenment. This response suggested that the religious (or grace) itself was to blame for the abuses of the medieval church. The rise of Deism in the eighteenth century reversed the hierarchy of this nature-grace dualism so that the faith aspect of life was devalued and other "natural" aspects of life, particularly rational and empirical understandings of the world, were privileged as means of understanding reality. As Charles Taylor argues, this reversal paved the way for the conditions of belief that characterize the present secular age. The reform of the problematic medieval "two-tiered religion" of the nature-grace dualism resulted in both attempts to reduce the meaning of all reality to the grace pole and to reduce all meaning to the nature pole (60-75). Thus medieval and early modern Reform produces both extremes as they have been historically instantiated: Puritanism and the (ongoing) ethos of the 1960s (Smith *How* 37).[28]

*D. Nature-Freedom*

By privileging the "natural" aspects of the world that had been presumed not to mediate God's influence, Deism created conditions in which it became easier for people to understand the world without reference to God. The rational and empirical epistemology of Deism became the ontology of a new religious orientation. This particular religious orientation treats all aspects of reality and human life as secular, that is, as autonomous of any transcendent reality. Objects of ultimate significance are immanent rather than transcendent, but this religious orientation can also condition religious beliefs that include a belief in transcendence. In this nature-freedom religious orientation, human freedom, self-determination, and personality replaced God's intervention and faith as privileged aspects of life for understanding meaning. The medieval enchantment with relics or the diabolical in nature that Taylor describes in *A Secular Age*, which is a perversion of creational enchantment, is not "subtracted," leaving Weberian disenchantment. It too is transformed and transferred to the freedom pole: freedom to choose, freedom to move, freedom to buy.

Eventually this religious orientation became dominant in the West, but not inevitably so, as Taylor stresses. God and supernatural grace were "replaced" with the freedom of the human personality. Nature became understood as that which was to be mastered and dominated for human benefit. Thus what was originally a reductionism designed to resolve the nature-grace dualism produced a different dualism. But where the church as dominant institution had considered nature irrelevant to the highest fullness that existed beyond earthly life, the state as dominant institution, which acknowledged nothing beyond life, considered nature as the means for achieving the ideal of human

freedom. This sanctioned the acceleration of wholesale environmental destruction, often through state-encouraged industry, for human benefit in its liberal version or financial profit in its neoliberal version. This religious orientation's civilizational dominance, roughly coterminous with modernity and the rise of European power, explains reality in terms of the dualism between nature and freedom—originally freedom from the church's hegemony. It is important to note that modern institutions, especially the nation-state, continue to define themselves over against their premodern counterparts.

The legitimacy of nature-freedom still depends on its supposed supersession of nature-grace, which survives as one conception of modern "religion," discussed below. Whether it is in ontology, epistemology, ethics, politics, or as simple history, the "secular" is understood to be a stadial development beyond the "religious" (Casanova "The Secular" 59-67).[29] One ideal for humanity and the goal of theoretical thought became freedom from political, religious, economic, or environmentally inherent limitations and the free play of human expression. At the same time, the human subject was seen as determined by social, political, cultural, natural and other factors. Science and technology became the means of totally knowing and controlling the forces of nature[30] that determined human life, often with the goal of enhancing human freedom. Since the nineteenth century, emphasis in various influential theories has shifted back and forth from freedom pole to the deterministic nature pole. Sociobiology is an example of the latter, and examples of the former include historicist relativism and identity politics that holds autonomous individual identity and personality to be sacrosanct. As "religious" belief became optional, optionality—freedom—became the object of religious devotion.[31] This shifting often happens by way of reductionism. For example, a theorist may posit

that agency and meaning are really just a function of matter, which functionally grants matter divine status. This may also happen by way of dialectical synthesis; however, Dooyeweerd was clear that these dialectics cannot truly be overcome because they deal with ultimate meanings. Nature-freedom is more accurately an antinomy than a dialectic. Attempts to hold both poles of a religious orientation together will result in theoretical inconsistency at best and nihilism at worst.

Although this nature-freedom religious orientation remains dominant in the West, the others still exist.[32] The form-matter orientation has largely been transformed into the nature-freedom orientation itself, by way of nature-grace. Nature-grace especially shapes the thinking within various organized religious groups and understandings of religion in modernity. Even the ancient creation-fall-redemption still influences thinking as well, largely through its influence on Christian tradition. It haunted the dualistic nature-grace religious orientation while it was dominant in Europe, often erupting in the lives and writings of saints like Francis of Assisi, Hildegard of Bingen, and John Wycliffe. This religious orientation has never been truly dominant in the West, but it has structured much thought and action in Judeo-Christian cultures. It never went away even as early Christian thought was heavily inflected by the dominant Greek and Roman religious orientations, even as it was transformed by its synthesis with these into nature-grace, even as it is construed as a mere "belief" by nature-grace and consigned to the past as a stage in the development of modernity. The greatest Christian theologians of all periods—Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Barth, to name a few—used the language of their times and were influenced by the dominant religious orientations, even as they each in their own way also remained faithful to the Biblical creation-fall-redemption structure.

The same may be said of the authors of some of the greatest Christian literature—Dante, Milton, Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, just to name poets.

Although modern people experience the world and themselves without conscious reference to transcendence, and modern civic society acts as if it exists autonomously or as simply composed of individuals, these experiences and assumptions are troubled by those of the other religious orientations. As James K. A. Smith has said, "some of our best novelists, poets, and artists attest … that our age is haunted. On the one hand, we live … ensconced in immanence. We live in the twilight of both gods and idols. But their ghosts have refused to depart, and every once in a while we might be surprised to find ourselves tempted by belief, by intimations of transcendence" (*How* 3-4). Colin Jager refers to these intimations as the "unquiet things" that remain in the supposed finality of the modern immanent frame. Our secular age is "cross-pressured" according to Taylor, meaning that beliefs are pulled by both the lure of exclusive immanence and the specter of transcendence, resulting in a "nova effect," an explosion of new configurations of religious belief—and definitions and secular—that often appear in literary works. I would only add that this haunting, these unquiet things, are structured by the religious orientations that acknowledge transcendence. Using these structures, these religious orientations, as tools of analysis may aid literary critics in their pursuit of understanding the secular and the religious in literary texts.

To further illustrate the differences between these three religious orientations and how they direct different interpretations, let's apply them to see how they shed light on a religious discourse and an ecocritical discourse. Regarding the Genesis 3 fall narrative, and the curse on the humans in particular, [33] each of the religious orientations would

agree that the curse involves the inequality of males and females, with males in a "ruling" position.[34] Creation-fall-redemption sees this curse as the result of disobedience. Patriarchy is antithetical to the structure of creation in which male-female relations are characterized by love and mutuality. This fallenness pervades everyday reality but does not efface that original normativity; redemption involves improving equality and gender relationships, which individuals and institutions should strive for. Nature-grace sees this curse as God's establishing patriarchy as a new normative status for male-female relationships. Love and mutuality are still important, but in this worldly life at least, males "naturally" rule females, which they should do graciously. Nature-freedom sees this story as a "religious" myth used to justify patriarchal oppression, which can be a fair critique of nature-grace. The inequality may be considered "natural," probably as a result of socialization rooted in evolutionary processes. Freedom is the ideal instead—freedom for women from this patriarchal inequality, but also freedom for men to exercise the power they have.

The ecocritical "wilderness debate" attempts to conceptualize the appropriate relationship between wilderness and humanity and to assess what exactly does or does not make something wilderness. The positions in this debate correspond to the positions of the nature-freedom dualism. In "Wilderness Skepticism and Wilderness Dualism," Val Plumwood analyzes these positions as they correspond to the nature-culture dualism. One position, held by Holmes Roston III, maintains the dualism in order to hold humans responsible for the "nature" on the other side of the dualism, a position that would also accord with nature-grace. Plumwood notes how this dualism fails to recognize the overlap between the two poles and fails to adequately critique the oppression of

indigenous peoples and women that the valorization of "pristine" nature has served to justify (670). Other positions begin from a critique of this view that wilderness is the absence of human culture. The wilderness skepticism of Ramachandra Guha and William Cronon attempts to resolve the dualism by reducing nature to culture—wilderness is a (problematic) human invention. This anthropocentric position, however, cannot adequately account for nature's otherness and inadvertently erase its agency (672-674). Finally, another position, held by J. Baird Callicott, reduces culture to nature, assuming that a material or sociobiological priority determines human culture. Human functioning is essentially the same as all nonhuman functioning. Humans are simply another part of the global ecosystem. This view, too, cannot account for human social relations or adequately ground an environmental ethics.

Plumwood, in concurrence with creation-fall-redemption, resists dualisms and reductionisms. According to Plumwood, it is a fallacy to assume that the existence of a cultural aspect to some "natural" entity means that there is no "natural" aspect to it either, and vice versa. She argues for the interdependency and "interwoven continuum of nature and culture" (670, 684). Holding the two poles together in a kind of natureculture as a way of resolving the dualism is promising. Plumwood's approach attempts to push beyond nature-freedom, but does not actually get outside it; however, her account of the wilderness debate can be fully accommodated and developed by way of the creation-fall-redemption orientation.

In creation-fall-redemption, wilderness, like all entities, does not have essence or being in itself. Rather its existence is creational, upheld by a divine source by way of creational laws. These laws include biotic and material laws as well as social and cultural

laws and norms. Nature-freedom-structured arguments about whether the property of "wilderness" exists only in the human mind, intrinsically in the non-human world, or in some physical relationship to humanity tend to be based in that dualism and its attendant reductionisms. The meaning of wilderness is multiple according to the different creational aspects, all of which are inherently good.[35] The same entity "wilderness" that could be biotically understood as an ecosystem could also function in the analytic or lingual aspect as the word or concept "wilderness." It could exist in the ethical aspect as the recipient of care by humans, in the pistic aspect as a place that opens the human heart toward the divine, or socially as a component of human relationships (or debate, for that matter). Its active biotic agency could have an effect on the passive functioning of humans. Thus a creational/aspectual explanation about the meaning of an entity disallows its reduction to any one aspect. But creation-fall-redemption also recognizes that some of the creational laws that define wilderness have norms that can be violated, as it certainly has been economically, aesthetically, and culturally in ways justified by nature-freedom. Indeed, much of the activist and transformational impulse of ecocriticism—that which would seek to "save" the wilderness—is better understood as motivated by redemption rather than as a reformulation of the absolutized "freedom" or "nature" poles.

**Some Objections Initially Considered**

At this point, someone skeptical of this category might ask, "Aren't these religious orientations really just religious beliefs, rather than anything 'deeper'? And aren't they really just ideologies?" That critique, however, relies on an understanding of religion *as* belief or ideology, an understanding that is made possible and determined by the nature-freedom religious orientation. As I will show shortly, these are constructions

of early modern and Enlightenment theorists such as Hobbes, Rousseau, and Locke designed to legitimate the hegemony of the modern state. In other words, the reduction of religion to belief or to ideology is a feature of modern secular thought. Such a critique reveals the deep religious orientation that the critic is committed to. A religious orientation is therefore not to be understood simply as Marxian or Althusserian ideology, although, religious orientations may indeed legitimize ideological state repression, as nature-grace and especially nature-freedom do. But this critique, too, is rooted in the dominant nature-freedom dualism. In fact, Althusser's theory of ideology very clearly presupposes a particular religious orientation, namely an orientation toward the tension between human freedom and the deterministic nature of the state apparatus as an ultimately meaningful structure. A creation-fall-redemption take on this would be that, like Foucault and most deconstructionist theorists, Althusser does reveal the insidious and pervasive workings of power, but in doing so, he also reduces all relations to functions of the formative aspect of the world. This aspect of everyday life is indeed inescapable, but so are other irreducible aspects such as justice and love. Although these critics brilliantly analyze the workings of fallen directionality in this aspect related to power, power itself remains a creational good. Furthermore, these critics only gesture toward redemptive possibilities because in the immanent nature-freedom orientation, true redemption is excluded from the realm of meaningfulness. Any redemptive act is actually a power move that limits or enhances (or masks the repression of) the free expression of an autonomous personality.[36]

Someone else might argue that, granting this, critique is inherently secular or at least must be so in modernity because the dominant religious orientation is the secular

nature-freedom structure of the immanent frame. It alone can offer a neutral position for critique. This view, however, leads to the inconsistencies and antinomies of the dualistic modern nature-freedom orientation. According to the creation-fall-redemption orientation, participation in the public sphere should be pluralist yet principled; a diversity of viewpoints and interpretations exists due to the pluralistic and diverse nature of creation, which only becomes a problem due to the effects of the fall. Individuals should not have to leave aside their deepest commitments because they are not dominant. To hold this view, a critic must cede that the construction of the legal fiction of "the wall of separation between church and state" is only meaningful in a nature-freedom orientation. And despite the fact that this orientation may be dominant, "might makes right" is a logical fallacy as well as false according to other religious orientations. The critic must cede the point of the Radical Orthodox critic of secularism: the state is not separate from the church; it is rather a rival "church" that imitates and indeed parodies the dominant church of medieval West, when nature-grace was dominant. The dominant mediator of holiness and the sacred is no longer the Roman Catholic Church; "the holy" has migrated to the state and its civil religions, which have deftly coopted many forms of Protestant Christianity.[37] Furthermore, this supposed critical neutrality is a falsehood. The directionality of critical thought is conditioned by religious orientations.[38]

Or someone might say that "religious orientation" here is an ideal for religion that totalizes and absolutizes it and naturalizes religion when it is really a constructed category. This could dangerously lead to theocracy, as it did for the Puritans. From a creation-fall-redemption perspective, theocracy and Christian dominionist political ideologies (not to mention some Islamist ideologies that specifically react to Western

secularism) are indeed dangerous. They are modern derivatives of the nature-grace dualism that look back nostalgically to premodernity in reaction to modern secularisms, essentially attempting to defeat secularism on secularism's terms, attempting to reassert Protestantism in place of the secular. Tracy Fessenden has shown that Protestantism did essentially function as a secular, unmarked neutral background category in the United States well into the twentieth century—a "Protestant-secular continuum"—although its influence had been in decline long before then (9-10). Thus I would argue that creation-fall-redemption, the religious orientation that renders that very category meaningful, poses a stronger threat to dominionist ideologies.[39]

The creation-fall-redemption does see all of life as religiously oriented and structured. This religiosity is not the same as religious belief or affiliation, nor is it the same as other construals of religion such as the impulse to render worship. A religious orientation is as much observable in everyday life as it is in theories or dogmas, ceremonies or rituals. Everyone has beliefs, religious or not. Everyone participates in habitual activities that shape what we love and trust most deeply.[40] Everyone and every society is shaped by one or more religious orientation.

Likewise, someone might object to my characterization of secularity as inherently at odds with environmentalism because many people with environmental commitments not to have any religious belief or affiliation. Again, religious orientations are not the same as religious belief or affiliation. One may identify as a Christian and be most fundamentally shaped by creation-fall-redemption, nature-grace, or nature-freedom. Likewise, an environmentalist might not believe in a transcendent reality, but might be guided more by a creation-fall-redemption orientation than one that acknowledges only

immanence. This implies the kind of inconsistency that I believe is pervasive in ecocritical thought that is grounded in the nature-freedom religious orientation.

Still, such a critic might grant the possibility of this point but still object to the overtly theological terminology used in naming and categorizing these religious orientations. That is understandable. However, these names acknowledge the sources of these structures of thought and meaning instead of obscuring them. In the Western world, these structures are out there and available to be used to express meaning. So even those who do not believe in or identify with the implications may use these structures. For example, many Native American environmental writers use nature-freedom or creation-fall-redemption structures to express their opposition to colonialism as structured by nature-grace or nature-freedom. One reason for this is the commonality between the creationality of the creation-fall-redemption orientation and Native American spirituality, which like creation-fall-redemption applies to every aspect of life. There are, of course, many differences between pagan religious orientations and ones that emerge in the context of monotheism, but both can be integral and non-secular and thus have a robust account of the meaning and value of the natural world. Zitkala-Ša's "Why I Am a Pagan" could just as easily have been titled "Why I Am a Creational Christian" but for the fact that the Christianity Zitkala-Ša had encountered was guided by the nature-grace dualism in the context of the dominant nature-freedom orientation, both of which tend to devalue the natural world. Indeed Zitkala-Ša would have made a fitting addition to my study in her line of resistance to the devaluing of the natural world on religious grounds, but for the fact that she wrote significantly later than the authors under consideration, and was raised outside the post-Puritan New England context.[41] I will discuss my responses to

these objections further by way of elaborating the scope and terms of my argument after I return to the connections between secularization studies and ecocriticism.

**The Secularity of Ecocriticism**

In the present, nature-freedom is decisively dominant although its problematic nature has been the subject of much debate, not least in postsecular studies and ecocriticism. I have already discussed how these two fields, like literary study as a whole, share a concern with dismantling dualisms that legitimate oppression and harm. However, though much less egregiously than others who simply ignore the influence of earlier literatures, ecocritics have tended to dismiss early American religious conceptions of environment as dualistic and as having regarded nature or wilderness as inherently bad, often while paternalistically assuming such conceptions were unsophisticated or oppressive. Without doubt, a dualistic religious orientation was at work in Puritan Christianity, but such a critical stance overlooks the nuances of texts that were particularly influenced by the non-dualistic creation-fall-redemption religious orientation.

A second concern shared by both critical fields is finding consistent philosophical positions in ethics, politics, epistemology, and ontology, but this is also the source of their divergence and the place where studies with/out the secular can improve the theoretical consistency of ecocriticism. Both fields reject the supposed objectivity and neutrality of scientific and philosophical thought. Donna Haraway's "Situated Knowledges" is a well-known feminist critique of the subject-object dualism as an unmarked, disembodied gaze "seeing everything from nowhere," which Haraway calls "a god trick" and associates with whiteness, maleness, and violence (581). For Haraway, whatever objectivity is possible emerges from a particular subject position embedded in

the material world and is "not about transcendence" (583). Although not an ecocritical text per se, Haraway's thought has been influential in ecocriticism, including in related ecocritical fields such as posthumanism and new materialism. For instance, new materialist Karen Barad theorizes an "ethico-onto-epistemology" of matter (185) that attempts to overcome the dualism between agent and materiality, which has been taken up by other ecocritics. An understanding the existence of the world and how we know it must produce a response. According to the editors of a special issue of *ISLE* on new materialisms, "[q]uestioning the dualistic paradigms of transcendental humanism, the new materialisms rethink ontology, epistemology, and ethics—being, knowing, and acting—in terms of a radical immanence" (Iovino and Opperman 450). Drawing on Haraway and Barad in books such as *Bodily Natures* and *Exposed*, Stacy Alaimo posits a "trans-corporeal subject" deeply intertwined with the material world and a responsibility to it. Alaimo "critique[s] transcendence and the splitting of subject and object" because "transcendent epistemologies have fueled environmental destruction and harm to … animals" (*Exposed* 19). Notice the strong rejection of transcendence. It is this rejection and its implications that put new materialist ecocriticism at odds with the branch of critical secularization studies I am most concerned with.

Postsecular critics (and particularly those who are critical of the concept of secularity) fully agree with the overall force of Haraway's deconstruction of the pretended objectivity of science as well as the need for a consistent ontology. Dooyeweerd, for example, was making a similar argument in the 1930s. Philosopher James K. A. Smith, drawing on Radical Orthodoxy, contends that "behind the *politics* [or ethics] of modernity (liberal, secular) is an *epistemology* (autonomous reason), which is

in turn undergirded by an *ontology* (univocity and the denial of participation)," namely participation in a transcendent, divine reality (*Introducing* 99-100). Instead of this, a non-secular alternative contends that "[b]ehind the *politics* [of Radical Orthodoxy] (socialism) lies an *epistemology* (illumination [or revelation]), which is in turn undergirded by an *ontology* (participation)" (Smith *Introducing* 100).[42] The univocity that Smith refers to originally denoted the late medieval theological innovation of John Duns Scotus that the creator God "is" in the same way that creatures "are" (98) and thus "the immanent order" exists autonomously from "a transcendent source" (99), whereas previously it had been understood that the immanent world was suspended from the transcendent. The difference between God and humans becomes quantitative rather than qualitative, and, by implication, the world became understood to be knowable without divine revelation. Nature became detached from grace, even though grace was still understood to be superior.[43]

One consequence of this was the emergence of the subject-object split that the new materialists decry. But another was the understanding of reality as radically immanent that the new materialists uphold. As Charles Taylor details throughout *A Secular Age*, the rise of the modern "buffered" subject, which defines itself freely and originates meaning, is correlative with "social imaginary" consisting of these individuals, a "modern moral order" in which "fullness" is entirely immanent and achievable by the state, and a modern cosmic imaginary shorn of transcendence (or even any spiritual aspect). New materialists want a porous and vulnerable subject—just like the premodern self that Taylor describes—but not a transcendent reality or even a society or cosmos with built-in norms of meanings or modes of meaningfulness. They want a non-neutral

epistemology, but only from a religiously neutral point of critique. They want a participatory ontology but not participation beyond the intra-material. They want a liberating politics but not the ethical or philosophical grounding for it. It is this discrepancy between critics with/out the secular and ecocritics that this dissertation takes up. By thinking with/out the secular, I contribute a critique of the pervasive assumption of secularity as an unmarked critical posture in ecocriticism. Although I applaud new materialism's critique of epistemic secularity, new materialist ontologies fail to sufficiently ground an ethics or politics capable of countering environmental degradation. Ecocritical gestures toward premodern vitalist or animist theories or vaguely "spiritual-but-not-religious" Westernized Buddhism do little to ameliorate the secular structure of these theories. In fact, much ecocriticism relies on the same structures of meaning, the same religious orientation, that provide justifications for irresponsible ecocide. Without an adequate account of the deep structures undergirding environmental degradation, ecocriticism remains impoverished as a field of critique. This dissertation aims to bring to light those deep structures and their implications as they were demonstrated by Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson.

Furthermore, the traditional secularization narrative runs contrary to the scope and aims of ecocriticism as a field. From its inception as a field, ecocriticism has emphasized that literary criticism too often ignores the non-human environments to which those texts refer and toward which they cultivate ethical orientations. However, although ecocriticism does not bracket out the environmental referents from its scope of consideration, by tacitly bracketing out the possibility of a transcendent or spiritual reality beyond the human or material world, even when such a reality is represented in

texts, this criticism still falls in line theoretically with the presuppositions of the secularization thesis. By using an approach that makes visible and attempts to avoid secular assumptions, my project will show how a framework for ecocriticism need not rely on the presumption of secularity. Thus, my project will broaden the scope of ecocritical consideration to an understudied aspect of texts—the deep religious orientations that structure meaning in the text.

To see how ecocritics require a more robust religious orientation to better ground their theories, it will be helpful see how secularity functions in ecocriticism. For example, as I mentioned earlier, ecocritics often follow the argument of Lynn White Jr.'s influential essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," that Christianity's inherent anthropocentrism intellectually justified and paved the way for contemporary environmental degradation. But White conflates Christian dogmas consistent with a nature-grace religious orientation with Christianity itself, a typical secularist move. Certainly Christianity has historically placed high value on humanity, consistent with creation-fall-redemption. But it has also placed a high value on materiality, even if historically, under the influence of dualistic religious orientations, it has done so to a lesser extent. White adds technical and instrumentalist views of nature to his indictment of Christianity but these are more accurately a product of the nature-freedom orientation. On the other hand, White himself was a Christian and saw religion as essential to environmental solutions, although this too tends to instrumentalize religion itself, reducing it to a the political. His "alternative view of Christianity," which he calls "heretical" is very similar to the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. He sees St. Francis as a failed Reformer to this end and "the patron saint of ecology"[44] (12).White

should be applauded for recognizing this even as he should be faulted otherwise. But not only do ecocritics tend to accept White's historically flawed argument, they also extend this thesis into a version of the traditional secularization thesis, expanding the critique to all religion and indeed anything regarding transcendence, which itself becomes a stand-in for anthropocentrism, as can be seen in the above declarations by Alaimo. These ecocritics emphasize that anthropocentrism is "inherent" to religions, especially Christianity, when that is really the most inaccurate and objectionable part of the White Thesis. Like the secularization thesis itself, the White Thesis has been roundly critiqued in both its evidence and conclusions on sociological, historical, theological, and exegetical grounds (Mabie 282). In typical eccoritical accounts, religion is assumed to be what was discarded when modern forms of critique rose to prominence, and thus religion is irrelevant to environmental solutions, something White himself disagreed with. The supposed irrelevance of religion in modernity due to science in particular is another of the uncritical assumptions or "unthoughts" of the Academy that Taylor exposes (429). Thus in much ecocriticism, to the extent that religion is still a presence in cultural and literary texts, it must be resisted or, more often, simply ignored.

Some excellent ecocritical studies fail to achieve the integrated ecological worldview they aspire to by explaining away or ignoring the transcendent. My work extends and enriches such arguments by recovering religious elements that these new materialist ecocritics ignore or subsume, often implicitly but always reductively, under some supposedly more fundamental aspect of reality. By doing away with the transcendent, the particular focus that an ecocritic uses as a lens with which to analyze environmental discourse takes on a deterministic character to the point of achieving a

kind of ultimate or divine status. Such aspects include materiality (Alaimo), Foucauldian power structures (Sarah Jacquette Ray), Marxist economic structures (Lance Newman), linguistic phenomena (David Gilchrist), phenomenological perception (Leonard Scigaj), scientific rationality (Dana Phillips), and Neo-Darwinian sociobiology (Joseph Carroll). Some ecocritics, especially early in the development of the field, were drawn to the spiritual elements in the environmental literature of writers from John Muir to Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, Barry Lopez, and Mary Oliver. But ecocritics such as Timothy Morton and Dana Phillips reject this stance due to the religious overtones of "Nature." However they then advocate an even further secularized "ecology" or "mesh" in its place in which traditional religious categories still have no meaningful place (Morton *Ecological Thought* 3), a textbook instance of the replacement version of the traditional secularization narrative. Morton's mesh, like Alaimo's transcorporeal self and Haraway's situated knowledges, gestures toward the need for a non-dualistic, non-secular basis for ecocriticism, but it ends up reinscribing the nature-freedom dualism. Morton and other object-oriented ontologists reject the epistemological objectivity and neutrality of the secular but inconsistently insist on a secular ontology of immanence that implies a secular ethics of autonomy. But without a telos, without a normative transcendent authority, all that is left is the figurative public marketplace of objects and rationalist ideas, in which whoever has the most power and money is bound to dominate (Bilbro 18-19). This is also the marketplace into which Nietzsche's madman came announcing the death of God (Hart) and the rational public sphere that discounts the value of embedded embodiment (Connolly). And not coincidentally this dominant marketplace imaginary creates the intellectual conditions that render possible the material globalized marketplace

of late capitalism, which is slowly but surely choking human civilization and indeed the entire Earth System to death.

Other ecocritics take a utilitarian approach to religion, which reduces it to one or the other poles of the nature-freedom dualism. In this formulation, religion is a powerful social force, so it should be harnessed when possible in the service of environmental causes (Oelschlaeger *Caring* 3). This position, too, assumes religion to be merely a cultural construction, a subset of political constructions, as opposed to a means of revealing or ordering transcendent truth in its own right. Ecocriticism, no less than literary study as a whole, tends to operate in an exclusively immanent frame and rely on the outdated secularization narrative.

Thinking with/out the secular can do more than act as a theoretical and interpretive corrective for ecocriticism. After all, though it might be ultimately inconsistent, textual interpretation can be done under nature-freedom as well as any other religious orientation. One of the rhetorical characteristics that I pay particular attention to is the biblical allusion, which creation-fall-redemption recognizes as an appeal to authority beyond the cultural dominance of religious orientations that value the Bible. Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson were far more biblically literate than the average contemporary academic and many of their allusions and the significances of those allusions go uncovered. Let me illustrate with an example relevant to but outside the scope of my study. Prominent ecocritic and Thoreau scholar Laura Dassow Walls reads the sandbank passage in *Walden's* "Spring" chapter as evidence of Thoreau's understanding of humanity's interpenetration with other forms of matter and life and the agency of matter, its ability to "'organize itself' as it was carried to its Maker's end"

(181). She quotes Thoreau's assertion at the very end of the sandbank passage that "not only [this molten earth], but the institutions upon it, are plastic like clay in the hands of the potter" (*Walden* 309). Walls also notes that the metaphor of the potter and clay could itself be "molded to various ends," and she illustrates this using a contemporaneous critic who rails against "'Nature worshippers'" and who characterizes matter as inert and unalive, a crude resource, "'but clay in the hands of an Almighty Potter'" (Walls 274n12). This anonymous critic's understanding of nature is structured according to the nature-grace and/or nature-freedom religious orientations, whereas Thoreau's is creational. Walls does not discuss that this metaphor has biblical origins, nor does she need to in order to make her argument. But doing so could enrich her argument. The metaphor originates in passages such as Isaiah 64:8 and Jeremiah 18:6, in which the clay is the nation of Israel and God is the potter. In the New Testament, Paul uses the metaphor to expand the understanding of who is formed by God into the chosen people of God to include Gentiles as well as Jews (Romans 9). Thoreau takes the metaphor and uses it to expand those chosen to be in the gathering of "the Maker of this earth" to include the earth itself. This creational interpretation and attention to Biblical allusion gives further evidence for Walls' claim.

**Rethinking Religion and Secularity**

Religion has been defined by scholars in a number of ways during the period in which the nature-freedom religious orientation has dominated. Theologian William Cavanaugh, largely following Talal Asad, identifies three common definitions of "religion" in the academy, all shaped by nature-freedom: substantivism, functionalism, and constructivism. Substantivists posit that there is a transcultural, transhistorical

essence that all religions share. Thus religion is "natural" according to the structure of the religious orientation. This substance of religion is generally asserted to be beliefs and practices that have to do with divinity or "the transcendent" as opposed to mundane, "secular" matters (Cavanaugh 57-58). Colin Jager names this way of understanding religion "religion as belief," reduced, that is, to "a set of propositional statements and their corresponding doctrines," to which one must intellectually assent in order to be a member (or be saved). In other words, "reason determines the lowest common denominator of religion" (*Book* 202-203).

Functionalists define religion not according to its content but rather according to how it operates in the lives of individuals and societies: anything that gives people meaning or a relationship with some "transcendent" reality is considered a religion, and this definition is also naturalized. Thus nationalism, capitalism, Marxism, and any other number of "-ism"s can each be considered to be "religion," in this sense. For functionalists, Christianity or Buddhism is not meaningfully different in form from Leninism or Maoism or neoliberal global capitalism or nationalistic American civil religion (Cavanaugh 57-58).

Both of these approaches face significant problems for productive analytical purposes. The wide diversity of belief and practices among world "religions," such as Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and animism, makes it nearly impossible for substantivists to extract the common religious essence they supposedly share without making internal contradictions. Moreover, that such a wide diversity of ideologies qualify as religion for functionalists renders the term "religion" nearly useless as a category of analysis (Cavanaugh 8). Again, whereas substantivism makes too sharp a

distinction between religion and political, economic, and other cultural formations, functionalism makes religion a measure of the degree of significance that any political, economic, or cultural formation can have for a person or society. What both of these approaches have in common is an essentialist understanding of religion as transhistorically and transculturally "natural," something that appears at all times and places in human history, albeit in very different configurations. Used this way, religion is simply a neutral occurrence that may be objectively discovered and studied, according to rational and empirical means (Cavanaugh 58). According to our terminology of religious orientations, religion thus understood becomes a function of the nature pole, something to be overcome or utilized, but ultimately discarded, in pursuit of freedom.

An increasingly large group of constructivist scholars, however, reject such definitions of religion as a neutral, essentialist category. As a category, they argue, "religion" is neither different in kind from nor functionally identical to "secular" categories such as political, economic, or social categories. Rather, it is constructed differently in particular times and places by political, economic, and other formations of power and authority. In turn, what is constructed as a religion can influence other cultural formations of authority (Cavanaugh 58). Thus, the construction of the category of religion *as* a transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon of which all the world religions are instances *in opposition* to the category of "secular" is itself a modern Western project designed to legitimate the authority of the modern liberal nation-state.[45] For example, when religion is constructed as inherently (that is, substantively) irrational, interior, and violent, as it has been in the West, then the state may be correlatively constructed as the legitimate dominant public authority and the legitimate purveyor of

violence, including violence as a means of suppressing supposedly "violent" religion. This view was imposed on non-Western cultures as part of the Western colonial project. In this configuration, science is legitimated as the only "rational" and authoritative form of knowledge. According to Craig Calhoun,

> The Enlightenment theorists did not so much report on social reality as seek to construct a new reality in which religion would be outside the frame of the public sphere. Kant's effort to reconstruct religion 'within the limits of reason alone' was, of course, a challenge to the lived orientations of many religious people. If it respected a certain core of faith…it did so only by excluding it from the realms of reason and the public sphere. Faith became available only on the basis of leaps beyond reason. (80)

Despite the fact that freedom, liberation, and cultural ideals of the West derive from medieval Christian discourse, "religion" was constructed in modernity as contrary to these ideals: Religion is a choice, but it is an irrational one. Religion is supposedly natural, but it is contrary to freedom (Calhoun 80-81). Correspondingly, loyalty to God was constructed as irrelevant to the public sphere and the greater demand for state loyalty. Institutions play an important role in mediating these ideologies; these include schools, businesses, and the state but also churches that construe their own purpose as concerning private belief in a way that inadvertently props up the dominance of the state. This invention began rather benignly in the thought of Christian humanist scholars and theologians in response to events in late medieval European society (Cavanaugh 60-122).

Despite the important critique of religion as belief that constructivism has to offer, it too can assume or even produce a reductive understanding of religion. Operating in the

framework of the nature-freedom religious orientation, constructivism shifts the locus of meaning of "religion" from the nature pole of the nature-freedom dualism to the freedom pole as an instance of cultural power. Acknowledging the constructed aspect of religion is important. But the absolutizing of nature-freedom leads some to assume that it can be nothing but a construction, without basis in reality. Jager terms this strong constructivist version "religion as ideology," in which religion is understood as obscuring the accurate vision of reality. This visual metaphor of religion as an illusion that can be seen through comes from Marx, perhaps the most influential post-Enlightenment figure in analyzing religion as ideology but also in reductively defining religion as nothing more than ideology. This metaphor ("seeing through religion") has now entered common uncritical usage; it just seems to make sense without explanation. Religion as ideology depends on the construction of religion as belief since the institutions and individuals who mediate that belief must be seen as hypocritical and inferior to the state and scientific rationality (Jager *Book* 206-207). Ashis Nandy also calls this "religion-as-ideology," arguing that this construal by the secularist state renders religiosity more controllable by the state ("Politics" 70-72). Although Nandy admires the secularist promise of "religious tolerance," he sees secularism, premised on its opposition to religion-as-ideology, as "a cover for the complicity of modern intellectuals and the modernizing middle class of South Asia in the new forms of religious violence." Consequently, Nandy critiques the "imperialism of categories" as part the colonial legacy of secular "structures of knowledge," which blinds people to reality of non-ideological forms of religion ("Politics" 69), such as *religio* and religious orientation.

Embracing this constructivist approach to religion does not mean that, if it is not essentially a set of beliefs and practices or a formation that gives people purpose, Christianity (or any other religion) is merely an ideology. As I discussed earlier, such a Marxist understanding would itself be a reductive ideology structured according to the nature-freedom religious orientation. Just because Christianity is construed ideologically in the dominant modern Western liberal perspective, does not mean that it may be nothing more than ideological. One partial insight of functionalism, particularly from a creation-fall-redemption perspective, is that political and economic liberal ideologies are not actually different in form from religion as constructed in the modern west; their status as neutral, rational, and "secular," that is, has been constructed to legitimate their dominant cultural authority. If all religions may become ideologies, then all ideologies may be religious.

Another further way religion can be understood is as an identity or affiliation, but how affiliation itself is understood will vary from one religious orientation to another. In the modern ideological construction of religion, religious affiliation is constructed as the intellectual assent to propositional beliefs. This kind of belief determines who is "in" or "out" of the religion. Thus people can "lose belief" and accordingly no longer consider themselves to be part of a religion (Jager *Book* 206). Gauri Viswanathan notes that "words such as 'secular' or 'religious' have consequently lost their descriptive value and function instead as signposts to given attitudes" regarding religion, particularly religious belief of the kind that is more than a mere building block in the ideological construction of religion (xv). In modernity, the categories of religious and secular largely designate conflicting public affiliations. For if the public sphere in modernity is defined as secular,

affiliating with a religion also marks a person as in or out in relation to the mainstream of the nation-state. Then again, an officially secular public sphere can share a large amount of continuity with a dominant religious affiliation, resulting in religious privilege for members of particular affiliations.[46] Thus, as Viswanathan argues in *Outside the Fold*, the act of changing religious affiliation—conversion—can destabilize modern social patterns as well as the "characterization of belief as communally sanctioned assent to religious ideology" (xvi). So affiliation need not be ideologically defined. Religious affiliation can be a means of pushing against a modern secular-religious binary.[47] Ashis Nandy thus identifies as a Christian because he was raised as a member of India's small Christian minority and speaks from that position in opposition to the violence and intolerance of India's secular post-colonial state. He frames his analysis of secularization and secularity as "anti-secularist" ("Politics" 73). However, his Christian family does not consider him a Christian because he is not a "believer"; he does not believe the core tenets of Christianity as it is defined according to the nature-freedom (or nature-grace) dualism. But that does not mean that he does not hold commitments that could not be considered "Christian" otherwise, such as his political thought being grounded in the creation-fall-redemption structure as opposed to the nature-freedom orientation that structures Indian politics, if not Indian culture (Nandy interview).[48] If religion is constructed as a category to be understood rationally, then membership in a religion can be construed as comprising those falling within boundaries, a "fold," so to speak, boundaries which are determined by rational assent to propositional beliefs. However, if religion is understood otherwise, including as a discipline of rendering praise rightly, then affiliation is better defined by the center of the group, what the religion is oriented toward, rather than its

boundaries. Christianity is centered on Jesus—the great shepherd of the "flock"—as the revelation of God; Islam is centered on the Quran as the revelation of God; nationalism is centered on allegiance to the nation-state; and so on. Furthermore, affiliation may denote, as it does for Nandy, political commitments which are not ultimately separable from the religious commitments of a community. The fold-flock distinction is another way to understand this.

Finally, some conceptions of "religion" that predate modernity prove more helpful than the above modern definitions. Older understandings include religion as a virtue or discipline of religious faith, religion as a religious orientation, and consequently religion as certain kind of affiliation. Regarding affiliation, according to historian Peter Harrison, early Christians conceived of themselves not as members of a modern "religion" but as a new way of life or a new race—more specifically, "a new *kind* of race, one that is open to all" regardless of ethnicity or geographical origin (Harrison 35-36). Prior to modernity, there was such a thing as true Christian religion but not *a* religion called Christianity that was understood to be true because its doctrines were true, as opposed to other false religions (Cavanaugh 63). What is the difference? The latter emphasizes religion as a system of beliefs and practices but the former is what Ashis Nandy calls "religion-as-faith" ("Politics" 70-72). This religious faith corresponds to the pistic aspect of life, which is an irreducible mode of knowledge and experience, in the creational structure of reality. It itself is not "religion," but it is one universal aspect of human life, including aspects of what is known in modernity as religion. It is not universal in an essentialist way though. Instead it is highly plural; what true faith looks like will vary from culture to culture and even individual to individual. In this sense,

religion or faith is an aspect of the everyday life of individuals and groups that involves trust, commitment, and rendering praise. It is just another way of functioning in the world, in no way opposed to any "secular" category. Like feeling and analytical reason, it is another way of knowing the world. Unlike religion constructed as belief or ideology, this sense is as much an aspect of life for a religiously unaffiliated atheist as for a devout practitioner of, say, Islam.

This understanding of religion corresponds to the ancient concept of *religio*. Augustine was one of the first Christian writers to expound its meaning, which primarily had to do with worship, the act of rendering praise. For Augustine, true religion meant worshipping God as revealed in Jesus Christ, such as is done in the context of Christian churches. False religion meant directing ultimate praise elsewhere. Augustine did recognize, however, that God as Creator was universally recognizable in the world (what John Calvin called the *sensus divinitatus*) and thus the tendency to worship what was not God was natural, if ultimately misguided. However, the ancient sense endured as the name of a particular virtue, the virtue of rendering praise where it is due, which is ultimately to God. Thomas Aquinas described the virtue *religio* in great detail, and it is very unlike modern religion: it is not a propositional belief system, institutionally mediated, separable from "secular" forces, primarily interior (although it is not primarily exterior worship practices either), or a kind of thing of which "religions" are instances. As a virtue, it is formed and cultivated by particular habits and disciplines (Cavanaugh 60-69; Harrison 7-16). Thus Colin Jager calls instantiations of this understanding in the modern world "religion as discipline" as opposed to religion as belief or ideology (*Book* 210). But these disciplines are not limited to disciplines of rendering praise, for praise can

be rendered in many ways through every aspect of life, including ones typically characterized as "secular" in nature-grace or nature-freedom. This brings us to a wider understanding of religion as religious orientation, which posits *religio* as a norm of the pistic aspect of life, but also posits "religion" as a whole and ideally holistic way of life, structured as creational, fallen, redeemed, and yet-to-be consummated.

Although *religio* may be the root of the modern word "religion," it is far from meaning what "religion" means in everyday usage today. How this meaning changed is important because it also sheds light on the meaning of the term "secular." Later, in the medieval period, the meaning of *religio* shifted to refer primarily to monastic orders. The church was where praise was rightly rendered to God by "the religious," that is, monastics, on behalf of everyone. The "saeculum" was the period of time from the fall until the consummation, a characterization shared by the creation-fall-redemption orientation. (Keep in mind that the dominant nature-grace orientation of this time was in significant continuity with creation-fall-redemption in its doctrines and terminology.) But they differed practically in that nature-grace saw God's "grace" as leaving creation with the fall such that "creation" became "nature" and all aspects of life not deemed religious were seen as inferior and lacking "grace." Thus all human history outside the institutional mediation of grace was "secular." "Secular" clergy ministered to everyday people, who were understood to participate vicariously in the practices of the "religious," resulting in the "two-tiered religion" discussed above which collapsed amidst various late medieval Reform efforts. The effect was that the "religious" became detached from the "secular," and when the church's cultural dominance dissipated, so too did a sense of anything beyond the "secular." Any redemption that occurred would not be redemption out of the

saeculum but within it, now accepted as "the immanent frame," most likely mediated ultimately by the state.

By contrast, in the creation-fall-redemption orientation (following Augustine), the saeculum denotes the pervasive directionality of the fall (Markus 83). That is not to say that secularity denotes sin. It rather denotes idolatry, the misdirection of worship, trust, desire, and hope away from God and instead toward anything that is immanent.[49] It is the recognition that until the consummation, the powers that be, dominant institutions such as church and state, and dominant religious orientations that structure what is meaningful to us will be affected by this misdirection. Whereas nature-freedom understands the world without reference to a transcendent source, creationality posits the presence of an ultimate transcendence in every aspect of life and denies any ontological status whatsoever to secular autonomy from this transcendence. Unlike nature-grace, however, this religious orientation does not see any institution or aspect of life as any more or less providing access to meaning or transcendence. Personal ethical choice and science are not secular; they are equally valid and necessary ways of understanding reality, as are faith, aesthetics, and so on. All aspects of reality are mutually irreducible and all orient a person or society toward a further ultimately meaningful reality, which was still understood to be God in the nineteenth century's largely Christian context even if practically "nature" or "freedom" had replaced God. Secularity is understood as an epistemological illusion, a misdirection or reduction rather than an ontological reality. To adapt Bruno Latour's phrase "we have never been modern" then, according to creation-fall-redemption, "we have never been secular" (Smith *Introducing* 42; Jager *Unquiet* 20).[50] Nothing exists autonomously or without reference to other modes of existence,

much less a transcendent source, so the scientific determinism and personal self-determination ultimately are not compatible with this orientation. "Secular" then denotes any fallen directionality toward the immanent that rightly would be directed toward God. Thus neutrality, autonomy, and closed immanence are what define secularity according to the creation-fall-redemption orientation. In this sense, it is possible to describe nature-grace (epistemologically) and especially nature-freedom (ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically) as "secular" while also denying the creational existence or ultimate meaningfulness of secularity. Another name for this fallenness is "original sin,"[51] which in creation-fall-redemption does not annul the goodness of creation but does recognize the damage done to it and humanity's ultimate inability to redeem this fallenness without transcendent intervention. However, in its nature-grace form, this doctrine does annul the goodness of creation.

**Notes**

[11] In yet another version, exemplified by Carl Schmitt's "political theology," religious forms and structures are translated into political, rational, or literary forms but without their religious content. More recent iterations of this project of secular transference have been proposed by Jürgen Habermas and Alain Badiou.

[12] Christian or other confessional critics, though "open" to transcendence often respond as "religious" in opposition to their "secular" counterparts. At best, this work seeks rapprochement and common ground between the two sides; at worst, it evinces a fundamentalist "spin." But it still takes for granted the immanent frame of modernity.

[13] To be clear, Milbank too would reject such implications.

[14] Dooyeweerd in turn drew from both German phenomenology and Calvinist theology, particularly that of Abraham Kuyper. I base this taxonomy of religious orientations on Dooyeweerd's overview of the history of philosophy in *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (25-36). See his *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* or *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* for more sustained accounts.

[15] This is similar to Taylor's conception of "fullness" (5-16).

[16] Taylor is primarily concerned with the conditions of belief, whereas I am concerned with the structure of those conditions themselves and how they shape understandings of the world.

[17] Religious orientations are thus more fundamental than Thomas Kuhn's scientific paradigms or Michel Foucault's epistemes, which in their historical development are structure according to the dominant religious orientation. They are more similar to John Deely's "ages of understanding" in his philosophical history *Four Ages of Understanding*. Deely's ancient and Latin ages correspond to Doyeweerd's form-matter and nature-grace, whereas Deely's modern and postmodern phases correspond to different emphases within Doyeweerd's nature-freedom.

[18] For Griffiths, not everyone's account of the world is religious. Again, religious orientations determine the structure and even content of such religious accounts.

[19] Taylor comes close to recognizing something like these three orientations when he divides "the camp of unbelief" into "secular humanists" and "neo-Nietzschean anti-humanists," whose ideals correspond to the freedom pole and the nature pole respectively. Taylor likewise recognizes a divide in the "acknowledgers of transcendence": those who acknowledge "the practical primacy of life" as well as "some good beyond life" and those who "think that the whole move to secular humanism was just a mistake, which needs to be undone[, and w]e need to return to an earlier view of things." Taylor critiques the view that secularity inherently implies nihilism, a key feature of Radical Orthodox critique (636-639). Although the latter may be accurate theologically, Taylor is more concerned with the political consequences, which need not be nihilistic. The Radical Orthodox response would be that secular humanism is still living off borrowed and unacknowledged transcendent social capital, so to speak, to prevent the practical descent into nihilism.

[20] This is not to say that no other religious orientations have existed in the West. Zoroastrianism and Roman Imperialism's law-power ground motives, both very dualistic, are two other examples besides the four I draw from Dooyeweerd, although the latter was significantly influenced by Greek thought. All human thought is guided by religious orientations. Outside the West these orientations are usually pagan, in which one (or more) aspect of the world is held to be absolute or fuction as a divinity, or pantheistic, in which reality itself as a whole is held to be divine and individual entities merely have the appearance of being individuated. Examples of the former include Shinto and many Native American religions. Examples of the latter include Hinduism and Daoism, in which Brahman-Atman and the Dao are held to be divine respectively. These religious orientations also are not necessarily dualistic. Materialism (including in the nature-freedom religious orientation) simply regards matter alone as the divine aspect of creation, but this tends to produce dualisms within that reductionist monism. The yin-yang dualism in Daoism is an example of a pantheistic dualism (Clouser 39).

[21] Genesis 1-2; Job 38-41; Psalms 8, 19, 104, 148

[22] Dooyeweerd's fifteen aspects or modes of meaning within lived reality are perhaps the

most distinctive component of his philosophy. They do not "exist" but rather enable existence. They are aspects of concrete things and subjects that do exist. Each aspect has a "kernel meaning" that provides the center point of meaning for the functioning of an entity according to the laws of that aspect. The kernel meaning points to the norm of the aspect, the characteristic of right functioning according to the aspect's laws. The following table lists the aspects, their kernel meanings, and an example of how this paper functions in or is structured by each aspect (*ITWT* 7-9). Dooyeweerd considered this a "working" list and was open to altering the makeup of the suite of aspects if lived experience necessitated it. I am indebted to Andrew Basden's *The Dooyeweerd Pages* for a similar example.

| Aspect | Kernel Meaning | Example |
|---|---|---|
| -Quantitative | amount | number of letters, words, pages |
| -Spatial | space, continuity | This page extends over space. |
| -Kinematic | movement | One's vision moves over the page. |
| -Material | energy, matter | The paper consists of physical matter; energy was used to produce it. |
| -Biotic | life, health | Paper and ink are made of organic materials. |
| -Sensitive | feeling, emotion, perception | This paper can be seen, touched, smelled. |
| -Analytic | logic, distinction, concepts | One can have ideas about and from this page. |
| -Formative | making, history, culture | This paper was composed and can be used. |
| -Lingual | symbolic communication | This paper contains an essay, words and information. |
| -Social | respect, relationship | This essay was written under institutional guidelines to be read by an audience. |
| -Economic | frugality | Did the author write efficiently? |
| -Aesthetic | harmony, beauty, fun | Is this essay written winsomely? Does it cohere? |
| -Justice | rights, responsibilities | Does this essay do justice to its topic? |
| -Ethical | self-giving love | Was this essay written out of genuine generosity and care? |
| -Pistic | commitment, faith, vision | Are this essay's ideas trustworthy; are its goals rightly oriented? |

These aspects are similar to Bruno Latour's "modes of existence."

[23] As Dooyeweerd described it, "*Meaning* is the *being* of all that has been *created* and the nature even of our selfhood. It has a *religious root* and a *divine origin*. … [T]he inter-modal coherence of all the aspects of the temporal world … is a coherence of *meaning that refers to a totality*. We have been fitted into this coherence of meaning with all our modal functions, which include both the so-called 'natural' and the so-called 'spiritual'" (NC 1:4).

[24] Genesis 3-4, 11; Romans 1-2; *passim*

[25] For example, God's covenants with his people, including Israel and the church; the calling of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Exodus; God's sending judges and prophets; and ultimately the work of Jesus incarnation, birth, ministry, death, and resurrection.

[26] Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15, Revelation 21-22. The only time the word consummation (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι in Greek) is used in the Bible is in the final clause of Ephesians 1:9-10: "[God] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (NIV).

[27] Many factors contributed to this synthesis, from the Roman Empire's domestication of the Christian faith as its official religion to the medieval rediscovery and integration of classical Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, which culminated in late medieval scholasticism.

[28] Again, the fact that Taylor does not recognize a third creation-fall-redemption religious orientation, even as his thought as a whole is largely structured by it, leads to his mischaracterization of the Reformers' goals and especially John Calvin (79-81). Cavanaugh likewise has a highly partial interpretation of the significance of Calvin's thought and influence (*Migrations* 90). Much Puritan writing is best understood as a struggle between the nature-grace religious orientation and the creation-fall-redemption orientation with the latter emerging to prominence only once the dominant cultural religious orientation had shifted to the nature-freedom religious orientation.

[29] This secular stadial history is essentially the same as the stadial anthropology that was used throughout modernity to justify colonialism and the subjugation of supposedly less-advanced or uncivilized peoples. Neutral, rational secularity provides the conceptual framework for whiteness and its justification of racism.

[30] They also later contributed to them, such as with climate change.

[31] When I engage students, including Christians, on the topic of religious belief, I regularly hear something like, "I believe in God, but more importantly I believe that everyone should be free to choose what they believe."

[32] This dominance of nature-freedom is roughly the same as what Taylor terms "the immanent frame" because it brackets out transcendence from accounts of the world.

[33] Verses 16-17 read:
To the woman he said,
"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you."
To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

[34] I will deal only with this curse, but the curse of suffering in labor, suffering in work, desire for husband, alienation from the earth, and other aspects of the text could also be used here. Indeed, these parallel curses may be read as an ancient narrative recognition of the intersectionality of oppression due to patriarchy, class and economic disparity, and anthropocentric environmental misuse.

[35] I believe it is this sense of creational goodness that Rolston seeks in "pristine" nature.

[36] All that said, I should add that religious orientations, following Dooyeweerd, are in part the result of human production. They are neither the created aspects through which we experience everyday reality (similar to what Michael Polanyi called the tacit dimension) nor our naïve, unreflective experience of and functioning within everyday reality (what Edmund Husserl called the natural attitude). But neither are they just theories, the theoretical attitude being one special way in which to experience and know reality. So while in terms of how they function in the world, they are pre-theoretical, in this sense of reflecting on them, they are supra-theoretical, involving the theoretical but unable to be bounded by or reduced to the theoretical or any other aspect of life (Smith *ITWT* 4-5 n5). Instead, they structure theories, determining their shape, and, as the foundational reference of ultimate meaning, making them seem plausible.

[37] See Cavanaugh "The City: Beyond Secular Parodies" and *Migrations of the Holy*. This is another version of Fessenden's "Protestant-secular continuum."

[38] This objection deserves a much more nuanced reply than space allows here. See Stathis Gourgouris' *Lessons in Secular Criticism* for an articulation of this objection. See Milbank and Clouser for the opposing response.

[39] And I would argue that, for example, the theocratic Puritans were on the right track, however, despite their theocratic tendencies, which were originated in the nature-grace that the Puritans, read charitably, sought to be free from.

[40] Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom* is a particularly astute analysis of this phenomenon.

[41] Furthermore, the presence of the creation-fall-redemption orientation is not as fully developed in her writing as it is in Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson.

[42] Smith is referring specifically to the Radical Orthodox formulation. I would substitute "public justice" for "socialism" as the politics implied by a creation-fall-redemption orientation.

[43] The Radical Orthodox account of the origins of secular modernity has more in common with Taylor's than Dooyeweerd's. They emphasize the role of Reform and the Reformers but look earlier to Scotus in particular whereas Dooyeweerd emphasizes Aquinas in the

scholastic turn toward secularity.

[44] Following Dooyeweerd, I read John Calvin similarly to how White reads St. Francis. Interestingly, twelve years after White's 1967 article, Francis was indeed named patron saint of ecology by Pope John Paul II.

[45] The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 made this the official policy of nation-states across the West. See Cavanaugh's *The Myth of Religious Violence*.

[46] Take, for example, Protestant Christianity in the United States, Catholicism in France and Quebec, Islam in Turkey, and Hinduism in India. This privileging may include having holidays recognized by the state or more covertly in legal bias or social acceptability. Countries with established religions navigate their secularization differently as the status of the religion as official depends on a secular authority to recognize it, a form of secularism dating officially to 1648 but in practice to much earlier.

[47] Viswanathan is also attentive to variance of belief and identity within larger religious affiliation: conversion to Catholicism by John Henry Newman as a means of opposing the secular English state or Pandita Ramabai's conversion to Christianity as a means of promoting women's rights in India. Ramabai's subsequent questioning of Christian dogmas that she found objectionable led her to be labelled a heretic, "outside the fold" (44-72, 118-152).

[48] Interestingly, Viswanathan critiques Nandy for claiming to speak as "anti-secular" from this position to a primarily secular academic audience (xv), although Nandy actually claims only to be "anti-secularist". In other words, he also claims membership in a group that is defined by its secularity and does not critique that, but he does critique the political implications and actualities of this position. And I would critique Nandy's self-assessment for his belief that his status as an unbeliever grants him a kind of neutrality from which to make his anti-secularist critique. The religious neutrality he claims is part and parcel of the secularism he despises. This same accusations of inconsistency, of course, can be made of many ecocritics.

[49] Of course, in the biblical narrative, and as emphasized by creation-fall-redemption, the God who is ultimately and supremely transcendent becomes perfectly immanent in the person of Jesus.

[50] Smith and others use the term "post-secular" to denote the critical work secularization studies has done to expose the secular as a modern construction. As I discussed earlier, following Tracy Fessenden and Kevin Seidel, I avoid this term because it suggests a non-secular position. On the contrary, what goes as "post-secular" is really just another version of secularity. The dominance of the nature-freedom religious orientation and the closed immanent frame are still strong both in everyday experience and the academy. In a secular age, arguments may be anti-secular but not post-secular.

[51] I prefer the term "total depravity."

# CHAPTER III

# CREATIONAL CHRISTIANITY AND THE NATURE OF BEING NATIVE: WILLIAM APESS' RESISTANCE TO RACIAL HEGEMONY, ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE, AND RELIGIOUS SECULARITY

Pequot minister William Apess argued for a non-secular religious orientation that placed a higher value on "creation" or the natural world than did the dominant religious orientations of his nineteenth-century New England context. His arguments in practice often took the form of opposing dominant religious institutions and beliefs. The same is true of Henry Thoreau and Emily Dickinson's arguments along the same lines, and all three embodied creation-fall-redemption in their actions as well as in the underlying structure of their thought embodied in their writings.

But Apess differs from them in two important respects. First, Thoreau and Dickinson were of European descent, whereas Apess, though mixed-race, was a Native American, a tribal member whose ancestors had resisted the atrocities perpetrated by "white" colonists, injustices often justified using religious concepts. Thoreau occasionally drew attention to the ways that Natives could teach Euro-Americans better ways of inhabiting the natural world, but this is Apess' primary focus, and Apess avoided many, though not all, problematic assumptions about "Indians" that Thoreau held. For Apess, Native identity is integral to thinking about the relationship between religion and environment. Thoreau and Dickinson connect the two more explicitly and directly, though perhaps at the expense of eliding important human social factors in the relationship. Apess did not have the privilege afforded by "whiteness" to leave race out of such discussions, nor was he was blinded by that privilege to the integral connection of

racism to destructive understandings of the natural world. Although a creation-fall-redemption religious orientation structured the thought of all three, for Apess, Native identity is integral to how a religious orientation structures the meaning of the natural world.

Secondly, Apess' relationship to the church was much different than Thoreau or Dickinson's. He was a Christian convert, a minister, and a missionary whereas Dickinson and Thoreau distanced themselves from institutional Christianity. Apess' theology was more conventionally orthodox, so his language often uses the same kind of language one would expect from arguments structured by the nature-grace religious orientation, whereas Thoreau and Dickinson use language that tempts critics to read the nature-freedom orientation into their work. Apess' rhetorical use of the Bible appeals to it more directly as an accepted authority compared to the allusions and ostensible quarrels with the Bible employed by Thoreau and Dickinson. I argue that Apess' thought is consistent with a creation-fall-redemption-oriented Christianity, and that religious orientation and Apess' religious beliefs and affiliation that proceed from it are not at odds with Apess' Native identity and political activism.

Born a Massachusetts Pequot in difficult circumstances, Apess was abandoned and abused as a child, and later indentured to a local white family who raised him but eventually sold his indenture. As a teenager, he became acquainted with Methodist revivals and worship, which he preferred to the formal Calvinism of his white foster families. Apess eventually ran away from his indentured servitude, serving in the War of 1812 before returning to New England and fully embracing a Pequot identity. He converted to Christianity in a revival meeting and was trained in ministry by his Aunt

Sally George, who was a Pequot spiritual and political leader (O'Connell lx). He became an itinerant minister and missionary to other Native Americans, preaching in their native Algonquian language, eventually becoming an ordained Protestant Methodist minister.

He published five books: *A Son of the Forest*, the first book-length autobiography written and published by a Native American; a sermon, *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*, accompanied by an essay "The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes"; *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe*, a series of conversion narratives, including a briefer account of his own conversion, as well as the essay "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"; *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe; or, The Pretended Riot Explained*, an argument for Native sovereignty and an account of the Mashpee Revolt, led by in part Apess, which successfully asserted Native rights in opposition to white violation of those rights; and, finally, *Eulogy on King Philip*, originally given prominently as a oration in Boston, a brilliant counter-history to the narrative celebrating the Pilgrims as American founders that instead reveals the nation's founding as predicated on the mistreatment of and theft from Natives and asserts the priority of Natives in understanding the greatness of America. After these publications, Apess moved to New York where he continued to lecture on Native rights issues.[52] Each of these texts has religious and political themes. Each brings his Pequot identity and Native rights activism into relationship with his Christianity, both his own faith and ministry and his criticism of white American Christianity. Each of his texts also engages, though often subtly, what we would call environmental themes. Most significantly, *Indian Nullification* engages in what we would call environmental justice activism. The Mashpee Revolt centered on an act of civil

disobedience that was in fact the resistance to the theft of natural resources. I will end the chapter with a discussion of the significance of this incident.

This chapter argues that both racism and anthropocentric environmental degradation are products of the secularity of the nature-grace and even more the nature-freedom religious orientations. More specifically, nature-freedom renders racism and anthropocentrism as meaningful structures of everyday life. Secularity, that is, makes them feel "natural" even for some of those who are made to suffer by these structures, and even for those who intellectually "believe" them to be wrong, especially when racism and anthropocentrism bestow "freedom" to them. William Apess' work embodies and engages the connections among race, environment, and religion, including anti-secularity. He resisted racism, environmental injustice, and secularity as well as the dualistic structures of meaning they rely on by actively critiquing white supremacy and white nationalism, environmental injustice, and secular iterations of Christianity. He did this work from a non-secular creation-fall-redemption religious orientation that upheld the equality of all people, both Natives and "whites." For Apess, Native identity—indigeneity—is the link between anti-secularity and environmental activism. I argue that the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation structured Apess' arguments about Native identity and that his understanding of himself as a Native Christian proceeds from this religious orientation.

In his time (and to an extent in ours), secular dualisms justified harm to both Natives and nature, and the two entities were seen as linked. Instead of declaring the two separate, and that Natives like whites were opposed to nature and free to master it, Apess affirmed the connection and argued for the elevated value of both in non-dualistic terms.

His primary means of doing this was to counter-narrate the originally Puritan typological account of American Christians as the continuation of God's chosen people, that is, as heirs of Israel and the early church. Apess does not reject this narrative altogether, however, as one who held a nature-freedom perspective would. Under nature-freedom, such an explicitly "religious" structure of meaning as Apess held could be seen as a hindrance to the freedoms he argued that Natives deserved, which is in fact what many Apess scholars argue. Rather, Apess rejected only the interpretation of the typological narrative that served as a religious justification for colonial oppression. This Puritan interpretation flourished into the nineteenth century, grounded in the dualisms of nature-grace and nature-freedom. Arguing against this interpretation, Apess substitutes Euro-American identity out of the center of this narrative and replaces it with Native identity, highlighting its positive connection with the natural world. In doing so, he affirms indigeneity as a creational good, white behavior towards Natives as exemplary of fallenness, and Natives as equal participants in the redemptive potential of the church.

The claim that Apess counter-narrates a dominant historical account that elides oppression of Native peoples is nothing new in scholarship. However, my argument means to push existing scholarship beyond its secular limitations. For example, Drew Lopenzina, one of William Apess' foremost contemporary interpreters, claims that Apess' "Memorial on the Marshpee Indians" is "a centerpiece in the textualized struggle for Indigenous rights emerging from the heart of colonial containment," one that "highlights the manner in which Apess pioneered effective strategies of civil disobedience" ("Letter" 106). In *Eulogy on King Philip*, Apess also "revisits the received history of the colonists to piece together a complex counternarrative reaffirming a

physical and political presence for Native Americans in New England by taking into account indigenous points of view and strategies for resolution" ("What" 677). In doing so, Apess "reassemble[d] the usable parts of dominant history in a manner that allowed for a more judicious reading of Native presence and agency" (Lopenzina "Letter" 107). However, Lopenzina's characterization of Apess' work predictably follows the contours of the nature-freedom religious orientation, which obscures a full and accurate interpretation of Apess' work. Thus critical perspectives such as Lopenzina's that assume an unmarked critical stance of secularity need the framework of religious orientations to account for the importance of love, truth, and faith in Apess' work.

Before showing the convergences of racial, environmental, and religious activism in Apess' work and career, I examine recent scholarship dealing with connections between all three of these terms, rather than the usual practice of dealing only with two (and the first two in particular). I then demonstrate the intersectionality of the injustices caused by racism, ecophobia, and secularity, all of which in their modern iterations stem from dualisms, particularly the nature-freedom religious orientation. After I examine the spectrum of how critics impose pre-existing assumptions that stem from nature-freedom on Apess' texts, especially the belief that Christianity and Native identity are at odds, I focus on the typological origins of the nature-grace narrative that legitimated the marginalization of Native people and the natural world on religious grounds, showing how Apess typologically counter-narrates this story from a creation-fall-redemption perspective to show that Natives are equally God's people compared to whites, if not more so.

**Converging Stories: Race, Secularity, Environment**

Some excellent recent literary scholarship has explored the relationships between race, ecology, and religion, but none has engaged all three of these factors, especially from an anti-racist, environmental justice, and anti-secular stance—the stance that I argue is manifest in Apess' own writings. Likewise, the rapidly expanding body of Native studies and postcolonial scholarship has examined Apess as an important early-American Native writer. However, while most take up the significance of his Christianity, only a handful of articles have taken his religious thought as their primary consideration. Even fewer have examined his work from an ecocritical perspective, John J. Kucich's "Sons of the Forest: Environment and Transculturation in Jonathan Edwards, Samson Occom and William Apess" (2006) being the most important example. Moreover, these all have generally been written from within a Native studies interpretive approach. Engagement with Apess as a Native American writer is unavoidable, of course, and I have no wish to downplay this integral aspect of his identity. On the other hand, I contend that engagement with Apess as a Christian writer is equally unavoidable, although many critics choose to downplay this integral aspect of his life and writings. Indeed, understanding Apess' self-narration as a *Native Christian* is the only way to fully account at once for his Native identity, his Christian identity, and his environmental justice activism.

An understanding of the current state of literary scholarship on race, religion, and environment will be helpful before situating Apess' own work in that theoretical triangle. Recent monographs that have examined the relationship of race and environmental concerns in U.S literature include Jeffrey Myers' groundbreaking *Converging Stories:*

*Race, Ecology, and Environmental Justice in American Literature* (2005) and Ian Frederick Finseth's *Shades of Green: Visions of Nature in the Literature of American Slavery, 1770-1860* (2009). Regarding race and religion, Joanna Brooks' groundbreaking *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (2003) examines racial ideologies and religious movements in the eighteenth century and argues that "we may read the religious aspects of early African-American and Native American writings as potential expressions of resistance against the ascendant secularization and rationalization of the late eighteenth century" (18). As to theoretical connections between environment and religion in literature, John Gatta's *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (2004) traces the history of literary responses to the numinous and divine perceived in the natural world, and Belden C. Lane's *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (1988) does the same from a religious studies perspective. These two books both engage African American and Native American literatures, but they do not foreground race and ethnicity.[53] Despite the relatively narrow historical focus of these studies, each is highly relevant to contemporary conversations regarding race, religion, and environment and to aspects of Apess' thought. [54] In these studies, however, Apess himself is nearly absent.[55]

Of these books, Myers' is the one whose arguments I will be working from and extending most closely. Myers argues that "the ethnocentric outlook that constructed 'whiteness' over and against the alterity of other racial categories is the same perspective that constructed the anthropocentric paradigm at the root of environmental destruction." Of early Euro-American writers such as Jefferson and Emerson, Myers shows that "even

as [they] attempt to move away from the prejudices of their times, they expose how their own racism and alienation from nature comes from the same source" (5). What is this outlook, this perspective, this source? Myers finds that "ideas about the superior status of the human self with respect to nature and the superiority of the white self with respect to race are related social constructions that derive from a misunderstanding of the human relationship to the rest of the natural world" (16-17). In particular, this misunderstanding results from the "Cartesian mind-body dualism." Myers cites Lynn White Jr. to assert that this dualism "recapitulates a far older tradition of Christianity" that privileges anthropocentrism and legitimates human possession and destruction of the natural world (13-14). In other words, Myers opposes the dualisms that result from the nature-freedom religious orientation, which in turn resulted from the nature-grace dualism.

As an alternative to the mind-body dualism, Myers takes a stance of "ecocentricity," in particular a "postpositivist ecocentricity that would acknowledge the social construction of ideas about nature while privileging the reality of the physical world and its constituent members (including human beings)" (18). Similarly, Finseth "posit[s] the natural world (i.e. the terrestrial biosphere) as an ontologically real domain that has powerfully, if not deterministically, shaped human consciousness" while also "maintain[ing] that racial subjectivity matters to how human beings perceive, narrate, and interact with nature" (9). Myers, like most scholars in the humanities, shifts away from the nature pole of the nature-freedom dualism in rejecting the "positivist view that race is a fixed, stable determinant of identity," which "closely parallels the essentialist position in the environmentalist debate in favor of 'uninhabited wilderness' or 'the balance of nature'" (17, 18). In seeking to move away from a dualism that entails either a naive

erasure of difference between identities or a reinscription of hierarchies, Myers and Finseth seem to be seeking an alternative to the secular nature-freedom dualism.

However, Myers in particular does so from within the secular confines of that very religious orientation, and both he and Finseth look past the contradictions and antinomies latent in their attempts to hold the two distinct poles together. Both fall back on the assumptions of the nature pole (encompassing what is studied by the hard sciences) regarding ecology and the freedom pole (encompassing social constructivism) regarding race, thus remaining within the logic of nature-freedom. Furthermore, Myers' assessment of the supposedly religious/Christian origin of problems in relation to race and ecology is dubious.[56] Finseth displays a much more nuanced understanding of how Christianity was a major motivator behind abolitionist and anti-racist movements and how writers of the time distinguished between different versions of Christianity. But, like Myers, it only occupies a peripheral place in his concern.

I propose to extend Myers' and Finseth's insights by shedding light on the shared source of racial and ecological hegemony, namely, secularity. The story of secularity is the third story that must converge with the other two. I detail this story in my introduction, but I will reiterate it further here: secularity itself is the intersection where racism, misogyny, homophobia, ecological hegemony and ecophobia, among other forms of oppression, meet. One could easily extend the list of identity categories denigrated as "inferior" poles of the dualistic hierarchies of modernity. Originally in medieval Western society, structured by the nature-grace religious orientation, the secular-religious dualism asserted the superiority of the religious over the secular. But in modernity, the poles are switched and secularity is seen as the normal, neutral position. "Being religious" is an

alternative option to this position, but it is one that is assumed as having been chosen from the prior neutral position of secularity. Up until around Apess' time, Protestantism itself occupied this position of neutral secularity in New England society, a Protestant-secular continuum (Fessenden 9-10). Secularity thus provides the supposedly neutral epistemological point from which whiteness, for example, can appear normal and thereby exercise its hegemony.

What is more, the immanent ontology of modern secularity disallows an ethics or politics in which a transcendent reality assures the worth of all oppressed subject positions and necessitates obligations to them. Instead, nature-freedom only allows for ethical positions either that are supposedly "objective" though often suited to benefit the dominant or, on the other hand, that deny any ethics beyond the assertion of power itself. Many thinkers in the academy operating within the nature-freedom paradigm thus decry oppression but do so while holding to the very structure of meaning that tacitly legitimates such oppression.

Let me illustrate this parallel between the epistemologies of secularity and white supremacy by turning to race theorist Richard Dyer's analysis of representations of whiteness in *White*. In what follows, I have simply substituted "secularity" for "whiteness" and "religion" for "race" or "blackness" in Dyer's argument to show how they function in exactly the same way:

> "The sense of [secularity] as non-[religious] is most evident in the absence of reference to [secularity] in the habitual speech and writing of [modern secular] people in the West" (2).

> We should consider [secularity] as well as [religion], in order 'to make visible what is rendered invisible when viewed as the normative state of existence: the [secular] point in space from which we tend to identify difference.' (3, quoting Hazel Carby)
>
> The invisibility of [secularity] as a [religious] position in [secular] (which is to say dominant) discourse is of a piece with its ubiquity. (3)
>
> "At the level of [religious] representation, in other words, [modern secular individuals] are not of a certain [religion], they're just [human]. (3)
>
> [Secular] power none the less reproduces itself regardless of intention, power, differences, and goodwill, and overwhelmingly because it is not seen as [secularity], but as normal. (10)

These comparisons could be multiplied.[57] Just as "races" would not exist as they do today without white racism, so modern "religions" would not exist as they do today without secularity. Without belaboring the analogy, it should be pointed out that being religiously-unaffiliated does not confer the same privilege that supposedly being "white" does. Race is constructed as a "natural" category, as religion also often is, but one from which one cannot convert (though one can "pass"). Religiously-marked individuals have likewise been subject to much injustice, but not in the same way or to the same extent that non-white individuals have, especially in the United States. Nor, of course, do I mean to suggest that "white" individuals are all necessarily secular.

From this we can see that the intellectual skeleton for the injustice-legitimating concept of the raced versus white body is the same as the intellectual skeleton of secularity. Both secularity and whiteness function as invisible ideals according to the logic of nature-freedom. Whiteness as it exists could only have developed in a secular age under the dominance of nature-freedom.[58] A linkage between secularity, whiteness, and anthropocentrism thus serves as conceptual legitimation for unjust forms of power, particularly the power of the modern state. Both secularity and white supremacy underlie the modern categories of religion and race as policed, often tacitly, by the modern state. But the fact that religiously-affiliated people as a whole are not an oppressed minority in most places makes secularism that much more invisible and insidious, especially in places with large "religious" populations.

Like Myers, Dyer blames Christianity for the advent of "white" embodiment. But Dyer uses words like "Christianity" and "religion" nearly interchangeably and from an uncritically secular perspective, defining Christianity as inherently dualistic, "an anti-body religion … the point [of which] is the spirit that is 'in' the body" (16). Although Dyer makes clear that "Christianity is [not] of its essence white," the assumptions he makes about what is in fact its essence are profoundly misleading. He conflates Christianity with Christendom, essentially defining Christianity *as* its heresies, its distortions, and their often-secondary consequences (17). In other words, he takes the nature-grace religious orientation that spawned the nature-freedom religious orientation as quintessential Christianity rather than as one distorted expression of Christianity.[59] It is not that I disagree with many of Dyer's assessments of the role certain historical events played in the formation of race and racism.[60] Nor indeed is he the only critic who finds

"Christian" roots to modern racial formation.[61] Indeed, many interpreters of William Apess make these same mistaken assumptions linking Christianity to racism. But taking religious orientations into account allows us to nuance this position by attributing these events that prompted racial formation and the normalization of whiteness to dualisms and the medieval secularization of Christianity that accompanied and accomplished the dominance in the West of the nature-grace orientation.

Furthermore, secularity need not always be opposed to organized religion; it can be expressed in the form of an organized religion. As Tracy Fessenden notes, a Protestant-secular continuum existed in nineteenth-century United States (9-10). In this context a secularized form of Protestantism was the supposedly normal, neutral background upon which Native spirituality, Catholicism, Judaism, and non-establishment forms of Protestant spirituality, such as Apess' Methodism, appeared as threatening abnormalities. Likewise, whiteness formed the American background upon which racial and ethnic groups considered inferior were marked as abnormal and inferior. Not coincidentally, these groups (Native Americans, Irish, Southern Europeans, and so on) were often the ones practicing the aforementioned faiths.

In the nature-freedom religious orientation, which became dominant in the West in early modernity hand in hand with the European colonial project, Natives were associated with the natural world, even called "naturals" as a descriptor by some early English and French explorers. Being associated with the nature pole of the nature-freedom religious orientation, they were seen as objects to be studied and, if possible, elevated to "civilization." Civilization was associated with the supposedly more-human and more-advanced freedom pole, as opposed to "natural" savagery. Full access to the

privileged freedom pole occupied by white identity was therefore unavailable to colonized native peoples.[62]

### William Apess, Native *Versus* Christian

Before examining the texts that Apess himself wrote regarding religion, race, and environment, it is important to understand the critical terrain regarding Apess' Christianity, Native identity, and political activity.[63] Critics' characterizations of how Christianity and Native identity relate in Apess' writing fall on a spectrum. On one end, critics see Apess' Christianity as overshadowing his Native activism. Arnold Krupat, for example, argues that Apess' Christian identity cancels out his Native identity, muting his political activism, while for Scott Michaelsen, Apess' Native activism is sincere but ultimately undermined by his Christianity. On the other end, his Native activism overshadows his religious identity. For instance, Drew Lopenzina sees Apess' political assertion of Native identity as successful, but as having been accomplished in spite of his Christianity. The ends of this spectrum are structured according to the nature-freedom religious orientation that sees religion and secular politics as at odds. Those critics tend to impose pre-existing assumptions that stem from the nature-freedom religious orientation on Apess' texts, especially the belief that Christianity and Native identity are at odds.

Arnold Krupat assumes that Christianity and authentic Native identity are inherently incompatible, the former overwhelming the latter in Apess' case. His Christianity exemplifies his complete assimilation into the dominant white culture: "Apes proclaims a sense of self, if we may call it that, deriving entirely from Christian culture" and "if there is … a Pequot dimension to Apes's [text and sense of self, it is] not apparent to me [Krupat].[64] In Apes's case indeed, there is the implication that when the Native lost

his land, he lost his voice as well" (145, 147). Instead of a Native voice, or even Apess' own voice, we read only "the voice of … salvationism … which in William Apes's autobiography is expressed in relentless monologue" (144). For Krupat, Apess simply mimics and channels the dominant white Christian discourse of his time.[65] However, he makes no indication that Christianity might be anything other than this; salvationism simply *is* religion (142). Religious orientations become useful for understanding Krupat's argument, making clear what is valuable and what is not in his understanding of Native identity. For example, he charts the shift of the primary category used by intellectuals in understanding Natives, a shift from religion to history to science to art (or personal aesthetic expression):

> In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, this discourse is secularized; in relation to Indians, the will of God becomes translated into the law of nature, an evolutionary law that insists upon the accession of 'savagery' to 'civilization.' … In the twentieth century, Indians become not so much candidates for salvation or for historical documentation as subjects for anthropological study. (142)

Then, in the 1960s, the aesthetic becomes the primary means for understanding Native identity, including autobiographical self-identity by Native intellectuals (Krupat 142-143). In this analysis, Krupat is accurately describing the shifting emphases of secularity within the nature-freedom religious orientation. The Protestant-secular continuum shifts its emphasis from secularized Protestantism to even more secularized scientistic secularism. Natural history and social science occupy the nature pole of the nature-freedom dualism. The mid-twentieth-century shift toward the freedom pole, to what

Charles Taylor calls the "age of authenticity," is signified by the category shift in understanding Native writing in terms of the aesthetic and personal autonomy.[66]

Where Krupat sees dominant Christian discourse muting Apess' voice regarding Native identity or politics, Scott Michaelsen finds Apess' voice clearly using dominant Christian and historical discourses to make arguments against white supremacy. However, he asserts that the very nature of these dominant discourses undermines the effectiveness of Apess' arguments. Michaelsen believes Apess' anti-racist arguments "mimi[c] the logic of nineteenth-century scientific racism, which translates older methods of distinction … into an account of difference that begins with the blood, with internal workings of the body" (66). These "older methods of distinction" are "white/black, Christian/non-Christian, savage/civilized" (66). He argues that Apess, through "reversals and inversion" of color binaries, merely reinscribes existing hierarchies, similar to how Black Muslim theology characterized black as good and white as evil using "a logic trapped by original parameters" (65). Thus, "in Apess's text it is impossible to imagine anything but a world in which whiteness reigns" (65): to the extent that Apess dismantles racial hierarchies he does so in the name of older hierarchies.

Other critics take similar negative views of Christianity but view Apess's critique as more successful. They argue not that Apess' Christianity undermines his Native identity and political activism, but that it is subservient to them: his Native political stance is successful in spite of his Christianity. According to Drew Lopenzina, for instance, the Christian conversion "narrative was (and is) a form of containment. As long as Apess' story could be fitted within such a crucial dominant paradigm it remained possible to overlook the many instances of resistance and defiance that surface" in his

work. But Lopenzina believes Apess does not preach Christianity so much as a "syncretic brand of spirituality" (*Red* 2). Lopenzina finds that Apess drew on mainstream abolitionist rhetoric but that his aims were "toward Native sovereignty rather than a bid for full inclusion within the American dream" ("What" 676).[67] Christian spirituality here remains opposed to Native identity (676). Furthermore, Lopenzina claims that Apess' role as a "voice in the wilderness," that is, the role of biblical prophet, is also incompatible with correctly understanding Apess as Native ("What" 682).

Eileen Razzari Elrod, too, sees Apess' conversion and missionary work ultimately as limitations to his critique because Christianity is "the religion and culture of violent colonizers." She implies that Apess' critiques of the failures of "conventional Christianity—at least the version of white Christianity" do not go far enough and only happen "despite his earnest piety" and "apparent religious compliance" (162). She shows how Apess "presented [white readers] with issues of racial identity and race hatred framed as specifically spiritual issues" (169) and he "insistently reaffirms Pequot identity and self-determination, rather than assimilation (and corollary cultural losses) into a monolithic belief system authored by and indistinguishable from European culture" (162). She believes he did this from a syncretic nature-freedom form of Christian faith rather than a creation-fall-redemption oriented Christianity: Apess "presents a construct" of "Christian Pequot*ism*," (emphasis in original) in which religious and other cultural forms are indistinguishable. This "distinct identity altogether" means that Apess was "not (emphatically not) an Indian Christian" because Christianity is essentially European and ultimately oppressive (162).

The two poles of the spectrum relating Apess' Christianity to his Native identity both uncritically rely on the nature-freedom religious orientation to structure these two identities as opposed, which leads to misunderstandings of Apess' writings. Krupat, following Foucault, seems unaware of the different structures of meaning that existed before the nature-freedom religious orientation came to dominance. The nature-freedom dualism and its reductive tendencies circumscribe his ability to read in Apess a distinction between two kinds of Christianity: nature-grace and creation-fall-redemption. I agree with Krupat that for Apess, his Christian identity takes priority over all his other identities and that for Apess there is no secular—his view of the world "denies secular history altogether" (Krupat 144). However, I strongly disagree with what Krupat means by these claims: that Apess valued only the grace pole of the nature-grace dualism, the sacred and not the "secular," excluding his "secular" Native identity in the process. I will show later that Apess' identity "in Christ" (101, 142, 148) signifies the structuring of his thought according to the creation-fall-redemption orientation and is pointed to by both his Methodist and Pequot identities. Creation-fall-redemption is anti-secular in that it rejects a sacred-secular dualism of the kind that Krupat assumed Apess held. It seems that Krupat does not imagine a possible world in which meaning is not dualistically structured. It should be no wonder that Krupat believes Apess simply apes the dominant discourse of his time when Krupat himself simply apes the dominant nature-freedom religious orientation of the present. Secularity renders him blind and deaf to the nuance regarding religion in Apess' writings.

Krupat's assumption that Christianity and Native identity are incompatible is the same logic that the federal government has used to deny official tribal recognition and

benefits. In 1978, for example, the Mashpee Wampanoag were denied federal recognition as a tribe because the judge declared that a "binary opposition [exists] between *assimilated* and *authentic* Native identity" (Donaldson "Making" 181). The key piece of evidence according to this reasoning was that the Mashpee had largely converted to Christianity in the late seventeenth century and thus had ceased to constitute a "distinct community" or an "Indian community" and instead were just "a community of Indians," who were thus not an authentic tribe (Judge Walter J. Skinner, quoted in Donaldson "Making" 181).[68] Notably, the Mashpee are the very tribe that adopted Apess as a member, minister, and protest leader in the 1830s, the tribe Apess led in a successful stance of environmental justice and self-determination against the state. Hence the secular critic, ostensibly writing to uphold the interests of Native authenticity, reinforces the deeper logic of the secular state that is used to undermine these interests.

Despite his careful reading of color imagery in "An Indian's Looking-Glass," Michaelsen's arguments are entirely unconvincing unless one equates whiteness and Christianity, as he (like Krupat) tends to do. On the contrary, Apess' worldview is one in which Jesus, not whiteness, ultimately reigns. Indeed, in "An Indian's Looking-Glass," Apess argues that Jesus, a Middle Eastern Jew, was a "man of color" and absolutely not "white" (Apess 158, 160). Michaelsen's evidence is that Apess uses the word "heart" as interior organ that determines affect in the way that interior essence was believed to determine a person's outward color. Although this "potentially turns [Apess'] text into a parody of scientific racism," it maintains a connection between the inside and outside, which reinscribes this problematic relationship (68). Michaelsen does not note that Apess makes this argument in the midst of making a number of arguments about how the Bible

refutes racism of any kind. For example, Apess claims that "Jesus Christ … never looked at the outward appearances. Jesus in particular looked at the hearts" (158) and similar claims throughout the essay such as "God … will show no favor to outward appearances, but will judge righteousness" (155). These assertions are paraphrases of 1 Samuel 7:16: "*the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (KJV).[69] Apess' anti-racist logic rests on a biblical, creational anthropology of divinely-approved inward value. Michaelsen instead asserts that Apess repudiates contemporaneous racist anthropology but ends up "advocating some other, already existing version of anthropology," namely, Thomas Jefferson's theory that Indians were of the same race as whites but were inferior and in need of civilizing (and that blacks were another inferior race altogether). This claim is utterly at odds with Apess' overall claims and assumptions. Apess himself explicitly rejects the binary of "civilized" European versus "savage" Native (53). Indeed, it is Michaelsen's, not Apess', "logic [that is] trapped by original parameters," in this case the dualistic parameters of the nature-freedom religious orientation that prevents the recognition of anything akin to creation-fall-redemption in which structure is distinguished from the directionality of fall and redemption. The "already existing version of anthropology" Apess embraces is the radically non-dualistic, non-reductionistic, non-secular anthropology structured by the creation-fall-redemption orientation.

Lopenzina and Elrod reductively equate Christianity with white Protestantism rather than recognizing that Christianity itself can be structured differently by different religious orientations even within a single context such as New England. Lopenzina prefers to emphasize the Native American intellectual resources Apess drew on, and his

arguments that Apess did indeed draw on those resources are convincing ("What" 677). But the subsequent claim that Apess moved away from Christian resources is misguided, grounded in assumptions based on the nature-freedom dualism. Elrod's analysis of the interplay of the spiritual and political in Apess' autobiography is at times compelling. Ultimately Elrod's analysis is framed dualistically as a series of "reversals" and lands on emphasizing the political over the spiritual, the Pequot over the Christian (162). "Christian Pequot*ism*" is simply another ideological "-ism" that absolutizes power according to the nature-freedom religious orientation.

The assumptions that Christianity is inherently European and that conversion or conversion narratives necessarily limit Native activism are narrow-sighted historically. It is true that Europeans introduced Christianity to Native Americans and that at the time Apess lived the vast majority of the world's Christians were European. However, Christianity and associated literary forms such as the conversion narrative originated in West Asia and originally thrived there and in North Africa. In 2010, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, approximately the same number of Christians lived in Sub-Saharan Africa as in Europe, and more Christians lived in Latin America than either of those places. Indeed, 61% of the world's Christians today live in the Global South (VanZanten 262).[70]

Furthermore, the assertion that conversion or narratives of conversion must hinder political efficacy is flawed not only for the same reason that equating Christianity with European culture is flawed but also because it assumes a monolithic definition of conversion that conforms only to the nature-freedom religious orientation. Under nature-freedom, conversion is understood to simply be a shift in affiliation or belief, a shift in

allegiance to a power that may or may not result in greater freedom. Lopenzina and Elrod assume it hinders freedom, although critics to be discussed later argue more convincingly that conversion indeed can enhance freedom. The understanding of conversion that the four afore-mentioned critics oppose is more accurately termed proselytism. Conversion as proselytism conforms to the nature-grace religious orientation; it entails rejecting one's "natural" life or culture prior to conversion. Unfortunately this has been the approach of Euro-centric Christian missionaries who, under the influence of nature-grace and nature-freedom, assumed conversion meant acting like a European. The fact that many critics follow this understanding of conversion, as if Christianity were essentially European, makes their position more understandable, but that does not make it any less myopic since they fail to consider that Apess' conversion could mean anything else or be a distortion of another meaning of conversion. Conversion under creation-fall-redemption involves the transformation of the already existing good but fallen aspects of the culture of the converted. One's prior identity is not rejected but rather is redeemed. In this view proselytism is a distortion, a fallen version of Christian conversion (VanZanten 263).[71] Thus Lopenzina and Elrod fail to account for Apess creational approach to Native identity. Such critical perspectives only work within a secularist context. Apess' anti-secular creation-fall-redemption-oriented Christianity is instead the source of the success of his critique.

### William Apess, Native *And* Christian

In the middle of the spectrum comparing Apess' Christian and Native identities, several scholars see them as compatible and complementary. This includes some arguments made by Lopenzina and Elrod, whose scholarship tends toward the pole

emphasizing Apess as a Native writer, but which at times occupies the middle part of the spectrum, albeit one that end of the middle range. In this middle range, religious and political commitments, and religious and ethnic identities, work hand in hand: his Christianity necessitates racial justice and equality, Native sovereignty, and the recognition of white Christian political hypocrisy; his experience as a Pequot, including the racism he endured, informs the contours of his faith (Elrod 150). Much of the recent scholarship on Apess has emphasized how his Methodism informs his Native rights activism. His Christianity is seen as a platform from which Apess as a Native person could work. Even amongst those critics who agree that these identities work together, however, how that relationship should best be characterized is still much contested.

One common approach to this task of characterization is to apply categories from anthropology or postocolonial studies such as syncretism, hybridity, or assimilation to Apess and understand the relationship between his faith and ethnicity through those terms. For example, Apess has been characterized as "a 'transcultural individual,' incorporating elements from different cultures into his identity" and speaking with a hybrid or "mixedblood" rhetoric (Bizell 34-35). His identity has been characterized as "bi-cultural" (Sayre 5) and his works as having a "bifocality" that "juxtaposes" two distinct but "mutually sustaining" cultures, "relativizing, interrogating, and overturning taken-for-granted assumptions about [each, in Apess' case] Protestant and Pequot identity." The "processes of bifocality" promote "cultural interaction rather than assimilation or extermination" (Haynes 29).

Other scholars find that these categories are too limited. Michaelsen rightly argues against critics' tendency to "anthropologize" Native writers, applying pre-formed

categories to their texts when they should be interpreting the anthropology within the texts itself and respecting the writers as doing anthropology themselves (xiii). And Gordon Sayre notes that Apess' case complicates postcolonial and Native studies categories such as authenticity and assimilation. Such characterizations themselves are also problematic. Authenticity of the kind desired by Krupat results in an essentialism that will be used as a tool of exclusion by the state as well as well-meaning critics. Syncretism, which is Lopenzina's characterization of Apess' faith, referring to the union of two belief systems in ways that obscure their differences and potentially "provide cover for the continuance of indigenous faith practices" (Brooks 55), fails to do justice to Apess' explicitly Christian faith.[72] So do categories such as liminality and cultural mediation, emphasizing going between two categories (Brooks 55).

Furthermore, postcolonial versions of religious syncretism and anthropological acculturation, including hybridity, mimicry, and *mestizaje*, do not adequately distinguish between liberating configurations and those complicit in oppressive (neo-)colonialist agendas. Lopenzina suggests that critics who categorize Apess as a liminal figure or as assimilationist do so from a "colonized perspective" rather than "viewed from within a Native space" ("What" 682). I also concur that "postcolonial hybridity also promotes the myth of the vanishing Indian, and perpetuates the belief that indigenous peoples cannot withstand contact with dominant societies" (Donaldson 194). Joanna Brooks agrees: "Neither the assimilationist, syncretist, or hybridity models fully appreciate Native conversion" such as Apess' for what it really is: "an act of self-determination and an expression of sovereignty" (56).[73]

To avoid these pitfalls and capture this aspect of Apess' work, Laura Donaldson, drawing on Cherokee historian Rayna Green, proposes "retraditionalization," "a major effort by Native women to integrate traditional and contemporary demands in a culturally-consistent manner" by "extend[ing] traditional … cultural … roles to activities in non-Native settings," including Christianity and the Christian church, as the most accurate characterization of Apess' Native Christianity (195). These traditional cultural roles serve as a means of preserving linguistic and cultural traditions, and the "non-Native" lifeways these roles inhabit are themselves transformed to become Native (196). Donaldson convincingly argues that Apess' Aunt Sally George and Apess himself integrate Native culture and Christianity in just this way. She finds that instead of Christianity limiting or erasing Native identity and voice, it actually amplifies them.[74] Another similar concept that adequately characterizes the relationship of Apess' Christianity and Native identity is "survivance," the active survival of Native identity by means of resistance to oppression, in particular self-narration in opposition to dominant stereotypical narratives that Natives are vanishing or victims. This is the primary critical term used by Drew Lopenzina, following Gerald Vizenor, regarding Apess in "What to an American Indian is the Fourth of July?" Lopenzina does not emphasize Christianity's role in Apess' constructions of Native survivance, but Donaldson and Bizell do just that, although only Bizell uses the term. I find retraditionalization and survivance convincing characterizations of Apess' position, but they may still fall into the error of reducing Apess' Christianity to a means to political ends.

Whether they finally view Apess' faith and politics as compatible or incompatible, most scholars also treat his Christian faith as subservient to his political

commitments. In scholarly work that emphasizes Apess as both Native and Christian, the religious is still generally understood as subservient to the political and ethnic regarding the structure of Apess' thought. Even those scholars who understand that these identities mutually and integrally inform each other in Apess' work struggle to adequately characterize their relationship, tending to give priority in their analysis to his Native identity and to see his politics as rooted primarily in his Native identity over against his fundamental religious commitments.

For example, Lopenzina believes Apess' conversion to Christianity, while sincere, was a syncretistic "strategy" and "venue" for his political ends (*Red* 2). His radical message had to be "couched" in Christian language ("What" 683). For Elrod, Apess' Christianity is most importantly a means to the end of articulating the abuses done to Native Americans (152), and his "Christian story is subordinated to the material realities he must survive" (170). Patricia Bizzell believes Apess' Christianity was expressed in his unrecorded Pequot-language ministry and sermons whereas the goal of his English-language publications is "to serve Indian political ends" (36). I believe it is a testament to the secularity of the academy that even Joanna Brooks' nuanced account of the religious contexts of early African American and Native American literatures often frames the significance of religion in terms of the political work it influences or accomplishes: "Christianity is but another venue through which indigenous peoples continue their ongoing struggle for self-determination" (55-56). Donaldson, too, frames the relationship directionally, with a movement from faith toward politics: "William Apess' participation in Methodism allowed him to enunciate his Native voice more forcefully" (195). Other scholars make this directional claim much more strongly. Sandra Gustafson claims that

"his writings chart his journey away from a primarily Methodist identity and toward an ethnically defined identity, a transformation revealed in his shifting rhetorical emphases" (33).

Because most critics implicitly subscribe to the dualist nature-freedom religious orientation, their arguments come pre-structured in ways that oppose the religious and the political, with the latter being privileged. Such characterizations end up implicitly or, in Gustafson's case, explicitly reproducing the traditional secularization narrative, in which the church and religion retreat from public discourse and become subservient to the state. This construction of modernity delegitimizes the meaningfulness of religious faith within its own sphere. The religious is only meaningful to the extent it results in political ends, the "liberation" or "self-definition" of the freedom pole of the nature-freedom dualism. All these characterizations suggest that the political alone is what gives meaning to Apess' critiques, including his religious ones. Some critics—Lopenzina, Elrod, Michaelsen, Krupat—also characterize religion as inhibiting freedom.

Now I am not suggesting that freedom in its various manifestations is not a good thing or is not an integral aspect of human life. The creation-fall-redemption orientation affirms that it is. But is also affirms that it should not be privileged or absolutized as it is under nature-freedom, in which freedom—power, choice, liberty—is practically accorded divine status. The critical tendency to reduce the meaning of Christianity to the political is another instance of the "migration of the holy" from the church to the state, from the religious to the political, which is one of the hallmarks of the dominance of the nature-freedom religious orientation (Cavanaugh). The modern construction of the state as the institution that ensures individual liberties (in exchange for unequally distributed

limitations on those liberties) helps ensure its institutional dominance. Gustafson sees this migration in Apess' own work, too. I do not mean to disagree with Bizzell, Donaldson, or Brooks, or even with Gustafson's analysis of Apess' shifting rhetoric. But I do disagree with the conclusion Gustafson arrives at based on this analysis of the textual evidence. Again, I am not suggesting that Apess does not speak to the political in favor of Native freedoms and self-determination; he does, forcefully. Nor am I suggesting that his Christianity did not prompt his arguments in that direction. However, the progressively growing political emphasis in Apess' texts is not secularization in practice at an individual level. If anything, his politics are an outgrowth of his Christian commitments. Certainly, Apess used Christianity to express his political commitments.

But, more fundamentally, his Christianity is the foundational context which makes his political commitments possible. I am not asserting that Apess speaks from a religious voice as opposed to a political or Native voice, as Krupat does, but claiming instead that that is a good thing instead of bad. To do so would merely reverse the nature-freedom dualism or shift terms to the nature-grace dualism. I mean instead that the growth of Apess' political activism was prompted more by an awareness that political structures hold more power in modernity than "religious" institutional structures, and these structures of the nature-freedom religious orientation must therefore be more directly engaged and resisted. What Gustafson reads as a shift away from religion toward politics, following the traditional secularization narrative, I read instead as a shift in Apess' own frame from a religious orientation inflected by nature-grace to a more consistently creation-fall-redemption orientation, albeit inflected by the increasing cultural dominance of nature-freedom.

Furthermore, his earlier emphasis on the full and equal Christian identity of Natives and his later emphasis on the full humanity of Natives does not simply suggest a movement away from religion and toward political rhetoric. It instead suggests a shift away from viewing the church as the primary means of inclusion, as in nature-grace, toward a more holistic and integral view of the need for inclusion, as in creation-fall-redemption, across all institutions based in the creational equality of all humans.

**William Apess, *Native Christian***

Instead of just reversing a dualism, Apess' claims are structured by the non-dualistic creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. Apess vigorously resisted a Christianity structured according to nature-grace or nature-freedom, which indeed is an oppressive European belief system. But this system is not essential Christianity, according to Apess, though it is reductively passed off as such—as essential Christianity—by the nature-freedom dualism and critics such as Krupat, Michaelsen, Lopenzina, and Elrod, who then scapegoat "Christianity" in order to legitimate their own secular religious orientation. Apess absolutely argues against a nature-grace Christianity that places white identity over people of color (and also over nature) in relationship to God, as anyone reading his work should recognize. But he does not simply reverse this dualism to place Natives in a superior position to whites regarding Christian identity. He does privilege Native identity in a historical sense by pointing out the evils whites have done in order to elevate Native identity to the level of value whites give to whiteness. In doing so, he asserts a creation-fall-redemption paradigm which ties Natives to creation and redemption and ties whites' hegemonic behavior to the fall. He leaves room for white redemption as well and does not exclude whites from creational goodness, but his point is

to restore Native identity to an equal position with white identity, and to erase any supposed differences between them that might be construed hierarchically.

Ultimately, this identity difference itself is erased altogether by identity "in Christ," which refers to those included in the "flock" for whom meaning is structured non-dualistically as creation-fall-redemption and does not necessarily correspond to the "fold" in which Christian identity may be structured dualistically. Distinguishing Apess' creation-fall-redemption-oriented Christianity as the flock he was part of and Methodism as the fold that was one expression of that deeper religious orientation allows us to avoid the conflation of religious orientation with the secularist sense of religion as belief or affiliation. It allows us to see that his Methodism and Native identity were both identities Apess embraced because they gave shape to his creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. Apess saw himself, as a minister and missionary, as analogous to the hired hand in the parable of John 10 that I explained in the Introduction. But instead of shirking his responsibilities and fleeing in the face of danger like that hired watchman, Apess sees himself and other Native ministers as tending the flock as the shepherd would. [75] For Apess, the great shepherd who guides the flock, who loves it, who is the gate for it to the truth, is not the church, the state, the tribe, or any identity; it is Jesus Christ. Apess suggests this directly in his sermon "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ": "God loves his only begotten Son, and through him all that bear his image [are "in Christ"] and are the true sheep of his fold."[76]

Although "Christian Pequot*ism*" is a tempting interpretation of Apess' identity and politics because it mimics the logic of nature-freedom, it misses the point that Apess' arguments assume a "fold" identity that is not only both Methodist and Pequot, but is

indeed *Native Christian* in the "flock" sense. In asserting "Native Christian" as a more accurate characterization of Apess' identity, faith, and politics, I am doing more than claiming that the secular logic of nature-freedom that structures the arguments of all of the above critics does not structure Apess' own arguments. Apess saw being Native as entailing a close, positive relationship to the natural world—creation—that white Americans had lost. He also saw Native Christianity as an agent of redemption in his context, transforming Native cultures for the better but also transforming the dominant white American culture for the better. This includes transforming the aspects of dominant American culture structured by nature-freedom and nature-grace, most importantly the meaning of Native identity and the significance of environmental justice.

For Apess, what being a creation-fall-redemption-oriented person and culture looks like is being Native Christian. So although I substantially concur with Laura Donaldson's argument that Apess integrates his Methodist and Pequot identities via retraditionalization, and that his Christian ministry served as a venue for staging his Native activism, I do not see this as his primary goal. I propose that Apess uses the tools of Native retraditionalization to advance the survivance of Native American rights and culture not as an ends but as a means. His chief end, as a Native Christian, in integrating these identities was to foster the survivance and retraditionalization of a non-secular Christianity, a Christianity in line with the purposes of Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the original church. The original creation-fall-redemption-oriented faith had been overshadowed by the secularizing nature-grace and secularist nature-freedom religious orientations. Under these religious orientations, Christianity as a historical institution was distorted in both practice and understanding to the point that secularist critics, who

absolutize power via historicization, end up critiquing the perversion of the real thing as the real thing. Ironically, the European Christian church was distorted by the fact that it, too, accepted in practice the absolutization of power over justice, love, beauty, trust, health, environmental sustainability, and every other creational norm. This distorted, dualistic Christianity is what Apess also resists. Native Christianity is Apess' means for arguing that creation-fall-redemption should structure and American Christianity and culture. In what follows I will be particularly focused on showing how, in doing this, Apess' Native Christianity asserts the importance of the natural world in conjunction with Native identity.

**Biblical Typology: Retraditionalizing a Creational Christianity**

Apess' move to the structure of creation-fall-redemption redeems the intersectional connection between Native identity and the natural world, which had originally been constructed by early Euro-American settlers as justification to degrade both of them. By arguing for the elevated value of Native identity, Apess also elevates the value of the natural world that Natives were associated with. I follow John Kucich's assertion that "Apess achieves what Edwards and Occom did not—the full integration of natural theology and Native American identity." For Kucich, however, the "crucial tool in this process" seems to be "Romantic ideology," particularly Apess' "join[ing] Romantic notions [of sublime nature and the noble savage] to Indian solidarity" (16-17). However, Romantic ideology is insufficient for a robust natural theology of Native identity. The Romantic "noble savage" simply vanishes along with the woods of New England; deforestation accompanied the frontier of westward white American colonial expansion, following the logic of nature-freedom. Although Apess does use Romantic

imagery, the natural environment for him is not Romantic nature (of the nature-freedom orientation); it is the wilderness of the Bible interpreted through the lens of creation-fall-redemption. I argue instead that Apess' crucial tool is biblical typology. He achieved this integration of nature and indigeneity by typologically counter-narrating the story that white American Christians told themselves about their special status.[77] To show this, I must first show how nature and Native identity were originally constructed as negative and connected according to the dualistic logic of secularity.

In Apess' day, terms like "son of the forest," emphasizing this connection between nature and Native, were used as derogatory names toward Natives rather than as Romantic attempts to honor them (Lopenzina *Red* 2). Early in his autobiography, *A Son of the Forest,* Apess notes that he prefers the term "Native" to "Indian," but he also uses "of the forest" as a demonym to refer to himself and other Natives throughout his writing. An astute observer of the causes and consequences of prejudice, he is very sensitive to the subtle yet detrimental impacts of racist "nicknames," especially at a time when the descriptor "Indian" itself was used as "a slur upon an oppressed and scattered nation," "[thrown] as an opprobrious epithet at the sons of the forest." In an early passage from his autobiography, he describes how he internalized the racism around him while being foster-parented in a white community. He describes being "weaned from the interests and affections of my [Native] brethren," cut off from the nourishing aspects of his Native identity to the point that "a mere threat of being sent away among the Indians into the dreary woods" frightened him. This negative description characterizes the forest as dark, depressing, and oppressive precisely because it was associated with Natives. Racism went hand in hand with negative views of the natural world. Apess illustrates this "dread

which pervaded my mind on seeing any of my brethren of the forest than by relating the following occurrence": While he was picking berries in the woods he came across a group of dark-complexioned white women and, thinking them to be "natives of the woods," ran home terrified, believing they would scalp him. In an aside, Apess then relates how whites were actually the disproportionate aggressors against the Natives, rather than the reverse as he'd been led to believe. The incident of the berry-pickers he recounts shows how whites portray, often inadvertently, something that appears to be Native, which is both situated in the forest and also terrifying, but how this is actually false. He then proceeds to recount how his foster father whipped him severely while calling him an "Indian dog" for some misbehavior he had been falsely accused of. This association of Natives with nature, including animals, made it easier for whites to legitimate their harming them (Apess 10-12).

It is important to understand the origin of this connection between nature and Native identity to see how Apess uses it and combats its use for discriminatory oppression. Earlier I discussed the general contours of how nature-grace and nature-freedom religious orientations detrimentally align nature and indigeneity, but in the context of Puritan New England, the connection is more complex. Its roots go back to the different ways that the meaning of wilderness was constructed by the early European settlers of New England. These meanings of wilderness varied according to different interpretations of wilderness in the Bible, which in turn varied by way of the respective religious orientations guiding those interpretations. In short, the nature-grace interpretation of Exodus was the chief source for constructing both the natural world of the Americas and its inhabitants in terms of wilderness and Promised Land. As the

meanings of wilderness shifted negatively at the same time settlers' relationship with the Natives soured, the demeaned and connected statuses of Natives and nature became settled.

### *Nature-Grace-Oriented Puritan Typology*

As a public intellectual, Apess strongly engaged colonial Puritan discourse that formed the basis for much of the thought in his own nineteenth-century New England context. Puritan history forms the explicit subject of his Eulogy on King Philip, his final published work, so this discourse needs to be understood to fully appreciate the force of Apess' response to it. The colonial views of American nature as wilderness and as pastoral land of promise and plenty have their origins in Biblical typology, which was a way of interpreting the Bible in which Old Testament "types" are seen as being recapitulated or fulfilled by New Testament "antitypes." For example, in the Old Testament Exodus story, the Israelites escape from Egypt by passing through the Red Sea and into the desert wilds. There in the wilderness, God speaks to them and gives them the law. Then, after wandering for forty years, God leads them to Canaan, the Promised Land (a land flowing with milk and honey), which they conquer and inhabit. In the New Testament, Jesus follows this type when he was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, spoken to by God, tempted for forty days in the wilderness, and then began his ministry of teaching and healing. The narrative of Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection similarly follows the Old Testament type with resurrection the antitype of the Promised Land.

The Puritans settlers likewise saw themselves as antitypes for these Biblical types. They left Europe like the Israelites left Egypt, crossed the Sea into the Wilderness, and

expected to find the Promised Land. The expectation of America to be the Promised Land seemed universal from the first generation of colonists onward. However, the early Puritan writers differed greatly over how closely they identified contemporary events with the Biblical types and whether or not they actually saw themselves as still in the wilderness or already in the Promised Land (Williams 14-16).

These identifications were often negotiated by way of the jeremiad form, a kind of political sermon that harkened back to the biblical prophet Jeremiah, who was distinct for the fervency of his calls to repentance and in his descriptions of the spiritual transformation that would result (Bercovitch 8, 32). Thus the jeremiad itself was grounded in typological practices. The "American jeremiad" differed from the European jeremiad in that it pertained not just to the "mundane, social matters" of everyday life but to spiritual matters as well. The Puritan understanding of the world, however, "entailed a fusion of secular and sacred history" (9). That is, they did not simply accept the two-tiered world of nature-grace even though they often replicated it. The goal of Puritans' American jeremiads "was to direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny, … individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American city of God" (9).[78] This dual nature of the jeremiad (individual and collective) was what allowed the "wilderness" to retain its spiritual symbolism while also being chopped down for profit.[79] These two paradoxical motives suggest the workings of both creation-fall-redemption, which values the natural world as creation, and nature-freedom, which largely values nature for the purpose of enhancing human freedom. Sacvan Bercovitch's description of the contours of the American jeremiad closely follow the structure of creation-fall-redemption: God's forming a community and setting norms in place, the

community's violation of those norms that resulted in the bad state of the things, and a prophetic vision of the good things that would follow (17). This final step varied in emphasis though, according to the different religious orientations—it could imply communal *redemption* of what had gone wrong, improvement of life through God's favor or *grace*, or simply material gains and *freedoms*. The latter two explained away the deplorable state of the community's affairs while also offering the progress to the higher pole of the dualism. By the time of King Philip's War, these nature-grace and nature-freedom versions of the jeremiad were dominant.

In their foundational jeremiad sermons before and during the voyage to New England respectively, John Cotton and John Winthrop identify their destination as the Promised Land. Cotton claims that they are "Gods people" and they will "take the land by promise: And therefore the land of *Canaan* is called a land of promise. Which they discerne, first, by discerning themselves to be in Christ, in whom all the promises are" (6). Cotton claims that it is not enough simply to enter the land and possess it. The people must be "in Christ." This claim has typological significance. In the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul interprets Christ typologically both as the new Adam as well as Israel itself (in that Christ fulfilled the redemptive task that God had given Israel). Those who were "in Christ" then received the calling to be God's people.[80] Cotton identifies the Puritans with Christ and Christ with Israel in their possession of Canaan. He does not directly link the Puritans with Israel in their conquest of Canaan. Cotton is at pains to justify the voyage and possession of the land "lawfully," such as by purchase, but he excludes warfare without provocation of the kind fought by Israel, which was "by speciall Commission from God," and thus "is not imitable" (4). Nor does he invoke the

terms of the Doctrine of Discovery, which was used by both church and state to underwrite conquest in God's name.[81] Rather, the land may be co-inhabited with the natives because it is relatively less filled with inhabitants.[82] Cotton compares their arrival in America not with arrival in Canaan, however, but with arrival in the wilderness (6). Purity of the church and the freedom to worship in their own way were the Puritans goals, and Cotton claims that they are to be achieved in the wilderness, thus making the physical wilderness itself a potential site of the spiritual Promised Land. The two are compatible, even mutually and necessarily inclusive. Wilderness is necessary for Canaan. Cotton assures them both that God will bless them if they do God's will and that their entire mission into the wilderness is subject to God's approval—if they rebel against God, God may destroy their plantation (16-17). Following the creation-fall-redemption orientation, Cotton, as well as first generation leaders such as John Winthrop and William Bradford, used Biblical typology to interpret history, the Puritans' relationship to the natural world, as well as their relationship to God.

Second generation minister Samuel Danforth's jeremiad sermon "A Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wilderness" likewise typologically emphasizes the redemptive symbology of wilderness. He compares the colonists both to John the Baptist (who went into the wilderness to prepare the way for Christ's coming) and the people who went to see John in the wilderness. They did not go there to be inconstant hypocrites or to partake in material wealth, both of which the colonists were doing, but to witness and take part in prophecy, in preparing the way for the Lord. Danforth entreats his listeners to enter into the spiritual wilderness where they would have the freedom to purify themselves from sin and worship God rightly, the very objects of the Israelite

exodus and the first generation who had arrived forty years earlier. Danforth emphasizes that the Israelites wandered for forty years and that the exiles returned from Babylon neglected to rebuild the temple for forty years (6, 10). Like Cotton, Danforth emphasizes the people's freedom to partner with God in doing God's work(21-22). For the earliest Puritans in America, wilderness was considered to be redemptive more than creational, a mental state that signified freedom from fallenness as well as the fearful trials that would purge them of sinfulness on their way to redemption, the spiritual Promised Land.[83]

Unfortunately, this view devolved into a view that construed redemption as being *out of* the wilderness, a wilderness that was literal and not typological, and that in fact had already been physically left behind if the colonists believed that they were already in the Promised Land. This nature-grace view had in fact superseded creation-fall-redemption and been dominant for over a millennium in Christendom: nature and true religion were opposed. Instead of every created thing being good and human behavior being evil, this view saw nature itself (the physical world and human understanding of it through reason) as being inherently depraved, even subject to diabolical influence. Religion (grace, redemption, spirituality, God's revelation in the Bible) was what people needed in order to be freed from fallen nature.

The first generation Puritans were not immune from this view, which was dominant in Europe at the time, but one might charitably argue that their "errand" was an attempt to discard this view and manifest the creation-fall-redemption orientation.[84] By the second generation, however, the nature-grace orientation had again overshadowed creation-fall-redemption. Increase Mather's "A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New England" epitomizes this view. Mather is one of Apess' primary

historical interlocutors in "Eulogy on King Philip," his retelling of the history of early colonial-Native interactions that demonstrates the atrocities done to the Natives, especially King Philip's War, which Mather chronicled. In Mather's account of King Philip's War, wild, physical nature was particularly associated with the Indians, whom Mather calls "the perfect children of the Devill" (45) and worshippers of the devil (70) and generally believes to be untrustworthy, evil, and hostile. Indians are compared to beasts (30, 67) and frequently associated with the natural areas, particularly swamps, that they attacked from and retreated to (13, 14, 15, 21, passim). Mather even declares that the Indians are "befriend[ed]" by the trees and swamps, leading the colonists to increase their attacks in the winter months (34). The colonists are "bewildred" (40) by the woods and become so confused in the swamps that they start shooting at each other (14). Apess too notes how the Natives "were denounced as wild and savage beasts" by the New England colonists (285) and "hunted … like wild beasts, rather than enemies" (55). Mather's overall presentation of the relationship between the colonists and nature is that nature is external to the colonists' institutions, religious and otherwise. Nature, including sinful human nature, contains everything he perceived to be at odds with grace, including the Natives, and his account closely ties them to whatever he considered opposed to Christianity.

Mather's view depends not only on the nature-grace dualism but also, consequently, on an alteration of the Biblical typology of the first generation. In particular, he assumes that the colonists have already left the wilderness and reached the Promised Land. He claims that the Indians' land is the "Land the Lord God of our Fathers hath given to us for a rightfull Possession" (9). The possession has already taken

place. The metaphorical wilderness has not been passed through, but has simply been erased, transformed into the nature pole of a religious orientation. Mather presents the Indians who attack them as the very tribes surrounding Canaan who attacked the Israelites as a punishment from their straying from God's ways during the time of the Judges or as the remnants of the Canaanites whom the colonists, as Israel's antitype, "rightfully" displaced (9-10). Mather's refrain that the colonists need "reforming" (30, passim) is indicative of their stasis in that reformation merely implies improvement of their current state. Mather expresses confidence that the Puritans are God's people no matter what (17). Danforth's jeremiad sixteen years earlier likewise seems clearly directed at those who are not trusting God for their sustenance, but who trust themselves instead (24). His congregation believed that it has already reached the Promised Land. However, Danforth suggests that this is a problem, whereas Mather seems to share this belief. Mather also assumes that the colonists are "English Israel" (9), equating those in the present with those in the Old Testament.

These assumptions are strikingly different from those of the first generation. Mather's equation of Israel and the Puritans skips being "in Christ" as the mediating type between the Old Testament and the present. This failure in typological understanding accounts for the lack of the principles ("God's promise" and Winthrop's "Christian charity") that Christ embodied, principles which formed the basis of Cotton and Winthrop's understanding of how the colonists should deal with the Natives. Although the second generation may have discerned itself to be "in Christ" theologically and still behaved atrociously, Mather's rhetoric lacks this component, which underscores his generation's shift in behavior away from the first colonists' religious values regarding the

Natives. Apess likewise repeatedly emphasizes the utter opposition of the early colonists' actions and religious values such as mercy (308). Mather's guiding principle is revenge, which he believes accomplishes the justice that King Phillip and the Indians deserved (74): the Indians are God's vengeance and judgment on the colonists (1, passim), and the colonists are "the vengeance of the Lord upon the perfidious and bloudy Heathen" (34).[85] Apess mocks Mather's superstitious and deterministic view of God, believing that the Puritans' actions dictated responses from God, as if the Natives had no will (303).

However, since the wilderness had supposedly already been passed through and transformed into Canaan, the "terrors" of the war did not signify for Mather the terrors of the wilderness on the way to redemption. They were only punishments. The understanding of the Promised Land literally instead of metaphorically or spiritually is probably indicative of the reason that the colonists were slipping into the evil ways that so required God's judgment against them.[86] If they were already there, they had no need to pass through the "wilderness of conversion" (Williams 53-54, 74). This attitude is reflected in Mather's assurance that God is on the Puritans' side even as God sends the Indians to plague them, whereas Cotton and Winthrop viewed God's favor as tentative, emphasizing that God might abandon them if they failed to do God's work. Mather's view of God is very deterministic in that God's supposed actions are translated directly into history. The interpretive character of typology is replaced with the determinative character of the nature pole of a dualistic religious orientation. Winthrop and Cotton likely also viewed God deterministically, but they emphasized the freedom of God's people to partner with God in doing God's work of redemption in a fallen world, a freedom symbolized by the wilderness. However, with the typologically-understood

creational-redemptive wilderness banished from Mather's Canaan, this component of freedom and redemption likewise vanished.

### *Apess' Creation-Fall-Redemption-Oriented Native Christian Typology*

Apess' re-narrates this typological connection between American history and biblical narratives, but he shifts the interpretive lens from nature-grace and nature-freedom to creation-fall-redemption. This shift is first evident in the structure his narration takes, particularly as pertaining to Apess' use of the jeremiad form. Mather's jeremiad shifts back between the poles of the nature-grace binary: in God's favor or out of God's favor. If God was favoring the Natives, God then could not be favoring the "Christians." Apess use of jeremiad is strikingly different. Patricia Bizell argues that Apess uses a "(Native) American jeremiad" to "advocate[e] for the inclusion of Indians and all other people of color in the US body politic" (36). He certainly does that, but I would suggest that an even stronger formulation of Apess' rhetoric is that of "Native (American) jeremiad." Here the parentheses place national interests in the more fundamental context of race and religious interpretation. Apess does not foreground the place of America in the jeremiad and thus God's providential plan; he foregrounds the place of Natives, structured according to the creation-fall-redemption narrative structure.

Although he does not use the terminology of religious orientations that I do, Apess clearly recognized the distinction between motivating, orienting, and structuring forces beneath different versions of Christianity. "Men have but *finite* conceptions of the *infinite* glory with which" God works in the world, he exclaims (113). Apess' purpose is to point out that structures of thought that prejudice white people against Natives fail to account for the fullness of God's readily evident work. Apess offers the example of one

of the men he was indentured to as a child, “Now this man is what is generally called an enlightened Christian. But let us look at his proceedings and see if he was actuated by the spirit of Christ or the custom of the day” (123). Speaking of Mather and the Puritans’ “sickening” treatment of Natives on religious grounds during King Philip’s War, Apess doubted the orientation of their religion as practiced: “they pretend to follow” “the words of their Master,” Jesus, but actually they do not. Apess calls them “blasphemous” (304) and “pretended Christians” (301). He even goes so far to say that the God of “modern Christians” who commit atrocities against Natives is not an accurate understanding of God. More particularly he suggests that instead those who “presume to say [they] are executing the judgments of God” are not and those who “approve of the iniquities [and prejudice] of their fathers” are in the wrong. When he accuses his white contemporaries of approving “in deed” of these atrocities even if they disavow them “in word,” he suggests the workings of systemic racial injustice that blinds the complicit beneficiaries of the system of the evil done on their behalf. Instead he suggests that God did not approve of the atrocities and such a belief is based in a false view of God and Native identity (286-287). This false basis is the nature-grace religious orientation. He suggests that if Christ “should appear among us, [he would] be shut out of doors by many, very quickly… [a]nd by those too who profess religion” because of his non-white skin due to the fact that so many whites do not truly follow Christ’s spirit (160).

A shift from a typology based in nature-grace and nature-freedom to a typology based in creation-fall-redemption radically changes the meanings of wilderness, Native identity, and the linkage between the two. Apess equates Native identity and white identity as equally valuable in that all humans are created equal by God. For example,

just after his conversion to Christianity, Apess recounts realizing that his Native identity is in fact a good thing because it is how he was created by God: "although the white man finds so much fault because God has made us thus, yet … I choose to remain as I am, and praise my Maker while I live that an Indian he has made" (130).

If anything, Apess suggests that Natives have more evidence to claim a creational connection than whites. In his explanation of why he prefers the term "Native" to "Indian," he suggests that "the natives of this country" "are the only people who retain the original complexion of our father Adam" (10). Barry O'Connell suggests that this "somewhat inscrutable assertion depends upon Apess's belief that Native Americans were one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. As such, they were 'Semites,' and thus their complexions were more like Adam's than those of Gentile Euro-Americans" (10 n4). Apess did subscribe to the Ten Lost Tribes theory, and I will shortly discuss how he uses it as a tool for revaluing Native identity. But O'Connell is mistaken that this is what Apess is suggesting. Apess is playing with the Hebrew meaning of the word *'adam*, which means "human," and may be derived from the Hebrew word *'adom*, meaning "red," or *dam*, meaning "blood." The Hebrew word for human is in fact etymologically related to the word *'adamah*, meaning clay or "red earth."[87]

The main point is that Apess asserts a creational connection between Native identity and God's creation: Natives are human, and therefore good, because God made them so, just as God made the earth and everything in it. I should add that he asserts a *positive* creational connection because elsewhere Apess refutes the "deep-rooted popular opinion in the hearts of many [whites] that Indians were made … on purpose for destruction, to be driven out by white Christians, and they to take their place; and that

God had decreed it from all eternity" (287), an opinion structured by nature-grace. "Dr. Mather, so well versed in Scripture," Apess notes earlier, "[should] have known better than to have spoken evil of anyone, or have cursed any of God's works. He ought to have known that God did not make his red children for him to curse" (284). Apess notes this failure of theology (that is, falling into falsehoods under nature-grace and subsequently nature-freedom) could have been avoided by closer attention to the good creational nature of all humanity:

> If such theologians would only study the works of nature more, they would understand the purposes of good better than they do: that the favor of the Almighty was good and holy, and all his nobler works were made to adorn his image, by being his grateful servants and admiring each other as angels, and not, as they say, to drive and devour each other" (287).

Studying the natural world and finding it good, as God did in Genesis 1, should reveal the equal value of all humans before God. Apess extends this connection between creation and Native identity to an understanding of the natural world. Throughout his works, as I mentioned, Apess parallels Native identity and the natural world by using terms such as "sons of the forest." But it is worth reiterating that he does so to highlight a positive connection, not merely a neutral one. For example, in assessing the legacy of King Philip, Apess asks, "where, then, shall we place the hero of the wilderness?" (277) and concludes that Philip was "the greatest man that ever lived upon the American shores" (290). In the first paragraph of *A Son of the Forest,* Apess asserts that he is a descendent of King Philip, but then downplays the significance of this:

> [W]hat, I would ask, is *royal* blood?—the blood of a king is no better than that of the subject. We are in fact but one family; we are all the descendants of one great progenitor—Adam. I would not boast of my extraction, as I consider myself nothing more than a worm of the earth. (4)

From the first paragraph in his first published work, Apess asserts the radical equality of all humans, an equality rooted in creation. Apess then further humbles himself by refusing to boast and even comparing himself to a worm. I believe that Apess alludes to the apostle Paul's frequent assertions in his biblical letters that he could "boast" in his Jewish heritage or his accomplishments, but that these are nothing compared to his being in Christ, and so instead he boasts in his weakness.[88] Apess' choice of the worm as a symbol of his humility and abasement may seem like an odd way to end this passage. However, the worm too is a typological symbol, an allusion to Psalm 22:6 (KJV): "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." This is the psalm, known as the Psalm of Christ, that was recited by Jesus while he was on the cross, suggesting his utter humility and humiliation. Thus Apess, in this particular association with the natural world, describes his lowly position despite his noble heritage, and also associates himself with Christ. Apess affirms the connection of creation and Native identity even more in his discussion of Native Christianity, but before I analyze that, we should look at how Apess counter-narrates the "fall" movement of creation-fall-redemption.

Having established the equal creational value of Natives and whites, Apess establishes the equal fallenness of Natives and whites, or perhaps even the greater

fallenness of whites. Apess begins his essay "The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes" with a discussion of God's justice and how it applies to Natives. He relates,

> I have been asked, time and again, whether I did not sincerely believe that God had more respect to the white man than to the untutored son of the forest. I answer, and always answer such, in the language of Scripture. "No: God is no respecter of persons." I might meet a question of this kind by proposing another, viz., Is not the white man as sinful by nature as the red man? (113)

Apess uses a quote from the Bible, attributed both to Paul and Peter (Romans 2:11, Acts 10:34), that asserts that God does not show favoritism between people groups, including between Jews and Gentiles, and by analogy Natives and Euro-Americans. He then goes on to show that all the stereotypes of Natives that might indicate fallenness (uneducated, "unrenewed by divine grace," "an enemy to God and righteousness," "prone to the commission of every crime") apply just as much to whites (113). Elsewhere, he suggests that the fallenness the Natives seem to exhibit should really be counted as a problem the whites have caused (155).[89]

Apess also suggests that whites tend to be even more sinful than Natives. He suggests in "An Indian's Looking Glass" that even though people of color outnumber whites fifteen to one worldwide, which is further indication of God's creational approval of people of color, the crimes that whites have committed as a group outnumber the crimes of all people of color (157). In his "Eulogy on King Philip," he confounds contemporaneous racial discourse by likening whiteness to savagery (283) and refers to a group of settlers as "white savages" for massacring an entire settlement of ninety Christian Natives—men, women, and children—in Ohio in 1757 (309). This flies in the

face of the dualism that would have understood whiteness and savagery as inherently and categorically incompatible. For Apess, whiteness as a racial motivator is an indication of fallenness, a distortion of the true nature of created reality. This is utterly different from the way Mather and other Puritans viewed Native identity. They did not see Native identity as fallen, since that meant it was also creational and redeemable. They saw Native identity as diabolical—in a transcendent opposition to divine grace—or at best natural, neutral, and therefore exploitable.

Apess' shift to a creation-fall-redemption approach to biblical typology involves using a trope that is not itself associated with any one religious orientation, that of the Indians as the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. This trope allows Apess to make a redemptive typological linkage between Natives and God's people. In the biblical narrative, these tribes were taken into exile by the Assyrian Empire, leaving the Kingdom of Judah—the Jews—to carry on the identity of God's chosen people. This theory suggested that Native Americans were one or all of those tribes of Israel who had subsequently made their way to America. This theory was popular in the early nineteenth century, particularly as a means for minority groups to legitimate themselves using the biblical and typological framework familiar to Christian Euro-Americans. Sandra Gustafson notes that the theory had been deployed extensively in Mordecai Manuel Noah's attempt to found an independent Jewish state in upstate New York and in Joseph Smith's attempt to found an independent Mormon state. The theory provided "distinctiveness and political resistance with a revision of Puritan history. In his writings, Apess provides the most thorough elaboration of themes first developed by Noah and Smith, giving voice to a shared

rhetoric yoking native identity, prophecy, and cultural autonomy that provided an alternative to the imperial nationalism of the American Israel" (Gustafson 36).[90]

Apess uses this theory to remove the Puritans from typological identity with Israel and replace them with Natives as the group who should be typologically identified with God's chosen people in redemptive history. Natives were no longer figured as the Canaanites to be driven from the Promised Land so that European Israel could occupy it. Natives were the Israelites who were meant to be in the Promised Land, subject to the invasion by outside empires, just as the ancient Israelites and Jews were. Apess makes this comparison explicit in "The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes" where Natives are compared to the Jews who suffered under Roman occupation at the time of Christ. But Apess suggests that the whites were worse than their oppressive imperial European counterparts because the Jews were receiving the punishment for their rebellion against God but the Natives had done nothing to deserve their horrible treatment by whites (113-114). In his narration of the Mashpee Revolt, he compares the Mashpee tribe, unable to use their rightful natural and religious resources, to the Hebrew slaves in Egypt compelled to make "bricks without straw" and unable to worship God rightly: "We regarded ourselves, in some sort, as a tribe of Israelites suffering under the rod of despotic pharaohs."[91] He refers to the church in which they met to form their own government as their "synagogue" (179). In "Indian's Looking-Glass," Apess points out that Jesus and all the earliest Christians were not white—they were Middle Eastern Jews—and that whites could only assert their racial ideology in contradiction to the gospel they claim to believe (158, 160). In telling his Aunt Sally George's conversion story, Apess refers to her elder Pequot relations as her "mothers in Israel" who helped her

become a Christian, again suggesting the link between Native identity and identity as one of God's chosen people (148).[92]

Apess' extensive use of this theory does more than simply assert a primal typological connection of Natives to Israel, God's chosen people in redemptive history. He also deploys it to assert that Native identity ultimately exists to advance a creation-fall-redemption-oriented Christianity. This is one of the main themes of Apess' only published sermon "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ" and its companion essay "The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes." Barry O'Connell suggests that these texts are "arguably regressive" because typology contains Native identity in a way that inherently controls it (99). I have already argued that typology can indeed be abused when used according to a hierarchical, dualistic religious orientation such as nature-grace or nature-freedom but that it need not inherently do so. O'Connell's interpretation assumes a nature-freedom religious orientation in that it rejects out of hand as contrary to freedom something cast as "religious," namely typological interpretation. But O'Connell argues further that Apess' typological invocation of "John the Baptist, a man of the wilderness, as the forerunner of one yet greater than himself … cannot but evoke the idea of Indians as precursors of a superior which is to come and supplant them" (99). This is absolutely not what Apess argues though, and he only evokes the typological interpretation suggested by O'Connell to critique it. O'Connell correctly notes that Apess "remains steadfastly committed in the sermon to an egalitarian Christianity," but cannot reconcile this with his other interpretation, believing them to be inconsistent.

I argue that Apess is consistent in arguing for racial equality while also deploying John the Baptist typologically because John the Baptist was a precursor to Christ and Apess

argues that Natives too prepare the way for Christ's Kingdom, which is characterized by righteousness and justice. Remember that Samuel Danforth's famous "Errand into the Wilderness" jeremiad cast the colonists in the privileged position of John the Baptist. Apess turns this typology around so that Natives are the ones with God's special purpose. Apess argues that the fact that John "must decrease" as Christ "must increase" (John 3:30) does not lessen John's importance or exclude him from the Kingdom that is ultimately the consummation of heaven and earth, and Kingdom that he in part enables as Christ's prophetic forerunner. Apess characterizes John as "the mighty prophet of the wilderness" and "the greatest of the prophets; none born of woman ever surpassed him in stern dignity and grandeur of character" (101). Apess' point is to contrast the greatness of John to the far superior greatness of Christ's Kingdom. In paralleling John the Baptist with Native identity, Apess suggests that amongst racial identities, being Native is the greatest, but finding one's identity in Christ's Kingdom is far greater (101).

One peculiar instance where Apess' rhetoric suggests the priority of identity "in Christ" is in "Eulogy on King Philip" when Apess, in between a passage extolling King Philip's greatness and a passage condemning the hypocrisy and falseness of European Christians' religion, declares, "We will now give you his language in the Lord's Prayer" (309). As the "Eulogy" was originally given as a speech, Apess would then have said the Lord's Prayer in Algonquian, presumably because he knew the language. The transliterated text in Apess' published version of the "Eulogy" differs somewhat from the text of the Lord's Prayer in the same language in John Eliot's *An Indian's Primer*, which would have been the standard recorded text. As far as I can tell, this is the only use of a Native language in Apess' corpus. The phrasing "his language in the Lord's Prayer" suggests the priority of

the prayer over the language itself, contrary to the more common phrasing "the Lord's Prayer in his language." This also suggests that Christian identity, symbolized by the Lord's Prayer, can contain Native identity and culture, not as a means of control but as a means of full expression.

Another example is Apess' refusal to promote divisions in the church even when he perceived racism within the church. Apess emphasized his identity "in Christ" rather than as a "sectarian" of any kind at the end of his own conversion account (133) and praises his Aunt Sally George for the same attitude in his account of her experiences as a Native Christian. Furthermore, in the second edition of his autobiography he left out a passage excoriating the Methodist Episcopal church for initially denying him ordination for reasons he suggests had to do with racism rather than his character or qualifications (321-324), suggesting that unity amongst Christians was more important to him than taking revenge for the potentially racist treatment he received (O'Connell 3n1).

It is true that Apess accepts the logic of the myth of the "vanishing Indian" to some extent, but he does so to highlight the injustices done to Natives rather than to somehow justify those injustices. Just as John the Baptist was executed for prophetically speaking the truth to the oppressive political powers of his day, and the Jews were dispersed by the brutal Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman Empires, so the Natives also, Apess argues, have been oppressed and dispersed by white Americans. The historical "melting away" of the power of the Jews is paralleled with the "melting away" of the Natives from their homes in New England. Yet Apess hopes that this will give way to the "melting down" of the sins of the nations with the advance of the Kingdom of Christ

(112-114). Apess charts this movement earlier in the sermon when he characterizes Christ's Kingdom as one of righteousness in contrast to "[t]he kingdoms of this world":

> [They] are confederacies of wrong; the powerful trespass on the weak; the rich live in luxury and rioting, while the poor are enslaved and doomed to much servile drudgery… But, in the kingdom of Christ, the noble of the earth are on an equality with the poor and humble… Every subject of Christ's kingdom … becomes righteous in his dealings toward his fellow man; and, in accordance with the spirit of the kingdom to which he belongs, he can enslave no man—he can oppress no man. (102)

Apess is absolutely clear about who has violated this righteousness and thus cannot claim to already be a member of Christ's kingdom: white Americans. But Apess is equally clear that redemption through Christ is a real possibility, even for whites: "The white man, who has most cruelly oppressed his red brother" repents of these crimes "under the influence of the Gospel which he had long professed to believe" (102).

Apess extends this typological link when he suggests that Natives are also better Christians than whites, even Natives like King Philip who did not convert to Christianity.[93] Apess refutes the notion that "none but white" "are the children of God." "If so," he counters, "the word of the Lord is not true" (159). Apess uses the historical details of King Philip's life to show how he displayed Christian virtues such as mercy, generosity, kindness, forgiveness, and the chance for redemption, including in dealing with whites, that whites did not when dealing with Natives. Unlike Native women captured in the war by the settlers, King Philip kept "the females completely safe, and

none of them were violated, as they acknowledge themselves" (283, 297, 300). Indians killed in the war were "pious martyrs" (304).[94]

But Apess is equally clear that Native culture must be transformed by Christ, particularly its warlike tendencies (111) and idolatrous worship of many gods. Apess suggests that the Natives' "Great Spirit" whom they always worshiped can be "for the first time revealed to them in the fullness of his glory through a suffering and risen Savior" (102).[95] In other words, conversion for Natives means becoming even more truly Native than they were before once the truths of their culture are more deeply understood in Christ. Although Apess advocates Christian missions to seek out Native American converts in a number of his works, he absolutely rejects the imposition of European culture onto Native culture (proselytism). He also speaks out against using mission work as a cover for robbing Natives of their culture and land "as if God could not convert them where they were but must first drive them out" of their lands (287).

In describing Natives as model Christians, Apess presents a vision of the natural world as intimately tied to the worship of God. On his way home from fighting in the War of 1812 in Canada, he spent some time among the Natives near the Bay of Quinte on Lake Ontario and described the landscape in idyllic terms: "It had a most beautiful and romantic appearance, and I could not but admire the wisdom of God in the order, regularity, and beauty of creation; I then turned my eyes to the forest, and it seemed alive with its sons and daughters. There appeared to be the utmost order and regularity in their encampment and they held all things in common" (33, 318). Apess parallels the creational goodness of the natural world with the creational goodness of the Natives' way of life. Just after this passage, he suggests that Natives will be receptive to the Christian

gospel—when presented by honest missionaries without "sinister motives" of self-enrichment, an important caveat—because their way of life already praises God (34). Apess' description of this Native community evokes the description of the early church in the Book of Acts: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (2:44 KJV); "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (4:32 KJV). This allusion to the early church by way of paraphrasing Acts parallels Natives with the redeemed community as well as the human creational community. Apess suggests that a Native way of life is already a life that Christians should model themselves on in order to be better Christians, more like the earliest church that provided the type for the contemporaneous church. Drew Lopenzina notes how this connection between religion and nature also points to these Native worshippers as modeling the early church, "equating Native Christianity as practiced by his poor brethren with the original Christian ministries that knew no house of worship or textualized creed" (Lopenzina 683). This insightful interpretation also points to Apess arguing for a creation-fall-redemption-oriented Christianity, in line with the structure of the earliest church, rather than a modern Christianity defined by affiliation or belief.

Another example of these parallels between redemption, Native identity, and the natural world is Apess' account of his own conversion. Leading up to this account he has spent a couple of pages detailing his struggles with fully surrendering his life to God. Already before his conversion experience Apess had become a Christian: "I felt convinced that Christ died for all mankind—that age, sect, color, country or situation made no difference. I felt an assurance that I was included in the plan of redemption with

all my brethren" (19). Apess is clear to include Native identity in this vision of redemption. But he did not experience the full force of this conversion until some weeks later:

> There was nothing very singular (save the fact that the Lord stooped to lift me up) in my conversion. I had been sent into the garden to work, and while there I lifted up my heart to God, when all at once my burdens and fears left me—my heart melted into tenderness—my soul was filled with love—love to God, and love to all mankind. Oh, how my poor heart swelled with joy—and I could cry from my very soul, Glory to God in the highest!!! There was not only a change in my heart but in everything around me. The scene was entirely altered. The works of God praised him, and I saw him in everything that he made. My love now embraced the whole human family. [96] (21)

Apess rationally accepts Christianity in a church meeting, and this involves his realization that God includes Natives in his redemptive plan, but his actual conversion happens in the outdoors. In it, he is not just affected rationally, as nature-freedom reductively defines religion; in his conversion, he is filled with love, a love for all humanity.[97] This redemptive experience also involves him seeing the creational nature of the natural world: God exists within it, and it praises God in its very existence.

The conversion narrative of Apess' Aunt Sally George, who in his autobiography he compares to the Virgin Mary, is similar to his in making connections between redemption and understanding the natural world as creation. She was actually despairing and contemplating suicide by throwing herself into a river. She experienced the wilderness, "my native woods," as a dark place, but a place of fallenness that one must

pass through on the way to redemption, the metaphorical Promised Land. She begs for mercy from God, who mercifully comes to her. As Apess tells her story, "there was a change in everything around me, the glory of the Lord shone around, all creation praised God, my burden and my fears were gone" (149). Here, too, the experience of redemption transforms a person's view of the natural world to a creational one. Apess notes that the "fences, the groves, the forest—all will witness to the fact" that she "was always diligent to seek Jesus" (150). The natural world here is also figured as a member of the Christian community. It was from his aunt, a lay preacher, that Apess learned how to minister among Native communities in southern New England. The camp meetings she led were held outdoors when weather permitted because they believed, quoting William Cullen Bryant, '"that the groves were God's first temples'" (40).

Thus Apess re-narrates the Puritan typology of Israel and the early church, substituting Natives for Euro-American colonists. He maintains the centrality of identity "in Christ" that the Puritans had left out, which entails decentering the primacy of Native identity in order to elevate it to its proper worth, which Apess believes is substantial. In doing so, he rejects the racism of the nature-freedom religious orientation justified by the theology of the nature-grace dualism. Furthermore, he maintains a strong link between the natural world and Native identity, essentially yoking the high importance and value of the two, especially in the creation-fall-redemption orientation that structures his account.

**The Mashpee Revolt: Apess' Environmental Justice Activism**

Although today he is recognized as the first Native American to publish a book-length autobiography and produce a substantial literary corpus, in his own day Apess was best known as the instigator of the Mashpee Revolt of 1833, an act of environmental

justice civil disobedience, which Apess recounts in his *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe; or, The Pretended Riot Explained*.[98] The Mashpee Wampanoag of Cape Cod were a Native community at odds with the overseers of their town, appointed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and their minister, appointed by Harvard College to be a missionary to them even though the tribe had adopted Christianity as its religion over one hundred years earlier. These white men used their positions of authority for their own enrichment, treating the town of Mashpee like their own private estate, deriving income from its resources much like the English nobility, including by selling the Mashpees' land. These authorities also permitted white settlers from neighboring towns to take with impunity the natural resources that the Mashpee depended on: cutting wood and hay, depleting their fisheries, and so on (231, 253). The tribe, unable to get a fair hearing of their grievances from the proper authorities, had chafed for decades under this oppression, which included this environmental injustice, the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and risks (173).

Under Apess' guidance, the Mashpee began to assert their right to self-governance, their right to worship God as best suited them rather than as dictated by secularist institutions, and their right to prevent the depletion of their environmental resources. They adopted Apess into their tribe, selected him as a co-minister and leader, drew up a Constitution for self-governance, and asserted their right to use their town's church meetinghouse, which was mainly attended by whites from surrounding towns. They posted that they would enforce these things starting on July 1, 1833. That very day, Apess discovered some white members of the unwelcome missionary's congregation

cutting wood on the Natives' land. He engaged them civilly but firmly, ordering them to desist, which they did not. Upon calling other Native Mashpee residents to the scene, he urged them to stay non-violent. Apess ordered the Mashpees to unload the cart of the poached wood that had been cut (179-181). For this act, and for the danger of his eloquence in asserting Native rights, Apess was arrested on July 4 for "riot" and "trespass" and ended up spending thirty days in jail and paying a very hefty fine of one hundred dollars (197-201), a considerably harsher penalty than Thoreau's night in jail for a similar act of civil disobedience, refusing to pay a poll tax that someone else eventually paid. But Apess' leadership was effective: instead of frightening the Mashpees, Apess' arrest emboldened them. After nearly a year of continued protests, often in newspapers, the Mashpees were granted the right to choose their own civil leaders and eventually their own spiritual leaders as well. This was a major victory, considering that their assertion of sovereignty was widely construed as seditious, and that it occurred at the height of Indian Removal, when other Eastern tribes were being forcibly deported west of the Mississippi to allow whites to settle on their lands (Gura 92-93).

This incident illustrates the parallels between ecological plunder, religious oppression, and the abrogation of the basic human rights of Native Americans. Apess himself asserted that "the civil and religious rights of the Indians" went hand in hand in his advocacy (169), and he argued for the Mashpees' right to determine their own style of worship to God appropriate to their culture (255-256, *passim*) as well as the abolition of what was in practice an "established church" in their community (234). He argues for "religious freedom" rather than religion dictated or circumscribed by a "secular" institution such as the state (263). Apess himself did not emphasize the environmental

nature of his activism. Since the advent of explicitly environmentalist rhetoric, which was not available to Apess, a few scholars have noted these themes in his work. John Kucich argues that "Apess forges at the beginning of the 19th century a new ethic in which the forest and its inhabitants are inextricable. His act [of civil disobedience at Mashpee], at once religious, political and environmental, … established a standard of social and environmental justice that America has barely begun to realize" (6). In most accounts of Apess' political and Native rights activism, these environmental and religious components are left out. Kucich's account is unique in that it highlights the environmental aspect of the incident but elides still the religious component. My aim in this chapter has been to examine those three elements as they converge in William Apess' thought and rhetoric, just as they converged in his account of his actions at Mashpee.

Apess visited the tribe in early 1833 as part of a preaching tour to Native communities in Massachusetts, and his account of first coming to Mashpee shows the integration of the environmental, racial and religious components of the injustice faced by the Mashpee. He had been welcomed by Mr. Fish, the appointed missionary to the Mashpee and later his antagonist. Upon arriving at the meetinghouse to attend a worship service, Apess describes the church building—"the sacred edifice stood in the midst of a noble forest and seemed to be about a hundred years old"—as a positive feature in a pastoral natural scene amidst tall pines and beside a picturesque "Indian burial ground." "A delightful brook, fed by some of the sweetest springs in Massachusetts, murmured beside it." He compares it to "Solomon's temple," perhaps suggesting a connection between the Natives and the Israelites. Apess paints the natural environment, the church, and Native presence, albeit a past presence as figured by the graveyard, as integrated. He

quickly shifts to the problem with this landscape: he expects to see the living Natives whose land and church this is, but he does not: "After pleasing my eyes with this charming landscape, I turned to meet my Indian brethren and give them the hand of friendship; but I was greatly disappointed in the appearance of those who advanced [toward the church]" upon seeing their "pale faces" that seemed to hold the "hue of death." Expecting to see the Natives to whom the church belonged, Apess compares the "whiteness" of those who had usurped the church building to the color of a corpse as opposed to the ruddy, living complexion of his Native "brethren," who appeared to "have changed their natural color and become in every respect like white men" (170). Apess allies Native identity to the natural world—to original creational goodness—and further suggests that the incursion of "whiteness" into the church is unnatural, opposed to life. Apess quotes the words of Jesus when he cleared out the Jewish temple that was being used as a marketplace for religious goods, suggesting that "the words of the Savior … might be properly applied" to the present situation: "'It is written that my house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves'; for these pale men were certainly stealing from the Indians their portion of the Gospel, by leaving their own houses of worship and crowding them out of theirs" (171).[99] The theft of the Native's resources by whites typologically reflected the incursion of market-driven greed into the temple that hindered the proper worship of God. This incident marks the beginning of the Mashpee conflict as initiated by whites' harm to the spiritual needs of the Natives, a point Apess makes explicit (169). The theft of religious resources is also cast in environmental terms, and the conflict would come to a head over the theft of environmental resources.

Apess casts the whites' behavior as fallen, an incursion into creational goodness, and in need of redemption.

Apess casts the Mashpee Revolt as what we would call an environmental justice incident in the "Introduction" of *Indian Nullification*. Writing of himself in the third person, he says

> the causes of the prevalent prejudice against his race have been his study from his childhood upwards. That their color should be a reason to treat one portion of the human race with insult and abuse has always seemed to him strange, believing that God has given to all men an equal right to possess and occupy the earth, and to enjoy the fruits thereof, without any such distinction. He has seen the beasts of the field drive each other out of their pastures, because they had the power to do so; and he knew that the white man had that power over the Indian which knowledge and superior strength give; but it has also occurred to him that Indians are men, not brutes, as the treatment they usually receive would lead us to think.

Apess then goes on to describe the theory that Natives were closer to nature and thus inferior:

> Doubtless there are many who think it granting us poor natives a great privilege to treat us with equal humanity. The author has often been told seriously, by sober persons, that his fellows were a link between the whites and the brute creation, an inferior race of men to whom the Almighty had less regard than -to their neighbors, and whom he had driven from their possessions to make room for a race more favored… Assumption of this kind never convinced William Apess of its own justice. (168-169).

I have already discussed Apess' arguments regarding the relationship of Natives to the natural world, and this passage supports those earlier interpretations. My point in bringing it up here is to show that Apess frames the incident as a matter of environmental justice in terms of the creation-fall redemption religious orientation. This passage is about the unequal distribution of privileged access to environmental goods, "the earth, and … the fruits thereof."[100] All people should have the privilege of access to the same environmental goods.

One might reasonably ask whether Apess' thought in the instance of the Mashpee Revolt, reflected in this passage, is indeed structured by creation-fall-redemption: couldn't his opposition to the behavior of whites be structured by nature-freedom in that their behavior is unnatural and hindering freedom? It is important to remember that in creation-fall-redemption, freedom is also a creational good and something that is restored in redemption. Something in opposition to creational goods might just as well be characterized as unnatural as fallen. These two religious orientations share freedom as a high value, but in nature-freedom, freedom is absolutized as an end in itself. In particular freedom as power to exert one's own will or to be free from the power of others is absolutized. Furthermore, because nature-freedom is a dualistic religious orientation, redemption is not an option. "Whiteness" is either good because it accords greater freedom to some (albeit via the exploitation of people and things considered "natural") or bad because "whiteness" and the discourse of "nature" inhibit freedoms.[101] According to creation-fall-redemption, whiteness is fallen because it distorts the equality of all human persons, reducing human worth to an artificial social category, but redemption restores equality and integrity.[102] Apess is adamant about the now commonplace understanding

that race is not biotic, but rather it is a human social creation with the original purpose of privileging some at the expense of devaluing others. Race is not creational, either biotically or socially. What is in fact creational is the equal use of non-human creation by humans to allow all of creation to flourish (Genesis 1:28), a truth that remains despite the fall.

Apess does not reject this use of human power, which is creational, as inherently bad, the position taken by some secularist critics; he rejects the fallen misuse of power that results in inequality and injustice. In the above passage from *Indian Nullification*, Apess explicitly rejects the misuse of power to appropriate the Natives' land and natural resources, just as he had years before the Mashpee incident in *A Son of the Forest*: "the Europeans acted on the principle that *might* makes *right*—and if they could succeed in defrauding the natives out of their lands and drive them from the seaboard, they were satisfied for a time" (53). According to nature-freedom, power is either a good that does in fact make right, an evil that is inherently oppressive, or simply how humans act in the absence of any directionality of good or evil. Apess rejects a Social Darwinist approach to survival of the fittest along racial lines, whether that be slavery, capitalist economics, colonial expansion, or other forms of subjugation. Apess subtly and brilliantly suggests that whites, who treat Natives this way, are actually the ones behaving more like animals. He is insistent that "Indians are men, not brutes"—fully and equally human and equally deserving without qualification to be treated as such. Such an approach that treats all humans as if they were merely animals exercising coercive power over each other is incompatible with Apess' creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. Unfortunately, this power-centric view is very similar to the Foucauldian position under nature-freedom

that many secularist scholars hold to, that human subjectivity is determined by oppressive power structures even as they strive to be free from power.

This difference becomes evident in interpretations of the significance of Apess' successful resistance in the Mashpee Revolt and what it says about who Apess considered himself to be as a Native Christian. For example, Lopenzina believes that Apess accomplished this by means of "negative work," a term he draws from Michel Foucault referring to "the rhetorical reconfiguration of the genealogical pathways of knowledge [Foucault] deemed essential to exposing entrenched operations of power" ("Letter" 106). Apess "aimed to subvert assertions of raw colonial power by contesting them through paradoxically peaceful means" ("Letter" 108). Again, this is a fair characterization of Apess' activism and advocacy. Lopenzina, however, then fails to grasp the full stature of Apess' subversive work because, following Foucault, he takes for granted the secularity of the nature-freedom religious orientation, which absolutizes power. "Truth" can only ever appear in scare quotes in this formulation (Lopenzina "Letter" 107) because it has already been reduced to power struggles. In this theory, such work as Apess' can only be "negative" and oppositional, which essentially is tantamount to accepting the terms of debate of the very view they wish to undermine. Such a critical stance also fails to account for the positive, redemptive aspect of Apess' counter-narration of the meaning of Native identity, Christianity, and the natural world. Truth may only be partial and incomplete according to creation-fall-redemption, but it can be known.[103]

Let me illustrate this critical difference by using more contemporary analogues. The titles of two recent articles by Drew Lopenzina allude to the titles of important texts by black American justice advocates: "What to the American Indian Is the Fourth of

July? Moving beyond Abolitionist Rhetoric in William Apess's *Eulogy on King Philip*" alludes to and draws explicit parallels with Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" while "Letter from Barnstable Jail: William Apess and the 'Memorial of the Mashpee Indians'" alludes to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." However, the latter article makes no mention of King, his activism, or his vision, instead using Foucauldian terminology to interpret Apess. For Douglass and many other abolitionists, King and many other civil rights leaders, and Apess, their Christian faith was a primary motivator in their activism. All three severely criticized white Christians for their complicity in racism and injustice, but each also evinced a hope for reconciliation and justice. King famously declared, "How long [will such reconciliation take]? Not long, because the ar[c] of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice" (230). According to the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation, which structured King's vision, power is a good gift of creation that is abused by fallen humans, causing injustice, but which can be and is being redeemed, even if it will take a long time. A Foucauldian, nature-freedom counter-narrative to this is articulated by Ta-Nehisi Coates in *Between the World and Me*: "My understanding of the universe was physical, and its moral arc bent toward chaos then concluded in a box" (28). Whereas for King, divine love most foundationally upholds reality, for Coates, (and, it seems, Lopenzina and Foucault) it is "struggle" (Coates *passim*) and power: "The world, the real one, was civilization secured and ruled by savage means" (32). Nature-freedom can provide excellent tools for exposing injustice. Coates, for instance, recognizes that the desire for power that motivates racism has led to ecological catastrophe (150-152). But its reductionism fails to fully account for the reality of the meaningfulness and good of

justice, love, trust, beauty, society even if human behavior in these spheres is integrated with power and also fallen. Indeed, the worldview of the secularist critic cannot account for redemptive use of power, culture, and history. Under nature-freedom, power can only be subverted, never redeemed. My goal in this chapter has been to show that the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation implicit in King's arguments is also what structures the thought of William Apess.

As to what the quoted passage above tells us about how Apess understood himself as a Native Christian, Arnold Krupat, following the nature-freedom approach, reads in the above passage that

> Apes now sees himself quite self-consciously as the prophet of a colorblind Christianity, and this bears upon the question of self-definition inasmuch as it would seem he can be fully himself only as an Indian member of the tribe of the non-racist saved. It is the part-to-whole relation in which the self as such is validated only in its social-collective (Christian) personhood that is important to Apes. (*Ethnocriticism* 227)

Krupat argues that autobiographies by Indians tend to present the self in a synecdochic or part-to-whole relation rather than a metonymic or part-to-part relation. Although this may be accurate to an extent, Apess does not frame his own selfhood as partial in relationship to some "whole." He frames his selfhood as a whole that nevertheless contributes to the wholeness of the other "wholes" to which he belongs (the church, the tribe, civil society). Apess' identity as a Pequot, a Methodist, an American, a minister, an author, etc. are integral aspects of his whole personhood, but none of them defines him absolutely. If anything, Apess' self-definition is as a whole-to-perfect-whole, that perfect whole being

Jesus Christ, in whom Apess understood his various identities to ultimately derive their meaning. The understanding of humans either as parts of a social whole or simply as autonomous parts is strictly limited to the nature-freedom religious orientation, and it is a limitation of criticism structured by nature-freedom that reduces humanity to some aspect of human personhood, whether that be the material or biotic, the rational or cultural, the aspects involving freedom, or the aspects involving religious faith.

Furthermore, "colorblind Christianity" is an inaccurate category to apply to Apess' thought. Colorblind ideologies tend to argue that race is socially constructed, it should not be taken into account in making decisions designed to counteract racism. In can even be used to deny the reality of racism and racial injustice and thus perpetuate racial inequality by prohibiting inaction regarding "race" (Omi and Winant 57). The idealization (or supposed realization) of colorblindness is analogous to the idealization of religious neutrality. Both end up legitimating the status quo of white supremacy and secular hegemony. Apess certainly saw himself as an anti-racist prophet. But he argues for a Christianity (and a state and civil society) in which all persons are in fact, not just in theory, treated equally regardless of appearance or ethnicity. Because it has been so abused, he argues, "color" must be taken into account, not turned a blind eye to.

The nature-freedom religious orientation further limits critical insights by circumscribing what counts as a source of meaning. For instance, Lopenzina has nothing more to say about the final line of Apess' "Memorial of the Mashpee Indians" —"*Oh, white man! white man!* the blood of our fathers, spilt in the Revolutionary War, cries from the ground of our native soil, to break the chains of oppression, and let our children go *free*."—than that it is "a general cry for release from bondage" ("Letter" 105).[104]

However, this single sentence actually makes a sophisticated argument by drawing on three biblical allusions. Apess is suggesting that since the Mashpees fought with the colonists in the Revolutionary War, they should be equal heirs to the freedoms sought in that conflict, if not more so since the land belonged to their ancestors and not the colonists'. He compares the contemporaneous government of Massachusetts to the British monarchy that oppressed the colonists and denied them self-rule, certainly not a positive comparison in the early American republic. But more than that, Apess compares the Mashpee Natives not only to the civic martyrs of the Revolutionary War but to the biblical proto-martyr, the shepherd Abel, murdered in the prototypical act of human violence by his agriculturalist and later city-building brother Cain for doing what was pleasing to God. In the Bible, it is God who says to Cain, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10 KJV). Likewise Native blood cries out from native soil for God's justice to be done by the American governments. The following two clauses of Apess' plea are indeed more general, but the first approximates the language of Nahum 1:13, a cry for freedom of the Israelites from oppression by the Assyrian Empire. The final clause evokes the refrain that God tells Moses to exhort to Pharoah in Exodus regarding the enslaved Israelites: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exodus 4:22-23 KJV); "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness" (5:1); "Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go" (6:11); "Let my people go, that they may serve me" (8:1, 9:1, 10:3). Apess typologically connects the oppression of the Mashpees to the oppression of the Israelites, God's children and chosen people.

William Apess' leadership at Mashpee demonstrates the concurrence of environmental justice, Native rights, and religious freedom in his thought. Some of the conceptual apparatuses he deploys, such as the Ten Lost Tribes theory and biblical typology, are "religious" according to a nature-grace and nature-freedom paradigm. Others are "secular," such as Natives being understood as close to nature. But none of these concepts are inherently useful to his causes; indeed, all were deployed as means of legitimating racial injustice, anthropocentrism, and even indirectly secular hegemony. But according to the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation that structures his arguments, these concepts become more emancipatory than they would even according to a dualistic structure of meaning that functionally considers "freedom" the highest good. Apess' identity as a Native Christian further manifested this religious orientation over against contemporaneous civic, social, and religious assumptions that Natives were inferior or destined to vanish. His assertion of a Native Christianity gives an example of positive work towards a Christianity redeemed from its racist, anthropocentric, and secular distortions.

**Notes**

[52] See Philip F. Gura's biography of Apess *The Life of William Apess, Pequot* for a full account of Apess' life and historical context.

[53] Nor do they foreground secularity, although both are sensitive to the dynamics of authors writing from a wide variety of religious identities, including those who were or are generally Christian but write from "outside the fold."

[54] Many other works that take one of these terms as a primary focus also develop insights into others. For example, Tracy Fessenden's *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literatur*e includes chapters significantly involving race and gender. Furthermore, many connections have been made between these themes in historical studies in other disciplines besides literary interpretation.

[55] Only Brooks mentions Apess, who falls just outside her book's historical scope, and only

briefly in her Conclusion.

[56] It plays virtually no role in his explication of Thoreau's anti-racist ecocentricity. He notes that the nature-based religion of conjure, as opposed to Christianity, played a positive role in Charles Chesnutt's development of an ecological and humanitarian consciousness and that Zitkala-Ša understood Christianity as a "bigoted creed … that would divide the soul from the natural world" (102, 121). But Myers does not go beyond this to consider that Chesnutt also had access to the deeper creation-fall-redemption religious orientation of Christianity or that Zitkala-Ša only engaged with dualistic, modern nature-grace and nature-freedom orientations.

[57] "[Secular] power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (Dyer "White" 44).
"The point of looking at [secularity] is to dislodge it from its centrality and authority, not to reinstate it." (10)

[58] Charles Mills argues in *The Racial Contract* that the social contract theories of Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau, Locke, Kant, and certain American founders based their theories that legitimated the hegemony of the nation-state, the very secularist theories made possible by the supersession of the church by the state, on racial ideologies of white supremacy. Walter Mignolo argues that modern racism is the byproduct of the European colonial project, which provided the resources for the rise to cultural dominance of the nation state. Both of these examples may seem to suggest a similar but converse argument to mine, that racism begets secularity. But it was not only the rise to dominance of the nature-freedom religious orientation that depended on racism and secularity. It was the secularity of the nature-grace religious orientation that initially created the epistemic categories that made racist anthropologies seem to make sense. A professor of mine once commented in a graduate seminar, in the context of critiquing the racist legacy of the Enlightenment, that "the only good thing about the Enlightenment was that it got rid of religion." It is deeply ironic that these two historical realities are deeply connected. Indeed, it was only by ridding themselves of "religion" that European intellectuals were left unhindered to let their racist theories flourish.

[59] Consequently, he grossly misunderstands the doctrine of the incarnation and, to a lesser extent, the sacraments and Marian devotion.

[60] Examples include the Crusades "making national/geographic others into enemies of Christ, the gentilising and whitening of the image of Christ and the Virgin in painting," and so on (17)

[61] See, for example, Omi and Winant 61-62).

[62] The word "heathen" also has roots associating the un-Christianized with the natural heaths outside civilized towns.

[63] Very little scholarship engages environmental aspects of Apess' thought. I will discuss

this in more depth in conjunction with my readings of Apess' texts.

[64] The original spelling of Apess' surname was "Apes," and this is how his name appears in a number of his published works. However, his preferred spelling was "Apess," which has become the standard form since Barry O'Connell's edition of Apess works.

[65] In a very partial sense, Krupat is right: the dominant discourse in the 1820s, including regarding Native Americans, was the discourse of white Christianity, what Krupat calls "salvationism," defined as prioritizing the goal of achieving heaven over "all this world" (142). Krupat is describing nature-grace, particularly in its belief-bound iteration under the dominance of the nature-freedom religious orientation. In his later monograph Ethnocriticism, Krupat makes a more positive assessment of Apess' anti-racist arguments.

[66] This concurs with the evolution of racial formation that Omi and Winant trace from religion to science to politics (61-69).

[67] I find more convincing Jean M. O'Brien's reading of "Apess' more secular writings" argue that justice for Natives "involves securing both the self-determination of tribal nations and the extension of the rights of U.S. citizenship" (187). Where I quibble still is in O'Brien's uncritical characterization of Apess political writings as secular, even though she uses the word to make a legitimate distinction in the tenor of Apess' writings.

[68] See Brooks 55-56 for a discussion of this case in relation to Samson Occom, like Apess a Native minister and missionary. See also James Clifford's essay about the trial. The cases were *Mashpee Tribe v. Town of Mashpee* and *Mashpee Tribe v. New Seabury Corp*. The Mashpee have since gained federal recognition through the Department of the Interior.

[69] Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous distinction between being judged "not … by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character" follows this same biblical logic.

[70] The Global South is considered to be Latin America, Africa, and Asia and Oceana excluding Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. The Global North, then, includes Europe, Canada, the United States, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

[71] In the New Testament, the view that converts to Christianity had to give up their original cultures was decisively rejected at the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. In particular, the New Testament holds that, although Christianity is a branch of ancient Judaism and all the first Christians were Jews, Gentiles did not first have to become Jews and follow Jewish laws and lifestyle in order to be Christians. See Walls for more on this distinction between forms of conversion.

[72] Syncretism as a form of conversion may be either nature-grace or nature-freedom.

[73] Gauri Visawanathan's *Outside the Fold* provides an in-depth treatment of this dynamic.

[74] Lopenzina offers a similar assessment; however, it is muted and seems to be a concession to the importance of Christianity for Apess: "And yet, as with the Pequot and

other Native New England communities, the church still presented itself as a center of tradition, a place where the Indigenous community might anchor itself against the relentless tsunami of colonial assault" ("Letter" 108).

[75] Apess alludes to this parable a number of times regarding the Mashpee Incident to characterize the Harvard-appointed white minister Mr. Fish as a hired hand tending the sheep without their best interests in mind (172, 186, 251).

[76] That fact that Apess uses the word "fold" is due to his use of the King James Version, which mistranslates "flock" as "fold."

[77] Natural theology was influenced by both the nature-grace and nature-freedom religious orientations. Apess molds it toward a creation-fall-redemption structure.

[78] Bercovitch, following Perry Miller, argues that the American jeremiad enhanced Americanization once their "errand" failed due to the collapse of the Puritan-led Commonwealth and the Restoration of the monarchy in England, which left the colonists both without government support and without an audience to be a good example for the purpose of political and spiritual renewal.

[79] Indeed, Mark Stoll in *Protestantism, Capitalism, and Nature in America* convincingly argues that this dual motive in Puritan rhetoric was the origin of both American environmentalism and American economic industry and commercialism.

[80] See, for example, Romans 3:21-31, 5:12-6:5, 8-11.

[81] The Doctrine of Discovery, originated in 1496 by Henry VII, declared that Christian states could claim dominion over non-Christian lands they "discovered" with the church's blessing. This follows the nature-grace dualistic distinction between heathen and Christian. Amazingly, this was not officially repudiated by the Episcopal Church (the American descendant of the Church of England) until 2009 ("D035 - Reconciliation: Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery").

[82] This fact and the opportunity for material betterment despite the difficulties make Cotton's sermon highly promotional and suggestive of the nature-freedom paradigm (8-12). In addition, the settlers must not presume that just because they want to go, God is calling them to. Unless they go to do God's work, they are "intruders upon God," as well as upon the land (7). The primary reason they go is for this spiritual reason based on the Biblical typology.

[83] The material wilderness was considered creational, too, though, as evidenced by the attention paid to natural beauty by first generation colonists like Anne Bradstreet and later Puritans like Jonathan Edwards.

[84] And the fact that they used physical metaphors to describe humans' direction toward or away from God does not mean that they took those metaphors literally. Bradford, for example, clearly had no love for the physical wilderness. Cotton distinguishes between

"temporalls" and "spiritualls" (19). Winthrop distinguishes a law of nature and a law of grace, the latter being superior. However, he also claims that God's love is the ground of both laws (107-108), meaning they are not mutually exclusive but refer to different aspects of one's life, which must be characterized by love in all things.

[85] Thomas Shepard also claimed that the Pequot War was motivated by revenge, more than justice (472-473).

[86] Bradford also treats the typological relationship between Israel and the colonists literally when, for example, the Separatists of Plymouth attempt to apply Levitical laws directly (356).

[87] The English (via Latin) relationship between the words human and humus is similar.

[88] See, for example, 2 Corinthians 9:15 and 11:30 or Philippians 3:5.

[89] Michaelsen suggests that this "fall" can only be remedied, in "Apess' view," if the Indians "rise again according to a logic of white civilization" (201 n14). This may have been the view of some of the sources Apess drew upon, but Michaelsen makes virtually no case that Apess himself believed this. Michaelsen is merely reasserting his faulty equation of Christianity and whiteness.

[90] Gustafson's claim that Apess' elaboration of the theory is the most developed is arguable. Apess himself relies heavily on Cherokee scholar Elias Boudinot's version of the theory, for example.

[91] This is an allusion to Exodus 5:7.

[92] Apess also used this theory extensively in his Appendix to *A Son of the Forest*, which used the theories of writers such as Washington Irving and Elias Boudinot to construct a positive Native American identity and pre-colonization history. Apess seems to have sincerely held this belief himself (114), but that is immaterial to my analysis of how he deploys it.

[93] Roger Williams, whom Apess called "a Christian and a patriot and a friend of the Indians, for which we rejoice" (291), similarly contrasted Native Americans positively to Puritan settlers since they behaved more Christianly.

[94] In the Appendix to his autobiography, Apess argued that the violence that the Natives did commit was modeled after and worsened by contact with Europeans: "It is often said of the 'savages' that their mode of carrying on war, and the method of treating their prisoners," Apess lamented, "is cruel and barbarous in the extreme—but did not the whites set them the brutal example?" (53).

[95] "Great Spirit" is a term that Apess himself also uses to refer to God (286, 288).

[96] Apess repeats this account nearly verbatim in his "Experience of the Missionary"

conversion account. One minor difference is that he says upon his conversion "the works of God praised him, and I saw in everything that he made his glory shine" (129).

[97] The conversion narrative of Anne Wampy in *Experiences* is also noteworthy in this regard. Wampy embodied a number of Indian stereotypes—impoverished, alcoholic, bitter—and blamed whites for her degraded state. Her hatred of whites, however, gave way to love after her conversion (151-152).

[98] Marshpee was the standard name for both tribe and town in Apess' day. Today, Mashpee is the standard spelling, and I use it except in textual quotations.

[99] Apess paraphrases a line that Jesus speaks in all three synoptic gospels. (The clearing of the temple also occurs in the gospel of John, but Jesus does not speak this line.) This line itself is an allusion to the Hebrew prophets: Isaiah 56: 7 and Jeremiah 7:11.

[100] This may be an allusion to the Parable of the Wicked Tenants in Matthew 21:33-46. Apess seems to cast whites as the wicked vineyard tenants who abuse and kill the messengers and son of the vineyard owner, referring to God's prophets and Jesus and in Apess' parallel, Natives, in order to unjustly benefit themselves with the profits of the vineyard. Jesus declares to the religious authorities, the original analogue to the wicked tenants, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (21:43 KJV).

[101] The version of nature-freedom that denies the reality of freedom also sees whiteness as bad but because it is not natural—equality is "natural"—and is rather a fabrication that ultimately is detrimental to the health of the natural world.

[102] In the New Testament creation-fall-redemption paradigm, all people groups are explicitly discussed as equally fallen and in need of redemption (Romans 1-2). Redemption "in Christ" entails the dissolution of national and ethnic differences and oppositions (Galatians 3:28), and the final consummation will involve people of all nations and ethnicities (Revelation 7:9).

[103] In the "nature" pole of nature-freedom and nature grace, truth can be known absolutely through logical positivism as well as in nature-grace through the means of "religion."

[104] Likely written when in jail for the trumped-up charges regarding his role in the Mashpee Revolt, Apess' "Memorial" appeared in the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* in January 1834, before the Mashpees were granted the rights they sought. It was a precursor to his book-length *Indian Nullification*, which was published in 1835.

# CHAPTER IV

# THOREAU'S "NATURAL SABBATH": A CREATIONAL CRITIQUE OF SECULARITY

Discussions of both religion and nature pervade Thoreau's writings, often intertwined, leaving room for a wide divergence of legitimate opinions as to their conceptual relationship (Dustin 259). This journal entry from 1842 is representatively ambiguous:

> I feel that I draw nearest to understanding the great secret of my life in my closest intercourse with nature. There is a reality and health in (present) nature; which is not to be found in any religion—and cannot be contemplated in antiquity— I suppose that what in other men is religion is in me love of nature. (PJ 2:55 *sic*)

Is Thoreau suggesting here that he has no "religion," only "love of nature"? Or that "love of nature" is his religion? Does that mean that nature becomes the *telos* of his religions orientation, replacing whatever the dominant *telos* of his time was (God? Humanism? Money? Religion itself?)? Or might he be suggesting that he encounters the divine—and a more realistic and healthy understanding of the world—more readily and fully in nature (in the present) than in the doctrines and rituals of the church or in ancient writings? "Nature" is clearly different from "religion," but what does he mean by "these terms? In this chapter I will argue that more often than not Thoreau conceives of nature in creational terms rather than in the secular sense as somehow opposed to religion, and further that he is critiquing religion as a modern phenomenon within a nature-freedom religious orientation. In fact, this journal entry continues with material that Thoreau

reworked and included in the "other world" discourse that ends *A Week*, material that provides strong evidence for a creation-fall-redemption structure to Thoreau's thought.

Another important locus of intersection between these concepts is Sabbath, about which Thoreau likewise seems to take divergent views. In the "Sunday" chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, he delivers a sustained and biting critique of New England Christianity and Christian Sabbath practices. He exclaims, for example, "Really, there is no [religious] infidelity, now-a-days, so great as that which prays, and keeps the Sabbath, and rebuilds the churches" (76). Yet in a later essay, "Life without Principle," Thoreau laments that, as society becomes increasingly commercialized and materialistic, "there is no Sabbath. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once" (156). Is Thoreau simply inconsistent here? Or is he writing of Sabbath in two different ways? or of two different kinds of Sabbath? This chapter attempts to reconcile these seemingly inconsistent depictions of Sabbath.

One common way of resolving this would construe the later instance as an exception to the narrative that, in parallel with a larger cultural secularization, a "more religious" young Thoreau gives way to a "more secular" older Thoreau, an exception that tests but ultimately confirms this narrative of secularization (Van Anglen 154; Buell 1986 117; Buell 1995 129). Another interpretation might construe Thoreau's criticism of conventional Sabbath practice as signifying a secularization of the Sabbath principle itself, a Reform effort that unmoors the Sabbath as a concept from its Judeo-Christian roots,[105] similar to Rochelle Johnson's understanding of Thoreau's treatment of "enchantment." Instead, I argue that this seeming contradiction signifies an affirmation of the Judeo-Christian Sabbath principle and, at the same time, a criticism of the forces of

secularization within American Christianity and society. In other words, it signifies the need for a break—a Sabbath—from these forces of secularization.

Furthermore, I will argue that Thoreau's discussion of Sabbath, particularly the Sabbath discourse in "Sunday," reveals a nuanced critique of the structural relationship between religion and the secular. Rather than rejecting the religious in favor of the secular or the spiritual in favor of the natural, Thoreau altogether rejects the division, common within Christianity and American culture at his time, between secular and religious as categories. For Thoreau, all of nature and life is good and has religious significance. This goodness has been perverted from within by humans but not irredeemably destroyed. The Sabbath is an example of a good principle and practice (as affirmed above in "Life Without Principle") that has been misunderstood and abused (as critiqued in *A Week*). Sabbath remains both creational and fallen, a concept in need of the redemption that Thoreau argues for it outside the bounds of the Christian "fold." Thus, although Thoreau does not write from a position of Christian belief, the underlying structure of his thought does correspond structurally to a religious orientation that emerged from and accords with the Judeo-Christian tradition. This structure of creation-fall-redemption integrates the "religious" and the "secular," the sacred and the mundane, the divine and the natural. In this way, I argue that Thoreau's critique of institutional Christianity is most fundamentally a rejection of the secularity of the nature-freedom and nature-grace religious orientations.

**Critical Interpretations of Nature and Religion in Thoreau's Writing**

A consensus is emerging within recent scholarship on Thoreau and religion, exemplified by a roundtable on Thoreau and Religion at the heart of the 2013 issue of the

Thoreau Society's *Concord Saunterer*, that Thoreau did not reject religion as such or even Christianity but rather the improper practice of religion—religion that is not religious enough (Dustin 261). The strongest treatments to date of Thoreau's comprehensive religious vision is "Thoreau's Religion" (2009) by Christopher Dustin, which argues that Thoreau's thought is fundamentally theological, even if Thoreau's beliefs were barely theistic (257).[106] Dustin argues that "Thoreau's religion" is grounded in a vision of communion with the nature world as the source of "moral freedom" (Thoreau's term) and as the means to seeing beyond nature to "a divinely creative source." This participatory referentiality of nature, that inature refers to and participates in something beyond itself, is "reverential and redemptive," "a form of religious transcendence that is seldom recognized" that is often obscured by presupposing that such terms imply a dualistic conceptions of reality, as critics I will discuss later commonly do. "As Thoreau sees it, nature points beyond itself, to a transcendent ground that is neither separable from nor reducible to it" (Dustin 259).

Thoreau was critical of institutional Christianity's beliefs and practices because it had lost its experiential dimension, not because he was critical of the essence of the religion of Christ (Hodder 20-21; Wolf 47). To use the distinction introduced earlier, he argues that the Christian "fold" has become inhospitable to the Christian "flock." As Malcolm Clemens Young points out, Thoreau "criticizes the church not so much for being fundamentally wrong in its teachings, but for failing to live up to its high standards," and he "rejects the church not because of its superstitions or because it believes too much, but because of its *lack* of faith and gratitude and 'affection for God'" (Young 18, quoting PJ 1:325 and PJ 1:371). By examining the pertinence of Thoreau's

critical stance to the Sabbath, this chapter will extend this critical perspective. My effort to theorize the structure of the religious orientations in Thoreau's work bolsters Dustin's argument that Thoreau's religious view includes a belief in a God beyond or behind the created natural world in a non-dualistic way. Thus, Thoreau's conception of Sabbath is both incompatible with secularity and structured according to the non-dualistic creation-fall-redemption religious orientation.

Yet beyond a perfunctory nod to the rejection of the secularization thesis, this scholarship considers Thoreau's "religious" thought in isolation from secularity and tends to use the term "religion" uncritically. These critics do not sufficiently examine how dualisms, such as secular-religious, are dealt with or present in Thoreau's own writings. For example, the extent to which such dualisms structure Thoreau's thought and the extent to which Thoreau rejects this dualistic structure go unconsidered. Dustin comes closest to engaging the religious-secular dualism as it pertains to Thoreau's writing when he suggests that literary critics' readings of Thoreau are obscured by the assumption of a religious-secular dualism, antithetical to Thoreau's own view of the world, and points to the dynamic of Thoreau's religious orientation extending beneath and beyond mere beliefs. In the present chapter, an extension and refinement of Dustin's argument with particular attention to the relationship of the secular to nature, I argue that the structure of Thoreau's religious orientation itself is non-dualistic, non-reductionist, and non-secular, and indeed conforms to the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation.

Critics, however, have tended to read passages such as the one quoted above from *A Week* as evidence of Thoreau's rejection of Christianity according to a secularization narrative of religious decline. Indeed, Thoreau's work has been characterized as secular

in a number of ways, each of which demonstrates an uncritical acceptance of the concept of secularity or the contours of the traditional secularization narrative. For example, Kevin Van Anglen and Lawrence Buell tell a subtraction story about Thoreau, in which he starts off religious but, in tune with American society, becomes less religious over the course of his life. Another version of the subtraction story of secularization is the replacement story, which Robert Richardson tells, in which God is replaced (in this case, by Nature) as the object of religion for Thoreau. This secularizing move concurs with Michael Warner's suggestion that Thoreau's (like other Transcendentalists') works manifest a version of secularism that is "a kind of spiritual worldliness [or "nontheist worldliness"] in a way that is distinguished from Christianity, or the theological, but not necessarily from religion [or "religious subjectivity or practices"] per se" (210). A third interpretive variation on the traditional secularization narrative takes faith-related and religious concepts used by Thoreau and secularizes them. Rochelle Johnson, for example, attempts to redefine "spirit" in wholly materialist terms. Such interpretations often posit Thoreau as embodying some kind "spiritual worldliness" but severed from the religious. Such a severing often comes by interpretive omission rather than commission. Important studies by Laura Dassow Walls, Jane Bennett, and David M. Robinson show how Thoreau overcame or integrated modern dualisms, which I read as structured by a secular nature-freedom religious orientation. But these studies fail to account for the alternative non-secular structure of Thoreau's thought by only glancingly engaging with the religious content of his writings when such an engagement could productively extend their arguments, if not, indeed, problematize their assumptions.[107] Other scholars, rightfully striving to retrieve Thoreau as a religious thinker, nevertheless use the category

of "religion" in a way that assumes a secular categorical counterpart. Malcolm Clemens Young and Alan Hodder, for example, tell a story of the privatization of religion, in which religion is removed (subtracted) from the implicitly secular public sphere. Jeffrey Bilbro's placement of Thoreau's environmental ethics as a continuity of Puritan doctrinal thought and use of the categories of "secular" versus "religious," meaning contemporaneous institutional Christianity, implicitly puts Thoreau on the "Protestant-secular continuum" that takes Protestantism rather than the non-religious as a neutral, and thus secular, category. Such an implicitly secular Christianity is exactly what I argue that Thoreau rejects. [108]

Thoreau's writings have frequently been fitted into a traditional secularization framework by critics, including some of Thoreau's best readers, such as Lawrence Buell. According to this narrative, the liberalizing Unitarian reform of New England Congregationalism was followed by Emerson's Transcendentalist reform within Unitarianism and Thoreau is usually positioned somewhere between Emerson and Whitman in distancing himself from Christianity (Buell, 1973, 4-6; Miller 188). In his 1998 article "Reading Transcendentalist Texts Religiously," Kevin Van Anglen argues that critics such as Buell often suggest that the religious significance of the Transcendentalists is that they offered a glimpse of the secularism and unbelief that would follow, despite their period-typical and often pronounced, albeit unconventional, religiosity. Such criticism thus tidily assumes the gradual secularization of American culture and enlists the Transcendentalists as key early players in that narrative, ignoring the unevenness of religious developments in American culture as well as the Transcendentalists' own writings. (Van Anglen 158-159; Buell, 1986, 166-167).

Although secularization has occurred in some sense, the influence of church authority and Christian belief were not inevitably declining, or even declining at all, when Transcendentalism flourished, or for individual writers.[109] Thoreau himself was a significant religious thinker throughout his life, Van Anglen argues, and his sympathies toward Christianity should not simply be written off as exceptions (164-165). Van Anglen is right to call for a more robust reading of the Transcendentalists that accounts for religious elements, but, in keeping with the secularization thesis, his argument still assumes a dichotomy between the religious and the secular. The religious should not be ignored, he claims, yet the two remain apart, and this separation is uncritically assumed.

This presupposition of a religious-secular dichotomy has affected how critics have interpreted Thoreau's understanding of the relationship between religion and nature. As discussed earlier, many see "nature" as secular and opposed to religion. In Thoreau's context, the dominant religious orientations of nature-freedom and nature-grace, as well as consequent religious and political doctrines, assumed that the natural world should be subservient to human considerations. For such literary critics, Thoreau reverses that dualism by privileging nature over Christian beliefs or institutions, which are understood to be aspects of the culture. It is understandable that these critics would observe Thoreau critiquing the then-culturally-dominant pole in a hierarchical dualism and assume that he therefore favored the other pole in that dualism. Indeed, for the purposes of critique, he did rhetorically employ such reversals. But it is another thing to uncritically assume the contours of that same dualism, updated to the present and hierarchically reversed, and allow it to dictate the contours of aspects of one's literary interpretation. That is what

critics such as Buell and Robert D. Richardson Jr. have done, which has prevented them from seeing Thoreau's critique of the dualism itself rather than mere critique within it.

For example, in *The Environmental Imagination,* Lawrence Buell, who is generally sensitive to the religious workings of Thoreau's thought, assumes that religion and nature are categorically separate. According to Buell, one of Thoreau's environmental projects puts "the natural and the spiritual" in "correspondence" in his writings. The two may be associated by an act of imagination for other, political purposes, but they are not related as such. This project begins as a "religiocentric inquest," but religion signifies only a single (early) step in Thoreau's evolution toward "ecocentrism." Buell's language of "centrism" correctly suggests the two binary poles of the nature-supernatural religious orientation. But in his account, the religious becomes secondary and is subsumed under the natural, which is Thoreau's final object of religious attention (Buell, 1995, 117, 128-134).[110] In *Literary Transcendentalism,* Buell's reading of Sabbath in "Sunday" likewise concludes that the passage reverses a religious dualism between Christianity, which for Buell is an example of a humanly-constructed cultural system, and nature, leaving the former and embracing the latter (1973, 213).

Robert D. Richardson Jr. even more clearly sees Christianity in particular as opposed to secular nature. "Secular," for Richardson, seems to refer to whatever is opposed to Christianity, and this includes nature (226). For example, *A Week* is a "modern, secular version" of a sacred "account of [the seven days of] creation" (156). Richardson reads Thoreau as thoroughly secular in his view of nature, as completely reversing a secular-religious dualism that had favored the religious. It is not that Richardson recognizes no religion or spirituality in Thoreau. He insists that Thoreau's

religion was an utter rejection of Christianity and an embrace, instead, of nature.[111] Again, society is simply assumed here to be secular for Thoreau (and presumably remains so) and God is absent from public life. In one sense, Richardson is correct: in modern secularity, nature has been taken as an ultimate ground of meaning and as part of the modern religious orientation. But that is not his point, and his assumption of secularization stunts his reading of Thoreau. For example, Richardson fails to account adequately for Thoreau's strong use of Christian imagery and argument in his anti-slavery addresses and essays. He simply dismisses it as "uncharacteristic," a popular appeal used only for political ends and not reflective of Thoreau's own views, and the unintentional overflow of Thoreau's emotions regarding the issue of slavery: "Thoreau felt … so strongly that he slipped into some old Christian rhetoric" (315). Here Christianity is defined somewhat flippantly as "old," a thing of the past. He does not deal with the "Christian" content of what Thoreau actually says. It seems counterintuitive that Thoreau, at his most impassioned and concerned, would move toward using more explicitly Christian language and more sustained evocations of a creation-fall-redemption religious orientation, as Richardson acknowledges, if he actually rejected these views. Richardson then explicitly reduces faith to an expression of freedom, a key move of the nature-freedom religious orientation's redefinition of religion, and suggests that freedom is actually most important to Thoreau in his political writings. Richardson quite accurately describes the nature of the nature-freedom religious orientation, although he does not acknowledge it as religious, when he describes this pole, known successively through the centuries as "liberty," "emancipation," "freedom," and "liberation," as "becoming valorized or discredited by turns" (316). However, he does not entertain the

possibility of freedom, as important as if was to Thoreau, might have been only one aspect in his life or worldview, albeit a neglected one that was in need of a champion.

Using Thoreau to attempt to overcome modern dualisms is also a strategy used by New Materialist ecocritics. New Materialists emphasize the materiality of reality, which accords with the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation's understanding that the structure of creation has an irreducible material aspect. However, New Materialists tend to absolutize one aspect of reality, usually its material aspect but sometimes also perception. New Materialists tend to espouse a secular religious orientation and secularize the meaning of religious concepts, to the extent they accept them at all, including those Thoreau uses. For example, Rochelle Johnson does just this in "'This Enchantment Is No Delusion': Henry David Thoreau, the New Materialisms, and Ineffable Materiality." Johnson's overall purpose is laudable and important from an anti-secular perspective: to rehabilitate "enchantment" as a concept worthy of literary and ecocritical consideration, to counter dualisms that separate humans from nonhuman nature, and to explicate Thoreauvian trans-corporeality, the "understanding of the human body as ultimately inseparable from the material phenomena comprising the world" (608). Johnson is correct in claiming that "Thoreau asserts that 'enchantment' is inextricable from the presence of 'spirit' in the material world" (607) and that "Thoreau thus claims enchantment as factual (or legitimate) and as an integral, significant part of human existence in (and as part of) the world" (610). She is correct that "New Materialist pursuits of both enchantment and the complexity of matter have tended thus far to neglect the matter of spirit, but to Thoreau, such neglect would signal a reductionist understanding of matter" (607-8).

Unfortunately, Johnson's understanding of matter, like other New Materialists, is highly reductionist: she simply reduces spirit to matter, which includes everything (607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 613, *passim*). One may claim that humanity and spirit in nature are irreducibly material, as I agree Thoreau does, without reductively presupposing, as Johnson does, that humanity and spirit are nothing more than material. One may "assum[e] a numinous aspect of materiality," as Johnson does and suggests New Materialists also do (and which I would argue Thoreau does), without reductively presupposing, as Johnson does, that reality has no aspects outside the material.[112] Johnson follows Francis Crick and neuroscientists in making a materialistic, pre-theoretical assumption that mind, consciousness, culture, and spirit are nothing more than matter-energy and can be explained in terms of molecular chemistry and the human nervous system. That this reductionism is a "scientific belief" (613) and "a given" (629 n13) is not only spurious but betrays the fundamentally non-religiously-neutral nature of the presuppositions that structure Johnson's argument. She espouses the dualistic Nature-Freedom religious orientation, moving from the Freedom pole in her critique of the "linguistic" turn in theory (612) to the Nature pole in her materialist reductionism. In this view matter is accorded a role that is divine in being the source of existence and meaning. Johnson follows Jane Bennett in arguing that for Thoreau matter is "neither providentially created nor divinely imbued" (626 n3). Instead, matter itself is divine. She proceeds to read her functionally religious assumptions as Thoreau's assumptions without offering evidence (619).

Since the late 1990s, in light of the troubling of the traditional secularization narrative, much important critical work has been done to rehabilitate Thoreau as a

significant religious thinker. Most of this work, however, retains the assumption of a religious-secular binary when considering Thoreau's environmental thought. One such critic is Alan Hodder, whose book *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness* (2001) intentionally looks beyond the critical traditions defining Thoreau as political thinker and reformer, man of letters and literary artist, naturalist and proto-environmentalist, and idiosyncratic American icon to give greater attention to "the underlying forms of [Thoreau's] religious and literary imagination." Hodder critiques "the general secularization of the Academy with its separation—unaccountable to the early-nineteenth-century mind—between religion and literature" among other assumptions of critics and approaches Thoreau that have obscured and "placed fairly severe limits" on our understanding of Thoreau's significance as a religious or spiritual thinker (xiv, 3-10). Hodder emphasizes that his religion was neither belief-based nor psychologically determined but rather a lived experience that consisted of, or was at least conditioned by, ecstatic experiences in nature. Hodder argues that Thoreau's emphasis on experience led him to a religion of interiority and an affirmation of the divinity within humanity that was a hallmark of Transcendentalism (5-6, 171-172).

This detailed recuperation of a neglected aspect of Thoreau's thought is a welcome one, but Hodder's study nevertheless retains the general assumptions of secularity and the traditional secularization narrative. Hodder acknowledges the problematic distinction between "more authentic" and "less historically motivated" "spirituality" over against "religious in the more conventional, collective, or institutional sense," but goes on to use the terms spiritual and religious "in roughly synonymous ways" to refer to "personal, 'interior,' and experiential" and "private" (5-6). Religion

must not be ignored by critics, Hodder rightly claims, but he still defines it as against the secular and public. Even though he refuses to accept the replacement or subtraction versions of the traditional secularization narrative, he uncritically accepts the secular premises upon which the secularization narrative is based.

Whereas Hodder emphasizes Thoreau's break from his Puritan (and indeed Transcendentalist) forebears, Young and Bilbro emphasize Thoreau's continuity with Puritan Christianity. Malcolm Clemens Young argues in *The Spiritual Journal of Henry David Thoreau* that Thoreau's "way of life [was] founded on an idea and recorded in [his] journal. That idea is the faith that one can experience the holy in nature, and that although we can never initiate or control our experience of divinity, certain practices can help us to prepare for it" (1). These practices included Thoreau's journaling and walking, which are rooted in historical Christian spiritual practices. Contra Richardson, Young perceptively argues that, theologically, Thoreau was most deeply concerned with "perceiving God in nature" or "discerning God's presence in nature" or the "realization of God in the present moment" rather than replacing God with nature as an object of devotion or consigning God to the ossified religious institutions and doctrines he rejects as inadequate for approaching God (22). Likewise, Jeffrey Bilbro's chapter on Thoreau in *Loving God's Wildness: The Christian Roots of Ecological Ethics in American Literature* (2015) argues that Thoreau's literary aims are largely religious (rather than secular) and that his spirituality/faith/religious thought largely adopts, adapts, and creatively extends Puritan thought in a way that emphasizes nature a means of worshipping the God of Christianity (25-62).[113]

These two studies do much to rescue aspects of Thoreau's writing that reference "religious" beliefs "from the scholarly oblivion to which [they have] often been consigned" by an "overly secular view of the Transcendentalists" (Bilbro 27-28). Their work is a vast improvement over Richardson's assumption of Thoreau's clean break with Christianity according to the traditional secularization narrative. However, both Young and Biblro uncritically accept terms like "religious" and "secular" as opposed. For Young, religion is still contrasted with the science in the Journals, a move that defines religion as essentially individual and private, as it is for Hodder.[114] Bilbro's analysis of Thoreau's conflicted and complex relationship to Puritan Christianity is excellent, but he fails to account for Thoreau's distancing himself from historical and contemporaneous Christianity, which I argue had itself become structured around secular assumptions. That is, Bilbro correctly explicates the "Christian roots of [Thoreau's] ethics," but fails to do justice to Thoreau's critique of Christian belief and doctrine. By casting Thoreau's ethics in the terminology of Protestant doctrine, Bilbro unquestioningly treats Protestant Christianity as essentially neutral—that is, secular—in a way that I believe Thoreau himself would have rejected or at least qualified. My purpose is to show that Thoreau was not more Protestant than secular, but rather that he altogether rejected and thus should not be considered in terms of a Protestant-secular continuum. Although this work by Young and Bilbro demonstrates the continuity between Thoreau's and Puritan thinking about nature, it does little to articulate the deeper structure of his thought. That said, I will attempt to show that in the structure of Thoreau's religious orientation does align with aspects of Christian doctrine that emerge from such a religious orientation.

**Sabbath as Creational and Mythic**

The "Sunday" chapter of *A Week,* mentioned earlier, is not only one of the most referenced passages in scholarship regarding Thoreau's supposed rejection of Christianity. It also includes his most in-depth discussion of Sabbath. Alan Hodder is the critic who has given the most sustained and nuanced attention to Thoreau's use of Sabbath, the Judeo-Christian religious concept and practice of a weekly day of rest from work.[115] He argues that Thoreau's linking of the Sabbath to a time before the biblical fall into sin indicates an attempt to trouble the Romantic mythology of America as an unfallen Eden (133-135). Specifically, Hodder argues that Thoreau as an "aspiring mythmaker" uses the biblical fall narrative to undermine the "American Adam" myth that claimed the American wilderness offered the opportunity to recover or return to the lost innocence of an Edenic paradise. Although Thoreau was optimistic about the possibilities afforded by Western expansionism, he was certainly much less so than Emerson or Whitman. Consequently, Hodder argues, to present a revised Romantic myth, Thoreau constructs a triumphal, heroic, and sacred quest narrative. Despite his critiques of "the Christian tradition, he never rejected the biblical version of the Fall story" and presents his own mythology "almost exclusively in the traditional terms afforded by the Christian story of the Fall" (111).[116] Hodder, however, is puzzled by this: "it is curious that Thoreau in effect reinstates the Christian myth of the Fall at the same time as he appears to be rejecting the Christian doctrines attached to it" (114).

The reason Hodder has trouble making sense of his insights about Thoreau's use of the fall is that he sees Thoreau within the modern nature-freedom religious orientation, claiming that he rejects the rigid beliefs and practices of Christianity and so moves to a

religion of ecstatic personal experiences in nature (132). In other words, Thoreau is among the many in the Romantic movement to shift from the nature pole to the freedom pole of the modern nature-freedom religious orientation. Consequently, Hodder's Thoreau becomes "ambivalent" and "ambipolar" because Hodder sees only two poles between which he could vacillate (117-8). The insight that Thoreau does not succumb to the Romantic myth of triumphalist progress but instead "seems committed to dramatizing the tension and interpenetration in human experience between time and eternity, fall and redemption, history and myth" can better be understood as Thoreau's troubling of the modern nature-freedom religious orientation itself and his deeper reliance on the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation.

Thoreau sees Sabbath as creational, a fundamental property of nature regardless of the world's fallenness. As he describes in the beginning pages of "Sunday," the rising sun clearing away the mist: "It was a quiet Sunday morning, with more of the auroral rosy and white than of the yellow light in it, as if it dated earlier than the fall of man, and still preserved a heathenish integrity" (43). Here Thoreau likens the scene and the rising sun itself to the goodness of the world at the time of creation, visible through the foggy distortions of the fall. The morning itself is "An early unconverted Saint, / Free from noontide or evening taint" (43). Here the morning—nature itself—is represented as always already saintly—one of God's chosen "people"—and not needing conversion to be so. Nature has no need to turn from a false path because it is good as it is, free from the "taint" of the fall, represented by the yellow light of the mid-day sun, which is paralleled with the fall (43).

Similarly, Thoreau later declares the stillness of the scene appearing "as if it were a natural Sabbath, and we fancied the morning was the evening of a celestial day" (46). On one level, Thoreau here compares the mist to dusk. He also alludes to the creation story of Genesis 1 in which evening precedes morning on each of the seven days of creation.[117] This Sabbath is "natural," suggesting that the natural world, not only God or humans, also partakes in the principle of Sabbath rest. Thoreau affirms this when he describes plants and meadows along the river as rejoicing and "at leisure" and the frogs "all Sabbath thoughts," recognizing an extension the sphere of Sabbath from the human to the realm of nature (49).

Thoreau's use of the subjunctive mood in the two passages quoted above further suggests that his affirmation of the Sabbath as inherent in nature signifies nature's ongoing goodness *despite* the consequences of the fall. The subjunctive construction "as if" can signal both an unreal situation or a true statement, depending on the context. Thoreau uses the phrase as an intensifying modifier for his experiences of peace. He is making true statements about the Sabbath qualities of nature. The first "as if" also signifies that a fall of some sort *has* occurred, that while the original creational goodness can be experienced, it cannot be remembered or grasped in its initial state. Nature still preserves the integrity that humans rejected in the fall, however. This integrity is "heathenish" because Thoreau ironically sees the church as one of the main perpetrators of fallenness in his own context. He asserts that coming to terms with this fallenness of an inherently good creation—the relationship of creation and the fall in how we think of Sabbath and the natural world—is one of the guiding questions of "Sunday" when he asks "Why should not our whole life and its scenery be actually thus fair and distinct?"

(46). He implies that our lives must be viewed as wholes embedded in the natural world. Although our lives and the natural world may not "actually" be as Edenic as his language suggests, he rhetorically asserts that this is not the way it "should … be," the creational way he strives to inhabit and advocate.

The essence of Thoreau's critique of contemporaneous Sabbath practices is that they separate Christians from nature when they should encourage communion with it. They perpetuate fallenness instead of creationality. One instance where this becomes clear is when Thoreau and his brother pass through the canal at Chelmsford, the event that prompts his long excursus on Sabbath and Christianity. The brothers receive icy looks from churchgoers who disapprove of their boating on the Sabbath and speculate that the churchgoers engage in "heathenish comparisons," suggesting both that the churchgoers compare them to heathens who are outside the bounds of true Christian religion but also that the comparisons themselves are outside the bounds of appropriate Christian behavior (63). Thoreau delights in this juxtaposition of comparisons: he believes that by enjoying the sunny day, he is actually observing the Sabbath creationally—more directly and appropriately than the churchgoers, according to the deepest meaning of the Sabbath (63). Likewise "heathenish" harkens back to his reflection that the sun and nature reveal a creational goodness or integrity that he now participates in, but which the churchgoers do not, blinded as they are from this integrity by their modern Christian rituals and doctrines.

Immediately prior to this incident, "Sunday" includes a discussion of fable and mythology (58-61). Thoreau, like other Romantics, sees fable as a model for poetry and literature, and this passage undergirds his frequent discussions about literature throughout

the book (Buell *Literary* 214). Additionally, Thoreau's discussion of myth here is important to understanding the form of *A Week* in general. Thoreau describes the relationship of three forms of writing that he employs in *A Week*: biography, history, and myth (or fable or mythology) (60).[118] Thoreau uses each of these modes both to critique the Sabbath practices of the New England churchgoers and affirm the Sabbath in principle and as he practices it. The biographical dimension concerns the actual movement of the brothers traveling along the river and prior events that Thoreau remembers first-hand. The historical mode allows Thoreau to take the reader back in time to think about events that took place along the river and in the region during the previous 200 years, the period of time of the presence of Euro-Americans. The mythic mode implicates these events in "higher poetical truths" as opposed to simply factual truths (60).

Before we look at how Thoreau employs these modes, we should see how other critics understand Thoreau's use of myth and its relationship to the formal construction of *A Week*. Buell believes that at this point in "Sunday," "the concept of myth gives him a club with which to attack institutionalized religion, as he soon proceeds to do [in] an entertainingly flippant discussion of Christianity and other ancient religious traditions" (*Literary* 214). Thoreau certainly does critique institutional Christianity, but I believe his use of mythology involves more than weaponization and, given his high regard for myth, his discussion is anything but "flippant." Hodder sees this discussion of myth as laying a foundation that allows Thoreau to construct his boat trip as a mythic hero quest that will shed light on an emerging American mythology (Hodder 108). Buell's readings of the formal movements and motifs in *A Week* are excellent, and he rightly points out that

Thoreau "experiments with" and "manipulates the sense of time" in the book, "interweav[ing] several different types of history: the personal, the regional, the cultural, the mythic" (236). However, he does not acknowledge that this is what Thoreau himself says he is doing in his discussion of myth in "Sunday" (60). For Buell, the "basic" formal unity of *A Week* lies in "analogous relations" between thousands of fragmentary and "isolated" "things" and "events," which are not ultimately interwoven. Regarding myth and its sense of the "universal" and "infinite," Buell claims that, despite the "succession of guesses or graspings at the transcendent" that Thoreau presents, "the narrator makes no lasting headway" toward anything outside what has been determined by time (237).

I believe that these understandings of mythic and formal structure of *A Week* miss the way that Thoreau integrated biography, history, and myth (Greek, Eastern, biblical, and otherwise), as well as poetry, to make headway indeed toward grasping the transcendent. For Thoreau, myth cannot be totally separated from history or biography: universal and transcendent truth is not beamed down out of heaven but must be discovered and composed. Truths of individual experiences are used to construct history and historical (and biographical) truths are used to construct mythology, which "contains only enduring and essential truth, the I and you, the here and there, the now and then, being omitted" (60). Thoreau criticizes "moderns, [who,] on the other hand, collect only the raw materials of biography and history," and so miss the deeper truths about reality that these could lead to (60).[119] Of course, Thoreau does not privilege the particular doctrines and texts of Christianity as a modern religion, but he does rely on the narrative of the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation over the dualistic nature-grace or nature-freedom religious orientations. Thoreau arrives at an understanding of "mythus [as

a] superhuman intelligence [that] uses the unconscious thoughts and dreams of men as its hieroglyphics" (61). "Mythus," like a religious orientation, unconsciously structures the thinking of people; it renders ideas meaningful or "true" to a society that subscribes to those myths. But this does not mean truths are simply relative to the society in which they happen to be dominant. The universal truths that myths are particularly suited to express are universal and translatable across cultures and religions (59-60). The truths that myth contains are thus revealed through the literary construction, but are not reducible to it, as they would be in the freedom pole of the modern nature-freedom religious orientation, which absolutizes the relativity and constructedness of reality. According to Thoreau, the truths are "auroral" and "precede the noon-day thoughts of men," suggesting that they have not been distorted by the fall or at least retain their creational goodness. Furthermore, the constructedness of the myths does not, for Thoreau, take away from the universality or essentiality of the truth contained by the constructed myth. Consequently, Thoreau's use of myth is not just as a weapon with which to attack Christianity or create an alternative to it. Instead, his use of myth is a way of integrating the truths contained in Christian mythology, which largely consists of the sacred history of Israel and the nascent church and the sacred biography of Jesus, with the truths of other religious myths, his own biography, and his insights on the history of New England. Whether or not this integration is as formally successful as it is in *Walden*, Thoreau explicitly signals his move to integrate all these modes in order to convey truths that he believes are inherent to nature but need human literary construction to be expressed.

**Biographical, Historical, and Mythic Critiques of Fallen Sabbath Practices**

These modes are integrated throughout *A Week*, but they are still identifiable as different modes. Thoreau's critique of New England Sabbath practices at times focuses primarily on one mode at a time. For example, at the biographical level, Thoreau encounters the churchgoers while passing through a canal between the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. His Sabbath discourse begins when he enters the canal (61) and ends upon reaching the Merrimack (79). The canal is an artificial waterway but is fed by the waters of the Concord River. Thoreau points out here and a number of other times in "Sunday" that the Concord is a "dead stream" but the Merrimack is a "living stream," suggesting the movement from the dead institutions of churchgoers to the life-giving Sabbath practices that he advocates (44, 61, 88). Despite the canal's relative age—it is the oldest canal in the country—it still appears out of harmony compared to the natural banks of the Concord. The relative unnaturalness of the canal suggests the unnaturalness of the practices of the churchgoers who appear along it. Like the natural river water flowing through an unnatural channel, their Sabbath practices originate in the very order of the created world, but have taken an unnatural, fallen form. Thoreau affirms Nature as a healer despite the disharmony created by the canal, even capable of perfecting what has been damaged through the "lapse of ages" (62). This suggests that the cyclical processes of nature, like the cyclical Sabbath, can enact the redemption of fallenness and even heal the damage done to it by the human "lapse" into sin. Thoreau does acknowledge that the time-scale of the canal, while imperfect and inferior compared to the geological time-scale the river, is favorable to the even greater speed of the modern railroads (62) that signify the lack of any Sabbath observance whatsoever.

Likewise, at the historical level, Thoreau uses the records and tales of towns along the rivers to reflect on and critique the significance of the Sabbath as it was practiced. For example, he relates a seventeenth century directive that a cage be erected near churches for Sabbath-breakers to be put into. He implies that contemporaneous Christianity is no less binding of a cage, only the church itself has become the cage (64). Thoreau makes a similar move in *Cape Cod*, reflecting on the Sabbath laws of the town of Eastham. He notes that those not attending church services would be required to sit in the stocks, but he suggests that the discomfort being confined to the stocks might be preferable to sitting through a church service (36). In this regard, the church has become an agent and enactor of what the fall originally did, separating humans from their natural goodness. Thoreau plays on the etymological relationship of the words "religion" and "ligature" to suggest that religious institutions bind people rather than freeing them by binding them to divinity.

Once the brothers have passed into the "living stream" of the Merrimack, Thoreau contrasts these rigid historical Sabbath practices with historical records of the Sabbath practices of Indians in the region who had converted to Christianity. In accepting Christianity, they adapted Sabbath observance to their existing way of life, which already involved leisure and reverence for nature, rather than simply adapting their lives to the practices of the white settlers, at least on this issue (79-82).[120]

Thoreau's frequent allusions to the biblical creation and fall stories, as well as Greek and other mythologies, signal the mythic dimension of his argument about the Sabbath, but myth is nearly always integrated with other temporal modes. One of Thoreau's many references to Greek mythology is near the beginning of his long

meditation on the Sabbath after passing under the last bridge of the canal before it reaches the Merrimack, the place he receives disapproving looks from churchgoers. After claiming that he is more truly observing the Sabbath because it was a "sunny day," he cites Hesiod's claim that "the seventh is a holy day" because that day was the birth of the sun god Apollo. That makes the sunny Sunday the seventh day of the week, "not the first" (63). He further claims that "in [my] Pantheon, Pan still reigns in his pristine glory" and that "perhaps of all the gods of New England and of ancient Greece, I am most constant at his shrine" (65).

These references to Greek mythology should not be taken to mean that Thoreau has adopted "paganism," "sun worship," or "Greek religion" as his own religion, as Richardson (50, 174) and Miller (190) claim. Rather, Thoreau cites these Greek myths as another means of critiquing the churchgoers' modern Christian practices that do not recognize the creational nature of Sabbath. Christian writers had for centuries used particular Greek divinities as shorthand for the divinity of the Christian God as experienced in the particular aspects of human experience that were those gods' traditional domains. Apollo was the god of the sun and of culture. Pan is the god of Nature, and he thus represents divinity (Christian or otherwise) experienced in and through Nature. Referring to the Sabbath day as the seventh day also refers to the Biblical basis for keeping a Sabbath since, as mentioned earlier, Genesis describes Sabbath as part of the creational nature of the world and the giving of the ten commandments in Exodus 20 declares the Sabbath's creational nature to be the basis of the fourth commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy.[121]

Thoreau claims to "betake myself *in extremities* to the liberal divinities of Greece" (64, my emphasis) because he knows the mythological references constitute an extreme and hyperbolic move. His embrace of Pan and "my Buddha" (67) provides foils to those who embrace the god of modern Christianity and also show that all gods are partial representations of divinity. In one sense, this understanding of divinity means that gods each are variously able to reveal the truth of divinity according to the various religious needs of various people: "Every people have gods according to their circumstances" (65). But this also leads people to become "intolerant and superstitious" (68) when they cannot admit to the partiality of their beliefs about God. This partiality leads humans to worship a god made in their own image, an idol that bears the true divine name, but an idol nonetheless. His claims that "Men reverence one another, not yet God" (65) and "What man believes, God believes" (66) should not be taken to mean that he sees true divinity as a mere human fabrication. These seemingly-relativistic assertions are critiques of the misuse of worship directed toward false gods, including the distortions about God propagated by modern Christianity. Thoreau in fact criticizes the Greek gods as gods on these same grounds: they are immature, "erring and fallen gods, with the vices of men" (65). Thoreau himself does not claim to be impartial; if he were impartial, he says he would "praise" "the nations of Christendom" (65), presumably for the ways they appropriately worship the true God. He goes so far to say that "it is necessary not to be Christian, to appreciate the beauty and significance of the life of Christ" (67).[122]

**A Sabbath from Secularity**

Just as Thoreau argues that New England Christianity is one form of approaching divinity among many legitimate ways and that modern Christianity should not be

privileged above other "religions," he argues that keeping the Sabbath day holy does not mean distinguishing it so severely from the other days of the week. Doing so actually destroys the spirit of the Sabbath. Consequently, it is not the case that the Sabbath makes the other six days of the week unholy or "secular." Thoreau provides an example of this fallacy by imagining a spinster who works so hard and unrestingly for six days that she is thus too tired to appreciate the Sabbath. Instead she spends it toiling over sermon books—another form of work that distracts from true Sabbath rest. Thoreau critiques this attitude by paraphrasing the fourth commandment: "For six days shalt thou labor and do all thy knitting, but on the seventh, forsooth, thy reading" (66). The account of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 explains that the Sabbath is a corrective response to the overwork in Egypt that the Hebrew people were subjected to as slaves, an event that in the Judeo-Christian story represents the denial of God's intentions for people and the world.

In contemporaneous New England, Thoreau argues, this ethos of overwork—an overwork ethic, so to speak—opposite to the spirit of the Sabbath, is what defines the practice of the Sabbath. Later in the chapter, he compares the Sabbath activity in New England churches to the practices of ancient Egyptian temples, and he associates Moses, who led Israel out of Egypt, with the natural imagery of the Nile (77). In the March 4, 1838 *Journal* entry that this passage is drawn from, Thoreau includes other examples of this hypocrisy, and more explicitly says that such Sabbath practices should not be imposed by anyone on others, and not even by the imposers on themselves (PJ 1:32).[123]

Instead of considering the Sabbath merely in the service of work practices antithetical to Sabbath creationality, Thoreau claims, imitating the conventional phrasing

of blessing found throughout the King James Bible, “Happy we who can bask in this warm September sun, which illumines all creatures, as well when they rest as when they toil, not without a feeling of gratitude; whose life is as blameless, how blameworthy soever it may be, on the Lord's Mona-day as on his Suna-day” (66). Rest and work should both be done with a spirit of gratitude on every day.[124] If six days of the week are relegated to the status of “[money]-days”, then even the one day regarded as a “[sunny]-day” will end up being dominated by the ethos of the former. Separating the “secular” from the sacred will wind up damaging the sacred, whether in human life or the natural world. Life should be recognized as inherently good on every day of the week, both the seventh and the first day, even though the fall has affected this goodness, making it “blame-worthy.” Every day should have a Sabbath character since it is an inherent part of creation. Thoreau thus affirms Sabbath while also affirming that every day is equal before God, and Sabbath should not be used to create divisions between aspects or areas of reality.

Thoreau’s approach to Sabbath is non-secular in his refusal to separate a single day or certain activities or places as the territory of religion as opposed to the territory of the secular. This is exemplified in his response to being scolded by a minister for hiking up a mountain on Sunday and so “breaking the Lord’s fourth commandment.” The minister suggests that “disasters … [befall those who do] any ordinary work on the Sabbath” (76). Thoreau rightly names as “superstition” the minster’s belief that “a god was on the watch to trip up those men who followed any secular work on this day” (76).

This is one of only two uses of the word “secular” in *A Week*, so attention to the way Thoreau uses it may offer some insight into his understanding of secularity. The

word here primarily refers to the sphere of reality distinguished from the religious sphere: secular as non-religious or religiously-neutral. This secularity may be understood as the aspects of life that have nothing to do with worship or ultimate trust. According to this usage, the minister would say that "secular work" on the Sabbath violates the holiness of the Sabbath by crossing a sacred-secular boundary and profaning the Sabbath by treating the sacred in a secular manner. This violation makes the work evil, according to the minister.

But Thoreau uses the word to point out that this dichotomy is a false one. The aspect of life that has to do with worship must be integrated with every other aspect; it cannot be cordoned off, relegated to a single day per week, and placed under inflexible religious institutional authority. Thoreau does not deny the validity of the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy, as a secularist reading of Thoreau might expect. Instead he suggests that the minister has misinterpreted the commandment by keeping the holy day separate from the other days of the week, which implies they are unholy. The minister only understands the Sabbath according to a nature-grace dualism that separates the sacred—in this case, the Sabbath—from the "ordinary" or "secular." Nor does this ensure that the Sabbath day itself is kept holy. Thoreau relates that the minister was "driving some poor beast" on his way to church, suggesting the mistreatment or overwork of an animal, behavior inappropriate to the Sabbath.

If the Sabbath is understood creationally, on the other hand, then "secular work" too can have a Sabbath quality. It too affords the opportunity to worship the divine. Thoreau suggests exactly this: "I would have gone further than he to hear a true word spoken on that or any day" (75-76). His goal is directional, toward the truth, and he

affirms the structural goodness of every day, which exemplifies the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. Thoreau reiterates his earlier claim that the natural world is an appropriate place to seek divinity when he suggests that a mountain, to which he was hiking is just as appropriate a place to do this truth-seeking as a church, to which the minister was driving. In this anecdote, Thoreau's argument is essentially the same as the argument of Jesus in John 4:21-23 to a Samaritan woman: "The time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. … But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way" (NLT). When asked about which is the appropriate place to worship God, Mt. Gerazim (as claimed by the Samaritans) or the temple in Jerusalem (as claimed by the Jews)—Thoreau compares the temple to a church later in the paragraph (76)—Jesus claims that instead God desires to be worshipped "in truth," just as Thoreau seeks the truth.[125] The location—mountain or temple/church—does not matter because every place affords the opportunity worship God appropriately. It does not follow that every place is therefore secular, or religiously neutral. Every place is sacred; no one place is more sacred than another. Secular-sacred dualisms are the foundation those kinds of divisions in the modern world that Thoreau rejects.

Thoreau also refutes the division of secular from sacred by claiming that it was not the "work" on the Sabbath that was wrong, but rather it was the "evil consciences" of the workers that was in the wrong. Their own consciences, not God, tripped them up (76). The activities themselves, Thoreau recognizes, are examples of the good use of the good creation. Evil exists as a direction within humans rather than any "secular" part of the

world that is inferior to some "religious" part. The structure of this argument follows the argument that the apostle Paul makes regarding the nature of the Sabbath in Romans 14. In Romans 14:1, Paul encourages his readers to "[a]ccept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters." The two "disputable matters" that he is particularly concerned with are eating meat that had previously been sacrificed to idols and legalistically keeping the Sabbath: "One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God" (Romans 14:5-6). Whether one day or all days are sacred is the same issue addressed by Thoreau. Paul does not believe that early Christians, who were largely Jews but whose community was rapidly expanding to include non-Jews, needed to keep the dietary and Sabbath laws kept under Judaism. Keeping the laws may be spiritually beneficial, but it is not necessary. More importantly though, Paul believes Christians should not use their freedom from these laws to damage the faith of those whose faith is weaker and who still depend on these particular religious practices. Thoreau, too, believed he was not beholden to Sabbath regulations but was free to pursue his spirituality in other ways, including unconventional Sabbath practices. Although the minister who scolds Thoreau is analogous to the believer whose faith according to Paul is weak, Thoreau suggests that a minister, whose faith *should* be strong, should not impede his Sabbath practices. He should not judge him for not worshipping or praying the same way he does (76). This echoes Paul in verses 13-14: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any

stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean." Thoreau, too, believes the minister is in the wrong for passing judgment on him and for attempting to put a "stumbling block" in his way—"trip him up" (76)—by telling him of the disasters that befallen him for working on the Sabbath and then, even worse, attributing those bad things to God. For Paul as for Thoreau, nothing (food, day of the week, the body, and so on) is bad or unholy—religiously "unclean," according to Jewish law—in itself: nothing is religiously neutral; in fact, everything is good. People's "regard[ing]" things as unholy or secular is what in fact causes things to become bad or unholy. Humans distort and introduce fallenness to the good world by how they view it and treat it. For both Paul and Thoreau the consciences of humans originate the evil and enact the consequent stumbling.

Thoreau's deriding of the minister for his "superstition" represents a critique of contemporaneous views of God, but also an affirmation of God's transcendence, which views like the minister's ignored. The belief that divinity or the gods control a deterministic world and can be mechanistically manipulated or appeased by rituals or behavior is a hallmark of paganism, not Christianity. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is not a part of the world that God creates. Instead God transcends the world but is nevertheless intimately involved in the continued subsistence of all created reality. Earlier in his Sabbath discourse, after criticizing Christians for being "intolerant and superstitious" (68), Thoreau includes a poem "I make ye an offer, / Ye gods, hear the scoffer" (69) that mocks this enslavement to superstition and declares his independence

from it but nevertheless also affirms a transcendent, divine reality. The speaker of the poem rejects superstitious religious beliefs when he claims he "cannot toil blindly, / Though ye [gods] behave kindly" in response to this superstitious behavior. When he acknowledges that he is "your [the gods'] creature, / And child of your nature," he both critiques the gods for his own negative qualities, but also claims that they are the source of his "free independence." In claiming this, he suggests that the true nature of divinity is transcendent: God (or the gods) is not limited by the causal, material world. The world is dependent on God; God is independent. The lines "And I swear by the rood, / I'll be slave to no God" emphasize this freedom from superstitious forms of religion. Ironically, the speaker vouches the truth of this assertion of religious freedom "by the rood," that is, by the cross of Christ. This may be intended as a further jab, but, if so, the irony cuts both ways. It may just as reasonably be interpreted as an affirmation of appropriate religious freedom as understood according to the Christian story. In the Christian story, Christ's—that is, God's—torture and sacrificial death on the cross did away once and for all with the sacrificial system of appeasing divinity that was central to earlier religious systems, pagan and otherwise. The "rood" is what enables freedom from slavery to superstitious religion, which is exactly the posture that Thoreau claims. After this line, the three final couplets of the poem put the speaker, now free, in a position not to bargain but to describe what he hopes his interactions with divinity to look like. He will continue to "strive" and be "your lover" if the gods (or God) are just, reveal the design of things to him, and "give him a sphere / Somewhat larger than here," suggesting heaven or a greater world to come.

Thoreau follows the poem with a quotation from the *Gulistan* by the Persian poet Sadi in which God pities and forgives his "servant" after much supplication (69). One could read this as continued mockery of the idea that divinity responds to humanity, a reply to his mock "hymn" that is to be further scoffed at. However, the shift to the voice of God in the words of the Muslim poet suggests two things. First, Thoreau turns over the response to his scoffing poem to the devout voice of another. Thoreau does not keep control of the response; he criticizes the superstitious as a false way to approach God, but then leaves it to God to respond appropriately, indeed, to forgive. Second, it suggests that God will respond mercifully to humans despite their failure to appropriately reach out to divinity, as Thoreau is attempting to do in his critique. The shift in tone is from scoffing at the false idea that God can be manipulated to humility before the truth of a merciful God who cannot be fully comprehended, whom Thoreau himself cannot presume to speak for. This makes Thoreau's critique of Christianity no less biting but points to a transcendent God nevertheless.

**Fallen Sabbath Practices as Exile from Nature**

In addition to suggesting that New England Sabbath practices perpetuate fallenness of the world as understood in the biblical fall, and in addition to suggesting the superstitious attitude New England Christians take toward the Sabbath enslaves them like the enslaved Israelites in Egypt, Thoreau furthermore suggests that these Sabbath practices have led to a state of exile, particularly exile from nature, which he likens to the Babylonian exile of the Israelites and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. In the Bible, the imperial injustices and domination of Egypt and Babylon embody the consequences of fallenness from the fall story, so it follows that Thoreau would allude to

these biblical empires. These allusions begin early in "Sunday," as Thoreau is reflecting on the towns the Concord River passes through, and their churches in particular, as the brothers move along the river.

He cites a historical document in which the residents of the town of Bedford requested a church of their own because the Sabbath requirement for them to travel the five difficult miles to the church in Concord was excessively burdensome. The settlers compared the burden of church attendance in Concord to the exile of the Israelites in Babylon, requesting to build their own church as the Israelites had requested of the ruling Persian King Cyrus the permission to rebuild the temple (51). Thoreau's quoting multiple instances of the colonists saying about the Sabbath "what a weariness is it" points to his indictments of religious practices that follow. He highlights the fact that the building of the church was delayed, not for spiritual or even practical reasons, but because of squabbles over where the most convenient location would be (52).

Thoreau also links the Babylonian exile to an estrangement from nature and uses allusions to the exile to illustrate New Englanders alienation from their environments. He details how the building of the "temple" in the neighboring town of Carlisle was a burdensome process and the coming of settlers to neighboring town Billerica accompanied the destruction of forests and habitat, the cutting to trees to make, for example, implements of confinement such as stocks (52). He contrasts the lifestyle of the Indians who preceded the "white man com[ing]" with what New England has become and finds that the way the "Indian's intercourse with Nature" was more mutually beneficial to the health of both human and non-human (52-56).

The New England Christians' exile from nature is self-imposed. Thoreau paraphrases the words of Psalm 137, a lament for the destruction of Jerusalem and an expression of the pain that the Jews felt from exile, saying that "Christianity … has hung its harp on the willows, and cannot sing a song in a strange land" (77).[126] The strange land of Babylon has become the land that the Christian settlers have made for themselves in America. They have made America into a place of exile away from creational goodness. Instead of singing, Christians hang their harps on the willows, which at the beginning of Sunday, Thoreau describes as "the most graceful and ethereal of our trees" (46), suggesting the spirituality of the natural world that Christians have become estranged from. Instead Thoreau goes on to say that Christianity "has dreamed a sad dream, and does not yet welcome the morning with joy" (77), alluding to Psalm 30:5 in which "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." This sad dream suggests the gloominess of Christian Sabbath practices that embody a belief in religion's separateness from nature. Interestingly, Psalm 30 is a psalm for the dedication of the temple, but Thoreau suggests that modern "temples" perpetuate darkness and fallenness.

Thoreau also alludes to the temple and exile in *Walden* to demonstrate Christians' alienation from nature. The reflection that "[e]very man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships" (211) alludes to 1 Corinthians 3:16, which affirms God's presence in and with the body and the body as the site of worship. What people choose habitually to do with their bodies will orient them in worship toward something, whether that be God or something else. Thoreau implies that communion with nature will result in proper orientation.

Misuse of the Sabbath is also a reason for exile. One of the Biblical reasons given for the Babylonian exile is the disobedience of Biblical Sabbath laws, in particular the law that the land was to be left fallow every seventh year. Leviticus 26: 34-35, believed to have been written during the Babylonian captivity, says of the abandoned land,

> Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. (KJV)

The writer of Leviticus explains the estrangement of the Israelites from their homeland as the result of not treating the land rightly, by honoring the Sabbath, when they were there. Thoreau indirectly echoes this sentiment, implying that Christians' very Sabbath practices are what separate them from nature (*A Week* 50). He more directly echoes this in "The Bean-Field" in *Walden* in which he criticizes white settlers who so quickly "exhausted the soil" (156). Quoting an agricultural book, he suggests that his bean field is particularly productive in part because it was one of the "worn-out and exhausted lay fields which enjoy their sabbath" (162), an allusion to Leviticus 26. Right use of the Sabbath leads to a right relationship between people and the land.

**Thoreau's Critique of Secular Institutions, Including the Church**

Thoreau uses allusions to the temple to critique the analogous religious institutions of his day—churches. He does not believe that churches actually practice Christianity or follow the teachings of the Bible, and this will lead them to ruin. After quoting several Biblical passages, words of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew,[127] that he observes Christians flagrantly ignoring, Thoreau ends a particularly biting indictment of

hypocrisy by exclaiming, "[These verses] never *were* read, they never *were* heard. Let but one of these sentences [from Matthew] be rightly read, from any pulpit in the land, and there would not be left one stone of that meeting-house upon another" (72-73). This accusation paraphrases the words of Jesus given in Luke 19:44, a prophetic lament about the future destruction of the temple in Jerusalem because the people ignored God. Jesus' words are themselves an allusion to Psalm 137 and the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. Luke 19 follows with the story of Jesus' clearing of the temple: Jesus angrily chased out those who had, with official approval, turned the temple from a place of worship to a place of unjust economic activity. The gospel narrative suggests that this challenge to the use of the temple was what immediately prompted the Jewish religious authorities to collude with the Romans in having Jesus killed. Jesus' attack on the temple was to cleanse it for its proper purpose, worshipping God. As the Israelites understood the Babylonian conquest and exile to be consequences of Israel's disobedience, Thoreau suggests that true adherence to Christianity would necessitate the destruction of the institutions of New England Christianity. He, too, attacks in order to point to the correct function of churches, worshipping God, which is not what the churches were doing. Christian religious institutions will be destroyed because they've strayed from God's word; they must be purified.

Thoreau's critique of institutions, religious and otherwise, goes beyond his allusions to the destruction of the temple to critique the functional substitution of institutions for God as divine entities or as ultimate authorities. Such "pagoda worship" (77) is yet another way that "men reverence one another, not yet God" (65). Thoreau's assertions that "[r]eally, there is no infidelity, now-a-days, so great as that which prays,

and keeps the Sabbath, and rebuilds the churches" (76) and "[i]t is necessary not to be Christian to appreciate the beauty and significance of the life of Christ" (67) mean that institutional Christianity's status quo is no longer guided by a religious orientation that accords with true faithfulness to God and Christ. He claims that actually to read the New Testament and do what it says would necessitate leaving the church. "I know of no book that has so few readers," he exclaims, despite "the universal favor with which the New Testament is outwardly received, and even the bigotry with which it is defended" since "there is no hospitality shown to, there is no appreciation of, the order of truth with which it deals" (72). Thus Thoreau finds himself outside the church by choice because the church has drawn boundaries that exclude his kind of piety and prayer, which he sees as legitimate approaches to God (76). "The church is a sort of hospital for men's souls, and as full of quackery as the hospital for their bodies" (76), he exclaims, suggesting that the spiritual guidance to be found in churches will not lead to God. Institutions founded on exclusion—the exclusion of those whose religious practices are deemed unacceptable and the exclusion of those who do not intellectually assent to the correct propositional beliefs—are bound to crumble.

Lest one interpret Thoreau's critique of the church as somehow favoring some other institution, he is just as critical of other modern institutions. For example, government, scientific, economic, and medical institutions may exclude individuals on the basis of class, racial, or ability status rather than religious affiliation or belief. In a critique of medical institutions—"Nothing more strikingly betrays the credulity of mankind than medicine"—he defines "quackery," "a thing universal, and universally successful," as "commonly an attempt to cure the diseases of a man by addressing his

body alone. There is need of a physician who shall minister to both soul and body at once, that is to man. Now he falls between two stools" (257). Doctors are just as guilty as clergy in their splitting the human person into spirit and matter, soul and body. Both, in fact, rely on maintaining the appearance of this split for business. A holistic, integrated view of the person is necessary instead. The "two stools" are the two poles of the secular dualisms that structure modern thought, human freedom (including spirituality) as opposed to materiality. "[Believing] that matter is independent of spirit" and doing so "practically," as a pre-theoretical presupposition, allows people to be deceived by those who maintain privileged positions in a modern context by appealing to their supposed separation. Thoreau does not argue that matter and spirit are the same; rather they are integrated and inseparable.

This critique of medicine extends to the critique of science. Thoreau applauds and aspires to the close observation of the natural world that was an important part of the emerging scientific establishment of his day. But he recognized that this approach can be reductive when performed according to the structures of the nature-freedom religious orientation, which absolutizes particular aspects of reality, such as the logical, the mathematical, or the empirical, and idealizes science as the best or only legitimate knowledge (according to the nature pole). In "Friday," on the return journey back to Concord, back in the Chelmsford canal in precisely the same place that the Sabbath discourse occurs, Thoreau worries that "[o]ur books of science, as they improve in accuracy, are in danger of losing the freshness and vigor and readiness to appreciate the real laws of Nature, which is a marked merit in the oft-times false theories of the ancients" (364). Science, he argues, should not be divorced from morality or ethics—they

must be integrated. For Thoreau, the most important purpose of science is to apprehend the structural laws of reality, laws which are not limited to the laws of causality and which exist independent of the scientific grasp of them. Increased accuracy and precision are good, but they are only a small part—one aspect—of understanding the world, and must stay integrated with those other ways of understanding. The laws of morality are as much part of nature as the laws of physics. These laws are not reducible to the human expressions of them either. They "are already *supernatural* philosophy," pointing to the fact that these laws are inherent to nature but originate from and point beyond nature itself. Furthermore, Thoreau prefers "natural philosophy," which differs from modern science in its pointing to higher truths than can be explained materially or mathematically, to a "science" that assumes an objective view from nowhere. When "[science] is sundered so wholly from the moral life of its devotee" (362), the scientific practitioner will not grasp the religious insights that it could give. When he says that "[a]nciently the faith of a philosopher was identical with his system, or, in other words, his view of the universe" (363), he suggests that an underlying religious orientation consists of a framework that takes all of reality into account and encompasses both moral and material laws. In a famous Journal entry from March 5, 1853, Thoreau discusses his answer to the Secretary of the Association for the Advancement of Science as to "what branch of science I was specially interested in," but fears he'd be a "laughing stock" if he revealed that he was most interested in "a science that deals with the higher law," which encompasses much more than "science" purports to study, even "[u]sing the term science in the most comprehensive sense possible": "a true account of my relationship to nature should excite their ridicule only." He does not mention how he actually responded to the

questionnaire, but he does mention that he "was obliged to speak to their condition," a condition of impoverished understanding of the world. It is only one "poor part" of himself that that science can speak meaningfully of. He refers to himself as "a mystic—a transcendentalist— & a natural philosopher to boot." For Thoreau, the modern "scientific community," unlike to the ancients, cannot understand that the study of nature is ultimately impoverished by not seeing other forms of knowledge as integrated with it and pointing to higher truths that science can explain (PJ 5:469-470).

This insistence on the integration of science and faith should not be obscured by places in the Sabbath discourse or elsewhere which seem to suggest a separation between the two. For example, when he asserts that "[t]here is more religion in men's science than there is science in their religion," Thoreau plays on multiple valences of the words *science* and *religion* (78). Thoreau seems to be saying that people are more concerned about depositing religiosity into scientific documents than they are with actually using what science has to offer (close attention to nature, for instance) to enhance their faith in God. He sees religious faith and scientific study as two legitimate but different ways of apprehending the truths of reality. A well-done agricultural report can honor God *as* an agricultural report by honoring with honesty and attention the world God has created. The report need not mention God or Providence or morality, especially in the obtrusive way that Thoreau criticizes. Likewise, faith in God need not be structured according to scientific terms—as rational and empirical—as modern religion is, with its emphasis on creedal belief. Thus the paragraph's abrupt conclusion, "Let us make haste to the report of the committee on swine" (78), becomes both an affirmation of said agricultural

committee's work for its own sake and a humorous indictment of those tempted inappropriately to turn a report into a religious document.

This critique of reductionist science is applicable to the way that modern Christianity is often understood: as a system of beliefs that can be codified propositionally and require intellectual assent. Both scientific fact and religious doctrine, as structured by the nature-freedom religious orientation, are reductionist, impoverished, and misleading. They can neither sufficiently explain the natural world, nor account for the substance of faith, nor account for divine reality. These shortcomings seem to be the reason that Thoreau opposes the emphasis on doctrine within Christianity. Attacking this aspect of modern Christianity is one of the clearest ways in the Sabbath discourse that Thoreau shows his opposition to the nature-freedom religious orientation. Thoreau declares that "Most people with whom I talk … have their scheme of the universe all cut and dried" (69). He playfully says that these schemes are "dry" in that they are very boring but also "dry-rotted" and "dry enough to burn," suggesting that taking such a rationalistic approach to understanding the world is neither winsome nor wise and will either eventually disintegrate or be easily and violently done away with (69). This metaphorical building recalls his synecdoche of Christian institutions as temples and church buildings that will be razed. He compares such schemes to the skeleton of a building—"and ancient and tottering frame with all its boards blown off" (69)—that people foolishly believe to be what is holding up "the heavens," here and elsewhere metaphorically referring to transcendent truth (70). Instead, such frames only block their view of "the heavens" and create unnecessary divisions between people (69). Against such schemes, Thoreau believes that "[t]he wisest man preaches no doctrines; he has no

scheme; he sees no rafter, not even a cobweb, against the heavens." He qualifies this later in the same paragraph, saying, "Your scheme must be the frame-work of the universe; all other schemes will soon be ruins (70). Here he is particularly critiquing "schemes" that purport to do more than they can, namely, to explain God and the universe. Rationality and science cannot explain the whole of the universe; in fact, they may simply be impositions that obscure the true nature of the universe. The entirety of reality—the universe—does have a "frame-work," but it cannot be fully grasped, especially not by only one form of knowledge such as rationality, as it is privileged in the science and religion of the modern nature-freedom religious orientation.[128]

Not only can these schemes not explain the universe from a religious perspective, but they are not an adequate expression of religious faith: "A man's real faith is never contained in his creed, nor is his creed an article of his faith" (78). Faith is what allows people to a glad and full life (78); that is a good thing. But "cling[ing] anxiously" to creeds actually reveals a deficiency of faith (78). Feeling the need "to prove or to acknowledge the personality of God" (77-78) signifies a lack of trust in who God really is and the need to obscure God's true nature to make it more believable. This is a "sad mistake" that Thoreau compares to a skin disease (77). Faith is its own aspect of reality and its own form of knowledge. The modern nature-freedom dualism distorts this by reducing faith to another aspect of reality, rationality, which idealizes scientific facts and the certainty they provide. Thoreau suggests that the commitment implied by the creeds is their redeeming aspect, their foothold in the creational nature of creeds that has unfortunately been distorted. This binding aspect of Christians' faith—again, Thoreau plays on the etymological relationship of "religion" and "ligature"—"should be its

umbilical cord connecting them with divinity," but instead, faith breaks down when these creeds are misused as checklists and divisive tools of religious institutions. Furthermore, they are inadequate to sustain faith one individuals are going about their lives outside of religious institutions (78).

After discussing the inadequacy of such doctrinal religious schemes, Thoreau launches into a fierce series of questions directed at those who attempt to explain God according analytical terms that is reminiscent of the series of questions in Job 38 that God poses to Job after similarly trying to explain the nature of the world according to a scheme of causality. In both cases, the questions are designed to reveal the inadequacy of human reason to formulate the nature of divinity. Thoreau believes that "[t]he perfect God in his revelations of himself has never got to the length of one such proposition as you, his prophets, state" (70). It is not divine revelation, God, or even the substance of doctrines that Thoreau derides—he stays relatively neutral on those issues; rather it is the propositional nature of the doctrines that and the authority they purport to have. True religious authority, belief, and revelation must be integrated. They cannot be reduced to "formulas" (70) or mediated solely by a single institution, such as the church. Thoreau does not critique the transition within Christianity from faith being defined as collective ritual to faith defined as belief, as I described in the Introduction. Both nature-grace and nature-freedom religious orientations are distorting schemes in that they afford false authority to institutions and creedal formulas, no matter the particular emphasis. "Examine your authority," Thoreau declares after he has rejected the religious authority of doctrine and the church for the purpose of explaining God (70). The tools of the rational aspect of reality may be useful for scientific purposes—measuring "the height of

the mountains of the moon," for instance—but they are not adequate or acceptable means to explain "the secret history of the Almighty" (71). God is ineffable and transcendent. Thoreau highlights this by ending his Sabbath discourse with a long quote from the *Gulistan* of Sadi that stresses the transcendence of God and God's worthiness to be worshipped as such and not as reducible to rational explanations by "vain pretenders [who] are ignorant of him they seek after" (79).

At the close of "Sunday," Thoreau and his brother are kept awake by the "boisterous sport" of those "unwearied and unresting on this seventh day" (116). Attention to sound plays an important role in Thoreau's nature writings, for example in "Sounds" and "Solitude" in *Walden* and in the Journal passage interpreted by Rochelle Johnson that I cited earlier as well as in *A Week*. Here at the end of "Sunday" Thoreau names Sunday as the seventh day rather than the first, emphasizing its status as Sabbath. In protesting the noise, he affirms correct Sabbath observance rather than Sabbath non-observance. For him, that correct observance necessitates avoiding noises that interfere with the experience of nature. It necessitates a rest not only from work but from workaday noises that inhibit rest. Throughout "Sunday," Thoreau notes how the sounds of the church separate people from nature, disrupt Sabbath observance in nature, and "profan[e] the quiet atmosphere of the day" (76). Such noises include a preacher shouting (76), reading out catechisms and religious books (77, 80), and the church bells he hears along the river from the towns of Lowell (83), Bedford, Carlisle, and Billerica, bells which he imagines frightening "the dreaming Indian" and forest animals (50, 77). In the *Journal*, conversely, Thoreau describes the sounds of nature as performing the true

function of Sabbath bells, calling the faithful to worship and reminding the hearer of the presence of God (*PJ* 1:277, 317).

It is not just the case that Thoreau critiques noise as breaking the Sabbath; he parallels Sabbath itself with silence. Appropriate Sabbath observance also necessitates silence as the culmination of the practice of Sabbath. Just before recounting the safe arrival back on the shores of the Concord from which they began their journey in the book's brief final paragraph, Thoreau ends "Friday" and *A Week* as a whole with an encomium on silence. Just prior to this discourse on silence, Thoreau narrates observations of wildlife along the river, the setting of the sun, and emergence of the stars as he and his brother row toward home on the Concord. Thus this meditation on silence comes just after the sun has set on Friday, the time at which the original Jewish Sabbath would begin. "Silence is the universal refuge," Thoreau reflects, "a balm to our every chagrin, as welcome after satiety as after disappointment; … and … remains ever our inviolable asylum, where no indignity can assail, no personality disturb us … [T]hrough her all revelations are made … " (392). Silence for Thoreau is not like the final silence of death. Thoreau's seven days end with Sabbath restfulness, as do the days of creation, rather than a final ending. Silence and "Creation" are not at odds; they do not "displac[e]" each other. Instead, Creation "is [silence's] visible frame-work and foil" (391). Silence and sensory creation thus complement each other the same way that Sabbath and workaday life do. Silence is not divine itself but is the medium through which divinity is most revealed in creation, similar to how Logos/Word (John 1) and Wisdom (Proverbs 8) are presented in the Bible as personifications of God. Just like Sabbath, silence is a creational principle that reveals divine handiwork. Silence is the truest way to worship

God; it most truly points to the ineffable Creator Thoreau believed in: "It were vain for me to endeavor to interpret the Silence. She cannot be done into English" (393). At its best, what his writing does is also what Sabbath does: provide an opportunity to move deeper and further on to contemplating silence and God. Thoreau advocates a *via negativa* approach to divinity, stripping away all that is false about God until, in the silence that remains, God is revealed.[129] Thus Thoreau does not attempt to "fable the ineffable" or "put mystery into words," as he accuses Christian and other "schemes" of doing in the Sabbath discourse in what would appear to be his most vicious attack on doctrine and revelation (70). Rather he uses words to approach the silence—the ultimate Sabbath, where God is truly revealed—in a way that honors that silence. Instead of imposing a scheme, such as a reductive, dualistic religious orientation, this creational view of the world suggests that the natural world points beyond itself to a transcendent mystery.

Thoreau's Sabbath discourse in "Sunday" thus contains his most comprehensive and most developed assessment and critique of contemporaneous Christian Sabbath practices, and through them of the modern nature-freedom religious orientation, as well as his fullest affirmation of Sabbath as creational. However, as a principle of rest inhering in and after creational work, Sabbath is present elsewhere in *A Week* (and Thoreau's oeuvre) in ways that aid in understanding how a creation-fall-redemption religious orientation structures his thought. First, Thoreau's practice of withdrawing from society for a time into nature is, for him, a Sabbath practice that implies a critique of secularism, the political outworking of the concept of secularity. Second, Thoreau equates Sabbath with silence throughout "Sunday" and the end of "Friday," as mentioned above, which

furthers his critique of misguided Sabbath practices. Third, Thoreau's discussion of a heavenly "other world" in "Friday" parallels his discussion of Sabbath earlier in *A Week* and points to a critique of a doctrine of heaven tainted by secularity that pits the earth or nature as a secular realm opposed to heaven. Instead, this "other world" bears the features of consummation according to the creation-fall-redemption/consummation religious orientation.

In "Sunday," Thoreau emphatically argues that nature is the best place to practice Sabbath, which is a creational feature. Being in the natural world, such as on the river in *A Week*, offers him a vantage point from which to critique modern religious institutions and conventions. This is not because nature affords a neutral or objective (that is, secular) position from which to make a critique. Rather it is because nature affords a space of creational goodness against which to measure the fallen corruption of the contemporaneous religion. Thus nature or "the wild" becomes analogous to Sabbath,[130] and Thoreau's practices of walking, huckleberrying, attention in journaling to natural particulars, and longer natural excursions such as those accounted in *Walden* and *The Maine Woods* can be thought of as Sabbath practices, temporary restful withdrawals from the workaday world.[131] These are Sabbath practices no less that church attendance.[132] The river journey made by the Thoreau brothers does not just recommend Sabbath, it enacts it in practice. Furthermore, Thoreau's account of Sabbath on the morning of "Sunday" recapitulates a creationality consonant with the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. Throughout the chapter he critiques the fallenness of institutional Christianity and upholds the redemptive potential of the natural world. This redemptive potential finds its fulfilment at the end of the book's final chapter "Friday," which contains

eschatological overtones that point toward the consummation of creation, a heaven of sorts in continuity with earth. Emily Dickinson developed this very theme, the continuity of heaven and earth in a creation-fall-redemption paradigm, as one of the most important in her poetry. It is to her work I now turn.

**Notes**

[105] This interpretation of "Reform" and secularization follows Charles Taylor's account in *A Secular Age*.

[106] William Wolf's *Thoreau: Mystic, Prophet, Ecologist* is also one of the very strongest treatments of his religion, but it functions more as a survey by major works and themes than a comprehensive articulation.

[107] Another way that critics (such as Buell) read secularity into Thoreau is by assuming that meanings are solely the product of the human mind and thus overlaid onto the natural world by human (Thoreau's own) agency. Meaningfulness (particularly in a religious sense) is subtracted from the world, remaining only within the buffered self.

[108] Young, Hodder, and Bilbro's uncritical use of the religious-secular dichotomy also suggests their acceptance of secularity as an epistemic category (though not necessarily an ontological or ethical category). This is still an assumption that needs questioning.

[109] Some Transcendentalists, such as Orestes Brownson, were more inclined to use the parlance of organized religion than others, such as Margaret Fuller.

[110] Buell suggests that the Transcendentalists "turned instinctively to that which had gradually replaced historical Christianity as the chief locus of God's Word, Nature" (139).

[111] In Thoreau's essay manuscript on "Chastity and Sensuality" relating human sexuality to the Linnaean taxonomy of flowers, Richardson finds evidence of "a crucial moment in the shift from the old religion of God to the new religion of nature, and the beginnings of the modern views of nature as sacred, and her pollution as profane" (269). In addition to remaining unconvinced by this interpretation, I note that Richardson simply assumes nature to be a space devoid of God. Furthermore, he assumes this state to be the present "modern" reality, the religion of God having been relegated to the past, in line with the secularization narrative. Richardson, drawing on anthropologist Mary Douglas, explains Thoreau's interest in sexual chastity by explaining that "even after nature has replaced God in a secular society, certain old ritual concerns persist, often taking new forms" (269). Richardson approvingly quotes N.C. Wyeth in saying that in his discussion of sexuality and relationships, Thoreau is "'utterly deficient, as is Christ, on account of his lack of experience'" (266). This, too, reveals a modern bias against religion and religious orientations that do not absolutize human personality, expression and so-called fulfillment

to divine status.

[112] She bases this claim about numinous materiality on the "New Materialist paradigm as theorizing 'ontology, epistemology, and ethics' 'in terms of *a radical immanence*'" (608, quoting Iovino and Oppermann). I do not see how "radical immanence"—in which transcendence is simply assumed to be dualistic and false and is rejected out of hand (Iovino and Oppermann 450)—assumes a numinous aspect.

[113] Bilbro situates Thoreau firmly within Christianity. He argues that Thoreau "saw his work as a continuation of the divine errand on which his ancestors had been sent" and

> believes this engagement [with the natural world] will enable Americans to become members in a divine covenant that God offers them. By taking their proper place in this covenant, Americans can stop seeing the world in terms of their own selfish desires. Instead, they can participate in God's ongoing redemptive work and join the rest of the created world in enjoying and glorifying God. (27)

[114] For example, his claim that Thoreau's longing for "communion with nature … can be best understood as a distinctively modern kind of piety" (5) echoes Buell's discussion of Thoreau's "natural piety" as a hallmark of his ecocentric stance that moves beyond a "religiocentric" stance or piety (1995, 129). Furthermore, "authentic religion" is "individualistic" (Young 20) and "deeply subjective" (21).

[115] Stephen Miller's *The Peculiar Life of Sundays* also devotes a significant amount of space to Thoreau. Despite Miller's wide-ranging survey of Thoreau's references to the concept in "Sunday" and throughout his work, he follows Richardson in simplistically reducing them to instances of the secularization thesis (188).

[116] Hodder's insightful readings focus on the apple tree as a symbol for the Biblical tree of the knowledge of good and evil and on Thoreau's use of the phrase "the lapse of the current" as suggesting both the movement of the river and the fallenness of the contemporary.

[117] However, in Genesis the seventh day, the Sabbath, has no evening and morning as the other days do, suggesting that the seventh day of creation in some way continues to the present. Thus the evening of a celestial day actually is the morning, the beginning of the day.

[118] Hodder connects these to the three temporal modes at play in *A Week*—the spatial, the historical, and the mythic (107-108).

[119] I believe this criticism applies to contemporary literary critics who miss the significance of Thoreau's use of biblical mythology, which he uses largely through allusion, and especially to the creation and fall aspects of the Christian story.

[120] During one of his excursions in Maine, Thoreau got into an argument over Sabbath practices with his Indian guide Joe Polis. Thoreau favored reading and hiking; Polis argued for worship in church and abstention from work. Thoreau accused him of simply doing

what whites had taught him, but finally allows himself to stand reproved by Polis, a silent acknowledgement that Polis' Sabbath practices did not take away from his being Native (*Maine Woods* 182).

[121] The Christian practice of celebrating the Sabbath on Sunday originated when early Christians, who were Jews, were no longer being welcome in synagogues on the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath and so celebrated it on Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection. Because Sunday corresponds to the first day of creation and on a weekly basis follows the Sabbath, corresponding to the seventh day of creation, which is the day Jesus lay in the tomb after being crucified in the gospel narratives. Sunday for Christians thus symbolically is also the "eighth day," corresponding to God's inaugurating a renewal of creation through Jesus and his resurrection. But this does not factor into Thoreau's critique; his main concern is to remind his readers that the Sabbath is creational.

[122] In "Monday," Thoreau engages in an extensive critique of Eastern religions, comparing their Scriptures negatively to the New Testament.

[123] In a *Journal* entry from July 1859, Thoreau further decries the negative effects of Sabbath practices imposed on the natural world itself in a spirit of overwork.

> So completely emasculated & demoralized is our river that it is even made to observe the christian sabbath--& Hosmer tells me that at this season on a Sunday morning [he should rather say Monday morning –Thoreau's note] (for then the river runs lowest owing to the factory & mill gates being shut above) little gravelly islands begin to peep out in the channel below-- Not only the operatives make the Sunday a day of rest--but the river too to some extent--so that the very fishes feel the influence (or want of influence) of mans religion-- The very rivers run with fuller streams on Monday morning. All nature begins to work with new impetuosity on Monday. (Journal Manuscript Volume 29: 165-166)

Here Thoreau describes how the gates of a dam on the Assabet River are closed on Sundays, so as not to contribute to the work of the mill and factory powered by the river. This practice is hypocritical since the river is not actually resting—running freely, with the dam gates fully open; rather its work is merely stored up and deferred to the rest of the week. This practice causes the river to be greatly diminished in its flow, the root of the word *influence*. Thus the river and its riparian inhabitants lacks "influence" and are negatively "influenced" due to contemporaneous Sabbath practices. These fallen religious practices bear the mark of the nature-freedom religious orientation in that they treat the natural world as a mere resource for enhancing human freedom. Thoreau's play on the meaning of "influence" is compounded by his play on the meaning of "want," meaning both lack and desire. The river lacks because of how Sabbath is practiced by fallen humans, but Thoreau sees the river desiring the right practice of religion as well, including Sabbath practices that would allow it to flourish in its created goodness.

[124] This recalls the final lines of Wendell Berry's Sabbath poem 1979: X, "When we work well, a Sabbath mood / Rests on our day, and finds it good" (20).

[125] I do not mean to argue that Thoreau was alluding to this passage. Instead, I'm arguing

that the biblical passage and Thoreau are making essentially the same argument against secularity. In another parallel, one of the chief arguments against Jesus by the contemporaneous religious authorities was that he healed people on the Sabbath in violation of the fourth commandment.

[126] The first four verses of Psalm 137 (KJV) read as follows:

> 1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
> 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
> 3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
> 4 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

[127] Matthew 6:33, Matthew 6:19, Matthew 19:21, Matthew 16:26, Matthew 17:20

[128] Wolf argues that Thoreau himself inconsistently constructs his own "scheme" in this passage (57).

[129] Cf. Gatta 132-133.

[130] Several nature writers have made an explicit connection between Sabbath and nature/wilderness. See Scott Russell Sanders "Wilderness as a Sabbath for the Land" and Wendell Berry's Sabbath Poems cycle, for instance 2011:XI.

[131] For example, Malcolm Clemens Young details the spiritual dimensions of the practices such as observing nature and walking that Thoreau journaled about as a spiritual practice. John Gatta has detailed how Thoreau's many ritual practices while at Walden, such as bathing in the pond, as recorded in *Walden*, mark them as religious practices.

[132] That Thoreau uses such natural practices as positions of critique is an argument made by Jane Bennett and Shannon L. Mariotti respectively in *Thoreau's Nature: Ethics, Politics and the Wild* and *Thoreau's Democratic Withdrawal: Alienation, Participation, and Modernity*. Both find in Thoreau's nature essays and natural excursion writings a critique of modern political structures and practices. I believe that Bennett and Mariotti's argument that Thoreau critiques the state through his nature practices is furthermore fundamentally a critique of secularism.

# CHAPTER V

# THE FACT THAT EARTH IS HEAVEN: EMILY DICKINSON'S NON-SECULAR RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* moves from his reflection on the natural world as the appropriate place to observe the Sabbath in "Sunday," his first morning on the river, to his meditation on silence and the heavenly "Other World" at the end of "Friday," the final chapter. Emily Dickinson traces a similar movement in a single poem:

> Some keep the Sabbath going to Church -
> I keep it, staying at Home -
> With a Bobolink for a Chorister -
> And an Orchard, for a Dome -
>
> Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice -
> I just wear my Wings -
> And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
> Our little Sexton - sings.
>
> God preaches, a noted Clergyman -
> And the sermon is never long,
> So instead of getting to Heaven, at last -
> I'm going, all along. (236) [133]

Like Thoreau, Dickinson does not reject the Sabbath; instead, she keeps it in an unorthodox way: by enjoying the natural world. Instead of a building designated for worship with special garments and accoutrements, she finds an orchard filled with birdsong the appropriate place to worship, just as Thoreau found the woods and the river. And in the outdoors, she hears God's voice directly, unmediated by long or bombastic sermons that Thoreau, too, found more distracting than revealing. This shared preference challenged the dominant religious norms, beliefs, and practices of their mid-nineteenth-century New England context, which both authors questioned. For example, this poem challenges the common notion of heaven as an utterly distant place one can get to only "at last" after death; instead, heaven is a state of being that overlaps the here and now, even though one must be "going" toward heaven to be there.

This chapter examines this simultaneous here-ness and there-ness, of going and having already arrived, that characterize Dickinson's engagement with heaven. After surveying some important scholarship on Dickinson and environmental thought, Dickinson and religion, and Dickinson and heaven, I apply the concept of religious orientations to her poetry, particularly her poetry on the continuity between heaven and earth. After examining how the uncritical acceptance of a secular point of reference in literary criticism has led to misreadings or impoverished readings of Dickinson's poetry, I focus on poems that critically examine the dominant nature-freedom religious orientation and find it wanting in its idealization of science and the freedom in art, neither of which it turns out is inherently at odds with religion. I then turn to Dickinson's poems that show heaven in continuity with earth and structured in relation to the very different creation-fall-redemption religious orientation.

The themes in "Some keep the Sabbath" resonate strongly throughout Dickinson's poetic corpus. From bobolinks to bumble bees, from gentians to geology, from sunsets to seasonal changes, Dickinson loved the natural world. Spending much time outside on the acreage of the Dickinson family estate in Amherst, she was an avid gardener, plant collector, and student of botany (Leader 78). As shown by Christine Gerhardt's ecocritical study of Dickinson, *A Place for Humility*, Dickinson's poems were engaged with the proto-environmentalist discourses of her day. Gerhardt furthermore argues that her poems anticipate, inform, and speak meaningfully to the ecological and environmentalist discourses of the twenty-first century. Dickinson, for example, paid close attention to the minute workings of the natural world around her, finding in them intrinsic meaning as well as allegorical meaning for human life. She was well educated in the sciences and used scientific terminology in hundreds of poems. She also was strongly attuned to New England as a place with a unique natural history and regional identity.

Gerhardt's environmental readings set a high standard for ecocriticism on Dickinson, but her interpretations could be enhanced by a deeper understanding of the structures of meaning that shaped Dickinson's view of the natural world. While occasionally noting religious influences in Dickinson's poems in the form of biblical allusions or ethical implications that resonate with Christian ethics (32-34), for example, for the most part she focuses on Dickinson's environmental discourse rather than on her poems' "religious and broader cultural implications" (152). However, I believe these implications are important, particularly as they are relevant to understanding the dominant religious structures of thought that influenced conceptions of the natural world. This is not a criticism of Gerhardt's work; religious implications are understandably

beyond the scope and purpose of her project. She gives sustained and sufficient attention to Dickinson's environmental concerns, which have indeed been neglected, especially compared to the work on Dickinson and religion. Accordingly, this chapter moves beyond her ecocritical work by focusing on the religious implications of one aspect of Dickinson's environmental discourse: the continuity between the natural world and heaven. In doing so, I interpret Dickinson's understanding of the natural world as a key to understanding her religious thought.

**Religion in Dickinson's Poetry**

As "[Some keep the Sabbath going to Church -]" illustrates, Dickinson was preoccupied with religious questions. Most studies of Dickinson and religion have focused on the question of her relationship to religious belief, particularly regarding Christian doctrines, with most scholars acknowledging the ambivalence Dickinson felt toward belief. Roger Lundin in *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* and James McIntosh in *Nimble Believing* emphasize Dickinson, with her complicated faith life in a period of religious upheaval, as a unique kind of believer with a hard-fought and "tenuous but genuine faith" (Lundin 151). Her faith nonetheless sometimes operated by way of doubt and questioning received religious ideas (McIntosh 14, 73). Mary Loeffelholz emphasizes instead what she calls Dickinson's "nimble doubt" over the belief she exhibited (105). In this chapter, I move beyond questions of belief to complicate these critical views of the religious context in which Dickinson's poetry is interpreted. In doing so, I follow Linda Freedman's *Emily Dickinson and the Religious Imagination,* which takes the relationship of aesthetic imagination and religious imagery (rather than belief) as its primary object of study and finds them mutually affirming rather

than at odds. Instead of asking a question of belief about what Dickinson believed about the afterlife or to what extent she accepted the doctrine of the resurrection, Freedman's approach allows her to ask what I see as more significant questions, such as what "kind of artistic inspiration [did the doctrine of] resurrection provid[e] for Dickinson"? and what implications did the notion of the resurrected body in continuity with the mortal body have for Dickinson's poetics (158-159). Using the critical category of religious orientations can extend the scope of these questions beyond the aesthetic to examine the deeper structure of Dickinson's poetic thought. Religious orientations allow us to ask to what extent Dickinson's poetic arguments are structured in such a way that also renders resurrection a meaningful concept. This approach allows us to see what Dickinson's poetic approach to resurrection can teach us about the meaning of "resurrection" itself and its implications for environmental thought.

As I discussed earlier, three main religious orientations exist within Western modernity. The creation-fall-redemption/consummation religious orientation was originally constructed in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. It understands every aspect of life as holy, good, and a site of mediating divinity. God transcends the world but is intimately involved in its existence. Creation-fall-redemption recognizes that all creaturely entities, particularly humans, can be directed towards or against God's will. The former direction is redemption and the latter fallenness. In this view, all creatures are finite and, led by humans, have chosen to rebel against God, and they are thus, though inherently good, in need of redemption. Redemption occurs by way of God's working through natural processes, human work, particularly (in its Christian understanding) through the people of Israel and ultimately through Jesus Christ.; it will eventually be

completed or consummated, all evil wiped out, the dead resurrected on earth, and the world restored and transformed such that only the good will and can exist. This religious orientation views the world as a drama of divinely created goodness, human rebellion, and divinely authored redemption. It is non-dualistic, non-reductionist, non-essentialist, and non-centric in its understanding of the meaningfulness of life.

However, in late antiquity, the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation was gradually synthesized with the Greek religious orientation, dominant throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, that posited a dualism and hierarchy between form and matter. What resulted was a nature-grace dualism that conflated creation and fall into one (nature) and opposed it to redemption (grace), which became coterminous to the specific realm of the church. (In other words, divine redemption or grace was mediated through the institutional church). The medieval church gave religious priority to spirit over matter, soul over body, heaven over earth, grace over nature. The church established itself as the mediator of those privileged terms while also denigrating and seeking to control what it saw as manifestations of the latter, including other institutions such as the state, influencing their proper functions to the church's benefit. That which was less sacred or not sacred, everyday life and the natural world, was considered "secular." Thus nature-grace was a form of secularization within Christianity because it did not see all reality as sacred. This dualism is the origin of the modern concept of secularity—a secular domain opposed to religion. Nature-grace treated fallenness less as a condition of a good creation than as an inherent aspect of all created reality. Yet the holistic creation-fall-redemption orientation never went away. And at its best, nature-grace-oriented thought hinted at the creation-fall-redemption orientation that it originally drew on.

The modern nature-freedom religious orientation arose to dominance with the nation-state after the decline of feudalism and the church's domination of social institutions. Taking root in the Renaissance and becoming dominant during the Enlightenment and in Romanticism, it allowed cultural, societal, and state institutions to replace the church as dominant in public life. It challenged the failings of the medieval religious dualism by replacing supernatural grace as mediated by the church with human freedom as an ideal. This freedom (initially, freedom from the church) extended to cultural, aesthetic, ethical, and other aspects of life. The dualistic structure remained, but the supernatural aspect was subtracted to create an understanding of reality as exclusively immanent. Belief in a transcendent God gave way to the belief in the immanent divinity and transcendent potential of humanity. This attitude toward human freedom formed one pole of a new religious dualism, with human freedom, expression, and personality irreconcilably opposed to nature (human and non-human), reason, science, and deterministic forces as the ultimate sources or at least arbiters of meaning. Meanwhile, the creation-fall-redemption orientation, though also often reduced by modern thinkers to merely a "belief," continued to haunt the modern world with its dramatic vision of the world as intimately tied to the transcendent, as inherently good, and as destined for glory through divine work, despite human failings.

Dickinson, like Thoreau, rejected the dualisms of nature-grace. In his advocacy for the natural world against contemporaneous religious understandings, Thoreau was most concerned with resisting the theological conflation of the doctrines of creation and fall into an inferior "nature." This move transformed the creation-fall-redemption orientation into the nature-grace dualism, whereby "creation" is refigured as "nature" and

is seen as less meaningful and less valuable than supernatural "grace." Similarly, Emily Dickinson was concerned with resisting the theological dissociation of the doctrine of creation from the doctrine of redemption and consummation and same nature-devaluing dualisms result.

It is easy for modern readers to construe this resistance as motivated by secularization according to the traditional secularization thesis of nature-freedom. Since Dickinson rejects the nature-grace dualism, and since nature-freedom was born out of the rejection and transformation of nature-grace, critics assume she must most closely align with a nature-freedom religious orientation. But this interpretation only makes sense from the secular worldview of the nature-freedom religious orientation. However, that begs the question of the legitimacy of this religious orientation, which I argued in the Introduction is the direct framework for the modern justification of environmental degradation. As a critical framework it produces inconsistent environmental thought at best. Nevertheless, it is true that within the bounds of the nature-freedom dualism, Dickinson's resistance looks a lot like secularization. At a distance of 150 years, her thought appears to bear witness to the continued dominance of the secular nature-freedom dualism that modern American society inhabits.

Furthermore, Dickinson's poems themselves resist the structure of nature-freedom and its absolutized forms of knowledge. The nature-freedom religious orientation treats various construals of "nature" or its antinomy "freedom" as self-existent and the source of ultimate meaning in every aspect of life. Thus scientific rationality and the autonomous expression of personality are idealized over other forms of knowledge. Dickinson's poetry challenges the nature-freedom dualism by questioning these polar

idealizations and finding them lacking. Of the two, Dickinson did favor the freedom pole in tune with the Romantic vision of poetry as religion that influenced her. However, unlike Emerson, this did not lead her to embrace the nature-freedom orientation.

For example, "["Arcturus" is his other name -]" (117) playfully but decisively calls the dominance of scientific rationality into question by privileging everyday experiences and understandings of things in nature such as stars, worms, flowers, and butterflies over scientific understandings. Indeed, the poem criticizes "Science" for killing creatures physically and removing them from the environments they inhabit in order to understand them better, suggesting that understanding them as embedded in their particular habitat is the best way to know them truly. Furthermore, the poem suggests, scientific understanding damages real creatures conceptually by reducing them to whatever can be studied scientifically. The poem exposes this very playfully, in stark contrast to objective rational and supposedly neutral scientific discourse: "It's very mean of Science / To go and interfere!" (3-4). In the second half of the poem, "'Heaven, '" "Where I proposed to go" (19) is imagined from the perspective of the nature pole of the nature-freedom dualism, as "mapped, and charted too!" The speaker conjectures whether the "'kingdom of Heaven's' changed" due to the ascendance of science as the most privileged form of understanding. The poem's speaker treats this proposition as foolish. At the poem's end, the speaker expresses a desire for heaven to be the way it was understood before a scientistic understanding of it. "I hope" is repeated three times in the three final stanzas to convey this forward look to heaven. The speaker hopes that heaven's occupants will not be "new fashioned" like scientists when she gets there and that God "the Father" "Will lift his little girl - / "Old fashioned"! naughty! everything! /

Over the stile of ‘pearl’!” referring to the metaphor of heaven’s gates as pearls in the book of Revelation. In this way, the speaker privileges her irreverence to scientistic authority, whether it be “religious” or otherwise, and her commitment to “older” religiously-marked ways of understanding that are comprehensive and holistic, including every aspect of a person rather than a reductively scientific understanding. Such an understanding of humanity and the world accords with the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation rather than nature-freedom.

Similarly, “[The Lilac is an ancient Shrub]” (1261) uses a multi-layered visual metaphor to assert the priority of direct experience of divinity in the natural world over such an experience as reductively mediated by propositional science. After a lilac-colored sunset prompts an elaborate metaphor comparing the earth to a flower, the speaker imagines “The Scientist of Faith,” whose “research has but just begun” (12-13). The title “Scientist of Faith” suggests both a faith that views the world scientifically and the scientific examination of faith. But the poem finds that the beauty of the world remains “Above his Synthesis” (14). Ultimately, scientific “Analysis” and faith that is reduced to propositional belief cannot account for the meaning of the beauty that the first half of the poem conveys. The final quatrain then shifts the poem’s argument to beauty’s relationship to faith:

> “Eye hath not seen” may possibly
> Be current with the Blind
> But let not Revelation
> By Theses be detained -

The quoted text is from 1 Corinthians 2:9: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (KJV). Paul in turn quotes the prophet Isaiah: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (64:4 KJV). The poem thus suggests that the things that God has prepared for those who love him are actually available on earth. What God has prepared is not a distant heaven but the world itself in all its beauty and glory. Isaiah 64 speaks to this longing that God and God's glory be fully present on earth and not feel so distant. For the speaker, this glory is already observable on earth in the beauty of the sunset. Thus the speaker accuses contemporaneous Christians of being "Blind" to the heavenly glory that already surrounds them. In this way, the poem parallels this blindness with "Theses," suggesting that both scientific facts and religious doctrines hinder a knowledge of God. However, the sunset is only available "To Contemplation – not to Touch" (7). In other words, by acknowledging its visual metaphor, the poem thus acknowledges that even those who, like the speaker and Dickinson herself, have their eyes open to God's revelations in the natural world cannot hold this beauty fully and finally in the way that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians.

The poem actually makes essentially the same argument as the Biblical passage it appears to critique. Paul's larger argument in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16 is that God's wisdom appears foolish to "the wisdom of this world, [and] the princes of this world, that come to nought" (2:7).[134] Dominant philosophies and political authorities, that is, amount to nothing compared to the truth that God has revealed. "Where is the wise? where is the

scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Paul challenges (1:20). Dickinson's argument mirrors this: Despite the blindness of the dominant culture, "let not Revelation / By Theses be detained" (19-20). Dickinson included "profaned" as a variant wording for "detained." This further emphasizes the religious nature of the epistemological damage that can be done by science, which was emerging as the dominant mode of knowledge in society, including in religion. [135] Paul argues that God does not work through such channels but instead works through "the weak things of the world … [a]nd base things of the world, and things which are despised" (1:27). Paul is specifically referring to the oppressed Jewish nation and the crucified Jesus. To these supposedly "weak" mediators of God's power, Dickinson adds the lilac and the sunset, the delicate beauties of the natural world that demand as much attention as the supposedly more "religious" means of God's revelation.

These critiques of the relationship of science, religion, and aesthetic beauty point not toward a rigid maintenance of boundaries between ways of knowing, but towards an integration of them. For example, in the first line of "[Split the Lark - and you'll find the Music -]" (905), the speaker opposes the devaluation of understanding a bird's song aesthetically that occurs when the methods of science are privileged. To challenge the skeptical worldview encouraged by science, the poem uses Biblical imagery by invoking the disciple Thomas who famously doubted Christ's resurrection without empirical evidence: "Scarlet Experiment! Sceptic Thomas! / Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?" (7-8). By comparing the bird, Christ, and the speaker, placing them in contrast to the skeptical "you," the poem faults the intrusion of scientific methods into non-empiricist modes of existence: religious faith, personal relationships, song, and the life of

a bird. Further, in comparing the gushing song of the bird to its gushing blood upon dissection, the poem recalls the gushing blood of the crucified Christ, whose wounding a misplaced empiricism replicates. In this respect, the poem affirms the corporeality of the resurrection against the abstracting rationality of science and the religious skeptic, who only considers God to be a concept or the resurrection nothing more than a story without a real, embodied referent (Freedman 173). By extension, this corporeal, embodied faith suggested by the poem contrasts with a faith reduced to propositional belief or a faith that idealizes a disembodied spirituality or heaven. The poem thus emphasizes the importance of "[being] true" (8) across all aspects of life whether that concern religious faith, personal, or the biotic and aesthetic integrity of a bird and its song. This corresponds to the understanding of the world found in the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. The poem's layering of biblical, aesthetic, scientific, and natural imagery thereby suggests the integration of these aspects of life while also critiquing the reductive reaching of one mode—science—to dominate the others.

By contrast, Dickinson's poems do evince a strong affinity to the freedom pole of the nature-freedom dualism. Poems like "Growth of Man - like Growth of Nature -" (790) seem to advocate for an autonomous individualism in which spiritual growth occurs independent of divine guidance (Vendler 336). Following Elisa New, Linda Freedman argues that Dickinson was influenced by the Emersonian notion of the replacement of religion by poetry but that her poetry resists such a modern secularizing project (2). In Dickinson's poetry, this "freedom" is most often expressed in the idealization of the powers of poetry itself. However, the relationship of poetry to religious faith in Dickinson's poetry is rich and not one of conflict. Freedman has demonstrated that the

aesthetic and religious imaginations in Dickinson's poetry are ultimately mutually affirming; they are in a "vital relationship" and "dynamic exchange," doing similar work and facing many of the same difficulties. Furthermore, Christianity, in the form of both Puritan heritage and contemporaneous liberal movements, was "a source of poetic enrichment and not a barrier to creativity that she simply reacted against." "Religion is more than a context in which to read Dickinson; it gave her the conceptual and emotional vocabulary with which to stage and explore the epistemic problems at the core of her own aesthetic" and "fed her imagination and sense of poetic purpose" (Freedman 2-4). What is more, I argue, the religious orientation that Dickinson's poetry most relies on is not only not inherently at odds with the content of Christianity as a "religion," but it also allows for an even richer appreciation of the poems' engagement with religion.

Thus Dickinson's poems resist the more fundamental kind of secularity that the traditional secularization narrative and its secular interpretive derivatives depend upon—the religious separation of the sacred from secular, of human flourishing from a "natural" state. Dickinson does not simply conflate creation and redemption as Emerson did. I argue that the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation, which values the aesthetic, the so-called "natural," as well as the so-called "religious" as conduits of transcendent truth, structured the arguments in Dickinson's poetry about nature and faith. Thus I challenge the critical commonplace that sees Dickinson's rejection of particular Christian doctrines as an example or affirmation of secularization, an embrace of Emersonian immanentism, a loss of belief, or a rejection of Christianity. Dickinson's poems argue against the process of secularization taking place within Christianity rather than for a secularization away from Christianity.

Other scholars have come to similar conclusions by interpreting the ambiguities around doctrinal belief in her poems. For example, David R. Williams opposes the "misinterpretation [of religion in Dickinson's poetry that] results both from misunderstanding what it meant to be a Calvinist in New England as well as from an inability to distinguish between" different spiritual expressions in the mid-1800s, some more robust than others:

> Emily Dickinson was in rebellion, not against her ancestral religion, not against Calvinism, but against the sterile and superficial faith of her more immediate culture. If she revolted against the church, it was in the name, not of Emerson, but of Christ. And her doing so put her in the mainstream of the true Calvinist … tradition. [136] (196)

But while I find Williams' characterization of Dickinson as a true Calvinist convincing, I follow Freedman in making no claims about a specific historical Christian tradition that Dickinson should be placed in. Nor do I make any biographical claims about what Dickinson "believed" in general or at a given time. Her understanding of belief was too complex for it to be simply characterized or even used as a simple category for analysis of her work, although I do find Lundin's interpretation of Dickinson's relationship with belief to be very helpful. Furthermore, such critical arguments over belief usually become enframed by the dualistic, secular nature-freedom religious orientation, which defines religion as belief. It is this very structure, dominant in our secular age, that I question as an adequate framework for understanding Dickinson's poetry. Focusing on belief risks the trap of reducing religion to doctrines or personal beliefs. My focus instead is on the ways Dickinson responds to and stages these religious orientations in her poetry.

Indeed, Dickinson's struggles with particular Christian doctrines suggest less about her status as a believer or nonbeliever than that she realized the utter insufficiency of the religious options of belief available under the dominant secular religious orientation of her day and ours. For example, in a late letter to her sister-in-law Sue, written about 1884, Dickinson cryptically claims that "To believe the final line of the Card would foreclose Faith. Faith is *Doubt*" (L912). "Believing" as commonly understood, that is, actually inhibits true faith. Thus having true faith necessitates doubting as part of its process, including doubting, I will argue, beliefs promulgated by the contemporaneous church. Another late poem similarly refers to "the Balm of that Religion / That doubts – as fervently as it believes" (1449), an apt characterization of the nature of Dickinson's faith as simultaneously believing and doubting.[137]

To use the fold-flock distinction I elaborated earlier, Dickinson constructed, largely through her poetry, a better fold than the one available to her and the rest of the flock she was a part of in the contemporaneous church, a fold that required modern "belief" of the kind that Dickinson rejected. In an early 1846 letter to her friend Abiah Root, Dickinson characterized herself just this way: "though we are not in the fold yet I hope when the great sheperd [sic] at the last day separates the sheep from the goats we may hear his voice & be with the lambs upon the right hand of God" (L11). The young Dickinson clearly anticipates joining the church—the "fold"—although she never would. Nevertheless, she already imagines herself as part of the Christian flock in her allusions to the parables of Jesus found in John 10 and Matthew 25, where Christ is figured as the "great shepherd" leading his flock. Likewise, she anticipates her place in heaven, signified by "the right hand of God," as a member of this flock.

It would not be until adulthood that Dickinson would express in her poetry a more mature understanding of flock and fold as separate. For example, Dickinson references the biblical parable of the lost sheep from Matthew 18 and Luke 15 a number of times in her poems and letters. In this parable, Jesus is figured as a shepherd who leaves his flock of ninety-nine sheep to save one who has gone astray. Dickinson's first reference to this parable is in an 1846 letter in which she refers to a friend who had left her friend and ceased responding to her correspondence group as a "lost sheep," figuring herself as part of the remaining flock and, even more significantly, as the shepherd who will go to great lengths to bring her back (L 9). In poems such as "Just lost, when I was saved!" (132), she figures her lostness to the rest of the Christian flock as a condition for her actual salvation. "[If I'm lost - now]" (316) questions the implications of this condition of being once found or saved but now "lost" to the church:

> If I'm lost - now
> That I was found -
> Shall still my transport be -
> That once - on me - those Jasper Gates
> Blazed open - suddenly - (1-5)

Dickinson reverses third line of the hymn "Amazing Grace," "I once was lost but now am found," in order to show her estrangement from this traditional understanding of salvation. But the fact that she was found before will be what brings her to heaven. Heaven is depicted using biblical imagery, suggesting a rather orthodox view, but also as a state that she has in some sense already "once" experienced, since she knows heaven's gates are open to her. The next lines suggest a great ambivalence toward heaven if it is

like the heaven she has experienced via the contemporaneous church, in which angels have “fleeces” like the rest of the flock (8). She ends by concluding that if she does not obtain heaven then those who declare her lost, those who have “banished” her (10) and made her feel “foreign” (11), will certainly not either. In fact, she ends the poem by addressing those (or perhaps one male person) who have excluded her from the fold, telling them that they will be excluded from the heavenly fold just as she has been excluded from the church: “You'll know [banishment]- Sir - when the Savior's face / Turns so - away from you -” (12-13). Dickinson thus “turns the notion of the lost sheep on its head” (Morgan 138). She is the found sheep but the other ninety-nine in the flock have gone astray from the truth and the “Savior.” They may consider her to be “lost,” but that is only because she has in fact been “found.” This accords with Harold Bloom’s characterization of Dickinson’s relationship to Christian faith as a “sect of one,” still spiritually within the Christian tradition as opposed to “post-Christian” like Emerson or Whitman (6). [138] I argue that, in Dickinson’s poetry, holding a position of true faith means following a creation-fall-redemption rather than a nature-freedom religious orientation in opposition to the modern, secularized version of the nature-grace religious orientation that structures many doctrines of the church, especially the doctrine of heaven.

**Heaven in Dickinson’s Poetry**

Among other religious themes, heaven occupies a particularly prominent place in Dickinson’s poetry. Despite the importance of both religious and proto-environmental themes in her poetry, of the prominence of depictions of the natural world and (and sometimes *as*) heaven, in her youth, Dickinson experienced these two deep concerns as at

odds. She discussed her conflicted emotions about this in another early letter to Abiah Root regarding the conversion experiences others were having at local revivals: "I have perfect confidence in God & his promises & yet I know not why, I feel that the world holds a predominant place in my affections. I do not feel that I could give up all for Christ, were I called to die" (L13). In 1848, she wrote, "I did not give up and become a Christian. …[I]t is hard for me to give up the world" (L23). Dickinson longed for the comforts that she knew Christianity provided: "I hope you [Abiah] are a christian for I feel that it is impossible for any one to be happy without a treasure in heaven. I feel that I shall never be happy without I love Christ" (L10), but she was unwilling to "convert" if that meant abandoning her love for the natural world. Dickinson rejected the church's doctrines of heaven, and membership in the church itself, in large part due to her commitment to loving this world.[139]

What "heaven" meant in Dickinson's time and place can be understood through the lens of religious orientations. The medieval nature-grace religious orientation transformed the ancient orthodox creation-fall-redemption doctrine of ultimate hope in the bodily resurrection of the dead on a renewed earth into a doctrine of a heaven that was separate from (and superior to) earth as well as being the home (at least until the resurrection) of disembodied souls. Influential works such as Dante's *Commedia* emphasized life after death rather than resurrected "life *after* [a possible, disembodied] life after death," which theologian and Biblical scholar N. T. Wright argues is the orthodox Christian hope (151). Poetic images and metaphors like Dante's were literalized to the point that people actually believed heaven to be located in "the heavens." This contrasts with the biblical creation-fall-redemption understanding of heaven as God's

realm, already coterminous with earth in its existence, becoming gradually present on earth through God's work, such as in the covenant with Israel, that covenant's fulfillment in the advent of Jesus, and ultimately in the consummation—the complete union of heaven and earth. Humans were seen as immortal when nature-grace was the dominant religious orientation, a concept drawn from Greek thought. Thus they were destined to exist forever in either heaven or hell. By contrast, the view of creation-fall-redemption is that all humans are mortal, but that at least those "in Christ," who himself lived and died as a mortal before being resurrected, would themselves be resurrected out of death into immortal life. Indeed, all of creation would be resurrected and consummated.

While the religious view of nature-grace is no longer dominant in the West, its belief in heaven is held by many Christians to this day as a tenet demanding intellectual assent and was very influential in Dickinson's Congregational church culture (Williams 195). In the First and Second Great Awakenings, detailed images of heaven and hell were important tools of conversion—used respectively to instill desire and fear— (Smith *Heaven* 66). It was during the latter Great Awakening that Dickinson came of age. American hymns written during Dickinson's life tend to characterize heaven as far away from earth, mirroring the secular-religious dualism of nature-grace (and nature-freedom). Take Fanny Crosby's "Whither, Pilgrims, Are You Going?" from 1859:

> Tell me, pilgrims, what you hope for
>
> In that far-off, better land.
>
> Spotless robes and crowns of glory
>
> From a Savior's loving hand.

Or "In the Sweet By and By" (1868) by Sanford Bennett:

There's a land that is fairer than day,

And by faith we can see it afar;

For the Father waits over the way

To prepare us a dwelling place there.

Or "Beyond the Sunset" (1871) by Josephine Pollard: "Beyond the sunset's radiant glow / There is a brighter world, I know" and "Beyond the sunset's purple rim, /…/ My soul shall find its heav'nly home."[140] Beyond affirming God's faithfulness and using the same (albeit literalized) metaphors, the theology of such hymns has little in common with biblical conceptions of heaven that comport with the creation-fall-redemption structure that I argue is what resonates with the meaning in Dickinson's poetry.[141]

The transcendent heaven of nature-grace was replaced under nature-freedom by a kind of exclusively immanent "fullness," where the highest possible flourishing was human freedom on earth. But unlike the heaven of creation-fall-redemption, which is also an earthly existence, this exclusively immanent heaven is not conceived to be in union with transcendent reality because the transcendent is dismissed as unreal, shorn from the realm of conceptual plausibility. How did we get from Fanny Crosby to this view? In the mid-nineteenth century, likely under the influence of nature-freedom religious orientation, depictions of heaven in American culture shifted from being centered on God to centered on humans. Heaven was seen less as sitting on a cloud with a golden harp praising God in a faraway place, as the above hymns depict, and more as a perfected version of everyday life, in which, crucially, one would be reunited with one's loved ones (Smith *Heaven* 70). This version of heaven has much in common with the creation-fall-redemption view of resurrected life on earth; however, the resurrection itself was largely

absent from such accounts of life after death. These understandings of heaven as being with God and being with loved ones were not seen as incompatible at first, often united in a larger sentimental vision. One of the most popular instantiations of such a version of heaven was *The Gates Ajar* by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1868), written with the mourners of the catastrophic carnage of the Civil War in mind. It presents heaven as an idealized, sanitized version of middle-class New England domestic life (Smith *Heaven* 73).

Using Phelps' *The Gates Ajar* to interpret Dickinson's heaven poems, Barton Levi St. Armand argues that such popular nineteenth-century ideas about heaven had significant resonance in her poetry. Both Phelps and Dickinson demonstrate resistance to a cold father-figure God, for instance. Both parody traditional notions of heaven using *reductio ad absurdum*. St. Armand argues that the most important meaning for heaven and the source of Dickinson's gradual acceptance of the afterlife was her experience of intense but secret and unconsummated love for an anonymous lover, with whom Dickinson believed she would be united to in the afterlife. Whether or not one finds St. Armand's biographical speculation convincing, his analysis certainly demonstrates the importance of continuity of earth and heaven in Dickinson poetry. However, I do not believe that this vision of heaven was necessarily sentimental in the maudlin and largely immanent way Phelps and others described heaven. Again, although this sentimental version of heaven depicts redeemed life as earthly, in accordance with creation-fall-redemption, it is more accurately a nature-freedom-inflected version of nature-grace's conception of heaven.

Dickinson's widely varying poetic stances toward the concept of heaven have, like her general relationship to faith, engendered widely contradictory critical

interpretations. These range from the argument that Dickinson rejected church teachings and heaven as portrayed in Christian scripture (Onodera 23) to the argument that she had an assured and accepting belief in heaven (Harde 176). Although these critics muster significant evidence for these positions, many scholars do not find such extremes wholly convincing. Patrick Keane, for instance, reads Dickinson, admittedly through his own self-proclaimed post-Catholic agnosticism, as affirming heaven to be both earth-bound and death-bound. Although acknowledging that any hope Dickinson expressed in immortality was linked to Christ's resurrection, he finds this hope overshadowed by her meditations on the finality of earthliness and the death that attends it. Such a reading exemplifies a secularized critical standpoint. Keane's readings are better read as examples of Dickinson rejecting the already secularized nature-grace theology of her day that posited a radical distinction between earth and heaven, body and spirit. Jennifer Leader, on the other hand, finds Dickinson's understanding of heaven to be continuous with that of with Puritan thinkers, particularly Jonathan Edwards, though without any acceptance of their traditional doctrines. According to Leader, in asking "how, or whether, earth and heaven might still be in reciprocal relationship," Dickinson vacillates between "a sense of divinity to be found in immanence," especially in "natural cycles," and "some transcendent link between earth and heaven, whether that link be between the living and their beloved dead" (79). This is an astute observation, but I do not see these two ways as at odds. Only within a dualistic nature-freedom orientation need they be understood as opposed or mutually exclusive. But it is such a position that Leader, despite her insightful readings of typology in Dickinson's poetry, seems to take for granted as Dickinson's own. In a creation-fall-redemption religious orientation, however,

the immanent and transcendent are not opposed, so divinity might be found within nature as well as beyond it.

As mentioned earlier, Dickinson's poems emphasize the continuity of heaven and earth. However, they do not simply conflate creation and redemption into an Emersonian earthly heaven, as some critics have suggested (Gelpi 55-73). The heaven that Dickinson resists is the heaven that dissociates creation and resurrection, but even this heaven is not an immanent heaven shorn of transcendence, as secularists would see it. A closer look at the poems typically enlisted in this secularization narrative reveals that they affirm continuity between heaven and earth, and thus the value of the natural world, yet without fully conflating heaven and earth. Critics who suggest such a conflation but also acknowledge Dickinson's ongoing belief in God and a heavenly realm fail to account for this inconsistency.[142]

This continuity without conflation can also be found in certain doctrines as structured according to the creation-fall-redemption orientation, particularly in the doctrine of the resurrection. This doctrine, under nature-grace, is often elided into a belief in "heaven," a move which Dickinson resists. Under nature-freedom, resurrection is rejected altogether as an illusion, a move Dickinson does not make. In its biblically derived version, the doctrine of the resurrection affirms continuity between earth and heaven, and between creation and redemption/consummation, just as Dickinson did.

Thus I argue that Dickinson's position aligns with the creation-fall-redemption/consummation religious orientation, in which the consummated world is the creation redeemed and fulfilled; thus "heaven" is still this world and not a removal from it. Viewed from this perspective, her poetry of heaven and immortality may be read as

critiquing dualistic religious orientations that separate a heavenly realm from an earthly, secular realm and as consistently questioning received doctrines and structures of thought that draw a sharp division between them. Not coincidentally, this is the very division that underlies environmental abuse and neglect.

**Secular Misinterpretations of Dickinson's Poetry**

As I stated earlier, a focus on religious orientations thus allows us to move beyond the limitations of critics' observations about Dickinson's thought that fail to consider deeper religious structures. These observations depend on a limited, assumed, and unmarked critical framework that almost by definition excludes consideration of deeper religious structures. We can see this, for instance, in the way critics tend to interpret Dickinson's attitude toward the dualisms of heaven-earth or religious-secular as reversing or inverting the hierarchy of the terms to favor the latter term over the former. Wendy Martin, for instance, claims that Dickinson

> uses biblical allusion to reverse the expected object of religious devotion from God to earth/nature/friend, to reverse the relationship of creature and creator, and thus to reverse the existing hierarchy of authority…. Not only does Dickinson tend to undermine the traditional authority of the Bible by referencing it playfully and ironically, she uses these references to exalt what would normally be considered earthly (and thus secondary) relationships to a religious level. (58-59)

Martin explicates "[The Bible is an antique Volume -]" (1577) to support this interpretation. She argues that Dickinson, like Thoreau, mirrored the dominant religious dualisms of the day in her writing with the poles reversed. She indeed sought to describe an elevated view of the natural world as opposed to a view concerned exclusively with

human flourishing, whether immanently or transcendently conceived. But Dickinson's writing involves more than undermining certain religious authorities or merely mirroring, in which the dualisms remain intact. A lot depends on what Martin means by "traditional" and "normal." If those words simply signal characterizations of religion as understood according to the nature-freedom dualism—religion as irrelevant, as stadially immature, as "subtracted" or "replaced" in modernity—then Martin is just uncritically making an argument structured according to the nature-freedom religious orientation. If so, then rather than providing an understanding of the religious nature of Dickinson's view of earthly life, Martin's "religious" refers only to the contemporaneously preferred pole of the dualism.

But Dickinson ultimately subverts rather than inverts these dualisms. Her inversion of the terms in a religious hierarchy more often serves to reform the dualism back toward a non-dualistic alternative, the creation-fall-redemption orientation. Her creative use of the Bible, for example, typically channels rather than undermines its authority in order to combat biblical interpretations (or misinterpretations) that devalue nature. Martin's view that Dickinson's playful irony displays "aggressive skepticism" and "mocking disbelief" toward the Bible's authority is a very modern perspective, available only in a society whose dominant religious orientation, whatever it is towards, is away from "religious" authority (Martin 59-60). In this perspective, parody can only be dismissive. By contrast, Roger Lundin, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin, argues that the poem uses parody in a way that developed in medieval Europe, under the influence of the nature-grace religious orientation. Dickinson uses parody, he argues, as a form of respect and renewal toward an accepted authority in a way that critiques, sharpens, and corrects

the misguided use of that authority to its proper end (203-04). To put it in the terms of religious orientations, Martin's construal offers religion only as something to be "freed" from and discarded. Lundin's interpretation, on the other hand, sees religion as creationally good but also as fallen in its present use. Dickinson's poetry shows this and redemptively redirects the understanding of religion towards its proper end. To modify Martin's claim, the "normal" and "traditional" that Dickinson challenges are the modern, secular dualisms—nature-grace and nature-freedom—that had become the Christian status quo when and where she lived. The reason the earthly is "religious" is because in the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation, all of life is "religious": it is good, holy, and every aspect of life equally affords opportunity for knowledge of God. Thus taking religious orientations into account allows common but limited critical interpretations to be nuanced and extended.

Criticism that implicitly treats religion primarily as personal belief, especially when written from a position uncritically invested in a modern nature-freedom religious orientation, is particularly vulnerable to reducing the meaning of religion to its nature-freedom version. Because it operates uncritically within a dominant religious orientation that reduces the meaning of religion to chosen belief or an ideological illusion, such literary criticism, however good, will neglect nuances of the meaning of religion within Dickinson's poetry. Her grappling with belief and doubt becomes just another instance of nineteenth-century secularization or loss of faith according to the traditional secularization narrative. Similarly, Dickinson's rejection of the modern version of the nature-grace dualism is taken as evidence of her acceptance the dominant secular nature-freedom religious orientation. To some extent, of course, any author operating within a

particular dominant worldview or paradigm will be influenced by it, as Dickinson particularly was by the Emersonian view, which posited humanity as the ultimate site of divinity and poetry as a replacement for religion, a clear example of nature-freedom. But to neglect the possibility that other religious orientations might guide Dickinson's poetic arguments would be a mistake.

The difference between a conventional secularist analysis that employs a reductive understanding of religion and the reading I am proposing can be further illustrated by considering Helen Vendler's reading of "[Those – dying then,]" (1581). Vendler takes for granted the modern, secular nature-freedom religious orientation, which ends up dictating the contours of her interpretations. Vendler ignores the ambiguity and ambivalence around religion in Dickinson's work and simplistically characterizes her as "blasphemous," "an unbeliever commenting on the deluded faithful" (300, 42). Vendler writes so uncritically from a secular religious perspective that she never clarifies whether it is her own view that the "faithful" are "deluded" or Dickinson's—it is simply presented as understood in a secular context.[143] She claims that the poem "[Of all the Souls that stand create -]" (279) "although impossible without the Christian imagining of the Last Day, … could not have been written by a Christian believer" (16). Likewise she claims that Dickinson's poems only "resort to Christian imagery and language," as if Dickinson would have preferred not to use the Bible as pervasively as she did, and she does so to "rework Christianity" (16, 98-100).[144] These assertions only make sense within the structure of the nature-freedom religious orientation. Vendler's interpretations depend on assumptions and ignorance about the meaning of Christianity and belief that Dickinson did not share. Vendler also claims that Dickinson "distinguishes herself from the family

flock," using the metaphor from John 10 discussed in the Introduction (16). Whereas Vendler conflates fold and flock and is eager to exclude Dickinson from both, I suggest that Dickinson may be read as a member of the flock who resists the secularity of the fold as it existed in her milieu rather than rejecting the fold or the flock itself.

Vendler's analysis of the late poem "Those dying then," one of Dickinson's most important poems on the subject of heaven and belief, exemplifies this kind of secular misreading:

> Those - dying then,
> Knew where they went -
> They went to God's Right Hand -
> That Hand is amputated now
> And God cannot be found -
>
> The abdication of Belief
> Makes the Behavior small -
> Better an ignis fatuus
> Than no illume at all -

About the first stanza, Vendler declares, "There can be no ambiguity here. These statements [in the first stanza] declare a creed opposite to that of the church … forthrightly and absolutely" (496). The poem reaches a "sardonic conclusion in favor of denial," which Dickinson is nevertheless reluctant to accept. The final lines are "ironic" and "ring … dismissively" (497). Vendler recognizes Dickinson's ambivalence but is eager to claim that Dickinson's argument in the poem can be reduced to a "creed," a

formula of belief. She then enlists that supposed belief system into opposition to the creeds of the church, failing to acknowledge that the church's creeds were not formulated as modern documents.

On the contrary, I argue that the poem critiques the secularity both of the nature-grace and nature-freedom religious orientations from an implicit non-secular position of creation-fall-redemption within a society dominated by nature-freedom. The poem resists biographical interpretations like Vendler's in that it is not a first-person poem. Instead it comments negatively on the secularization that marked the ongoing transition from the cultural dominance of nature-grace to the dominance of nature-freedom. The poem is especially critical of the ethical and epistemological consequences of the nature-freedom religious orientations.

Written four years before her own death, "[Those – dying then,]" begins by describing the meaning of death "then," referring to the time when the nature-grace religious orientation provided the dominant structure of ultimate meaning for society. In this time, belief in God was assumed, and death was assumed to be a passage to an afterlife in heaven in the presence of God. "God's right hand" is a biblical metaphor referring to a place of honor in God's presence and more particularly to transcendent life with God after death, whether that life is construed as a transcendent heaven apart from earth or a resurrected life on an earth that is both immanent and transcendent. This metaphor of God in a throne room awaiting those on their deathbeds suggests that the deathbed scene itself is not just one of sadness and ending. This transitions abruptly to an image of that metaphor literalized, "That Hand is amputated now" (4). This image suggests that heaven now seems cut off from plausibility as a way of encountering God

after death, and perhaps even the violence done to the concept of religion itself. Whereas the deathbed's associations in the past were positive, "now," in the present, under the dominance of nature-freedom religious orientation, the association of the death is isolation from transcendent meaning.

Beyond these associations, the transition from "then" to "now" in the poem is epistemological: how people know things changes. Under nature-grace, knowledge was mediated primarily through religious institutions like the church. In both nature-grace and creation-fall-redemption, knowledge is assured transcendently. This transcendence is mediated by the "religious," by the other-worldly via the church (nature-grace) or in all aspects of life (creation-fall-redemption). In the latter case, for example, empirical science is a trustworthy means of knowledge because divine authority assures that our senses and logic, while flawed, are creationally good and a trustworthy means of knowledge. Furthermore, this previously dominant epistemology is teleological: meaningfulness is provided in the present by the knowledge that life is destined to be finally fulfilled in God's transcendent presence. In the secular present, however, an exclusively immanent ontology cuts off this transcendent assurance and teleology: "God cannot be found" (5). The poem suggests that when God cannot be found, neither can assured knowledge. Nature-freedom, even to the extent it allows for any further existence after death, cannot assure it since an afterlife depends on a transcendence that nature freedom does not acknowledge, or at most is neutral on. Furthermore, though nature-freedom idealizes scientific knowledge, even it cannot provide assurance that science provides trustworthy knowledge, unlike creation-fall-redemption.[145]

Significantly, the poem does not portray the God who cannot be found as therefore not existing or hiding.[146] Whoever amputated the hand—the secularized church, the modern state, scientistic epistemology, the autonomous individual—has created conditions in which God is not as knowable as in the past, when other religious orientations structured knowledge and religion. Finally, God is treated as passive here, as a grammatical object, pointing to nature-freedom's reduction of religion to belief or ideology. "God" becomes an immanent concept that can be obscured rather than a divine, transcendent, omnipresent person who creates and sustains the entirety of immanent reality and enables all functioning within it.

The poem's understanding of God as amputee is not only an incisive commentary on secularization; it is also consistent with an orthodox Christian understanding of God under any religious orientation. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is the God who suffers when God's people do the wrong thing, who is tortured to death by the imperial political powers in collusion with the religious authorities, and who, even after being resurrected and conquering death, forever bears the marks of this suffering in the wounds on his hands from the crucifixion. Indeed, the poem's fifth line, "God cannot be found," echoes Christ's despondent cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46 KJV).

On the meaning of God's apparent absence, the difference between Dickinson's argument and a secular interpretation of the poem is that the latter assumes that since God is no longer easily knowable, then God must not or probably does not exist. The speaker, on the other hand, as in many other Dickinson poems, figures God as present and real even if damaged and distant. Where an atheistic, agnostic, or secularist interpretation

impatiently abandons faith, the poem suggests that a patient faith like Christ's, or even a misguided faith, is a better way forward in seeking the truth.[147] In this way, the poem figures modern faith as the moment of darkness at God's death—the time between the crucifixion and the resurrection.

The poem's second stanza again figures this same shift from secularized nature-grace to even-more-secular nature-freedom twice. First, the stanza returns to the lexicon of the throne room, signaled by the word "abdication," but it is not God who is absent from the throne; it is "Belief" (6), which seems more akin to the knowledge of line 2 or the place of honor at God's right hand in line 3 than to God. Somehow belief itself, rather than the God to whom that belief is ostensibly directed, is figured to have been ruler. This was indeed the case under the nature-grace religious orientation: belief in God—and even more so belief in the institutions understood to mediate God's grace—occupied a dominant, absolute status in society. In the world of the poem, before "Belief" can abdicate, it has to supplant God as ruler. Likewise, the nature-grace religious orientation supplanted creation-fall-redemption as the guiding religious orientation of Christianity: a relationship to belief in God became a substitute for an actual relationship with God. A charitable understanding of the institutional church that embraces the nature-grace religious orientation sees it as a misguided but fruitful steward of God's authority, as in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25; a critical understanding sees it as a treacherous usurper, as in the parable of the tenants in Matthew 21. Either way, the poem figures this "Belief" as having stepped down, leaving the place of authority empty.

This abdication has negative ethical consequences: it "Makes the Behavior small -" (7).[148] The specific behavior under consideration in the poem is the act of dying, the

positive significance of which is diminished. But the word itself as a consequence of unbelief has wider resonance. For example, it parallels the "modern moral order" that Charles Taylor describes as the consequence of a shift to understanding morality as immanent rather than guided by or accountable to any transcendent norms, laws, assurance, or sense of goodness. Morality is reduced ("[made] … small") to mutual economic benefit accomplished by the reorganization of society or to expression of personal "authenticity." An ethical and "*political* shift … mirrors or parallels the theological shift" of detaching God from what behavior is considered moral (quoting Smith *How* 53-54; Taylor 237-45). People holding to a secular ontology of immanence behave as if God did not exist, and thus they behave poorly. Within such an understanding, religion defined as "Belief" and Christian morality, already a reduction of a more robust creation-fall-redemption Christianity, is further reduced to a "Behavior" that lacks sufficient moral guidance, whether because a rational, utilitarian, state-influenced modern moral order is incapable providing such guidance or because a will-to-power mentality rejects it.[149]

The final two lines conclude that a nature-grace religious orientation is preferable to the dominant nature-freedom religious orientation. "Belief" and "[knowledge of] where they went" are paralleled with "ignis fatuus." Conversely, "cannot be found" and "Behavior [made] small" are paralleled with "no illume at all." An ignis fatuus, also known as a will-o'-the-wisp, is a light that appears over marshy ground due to the spontaneous combustion of gasses produced by decaying organic material. It has long been used as a metaphor for something that misleads due to false appearances, just as a phosphorescent light in a swamp at night might deceive a traveler seeking shelter.

Dickinson figures the modern secular age as a swamp, a place of difficult disorientation and inability to find comfort. An easy and comforting belief in heaven is misguided and misleading in this context, but it is better than the secular belief that human existence ends in darkness and nothingness. Is this because cynical delusion is preferable for Dickinson over realistic despair, as Vendler would have it? I do not think the poem warrants this interpretation. The poem does not look ahead to life after death, as many of her other poems do. Like "[Safe in their Alabaster Chambers -]" (124), this poem leaves the "meek members of the Resurrection" in the grave, neither confirming nor denying their hope for future bodily life on earth. The poem remains set in the present, under the reign of fallenness and death, under the dominant ontology of immanence, although it does not necessarily accept that ontology or any particular religious orientation. The misleading mirage of nature-grace is better than darkness of nature-freedom because the ignis fatuus points to the possibility of finding one's way through and out of the swamp in the daytime. In this analogy, creation-fall-redemption would be the sunlight of day. Again, the poem does not get to that point itself, but in order to take the "better … than" formula of the final lines seriously, the question of why an ignis fatuus is better than nothing needs to be answered. In the allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, the fire in the cave reveals reality more clearly than shadows on the walls. Likewise, nature-grace's distortions are preferable to darkness. Like the sun outside the cave, the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation points to the reality of a transcendence that is not detached or detachable from this world. It offers moral and spiritual resources similar to the nature-grace orientation without the latter's dualistic epistemological secularity.

Nevertheless, the poem ends in the unilluminated swamp of the modern closed immanent frame.

An uncritical assumption of a secular religious orientation can also have consequences in misinterpreting poems from an environmental perspective. For example, in her ecofeminist article "The Swamps of Emily Dickinson," Cecily Parks claims that in "[Those – dying then,]" "Dickinson earnestly offers the 'ignis fatuus' as an alternative to Christian belief," that "Dickinson [turns] away from 'Belief' to the natural world, and to the swamp in particular," and that "[t]he life that Dickinson pursued in her swamp-inspired poems is one liberated from the conventions of religion" (18-19). Parks' interpretation contains textual misreadings: the ignis fatuus in the poem refers to belief, not an alternative to it. Parks, like Martin and many others, also assumes that "[Those – dying then,]" and other poems do not question the opposition of the natural world and faith. There is no sense that the poem itself might not presuppose this dualism, as the critics themselves do. This interpretation falls predictably into the structure of the nature-freedom religious orientation, which puts religion in the past and opposes religious belief to the "liberation" of the individual. The nature-freedom religious orientation offers a very limited range of secular understandings of religion as belief and ideology. Accordingly, its secularity limits the range of legitimate critical interpretations of the poem. Dickinson does not turn to the image of the nighttime swamp as better than alternative metaphorical settings for religiosity, but to show the difficulties metaphorical travelers face without the guidance of God or belief.

Parks is on firmer ground in her interpretation of "[Sweet is the swamp with it's secrets,]" (1780), given here with variants, but she still misses the poem's layering of religious and environmental significance:[150]

Sweet is the swamp with it's secrets,
Until we meet a snake;
'Tis then we sigh for houses,
And our departure take
At that enthralling gallop
That only childhood knows.
A snake is nature's treason, nature's] summer's
And awe is where it goes. awe] guile

The poem offers more than a simple tale of outdoor play as a metaphor for growing up. Parks affirms environmental readings of the poem that show how it reflects conflicted nineteenth-century views towards wetlands and also, correctly I believe, rejects ecofeminist readings that feminize the swamp landscape. Instead the swamp offers "psychic unmooring." While the swamp "offers sweet disorder in opposition to the ruefully sighed-for order of houses," "the swamp's sweetness belies danger" in the snake. And although, "the natural world refused to let them stay, … the poem chooses to end on the snake in the swamp, which is the site of awe" (21-22).

This reading has merit in paralleling personal and environmental layers to the poem, but I believe the poem actually parallels five movements: playmates fleeing their marshy playground, childhood maturing to adulthood, human civilization "progressing" from environmental immersion and adaptation to environmental alienation and

manipulation, humans desiring heaven instead of earth, and humans responding redemptively to creation's fallenness. The first two observations are uncontroversial. As Parks notes, the snake environmentally signals the danger of the natural world and the realization that humans, though part of nature, also are not in perfect harmony with the rest of nature (21-22). The swamp represents more than mere "nature," however. It is creational, pleasurable, mystery-imbued, a veritable Eden. The snake suggests the fall narrative in the Garden of Eden. It is only after the fall, the poem suggests, that humans long for heaven, figured as houses here as it is in other Dickinson poems, an allusion to John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (KJV). Thus the poem parallels environmental alienation with a desire for heaven's comforts. In a nature-freedom paradigm, the longing for freedom and escape from nature leads to alienation from nature by way of human-built endeavors—"houses"—which in nature-freedom is all the heaven that can exist. The same consequence is true to a lesser extent of the nature-grace paradigm and its desire for heavenly alienation from earth.

At the same time, the poem does not demonize the desire to live in houses rather than the swamp, or heaven rather than the disorderly present. It recognizes that such "houses" can be directional—rightly or wrongly orientated—which explains the non-synonymous variants "awe" and "guile" in the poem's cryptic final line. (In contrast, "nature" and "summer" are synonymous variants here, summer suggesting the fullness of creational nature.) Typologically, the snake signals the fallen state of creation that separates humans from—or even betrays them "treasonously" from—their original harmonious creational state. Because our experience of the world is both creational and

fallen, and because the creation itself is both fallen and still good, our experience of the natural world is characterized by both "guile" and "awe." The antecedent of "it" in the final line is ambiguous. It might refer to the snake, nature/summer, or treason. However, it may also refer to "childhood." The two are paralleled by rhyme: "childhood knows," and "it goes" and the "go[ing]" of the "it" makes sense as the "departure." The response of guile is manifest in Genesis 3, the biblical fall narrative, in the blame-shifting of the humans to each other and the snake as well as in the human alienation from nature that results from disobeying God. This alienation is exacerbated by dualistic religious orientations such as nature-freedom and nature-grace, under which humans treat the natural world with craft and disrespect for its limits, just as the biblical serpent did in tempting the humans. The better response to nature—"awe"—is, of course, possible for individuals guided by nature-grace and nature-freedom, but this response is at best inconsistent with these dominant religious orientations and at worst comes at the expense of other integral aspects of human experience. Creation-fall-redemption, on the other hand, consistently produces a reverence and wonder for the natural world tinged with fear and respect for its dangers. This awe is a right response both to creationality and fallenness, and thus is redemptive. A "house" of "awe" allows for safe continued experience of the swamp's sweet secrets. By giving two variants to the end of the poem, Dickinson shows the reality of both these responses of humans to the natural world, including in their attitudes toward heaven.

**The Continuity of Heaven and Earth**

If poems such as "[Those dying then]" and "[Sweet is the swamp]" do not fully pivot from a nature-grace orientation to embrace a creation-fall-redemption religious

orientation, they certainly do not embrace the nature-freedom orientation that Dickinson found to be ascendant in her society. Even as they occur within the nature-freedom religious orientation, the position from which her poems analyze the world is oriented by the creation-fall-redemption/consummation narrative. In fact, Dickinson's poetry resists the reductive construal of religion under the nature-freedom religious orientation. In addition to defying the traditional secularization narrative tacitly espoused by Martin, Vendler, and Parks, Dickinson's diverse body of poetic work resists being reduced to a system of belief when it comes to heaven and the afterlife. Any consideration of heaven in Dickinson's poetry must acknowledge that she expresses both hope and skepticism regarding heaven in both her early and later poems. But Dickinson's ambivalence regarding heaven, and the consequent interpretive ambiguity, does not preclude claims about the nature of that ambivalence. Her capacious poetic perspectives on faith necessitate the more capacious understanding of religion offered by the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation in order to locate precisely the structures of religious thought in her poetry.

This capacity values freedom without absolutizing it. Dickinson found the freedom pole of the nature-freedom dualism appealing for what it offered over against nature-grace, but she did not treat it as ultimate. It remained one aspect of life, albeit a particularly vital one for her in its aesthetic form. Although Dickinson never committed to an Emersonian religious view of poetry, which is exemplary of nature-freedom, she did explore the possibility in "[I reckon – When I count at all -]" (533). In the poem, the poetic speaker creates a list of what she "reckon[s]" or considers worthy of consideration: poets, summer and the sun, which suggest the natural world, and "the Heaven of God,"

which suggests religion in one form or another, particularly regarding a perfect existence in God's presence. The speaker declares the entire list, including Heaven, to be subsumed under "Poets" since poets "Comprehend the Whole" (6) and are themselves a "Further Heaven" (12), a religious end in themselves, suggesting a Romanic notion elevating art to the place religion once occupied. In the final lines, the speaker uses theological terms such as "grace" (15) and "justify" (16) to speak of the further poetic heaven, replacing their application in traditional theological meaning with an application to the heaven of poets. The substitution of heaven as God's realm with an exclusively immanent, human realm, a key move in modern forms of secularization, is evident in the poem.

However, the speaker also reveals significant ambivalence toward this replacement. The poetic grace that replaces God's grace is "too difficult" (15) to "justify the Dream" (16) of a poetic heaven. Although the speaker challenges the religious validity of the "heaven" of nature-grace secularity by replacing it with the poetic heaven of nature-freedom, she ends by questioning the validity of a poetic heaven that subsumes the traditional one. Similarly, she only reckons as she does "When I count at all" (1), indicating that what she prefers is not to have to reckon such matters but is only doing so at the prompt of others. In this way, nature-grace and nature-freedom secularisms coexist in tension in "[I reckon -]."

Despite the ambivalence in these poems, Dickinson's ideas about heaven and resurrection do at times reflect the received notions of the nature-grace beliefs that were dominant in her religious context. For example, the idea in "[I reckon -]" that heaven is far away and that a heaven of poets must be even "further" (12) reflects the belief that heaven is dualistically separated from earth. The dualism in the nature-grace religious

orientation that separates human body and soul (or subsequently body and mind in modern secularity) also appears in Dickinson's poetry. The soul in "The Soul unto itself" (579) is depicted as completely freed from the body, which may even be its "Enemy" (3). In "[One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted –]" (407), where "The Brain has Corridors - surpassing / Material Place –" (3-4), the soul, compared to the body, is "a superior spectre," suggesting the separation and superiority of the soul to physical self.[151] Again, "[The Overtakelessness of Those]" (894) argues for the separation of body and soul at death, at which time the soul walks away, presumably to heaven, with "fair aerial gait / Beyond the hope of touch" (7-8). In such poems, heaven and the soul are depicted as completely separate from and superior to earth and the body.

Yet, despite occasionally accepting the secularized religious meanings of these terms, Dickinson's poetry generally resists the nature-grace dualism that separates the spiritual and heavenly from the earthly. Again, this resistance appears to stem from Dickinson's love of and commitment to life on earth. Poems such as "['Houses' - so the Wise men tell me]" (139) and "[Why - do they shut Me out of Heaven?]" (268) display a longing for heaven, understood as separate from earth. But they also express the speaker's anguished inability to abandon the "nature" side of the dualism (or the "creation" that "nature" is conceptually derived from). At the same time, these poems question the validity of those religious authorities (the "Wise men" and "they" of the poems' respective first lines) who construct religious identity as a means of exclusion rather than a means of spiritual growth—a fold rather than a flock. In "[Going to Heaven!]" (128), the speaker claims not to believe in heaven, the place where dead loved ones perhaps exist, because it might kill her, and she desires to continue living and

delighting in “such a curious Earth!” (23). In “[I never felt at Home - Below -]” (437), heaven signifies an eternity of all that the speaker finds tiresome and lonesome on earth. Again, the early poem “[‘Sown in dishonor’!]” (153) responds with indignant sarcasm to the account of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, particularly Paul’s assertion that the human body that acts according to its sinful nature is “Sown in dishonor” (1) and “Sown in corruption” (6). When the speaker questions “May *this* ‘dishonor’ be?” (3), she could be referring either to her own body or to the poem itself, but she clearly does not believe either to be “dishonor[ed].” Instead, the speaker reacts directly to the “Apostle,” who she believes “is askew” (8). In each of these texts, the speaker’s love of things denigrated by the nature-grace religious orientation—earth and humanity—leads her to reject what was privileged by the church—heaven and one particular formulation of doctrine of the resurrection—in their stead.

Likewise, “[The Fact that Earth is Heaven -]” (1435) complicates this rejection of heaven by delineating a true heaven in continuity with earth from a false heaven apart from it.

> The Fact that Earth is Heaven -
> Whether Heaven is Heaven or not
> If not an Affidavit
> Of that specific Spot
> Not only must confirm us
> That it is not for us
> But that it would affront us
> To dwell in such a place -

This poem has invited a variety of readings about the relationship of heaven and earth. Albert Gelpi suggests that the four negations disrupt the confident affirmation in the first line (81). Christine Gerhardt believes that the "specific Spot" (4), "place" (8), and pronoun "it" (6) refer to earth, leading her to an admittedly "perplexing conclusion" that knowledge of and familiarity with earth is unavailable to humans (206).[152] However, the "spot" the poem refers to is heaven, and it is the speaker's relationship to heaven that the poem questions. Dickinson similarly refers to heaven as a "spot" in "[I never saw a Moor.]" (800), but there she espouses a much more confident assurance in its reality: "I never spoke with God, / Nor visited in Heaven - / Yet certain am I of the spot / As if the Checks [railway tickets] were given -" (5-8). In "[The Fact that Earth is Heaven -]," however, the speaker is only assured of a heaven that in some sense is also earth and of the earth that is in some sense also heaven. Her question "Whether Heaven is Heaven or not" reveals an understanding that the conception of heaven as apart from earth is different from and less desirable than this true heaven that is also earthly. If the "it" of the second quatrain is ambiguous, on this reading it would seem to refer to a dualistic "heaven." The affront of this heaven is that dwelling there would entail precisely its disconnection from the earth that is celebrated throughout Dickinson's poetry.

As in "[The Fact that Earth is Heaven -]," "[Which is best? – Heaven]" (1021) likewise poses a distinction between a real earthly heaven and a problematic, questionable non-earthly one: "Heaven - / [and] only Heaven to come / With that old Codicil of Doubt" (1-2). "Heaven" itself the speaker takes for granted in the present. The word "only," modifying "Heaven to come," on the other hand, implies that that other heaven does not encompass this present world; it has not yet arrived. The poem thus

suggests that heaven is like the reward or inheritance one might be bequeathed in a will, but this only happens upon one's own death rather than upon someone else's. And this will has an addendum or codicil—there may be no heavenly afterlife at all. The second stanza uses the logic of the saying "better a bird within the hand than two within the bush" to declare the former present heaven or

> The "Bird within the Hand"
>
> Superior to the one
>
> The "Bush" may yield me
>
> Or may not
>
> Too late to choose again. (6-9)

The expected eight-syllable third line of this quatrain is broken to form an abrupt additional three-syllable line, a kind of codicil of doubt—"Or may not"—in order to highlight the speaker's doubt about this heaven that is only to come. But the speaker does not deny the reality of the bush, a stand-in for God that perhaps recalls the story of Moses and the burning bush that contained God's presence. God is seen as the source of the bird that is the doubtful non-earthly heaven, but the poem does not doubt the reality of the bush. The poem thus frames these two heavens as what one must choose between: "Which is best?" (1). But these two are only the options in the false dilemma created by nature-grace, and they only need be constructed as a rational choice when religion is construed as belief, as it is under nature-freedom.

Although these texts may seem to reflect a secular skepticism that rejects all instantiations of Christian transcendence, they may better be understood as reactions against specific interpretations of the Bible and Christian identity structured by the

nature-grace and nature-freedom dualisms. These poems are consistent, however, with a paradigm of creation, fall, and redemption, which itself is opposed to dualistic religious orientations but fully acknowledges transcendence. Affirming the inherent goodness of all created things—earth, bodies, animals, and cultural artifacts alike—the creation-fall-redemption orientation affirms that nothing is inherently dishonorable whereas nature-grace views the body to be inferior to the spirit and interprets Paul and Biblical passages about heaven accordingly. To be sure, in criticizing this conflation of creation and fall, Dickinson herself sometimes conflates resurrection, a key aspect of redemption/consummation, with a pole in a dualism rather than seeing it as a transformative process that occurs to bodies in the world, as "['Sown in dishonor'!]" illustrates. But Dickinson nuances this reading of 1 Corinthians 15 in later texts.[153]

Other poems resist a nature-grace dualism more by reforming its view of heaven towards the creation-fall-redemption orientation than by outright rejecting it. Keeping a dualism but reversing which term is privileged may indeed be the first step in questioning the dualism altogether. For example, in "[My period had come for Prayer]" (525), the speaker feels that it is necessary to pray because what prayer can accomplish is not possible through "other Art," perhaps a reference to poetry. The use of the word "Tactics" for prayer in "My Tactics missed a rudiment" (3) suggests that the speaker's approach to prayer is one of technical mastery or even competition rather than of relationship. In the poem, this approach to prayer fails in some basic way, namely by missing the "Creator" (4). This prepares for a questioning of received understandings of prayer that is based on the assumption of the separation of earth and heaven in the rest of the poem. The speaker's assertion that "God grows above - so those who pray / Horizons

- must ascend -" (5-6) reflects the notion that heaven and God are distant from humans and the earth and that prayer is the movement away from oneself towards heaven, precisely the position of nature-grace. However, the rest of the poem depicts the speaker's ascent to a heaven in the sky, which she finds to be empty. Heaven is neither populated by humans nor inhabited by God, which directly challenges nature-grace's conception and privileging of heaven. When the speaker finally asks God, still as the impersonal "Infinitude," to reveal his face to her, her prayer is answered in the final stanza:

> The Silence condescended -
> Creation stopped - for Me -. Creation stopped -] The Heavens paused -
> But awed beyond my errand -
> I worshipped - did not "pray"

Here God is depicted as the one who acts, coming to the finite (if not necessarily fallen) human. Even though the speaker's prayer is misdirected in searching for a distant God, it rightly seeks God's face-to-face presence. The poem parallels God with Silence, the Creator with Creation, suggesting that those are as close as the speaker is able to come to experiencing divinity. The silence condescends, suggesting here and elsewhere Christ's descent in the Incarnation, which is a key element in Christian doctrine emphasizing the continuity of the divine and the created. The poem suggests that this takes place by way of silence, the very absence that the speaker seeks to overcome on her own terms (or the terms of her culture), and creation, the very realm that heaven is opposed to earlier in the poem. The awe the speaker experiences through creation and silence, and in their active accommodation of her, reveals the inadequacy of a religion that seeks God on its own

terms and in ways that discount other ways of seeking. The response of the speaker is no longer prayer, the reaching for a distant divinity, but worship, no less divinely directed yet presumably taking place in the creaturely present.

Over the course of her poetic career, Dickinson developed this rejection of dualism in favor of the notion that heaven and earth are overlapping and continuous. Poems with this perspective tend also to embody most clearly the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. Perhaps her most straightforward statement of this understanding of the relationship of heaven and earth as redemption and creation is "[Who has not found the Heaven - below -]" (1609):

> Who has not found the Heaven - below -
> Will fail of it above -
> For Angels rent the House next our's,
> Wherever we remove -

This poem, written in 1883, suggests a movement toward creation-fall-redemption in Dickinson's thought in that it revises the first stanza of the aforementioned "[I never felt at Home - Below -]" (437), from 1862, whose speaker accepts (and reverses) the dualism of heaven and earth. The earlier speaker had claimed that "in the Handsome skies / I shall not feel at Home" (2-3) and "I dont like Paradise" (4). Both poems' first lines begin with a pronoun (I, Who) followed by a negating adverb (not, never) followed by a verb beginning with the letter "f" that expresses affinity (felt, has found) directed toward a noun beginning with a capital "H" (Home, Heaven) followed by the word "below" set off both before and after by dashes. However, while "[I never felt at Home - Below -]" goes on to denigrate Heaven and Paradise, "[Who has not found the Heaven - below -]"

affirms the continuity of heaven and earth. The later poem rejects the dualism of nature-grace and the immanence of nature-freedom found in the earlier poem.

In "[Who has not found the heaven below]," the parallelism of the first two lines links "above" and "below," emphasizing that Heaven exists in the world the speaker inhabits. This is not merely the statement common to the discourse of church secularity that what we believe on earth will dictate what happens to us in the afterlife. Rather, the positive spiritual presence of angels accompanies the speaker and others. In this sense, spiritual equality is given to earth over any possible remote heaven. This priority is also emphasized by the poem's placement of the word "below," visually set off by dashes, which only retains the iambic meter and the common 8686 stanza form if the word "Heaven" is shortened to a single syllable. While such elision is common in hymnody, in this poem it draws attention to the word "Heaven" and then to "below," the word that necessitates the metrical elision. The elision of Heaven's second syllable subtly suggests a diminished role for the church's secularized meaning of the word in Dickinson's religious context. But this is not a simple reversal and reinscription of the dualism. The reality of heaven and angels is not questioned. They are present everywhere, even when humans are "remove[d]" in death. It is their relegation to a realm separate from or "above" people's lives that is challenged.

The final lines of "[Some keep the Sabbath going to Church -]" (236) present a similar argument: "So instead of getting to Heaven, at last - / I'm going, all along" (11-12).[154] In this poem the parallel and contrast between examples of where heaven might be found are temporal as well as spatial. Heaven is experienced during life on earth, not merely at the end of this time on earth. Indeed, heaven, in this 1861 poem, is even less

spatially based than in "[Who has not found the Heaven – below]." One does not "get" to heaven as if it were a final destination. Being in heaven is the very process of going there. Ultimately, there is also here. This emphasis does not contradict the poems that express heaven's qualities spatially. It does, however, suggest that there is no one location or aspect of the world that is spiritually superior to another. One may be in the presence of angels wherever one removes, as "[Who has not found the heaven below]" suggests. "Some keep the Sabbath" presents heaven both as a destination and the process of getting there. Indeed, journey and home are Dickinson's two most commonly used locational figures for eternity and heaven in her poetry, but she tends to favor the latter (Onodera 21), which was one of the most common metaphors for understanding heaven during Dickinson's lifetime (Smith *Heaven* 70). "[Some keep the Sabbath going to Church -]" depicts heaven as a process, a journey, but it is a process that takes place while one is at home. And the heaven one arrives at is at home, too. This process aligns with the view of reality as a drama of creation, fallenness, and redemption. Dickinson extends (or simply affirms) the location of heaven from the end goal of redemption to the very nature of creation. The journey toward redemption and consummation does not entail leaving the creation, which remains our home.

This suggests that the relationship of Dickinson's poetry to the concept of heaven follows the contours of her poetry's relationship to the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation itself. The structure of the poetry mirrors the structure of creation-fall-redemption as it rejects nature-grace and finds nature-freedom inadequate, but the poems and the poems' speakers seem unable to completely inhabit this structure. However, the concurrence in "[Some keep the Sabbath]" of this directionality toward heaven while yet

remaining embedded within earth is exactly what the movement of the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation looks like. Moving toward "heaven" or consummation happens in the creational context. Indeed, redemption is moving *toward* creation as it was originally meant to be and as it will be, perfected and unfallen. Practically, in the context of dominant religious orientations that distort this vision, this looks precisely like the indecisive condition that Dickinson described in her early letters—simultaneously believing herself destined for heaven, wanting to make a choice that would assure her place in heaven, but also unwilling to do so because it entailed, she was led to believe, relinquishing earth. Rather than relinquishing heaven in her poetry, though, Dickinson refused the false dilemma she was presented. Poetry became a surer means of approaching heaven than church membership. By "choosing not choosing" religiously, she could keep both heaven and earth, just as she kept multiple variant wordings to so many of her poems.[155] This relinquishment or refusal of her own choice, essentially casting her fate to God, is indeed further evidence of her poetry's ultimate incompatibility with the nature-freedom religious orientation that valorizes human choice to the point it becomes a substitute divinity.

While these poems affirm the heavenly state of earthly life, their references to "remov[al]" and "at last" suggest lurking questions about the relationship of heaven to death. Several of Dickinson's poems take up this question more explicitly. In nature-freedom, nothing exists beyond death and so heaven cannot exist in any transcendent form. In nature-grace, death marks a complete separation point between earth and heaven. However, in many of Dickinson's poems death marks a point of continuity between earth and heaven, in accord with creation-fall-redemption. "[We pray - to

Heaven -]" (476), for example, questions the location of heaven and those who have died and likewise affirms the ultimate non-spatiality of heaven. That is, it is not a space apart from earth. The poem concludes that heaven is not "a Place" or "a Sky" or otherwise (6), suggesting that spatial metaphors of heaven such as heaven as "location's narrow way" (7), a metaphor from Matthew 7:14,[156] are helpful for the living but lose their meaning in an ultimate sense, for "Unto the Dead / There's no Geography -" (8-9). But the dead do not just disappear for good in death. Although the poem's final lines are enigmatic, they suggest that the dead exist in a "State" of "Endowal," "Focus," and "Omnipresence" (10-11). Heaven after life is a place of fullness and clarity. Beyond this, though, the poem uses the locational designator of "Omnipresence," usually reserved for God, for the state of existence after death. Thus the poem suggests that while the dead are with God, they remain present in the way that God is present, which is different from the presence of the embodied living. Heaven is only non-spatial because spatiality as we understand it limits the fullness of heaven, which is perhaps more accurately described as pan-spatial according to the poem.

Heaven thus encompasses all reality even if death creates a division in that reality. Indeed, "[Of Paradise' existence]" (1421) suggests that death is actually a way of apprehending the closeness of heaven despite our doubts about its existence:

> Of Paradise' existence
>
> All we know
>
> Is the uncertain certainty -
>
> But its vicinity infer,
>
> By its Bisecting Messenger -

Here while the "Bisecting Messenger," death, cuts a person off from life, this messenger is also pictured as an angel from heaven. Similarly, poems such as "[Because that you are going]" (1314) and "[Show me Eternity, and I will show you Memory]" (1658) also affirm the continuity of earth and heaven, life in the past and present and the life to continue after death.

Again, "[Life - is what we make it -] (727) demonstrates a discontinuity between life and death that could be construed as the separation of earth and heaven, but ends up bridging these two supposed opposites with the concept of resurrection. The fact that about "Death – We do not know -" (2) is one of the central mysteries of life as well as one of the mysteries and ambiguities of all forms of Christian faith. On the one hand, death is destructive of life and can be indicative of fallenness and is therefore not ultimately good. On the other hand, especially in creation-fall-redemption, it is a part of created reality and therefore at least partially good. In Christian orthodoxy, this is resolved by redemption, particularly Christ's death and resurrection, which make possible and assure the resurrection of all the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). The poem's argument is likewise that one should not fear death because Christ's "sure foot" (13) has gone before into death. Christ, that is, is the "Tender Pioneer" (14) who leads the way for people into the presence of God, clearing away anything to do with death that might hinder them (Hebrews 6:19-20).

"[Two Lengths has every Day -]" (1354), another of Dickinson's many reflections on death and the afterlife, also argues for the continuity of earth and heaven, life and afterlife. Furthermore, it exhibits a strong affiliation with the religious orientation of creation, fall, and redemption/consummation:

Two Lengths has every Day -

Its absolute extent

And Area superior

By Hope or Horror lent -

Eternity will be

Velocity or Pause

At Fundamental Signals

From Fundamental Laws.

To die is not to go -

On Doom's consummate Chart

No Territory new is staked -

Remain thou as thou Art.

The poem's first stanza acknowledges that a person's existence, the "Day," has two temporal durations. The first extends until death; the other, of much longer or "superior" duration, extends beyond that. This second duration, the afterlife or "Eternity," depends upon (is "lent" by) the first, putting them in continuity to make a single day. Likewise the earth will exist until the Last Judgment and then exist in a redeemed state for eternity, a state that is described in Revelation 21:25 as having no night.[157] The contrast between Hope and Horror suggests the contrast in direction to or away from God, and perhaps the contrast in destinies of the redeemed and unredeemed in Christian doctrine. Hope in the New Testament frequently refers to the resurrection of the dead as in the previously cited

passages from Hebrews and 1 Corinthians. This distinction between hope and horror may allude to the Biblical passage of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, a parable in which one's actions and attachments in life, toward or away from God (attested to by one's treatment of the poor and needy), result in a continuation into the afterlife of either separation from or closeness to God.

The second stanza continues a lexicon of geometry and physics to describe Eternity and how one gets there. Onodera believes that "Velocity" and "Pause" correspond to conceptions of heaven as journey to an otherworldy place and as home (25). The contrast between the two could also signify common notions of eternity as time that continues forever or as timelessness. It is not clear whether the speaker favors Pause, which is the more likely of the two considering that "Velocity," forward movement in time, is akin to the negated "go," or views velocity and pause as simply two aspects of eternity. Even if "Pause" suggests the cessation of life (rather than its intensification), these lines suggest the continuity between life and afterlife since what eternity will be takes place "At Fundamental Signals / From Fundamental Laws" (7-8). "Fundamental Laws" suggests the very structure of reality. The poem suggests that the basics of life, and perhaps whether life is lived in Hope or in Horror toward eternity, toward or away from God, will determine a person's eternity.[158]

The third stanza begins with an assertion that death, the break between the lengths in the day, does not signify leaving earth for a heaven apart from earth. The cartographic lexicon emphasizes the spatial continuity of the "Area" of eternity and the present (3). "Doom's consummate chart" perhaps refers to the scroll with seven seals in Revelation 5:1 or the Book of Life mentioned throughout Revelation (Bennett 356). Doom seems to

denote the Final Judgment determining where one ends up in eternity rather than connoting coming to ruin. Consummation is often used as a term in Christian doctrine for the final movement in the creation-fall-redemption narrative, the ending point at which all of creation is redeemed, resurrected, and renewed. "To die" thus does not mean moving on the map that signifies eternal life—it means the eternal fruition on earth of one's everyday life. That no new territory is imposed on the chart suggests that heaven (and hell) are earthly states that extend after death. "No Territory new" (11) also recalls "[Life - is what we make it -], which claims that "no new mile remaineth / far as Paradise -" (11-12) for people to walk because Christ has already been through death and has been resurrected, pointing to the nature of existence after death for Dickinson's speaker in "[Two Lengths has every Day –]." "Remain thou as thou Art" (12) echoes Revelation 22:11 in a passage that emphasizes the nearness of the kingdom of heaven: "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." The final command to "Remain" is more confident and assured than in most other Dickinson poems, suggesting an assurance that she (and her "Art") have already begun to partake in heaven.

The willingness to follow Christ, the "Tender Pioneer," into death and the hope of a Christian afterlife that is a non-secular heaven are developed in a number of other later poems. For example, "["And with what Body do they come"?]" (1537) begins with a quotation of 1 Corinthians 15:35, which is a statement of incredulity toward the bodily nature of the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul proceeds to argue that Christ's resurrection assures the resurrection of humanity. Dickinson, writing in a letter

to a cousin whose daughter had died, responds similarly (L671), affirming this doctrine of resurrection:

> "And with what Body do they come?" -
>
> Then they *do* come - Rejoice!
>
> What Door - What Hour - Run - run - My Soul!
>
> Illuminate the House!
>
> "Body"! Then real - a Face - and Eyes -
>
> To know that it is them! -
>
> Paul knew the Man that knew the News -
>
> He passed through Bethlehem -

That the poem even goes so far as to proclaim "Rejoice!" (2) regarding death is significant in that here Dickinson, or her speaker, allies herself with Paul's very claims to which she had objected twenty years earlier in "['Sown in dishonor'!]." The poem affirms that "Paul knew the Man that knew the News - / He passed through Bethlehem -" (7-8). The man is Jesus and the repetition of the homonyms "knew" and "News" emphasizes both the speaker's confidence in the resurrection and the renewal of life that will occur in the resurrection. Our bodily, earthly life with loved ones is continuous with the bodily afterlife via the resurrection. In both periods the "Soul" (3) and the "Body" (5) are coterminous, not separate (Harde 167).

This affirmation of resurrection represents a final development in Dickinson's poetry toward an embrace of creation-fall-redemption as an explicit alternative to nature-grace and nature-freedom. This development is also evident in an 1873 letter (L391) Dickinson sent in the years between when she wrote these poems, in which she again

quotes 1 Corinthians 15, regarding the resurrection. She writes that "While the Clergyman tells Father and Vinnie that 'this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption' - it has already done so and they go defrauded." Dickinson is not claiming that Paul's account of the resurrection is false or fraudulent. Rather, the institutional church's interpretation of the Bible is what is mistaken. What do these three go defrauded of? These are the final lines of a letter in which Dickinson has described the glories of a summer day—the sun, the meadows, the birds. She claims of "Paradise[,] I have never believed [it] to be [a] superhuman site." She resists the conflation of the natural world with fallenness, or corruption. Likewise she resists the disassociation of the resurrected, consummate world and everyday earthy life. For Dickinson the natural world is "Eden, always eligible," with a goodness that is incorruptible. The implication is that biblical interpretations that refuse to recognize this cheat people out of a deeper religious appreciation for the natural world. In the face of death, Dickinson would extol the relevance of resurrection, redemption, and consummation for humans. Here she emphasizes that whatever resurrection involves, it is already on display in the glories of creation.

Dickinson's affirmation of the continuity of life and afterlife, earth and heaven, then, resists the dualisms of her religious context. Although some of her poems do seem to exhibit the secular dualisms of nature-grace and nature-freedom, her poetry tends to undermine these dualisms. This is especially true insofar as these dualisms tend devalue the physical, embodied world, which suggests that this non-dualistic, non-secular orientation will be useful for ecocriticism considering Dickinson's poetry. One chief way it does so is through the linking of heaven and earth on a continuum that is consonant with an understanding of reality as a narrative of creation, fall, and redemption. In the

poetry, this continuum is particularly evident in the Christian doctrine of the bodily resurrection of the dead, a doctrine that does not accord with either nature-grace and nature-freedom orientations. Dickinson's grappling with these religious perspectives provides opportunity for both literary and theological reflection, reflections, whatever one's religious commitments, can offer a rich and sure-footed path towards greater understanding and love of the natural world.

**Notes**

[133] All poems are quoted from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition,* edited by Ralph W. Franklin, and will be cited parenthetically in the text by number when first introduced and by line number thereafter. Dickinson's letters will likewise be identified by number. My use of first lines in lieu of titles follows standard scholarly practice, and I bracket the line to denote editorial intervention. Subsequent usage of titles may be abbreviated and without the original typography.

[134] Interestingly, this argument is embedded in a larger argument for unity and against divisions in the church.

[135] Many of the poems in Dickinson's manuscripts contained variant word or phrase substitutions, which means that she kept several alternate versions complete versions of some poems, choosing not to choose one over the others. Likewise many of her poems exist in multiple fair copies with alternate wordings.

[136] My topical focus differs from Williams' but I reach a similar conclusion. (I interpret her depictions of heaven in continuity with earthly existence; he interprets her psychologically terrifying experiences of the divine as following the typological Biblical wilderness experience.) What he calls Calvinism is akin to what I call the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. Indeed, the contours of arguments made by John Calvin and many of his theological followers were structured by this religious orientation in opposition to the nature-grace and later the nature-freedom religious orientations. The fact that my interpretation of Dickinson's work engages questions of biographical belief or affiliation only indirectly should not be understood as a denigration of the importance of scholarship such as Williams' and Lundin's that does.

[137] This characterization is contrasted to a derisive attitude toward the body and the hope for heaven only after death. The poem was included in a letter to Samuel Bowles, seemingly as commentary on the claim that his face appears "out of Paradise – probably because you are there constantly, instead of ultimately," another of many suggestions that heaven exists here and now, whatever else it might be.

[138] Harold Bloom also uses this phrase to describe Dante, Milton, Blake, and himself.

[139] These letters were written when Dickinson was a teenager on the verge of adulthood. As "Some keep the Sabbath" makes clear, her poems, written in adulthood, take a more nuanced approach to this tension.

[140] Interestingly, Dickinson's "The lilac is an ancient shrub," which uses substantially the same imagery but to a substantially different end, was written one year later.

[141] Wright mentions prominent nineteenth-century British hymns about heaven that are similarly out of touch with what he sees as Christian orthodoxy, which is very much in line with a creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. These hymns are largely, but were also written during Dickinson's lifetime: John Keble's "Sun of my Soul, Thou Saviour Dear" and John Henry Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light" (20-21).

[142] For an example of such an inconsistency, see Gelpi 36.

[143] This is clearly Vendler's view: it is no secret that she, an ex-Catholic, bitterly hates religion.

[144] It is practically a critical commonplace that Dickinson merely "resorted" to using biblical language and allusion because that was all she had available to her and that she sought to mock and undermine the Bible in her irreverent use of them. See Gelpi (49) for another example. These dual assumptions are mutually reinforcing and only make sense from a secular critical position that presupposes the nature-freedom religious orientation. The best refutation of this perspective is Linda Freedman's *Emily Dickinson and the Religious Imagination,* which demonstrates the productive interplay between biblical ideas and Dickinson's poetry.

[145] This argument follows Alvin Plantinga's argument in *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism.*

[146] Jane Donahue Eberwein concludes the same in her article on this poem. "'Is Immortality True?'"

[147] This idea is given extensive treatment in Tomáš Halík's *Patience with God*.

[148] Furthermore, it is ambiguous whether the "Behavior" may refer to the actions of "Belief," having abdicated, or to the actions of "Those"/ "they" in lines 1-2, the ones who bowed down to God and/or Belief. I do not believe choosing one interpretation over the other substantially influences the interpretation.

[149] Coincidently, perhaps,"[Those – dying then,]" was written was written in 1882, two years after the publication of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov,* which makes the similar point, from the perspective of characters who have abandoned belief in God, that "[w]ithout God and the future life … everything is permitted now, one can do anything" (589). Compare this with Friedrich Nietzsche's 1883 assertion that "nothing is

true; everything is permitted" (239).

[150] Many of the poems in Dickinson's manuscripts contained variant word or phrase substitutions, which means that she kept several alternate versions complete versions of some poems, choosing not to choose one over the others. Likewise many of her poems exist in multiple fair copies with alternate wordings.

Parks does not consider the poems variants. She follows Franklin's reading edition, which favors what are believed to be later instances of the poems. Johnson, on the other hand, favored earlier versions. I try to consider the significance of interpreting the variants as "both/and" rather than "either/or," particularly in poems such as this where the variants differ noticeably.

[151] On the other hand, this fascinating poem may also be suggesting that the human psyche and spirit cannot be reduced to the material body.

[152] In addition to being at odds with her readings of many other of Dickinson's poems, Gerhardt resorts to reading Dickinson's mistrust of science into the poem in order to make sense of her original reading.

[153] The fall is the aspect of creation-fall-redemption that Dickinson seems most resistant to in her poems about heaven although she does not actively evacuate it from her thought, as did Emerson (Gelpi 57-58). She seems all too familiar with fallenness in her poems about mental and psychological distress and extremity (Williams 195).

[154] The fact that this early poem manifests an attitude toward heaven more pronounced in Dickinson's later poems suggests that the creation-fall-redemption-oriented development of her poetic thought began earlier in her career, as is also evidenced by her early letters.

[155] I refer to the title of Sharon Cameron's *Choosing Not Choosing*, which argues that Dickinson refused to choose how here poems were to be read in the way she recorded and preserved them.

[156] "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (KJV)

[157] Day and night would be the conventional way to understand the two lengths of every 24-hour day.

[158] The only textual variant in this poem is to lines 7-8, which reads in variant "Precisely as the Candidate / Preliminary was -" (Dickinson, 1998, 1354*A*). This even more directly lends support to the argument that this poem suggests the continuity of life and afterlife. Additionally, "Candidate" suggests a candidate for baptism or some other initiation.

# CHAPTER VI

# EPILOGUE

Although the authors I study lived and wrote more than 150 years ago, my motivation for studying their writing has largely to do with concerns of the present. These authors wrote at a time of transition, for example, in the use of industrial technology, energy regimes, and land manipulation. The negative environmental consequences of these changes have only compounded up to the present. They also wrote at a time of deep religious reorientation. The cultural and subcultural dominance of nature-grace was giving way more and more to nature-freedom as the dominant religious orientation in the United States; Protestant Christianity was giving way to a form of civil religion as the supposedly neutral, secular religious standpoint from which others are understood. This trend, too, has only continued. The time during which I wrote this dissertation also saw the Standing Rock Sioux protests against the construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline across their treaty lands, an environmental justice protest that drew wide attention to issues of Native sovereignty and environmental pollution of the slow, toxic kind. This time also saw the election as United States President of Donald Trump, the most environmentally hostile and racially callous Presidential candidate of my lifetime. It seems that threatening ethnic and religious minority groups and women, calling climate change a hoax, and promising to do away with environmental protections are, if not popular, not particularly problematic for a large number of Americans.

These problems—climate change, environmental degradation, racism—are some of the largest and most systemic facing the United States and the world today. Yet most Americans ignore these problems in their daily lives to the extent they are able. An

underlying reason for this is the dominance of the nature-freedom religious orientation, which renders such violations as legitimate. The means of mastering nature—science and technology—and the purported ends—enhancing freedom and progress—are all assumed to make sense. Nature-freedom renders meaningful the modern logic of environmental ruin and social and economic plunder. But it also renders meaningful the academic pursuits in both the sciences and humanities of the mastery of nature and furthering of human freedom. Even academic paradigms that resist this logic struggle to escape the dualism, tending to reductively render reality as entirely nature (a hard materialism) or freedom (a hard constructivism). Literary study and ecocriticism both tend to be structured by nature-freedom in basing their critique in a "secular" stance in opposition to (or difference from) "the religious." Resistance to the power wielded under nature-freedom tends nevertheless to be based on the terms of nature-freedom, still treating power itself as absolute. Nature-freedom treats the use of power as most foundational in these systems, whether this appears as a more conservative approach that sees systems as justly rewarding different groups unequally according to merit or a more liberal approach that sees systems as inherently unjust and producing inequality accordingly.

One alternative to this is the nature-grace religious orientation, which posits faith over power, reason, or freedom as absolute. This position is still held by many "religious" individuals and groups in opposition to nature-freedom. In particular, it asserts a transcendent reality over the exclusive immanence that meaning structured by nature-freedom presupposes. As it exists under the dominance of nature-freedom, however, nature-grace tends to reinforce dualisms, such as secular-religious, and seek power as even more fundamental than faith. Take for instance the fact that eighty-one percent of

white American evangelical Christians voted for Donald Trump, by most accounts a person who embodies the antithesis of Christian behavior and attitude, for whom power is clearly foundational. Perhaps this is because he promises to introduce chaos into what are perceived as secular institutions. A recent survey published by the Barna Group found that while ninety percent of evangelicals, whose thinking as a group I believe tends to be structured by nature-grace, hold that Christians should be more involved in environmental work, the same respondents ranked climate change, energy, and environmental problems as some of the least important problems facing the United States. This represents a growing recognition of the religious significance of the natural world but a failure to take meaningful action to address environmental in any way that threatened the power held by the group or its members.

Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson all argued against the nature-grace religious orientation, in part because of the violence to the natural world that it justifies, but they did not then argue in favor of the nature-freedom dualism replacing it. They didn't merely invert the dualisms of nature-grace and nature-freedom, in other words. Nor did they merely subvert the power exercised under nature-freedom by various institutions and systems. They argued for an alternative, structured by the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation. A creation-fall-redemption approach affirms the importance of human freedom without absolutizing it. It acknowledges transcendence without opposing it to immanent reality. Thus I believe that it can form a bridge, if not a compromise, for those who make arguments about the importance of environmental work but whose actions and priorities are inconsistent or hypocritical. It affirms the inherent goodness of

the natural world, accounts for the injustices and violations of that goodness, and offers paths of redemption to put those wrongs to rights.

In this light, Apess, Thoreau, and Dickinson can be seen to speak to some of today's most pressing problems, with a message that challenges both "secular" nature-freedom positions and "religious" nature-grace positions by doing away with such dualisms in favor of an integrated religious orientation. The alternative they argued for echoes the words of Jesus in Mark 12:17 in response to a question about paying taxes to the unjust and oppressive Roman Emperor: "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and [give] to God what is God's" (NIV). Each of these authors in their own way encourages us today to relinquish—to "give back"—the unjust privileges accorded by the nature-freedom religious orientation, to repent of our individual participation in injustice, and to relearn to love the world as sacred, perhaps even as God's. Their writings certainly challenge me in these ways. As someone who enjoys the undue privileges of "whiteness," American nationality, and anthropocentrism, I am particularly chastened by the words and witness of William Apess, even as I share his vision of reconciliation. As someone who affiliates and identifies as a Christian, I am chastened by Dickinson and Thoreau's critiques of religious doctrines and practices, even as I share their distaste for many doctrines and the modern priority of belief in religion. As someone whose life is complicit in the mass ecocide perpetuated by American culture, I am chastened by all of their strivings for environmental justice and greater love of the natural world. Yet as someone who finds the creation-fall-redemption religious orientation not only ultimately meaningful but also true, and powerfully attested to in Apess', Thoreau's, and Dickinson's writings, I share with them the hope for justice, love, reconciliation, and

integration amongst all humans and indeed all creatures. For these reasons, their prophetic voices remain relevant to the world today.

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