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At Connecticut College, in our protected microcosm of academia, we often tend to discuss faith and reason as though they were opposites. Indeed, since the Enlightenment liberals and leftists have generally viewed faith as reason’s obfuscation. The staggering achievements of science and modern technology have only exacerbated our tendency to reduce faith to little more than an outdated superstition and search for salvation in smaller computer chips or grand social theory.

In this light, it is tempting to look at this year’s presidential election and declare it a triumph of faith over reason. Liberals see a resurgent Christian right as an example of blind faith run amok, a swing of the pendulum too far towards religion and away from secular values. Perhaps they’re right. Indeed, never in recent political history have issues of values, religion, and above all faith, loomed so paramount in the national consciousness. But are faith and reason truly so diametrically opposed? Can they coexist even in a heated political context?

In a society that appears to be growing increasingly secularized, this resurgence of faith in the voting booths took much of the nation by surprise. “But”, the reasoned and educated Democrats in our midst cry, “look at the economy, the quagmire in Iraq, the rank inequality within our own society! How can anyone possibly cast their vote based on the obscure and subjective menace of gay marriage with these quantifiable terrors breathing down our necks?”

A more nuanced look, however, reveals that this tension between faith and reason has always been with us. Indeed, the separation between church and state, one of the central tenets upon which America was founded, was primarily an attempt to deal with the tension between faith and reason, two modes of consciousness that were beginning to seem fundamentally at odds with each other. The Founding Fathers recognized the necessity of creating a secular civil society precisely so that faith could exist without persecution. Issues like gay marriage, school prayer, and abortion all continue to test the rigidity of the Constitutional barrier between church and state even as they decide elections. Roe V. Wade, the Scopes trial, and last week’s election tally are some of the symbolic battlegrounds upon which these issues have been fought and, at least temporarily, decided.
If nothing else, this past election reminds us that faith and reason are not as divorced from one another as we might think. After all, this country was founded in part by religious zealots who thought nothing of burning witches while ardent-ly defending their right to freedom of religion. At Connecticut College, we are liter-ally surrounded by this stark history. Yet, like it or not, it is the interplay between faith and reason, values and logic, that comprise the moral center of this country. Faith is an inherent and necessary component of our national political conscious-ness and we ignore it at our peril.
How successful was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?” Antjie Krog, in her journalist’s memoir *Country of My Skull*, claims that this is the question she is most often asked. More specifically, she notes, “the biggest question is whether or not the TRC process achieved reconciliation.” If ever we have witnessed a leap of faith, it is the idea that telling the truth about past human rights violations will somehow lead to reconciliation. This claim has been made by a wide variety of individuals, including many a scholar claiming to adhere to “rational” social-scientific methods of conducting research. The concepts have become so closely associated that the connection may now be permanently cemented, as the terms “Truth and Reconciliation” are joined in what is increasingly becoming the norm in titling truth commissions. The idea that truth is unequivocally linked to reconciliation was given further weight with the adoption of the slogan *Truth. The Road to Reconciliation* by the South African TRC.

This *Truth—>Reconciliation* model is so taken for granted that often little attempt is made—beyond the provision of anecdotal evidence—to determine whether it is in fact true, either in general or in specific cases. One problem with this presumed model, however, is that it conflates success with reconciliation. In other words, the *Truth—>Reconciliation* presumption has become so commonplace that the assessment of the contribution of any particular truth-telling process has become, almost by definition, the presence or absence of reconciliation. In other words, if *Truth—>Reconciliation* becomes the basis of evaluation, then the success question becomes “are these people reconciled?” Reconciliation is no longer one of several possible contributions of truth telling; it becomes the *sine qua non* of assessing success. The problems with this conflation are obvious. First, it makes “seeing” reconciliation a prerequisite for evaluating impact. Unless there is a perceived widespread increase in the number of individuals “getting along,” a truth commission will be deemed to not have contributed much to a post-conflict society. Of course this inference would undoubtedly be premature, given that reconciliation is a very slow process. Second, anecdotal evidence supports both sides
of the question on whether people are reconciled. Sometimes, individual victims report experiencing genuine feelings of “catharsis;” just as often (if not more so), however, they report that feelings of anger and frustration have not diminished in the least. In the case of South Africa, for example, one can just as easily argue that the TRC was (or was not) successful, because people in South Africa are (or are not) reconciled. Examples abound: on the one hand, one mother of an ANC comrade who was drugged by security police and pushed off a cliff in a van to his death stated, “I will never forgive them. I want to see them dead like our children.” On the other hand, one finds the widow of a disappeared activist husband who found out through the TRC process that he had been kidnapped and killed, his body roasted over a fire for six hours and his ashes dumped into a river. After the TRC hearing, she declared, “don’t we want peace for South Africa? How are we going to find peace if we don’t forgive? My husband was fighting for peace for all of South Africa. How can you correct a wrong with a wrong?”

Finally, focusing only on the presence or absence of reconciliation as a basis for assessing contributions of truth-telling mechanisms runs the serious risk of overlooking various other ways in which they are successful, or the many contributions they do make. If we judge a mechanism by asking whether people are reconciled, we are less likely to be able to say, “this experiment with truth telling made serious contributions to long-lasting peace.” And yet, almost every attempt at coming to terms with the past has some accomplishments. It makes little sense to simply pronounce such attempts a failure; it makes more sense to examine what they have achieved and where improvements can be made.
STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS
Oh, Inverted World:
Marx, James and the Gamble of Faith

By Zach Smith
Class of 2007

Has the advent of the Enlightenment, the so-called Age of Reason, ruled out the place for faith in the life of modern man? The reconciling of faith and reason is an exceedingly difficult, and at times impossible, endeavor that inevitably accompanies modernity. Mr. Smith seeks to cast light on the relationship between these entities by cleverly casting Karl Marx and William James as students on a post-Floralia Connecticut College campus. During the course of their hypothetical debate, critical issues of the validity of religion and the role of reason in re-contextualizing faith come into play.

The Age of Enlightenment was a period of time abounding with scientific discoveries and new philosophical ideas. These discoveries oppose the religious concepts and notions previously thought to be authoritative. During this iconoclastic era, the standard for truth shifted away from the tenets of religion and toward the laws of science. The Enlightenment spawned the spirit of modernity. Modernity is not so much a period of time as it is an ethos, a set of moods and motivations intrinsically linked with man’s discontent with his world and how that world operates. In modernity, man must reevaluate his conception of freedom, as more importance is placed on the self rather than the Transcendent. Autonomy is at the root of this new notion of freedom, as there is a call for man to think for himself rather than passively accepting what he is told. The modern, autonomous man does not any longer accept the world as presented to him, but instead questions his senses, his existence, and his faith. As science becomes the dominant source of authority and value, modern man must attempt to figure out what place religion has in the world, if any.

On May 3rd, 2004, these questions of existence and faith once again became a focal point for great minds. It is the morning after Floralia, a celebration during which students of Connecticut College indulge themselves in convivial delights whilst reflecting on all of that which they have learned. Freshmen William James, an affluent Manhattanite majoring in philosophy, and Karl Marx, an exchange student from Germany majoring in sociology, are no different. After having spent the entire night engaging in lively conversa-
tion, the two decide to leave their spot on a sofa on the Shain Library green and continue their discussion while walking around the campus, surveying the damage caused by overzealous revelers. After briefly critiquing the disappointing Beatnuts performance, they reached the toilet paper-festooned Harkness Chapel. The sight swiftly changed the subject to religion.

Marx sees religion as an illusion, an unnecessary institution which instills in man a false consciousness, not only deserving of toilet paper adornments but of complete abolishment. James, on the other hand, feels that man has a right to believe in God and to deny him the option to do so would curtail his freedom.

Marx begins the debate: “The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions” (54). Marx feels that religion is an inaccurate projection of man’s self-consciousness; it demonstrates his needs, desires, hopes and fears, but exists outside of the reality in which man is inexorably grounded. Man exists in society, and this society produces religion which then becomes the projection of the consciousness of this society, not of the individual man. The individual cannot be expected to conform to these generalized notions of reality set forth by religion. For Marx, striving for religion’s fantastic version of reality is the equivalent of attempting to achieve the proportions seen in a funhouse mirror’s reflection. It is not only an impossible task, but one with undesirable ends. Man must rip his gaze away from the hypnotic warped mirror of religion to realize who he truly is and what he can truly achieve. He cannot attain true happiness until he abandons his quest to attain the “illusory” happiness that religion provides. Once man has abandoned this illusion, the crutch of faith, he has proven himself strong enough to exist without it.

James quickly retorts that Marx is a unique case, as for him religious conviction is a dead hypothesis. This is to say that Marx is so naturally disinclined to religion, that belief is not even a possibility for him. In his aversion to religion, Marx demonstrates the same undeniable passional tendencies which drive others to religion. Marx is so opposed to having faith that it is impossible to sway him in this matter. Forcing Marx to believe is not only impossible but counterintuitive, as this imposition of belief is no different from the imposition of disbelief which Marx is proposing. James states plainly, “our passional and volitional nature lay at the root of our conviction” (4). Just as it would be unnatural for Marx’s opinion to be forcefully changed, it would be against human nature to suppress the passional and
instinctual tendencies which drive the masses toward belief. The abolition of religion would be, in this respect, a suppression of human nature, and consequently a degradation of humanity as a whole.

James claims that the reason for Marx’s adamant stance against religion is simply because “as a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use” (10). Religion is completely unnecessary for Marx, so disbelief ensues. He does not see it as being advantageous in the revitalization of Germany, and because it does not work to achieve his desired ends, he seeks to abolish it. Just as the majority of scientists refuse to look at evidence for telepathy, James relates, Marx is afraid that belief in religion may debase his previous notions and claims (10). James continues his analogy, proposing that if a scientist were shown what he could do with telepathy, he would reevaluate his stance. Perhaps, James suggests, if someone were to show Marx what religion could do for him, then his attitude might change.

James states that it is man’s right to “adopt a believing attitude in religious matters”; to have faith and believe in God (1). Marx does not afford man the option of coming to his own conclusions concerning religion, but instead robs us of our “right to believe”, or more pointedly, the decision to believe. If religion is rendered as merely illusory, and then abolished, man is not given the choice of belief. By depriving us of this choice, Marx is sacrificing our autonomy and thereby creating impossible conditions for the existence of freedom.

Marx counters James’ rebuttal with a rejoinder of his own. Belief instills false consciousness in man, convincing him that religious happiness is his own happiness, that religious suffering is his own suffering. Belief does not demonstrate autonomy, but a state of etherisation. Religion, Marx blithely informs James, is “the opiate of the people” (54). With religion as an addictive and nearly irresistible distraction, people are unable to investigate the true sources of their discontent and dissatisfaction. Because they cannot locate the sources of their suffering, they are unable to seek remedy, and continue to suffer. Just as religion prevents man from experiencing real happiness, it anesthetizes him, prohibiting him from
knowing the source of his suffering. Clearly, Marx declares, it is belief which oppresses man. Religion is the true culprit in the robbery of freedom.

Marx goes on to conclude his critique: “The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the supreme being for man. It ends, therefore, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being” (60). To emancipate ourselves from the bondage of religion is to realize the importance of the self. We cannot be truly autonomous until we realize that there is no Transcendent, no omnipotent higher power to which we must surrender our sovereignty in an effort to gain salvation. We are not in danger of breaking moral law, as the only law which we must subject ourselves to is the one that we ourselves create. We are the ultimate beings, self consciousness, the ultimate consciousness.

The choice, “to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters” or not, is what James calls a live option, as it presents two plausible hypotheses. James is quick to inform Marx the logical reason behind his choice to believe in religion: “Weigh what your gains and losses would be if you should stake all you have on heads, or God’s existence: if you should win in such a case you gain eternal beatitude; if you lose, you lose nothing at all” (5). Essentially, James does not understand why one would not “adopt a believing attitude toward religion.” The believer is making a wager. If he is correct in his belief, and God exists, he will have won an infinite gain. If he is wrong, the loss will have been finite, and surely worth the possibility of the infinite good. Conversely, the disbeliever is a slave to his fear of being “duped”, a term which James clarifies for the German as mistakenly taking falsity as truth (18). The disbeliever does not gain anything in being correct; he merely avoids the shame of “dupery”. If he is incorrect, and God does exist, then he will have missed his opportunity for infinite gain. The disbeliever forfeits his freedom to his fear. The disbeliever is in a compromising situation, as neither outcome of his wager is profitable. Clearly, disbelief is an unreasonable premise.

To call religion an illusion, James asserts, is an irrational argument. Marx would dismiss religion altogether on account of an uncertain illusory nature. As an Empiricist, James explains, he may attain truth, but he will never know whether he has or not. It is not empirically evident that religion is an illusion, as there is no way to go about proving such a hypothesis. Religion should not be disregarded on account of unfounded doubt and skepticism. To illustrate this point to Marx, James turns to a second analogy:
“Just as a man who in the company of gentlemen made no advances, asked a warrant for every concession, and believed no one’s word without proof, would cut himself off by such churlishness form the social rewards a more trusting spirit would earn,—so here, one who should shut himself up in snarling logicality and try to make the gods exhort his recognition willy-nilly, or not get it at all, might cut himself off forever from his only opportunity of making the gods’ acquaintance” (28).

James goes on to expound on the existence of religion as self-verifying, undeserving of the churlish man’s scrutiny. James says that “faith in a fact can help create the fact” (25). Faith, therefore, creates religion. Faith is a self-evident truth, and therefore cannot be questioned. As both the focus and product of faith, religion too becomes unquestionable and its existence undeniable.

To dismiss religion as merely an illusion, James reiterates, is unreasonable, as it represents “a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth” (28). If religion is abolished, then there is no possibility for the attainment of religious truths. An example of such a truth is meaning in life. Many believers find meaning in religion. Marx provides no auxiliary source for meaning, but instead leaves a void. James interrogates Marx - Can one live a meaningful life without religion? Abolishing religion altogether runs the risk of abolishing meaning along with it.

The two begin to yawn; the sun has long since come up. They walk back to the dorm in silence, minds grappling with sluggish thoughts. Despite persistent persuasion on both their parts, neither Marx nor James swayed from his original conviction. Marx maintains that religion is an illusion, one which mesmerizes the people and instills a false consciousness, one which distracts from self consciousness. Freedom is gained when religion is abolished, as religion disallows autonomy and prevents us from achieving real happiness. The notions of a higher power must be displaced by the realization that man is the Supreme Being for man. James, similarly, continues to uphold his faith. According to him, man has the right to believe, and the denial of this right is the equivalent of the subtraction of freedom. Belief is the rational decision, as disbelief yields no possibility for gain. Instead, people are driven to disbelief by a fear of committing to an error. This fear enslaves the disbeliever, leading to a further loss of freedom. Without religion, James sees no source for meaning in life. If it is true that life is meaningful, then religion must not be an illusion but an irrefutable truth.
Shaving Pop

By Andrew Dutton
Class of 2006

Faith is, above all else, profoundly personal. It permeates the mundane and, occasionally, lends to our experience something like holiness. Mr. Dutton candidly explores this theme in his moving description of shaving his grandfather’s head in preparation for his death.

In the late autumn of my fifteenth year, I sit in the front pew of a Baptist church in Waterville, Maine looking up at my grandfather, who leans hard over an open bible. His black robe falls comfortably on his hunched torso and he is telling us about something like faith. My eyes wander to the old wooden floor, to the swirling leaves outside, to the back pages of the heavy hymnal. I do not know it yet, but when I can hardly remember the sound of his voice, I will regret not listening harder to his words; when he is gone, I will regret not going more often to hear him speak.

Almost three years later to the day and I stand outside my grandparents’ modest home, the place my mother was raised, with a shaving kit arrested between my chest and the elbow of my left arm. Leaves blow from small piles scattered across the lawn and the chill in the air crumples potted marigolds without reservation. Paint peels slowly from green shutters and the high branches of an oak tree scrape gently against second story windows. Inside, my grandmother, whom I call Mimi, curls her legs and sits under a dim lamp’s light finding words to fit into small grey and black boxes. To her right, my grandfather rocks in thoughtful rhythm to a newscaster’s voice coming from the radio in the kitchen. It is the first Sunday in thirty-five years that my grandfather has not delivered a sermon and he has called on me for my company and to shave his head in solemn preparation for his death.

Although cancer has been in his bones for months, my grandfather does not look to me like a cancerous man. In his rocker, he looks handsome and academic. He stands to greet me when I push through the heavy door. My grandfather is the kind of man who looks at you for a few seconds before he hugs you. And this is what he does. Since I was a child, I have learned to expect things from my grandfather. Among these, the inescapable feeling that he will always be bigger than me.
For reasons I cannot explain, my grandfather’s embrace is like a small room for hiding.

My grandfather is no longer permitted to drink coffee, but he offers me a cup. And before I can say no, my grandmother is up and buzzing in the kitchen. She moves like a dancer in the small room, lighting the stove, spinning to the sink to fill the teakettle and meeting me with a soft hand on my cheek as if to make sure I am actually standing there.

“You boys go sit,” she says. And so we do.

Because there are only two chairs in the sitting room, I squat near my grandfather’s rocker. Mimi, when she comes with coffee, directs me to her chair and then she sits on my grandfather’s lap. My grandparents are a very old couple; I learned from watching them what it means to be in love.

We make small talk to avoid the much larger attention of a Sunday when my grandfather is not standing behind a pulpit telling stories to people who love him. I have rarely been to hear my grandfather preach since my parents’ divorce, a time that marked my freedom from formerly requisite things like church, but brought with it new obligations like family counseling. My grandmother, a retired teacher, asks me about school. I tell her what she likes to hear. Sacrifice has always been important to my grandfather, and a common theme in his sermons.

Near the stairs that lead to the bathroom, my grandfather’s wool coat hangs in grave resignation on a wooden spike. Below, on the tan rug, lay two work boots and a fly-fishing rod. Since my grandfather’s recent retirement from thirty-five years of Baptist ministry, he has retired other things as well. Not all things, but some. Fortunately, my grandfather built the stairs in his home steep. I don’t imagine that he had in mind climbing them with cancer in his knees, but perhaps he was moved to this design by something he cannot explain; in his seventy-third year, my grandfather crawls slowly to the second floor bathroom.

There is already a small stool in front of the mirror, placed there by my grandmother, who was called from sleep at dawn with that task in mind. My grandfather makes his way to the seat with temporary support from the brass doorknob, the porcelain sink, and my shoulder. He finds his way to the front of the stool and moves his weight slowly back. My grandfather is the kind of man who lifts his pants off his knees before he crashes down. And this is what he does.

My grandfather is not as limber as he once was and he needs help removing his shirt. In the white bathroom, he lifts his arms like he has been helped before and I pull the shirt over his head. He works his grey hair as if to say goodbye. My grandfather wants to be consciously bald; he wants to beat the
chemotherapy, which will seep into him through tubes and thin his hair. With a respectful nod, my pale and bare-chested grandfather asks me to begin.

As I stand poised behind this old man, I am unable to recall how I was elected to perform this duty. Perhaps, like naming one’s grandparents, the task goes by design to the eldest grandchild. My grandfather will tell me before he dies that, although he had always imagined himself as a Grandpa, Pop has grown on him and suited him well.

I start by combing through the limp nest covering Pop’s scalp. While a shining bald spot gleams in the low light in the bathroom, the hair around that spot is thick. I make his hair nice before I slice it off. My grandfather is looking into his weathered hound-dog reflection and I cannot bring myself to interrupt—I make the first cuts on faith, with scissors so sharp they sound like an axe running through a thick block, because I cannot bring my self to say, “Are you certain you want to die bald?”

As if awakened from a deep meditation, my grandfather shifts on his stool when I brush white and grey strands from his shoulder. I have cut all the hair on the right side and am working my way to my grandfather’s left when he asks me if I remember waiting for the bus with him.

“I remember,” I say.

Because my parents were hard workers and began earning before the bus came by our home and because I was too young to stay alone, my grandfather picked me up every morning in a red Dodge truck and drove me to his church where he sat with me and waited for the bus to come. He showed up every morning before school and I began to expect his arrival and the powdered donuts he revealed from his coat pocket after I climbed into the cab.

“Tell me,” he whispers, looking hard into his slate reflection. And so I do.

I tell my grandfather that I remember the light jingle of keys when he opened the church in the early morning and the feeling of standing alone in complete darkness in the middle of the sanctuary while he hobbled across the great room to turn the switch that warms the lights. I tell him that even now when I eat powdered donuts, I think of sitting low on a curb and smiling, wearing a small backpack and the clothes my mother had set out. I tell my grandfather that I

My grandfather wants to be consciously bald; he wants to beat the chemotherapy, which will seep into him through tubes and thin his hair.
often wonder if I knew at the time that I would miss sitting there, comparing shoe sizes and rocking in childish giddiness. And then I ask him if we can know the things we will miss before we actually miss them. “Like people,” I say.

My inquiry is met with a somber, academic nod, as if to say, “It’s an interesting question, but we will not reveal the answer yet. Not quite yet.” My grandfather is a man of patience.

I have worked my grandfather’s hair as short as I can with the scissors. I move around him to the small towel closet near the door and pull out a cloth that I soak and warm in the sink and drape over his head. When I peel it off, my grandfather looks, for the first time, like a very old man. He has moved his eyes from his reflection to mine. I shake up a bottle of shaving cream and lather it on his head around the sides, where the hair was thickest. “Even on the top,” he says. And so I put some on the top.

The first swath I cut is a long pull across the top—a reverse Mohawk. It looks like the track of a snowmobile in fresh snow. I don’t bring myself to remind my grandfather of ice-fishing adventures in northern Maine, where I held his back when I was young and raced to tripped orange flags, and later chased fish under ice on my own accord, trusting the support of an untested floor. I don’t tell him that I want to bundle and load him onto the back of a snowmobile and carry him to the middle of a lake at night and sit there with him, allowing my grandfather to feel what I felt standing alone in his giant church and listening hard to his footsteps and the bell-tone jingle of keys and coins in his pockets.

When I think we are done, I use the towel to wipe away small, lingering patches of shaving cream. “We’re not done yet,” he says, pointing to the sink. And then I make the faucet run lukewarm.

“Lean down,” I say. And he does.

Pop’s head hangs in my hands with the weight of a heavy bible. I move warm water on him with baptismal reverence, reciprocating the motions my proud grandfather performed on me in my infancy, while I squirmed in my mother’s arms in front of the church. When my grandfather looks up at me with water moving easily down his scalp and over his brow, I am moved to hold him by something I cannot explain.

“Thank you,” he says, and I force a smile.

“It looks funny,” I say, and move my fingers over his rubbery forehead.

“Thank you,” he says, “I’m ready.” And I know what he means.

Outside, standing in yellowed grass among spinning brown and orange leaves and looking in at my grandmother, who is smiling and hugging my grandfather and telling him he’s still pretty handsome for an old man, I am again a child with powdered donut on my face. I gesture a somber wave to
my grandfather, who has made his way to the window, and I expect him to know my thoughts and somehow comfort me from there; I expect my old grandfather to give me a heavy nod I will not easily forget. And this is what he does.
The Divine Command Theory

By Lily Bower
Class of 2007

For monotheists, absolute and infallible rules delineating both right and wrong exist within debates transcending disciplines as diverse as national politics and interpersonal relationships. Ms. Bower takes a close look at the origins of the Divine Command Theory, applying reason to examine whether this version of ‘morality’ is merely the mandate of God or if He too is bound by a prescription of ‘moral goodness’ beyond his own decree. This assessment prompts the question: Can actions contrary to common moral standards be legitimized by a mandate from God? If so, is this an inherent contradiction that unmasks the arbitrary nature of God’s commands or is there a subtle yet rational explanation beneath the surface?

In day to day life, each human beings constantly expresses their own personal relationship with the notion of morality. We regularly act out our definitions of this concept through interaction with the world around us. For many, morality is intricately tied to fear; the need to act in a moral manner, to fulfill the role of “a good person”, often springs from fear of the consequences that would occur otherwise. This dynamic implicitly assumes that there is a definitive and objective set of moral laws and implies the existence of a higher power. Although few can agree that an infallible and absolute prescription of moral behavior exists, most people do live their lives according to feelings of moral obligation and an understanding of what is right and wrong. These beliefs as to what is considered moral spring from a variety of environmental sources. For many, the most actively informative of these influences, is the religion one subscribes to. The validation that results from upholding certain moral laws and beliefs finds an important basis in religious dogma. However, religion cannot be viewed as an influential system of moral reference for those who do not already completely accept a specific faith and God in general. As Quinn points out in his essay God and Morality, the moral codes that go along with the major monotheistic religions are based on what God has commanded as right and wrong. From this it follows that God is, for many monotheists, the arbiter who delineates what is morally right, obligatory, and prohibited in their lives. Quinn examines Christianity in particular and points out the presence of absolute moral laws which have their basis in the Ten Commandments and in other direct
While it is understandable that the direct link Quinn draws between God and morality would be appealing to many monotheists, I do not feel that his central argument can be defended effectively against key objections. In arguments concerning God, however, it is impossible to truly refute a theory, as no definitive evidence on God herself can be attained. Monotheistic belief systems are predicated on God’s existence, but cannot substantiate it. Because God is seen as completely outside of our understanding, there is no way to objectively confirm or deny a theory that has it’s foundation in this concept. Despite this, it is possible to show whether a theory is sound or not, and I believe that the Divine Command Theory is not valid in the face of the objections raised. It does not achieve what Quinn intended, as it inevitably leads to the conclusion that morality is arbitrary in negative ways. (Handout # 21)

Quinn’s basic argument is that all Christians that honestly believe in their faith and in God should accept the Divine Command Theory. This theory states that all moral laws spring from God; it is God who decides what is right, obligatory and prohibited. The theory can be expressed by saying that actions are right, wrong or obligatory if and only if God commands that they be so, and that they have this assigned identity as a direct impact of God’s command. This is to say, that the factor that defines an action’s moral character is nothing more than God’s command. (Quinn 667)

This seems a reasonable argument for Christians because the wishes and proclamations of God are central to how believers conduct themselves. Quinn sites four “legs” which contain evidence supporting the argument that Christians should accept the Divine Command Theory. Each of these legs has its basis not in a priori principles, but in religious dogma and belief. It is the third of these “legs” that is the most pertinent to the objections raised. (Quinn 665)

The fact that Quinn’s argument is not universally appealing and that is it quite narrow does not necessarily undermine his argument, as it is aimed only at monotheists and Christians in particular. The focused nature of the argument and its inability to extend itself may, however, suggest a lack of fundamental strength. This intuition is not a valid reason to discredit the argument, although it can help inform the strength of objections. (Quinn 665)

The first leg of Quinn’s argument focuses on God’s commandment to love one’s neighbor. This commandment makes it obligatory for Christians to love all people. Quinn notes that because this commandment seems so difficult and might not be the natural inclination of most, it has to be commanded. Love of mankind as a whole is central to Christianity. It is also the subject of a
command, making it a moral duty. The fact that such a central value is commanded by God as obligatory seems to support the idea that, for Christians, the Divine Command Theory makes sense. God is in effect spelling out for Christians what they should do and what is correct. It is God’s command that makes neighborly love obligatory. (Quinn 668)

The second of Quinn’s legs focuses on religious practice and the emphasis it places on conforming one’s own will to that of God. This concern with, and desire to comply with the will of God through one’s actions, reflects the control God exerts over what is considered moral. There is an innate Christian belief that what God wants is necessarily right. The need to act in accordance with God’s desires in moral situations reflects God’s ability to determine what is right and wrong. Christians have a certainty that by tailoring their actions to God’s will, they will be acting morally. This certainty clearly suggests the will of God is morality itself, and that God’s commands therefore, define morality. While this point lends itself well to Quinn’s argument, it is conceivable that God may only be passing moral laws on to individuals to violate accepted moral laws. Within the context of the Christian religion, this is one of the strongest of Quinn’s legs because it appears in these accounts that the moral status of actions is dependent on God’s commands, not logic or accepted practice. Quinn sites three different examples from the Hebrew Bible to support this point. The first deals with God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Under any other circumstances, Abraham’s arrangement to kill his innocent son would be completely immoral and unforgivable. However, because it is commanded by God, it seems that it would be immoral of Abraham not to kill his son. If God is, as Abraham strongly believes, all good and all knowing, then the sacrifice of Isaac is a morally obligatory action to

Christians have a certainty that by tailoring their actions to God’s will, they will be acting morally.
take. This seems to be supported by basic intuition also. For Christians and non Christians alike, it seems that if God gives you a direct and undeniable command, that the right thing to do would be to obey it, even if it goes against common sense morality. Some theists claim that God’s infallibility precludes the possibility that he would ever supercede previous commands and in this way, it would become a moot point. (Feldman) However, the hypothetical situation of direct divine commands still has weight. Also, because God is understood to be completely outside our comprehension, it seems possible that one’s common sense would not necessarily be able to reconcile a divine direction. This is to say that God’s commands may go against our ideas of morality without being immoral. (Quinn 670)

The other two cited examples follow the same format. In one, God commands the Israelites to steal from and plunder the Egyptians. Although theft, like murder, is clearly outlawed in the Decalogue, it seems to be made not only right, but obligatory by God’s command. The final account, where Hosea is commanded to take an adulteress as his wife, is normally prohibited as fornication or adultery. In all of the cases, the normally immoral action becomes moral and is carried out (or attempted) because of God’s command. Quinn suggests that the actions God orders are permissible because, as a result of nothing but a divine command, they become “due”. Anything that God commands or sanctions is due because it is God who ultimately controls the universe. Therefore, the immoralities of the patriarchs are not truly wrong, because they were due. (Quinn 670)

Although these cases are taken as literal accounts, hypothetical interpretations would make a similar impact. We can imagine that an unmistakable command from God would make the needed difference to transform an immoral action into a moral one. Also, these descriptions make it clear that the single factor that changes the nature of the perceived sins, are divine commands; nothing intrinsic about the actions is altered, merely God’s stance and will. This makes precisely the point needed to lend validity to the Divine Command Theory: that it is God’s will, and that alone, that decides morality. (Quinn 670)

The last of Quinn’s legs concerns the divine sovereignty of God. God, in monotheistic belief systems, specifically Christianity, is accepted to be wholly independent of all cause or explanation. Instead, God is the cause and the explanation for the entire universe; he is the creator of everything, including himself. By this view, we can trace all thoughts, concepts, and laws back to God, directly or indirectly. It may be conceded that God relinquishes control of minor events through the capacity he grants for free will, but the sum total of all
these actions will contribute to and eventually lead to some predestined end. Ultimately, the purpose of creation is of God’s design and is completely under his control. If Christians accept this view, then it follows that they should accept that God created moral laws, as they are a part of the universe. They could not have existed before God and therefore, God did not use them as a guide for the creation of moral laws. This leaves only the other conception of moral laws; that they are moral because God commands them, not because of independent qualities. (Quinn 671)

Each of these “legs” contains concepts that may be objected to in order to undermine the argument for the Divine Command Theory. Just as none of the legs alone can support the Divine Command Theory entirely, none of these specific rejections can refute it. The most effective objection to the theory targets not individual points, but the central failure of the overall argument. The Euthyphro Dilemma takes issue with why commands of God are moral: are they moral because God commands them, or does God command them because they are moral? Each of these options lead to conclusions that a divine command theorist would reject. If God’s commands make actions moral, as Quinn suggests in his essay, then God could make anything moral. There is no innate goodness in any action outside of God’s will; therefore, God can make even the most atrocious action moral. This view would lead to a view of morality that is completely arbitrary. The other view is equally bleak for the Divine Command Theory. If God defines things as moral because they are right, this implies some preexisting condition. (Quinn 675) In this way, it seems that God selected actions that were right and then issued commands that they were moral. This view is inconsistent with the point of divine sovereignty and with the Divine Command Theory itself. If God is the creator of all things and is completely independent, then it is he that creates “right” actions. If some standard of morality exists before and above God’s commands, then the Divine Command Theory is false. This option is obviously rejected by Quinn and other Divine Command Theorists. This leaves the first option, that whatever God commands is right independent of any other factors. (Feldman, Class Discussion)

If God’s commands follow no map of morality, then God could command that any action be obligatory. It is just a matter of luck that God commanded what he did. Quinn must concede this point as it is basically the very thing he is aiming to prove. Quinn does make it clear however, that while the specific action may seem arbitrary, the end it serves is not. He does not address this point, because he does not accept that the capacity for morality to be arbitrary discredits his theory. He and Divine Command Theorists respond
by saying that God’s commands cannot be arbitrary because God is constrained by his goodness. He would not then, command that murder be obligatory, unless it served some greater end. This intuitively seems to make sense; God who is all good would implement no completely empty moral laws. The counter argument described may still be subject to the idea that there is an external conception of right and wrong, one that corresponds with God’s goodness. Quinn does not merely claim that God is good, he asserts that God is goodness itself and is inseparable from this goodness. In this way, he eliminates the problem of independent morality. The potential for morality to be arbitrary is not addressed, however. (Quinn 675)

By Quinn’s view, God is goodness itself and He relies on no external moral notions. This point may well be valid; it seems plausible that goodness as Quinn describes it is not necessarily common sense morality, but the best course. Good actions may be the ones that bring about the best end. Despite such arguments, divine commands still appear arbitrary. If God is omnipotent, he could use any command or line of obligation to suit his end. Because He controls everything, He could achieve what He desires in literally any fashion. There are no limits on what God can do, so any law of morality he commands can bring about any end he chooses. The religious fact that God is omnipotent only contributes to the problem of arbitrary commands; God can command anything to bring about whatever he desires because the only thing that He is constrained by is the goodness He Himself defines. (Quinn, Class Discussion)

Another possible flaw in the Divine Command Theory is similar to the one just mentioned. The fact that God defines goodness, leads to the idea that God’s commands do not always have to mirror our ideas of morality; they could just as easily not. In effect, Quinn could have said that moral laws never need to agree with accepted morality; if God’s commands are the only significant factor, there are literally no constraints to what may be moral. A Divine Command Theorist might object to this assertion that the correspondence of divine commands with accepted morality is just a matter of luck. They could suggest that the accepted concepts of morality are the results of revelations...
given to the world God by God. If we accept that common sense morality is the result of laws revealed by God, then popular morality is derived from God’s commands and His goodness. In this way, it is much more than luck that leads to correspondence between God’s morality and what most people accept. Still, the common sense morality God chooses to purvey in this scenario is constrained by nothing and seems wholly arbitrary. (Quinn 676)

God can also change a command in a specific instance if He so chooses. Quinn makes the point that to be certain of a divine command, a series of indisputable events would have to take place. Indeed, something comparable to a miracle would be needed to be sure that God was issuing a direct command. This would involve some certain sign, witnessed by a variety of people, to rule out the possibility of hallucination. Obviously, this does not (to my knowledge) happen in modern times and many (including Christians) dispute that divine commands ever took place in such a tangible manner. The point Quinn is making here is that almost all of God’s commands correspond with accepted morality; instances of overturning one law and implementing another are not important factors. Because God’s commands really don’t differ in significant ways from common sense morality, the idea of the Divine Command Theory becomes easier to accept. The point is that they have the potential to change, however, in which case God’s commands would have to be followed instead of accepted morality. Simply because God’s commands are in accordance with common sense morality, doesn’t mean they must be. If God so chose, he could change his divine commands so that they were at odds with accepted morality. Or, if accepted morality is derived from divine commands, he could have chosen different commands, resulting in a different common sense morality. This, again, is arbitrary. Also, if a divine command is so certain that it is not disputed, there is no test of faith involved. It seems that one of the main reasons God would to issue commands against accepted morality would be to test the faith of a believer, as He did with Abraham. (Quinn 677)

The fact that for the majority of the time God’s commands accord with accepted morality and that it would take a huge amount to override accepted morality, does nothing to make the Divine Command Theory less arbitrary. Again, God may choose any line of morality he wishes, being constrained only by the goodness He Himself shapes. It appears that because of God’s omnipotence he may just as easily have changed the nature of goodness or chosen different moral laws to suit his purpose. Because he is constrained by nothing external, at some point in the creation of morality, an arbitrary method must have been used. (Quinn 677)

Any discussion of God and his
role in our lives becomes complicated as a result of the interweaving of reason, faith, and dogma. Each element lends a specific lens to understanding morality and contributes to defining this notion in the broad sense. The uncertainties raised in their common inquiry undermine the validity of Divine Command. This theory cannot help but admit the inherently arbitrary nature of God's commands which exist in this argument, if not in reality as well.
Selling God

By Katie Wyly
Class of 2006

In her paper, Ms. Wyly examines the ramifications of the secularizing effects modernization has had on Christianity. She uses Weber’s Protestant Ethic to analyze the increasing commercialization of modern salvation. Where once the capitalist ethic was filtered through a religious lens, now religion finds itself inextricably informed by modern capitalism. Ultimately Ms. Wyly casts a critical eye on the current phenomena of “Mega-churches,” and questions the validity of such an arguably prepackaged faith.

“Man is dominated by the making of money by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. (p. 53).” This is a perfect example of Max Weber’s essence of Modern Capitalism. The Protestant ideals of acquiring wealth for a deeper spiritual meaning have been replaced by a vacuous materialism which permeates our modern society. It would seem that the religious aspect of our ascetically driven culture has conveniently dropped out, leaving us with a flawed economic and social system that promotes a “dog-eat-dog” mentality while unapologetically dousing the brotherly love ethic with an ethnocentric attitude. What then happens when we abandon our religious constraints and allow capitalism to run free? It would seem that today’s Western society is the unfortunate answer to this question. A shining example of this unchecked market is the dawning of the “Mega-Church,” multiplex centers created to market religion as an unobtrusive institution designed for accessibility and aloofness. Is this Westernized Wal-Mart of religion merely another facet of the rampant capitalism our country is facing, a way for people to make God lucrative, or is this a sincere effort to restore religion to our society? In the age of televangelism and mass-produced faith, it would seem that the most pertinent question is, ‘are we selling God?’

The entrepreneurs associated with the development of rational capitalism combine the impulse to accumulation with a positively frugal life-style. Weber finds the answer in the ‘this-worldly asceticism’ of Puritanism, as focused through the concept of ‘the calling.’ (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, p. 4).
The dichotomy Weber draws between Asceticism and Mysticism is as clear as East and West. While Mystics look to their “inner illumination” for divinity, thereby denying the world and society, Ascetics engage in “world-rejection,” an interesting parallel between living and working within society while simultaneously denying all pleasures therein. The ascetic Protestant, or Puritan, fulfills their purpose by finding a vocation and becoming successful to serve deeper spiritual meanings, or for “pursuing profit for its own sake.” Weber describes this as a kind of ethos which permeated society and religion. This philosophy was introduced during the Reformation and is rooted in Luther’s principle of vocation, or ‘calling,’ and is augmented by the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. By embracing the idea that God has a static, chosen group which will someday rejoice in Heaven, there was a rampant desire for tangible proof of favoritism. Thus, the notion that economic success was God’s manifestation of preference, was adopted with fervor, enabling individuals to prove to themselves that they are blessed with divine salvation. “… Asceticism looked upon the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself as highly reprehensible; but the attainment of it as a fruit of labor in a calling was a sign of God’s blessing (p. 172).” When tempering this “work ethic” with the devotion Protestants felt towards their vocation it creates a convincing foundation for modern capitalism. The mixture of inevitable worldliness and ascetic discipline created an atmosphere in which accumulated wealth was

It is clear that though capitalization was nearly inevitable in most social spheres, the rampant industrial economy America faced early on was a specifically potent form brought about by forces within our culture.

The emphasis on the ascetic importance of a fixed calling provided an ethical justification of the modern specialized division of labor. In a similar way the providential interpretation of profit-making justified the activities of the business man (p. 163).

Weber asserts that after all else is carried away, the ethic remains. Stripped of its initial spiritual claim it merely governs the world in which these newly hollow movements are executed. Ideas that were once used to serve group interests are now used to shape the system in which we operate mechanically, attaching only the sentiment of avarice to acquisition. The image of Weber’s ‘iron cage’ is never more clear than when examining this society laden with valueless incentives and imposed morality.

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order (p. 181).
Despite our inclinations, the inherent value instilled by society is that of “time is money,” and money is life. What began as a light burden “to be thrown aside at any moment” now has us trapped in the “iron cage” of consumerism. But how far will this new ethic go? Will a sense of duty propel us to begin selling the very thing Weber considers dead: our beliefs?

Modernization and globalization have brought about a new trend in mass production and homogeneity. It seems that traditional and indigenous cultures are quickly being abandoned in search for the “bigger and better” products our society has to offer: McDonalds, Wal-Mart, and Mega-Churches, such as the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Shiny and new, these massive shrines to a diluted faith and the power of marketing, are offering comfort and salvation to nearly 9,000 Christians three times a weekend.

Cleverly they’ve taken away all those trappings that seem to scare people off conventional religion – the vestments, the dreary hymns such by an out of tune choir, all the standing or kneeling, the long silences, the incomprehensible language…there’s not much here that actually says “church” – just one cross on the wall (p.2).

Teleprompters make it easy to follow along, no prayer books or hymnals involved. The big screens project images of the always charismatic and unobtrusive preacher pacing back in forth as though he is reenacting some previously choreographed dance. Raking in nearly $500,000 in donations every week this institution easily funds its marketing endeavors, namely, youth basketball, private schools, state of the art gymnasiums, and some even sport a Jonah and the Whale theme park.

Many thousand or more spend a good chunk of their week in the smart new gymnasium, food court, day-care centre, classrooms…You see this is not just a church, it is the shopping mall of religion - a new medieval city, clustered round the sanctuary (Leyne, p. 2).

It seems that Weber’s assertions regarding the lack of religiosity in the social order actually stimulate the economy in a new way. It would appear that we
have come full circle from a time when God was the incentive and origin of the acquisition of wealth, to an era where God is the object being bought and sold. “The church is buying or putting in bids for every scrap of land around. They even have the equivalent of a chief executive. He moved here from the company that owns Kentucky Fried Chicken. Now he is marketing God, not chicken wings (Leyne, p. 5).”

Not only has the promotion of religion turned into a lucrative profession for these churches, but the constituency finds ample financial benefits in attending as well: “Southeast Christian is the place to be seen in Louisville, it’s the place to meet the leading politicians, to make business contacts. ‘It’s the country club of religion’ (Leyne, p.4).” Was this not the exact reason Jesus stormed the Temple in the Bible? This plan, though on the rise, to many seems fundamentally flawed in its philosophy of making a spectacle of God. Though it may seem reprehensible to market religion as a product, is it not also serving a social function by creating communities in a time when they are needed most? When asked why they attended the most common replies were “safety” and “security.” In a time of international turmoil it seems that people are eager to seek these commodities wherever they may find it, and massive communities found at these compounds are perfectly suited for this goal. So which is the correct way to characterize these new hubs of faith?

Though they are certainly guilty of adulterating the Christian faith by commercializing the message and mass-producing salvation, are they not also making a religious life and community accessible to people of all walks of life? Either way I believe Weber would certainly find an echo of the ascetic in these phenomena, though with a slightly more modern capitalistic edge.

When asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order...victorious capitalism, since it resets on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer...the idea of duty in one’s calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs (The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism, p. 8).

Weber’s idea of a modern capitalism which shirks meaning and aims for indulgence is not far from what we have in today’s society. Religious and moral vices are more prevalent than ever with little to check them but a new-fangled religiosity that is bought and sold at sterilized centers for communion. We have successfully taken God out of our incentives and motivations and replaced him with a materialistic consumerism which permeates every aspect of society, especially our religious experiences (Mega-Churches). It seems that the ascetic principle, deeply rooted in our culture, now perpetuates an imperative for employ-
ment but demands no more than medi-
ocrity from its participants. It appears that our society is caught in a gilded cage of infotainment, complacency and a stifling notion of “time is money.”

I've walked by your house
barely looking from the corner of my eye.
By not turning my head to see fully
I don't show I'm interested.
I haven't seen you.
But I have that sinking feeling
that you've been watching me.

I resist you.
My ignorance forces me to.
I know you know me,
but to me you can't exist.
I don't want to admit
I'll just be another
for you to group in your masses.
I don't want to acknowledge
that you've had all of them before me.

Someday I'll give in, though.
I'll walk through your doors.
Then I'll be naked to my very soul before you,
naïve, afraid and perhaps ashamed.
Finally ready for everything
I fought against so long,
I'll let you hold me in your arms.

Then I'll lie there in your grace,
and finally take you in.
Faith is, almost by definition, an individual enterprise. Indeed, we are perhaps nowhere more alone that when we seek to come to terms with our own faith and nature. Mr. Make demonstrates this brilliantly in his examination of the necessity of subjectivity in interpreting James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake. Essentially, Joyce has created his own language wrapped in his own voice, and encapsulated it into entity that is neither rational nor linear. The intangibility of the book is perhaps the most interesting aspect; created by such a dichotomous process, with scientific precision and unbridled artistic chaos, to yield a work that is utterly timeless and infinite in scope. Making poignant assertions as to the nature of truth, God, and the divine spark that lies within us all, Mr. Make demonstrates the necessity of defining truth on your own, whether it be by faith or reason.

By Jeremy Make
Class of 2005

Finnegans Wake is incoherent. But of sure I am that as infuriating to understupifind as Joyce’s jummydees may sail, our assempt is not fubile.

Rather, Finnegans Wake can be a fascinating read if only we can learn to decipher the complexities and nuances over which James Joyce toiled. The following essay outlines a method of interpreting Joyce’s work, especially those fighting for an understanding of Finnegans Wake. And, as we will discover, students of any age will benefit from our workshop. We will move slowly so make sure to ask questions along the way if ever you feel lost.

The first question we must ask is, “What is Finnegans Wake?” Like any other piece of written material, Finnegans Wake is a compilation of symbols — commas, periods, numbers, letters, diagrams, music notes, dashes, circles, and the like. But the novel is not made up of words as we may know them. Rather, James Joyce has created an entirely new language built out of lines and dots and space and anything else ink can do to paper (or, in some cases, what ink is purposefully forbidden from doing). At the most basic level, Finnegans Wake can be considered a piece of artwork — Joyce’s original manuscript is filled with illegible scribblings made by a man whose eyesight was on the verge of failure. It is a mess we would expect from a drunk Picasso, not an esteemed writer and linguist. A painter may see the abstract work of a genius, but she too understands the difficulty in fully comprehending this new form. See for yourself. The image below is a copy of one page of Joyce’s manuscript. Can you make sense of any of the lines?
One website thinks that halfway down the page, it reads “Trema dianesse/low Irish (W)/high Irish (E)/J suis un sot Breton/12’ haut/Shaun siglum) accordian/writing he was {x}/Issy siglum] sits on coif to iron it,” where {x} is a line Joyce has crossed out (http://www.mailbag.com/users/bjork/b1494.htm). But even the transcriber claims his “original transcription … has been changed” as a result of comments posted by contributors. Joyce makes it difficult for us to trust others so we must rely upon ourselves as the primary readers. Scholars have devoted their entire lives to transcribing Joyce’s original manuscripts, but we must do our own transcribing. The first level of interpretation can be accomplished only by seeing the words as they were written on the page. But we must not get caught up in deciphering their meanings just yet. Instead, our goal is simply to observe, even if we cannot make out what the words are. The drawings on the page are significant because they provide us with a look into what Joyce’s brain could do; but, at the first level, they are simply marks of ink on the page. Much like the deaf Beethoven who lost what we would consider his most important sense, James Joyce barely had the eyesight to make those marks, so we must recognize that the artist’s penmanship is momentous in itself. This first level is accessible to children and adults alike, and it only requires our sense of sight. It is eye candy for the masses, nothing more.

For some people, looking at the manuscripts of *Finnegans Wake* as paintings is enough to satisfy one important sense. But the second level of interpretation requires more than sight. It requires thought. The second level is the reader’s idea of what the markings on the page mean. As active learners, our goal is often to interpret those markings for ourselves. So, without much help other than the knowledge of our own experiences and perhaps a mentor or teacher to broaden those experiences, we dive, headfirst into a wreck, as alone as Adrienne Rich. We look at the words on the page and we ask, “What are they? What do they mean?” And eventually, we arrive at answers to our questions, mostly unsure about how close our judgments are to finding the truth (where that truth is and how we find it is a question we will continue to explore later in this essay).

Well, Him a being so on the flounder of his bulk like an over-grown babeling, let wee peep, see, at Hom, well, see peegee ought be ought, platterplate.

-Joyce
Open to a page, any page. Say page six in the Penguin Books edition. I find the sentence, “Well, Him a being so on the flounder of his bulk like an overgrown babeling, let wee peep, see, at Hom, well, see peegee ought he ought, platterplate.” Knowing that the early pages of the book discuss a fall – from grace, on your bottom, whatever – I take what I want from the sentence. To me, there is an idea of a deity or a hero falling like the Tower of Babel fell, crumbling on the ground. But I have not made any attempt to understand the true meaning behind the line. My interpretation comes strictly from my experience with reading pieces of the King James Bible. Some part of what I read struck a religious chord, and my memory went directly to a Religious Studies course with Professor Brooks when he taught me the story of man’s delusions of deific grandeur. But, for another reader, his interpretation will surely be something different. The words we read may remind us of similar allusions to the Tower of Babel, but what, specifically, we remember about the tower and how we feel about the story is our own. Simply put, reading is a subjective activity and interpretation will always be complicated by a personal identification with, or reaction to, the work. As long as we, as readers, as human beings, have our own experiences (that is, as long as we have lived a life), we are unable to see the full scope of the work we are reading. We can only assume, and what we assume is uniquely ours. We cannot avoid remembering our own struggles and achievements; we cannot ignore comparisons between our own lives and the characters’; we either identify with the characters on the page or we don’t. Take Roland McHugh’s description of reading Joyce:

In the opening chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen opens and closes the flaps of his ears, thinking about the sound of a train in a tunnel. I knew that association at once from experience. ... Initial contact with *Ulysses* was an extremely personal sensation. ... My early impressions were forms of recognition: I identified with the voice of the interior monologue. ... The things which seemed important to Joyce seemed important to me, and I found the moods and situations charged with a penetrating, timeless sanctity (McHugh, pg. 24).

For McHugh, the point of reading seems to be to find pieces with which he can identify. The more to which he can relate, the more intimate his relationship with the text. But suppose another reader cannot relate at all to Stephen, Bloom, or H.C.E. Is there a point in continuing to read? McHugh drives us to a fundamental goal for the reader of *Finnegans Wake*: abandon every experience, ye that enter; disregard all knowledge of your own life and your own psyche. In essence, start at the beginning without anything, without feeling, without a brain. But how on earth can we suspend feeling if we need to associate with A.L.P.’s love for H.C.E. at the end of the novel? And how can we abandon thought if the work requires
such a comprehensive knowledge of literary and geographic allusions (how am I supposed to know that the line “Ho hang! Hang ho!” is a reference to a Chinese river that constantly overflows if I’m meant to forget where China lies on a map?)? After all, Joyce, like T.S. Eliot, uses a tremendous number of allusions to other languages, works, places, and people. I cannot figure out how to give up the knowledge of other writing, other places, and other people because I believe that knowledge is still a necessity in reading Joyce. At the most basic level, we can at least offer a solution to translating the wide range of foreign languages.

Perhaps the easiest way of getting around the language obstacle is to throw out all notions of what language should be. Granted, Joyce uses English as a means for telling his story, but even the traditional notions of English are being broken down, augmented, rebuilt, so shouldn’t we be able to start over without the knowledge of how language and communication functions? If Joyce “breaks down the barriers between languages by producing new combinations of sounds with multivalent international references in a universal language based on English,” then we should have a shot at understanding most of the more than 40 languages he uses, right (Wales, pg. 136)? Wrong. We are still in the dark about this new language he is creating; these new, still foreign “sounds.” If we begin in childhood to hear and study these new sounds, perhaps one day we can better understand the writing and maybe we can work toward learning the other allusions to geography and literature we don’t already know. But, right now, we are still seeing the words on the page subjectively, like a child with tunnel vision. Certainly we are getting better with each reading because, at the very least, we are experiencing new emotions and new thoughts, so we have a wider palette from which to choose an interpretation. But we must move beyond our own interpretation as readers. We must look towards Joyce’s interpretation — remaining at the second level of interpretation is an egotistical act of laziness.

The third level of interpretation, in fact, is discovering Joyce’s intent. Our immediate goal is to find out exactly what the genius was trying to do. Obviously, this is the most difficult goal proposed in the paper thus far, but it
should be the most valuable if we can somehow begin to comprehend the man and his ideas. And it’s easier than we might think. What Joyce does is not unique. He is an incomparable adapter, mind you, a critical translator who has the ability to interweave both commentary and fact, criticism and truth. According to McHugh, “to fuse words [as Joyce does] rather than to hyphenate them is to engender new tangible entities” (McHugh, pg. 26). Certainly, Joyce is a sort of mad scientist, experimenting with words, thoughts, and structure, but this doesn’t make the work any more comprehensible; it makes it more difficult. Take the story of the ant and the grasshopper, for example. Most people are familiar with Jean de la Fontaine’s classic parable. But Joyce adds a whole new dimension with his fused words. One noticeable addition to the child’s fable is the dissemination of sexual acts. Examples of this are as follows:

-“to commence insects with him, there mouthparts to his orefice and his gambills” crudely refers to incest and oral sex, pg. 414.
-“with unshrinkables farfalling from his unthinkable,” alludes to Shaun’s underwear and his testicles, pg. 417.
-“Tingsomingenting, groped up” allows for a molestation of the Scandanavian “sweet little something,” pg. 414.

But the crudeness is only one of what might be tens of thousands of additions to the story. And that is the problem. Joyce offers us a seemingly infinite number of options and, going back to the second-level-analysis, leaves it up to us to decide which interpretation we will accept for the day’s reading. One day we might be feeling especially sexual and take the story as infused with sexuality. Another day, we might be feeling stepped on, ineffectual, so we will latch on to the humiliation and depression of phrases like, “He would of curse melissiously, by his fore feelhers, flexors, contractors, depressors and extensors, lamely, harry me, marry me, bury me, bind me, till she was puce for shame” (pg. 414). We might perceive this sentence as a sort of rape of pride, being forced upon by unkind persons who bind us and shame our reputation. It depends on our feelings for the day, not on the feelings of our guide, James Joyce. So, is Joyce leaving the interpretation to us or did he have his own expectations for the text? Of course he had expectations; he wrote the book. Let us examine how he wrote the beast, and maybe, in the process, we will discover why he wrote it.

Just as Joyce toyed with conventional notions of writing, so too did Richard Wagner experiment with composing. Wagner used chromatic intervals instead of scalar intervals; he abandoned traditional methods of composing and transcended the pre-conceived laws of music theory. With this new tactic,
Wagner was able to fill in the gaps between scalar intervals, making each piece more full, more heavy. Like Wagner, Joyce adds a new dimension to each word so that instead of making one word carry one meaning, each word takes on multiple meanings. Scholars refer to these fusions as “portmanteau” words where portmanteau is defined as a large suitcase that usually opens into two compartments. Take, for example, the word “lothing” used repeatedly in A.L.P.’s letter to her H.C.E. in the final pages of *Finnegans Wake* (pg. 627). A second-level understanding (a reader’s interpretation) might see the word as “loathe” as in to despise. But Joyce uses a fuller word in the third-level analysis to encompass a myriad of emotions racing through A.L.P.’s heart. Joyce is playing upon a very realistic, human trait: a dichotomy of emotion. And it makes the writing more full, more real because humans rarely have one definite emotion at any given time. Rather, human beings are filled with conflicting, complex, capricious emotions. Although she dislikes “their little warm tricks” and “their mean cosy turns,” she is beginning to describe a beautiful love she has for H.C.E. Eventually “lothe” takes on an even greater number of meanings, everything from loose to lost to loony to lonely in the lines, “But I’m loothing them that's here and all I lothe. Loonely in me loneness” (pg. 627). As a reader, your personal experiences will determine how you see the word. An angry maid might see the word as loathe; a sappy romantic might see the word as love. A.L.P. probably felt the latter, but Joyce certainly is drawing on a number of perspectives that come out of the open-ended portmanteau. The ‘L’ words could be “lost” or “lonely” to allude to Bloom and Odysseus trying to return home. Joyce could have meant “loony” because A.L.P. feels a little crazy, both fervently in love and madly confused about all the things she is feeling for H.C.E. On some level, perhaps this is the Virgin Mary holding her son (as in the Pieta), engrossed with devotion to and admiration for her son but nonetheless angry at and defeated by God. There are potentially dozens of interpretations swimming around us; but, again, we are forced back into our own experiences where we opt for the interpretation we find most appealing in our own lives. If, however, we are able to forget ourselves, we can view Joyce’s

"The things we can see in *Finnegans Wake* are the things we can’t see in life: the subconscious, the heavenly, the divine."
palette in its entirety, not choosing but acknowledging each version. This acknowledgment assumes that all readers can conjure all these references, but I know, for a fact, I am unable to do that.

Even if, somehow, we know all the allusions, this broad, everyman/everything notion might not be appealing if we are searching for literature that will move us, guide us, teach us to be better individuals. So, we must find another level, the fourth and final level of interpretation. God's level. The single, absolute truth. The final and perfect interpretation. We've gone from the specific word (level one) to the less specific audience choice (level two) to the least specific Joycean cornucopia of ideas (level three). But, for the fourth level, we are no longer allowed to pick and choose which of Joyce's ideas we find most appealing; now we must find the best interpretation, the most relevant to God. Although he was just as bewildered, Joyce's friend Ezra Pound probably would support the idea that there is a perfect interpretation somewhere over the rainbow even if God is the only one who can grasp that interpretation. In a letter to Joyce, Pound said, "Nothing so far as I make out, nothing short of divine vision or a new cure for the clapp can possibly be worth all the circumambient peripherization" (Wales, pg. 133). So while Pound probably meant only to joke with Joyce, the idea that perhaps there is a hint of "divine vision" is an appealing one. In fact, "some critics have doubted whether our memories are capable of coping with [Finnegans Wake] on a first reading" (Wales, pg. 135). Does Finnegans Wake require something higher? Just as man can never fully comprehend the work of the gods, Joyce's readers (and Joyce himself perhaps) can never fully know what is not meant to be known. But that doesn't mean we can't try.

The next part of this paper will not attempt to answer the mystery that is Finnegans Wake, nor will it discover the mystery of the story. Such a task may, very well, be impossible. Instead, the next part of this paper will try to figure out who God is. That will be a much easier task.

Joking aside, my contention is that there is something tangible about this book. The things we can see in Finnegans Wake, however, are the things we can't see in life: the subconscious, the heavenly, the divine. The ideal reader of Finnegans Wake, therefore, is one who does have knowledge. In fact, this ideal reader must have the knowledge of every single allusion Joyce makes (from language to geography to people to history). He must be, in some ways, greater than a Renaissance Man, but still retain human feeling and thought. He must have experience with love and death, incest and molestation, disease and triumph. There is only one thing that has all these
experiences and the knowledge of everything that is and has been. God. Only God can know about everything that has happened to man and how man has reacted to the trials of life. God is greater than life and, thus, understands the complexities of life. God is beyond the barriers of language. He is thought and feeling both. James Joyce was writing for Him. Simply. “In a language freed from the normal constraints of chronology and logic,” Joyce’s only audience is God (Wales, pg. 142).

Or is it? What if *Finnegans Wake* is beyond God? Is it impossible for a novel that came from a mortal being not to be close to God but to transcend Him? After all, Joyce does not seem to be impressed with God [“why spell dear god with a big thick dhee (why, O why, O why?)”] (pg. 123). In fact, Joyce attributes the fall of man in the Garden of Eden not to Eve, not to mortals, but to God Himself. One of the most fascinating and often personally appealing aspects of *Finnegans Wake*, for myself, is this idea that, in creating man, God made a fatal error. To create man is to create imperfection; man’s fall was inevitable. In fact, it is one of the most basic axioms in *Finnegans Wake*, a concept first proposed by Giambattista Vico. If we are to attribute man’s sinfulness to God, then it is a short jump to then say that God is flawed (unless we argue that God intended to make man sinful so as to give him a divine venture throughout his life). If God is flawed, then perhaps there is something even more perfect above God, something truly and infinitely perfect. Is that something *Finnegans Wake*?

While God could have provided us with a solution to understanding *Finnegans Wake*, His flaws stand in the way of allowing for a pure and perfect interpretation. That is why we must ask, is James Joyce challenging God? Is James Joyce building his own Tower of Babel so that he may climb his way past a v who cannot stop him? Or is Joyce simply trying to meet God, to confront Him about His own grand sin?

Whatever the answer, it is not our place to judge James Joyce for his ambition. We must return to earth and determine what it is *Finnegans Wake* can offer us. We will never meet God, at least not simply through reading *Finnegans Wake* — blasphemy takes a little more concentration. It’s been a long day; I propose we take a nap.
Indeed, the only way to fully realize *Finnegans Wake* is to sleep through it, to dream through it, to meditate through it. Joyce even offers us this “Tip” early in the story by telling us, “Nap. That was the tictacs of the jinnies for to fontannoy the Willingdone” (pg. 9). For years, critics have tried, rather recklessly, to call *Finnegans Wake* a “dream-vision,” like a “book of the ‘night’, of the dark and mysterious and the unknown” (Wales, pg. 138). But Wales rightly clarifies this claim by stressing that “the dream-from itself, like interior monologue in the book of the day [Ulysses], is but a stylisation, a device in the larger design” (Wales, pg. 138). If it is only a stylization, then we must immerse ourselves in that style to begin to comprehend the work. Comprehension is possible while sleeping even when Wales tells us, “On the one hand, the intellectual demands made upon [the reader] for the interpretation of the word-play mean that [the reader] must be mentally alert, ‘ideall[y] insomniac’; on the other, the effect of the distorted surface is to impress the mental faculties almost as if they have been dulled or fuzzied, as in sleep” (pg. 140). Our mental alertness will sleep next to us; it is a lover we can grasp and something with whom we may often cuddle, and we should strive to hold on to it all night. The only problem is, I haven’t figured out what to do find that lover.

Is it impossible? Is understanding *Finnegans Wake* a logical impossibility? For the weak of heart, you can easily yield to the obstacles by claiming that the term *Work in Progress* “can be applied with equal accuracy to the interpretive responses to the *Wake*” (Gillespie, pg. 361). But in making this claim, we have failed. My suggestion is that, as a reader, you make the choice of which level satisfies your needs. If you are content with simply reading the words on the page, without thought or feeling, perhaps you should aim for a personal interpretation of the text. If you have connected with the text on a personal level, perhaps you could aim for understanding Joyce’s interpretation (or all the choices Joyce left for his readers). If you believe, at some point in your life, that you have found all of the clues Joyce hid in the text, then your next step should be to understand the true interpretation, the one interpretation that is most absolute, God’s interpretation of the text.

For the secular man, praying to God for a better understanding seems like a reasonable request. In the end, God is the closest we’ll ever get to understanding the

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Bibliography


Homosexuality in India

By Priyanka Gupta
Class of 2006

In this piece, Ms. Gupta explores the role of homosexuality in Indian myth and religious texts. In doing so, she seeks to amend the record regarding the prevalence and influence of homosexuality in Indian history, as well as the continuing relevance of the queer perspective in the form of a contemporary Indian gay culture. Modern porous borders have led to the infusion of Western rationality, leading to questions about the validity of regulating contemporary morality with antiquated and often inaccurate religious teachings.

Transnational queer movements, along with forces of the Indian diaspora hybridize the Indian gay identity. Continuous cultural exchange between India and the West through travel, written or cyber correspondence, language and literature influence the Indian gay identity at a ‘local’ and ‘global’ level. People’s experiences with homosexuality and queer issues in the West bring about an awareness and acceptance that travels back to India with them. This spatial interaction is enhanced by the curiosity to explore evidences of homosexual manifestations within the Indian history. Susan Stanford Friedman in her essay “Locational Feminism- Gender, Cultural Geographies, and Geopolitical Literacy” discusses the effects of spatial and temporal tensions on the international and domestic feminism.¹ Her theory can be applied to homosexuality and queer identity in the same way. In the past, the confluence of the dimensions of space and time have not only led to the emergence of valuable literary evidences to gay recognition within Indian religious and historical texts, but has also helped form an Indian gay identity, that is unique in its description and diversity.

According to Susan Friedman, the union of the space element with the element of time completes the study of the transnational feminist identity. Similarly, in defining the Indian gay identity, it is important to note that the spatial interaction of the Indian gay culture with the West in the form of transnational queer movements, leads to the exploration of the traditional reference to homosexuality in the history of India. In the dimension of time, recognition is re-claimed through critical analysis of Hindu texts, epics, and other religious stories. These chapters or contexts are otherwise either
ignored or altered and erased in attempts to portray homosexuality as a new-age Western phenomena that is unconnected with the supposed straight Indian society. Close examination of the historical timeline up until the present helps understand the significance of the time vector in the definition of gay identity.

Devdutt Patnaik’s book The Man Who Was a Woman and Other Queer Tales from the Hindu Lore is a commentary on Hindu stories about sexual transformation and gender metamorphosis. It emphasizes that in many queer tales in the Hindu literature same-sex desire is expressed through sexual transformation. Among cases of women becoming men, the story of Teeja and Beeja serves raises important questions about justification of such sexual transformation and gender stereotypes. Two men meet in a fair and become friends after they discover that their wives are pregnant at the same time. They decide upon a marriage between the two unborn children assuming that one would be a male child while the other a female one. Things do not work out as planned as both children born are females. Beeja’s father, however, in the fear of breaking his promise to Teeja’s father and losing a prosperous match for his daughter, decided to raise Beeja as a man. Hence, Beeja grows up unaware of her actual sexual identity, all along believing and behaving as a man. Beeja and Teeja are married. On the wedding night, Teeja discovers the truth about Beeja. Beeja herself is stunned, but is comforted by Teeja, who encourages Beeja to dress as a woman. The society’s response to their open lesbian marriage is extremely unfavorable and the couple moves into a forest where they live happily in a well with ghosts. As time passes, Teeja becomes apprehensive and persuades Beeja to become a man. During their time as a straight couple, complications arise as Beeja begins to abuse ‘his’ authority as a husband. Eventually, Beeja decided to end the unpleasantness between them and “to restore their love and marriage” by requesting the ghosts to turn her back into a woman.

The story of Teeja and Beeja is significant since it is an example of a historical tale confirming the existence of same-sex love in India. Teeja is neither upset nor hesitant about being involved in a lesbian marriage with Beeja. Also, when Teeja does succumb...
to social pressure and tries to live the same happy life she has with Beeja, in a heterosexual setting, the relationship’s peace is disturbed. Finally, both of them are certain that they are content only when they share a homosexual relationship. In recognizing their sexual preferences both Teeja and Beeja are able to rise above social resistance. Patnaik in his commentary on this story attempts to draw a connection between Teeja and Beeja’s secluded life in the forest, suicide cases of lesbian couples and twin-goddess shrines in India. He questions, “Could it be that the twin-goddess shrines of India are shrines built in memory of women who loved each other and killed themselves rather than suffer the brutality of a homophobic society?” Unfortunately, quest for more information on twin goddesses has not yielded much yet. Also, most of these legends were passed down orally and hence usually cannot be corroborated.

Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai show that same-sex relationships have been affirmed and celebrated in poetry and prose, in mythology, literature and medical treatises throughout the lengthy span of Indian history. Their book explores the concept of ‘swayamvara sakhi’, a word found in the 11th century story cycle the Kathasaritsagara that refers to deep love between women and also refers to a self-chosen relationship. They discuss stories of sages ‘born of two wombs’, and of goddesses and gods that give birth without a cross-sex partner. How many Hindus, for example, acknowledge that the god Harihara/Ayyappa was the son of two of the major deities of the Hindu pantheon, Vishnu and Shiva, the former in drag, the latter pursuing ‘her’, “as a lordly elephant would a she-elephant”? Many Indians and Westerners, accustomed to a very “straight” interpretation of the Krishna-Arjuna relationship in the Bhagavad-Gita would overlook that Arjuna was aroused by Krishna’s beautiful waist, his penis visible through his yellow garments, and, in fact, as ‘Arjuni’ has wild sex with Krishna. It is also explicitly mentioned in the Rig Veda that marriage is the union of two souls and the souls are not gendered.

Giti Thadani in her book Sakhiyani – Lesbian Desires in Ancient and Modern India examines Hindu mythology and links same-sex romance between women in ancient India to the evidences present in the texts and architecture from the past right until the effect of colonization upon lesbian identities in India. Traces of lesbianism in Indian history are clearly evident in the tales of female interactions, paintings in caves and stone architecture. There has been a strong attempt to control mentions of homosexuality by heterosexual domestication or by totally eradicating any culture reference to it. Thadani discusses the dual roles played by a woman and the conflicts of interpretations that arise from this ‘dual feminine.’

For example, the usage of the word “sis-
“Marriage is the union of two souls and the souls are not gendered.”

ter” in describing the relationship between two women has been used in ways that could mean either blood-related or a female partner. In some contexts when the relationship is sexually intimate, there has been a forcible neglect of the presence of the female lover. Lesbian sexuality was made punishable according to the guidelines provided by Manu.¹⁰ Manu’s work is a famous piece of literature in Hinduism and it laid out the different punishments for different kinds of lesbian acts.

While Puranic tales of homoeroticism display love between same-sex couples in ancient India, Urdu-Persian gay literature brings out elements of homosexuality in the royal courts in India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Mahmud’s, the Sultan of Ghazna (in modern Afghanistan), romance with his non-Muslim male slave Ayaz, has been the topic for numerous poetic works in Urdu and Persian.¹¹ However, after the British conquest of Delhi in 1857, intellectuals and authors were forced to submit their works in for a severe British critique, in order to make a living. The British attacked these works for their homoerotic and “vulgar” contents.¹² They also declared homoerotic love a “criminal activity.” Complex revisions of literary traditions soon followed and all translations were given heterosexual contexts or meanings.

One of the famous twentieth century Urdu writers, Ismat Chughtai, wrote “Lihaf” (meaning “The Quilt”) about a lesbian relationship in a noble household and witnessed by a young girl.¹³ The British government charged Chughtai for her story’s obscenity in 1942.¹⁴ The lawsuit was eventually unsuccessful, but it left Chughtai relentless as she claimed that she was too innocent to know what lesbianism was and would not have written the story had she know what it had meant earlier. Irrespective of Chughtai’s change of mind, this case brings out the constraints on creative Urdu and Persian environment during the British rule. Last year, the famous Indian theatre and film personality, Naseeruddin Shah, directed a play called “Ismat Apa ke Naam” for a few special performances in the Prithvi Theatre in Bombay.¹⁵ The play was a monologue by an actress portrayed as the young girl in Chughtai’s story. Shah’s work not only brought back into limelight the Chughtai case but also introduced into the Indian cin-
ema, a new trend of placing the homo-erotic tales from the past into a contemporary unbiased liberal perspective.

Control of homosexuality took on a different course when milled between the colonial and national movements within India. British strongly condemned gay-activity among their soldiers. Nationalists, on the other hand, sought re-affirmation of the male “masculinity” and authority by portraying women as self-sacrificing, submissive home-makers. Nationalists defaced statues and images depicting two or more females in sexual poses. Mentions of Goddess Kali kissing Krishna’s lover, Radha, were considered blasphemous and hence remained unclaimed by society.16 Ancient texts that feature Radha secretly bathing with her Sakhis (female friends), in modern times, are interpreted as acts of male seduction for Krishna.17 Lack of information and rationale among the Indian politicians becomes evident when they clump together with the liberalization of the Indian economy, “incest, depravity, perversion, aberration, the breaking up of marriages, pre-marital sex, marital rape, degeneration of Indian morality, easy divorce and even scented condoms.”18

The most obvious question to ask here is what do lesbians have to do with all these, particularly scented condoms?

1 Susan Stanford Freidman, “Locational Feminism – Gender, Cultural Geographies, and Geopolitical Literacy.”
6 Ibid. 17.
7 Ibid. 17. P. 92
8 Giti Thadani, Sakhiyani-Lesbian Desires in Ancient and Modern India. (London: Cassell, 1996)
12 Ibid. 14.
14 Ibid. 16.
16 Id. 11. “Legacies of Colonialism.” Pp. 67-86.
18 Id. 14. Pp. 85
Peyote: The Illegal Sacrament

By Ken Brown
Class of 2006

The interplay between faith and reason is perhaps most obvious, and simultaneously distorted, when courts seek to legislate it. An important contemporary example of this concerns the use of peyote in Native American religious ceremonies. As Mr. Brown notes, such a seemingly innocuous cactus has prompted the repeal of traditions of faith by modern empiricism.

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 was instrumental in granting freedom to American Indians to follow their religions in any way they saw fit. It is important to see how the act granted freedoms and improved the lives of American Indians but it is also important to see the shortcomings of this piece of legislation. The act allowed American Indian tribes to access numerous sacred sites that were located on privately owned lands or public lands by the United States Federal Government. Even though the act explicitly states that all American Indians will be allowed to worship freely as well as “use and possess sacred objects” in their ceremonials and traditions, certain practices such as the use of the peyote cactus have been considered illegal by the United States government. This cactus can be found in Mexico and in Texas, but it is widely used by many different tribes throughout the southwestern United States and southwestern Canada. Many tribes make pilgrimages of one hundred miles or more to collect the peyote cactus. There are very specific rituals involved in its collection and preparation. There is a clear connection between these peoples and the environment, and it is reflected in these practices. Even after passage of AIRFA, the use of peyote for religious reasons by American Indians was still punishable by arrest and jail time.

Before Europeans settled in America, the peyote cactus was being used in religious ceremonies by multiple American Indian tribes in the southwest. Juan Cardenas, an observer of Indians in what is present-day Mexico, wrote about the ceremonial use of peyote in 1591. Missionaries felt that peyote had no place in Christianity. Some priests published manuals that asked converts such questions as “Have you eaten the flesh of man? Have you eaten peyote?” Peyote was often considered a satanic
plant and American Indians who used the cactus were believed to be followers of a satanic cult. In this century more extensive research has been done to discover exactly how long peyote has been used by American Indian tribes. Archaeological discoveries in caves in Texas suggest the use of peyote extends back at least three thousand years. Despite the use of peyote over the generations, there is still a great deal of debate in regards to its legality.

In accordance with other laws it is easy to see why the United States classified peyote as an illegal, hallucinogenic drug. It is not the cactus itself but an alkaloid found at the heart of the cactus, called mescaline (3, 4, 5-trimethoxyphenethylamine), that causes the hallucinations. Almost immediately after ingestion of a mescal button, the consumer experiences a horrible feeling of nausea. If the drug is abused it can cause heart attacks and respiratory ailments. Mescaline is structurally similar to PCP, speed, and other amphetamines but the effects are much like the effects of LSD. When mentioned in the same context of these drugs it seems understandable that mescaline and therefore peyote has been deemed to be an unsafe and illegal drug. The drug is dangerous enough that it is not allowed in religious practice in prisons. Many prisoners have complained that their religious freedoms were violated because they were not allowed to use peyote in a religious context. A compromise was finally reached in amendments added to the original AIRFA text, which state that “Native American prisoners who practice a Native American Religion shall have, on a regular basis comparable to that access afforded prisoners who practice Judeo-Christian religions, access to leaders, facilities, items, and materials used in religious ceremonies.”

Peyote was specifically not included because it is a dangerous drug and because of the precedent it would set for the use of other drugs within prison walls such as marijuana or alcohol which could lead behavioral problems by the inmates.

Outside prison, however, the inability to use peyote in religious services has first amendment implications. The first amendment of the United States Constitution states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of
religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceable to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances.\textsuperscript{5}

It seems as though the first amendment rights would lawfully allow the use of peyote in religious practice. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act never specifically mentions the use of peyote. The act did state that native tribes are allowed to use and possess sacred objects, so many American Indians assumed that the use of peyote was covered in this context. When many ceremonies were disrupted, however, it became abundantly clear that this was not true. The problem was that allowing the use of peyote contradicted the drug laws laid out by the Drug Enforcement Agency.

The use of peyote in religious ceremonies was one of the principal reasons that the Native American Church was incorporated in 1918. Those founding the church felt that their religion was not recognized in the same way as were other minority religions in the United States, in part because it was not fully organized. “It needed a name and needed to be known by that name; it needed a set of rules, officers, stated responsibilities; it needed to be ‘incorporated.’”\textsuperscript{6} These American Indians were ready to conform to the Judeo-Christian conceptions of religious organization in order to be accepted and more easily challenge governmental rulings on peyote. Becoming more organized and known as the Native American Church versus names such as the “Peyote Cult” garnered a greater level of respect. Peyote was specifically omitted from the articles of incorporation of the Native American Church for political reasons. In fact, the statement of purpose for the articles is strongly Christian,

The purposes for which this Corporation is formed are to give legal corporate entity to an association of persons having for their purpose and ideal the founding and establishment of a church organization embodying the conception found in the King James Version of the Holy Bible\textsuperscript{7}.

The use of the word “church” forced many people to view American Indian religions as they did the religions of the predominantly white society. Defining themselves in this way did not solve the problem of peyote use as a sacrament by American Indians but it was a strong first step towards legalization.

It is also interesting to look at the word sacrament. A dictionary definition quickly reveals that the use of the word may not be completely accurate: “a Christian rite (as baptism or the Eucharist) that is believed to have
been ordained by Christ and that is held to be a means of divine grace." The word “sacrament” is distinctly Christian. The majority of court proceedings use “sacrament” in regards to the use of peyote, showing that most followers of Christian religions have difficulty understanding the use of peyote in any other context. This is particularly apparent in some of the more recent cases regarding the use of peyote.

In 1988, a case titled Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of the State of Oregon et al., Petitioners vs. Alfred L. Smith reached the Supreme Court. Mr. Smith and other men had been fired from their positions as drug counselors by the Oregon Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) because of their use of peyote. These men were members of the Native American Church and they regularly used peyote as a “sacrament” in religious ceremonies. Once the ADAPT council discovered this, the men were immediately relieved of their positions. Mr. Smith then went to the Oregon unemployment office in order to register and receive unemployment benefits. He was denied these benefits on the basis that he lost his job as a result of misconduct. Supreme Court Justice Scalia stated that:

There is no absolute constitutional right to unemployment benefits on the part of all persons whose religious convictions are the cause of their unemployment. On three separate occasions, however, we have held that an employee who is required to choose between fidelity to religious belief and cessation of work may not be denied unemployment compensation because he or she is faithful to the tenets of his or her church.

Even realizing this, the Supreme Court decided that they could not rule on the issue because they were unsure of the legality of peyote use in Oregon. This ruling angered many Native Americans who felt that AIRFA, a federal law, allowed them to use peyote in religious ceremonies. Many American Indians felt AIRFA had become nothing more than a piece of paper. Since the use of peyote was omitted from AIRFA, it fell to the individual states to deter-
mine whether to provide protection to those using peyote for religious purposes. At the time in the Smith case, only twenty-eight states provided protection to American Indians who chose to use peyote in religious ceremonies but twenty-two states did not. Oregon vs. Smith finally forced the issue to be recognized on a federal level but AIRFA was not amended until 1994, six year later.

The proposed amendment did result in some opposition from private landowners. Most were concerned about the economic impact of opening private lands for American Indian religious purposes. If a logging company had purchased a plot of land from the government and that land was later deemed to be sacred ground to American Indians, it would be impossible for the logging company to recoup their losses. Since peyote is an otherwise illegal drug, many private landowners felt that “It is simply wrong to require private landowners to allow the growing, possession, and/or use of illegal substances on their lands.” The clash of economics and civil liberties is constant throughout the AIRFA debates.

5 United States. Bill of Rights First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Article I, sections 2 and 3.
Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it.
Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for generations.
Do not believe in anything because it is spoken and rumored by many.
Do not believe in anything because it is written in your religious books.
Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers or elders.
But after observation and analysis, when you find something that agrees with reason,
and is conductive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and abide by it.
-The Kalama Sutra