

ABSTRACT

“Who is the Other?": The Intersection of Anthropological and Theological Discourse
On U.S. Relations with Latin American Refugees

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The existence of oneself logically necessitates the existence of another, for being able to define what one *is* requires that one differentiates from what one *is not*. This is referred to as the self-other dichotomy. The tendency to differentiate between oneself and another, or the Self and the Other, is not uncommon, and is apparent in nearly all manifestations of identity and within human societies. Yet within Western civilization, this dichotomy has been unjustly utilized as an epistemological framework for Western ideologies to exalt the West as superior in comparison to non-Western nations, establishing what the discipline of anthropology refers to as the Anthropological Other. This term is utilized to consolidate any reference to cultures that exist outside of the Western tradition, with the Western tradition in contrast becoming known as the Self. Such a dichotomy has served to establish an “us-vs-them” mentality within United States relations with Latin American refugees, thereby begging the question as to the root of such dehumanized interactions. By examining the root of this othering dichotomy within Western civilization, this research unravels the question, "Who is the Other?" explicated through both the discipline of anthropology and theology. For, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, at the intersection of anthropological and theological inquiries lies a true explication of the Other, as an epistemological framework created by the inability of Western civilization to recognize the Triune God as the Divine Other.

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“WHO IS THE OTHER?”: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL
DISCOURSE ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICAN REFUGEES

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Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Luke 10:25-29

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CHAPTER ONE

Recognizing the Other in American Society

The Greyhound Bus Station

“*Puedo ayudar?*” (Can I help?) I stammered, blundering through each word as I slowly re-familiarized myself with the Spanish language and gently addressed the young woman as she made her way across the bus station. Having heard me, she glanced my way, and I faltered. Unmistakable weariness emanated from her, with shoulders sunken as if the weight of the world was upon her, and expression frozen in grim dismay. She wore a bright red coat – despite the warm Texas weather – and matching sweatpants, with bright red lace-less shoes that matched those of the children with whom she walked.¹ Yet what struck me the most were her eyes. Although exhaustion exuded from her stature, her eyes were staggeringly alert and intense. As I approached, a sense of uneasiness swept across her demeanor, and she looked at me quizzically. Repeating my question, I gestured towards the luggage she carried: a single sack, stuffed with all that remained of her family’s belongings. For a moment, her eyes widened in mild alarm, her glare piercing, and I worried that I had somehow misspoken, but then I noticed an almost imperceptible twitch of her hand, firmly tightened around the handle of her sack, drawing it if only a fraction of an inch closer. Nevertheless, perhaps due to my short non-threatening stature

¹ This woman had just been released from an immigration detention center along with her children. Families are identified by their matching uniforms, provided to them by the centers. The lack of shoelaces are claimed to be a safety precaution – some sources suggest it is to deter the refugees from running away, or else to remove a potential weapon from them, though Pastor John Garland says it is to prevent suicide among the refugees.

and diffidence, the woman's gaze softened. Muttering a muffled "*gracias*," (thank you) she hesitantly relaxed her grip on her sack and offered me its handle. I beamed, and with a sigh of relief and a reassuring smile, together we walked to the other side of the station, where a large group laden in similarly colorful attire sat in disquieted silence.

The rest of the Honors College Mission Team experienced similar interactions, nervously watching and waiting as each asylum-seeker exited the detention center bus, received their bus tickets, and made their way towards the benches designated for their arrival. Occasionally our offers to help were denied, but the volunteers from the Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) offered encouragement. Whatever allowed the asylum-seekers to feel more comfortable, they reminded us, would be the best sort of help we could offer.

"Besides," another volunteer interjected as she led a family across the station, "this may be the first kind gesture they've had States-side, it still may be foreign to them..."²

As the afternoon progressed, the team hastily memorized Spanish vocabulary as it became relevant: words such as *el almuerzo* (lunch), *los juguetes* (toys), and *la medicina* (medicine) echoed throughout the crowded bus station in one-word fragments as volunteers passed out various commodities, every so often punctuated with phrases such as, "*No se*" (I don't know) or "*No hablo español*" (I do not speak Spanish). Those of us proficient in the Spanish language were soon asked to help explain the unexpectedly complicated bus tickets to families, while representatives from the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) meandered among the

² Volunteer, Correspondence with Author, March 10, 2019.

crowded benches, checking the court summons of each family and comparing them to the final destinations on their tickets.

“They don’t always match,” a representative of RAICES explained, when a member of our team inquired. “Sponsor homes will be in one city, and the court summons might be in a completely different one, sometimes even half-way across the country. RAICES intervenes and requests that the summons changes, but they’re not always approved. Why do you think so many asylum-seekers miss their court dates?”³

Before too long, another bus was unloading outside, though few seats remained on the benches in our station, and only a few families had embarked on the next stop towards their sponsor homes.

“When will their buses leave?” I asked the volunteer next to me, gesturing to the crowded benches.

“It depends on where they’re going,” she replied. “Most will leave later today, but some families’ bus tickets are for tomorrow.”

My friend’s head jerked up, bewildered. “But where will they stay tonight?” she exclaimed.

The volunteer frowned. “Here,” she responded dejectedly, watching as another group filed in, armed guards on either side.⁴

~

The day dragged on, but our time at the station was coming to a close. I found myself standing helplessly on the outskirts of the enclosure, not sure how best to help,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

and knowing that we would only be a snapshot in the journey that started for the asylum-seekers thousands of miles away, and would end long after we had moved on. Another friend of mine from the missions team was also removed from the crowd. Her Spanish proficiency tremendously exceeded most everyone's on the team, but she, too, wavered at the edge of the enclosure with me, and in silent solidarity we stared at the congested assembly, incredulous that such injustices could exist so close to the place we called home.

For a second her face uplifted, and with a crinkle in her eyes she turned to say something, but in that moment she was interrupted as a lady in the bus station strutted up.

"You help *those people* too much," she sneered at us, eyes raking over the crowd of asylum-seekers.

I gawked, mouth gaping in utter astonishment.

"Please, ma'am, we're just trying to help them," I heard my friend respond. But the lady was not convinced.

"When have *they* helped *us*?" she demanded, glowering at us one at a time. We were speechless. A glimmer of triumph gleamed in her expression, as if her retort settled the matter, and smugly, the lady walked away.

Heart pounding, I turned back to my friend. Her mouth, too, was wide open, at a loss for words. Hurriedly, she averted her eyes from mine, blinking fast and face reddening, and mumbling something unintelligible about needing the restroom she hastened away.

~

Similar scenes endlessly unfolded in the spring and summer of 2019 as busloads of asylum-seekers from across Latin America arrived at the Greyhound Bus Station in downtown San Antonio multiple days throughout the week, dropped off by various detention centers with nothing more than the clothes on their backs, their remaining belongings, and a bus ticket with destinations to sponsor homes across the country and a court summons for their appeal to seek asylum in the United States. With the hordes of asylum-seekers overwhelming the small station, the Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) and Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) had partnered to assist the immigrants with their transition into this foreign country. While RAICES explained the legal and logistical processes associated with this transition, IWC volunteers travelled among the families, offering various commodities to supplant some of that which had been lost to them throughout their arduous journey and prepare them for the road that lay before them.⁵

In the spring of 2019, the Honors College of Baylor University sent a small mission team of students to San Antonio to volunteer with IWC and Pastor John Garland of the San Antonio Mennonite Church. With Garland's assistance, our team was scattered throughout the city, volunteering in the refugee center, assisting families in airports, and working alongside RAICES and the IWC volunteers in the Greyhound Bus Station. Yet, as Garland noted, there was little our team alone could contribute.⁶ We simply provided

⁵ As of the early fall of 2019, changes in US policy concerning immigration have meant far fewer refugees in San Antonio. The circumstances today have changed dramatically from the scene our team witnessed in the spring of that year.

⁶ John Garland, Correspondence with Author, March 9, 2019.

strength in numbers, bolstering the efforts of IWC and the Church, learning from their example.

Our most significant contribution was not anything we could have accomplished in San Antonio. As Garland assessed, the impact of this mission trip was not determined solely by our actions within that week, but by our witness.⁷ The Honors College Mission Trip witnessed firsthand the conditions of asylum-seekers in San Antonio, the despondency of each family. We saw the distinct faces that were collectively identified as “refugees” and “immigrants” and “aliens” – the trauma etched into the faces of mothers, the optimism still radiating from the vivacity of the children, the humanity that persisted within an environment unquestionably inhumane. And the lady in the station, who regarded the people around her as utterly *other* than herself, we watched as she, though seeing, did not see.

Who is the Other?

Although John Garland had warned our mission team that we might encounter individuals such as the lady in the bus station, the confrontation was still unsettling.⁸ The pointedness with which the lady emphatically distinguished between “us” and “them” – assumedly “them” referring to the Latin American asylum-seekers, and “us” referring to us as Americans – was, for me, the most striking aspect of our short and frankly one-sided conversation, as if the asylum-seekers’ distinct otherness was their most defining characteristic. Furthermore, her intonation implied that she deemed their otherness as

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John Garland, Correspondence with Author, March 9, 2019.

somehow equative to their inferiority, indeed evinced by her implications that they were undeserving of our aid.⁹

The tendency to differentiate between oneself and another, however – whether between individuals or between religious or cultural affiliations – is not uncommon. On the one hand, such a predisposition has plagued humanity since Cain’s inability to reconcile the disparities between him and his brother ignited a jealousy that incited his murderous hand. Yet such distinctions have not always resulted in fratricide, nor blatant racism. The existence of oneself logically necessitates the existence of another, for being able to define what one *is* requires that one differentiates from what one *is not*. This is referred to as the self-other dichotomy, and it is a natural means by which humanity defines and understands itself. Yet, as the disposition of the lady in the bus station demonstrated, this dichotomy can construct an “us-vs.-them” mentality that is evidentially apparent within United States relations with Latin American refugees, which has surpassed the naturalness of self-identification and manifested into a narrative of dehumanization and non-American inferiority, thereby begging the question as to the root of such a manifestation within our society.

As a student within the field of anthropology, I recognized the existence of this self-other dichotomy within my education in the discipline. Deemed students of humanity, anthropologists investigate the fundamental categorizations of human identity, including culture, and therefore must be cognizant of the differences that distinguish one

⁹ It is unavoidable to attribute a race component to the conversation of otherness, and there is certainly a relationship between prejudices against immigrants and race. Due to such, I have been asked on various occasions if the lady at the bus station was a white woman. Nevertheless, the lady was in fact not white, and neither was the friend who was with me. Though race undoubtedly contributes to othering narratives, this encounter led me to broaden my perspective and theorize that there were other factors at play, and thus the “us” that the lady was referring to was us as Americans, rather than us as a particular race.

group of people from another. In fact, anthropologists have conferred upon Western society much of its understanding of the cultures into which it has come into contact for centuries. Since the field of anthropology is rooted in Western academia, however, such distinctions tend to manifest in a self-other dichotomy that distinguishes between the West and the non-West, establishing what anthropologists refer to as the Anthropological Other. This term is meant to consolidate references to non-Western peoples, with the West in contrast becoming known as the Self, but has required the establishment of strict ethical policies as anthropologists actively study and objectify other human societies.¹⁰

However, as the second chapter of this thesis attempts to explicate, the concept of the Other perpetuated by anthropological thought is not merely the invention of this discipline, but is deeply rooted within Western ideological tradition. In fact, this dichotomy has been unjustly utilized within Western civilization as an epistemological framework for ideologies that exalt the West as superior in comparison to non-Western nations. Therefore, by tracing the Other as it has developed within anthropological theories, one can conceptualize as to the nature of such an othering mentality within Western civilization, and hence how it has manifested within American society. Furthermore, anthropological theory is a worthy topic of discourse in determining the root of the Other since it specifically pertains to Western perceptions of non-Western peoples, which would include the Latin American migrant community.

Nevertheless, equally unsettling about the existence of this othering mentality in American society was the fact that it has persisted within a civilization that has been

¹⁰ For reference of the ethical responsibility of anthropologists in human subjects research, see the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Ethics Forum: Principles of Professional Responsibility.

heavily influenced by the ideals of Judeo-Christian ideologies.¹¹ Western society, the United States included, has been heavily intertwined with the history of the Church, and therefore Christian values have permeated into Western society's perspectives on morality and ethics, even with the growing advocacy of the separation of church and state. One such value, however, is the love of thy neighbor, which the othering mentality of people such as the lady in the bus station does not reflect.¹² I had no means of determining if this lady was a Christian, but later testimonies from John Garland to our team confirmed that he had comparable interactions with Americans who had professed Christianity as their religion.¹³ Ana Hinojosa – Immigration Education Coordinator of the Mennonite Central Committee in the U.S. – re-counted similar experiences. She expressed how a narrative of fear associated with immigration across the U.S.-Mexico border and perpetuated by the media has made it difficult to help Christians understand the inhumanity of the refugee crisis, despite the biblical call to love thy neighbor.¹⁴

The fact that there are any American Christians who appear to blatantly ignore the second greatest commandment in the Bible is disconcerting, and perplexing. To hear Christianity preached by the same tongues that perpetuate othering narratives towards Latin American immigrants is beyond comprehension. Considering the clear exhortation in the Bible to love thy neighbor, it appears that the opposing othering tendency embedded in the West – as is explicated in chapter two – provides a contending narrative

¹¹ Jacob Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition: Toward an Authentic Anthropology* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1985), 27.

¹² Luke 10:25-37

¹³ John Garland, Correspondence with Author, March 11, 2019.

¹⁴ Ana Hinojosa, Correspondence with Author, November 2019.

adversely affecting the perspectives of Western Christians. By examining the root of this othering dichotomy within Western civilization, the third chapter of this research therefore attempts to unravel the question, "Who is the Other?" explicated through both the discipline of anthropology and theology. For, as chapter three seeks to demonstrate, at the intersection of anthropological and theological inquiries lies a true explication of the Other as the embodiment of the inability of the West to reconcile the innate otherness of the Triune God with human nature. Such an inability has resulted in the elevation of a false representation of a Western, or even American, God in some expressions of Christianity, which in turn uplifts the American identity as a people chosen by God in comparison to non-Western civilizations.

The Western fabrication of God is most revelatory in the parallel disunification of theological and anthropological inquiries, as chapter four has demonstrated. The existence of Other anthropologies is detrimental to the unity that once existed within the discipline, but necessary for the revitalization of anthropological studies upon an epistemological foundation that is not discriminatory towards non-Western societies. On the other hand, Other theologies is revelatory of the lack of unity existent in many Western Christian theological discussions, for if the Christianity that was introduced to the colonial societies was accessible and applicable to these people, there would be no need to separate it from the Western centrism that other theologians perceived in Western biblical exegesis.

While discourse between the disciplines of anthropology and theology is revelatory of such othering mentalities in the West, it is much more difficult to recognize the continuation of this othering within American society, insofar as there are numerous

confounding factors that complicate the discussion of identity in the United States. Christian exceptionalism is evident in the West's idolization of its own image as explained in chapter three, though how this mentality has persisted within the United States despite growing cultural awareness is a larger question for historical consideration, beyond the scope of my own studies. Nevertheless, as chapter five demonstrates, statistical analyses conducted using the Baylor Religious Survey of 2017 can be revelatory of vestigial othering mentalities associated with an intertwined American-Christian identity, which suggests an improper misidentification of the Christian-Self with the American-Self among many expressions of Christian tradition in the United States.

Lastly, chapter four explores the response of United States citizens to Latin American refugees, particularly the ways in which Christianity in the United States has become erroneously Americanized and entangled with political affairs, thereby establishing a sense of Christian exceptionalism among many American Christians and exacerbating their poor relations with Latin American immigrants. The methodologies of the fourth chapter include a review of the literature concerning American Christianity and a summarization of statistical analyses I have conducted using the Baylor Religion Survey. The purpose of this chapter is to provide statistical evidence for the continued existence of an othering mentality towards the Latin American refugee community, and in particular how such a mentality has become erroneously intertwined within the American-Christian identity.

The conclusions of this thesis are not ones that provide solutions to the inhumane othering of the Latin American refugee community, nor implicate particular peoples

within a given community. The subject, in fact, shies away from the atrocities of the refugee crisis along the United States borders, but instead serves to establish a foundation upon which further conversations can be constructed, for as I ultimately attempt to demonstrate, the propensity of Western society to “other” those who are different from itself ultimately stem from its misinterpretations of humanity’s relationship with God.

This thesis is more than simply an undertaking of extensive research for the sake of producing a writing sample, or preparing for a master’s thesis or dissertation, or fulfilling the requirements of the Baylor University Honors College. This thesis is an attempt for myself to understand the origin of the Other. It is an attempt to comprehend how such othering mentalities can permeate through a culture founded upon Judeo-Christian values, and how the existence of the Other within Western epistemologies has instigated the horrendous and inhumane injustices along our borders to which I myself have seen.

This thesis broadly asserts that at the root of the othering mentality perceived in United States relations with Latin American immigrants is the inability of Western civilization to recognize the Triune God as the Divine Other. The West has elevated an idol of itself in place of God, and in self-adoration has misidentified non-Western peoples as wholly Other from the divine West. As this distinction is further exacerbated by expounding factors – political factions, material wealth and social class, race, historical divisions, national boundaries – people continue to forget that the difference between ourselves and God is infinitely greater than any possible distance between human beings.

This thesis begins my witness.

CHAPTER TWO

The Anthropological Other

Introduction

“This increased concern with the history of anthropology represents an attempt to find the meaning of anthropology. I suggest that this may represent a revitalistic movement in anthropology, an attempt to understand the rationalizations that support the study of the human other.”

Jacob Pandian¹⁵

Anthropology – as I am inclined to define it – is the study of the philosophically-charged question, “What is humanity?” As opposed to other academic scholarship, anthropological methodologies approach the study of humanity by means of itself – by identifying other cultures and peoples seemingly unreconcilably different from their own, anthropologists strive to construct comprehensive theories concerning specific aspects of human nature as can be empirically hypothesized. Due to the contested nature of the foundations of anthropological scholarship, however, there is not a unified definition of the discipline today.¹⁶ Since such methodologies were established within Western Civilization, however, this opposition fostered the concept that anthropologists refer to as the “Anthropological Other,” a term used to consolidate references to cultures that are

¹⁵ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 8

¹⁶ After four years of study within the discipline of anthropology and compiling the opinions of various authors and professors, this is the definition that I believe best encompasses all the nuances involved in defining the entire field, which is compiled of numerous interdisciplinary ideologies. The purpose of anthropology is a heavily debated topic. For a review of the development of anthropological theory, see Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition* (University of Toronto Press, 2013).

studied that exist outside of Western tradition, with Western tradition in contrast becoming known as the Self.¹⁷ The foundation of the entire discipline is rooted in this self-other dichotomy.

The Anthropological Other, however, did not arise out of the discipline itself, but rather manifested within a civilization in which such a concept of the self vs. the other was already not only existent, but in the very foundations of its ideological tradition. By tracing Western history as it pertains to anthropological theory, othering tendencies are observable within the methodologies of prospective purveyors of anthropological thought throughout the West. The history of anthropological theory, however, is less a linear progression of intellectual discourse, but more so a collection of highly regarded theoretical concepts – both affirmed and discredited – from anthropologists that have shaped the discipline over the centuries. Although numerous theories have been constructed throughout the history of the discipline, the focus of this study is the anthropological theories that allude to existent “othering” mentalities that accentuated a prevailing self-other dichotomy within the dogmas of Western Civilization.

This chapter is not a comprehensive history of Western civilization nor anthropology, as the specifics of such comprise the research of historians that have been deliberated and disputed for decades, and such particulars are beyond the scope of this thesis. The focus of this chapter is the “othering” that can be attributed to facets of history thought to contribute to the development of Western civilization and anthropological theory. Since the Other is essentially the consolidation of any reference to what the Self is

¹⁷ For an introduction to the concept of the Anthropological Other, see Sundar Sarukkai, “The Other in Anthropology and Philosophy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 24 (June 14-20, 1997): 1406, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.baylor.edu/stable/4405512>.

not, anthropological theory is a worthy topic of discourse in determining the root of the Other as it pertains to non-Western peoples, for it epitomizes the most fundamental of categorizations of human identity: culture. This chapter of the thesis attempts to illuminate how anthropology is effectively the study of the differences that are discernable between cultures, and therefore what classifies the distinctions between the Self and the Other. Furthermore, as this chapter argues, the inability of modern anthropological studies to unanimously define the field of anthropology is due to its irrevocable foundation within the concept of the self-other dichotomy, which has been utilized throughout the centuries to justify racist and ethnocentric prejudices within Western Civilization. Therefore, by tracing the Other as it has developed and been utilized within anthropological theories, one can conceptualize as to the nature of such an othering mentality within Western Civilization, and hence how it has manifested within American society.

The Birth of Anthropological Discourse

Antiquity to the Renaissance

Modern anthropology is distinguishable today by its embodiment of the ambitions of academic scholarship to discern the nature of humankind amidst its complex diversity.¹⁸ As authors of *A History of Anthropological Theory* – Paul Erickson and Liam Murphy – note, however, inquiring as to the origin and nature of humanity is not restricted to any particular discipline, and can be explored by numerous professions and

¹⁸ Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), xxi.

peoples throughout history. The universality and relevancy of the question to all humanity has led Erickson and Murphy to contend that anthropologies are conducted by all peoples, regardless of cultural tradition, insofar as they attempt to characterize specific attributes of humankind. Anthropology's universality, however, has left the exact origins of the modern discipline of anthropology itself contested by various anthropologists and historians.¹⁹ The lack of a definite origin within the discipline ignites disputes as to the exact purpose of anthropological scholarship, although its intellectual development can be traced alongside that of Western civilization.

Yet a "nascent anthropology perspective" is discernible from the acclaimed dawn of Western Civilization – Greco-Roman antiquity.²⁰ The intellectual traditions of antiquity contemplated essential methodological elements of the field of anthropology before the study was established as a discipline, such as the analysis of the nature of humankind and the deliberation and observation of diverse cultural groups. The works of philosophers such as Thales of Miletus (c. 624-546 B.C.), Anaximander (c. 610-546 B.C.), and Democritus (c. 460-370 B.C.) are cited as some of the earliest contributors in the West to scientific considerations on the natural origin of humankind.²¹ Their works contrasted the literary narratives of Homer and Virgil, who provided enthralling epics to illuminate the divine intervention of Greco-Roman mythological deities who brought forth the beginning of human existence.²² Such narratives, furthermore, explicated the Greek and Roman's unique perspectives concerning themselves, and how they

¹⁹ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, xxi.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

interpreted aspects of their own society. By actively pursuing the question of “What is humanity?” these scholars represent some of the first documented fore-bringers of philosophical and biological attempts in Western civilization to intellectually understand human nature.

Additionally, the scholars of classical antiquity explored not only the nature of humanity as a whole, but even began to document observations concerning the different cultures with which they were in close proximity. Herodotus (c. 484-425 B.C.) composed works relating stories that identified other cultures with which the Greeks came into contact, constructing humanistic descriptions of the linguistic and cultural distinctions between these peoples in a manner comparable to current ethnographical studies. Herodotus’ research further introduced Greek philosophers to the differing cultural values that existed in other societies, begging the question as to the universal nature of morality. Remnants of such philosophical inquiries from Herodotus’ ethnographies exist in a few fragmented works of Aristotle (c. 384-322 B.C.) as well as Nicholas of Damascus (c. 64-4 B.C.).²³ Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus (c. 56-120 A.D.) also composed a work comparable to modern-day ethnographies, often known as the treatise *Germania*. Tacitus illustrated in his treatise the origin, location, and customs of the German people, though his research was not as highly regarded until its rediscovery in the Renaissance period.²⁴ Even in ancient civilizations, the people were not so far removed from others that they were ignorant of the disparities that existed between themselves and other cultures.

²³ John Rowe, “The Renaissance Foundations of Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 67, no. 1 (February 1965): 4, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.baylor.edu/stable/668652>.

²⁴ Rowe, “The Renaissance Foundation of Anthropology,” 4-5.

Nevertheless, despite its nascent anthropological perspective, it would be disingenuous to attribute the founding of the field of anthropology to Greco-Roman antiquity. Anthropologist, John Rowe, notices that there is frequent repetition or plagiarism of particular phrases within the ethnographic literature of classical antiquity. Rowe suggests that authors would often borrow descriptions from the ethnographic observations of other cultures, which he believes indicates that there was a lack of sincere interest among the Greco-Roman people concerning the variations among other peoples.²⁵ Greeks may have explicitly identified themselves from other cultures, but the distinction was not utilized in a comparative analysis of their culture with others. Instead, concern with other societies often represented attempts to further political agendas or else provide a means of entertainment which were often regarded as unimportant for scholarly inquiries. This is similarly true for the Greco-Roman scholarship of the philosophers. The act of explicating hypotheses concerning human nature, or even simply describing attributes of foreign cultures, is not a unique characteristic of anthropology, nor is the data taken from the observable studies what constitutes as anthropological research. Thus Greco-Roman society is not designated as the beginning of the academic field of anthropology.

Although notable Greek figures are not entitled as founders of anthropological theory, the othering tendencies of a self-other dichotomy are indeed observable within the methodologies of these prospective purveyors of anthropological thought in the West. Similar to the upcoming academic field, ancient Greeks also established clear distinctions between themselves and those of other cultures whom they researched or observed.

²⁵ Ibid., 6.

Anyone of non-Greek origin labelled a βάρβαδος, from which the English word “barbarian” is derived, thus noting an early instance of researchers (and entire civilizations) in the West explicitly differentiating themselves from those around them. As the torch of the West transferred to the Romans, such a mentality persisted. In fact, Rowe even suggests that the Greco-Roman West remains the unparalleled master of “ethnocentric prejudice.”²⁶ Their sociocentrism fostered a self-other dichotomy that has trickled down throughout the centuries of Western civilization.

Throughout the progression of Greco-Roman antiquity, such “nascent” anthropological perspectives nevertheless subsisted. References to a budding cultural relativism emerged in Sophist ideologies; universalism and the conventions of cultural institutions were discussed in the philosophies of Socrates (c. 470-399 B.C.) and Plato (c. 428-348 B.C.). Even Plato’s *Republic* reimagined the attributes that would characterize an ideal civilization based upon his perceptions of human nature.²⁷ Though largely deemed to be within the field of philosophy, these scholars contributed significantly to the development of Western thought and the ways in which it approached the study of the essence of human nature before the recognition of anthropology as an academic discipline.²⁸

With antiquity shifting into the Middle Ages, Western civilization was molded by the intellectual traditions and cultural influences of both Greco-Roman and Germanic societies, with ideology further inspired by the philosophical movements of the Middle

²⁶ Ibid., 14.

²⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004).

²⁸ Erickson and Murphy, *The History of Anthropological Edition: Fourth Edition*, 2.

Ages. As the torch of Western civilization was passed to Rome, the term “West” was coined to differentiate between the language and cultural divisions of the Greek East and Roman West, which was further exacerbated by the divide in the Roman Empire. The ideological traditions of the Greco-Roman period were soon slowly usurped and grounded in an emphasis on Judeo-Christian values. It provided laws that governed nearly all aspects of human life, from birth until death, and directed philosophical inquires and discussions. European identity, and therefore Western identity, unified in its emphasis on Christianity.²⁹

It was within the Western Renaissance following the European Middle Ages that Jacob Pandian and John Rowe identified the first purveyors of modern anthropological studies, whom first began to participate in comparisons of Western culture with non-Western ones.³⁰ Spanning from approximately the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the Western Renaissance was characterized by its emphasis on humanism. Humanism is a philosophical system of thought that revitalized the study of the Greek and Roman scholars from classical antiquity, as opposed to the medieval scholasticism of the Middle Ages, and produced the field of study known as the humanities. These scholars emphasized an anthropocentric way of thinking, stressing an understanding of humanity that focused on its innate value and inherent goodness. Such anthropocentrism exacerbated the Western centrism exhibited by their ancient predecessors, which provided a basis from which comparative studies were implemented. These studies were

²⁹ B.W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 32.

³⁰ Rowe, “The Renaissance Foundations of Anthropology,” 1-20; Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 8.

primarily between those of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages that had previously explored the question as to the nature of humanity, such as the fore-mentioned scholars.³¹ Whereas medieval scholars had not acknowledged the differences that existed between Greco-Roman antiquity and their own age, the people of the Renaissance began to view classical civilization as something other than their own, and were fascinated. The comparative studies that were conducted between the culture of the Western Renaissance with those of classical antiquity gave rise to anthropological discourse, while also providing a basis from which future anthropological studies could be constructed.³² As Rowe states, “Renaissance studies of classical antiquity not only stimulated a general interest in differences among men, they also provided models for describing such differences.”³³

The term *anthropologia* as a discipline of study was also first coined during this Western Renaissance by German philosopher Magnus Hundt (1449-1519) and Otto Casmann (1562-1607), and was soon anglicized into the English word “anthropology.”³⁴ Deriving its etymology from the Greek word *ἄνθρωπος*,³⁵ meaning human, Hundt, Casmann, and other pursuers of anthropological inquiries strived to provide a holistic

³¹ Rowe, “The Renaissance Foundations of Anthropology,” 2.

³² Sundar Sarukkai, “The Other in Anthropology and Philosophy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 24 (June 14-20, 1997): 1406, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.baylor.edu/stable/4405512>.

³³ Rowe, “The Renaissance Foundations of Anthropology,” 1.

³⁴ Samuel S. Kottke, “Vindication of Jewish Cultural Anthropology,” *Koroth: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium on Medicine in Bible and Talmud* 9, special issue (Dec 1988): 19, http://primo.nli.org.il/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=NLI&docId=RAMBI71205968050005171.

³⁵ The suffix *-logy* either derives from the Latin word *logia*, meaning “study,” or the Greek word *λόγος*, meaning “word.” Despite debates on the etymology of the word, it falls within the category of English anglicizations of the French suffix *-logie*, or the Latin suffix *-logia*, used to designate the study of a specific subject.

study of the relationships between the social, cultural, psychological, and biological factors that encompass human nature. The human being, therefore, is studied as “not only a biological being...but also in his historical development” and “in his wholeness,” meaning that both the physical and spiritual elements that encompass humanity were considered essential components of an anthropological study.³⁶ Overall, the discipline ventured to define human nature by means of itself, thereby relying on interdisciplinary methods to discover what it means to be human.³⁷

What distinguished anthropology from other disciplines, according to anthropologist Jacob Pandian, was not simply the study of people and cultures, but the comparative study of such, an aspect of anthropology that has remained consistent since the Western Renaissance. Various tradesmen – travelers, administrative officials, militia, etc. – collected descriptions of people they encountered as the introduction of vast empires and extensive roadways launched the steady trek towards globalization. It was cross-cultural comparison, however, that differentiated anthropology as a unique academic discipline among those who studied or categorized other cultures. Rowe corroborates Pandian’s claim, concurring that the distinguishing attribute of the discipline lies within its recognition of the scientific value of diversity as an important attribute in explicating human nature.³⁸ During the Western Renaissance, this equated to comparative studies between the present and the civilizations of classical antiquity. Yet, since anthropology is a discipline founded in the Western tradition, this inadvertently translates

³⁶ Kottek, “Vindication of Jewish Cultural Anthropology,” 19.

³⁷ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 101.

³⁸ Rowe, “The Renaissance Foundations of Anthropology,” 1.

into the study of the differences that exist between Western and non-Western cultures, with Western society acting as a normative basis from which deviations are observed and recorded. Western anthropology is founded upon a binary opposition that distinguishes between those that are within Western civilization and those that are not.

As Western society transitioned into the Age of Discovery, this opposition created what anthropologists refer to as the Anthropological Other, a term used to consolidate any reference to cultures that exist outside of the Western tradition, with the Western tradition in contrast becoming known as the Self. Pandian argues that the Self is not an innate conception, but one that is taught or acquired as “symbols that refer to or signify similarities and differences among human beings and that connote the significance of human existence.”³⁹ The Self is not, according to Pandian, an individual, but a collective identity, often manifesting in either patriotic sentiments or religious orientations, a reflection of significant cultural values within the society into which a child is born. In this instance, the West. Indeed, individuals are not entirely separable from the culture in which they are a participant, and those who exhibit personality traits and cultural values that are considered idealized within their society will they themselves be idealized, whereas those who do not are considered culturally deviant, or abnormal. The Other functions as a juxtaposition to what is idealized. It is not quite a descriptive classification, but more epistemological. The foundation of anthropological methodology for the entire discipline is therefore rooted in this self-other dichotomy.

Whereas the Other in the Western Renaissance was equated to the Greco-Roman predecessors, Erickson and Murphy note that the Anthropological Other as a

³⁹ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 41.

juxtaposition to the idealized West arose during the Age of Discovery that characterized the period between the early fifteenth-century to the early seventeenth-century. The era of European exploration introduced the scholarship of the Western Renaissance that sought to define and understand human nature through comparative studies to peoples whose cultural values and customs were drastically different than their own. Those who were versed in anthropological scholarship during the Age of Discovery were thought to provide objective and unprecedented attention to the descriptions of the native peoples they encountered during the age of European exploration, having been better trained in the observation and documentation of cultural differences.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the nations that participated in these expeditions of discovery depended on the collection of descriptions of the people they encountered for the sake of the imperialization and colonization of these foreign lands, which justified the study of such cultures through anthropological methods. This would spur future generations of anthropologists to refer to anthropology as “the offspring” or even “the handmaiden” of colonialism.⁴¹

For anthropologists – and Western society as a whole – the existence of this “New World” posed the challenge of how to reconcile such diverse cultures with the epistemological theory of psychological solidarity. A similar concept was coined “psychic unity” by German ethnographer Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) in the nineteenth-century, but both broadly held that human nature was unified as one species in a specific unilineal evolutionary manner, and all possessed the same capabilities for cultural change

⁴⁰ Rowe, “The Renaissance Foundation of Anthropology,” 12-14.

⁴¹ Stanley Diamond, “Anthropology in Question” in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 401.; Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, ed., *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 1991), 22.

and progression.⁴² Though the theory of evolution had yet to be proposed, it was still largely held that humanity was unified in certain spiritual or mental properties, corroborated by Christian doctrine on the unity of humankind as children of the Triune God. At the time, the existence of such diverse cultures was not conducive to these natural (and biblical) laws that were thought to govern human social and intellectual progression.

To reconcile the existence of these other cultures, imperial nations implemented a pastoral power upon these societies, which was utilized as a means of justifying the colonization of such culturally diverse nations. The concept of the “pastoral power” was coined by Foucault in 1999 to describe the “operating power” within “hierarchical social relations which strive for the eradication of error and ‘other’ forms of false or non-knowledge.”⁴³ In other words, the wanting well-being of these other nations that were lacking in intelligence and civilization necessitated a pastoral-like guidance from the prosperous and knowledgeable West to lead them out of the undeveloped societies in which they lived. However, within the age of imperialism, such nations categorized as the Other were defined in terms of “savagery” and “primitiveness” in comparison to the civilized Western imperial nations. The West – in a manner comparable to that of their Greek predecessors – maintained an “ethnocentric prejudice” that prioritized the endorsing of their own ethnic superiority. Thus originated the concept of the Anthropological Other.⁴⁴ Not only were these other cultures equated with primitiveness,

⁴² Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, 31.

⁴³ Paul-François Tremlett, “‘The Self’ and ‘The Other’ in Disciplinary Anthropology,” *Anthropology Matters Journal* 5, no. 2 (2003), 1, <https://doi.org/10.22582/am.v5i2.118>.

⁴⁴ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, 11.

but the prevailing theory among anthropologists was that these societies actually epitomized the savagery of primitive civilizations from which developed Western nations had progressed. They were, in a sense, living fossils. The objective of initial research in this prototypical anthropology was thus to document these “vestigial remains of darkness” in order that humankind “might know something of the savagery from which it had emerged, and rest easy that the long night was finally over.”⁴⁵ Colonialism was justified by a need to bring salvation to the undeveloped peoples that were branded the “Other,” and while documenting the remnants of their cultures, enforce their unavoidable enlightenment. The anthropology of this age both struggled with and advocated for the inevitability of the disappearance of these primitive societies in the wake of colonial expansion.⁴⁶

Empiricism in Anthropology

The influence of the Scientific Revolution that approximately spanned from as early as the thirteenth-century to as late as the seventeenth-century and the subsequent Enlightenment era ignited a shift in paradigms for anthropological theory. With the intro of empiricism, which can be described as the notion that “all knowledge is reducible to brute facts” and “immediate experience,” the binary opposition that existed between the self and the other was further emphasized, thus corroborating the unilineal evolutionary and psychological solidarity theories of early anthropologists.

⁴⁵ Tremlett, “‘The Self’ and ‘The Other’ in Disciplinary Anthropology,” 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

Previous epistemologies were derived from medieval Christian theological interpretations of the universe, which – at the time – endorsed a geocentric, and therefore anthropocentric, cosmology. Since the introduction of the heliocentric model of the universe proposed by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), as opposed to the geocentric Ptolemaic model, scholars deviated from the widely-held theological interpretations of cosmology and universal laws, aided by the natural philosophies of researchers such as Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727).⁴⁷ The enlargement of the natural world that followed from European exploration intensified the pursuit of natural philosophy – the term that then classified what today is known as science. The theories and observations of such natural philosophers – such as the Copernican heliocentric universe – went against common sense for Western society (i.e., the sun *appears* to rotate around the earth as seen by observing the sky), thereby challenging the existing paradigms of the Catholic Church.

Although not all natural philosophers were overtly anti-Christian in their approaches, the propensity of forthcoming scientists, however, to scrutinize the traditional Christian models and supplant theology for the empirical sciences was certainly characteristic of this age and proceeding generations. The rise of the theory of Positivism exemplified such tendencies. The theory of Positivism asserted that human thought underwent three different stages in the progression of knowledge: theological, metaphysical, and positive. The creator of the theory, Comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), claimed that the social sciences – which included anthropology – had bypassed the first stage of knowledge, the theological stage, after the Middle Ages, and was currently

⁴⁷ Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 7.

enduring the metaphysical stage within the abstract reason of the Enlightenment. The forthcoming transition into the positive stage would be abetted by empirical reason and scientific inquiries.⁴⁸ Religion, to Comte, represented the most primitive branch of knowledge, and empirical reason offered a progression out of such superstition. Soon, medieval predecessors and theologians were equated with the other, as well, whose epistemologies and intellect were primitive to that of modern scientists.

For some scholars, the epistemologies that emerged to supplant theology were grounded in the philosophy of deduction, which described the act of surmising logical conclusions on the basis of self-evident ideologies.⁴⁹ Distinguished philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) utilized such deductive methods to deduce his famous assertion *cogito ergo sum*, “I think therefore I am.” For Descartes, such a conclusion was evidential of a larger universal principle: the existence of a fundamental dualism that categorized the world into pairs such as the mind vs. the body, spiritual vs. physical, or even the self vs. the other – providing deductive, philosophical evidence to the existence of an othering narrative within the West.⁵⁰ Due to Descartes contributions, and the concurring philosophies of distinguished scholars such as John Locke (1632-1704) and Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Western society began to transition towards a desire for ontological certainty of physical and mental affairs through scientific methodologies that emphasized empiricism and incontestable, observable truths. This empirical knowledge ought to explicate ourselves and those around us. Evocative of Descartes own

⁴⁸ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, 19.

⁴⁹ Erickson and Murphy, *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*, 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7; Ralph M. Easton, ed., *Descartes: Selections* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1927).

contributions to this epistemological transition, scholars have coined such a need for empirical truth Cartesian anxiety.

For anthropologists, empiricism contributed to the unity of anthropological thought into one consistent discipline. Previously, the term “anthropology,” signifying broadly to the study of humanity, was utilized by countless authors across numerous disciplines, with little to no precision in reference to a specific academic epistemology. The foundational epistemologies of academic anthropology was indeed founded within the Western Renaissance, but anthropologists such as Marvin Harris accredit the era of the Enlightenment to the birth of anthropology as a field of academic research due to the unity empirical methods provided.⁵¹ Anthropological methodologies relied on empiricism to conduct objective participant observation in fieldwork, through which an anthropologist describes the language, lifestyles, and structure of the observed culture.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the evident dangers of the entanglement of empiricism with a society instituted upon a self-other dichotomy became evident. With the introduction of biological determinism, natural philosophers within Western imperial nations began to justify racial superiority on the basis of the degenerative nature of other races. As exemplified in Stephen Gould’s Mismeasure of Man, the theory of degenerationism held that “races have declined to different degrees” from “Eden’s perfection.”⁵² The theory that races have degenerated at different rates from perfection arose out of prejudiced, *prima facie* beliefs that certain races were superior to others, while also adhering to the common lineage of humanity outlined in Christian doctrine.

⁵¹ Marvin Harris, *Rise of Anthropological Theory* (Maryland: Rowman Altamira, 2001).

⁵² Stephen Jay Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980).

Due to the pastoral power of the Age of Discovery, and the equating of non-Western peoples with savagery, it was widely held among the West that the Caucasian race represented the superior people. Science was now a means to objectively prove such sentiments.

Expounding upon the tenets of biological determinism, Western scholars developed two theories concerning the degenerative nature of inferior races: monogenism and polygenism. Monogenism recognized the unity of humankind having descended from one Adam, yet each race degenerated at different rates from Adam's perfection, with the Caucasian race consequently the least degenerated. Considering the fallen nature of humanity emphasized by the Church, this was a popular theory to explain the existence of such primitive peoples. On the other hand, some scholars advocated for polygenism, which suggested that other races were in fact different species entirely, descended from different Adams. In an effort to objectively differentiate between Western peoples and Others, the West not only justified their own ethnic superiority, but completely dehumanized the Other in the process.

Such conditions were only intensified by the introduction of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. In his work *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) explicated his theory of natural selection, the process by which organisms more adapted to their environment survive and reproduce, thereby resulting in the evolution of species as more profitable variations in genetics are inherited by progeny.⁵³ Though Darwin's theory of natural selection was not wholly received by all, his insistence on the common descent of humanity was widely accepted, thereby contributing to scholars'

⁵³ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 81.

disenchantment with polygenism by the end of the century. Yet evolution only slightly reframed the perception of racist sentiments. Instead of the degeneration of races, people now advocated for the theory that races evolved at different rates in a manner consistent with theories of monogenism.

Equipped with empirical methodologies and the Anthropological Other as their object of research, anthropologists also began to exacerbate the opposition that existed between the self and the other as the field gained its own academic prowess. Building off of the popularity of Darwin's evolutionary theory, the theory of cultural evolutionism obtained prominence as the first recognized theory in academic anthropology. Cultural evolutionism described the unilineal growth by which a culture was believed to develop overtime, and late-nineteenth century anthropologists held that all cultures progressed through the same stages until attaining civilization. As opposed to advocates of biological determinism, cultural evolutionists tended to propose that culture was the most determinative factor of human behavior and personality. Although cultural evolutionism did not derive its main tenets from Darwin's theory of natural selection, the popularity of the theory of evolution heavily contributed to the thought processes of cultural evolutionists such as Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1888) and accredited father of modern anthropology, Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1888).

Cultural evolutionist, accredited father of academic anthropology, and first professor of anthropology, Edward Burnett Tylor – is one of the first anthropologists to provide academic anthropology with a definition of the construct of culture, which acts as the “unifying concept” of the entire discipline and what Tylor believed was the

determinative factor of a person's behavior and personality.⁵⁴ Culture itself is not easily definable, yet Tylor summarized culture in his work *Primitive Culture* as follows:

Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action.⁵⁵

Anthropology analyzes culture through its prominent facets, such as its stories and myths, symbols, technology, and infrastructures, in order to gauge in what manner a participant in a culture is expected to behave and exist in compliance with the way in which that society has sought to understand, adapt to, and find meaning in the world around them. Like human biology, culture – according to Tylor – abides by certain cultural laws observable through scientific methodologies, which anthropology ought to seek to explicate. Through such laws, culture progresses and evolves, thereby resulting in the various stages of cultural development through which societies will evolve until reaching the civilization.

In his work *Ancient Society*, American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan categorized the stages through which cultures progressed through cultural evolution into three distinct ethnical periods. The “lineal historical pathway of evolutionary progress” through which humanity progressed began in a state of savagery, and through the development of institutions such as invention, religion, and government, slowly evolved into barbarism. Only through the establishment of written language was a society granted

⁵⁴ Fluehr-Lobban, *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology*, 5.

⁵⁵ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (New York: Gordon Press, 1873).; Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 32.

the status of “civilization.”⁵⁶ On the one hand, Morgan’s thesis concluded that human degradation was no longer a tenable explanation for the existence of “savage” peoples. However, Morgan utilized the examples of living civilizations to characterize each ethnical period, thereby delineating some peoples classified as the Anthropological Other as less culturally evolved than Western society.

Throughout the progression of the West from its conception in Greco-Roman antiquity to the end of the nineteenth-century, the anthropological perspective was slowly surfacing as Western society began to distinguish themselves from the civilizations around them. The academic interest of comparative research between differing societies was fostered in the Western Renaissance, though the “ethnocentric prejudice,” however, that prompted the zealous Greek nationalism of the early West was also inculcated into the foundations of Western civilization. The existence of a multitude of dissimilar cultural institutions – as the European Age of Discovery uncovered – challenged the prevailing paradigms of the era, while also providing new regions in which Renaissance comparative studies could be implemented, thus inventing the concept of the Anthropological Other. Yet as empiricism redefined the field of anthropology into a distinct discipline, scientific methodology was elicited to bolster both racist and ethnocentric sentiments, reflecting the “othering” tendencies existent not only within academia, but in the prevailing Western ideologies. Anthropology was founded with the objective of empirically justifying this Western centrism.

⁵⁶ Lewis Henry Morgan, “Ethnical Periods,” in *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy (University of Toronto Press, 2013) 40-48.

The Birth of American Cultural Anthropology

American cultural anthropology marked a shift in the objectives of anthropological studies in the West, as the “relativist turn” of the twentieth-century began to question the foundational assumptions that had characterized the discipline up until then.⁵⁷ Whereas the previous discourse had been explicitly dependent upon the Anthropological Other as an object of research, the founder of American cultural anthropology, Frank Boas (1858-1942), challenged the psychological solidarity advocated by European anthropological theory, which corroborated the shift towards an anthropology that emphasized and celebrated the inherent diversity in culture.⁵⁸ Yet this paradigmatic shift in anthropological research ignited the inability of modern studies to unanimously define the field of anthropology, for the usage of the self-other dichotomy to justify Western centrism within the history of the discipline sparked controversy as to the purpose of anthropological scholarship.

Previous American schools of anthropology, occupied by notable scholars such as Samuel George Morton (1799-1851) and Josiah Clark Nott (1804-1873), had advocated for the scientific racist ideologies of the nineteenth-century, including polygenism and degenerationism. Their advocacy was even linked to the defenses of slavery that plagued the American populace from its conception until the Civil War.⁵⁹ Following the victory of the Union, much of the American people still retained their racist sentiments, evinced by the race wars and segregation that punctuated the twentieth-

⁵⁷ Tremlett, “‘The Self and ‘The Other’ in Disciplinary Anthropology,” 3.

⁵⁸ Erickson and Murphy, *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*, 95.

⁵⁹ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, 67.

century, culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the decades following. Yet as the West shifted in their understanding of equality and the inherent differences in humankind, the discipline of anthropology followed.

Utilizing a historical perspective, Boas demonstrated that each culture could not, as previously believed, follow one unilineal evolutionary tract due to the complex histories of the dissimilar cultures. Cultural evolutionists utilized the presence of similar customs among different cultures as evidence for their theorem, an observation which Boas does not deny. Yet Boas noted that their position presupposed that definite universal laws governed the fluctuation within all cultures, and that “cultural development is, in its main lines, the same among all races and all peoples.”⁶⁰ Nevertheless, he attributes these patterns to a considerable amount of “diffusion” – or the spreading and interchanging of various cultural inventions between peoples – and mass migrations to other parts of the globe.⁶¹ This requires an immense persistence of particular cultural traits within humankind, but Boas favors such hypotheses over the suggestion that cultures progress through ethnical stages in a unilinear manner (as Morgan hypothesized). Instead, cultures were molded and determined by complex and unique historical events.⁶² Marvin Harris later identified such ideologies as “American historical particularism,” or the theory that each culture had its own unique historical track from which it proceeded and through which it developed distinctively from other peoples.⁶³

⁶⁰ Frank Boas, “The Methods of Ethnology” in *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 105.

⁶¹ Frank Boas, “The Methods of Ethnology,” 106.

⁶² Erickson and Murphy, *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, 95.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 95.

Boas' attempt to discredit the cultural evolutionism of the nineteenth-century was wrought by his recognition that such a theory in anthropological scholarship was inherently and excessively ethnocentric and biasedly attributed the variability of humankind to race. To combat the racist sentiments that had spurred anthropological scholarship prior to the twentieth century, Boas radically denounced the scientific empiricism of the nineteenth-century within anthropological theory. This was primarily a response to the hereditary focuses of post-Darwinian sciences, which sought to verify the superiority of Western civilization through scientific racism. Yet such a pronouncement drastically shifted the methodologies of anthropological inquiries back towards the humanism of the Renaissance. While Boas relied heavily on empirical methods to record ethnographic observations, he decried its scientific element as non-relevant for anthropological inquiries. Later anthropologists retained much of Boas' historical particularism, particularly the appreciation of the uniqueness of diverse cultures – or else they maintained the denouncement of Western centric anthropology – but the levels to which scientific methodologies are employed vary. In fact, it is through its analysis and appreciation of culture that the field of anthropology becomes a beautifully wrought exploration of human existence, as it actively strives to encourage an awareness and respect for those attributes of human life that exemplify diversity. Indeed, many anthropologists today are often regarded as advocates of cultural humility, being highly versed in the structural function of culture in society and also more acquainted with the unique representations of humanity that exist across the world.

To tackle the extensiveness of the diverse cultural complexities American anthropologists sought to explicate, anthropology developed into four subfields of

research: biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and cultural anthropology. Biological anthropology – or physical anthropology – explores the “evolutionary origins and diversity” of the human species, *Homo sapiens*, including our evolutionary predecessors and lineages. The field utilizes primarily scientific methodologies, such as genetic research, primatology, and paleoanthropology to explicate the physical attributes that have historically characterized human beings.⁶⁴ Archaeologists specialize in human material remains through the analysis of artifacts, written records, and infrastructural remains such as ancient ruins.⁶⁵ Working alongside biological anthropologists, geologists, and even historians, archaeologists study human societal remnants as a means to understanding the development of human civilization. As opposed to the material focuses of the two former subfields, linguistic anthropologists are concerned with the evolution and development of both spoken and written language and its association with the cultural and societal factors that comprise the identity of a group of peoples.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, it is cultural anthropology that acts as the overarching subfield of anthropological studies, since it is most directly concerned with the study of the previously mentioned “unifying concept” of the entire discipline: culture.⁶⁷ The objects of cultural anthropologists’ studies include primarily non-Western cultural groups and societies, thus utilizing ethnographical methodologies to study morality, societal infrastructures, religious infrastructures, and the symbols that characterize a group of people. The twentieth-century following Boas’ paradigm shift was characterized by an

⁶⁴ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, xix.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁶⁷ Fluehr-Lobban, *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology*, 5

emphasis on participant-observation fieldwork, in which individual anthropologists would live in close association with the cultures they sought to study. This was a trademark of anthropological studies.⁶⁸ The resulting ethnographies are then utilized by anthropologists to develop theories concerning specific aspects of human nature as can be revealed through inductive reasoning. Anthropological theories are constructed from such observations, acting as an “intellectual framework” upon which an anthropologist will develop their research.⁶⁹

Yet the distinguishing attribute of American anthropological studies is not simply the study of cultural institutions. Throughout the twentieth-century, modern anthropology was much more appropriately defined as the study and analysis of the observable differences that exist in humanity. Biological anthropologists often compare human remains based on demographic and environmental factors. Archaeologists juxtapose civilizations and their remnants to reveal both patterns and incongruities in human societies. Linguistic and cultural anthropologists rely on conceivable differences and patterns in societal functions and cultural development to construct hypotheses concerning human nature. If anthropology was primarily defined by the study of people and cultures, then there would be nothing to differentiate it from the other disciplines in the social and physical sciences.

Indeed, compared to the Western centric objectives of the roots of anthropological scholarship, the objective for modern academic anthropology contrasts sharply with its predecessors. Modern anthropology can today be defined as the holistic study of the

⁶⁸ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 87.

⁶⁹ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, xix.

question, “What is humanity?” The existence of a multitude of dissimilar cultural institutions throughout humanity formed gaps within the truths that could be known about human nature, and in order to compose a theory concerning the nature of humankind, such cultures must be studied and contrasted with that of the West. The existence of the Anthropological Other was still prominent, and its epistemological foundation was still rooted in the need to differentiate between those who were within Western civilization and those who were not. Yet the contrasts between what is considered the Self, or “us,” and what is considered the Other, or “them,” are documented in order to theoretically reconcile a comprehensive illustration of the nature of humankind. In order to understand the “totality of the human experience,” the Other must be empirically observed and understood.⁷⁰

Since empirical methodologies in academic anthropology originated in the West, anthropologist, Sundar Sarukkai, would claim that harm is done against the Other through this empirical research:

There is an ethical responsibility not to violate the other by reducing it to one’s own system of thought. The violence arises in ignoring this a priori ethical call. Ignoring the call is also to view the other as an object of knowledge. Doing so only eliminates the identity of the other and refigures it in the eyes of the subject, ‘thereby incorporating the other into the identity of the constituting subject’ [Powell 1995].⁷¹

As Sarukkai claims, the underlying issue in the Anthropological Other as an object of research is that the Other is reduced to the intelligibility of the anthropologist, thereby subjecting the non-Western Other to Western epistemologies, usually without consulting

⁷⁰ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 8.

⁷¹ Sarukkai, *The Other in Anthropology and Philosophy*, 1407.

the appropriate non-Western epistemologies or philosophies. The competency of the research is then dependent on the competency of the anthropologist, meaning that the resulting research becomes less of an appropriate description of the cultural groups that the anthropologist is describing, and more of a reflection of the anthropologist's ability to apply modern anthropological theory to that cross-cultural study.⁷²

Anthropologists have attempted to settle such accusations by appealing to the objectivity of empirical research. Levi-Strauss counter-argues the opposition to empirical research in his work *Structural Anthropology*, stating that the empirical methodologies that objectify the Other allow the anthropologist “to assess more objectively the facts pertaining to the human condition.”⁷³ Marvin Harris' (1927-2001) theory of cultural materialism further addresses this concern, as well, which he considered to be “a central problem for scientific anthropology: people can be both subjects and objects of scientific investigations.”⁷⁴ Harris attempts to rectify the problem by categorizing different types of objective research. He first divided the research into the behavioral field, what people do, and the mental field, what people think. Harris then distinguished between the observations and interpretations of the native informant of an ethnography, which he called the *emic* perspective, and the observations and interpretations of the researcher, or the *etic* perspective. Harris' theory of cultural materialism was met with varying success among following generations of anthropologists, but his attempts to reconcile the Self and the Other in his research mirrored the struggles experienced by other anthropologists

⁷² Ibid., 1409.

⁷³ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 126.

⁷⁴ Marvin Harris, “The Epistemology of Cultural Materialism” in *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*, ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 263.

of the age. Nevertheless, anthropologist Samar Saran retorts to these assertions that insofar as objective truths are perceived through the biases and intellectual methods of the anthropologist, they cannot be purely objective. The ethnographies that are constructed in these empirical studies cannot be dissociated from the identity of the ethnographer itself.

Apart from the concerns of anthropological methodologies creating objective conclusions, Edward Said (1935-2003) proposes that this dichotomy is not only of epistemological consequence, but of ethical importance, as well. In his book, *Orientalism*, Said evaluates the objectification and subjugation of colonized Eastern Asian peoples and the creation of the term “Oriental” as an “otherizing” label:

Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men into ‘us’ (Westerners) and ‘they’ (Orientals). For such divisions are generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends.⁷⁵

Said evaluates that the Anthropological Other – manifesting in this instance as the term “Oriental” – was established under a historically unadmirable context, and the continued usage of it as a means to research reflected the hostility of its prejudiced predecessors. Such was the opinion of many postcolonial anthropologists, who critiqued the “global legacy of colonialism and imperialism” in light of the objectification and subjugation of colonized peoples.⁷⁶ It was brought to attention that most of the cultures that were studied

⁷⁵ Edward Said, “Knowing the Oriental” in *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*, ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 333.

⁷⁶ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, 138.

by anthropologists were those who had been subjected to Western influence through Western colonialist or imperialist efforts, and thus these peoples were not able to resist the objectifying research of Western anthropologists.⁷⁷ Postcolonial theories undermined the West's ability to represent or objectify the cultures which it attempted to describe in anthropological inquires. It provided conditions about what descriptives could be provided about such peoples and illuminated the lack of distinction between verifiable truth and an ethnographer's interpretation. The authority of Western social and scientific institutes were scrutinized due to the influence of Western elitism, and the identities imposed upon peoples by Western descriptives were challenged.

In turn, Western anthropologists would turn the magnifying glass inward, investigating their own peoples without the ethnocentrism of cross-cultural analyses. Ethnographers attempted to shift from viewing the otherness in the non-Western to addressing the innate otherness in itself, thus viewing fieldwork as an opportunity to develop a sense of cultural relativism.⁷⁸ The challenge of the anthropologist thus became self-reflection, as one attempted to remove oneself from the Western identity into which it was born and view it as utterly different.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, such anthropologies are not an eradication of the concept of the Other, but instead a re-situating of perspective. The Self, in these anthropologies, becomes the Other, and thus anthropology as an institute of alienation is not reconciled in such methodologies.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 89.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷⁹ James Clifford, "Partial Truths" in *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*, ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 436.

⁸⁰ Pandian, *Anthropology of the Western Tradition*, 95.

Ultimately, however, it became evident that the Self and the Other were not easily reconcilable in anthropological theory. Though anthropology now sought to celebrate the cultural variations that existed across the globe – rather than exacerbate the “ethnic boundaries” that existed between the Self and the Other – empirical methodologies of explicating human beings by means of other human beings became problematic.⁸¹ It was at this time that anthropologists sincerely began to ask the question, “Who is the Other?” Overall, the irreconcilable nature of the Self and the Other led to the social deconstruction of anthropology into postmodernity. Postmodernism, on the one hand, has challenged anthropologists not to divorce the more objective, or empirical, facts of culture and society with those factors considered subjective, such as the mental state of those who are researched. Such could be a return to the study of both the physical and spiritual attributes of humankind, though the specificities associated with either object of research make it difficult to differentiate anthropology with the other social sciences. The disunification of academic scholarship in the wake of the critiques of past methodologies instilled the theory of cultural relativism, which describes the conviction that the veracity of knowledge is relative to the cultural tradition in which such knowledge exists. This therefore undermines ethnocentric perspectives, since it rejects the idea of a superior culture, thereby discrediting justification for imposing cultural influences on others.⁸² However, cultural relativism further accentuates the disunity of the field of anthropology. If truth is relative to culture – as some anthropologists contend – then a universal truth cannot be obtained. More so, an anthropology established within an “objective, rational

⁸¹ Ibid., 125.

⁸² Ibid., 23.

epistemology” necessarily removes the ethical responsibility of the researcher towards the one whom is being researched, since violence is done against the Other when it is reduced to the intelligibility of the observer.⁸³ The nature of humankind cannot be explicated through cross-cultural studies if such studies will not yield conclusions. Therefore, what is the purpose, if any, of the self-other dichotomy and the empirical documentation of the Other in modern anthropology? What is the benefit of anthropology itself?

In fact, the ethnographic accounts of anthropologists began to be considered as works of the genre of literature rather than the objective, empirical works of social scientists. Recognition that cultural descriptions were reduced to the intelligibility of the anthropologist sparked a shift of focus in anthropological theory from the actions of the participant-observer to the creation of ethnography, which were re-envisioned to be the “invention, not the representation, of cultures,” as the lines began to be blurred between empirical science and the creative arts.⁸⁴ In so far as fiction refers to the something that is “made or fashioned,” ethnographic writings were clumped into the category of fictive literature in order to preserve the ethnographer’s narrative without claiming such narrative to be factually representative of the observed society.

Indeed, Boas’ realization at the beginning of the twentieth-century that harm was done to the Other in anthropological research ignited a gradual paradigm shift in the entire discipline. Anthropologists began to exercise an ethical responsibility towards those whom they studied, in order to preserve their subjects’ dignity and privacy. In fact,

⁸³ Sundar Sarukkai, *The Other in Anthropology and Philosophy*, 1407.

⁸⁴ Clifford, “Partial Truths,” 424.

the Principles of Professional Responsibility adopted by the Council of the American Anthropological Association summarized this ethical response with their enacted motto, “Do No Harm.”⁸⁵ Yet as postmodernity took off in the West, anthropological methodologies themselves were criticized as being indicative of harm, and as a result, the very objectivity of the field was undermined, resulting in an emphasis on cultural relativism to accommodate for the lacking unity in the field. The plurality of moralities that have become evident in the study of cultural institutions have complicated the establishment of one universal moral code for anthropologists, but they are unified in their approach to at the very least “Do No Harm” as they attempt to “understand and to accommodate” the perspectives of others – particularly the Other.⁸⁶ This is especially important since, in comparison to other social sciences, anthropologists have the potential to directly affect the lives of those whom they research, since participant observation requires direct interaction with observed peoples.⁸⁷ The resulting dilemma, however, was a discipline lacking a profound explanatory element for conducted research, whether research ought to be informative or evaluative. Hardly is there today a distinct unity between the four broad fields of anthropological theory.

This is the burden that modern anthropologists face: the battle between cultural relativism and the existence of universal truth for the explication of the nature of the human species. The unreconcilable nature of the Self and the Other has led to the deconstruction of anthropology in modernity. Tracing examples of how anthropologists

⁸⁵ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, ed., *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), Appendix C.

⁸⁶ Fluehr-Lobban, ed., *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology*, 147.

⁸⁷ For reference of the ethical responsibility of anthropologists in human subjects research, see the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Ethics Forum: Principles of Professional Responsibility.

throughout the twentieth-century have struggled to reconcile the inevitability of the self-other dichotomy in modern anthropological discourse is revelatory of such, though not explanatory of its cause. The first step in the re-unification of the discipline, however, is the reconciliation of the Self and the Other both within anthropology and the entirety of Western Civilization in order to address and rectify the othering mentalities existent in American society.

CHAPTER THREE

Who is the Other?

Introduction

“For it would seem clear that no one can call upon Thee without knowing Thee, for if he did he might invoke another than Thee, knowing Thee not. Yet may it be that a man must implore Thee before he can know Thee? But, *how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? or [sic] how shall they believe without a preacher? And they shall praise the Lord that seeks Him; for those that seek shall find, and finding Him they will praise Him.*”

Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* 1.1.1

Understanding the history of anthropological theory, as Jacob Pandian asserts, is the first step in comprehending the rationalizations that have historically corroborated the justifications for the study of the Anthropological Other. The goal of this discussion is to understand why such a dichotomy has extended beyond the natural tendency to differentiate for the sake of self-identification and has manifested into such a detrimental epistemological system. As chapter three attempts to elucidate, at the intersection of anthropological and theological inquires lies a true explication of the Other as an epistemological framework created by the inability of Western civilization to recognize the Triune God as the Divine Other. Such an inability resulted in the elevation of idolized fabrications of God unintentionally created by the West within its own image, thus uplifting itself as a divine-like entity in comparison to others and manifesting the ethnocentric prejudices of Western civilization towards non-Western peoples. In a

radical dialogue between anthropology and theology, one can explicate the root of such an othering propensity, and thus elucidate the true identity of the Other. Since the Other is essentially the consolidation of any reference to what the Self is not, anthropological theory is a worthy topic of discourse for such an inquiry, for its expositions concerning human nature focus upon the study of the differences that are discernible between cultures, and therefore what classifies the distinctions between the Self and the Other.

Nevertheless, in order to explicate the Other, an understanding of that which unifies human nature must also accompany a discussion of its differences. Much of current anthropological theory, however, is divided following its social deconstruction with its inability to reconcile the Self and the Other as a unified discipline, as was discussed in chapter one. Whereas more scientific approaches to cultural anthropology presuppose the existence of objective and discoverable truths that can be known about human nature, postmodernity has advocated for cultural relativity, which describes the conviction that the veracity of knowledge is relative to the cultural tradition in which such knowledge exists. The opposition between universal truth and truth relativism challenges both the objectivity and the methodologies of the discipline, and therefore complicates the search for an answer to the question, “Who is the Other?” The introduction of the Christian perspective to the conversation serves to accommodate for the lack of unity in the anthropological discipline. The area of theology that attempts to articulate the implications of humanity’s relationship with God is appropriately entitled theological anthropology. As Erickson and Murphy assert, all peoples have their own anthropology, in so far that anthropologies refer to the presumptions held concerning the

nature of humankind.⁸⁸ Theological anthropology in the modern sense, however, should not be confused with pursuing anthropological research from a theological perspective, lest imposing a theological lens is detrimental to the attempt of an unbiased observation. This thesis, instead, attempts to put into conversation the two disciplines with their distinct methodologies as separate entities, to then interpret if the findings reveal patterns in the observations, such as in the case of the Anthropological Other.

The Existence of the Other

Considering the history of the Other within anthropological theory, as was explicated in the second chapter, it is prudent to assume that the Other is nothing more than a detrimental epistemology, a conceptual framework upon which Western civilization based not only its academic pursuits in anthropology, but also its ideological tradition. The subjectivity of the term as being in reference to a specific perspective further suggests that its existence is only epistemological. Such a framework has led to empirical attempts at justifying racist sentiments, the objectification and subjugation of colonial peoples, and the development of cultural and truth relativism as both anthropology and Western society attempts to reconcile the existence of the Other with the changing paradigms towards representation and cultural humility within the twenty-first century. From an anthropological perspective, the Other is merely a means to delineate a juxtaposition between Western and non-Western peoples. The term does an injustice to the people whom it describes, reducing them to the category of “different,” and even functioning as an instigator of dehumanization when we forget that the peoples

⁸⁸ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, xxi

whom anthropologists study are of the same species as those who research them. The Other cannot humanly describe anyone, whether Western or not, without doing harm to the people it describes, thereby exacerbating the ethnic boundaries that exist between “us” and “them.”

The “us” in such a dichotomy is most often referred to as the “Self.” This “Self,” as Pandian noted, is not an individual entity. Instead, it is considered a reflection of the environment into which a person is born, a collective identity, often manifesting in either patriotic sentiments or religious orientations.⁸⁹ Patriotism or pride in one’s Self-identity can manifest from such identifications, though nationalism and superiority-complexes can further develop if such pride exceeds appropriateness. On the one hand, the pervasive effects of such superiority-complexes that have been associated with the Self-identity of the West have contributed to the epistemological Other’s harmful influence. On the other hand, however, to ignore this distinction between the Self and the Other is similarly harmful to the peoples whom the Other misrepresents. Presuming sameness between peoples can lead to ignorance of the inherent uniqueness in cultures worldwide, which can precede mishaps in communication and cultural insensitivity. Such is the conundrum existent in a society built upon an “othering” epistemology. One must not mistake the trees for the forest, lest they run the risk of forgetting the unity of the forest itself, though one must also not forget the inherent differences existing among the individual trees.

The tendency to differentiate between a “Self” and an “Other” is apparent in nearly all manifestations of identity, not simply in anthropology. This dichotomy that exists between the Self and the Other is not something that is avoidable. At an individual

⁸⁹ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 41.

level, it is undeniable to suggest that one cannot physically or mentally remove themselves from their self, and likewise cannot truly understand what it means to be another individual, therefore a boundary between an individual self and another is inherent. Such is true for collective identities, as well. The existence of one logically necessitates the existence of the other, for being able to define what one *is* requires that one differentiates from what one *is not*. Such an attempt at Self-identification is common, and is even natural when considered logically. Language, culture, religious and political orientations, and even something as trivial as sports affiliations are a means of Self-identification, and a means of denoting distinguishing factors of one's collective identity. Therefore, if the Self is an existent entity, then the Other must be, as well. Though it has been unjustly utilized as an epistemological framework for Western ideologies, the Other is still an existent phenomena. For each Self, Western or not, there is an Other. Thus reiterates the question, "Who is the Other?"

Christianity in the Discipline of Anthropology

As mentioned in the previous chapter, within the complex history of anthropological theory, Christianity plays a vital role as an influencer of the Western tradition in which anthropology arose. Anthropologists both utilized and challenged the Christian paradigm within the academic discipline, and were ultimately unavoidably affected by its progression and impact. From an anthropological perspective, however, Christianity is no different than any other religious institution which anthropologists study, as being another indicator of cultural values among a people.

Anthropologists have attempted to explain away the spiritual or supernatural attributes of religion through various theories aimed at identifying the origin of religion itself. Whether this be through theories concerning animism, the construction of monotheism vs. polytheism, or the Freudian Oedipus complex, the aim has been to reduce religion to an explainable cultural construct, an ill-constructed and non-scientific attempt at understanding the inexplicable or coping with the inevitability of death, or even a form of societal control on the part of powerful political entities. The contributions of religious institutions to easing “the struggle for existence” for humanity is not diminished, however, but merely critiqued and analyzed in the hopes of discovering what innate religious impulse in human nature necessitates the establishment of religious institutions across all known annals of time.⁹⁰ It is an inquiry of interest to all those who study the nature of humanity, as to what predisposes humanity to the need of religion.⁹¹

In order to gauge the ways in which a religious institution functions in a society – what needs religion satisfies and the methods in which it does so – anthropologists study the religions of those societies that are considered primitive, or simpler in comparison to those in the West. Ethnographies are recorded and rituals scrutinized in order to discern why specific motifs and ritual symbols are utilized. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, defined religion as a system of “sacred systems [that] function[s] to synthesize a people’s... world views.”⁹² The rituals in their worship become a direct representation of

⁹⁰ William Howells, *The Heathens: Primitive Man and His Religions* (Wisconsin: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1948), 2.

⁹¹ Howells, *The Heathens*, 11.

⁹² Stephen Karatheodoris, “From Social to Cultural Systems and Beyond: Twenty Years after ‘Religion as a Cultural System,’” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 71, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 54-94, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.baylor.edu/stable/41178437>

that world view while simultaneously acting as a social control upon the community. Such social controls confine the individuals to the behaviors and actions to which one must abide to uphold this established world view, practices which “represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes.”⁹³ Such is the Self religious orientation to which the individual abides. Yet, as opposed to Pandian’s claims, the individual participant is not to be ignored, for it is each individual, not the society, that is considered religious.⁹⁴ Within the complex civilizations of the West, however, too many variables can complicate the conversation as to the purpose of religious institutes, so these primitive religions provide less complications in anthropological research.

For many anthropologists, Christianity is beyond the scope of anthropological inquiry for the sake of identifying the origin of religious institutes. Just as the other major world religions – such as Islam, Judaism, or Buddhism – Christianity has expanded across all of Western civilization, encompassing various cultural traditions, ethnicities, and languages. The ideologies of the Church were paramount in the development of the West and was similarly affected by the influence of its own constituents throughout the centuries, including prominent theologians such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas. Christianity survived and adapted as Western civilization transitioned from antiquity, to the Middle Ages, to the Modern Era, and as it underwent shifts in ideological paradigms with the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment. The history of the Church itself is irrevocably entangled within that of West; its affairs ignited wars, upheaved political and social orders, defined national borders, sparked moral

⁹³ Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), 1-46.

⁹⁴ Howells, *The Heathens*, 10.

controversy, and overall informed the worldviews and customs of Western civilization, thus providing a Self-identity for people across this society and even worldwide. To focus on a religion such as Christianity as an object of anthropological religious studies would not be conducive to a fundamental analysis of the foundation or origin of religion within humankind.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, Christianity is still definable as a religion within anthropological discourse, insofar as it can be broadly defined alongside other religions as a system that functions “to synthesize a people’s... world views” and institutes behaviors and actions to which its constituents must abide to uphold such world view. Indeed, the history of the Church itself is irrevocably entangled within that of Western Civilization; overall, the West’s foundational Judeo-Christian values informed the worldviews and customs of most all Western nations. Judeo-Christian ideology and its associated traditional practices permeated the lifestyle of Western civilization, beginning around the Hellenistic period with the interactions the Greeks had with Jewish communities. Like the philosophies of the Greco-Roman scholars, the Patristic Fathers and influential Church figures such as Augustine of Hippo sought to understand the nature of human existence, thus developing a Christian theological anthropology. From a Christian perspective, human nature was explicated within Scriptural texts, and could be better known in relation to an omniscient, omnipotent, and all-loving God.

Although Christians were originally heavily persecuted within the West, it was soon popularized and prospered within a society previously centralized in Greco-Roman tradition. Judeo-Christian ideologies slowly influenced the Greco-Roman foundation

⁹⁵ B.W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 32.

within Western culture, becoming paramount in both political and socioeconomic structures particularly after the fall of Rome and the Great Schism between the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church. The rise of Christianity within the Middle Ages led to the construction of universities, as the controversial discrepancies between faith and reason influenced the creation of philosophical ideologies like scholasticism or humanism, while also directly contributing to the eradication of several pagan practices and debatably leading to the dejection of some works of classical literature.⁹⁶

The unique position of Christianity, in fact, is that its influential position and extensive prominence within the West has established it as the primary religious orientation in which the Self-identity of most of Western society is identified. It is this relationship Christianity has with Western civilization that has led anthropologists such as Jacob Pandian to assert that the root of the self-other dichotomy within the West lies within the Christian religion itself, since it is arguably the most significant contribution to the formation of the West and the Western tradition.⁹⁷ Considering its influence within Western traditions, Christianity, even indirectly, also contributed significantly to the establishment of the discipline of anthropology. Yet according to Pandian in his work *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, Judeo-Christian ideology's most significant contribution to anthropology and the West is as the instigator of the self-other dichotomy.

The monotheistic God of both Judaism and Christianity is a God who is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and all-knowing; a fully perfect being. The absolute perfection of God contrasts sharply with His imperfect, fallen creation, thus

⁹⁶ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory: Fourth Edition*, 6.; Rowe, "The Renaissance Foundations of Anthropology," 8.

⁹⁷ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 42.

producing a dualism with distinct boundaries between what constitutes the divine and what does not.⁹⁸ Pandian claims that Christians perceive this duality within their own nature, delineating those characteristics of their nature which are comparable to the divine as part of their true-self, and the characteristics which are not divine as part of their un-true self:

The human experiences and characteristics that cannot be conceptualized with reference to god are identified as evil or abnormal and rejected as aspects of the self not connected with god. Thus a contrast between the true self and the untrue self is made, a contrast which is homologous to the contrast between grace and sin, orthodoxy and heresy, normal and abnormal, goodness and evil, holy and unholy, true knowledge and blasphemy, and so on.⁹⁹

During the rise of anthropology in the Western Renaissance, Pandian asserts that those characteristics which were attributed to the true-self became equated with Western society, while the other, unfavorable, characteristics came to define those of non-Western societies. Western society equated itself with the divine attributes, and regarded non-Western societies as embodying the characteristics of that which was considered not divine. Thus was established the Anthropological Other.

The prevailing presumption with this theory was that rather than God creating humankind in His image, it was Man who created God in *his* own image.¹⁰⁰ Religion thus becomes a means through which anthropologists can determine how a culture perceives itself, with divine entities embodying the characteristics of the Self that a society deems to be admirable or favorable. Of course, such a perspective can be nuanced considering

⁹⁸ T.M.S. Evens, *Anthropology as Ethics: Nondualism and the Conduct of Sacrifice*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

⁹⁹ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ Howells, *The Heathens*, 11.

the variety of gods and goddesses that manifest throughout world cultures, and the ways in which such peoples interact with their deities, but it is observable how such deities often possess the values or qualities a society esteems. A society's connection to such gods are then viewed in relation to these characteristics, and, as Pandian claims, can often result in such peoples adopting such divine attributes for themselves. In a sense, the dehumanization existent in the self vs. other dichotomy, therefore, is not, in fact, the "lessening" of the humanity of the Other, but the elevation of the Self to something beyond human.

This claim, however, calls to question the existent self-other dichotomy within Greco-Roman society as exemplified in chapter one. The Greeks were regarded as the unparalleled masters of "ethnocentric prejudice," a mindset which was similarly undertaken by their Roman imitators as the torch of West was passed from one civilization to the next. Therefore, it would seem that such propensity to differentiate between the Self and the Other existed before the prominence of the Christian God began to heavily influence the West. Greco-Roman antiquity, in fact, also demonstrated a tendency to equate or sustain authoritative figures by means of divine entities.

The importance of religion, or *religio*, in Roman identity is consistently alluded to throughout Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, or the section of Livy's historical work that outlined the history of the city of Rome from its conception. As Livy asserts in his preface, divine allusions saturated the foundations of Rome, which constituted the peak of Rome's morality. Roman mythological traditions held that Romulus and Remus were descended from divine ancestry, and such divinities even deified Romulus himself in one of the earliest legends of Livy's history. Yet Numa is often accredited as the founder of Roman

religion, since he established the Roman rituals and beliefs that were to be upheld by the Roman populace. For the sake of maintaining societal order, Numa is even believed to have falsified his own testimonies highlighting his interactions with deities, as Livy addresses in his history:

“...first of all, he incited a fear of the gods, a course particularly effective with an ignorant multitude and in those ages an uncivilized and most savage populace...that he had pretended to hold nightly meetings with the goddess Egeria...”¹⁰¹

Such instance clearly demonstrates that Livy considered Numa’s practices to be instituted for the sake of societal control of an unruly populace. This is corroborated by the fact that most anthropologists deem societal control to be the primary initiator of religious function within a society. Yet Livy does not admonish such a practice, and even suggests that Numa’s actions were commendable for Roman rulers. In fact, Livy’s support for the utilization of religious institutes for the sake of societal control is observable throughout his history, as he attributes the misfortune of the people to their negligence towards religion or the perverse ways in which they worshipped.¹⁰²

Yet Livy did not rebuke the fabrication of religious beliefs, because the institution of *religio* within Roman society was not primarily associated with its belief system. Instead, religion emphasized the rituals themselves, without the requirement of adhering to the belief of the traditional mythology.¹⁰³ The function of *religio* was to maintain societal control through an overall cohesion of Roman identity and cultural memory,

¹⁰¹ *The History of Rome, Vol. 1* by Titus Livius, ed. Ernest Rhys, trans. Rev. Canon Roberts (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1905).

¹⁰² Livy 1.32.8-10.

¹⁰³ D.S. Levene, *Religion in Livy* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1993), 13.

which the insistence on divine ancestry of the peoples and divine agency within the ruling authorities provided. Accuracy of the beliefs themselves was not necessary. Those of the citizens who were considered elite, such as Livy, are often accused of writing esoterically in their philosophies by emphasizing the importance of adherence to ritual while simultaneously suggesting that they themselves did not believe in such fantastical and supernatural superstitions, thus maintaining both necessary societal control while not equating themselves with the base citizens who still held such fantastical views.

Though accounts from the common Roman populace have not survived – and may not have ever existed – one might assume that their society maintained a sense of the self-other dichotomy that Pandian described Christians as possessing. Ideal cultural values were embodied by the gods, and Roman identity was elevated due to its association with the deities, as seen through its divine ancestry and the divine agency that was perceived as aiding their ruling elite. From their perspectives, their peoples were elevated in comparison to the peoples with whom they came into contact, further evinced by the imperialistic actions of the Roman people in the expansion of the Roman Empire. Even those who may not have believed in the gods and goddesses of their mythologies would have abided to the religious rituals, for participation in the rituals themselves was an idealized attribute within Greco-Roman society.

Yet what differentiated the Greco-Roman ethnocentrism with the self-other dichotomy Pandian attributes to Christianity was the attributes which represented the gods of each religion. Whereas the gods and goddesses of Greek and Roman mythology were changeable and anthropomorphic, the Christian God is described as omniscient, omni-present, unchangeable, all-loving, and omnipotent. The opposition created between

that which is considered divine and that which is considered human was stark in comparison to the dichotomy between the Greco-Roman civilians and their deities. Such an “absolutist statement” is then attributed to the nature of the humanity that upholds such a divinity, and thus the stark opposition becomes a division between them and those who are different than them.¹⁰⁴ Such absolutism was not only illustrative of the Christian God, but of the religion itself. Unlike its Greco-Roman predecessors, Christianity – similar to other major religions – maintained that Scripture alone represented universal truths, and the existence of God in this monotheistic religion necessitated that the gods of other religions were nothing more than false idols created by humankind. It was other religions, not Christianity, that man created in his image. Thus, according to Pandian, the dichotomy that prevailed within Western civilization was one that corroborated a blatant distinction between Christians and non-Christians: those who were representative of God’s divine attributes, and those who were not.

As Western civilization progressed, the divine attributes of the Christian God met the ethnocentrism of the West – as was perpetuated by Greco-Roman antiquity. Nation-states were formed manifesting into empires that championed Christian values and established political orders upon the foundation of Scriptural interpretations. Such empires attempted to provide societal structures founded upon Judeo-Christian values, thus accentuating the identification of the Western Self with the religious orientation of Christianity. One such value advocated by Christian doctrine was the idea of psychological solidarity, an “interpretative framework of medieval Catholicism” highlighting the theory of monogenesis, which held that all humanity descended from

¹⁰⁴ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 50.

Adam and Eve, the first humans created by God in the biblical book of Genesis.¹⁰⁵ This theory presumed the innate unity of humankind as children of God.

Yet as the era of European exploration introduced the Christian world to the diverse peoples inhabiting foreign lands, theologians faced the challenge of how to reconcile such diversity with the theory of psychological solidarity and the unity of humankind, thus contesting the existing paradigms. Some attempted to suggest that the non-Western or Other people were descendants of Cain or Ham “or others who had defied god and had degenerated.”¹⁰⁶ Others cited the biblical passage of the Tower of Babel as potentially clarifying such perplexities. Yet most all Christian nations equated these peoples with whom they came into contact as “savage” or “primitive” in comparison to the civilized Western imperial nations.¹⁰⁷ As chapter one explicated, thus originated the concept of the Anthropological Other. Whereas anthropologists saw these primitive civilizations as needing to be educated in order that they might adopt a more evolved cultural identity, Christians recognized a need for missionary evangelization, in order that such undeveloped and savage peoples might attain salvation.

The Christian identity that characterized the Western Self justified the colonialism of such societies for the sake of the call placed upon Christians in the New Testament to make disciples of all nations and convert the masses. Whether such a claim by Western nations was genuine or not is heavily contested by historians, and assumedly some missions were far more sincere in their discipleship than others. Yet the prevailing

¹⁰⁵ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 76.

¹⁰⁷ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, 11.

mentality was the reconciliation of the existence of these “other” cultures with Christian paradigms, and thus imperial nations implemented a “pastoral power” upon these societies. The concept of the “pastoral power” was coined by Foucault in 1999 to describe the “operating power” within “hierarchical social relations which strive for the eradication of error and ‘other’ forms of false or non-knowledge.”¹⁰⁸ For anthropologists and other authoritative officials, this equated to the imposed guidance of the prosperous and knowledgeable West upon these undeveloped nations. For Christianity, which saw itself as the “religion proper” as an absolutist and monotheistic religion, the native religions of the Other were regarded as “inadequately religious” in comparison.¹⁰⁹

It is in such an act as pastoral power that Pandian’s criticism is the most evident. For within the concept of pastoral power, “the image of shepherd and flock defined pastoral interaction as a relationship between an agent of salvation and Others encumbered by a particular lack (i.e., sin).”¹¹⁰ Such imagery has a biblical origin, in which the shepherd is allusive to Jesus, guiding and protecting God’s people as a shepherd leads his flock. As Western Christians were confronted with the peoples they delineated as Other, God’s sheep attempted to become the shepherd, thus assuming the divine attributes of their own shepherd. Whereas the dichotomy between humanity and the divine was meant to encompass all human nature, the West attributed to itself the attributes of the divine while imposing upon the Other the depraved attributes of humanity. The relations between the West and the Anthropological Other appeared to

¹⁰⁸ Tremlett, “‘The Self and ‘The Other’ in Disciplinary Anthropology,” 1.

¹⁰⁹ M. Arivalagan, “*Self*” Rather than the “*Other*”; *Towards a Subjective Ethnography of Kani Community* (Madras Institute of Development Studies, 2010), <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/198491/1/appendix.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Tremlett, “‘The Self and ‘The Other’ in Disciplinary Anthropology,” 1.

equate to the dehumanization of such Other, but in fact the resulting detrimental epistemology of the Anthropological Other within Western society was not the lessening of the humanity of the Other, but the elevation and deification of the Self.

Considering the prominence of the existence of the Anthropological Other throughout Western history – as explicated in the second chapter – this dichotomy Pandian accredited to the rise of the prominence of the Judeo-Christian God in the West has not yet been reconciled in the field of anthropology. In fact, as the fourth chapter will address, such a dichotomy created by the Christian-Self of Western civilization has persisted into the present-day, both as a result of the enduring effects of colonialism as well as the Christianization of the American identity.

To Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

Nevertheless, despite the clear exposition provided by Pandian as to the origin of the Other in the West, theological discourse on the matter reveals a vital flaw in the accusations of anthropologists. What is radical about Christian ideology is that instead of denying or exploiting the differences that exist between peoples, it instead calls all Christians to love others regardless. Based on direct interpretations of the Christian Scriptures, the Other as an epistemological basis for anthropological theory and Western ideologies appears to be founded on actions and beliefs that were inconsistent with theological understandings of humanity's relations to God.

Likewise to the discipline of anthropology, theology actively seeks to answer the philosophically-charged question, "What is humanity?" Christianity presupposes an existing unity across all humanity – which is unified as being made *Imago Dei*, or in the

image of God – though the methodologies by which it answers the question of humanity differ from that of anthropologists. The primary nature of humankind, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer asserts in his work *Creation and Fall*, can only be truly gleaned through the life of Christ explicated in the New Testament of the Bible.¹¹¹ Unlike the empiricism of anthropology, such analyses are primarily dependent upon Scriptural interpretations and metaphysical inquiries as to the nature of God and His relation to His creation.

Yet Christianity is not adverse to the empiricism of anthropologists. Various meta-narratives attempt to vilify Christianity as being opposed to reason and rejecting of the empirical paradigms of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment. In reality, however, the narrative of an “anti-science church” is a myth.¹¹² There have indeed been eras throughout history that have challenged the existing Christian paradigms – such as the proposal of the heliocentric cosmology as opposed to the widely-held geocentric view – though such instances do not evince an anti-scientific narrative. For, as St. Augustine contended, Christians “ought not to believe anything inadvisably on a dubious point, lest in favor to our error we conceive a prejudice against something that truth hereafter may reveal to be not contrary in any way to the sacred books...”¹¹³ Indeed, Augustine would advocate for a reinterpretation of Scripture instead of a denouncement of scientific reasoning, for anything observable within nature could never be contradictory to biblical deliberations of God’s creation. Furthermore, as Pandian himself agreed, the Christian

¹¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, trans. Douglas Stephen Bax (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) 62.

¹¹² Gerard M. Verschuuren, *The Myth of an Anti-Science Church: Galileo, Darwin, Teilhard, Hawking, Dawkins*, (New York: Angelico Press, 2019).

¹¹³ Galileo Galilei, “Letter to Madame Christina of Lorraine, grand duchess of Tuscany, Concerning the Use of Biblical Quotations in Matters of Science,” in *The Renaissance and Reformation in Northern Europe*, ed. Kenneth R. Bartlett and Margaret McGlynn (University of Toronto Press, 2014), 236.

presumption of the existence of universal laws and unchangeable realities gave legitimacy to scientifically researching cosmology, which relativism could not achieve.

Although they challenged the existing Christian paradigms, in continuance, natural philosophies were not overtly anti-Christian in their approaches. Sir Isaac Newton even accredited the elegant system of planets and cosmology that he observed to be designed by an intelligent and powerful being, namely God. The Church, itself, at times even adopted natural philosophy to corroborate theological claims, utilizing “natural reason,” or what could be observed in nature, to provide evidence for attributes that described God. As Scriptures states: “Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse.”¹¹⁴ Christianity’s adaptation to the empiricism of the new scientific age was to utilize its potentially apologetic capabilities, resulting in criticisms from both religious skeptics and Christians, as the Church sought to intersect religious reason with that of scientific inquiries. Anything discoverable in the natural world by scientific observation, furthermore, cannot be in opposition to Scriptural evidence. If discrepancies occur, either the observations are incorrect, or the interpretations of Christian doctrine ought to be revisited, thereby influencing scientific and theological discourse from antiquity to present times as theologians sought to unravel universal truths existent in God’s creation. Despite modern sciences assumption that Christianity is antithetical to scientific inquiries, theology has played a vital role in the fruitful development of the field of science, insofar as science is not contrary to incontestable theological interpretations of Scripture.

¹¹⁴ Romans 1:20, NRSV.

There is not a singular perspective, however, that theologians have agreed upon in terms of interpreting Scriptures, but as St. Augustine of Hippo suggests, the incontestable interpretative key for all of Scriptures rests upon the two greatest commandments cited by Jesus in the New Testament:

“He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”¹¹⁵

These commandments to love your God and love your neighbor constitute the basis on which the Christian lifestyle is formed. All sin can be categorized into a failure to uphold these commandments, and any passage in Scripture that appears contradictory to them ought to be interpreted figuratively as opposed to literally.¹¹⁶ Not only is the Gospel the Good News of salvation through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but it is the pronouncement of the radical love of God. As Christians strive to live like Christ and become one with God, such radical love ought not only be reciprocated to our Creator, but unto His creation, as well.

Yet similarly to the man in Luke to whom Jesus proclaimed such a commandment, one subsequently questions, “And who is my neighbor?”¹¹⁷ To such a question, Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan, which provided the narrative of a man whom was attacked and was in need of assistance. Though a Levite and a priest neglected to offer him help, it was a Samaritan who took pity on the man and

¹¹⁵ Matthew 22:37-40, NRSV

¹¹⁶ Saint Augustine, *Teaching Christianity: De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. Edmund Hill (New City Press: 1995) 183.

¹¹⁷ Luke 10:29, ESV

came to his aid. It was this Samaritan, “the one who had mercy” on the attacked man, whom Jesus said demonstrated the love of a neighbor.¹¹⁸ It follows, then, that anyone to whom mercy and compassion can be extended is to be called a neighbor.¹¹⁹ In John Calvin’s *Institutes*, Calvin further expounds upon the term neighbor as it is explicated in the Bible, concluding that “we ought to embrace the whole human race without exception...there is no distinction between barbarian and Greek, worthy and unworthy, friend and enemy.”¹²⁰ If it follows that the second greatest commandment in Christianity is to love thy neighbor, and those considered one’s neighbor is extended to all of humanity, then a dichotomy that unjustly and destructively delineates between a Self and an Other of any nationality would be inconsistent with Christian ideologies. To suggest that Western tradition founded upon Judeo-Christian values possessed a self-other dichotomy created by those same values that advocated for the love of thy neighbor appears paradoxical.

The Christian Other

Nevertheless, as is evinced by the lady in the bus station, there are indeed people – both Christian and non – within Western civilization who appear to blatantly ignore the second greatest commandment in the Bible. Christianity is preached upon the same tongues that objectify non-Western peoples and dehumanize the Other and the Latin American immigrant. The testimonies of John Garland and Ana Hinojosa on their efforts

¹¹⁸ Luke 10:37, NRSV

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, 125.

¹²⁰ Jean Calvin, *Calvin’s Institutes*, ed. Donald K McKim (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2000), 49.

to witness to American Christians concerning the immigration crisis are evidence of such othering mentalities within various American Christian traditions.¹²¹ Despite the biblical call to love thy neighbor, Christians have allowed a narrative of fear and the self-other dichotomy of Western centrism to hinder their perception of who all is encompassed by Jesus’s description of the “neighbor.” Considering the clear exhortation in the Bible to love thy neighbor, it appears that the opposing othering tendency embedded in the West – as is explicated in chapter two – provides a contending narrative adversely affecting the perspectives of Western Christians. Yet Pandian’s accusation that such a narrative in fact arose out of Christian ideologies may not be unfounded. A Christian might argue – as I was initially prone to do – that Pandian’s claims only exemplified a vilification of Christian doctrine or even a misrepresentation of Judeo-Christian ideologies, but in fact Christians themselves may be the most prone to such an othering narrative.

On the one hand, the Gospel does indeed proclaim that God is “utterly distinct from men,” which Pandian correctly describes in his work.¹²² The absolute perfection of God revealed in Scripture contrasts sharply with His imperfect, fallen creation, thus producing a dualism with distinct boundaries between what constitutes the divine and what does not.¹²³ The dichotomy that Pandian elucidates from Christianity on which he bases his hypothesis is indeed existent, one that differentiates between humanity and the divine. Though Pandian was able to correctly identify such a dualism, however, he failed

¹²¹ John Garland, Correspondence with Author, March 11, 2019; Ana Hinojosa, Correspondence with Author, November 2019.

¹²² Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 28.

¹²³ T.M.S. Evens, *Anthropology as Ethics: Nondualism and the Conduct of Sacrifice*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

to recognize that the Other is not merely the epistemological framework of Western tradition, the juxtaposition between the West and the non-West, nor the instigator of dehumanization and deification. The Other is in fact God Himself.

The divine attributes attributed to the Christian God describe a God that is utterly perfect; He is all-loving of His creation, omniscient, omni-present, and omnipotent. Yet the Godhead is also beyond complete comprehension. Though God Incarnate inhabited the Earth in full humanity, God is not human.¹²⁴ He is ultimately “Other” in all senses of differentiation: He is the Creator, we are the created; He is the Good Shepherd, we are the sheep; He is perfect, we are sinful. In terms of explicating the nature of humankind, theologian Karl Barth asserts that this “otherness” of God is the meaning of all history – this distinction defines human sense and disposition, and can be observed throughout all expressions of religion and experience.¹²⁵ Those who establish ideological foundations upon the differences between humankind forget to realize that the difference between ourselves and God is infinitely greater than any possible difference between human beings.

Nevertheless, although Pandian’s accusations are inconsistent with Christian doctrine, it does not mean they are unfounded. As humankind attempted to understand the nature of God, His mysteriousness required that they turn to catophtic theology in an attempt to understand His attributes. As opposed to apophatic theology - which describes God by negating utterances of what He is not - catophtic theology uses concrete images

¹²⁴ This, of course, excludes reference to God Incarnate, or at least focuses primarily on the divinity of Christ. Though God “took on humanity,” so to speak, humanity cannot reciprocally “take on the divine” in a comparable manner.

¹²⁵ Barth, 92.

to describe God. This attempt to make God accessible through such theology can actually end up anthropomorphising and objectifying God, which Karl Barth would claim is the first step to likening God to an idol. Romans 1:22-24 calls attention to the potential dangers of this theology, as Paul states that humanity, “Professing themselves to be wise...become fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”¹²⁶ Likening God with *res* or things allows Him to be possessed, or grasped, if the things to which He is compared are not clarified to be metaphorical, or the limits to which God can be compared to such things are not distinguished. If God is grasped in such ways, the image humanity has of Him is lessened, and as Barth notes, the world then “exists side by side with God.”¹²⁷ Humanity idolizes the God they have created for themselves, the anthropomorphized or objectified God that matches their own understanding of the Primal Origin. They miss that the unique mysteriousness and glory of God stems from His innate “otherness.”¹²⁸

As humankind lessens God to an attainable image “side by side” with itself, His divine characteristics are equated with humanity’s own attributes. His “lessening” in humanity’s image of Him allows people to elevate themselves. Those who have failed to recognize God’s otherness and who have idolized for themselves what Barth calls a “No-God” have ascribed characteristics of the Divine upon themselves.¹²⁹ Without

¹²⁶ Romans 1:22-24

¹²⁷ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 52.

¹²⁸ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 92.

¹²⁹ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 44.

understanding the otherness of God, humanity has elevated themselves to divine beings, which anthropologists have accordingly attributed to issues of cultural superiority, colonialism, and races that have elevated themselves above others. Barth has recognized this fault in society, when he shows that by believing in a “No-God” that has been elevated to humanity’s own requirements, “we justify, enjoy, and adore ourselves.”¹³⁰

The Western Self is one that is alienated from God in its emphasis on individual self-hood. Idolization of the Self is both exacerbated by and evinced through Western individualism. The notions of selfhood perpetuated by the West was one that emphasized an individual, autonomous Self, rather than the Self Pandian described as a collective, or communal, entity. In fact, anthropologist, Karen Brison, notes the uniqueness of Western individualism in her discussion on sociocentric identity in religious discourse in rural Fiji, as she examined the Western conception of the Self in comparison to other world cultures:

Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures.¹³¹

This representation of the Self is negligent of the human-self as a communal and relational being within the West, the emphasis of humanity as an individualistic species is detrimental to its relational self both between individual human beings and with God, as

¹³⁰ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 44.

¹³¹ Karen J. Brison, “Crafting Sociocentric Selves in Religious Discourse in Rural Fiji,” *Ethos* 29, no. 4 (Dec 2001): 453-474.

well. The explications in chapter two on the othering tendency of Western anthropology is evidence of such a claim.

This phenomena that Barth recognizes is that which Pandian observes in his critique as to the origin of the self-other dichotomy in Western civilization. The West has taken God's place and erected idols in the image of itself, as its people "cry out to a god who is but [their] own ego."¹³² Western society equated itself with the divine attributes, and regarded non-Western societies as embodying the characteristics of that which was considered not divine. Throughout the course of Western civilization, humankind innately recognized the disparities that existed between itself and God, but in its inability to recognize the true God instead of the idol it created of itself, it imposed such an opposition on others, and so inflicted the unknownness of the Divine Other upon those who were different from themselves. Within anthropology, this manifested in the detrimental epistemology of the Anthropological Other. Such a tendency was exacerbated by the pastoral power implemented in the age of colonialism, in which the Western centric theologies of colonizers viewed the savage "Others" with whom they came into contact as not only requiring salvation, but a shepherd in the form of the idolized Western superior authorities. Within theology, this inability to recognize God as Other led to the erection of idols in the place of the unified God of the Universal Church, as will be explored in chapter four.

Anthropologist Peter Berger noted such a struggle that the self-other dichotomy implemented upon Western interactions with non-Western peoples, insisting that scholars, in an effort to explicate the essence of what it means to be human, "too often

¹³² Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 30.

become so concerned with minute differences that we forget we are studying a single species.”¹³³ Though the Other as an epistemological framework for anthropological theory manifested as the dehumanization of non-Western peoples, discourse between theological and anthropological inquiries demonstrate that such a dichotomy is existent not through the dehumanization of the Other, but in fact the deification of the Self, perpetuated by the inability of Western peoples – especially Christians – to recognize the innate “otherness” of God Himself.

¹³³ Slocum, “Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology,” 307.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Othering of the Latin American Community

Introduction

“Who, then, is so wicked and faithless, who is so insane with the madness of discord, that either he should believe that the unity of God can be divided, or should dare to rend it – the garment of the Lord – the Church of Christ? He Himself in His Gospel warns us, and teaches, saying, “*And there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*” (John 10:16) And does anyone believe that in one place there can be either many shepherds or many flocks?”

On the Unity of the Church 1.5

The proceeding exposition as to the existence of an othering mentality within anthropological theory and theological discourse serve to emphasize that vestiges of an othering tendency that have persisted within Western ideologies, exhibited in Western relations with the Latin American community in such relational academic disciplines. Anthropology and theology have had paralleled reactions to the rising age of cultural relativity resulting from this othering mentality, which have emphasized the need for a drastic paradigmatic shift in the fields to accommodate the rising representation of those who had been previously oppressed within the disciplines. The disunification of both disciplines, as will be explored in this chapter, have surfaced as a result of the underlying othering mentality perpetuated by the inability of Western civilization to recognize the Divine Other as it has elevated itself as an idolization of God.

“Other” Anthropologies

The inability to reconcile the culture of the Self and the Other in anthropological research has plagued the discipline throughout the twentieth-century and into the twenty-first and resulted in various approaches to its methodologies. Boas’ rejection of the racist sentiments inherent in pre-twentieth-century anthropological theories paved the way for an anthropology that celebrated the inherent diversity in humankind, rather than perpetuating the ethnocentric prejudice of Western ideologies. Anthropologists began to juggle both the recognition that humankind was inherently united as a singular species, and yet also uniquely diverse. The resulting dilemma, however, was how to continue with the methodologies of anthropological discourse without reducing the Other to the empirical intelligibility of the researcher, thereby establishing an ethical responsibility of an anthropologist towards those whom they researched. The twentieth-century was characterized by a disunified field that lacked unanimity concerning the ways in which anthropology must reconcile this existent dilemma between the Self and the Other.

As opposed to the methodologies that had up to that point defined anthropology, anthropologists began advocating for the discontinuation of research of non-Western cultures. Instead, anthropologists encouraged the creation of Other Anthropologies, or the call for anthropologists of other cultures to begin studying themselves, responding to the growing crisis of representation in the discipline.¹³⁴ The crisis of representation was initially enacted in response to the failure of the social sciences to accurately describe

¹³⁴ Sally Slocum, “Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology” in *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*, ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 307.

American society following the change in paradigms in the wake of World War II, though it was soon extended to include that which was known about non-Western cultures.¹³⁵ As non-Western, minority groups began to draw attention to the inherent biases of Western studies of them, such an invitation to research was often accepted.

The primary focus of these Other anthropologies were initially the peoples who were colonized by Western imperial nations following the Age of Discovery. Many postcolonial anthropologists, who critiqued the “global legacy of colonialism and imperialism” in light of the objectification and subjugation of colonized peoples, heavily advocated for the eradication of such anthropological studies.¹³⁶ It was brought to attention that in fact most of the cultures that were studied by anthropologists were those who had been subjected to Western influence through Western colonialist or imperialist efforts, and thus these peoples were not able to resist the objectifying research of Western anthropologists.¹³⁷ Postcolonial theories undermined the West’s ability to represent or objectify the cultures which it attempted to describe in anthropological inquires. It provided conditions about what descriptives could be provided about such peoples and illuminated the lack of distinction between verifiable truth and an ethnographer’s interpretation. The authority of Western social and scientific institutes were scrutinized due to the influence of Western elitism, and the identities imposed upon peoples by Western descriptives were challenged.

¹³⁵ George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, “A Crisis of Representation in the Human Sciences” in *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*, ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 443.

¹³⁶ Erickson and Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, 138.

¹³⁷ Pandian, *Anthropology and the Western Tradition*, 89.

Included in such non-Western minorities were the Latin American community. The multifaceted identity of the Latin American people – which constitutes a variety of nationalities and ethnicities – challenged the monolithic, reductionist label of “Latino” or “Hispanic” perpetuated by United States’ discourse on race and ethnicity.¹³⁸ Such a notion was exacerbated by the complex historical factors of colonialism within Latin America, which saw a social hierarchy constructed on the basis of the mixed-race and cultural attributes of Latin American colonial subjects, violence between the colonized and the colonizers, and the identity crisis of a society that sought to understand the contexts of their situation.¹³⁹ The complications this colonial history provided was not fully encompassed in the Eurocentric history of Western anthropology, which constituted as Other the entirety of colonized subjects instead of taking into consideration the circumstances of Latin American oppression, as well as the continued influence of the colonizer’s culture within Latin American societies.

The result has been an increasing attempt of Latin American anthropologists to repatriate their people’s identity away from Western explications and address the complexities associated with the Self of this community, both within Latin America and the United States. As Roberto S. Goizueta suggests in his essay “Nosotros: Towards a U.S. Hispanic Anthropology,” the locus of anthropological research must transition away from the individualism of Western anthropologists and towards an emphasis on the communal nature of the Latin American people. This emphasis on the collective identity

¹³⁸ Michelle A. Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?: Theological Anthropology, Postcoloniality, and the Spanish-Speaking Americas,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (Denver: Chalice Press, 2004), 59.

¹³⁹ Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?,” 64.

of the people is not fully encompassed in Western anthropology, whose emphasis on individualism hinders appropriate explications of this community. Furthermore, Latin American anthropologists highlight the importance of theology to the explication of Latin American identity, thereby challenging the unified empirical and scientific methodologies of Western anthropology. Ultimately, however, the influence of Western thought cannot be completely divorced from any current anthropological studies, but only further perpetuates the lack of a paradigmatic authority within the discipline, as evinced by the various Other Anthropologies that have arisen at the turn of the century.¹⁴⁰

The anthropological methodologies of Latin American anthropologists further accentuate such a disunity, for with their society as the locus for research, many anthropologists highlight the importance of theological anthropology in explicating the nature of the Latin American people.¹⁴¹ While such a methodology may be appropriate for Latin American anthropologists, such a radical conglomeration of anthropological and theological discourse is antithetical to the previous academic endeavors of Western anthropological research. Religion had been explained away by Western anthropologists as a social construct meant to provide societal control within a community. In the age of colonialism, Christianity may have been utilized for such means, but the Latin American community began to incorporate the Christian doctrine into their own identities. Considering the complexities associated with Latin American identity, as Gonzalez highlights, the unity provided by Christian identification would be an important consideration for their anthropological research. Nevertheless, the drastically different

¹⁴⁰ Marcus and Fischer, "A Crisis of Representation in the Human Sciences," 443.

¹⁴¹ Gonzalez, "Who is Americana/o?," 64.

methodologies utilized by each academia illuminate the disunity that is faced by the discipline of anthropology.

Other Theologies

The propensity to *other* peoples who exhibit differences from one's Self is seen not only in the discipline of anthropology, but in theology, as well, therefore parallels can be observed between modern anthropological theory and theological discourse, which will not only yield an understanding of the relationship between the othering of both disciplines, but demonstrate how such othering mentalities have persisted to the point of inciting contradictions between modern theology and the Scriptural assertions of a Universal Church within Christianity. In particular, the othering within the theological interpretations of the Latin American community are revelatory of the othering rooted in Western theology. Such a claim is evinced through United States relations with Latin American refugees for through the interactions between the two societies, the persistence of an othering narrative in Western Christianity – especially American Christianity – is observable.

Parallel to the relativistic theories that arose within anthropology, as previously discussed, theologies were constructed within the twentieth-century that were relative to the peoples for whom they were construed, particularly those who had been previously oppressed by the empires that colonized them. Many of these post-colonial societies who were introduced to Christianity during the age of Western colonialism had adopted Christian theologies into their own cultural traditions. The othering mentality that had dominated the Age of Discovery and colonialism had created a theology seemingly

favorable to the West and its culture, thus necessitating the establishment of Other theologies that responded to the needs of non-Western constituents. Yet such theologies only exacerbated the disunity instigated by Western othering, thus intensifying the ethnic and religious boundaries that separated the West and the Anthropological Other.

Nevertheless, the multifaceted identity of the Latin American people complicates the identification of a particular locus for these Other Latin American theologies. For, as opposed to the monolithic, reductionist label of “Latino” or “Hispanic” perpetuated by United States’ discourse on race and ethnicity, the peoples of Latin American society constitutes a variety of nationalities and ethnicities.¹⁴² Such a diversity of identities was exacerbated by the complex historical factors of colonialism within Latin America, which saw the a social hierarchy constructed on the basis of the mixed-race and cultural attributes of Latin American colonial subjects, violence between the colonized and the colonizers, and the identity crisis of a society that sought to understand the contexts of their situation.¹⁴³ The concerns of Latin American scholars to establish a discourse on Latin American identity were further intensified by the ways in which Western society had subsequently dehumanized the oppressed Latin American migrant. The evocation of terms such as “alien” or “illegal” or even “stranger” in reference to immigrants reduce the state of the migrant to something less than human, with the result that migrant concerns can become devalued as human rights issues.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, such terms emphasize the

¹⁴² Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?,” 59.

¹⁴³ Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?,” 64.

¹⁴⁴ M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 22.

existent othering mentality that has persisted despite postcolonial efforts in the social sciences to address the ethnic boundaries existent between the West and the non-West.

Considering the focus on Latin American refugees, however, the theological locus of focus in this chapter will be those theologies that have developed in somewhat relation to Latin American countries and the United States: Latin American liberation theology and U.S. Hispanic theology.¹⁴⁵ The contextualization that informs both of these theologies highlights the self-other dichotomy that has manifested within theological discourse, as postcolonial communities respond to the Western centrism inherent in the theology of their colonizers.

At the Second Vatican Council in 1959, the Catholic Church underwent a “fundamental rethinking of the relation between Christian faith and the world,” thereby reevaluating their understanding of the role of the Church in light of the ideological development of a “secular historical progress.”¹⁴⁶ This ideology is similar to a Whig interpretation of history, which claims that the progression of humanity is aimed towards a specific and inevitable teleological end characterized by the increased enlightenment and liberty of humankind. Theologically, secular historical progress is comparable to the Christian concept of divine Providence and humanity’s inevitable progression towards eschaton, or the end of the world, which culminates in the coming of Christ as is

¹⁴⁵ This paper is heavily influenced by research compiled through Dr. Barry Harvey’s Theological Interpretation of Scriptures course at Baylor University. Much of the material is gleaned from research conducted for the final paper for the course – Sarah Jones, “Liberation Theology vs. U.S. Hispanic Theology on Migration,” research paper, Baylor University, Theological Interpretation of Scriptures, Dr. Barry Harvey.

¹⁴⁶ Ivan Petrella, “Introduction - Latin American Liberation Theology: Past, Present, and Future,” in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), xii.

described in Revelation. Through this eschatological lens, the Church interprets its own role in the progression of history. Nevertheless, the Church itself has expanded beyond the confines of Eurocentrism, or even Western centrism, as theological interpretation has entered into what Johann Baptist Metz has described as the third epoch in the history of the church: the “epoch of a culturally polycentric genuinely universal church.”¹⁴⁷ The expansion of European colonialism introduced the Church to countries and nations throughout the world, and as these nations have begun to establish and assert their own identities, they have adapted their own theological discourse within the contextualization of their cultures. As the Second Vatican Council contended, this contextualization was not only viable for theological interpretation, but necessary as each individual church interpreted its own eschatological role in the Church Universal.

This secular historical progress and cultural contextualization underlays the ideological context in which Latin American liberation theology and U.S. Hispanic theology arose. The experiences of their respective cultures denote both theologies, with liberation theology focusing primarily on the experiences of the impoverished in the oppressed in Latin America and U.S. Hispanic theology focusing on the unique experiences of the culturally-oppressed Hispanic-American community within the United States. The christological lens with which each theology interprets their respective situations are fairly similar, but the contextualization inherent in each theology reveals the potentially otherizing narratives sustained in contextualized religion, especially as it exists in American Christianity.

¹⁴⁷ Goizueta, “United States Hispanic Theology and the Challenge of Pluralism” in *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, ed. Allan Figueroa Deck (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 1.

Liberation Theology

The economic and political upheavals that plagued the mid-to-late-twentieth century in Latin American countries were the foundational roots of the liberation theology movement. Noteworthy theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, widely regarded founder of liberation theology, challenged the effectiveness of political reformatory efforts, and consequently vied for revolutionary action to rectify corrupt political and economic undertakings in Latin America. As families migrated from their traditional familial structures to sprawling urban centers in the search for employment, cities were unable to support the influx of migrants, thereby leading many families into poverty and shifting culture away from the small rural communities.¹⁴⁸ Gutiérrez construed capitalism to be a contributing factor in this system of injustice and saw political endeavors in Latin American countries as mere brawls between avaricious people who lusted for power, thus demanding radical changes to liberate those who had been oppressed by the political and economic structures.¹⁴⁹ His liberation theology was founded on the aspiration to liberate the Latin American people from this socioeconomic oppression, drawing from the works of Karl Marx and his interpretations of the concepts of oppression, people, poverty, and history, as well as the notion that socialism could remedy the injustices produced by a capitalist society.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Eddy Jose Muskus, *The Origins and Early Development of Liberation Theology in Latin America* (Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster Press, 2002), 6-7.

¹⁴⁹ Petrella, "Introduction - Latin American Liberation Theology: Past, Present, and Future," xiii.

¹⁵⁰ Petrella, "Introduction - Latin American Liberation Theology: Past, Present, and Future," xiv.; Rosino Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 46.

Following Gutiérrez's radical efforts in establishing the groundwork for liberation theology, subsequent liberation theologians have utilized his approaches in theological discourse to create models for other liberation movements. Black liberation theology and even subsets of feminist theology have drawn from Gutiérrez's ideologies, modifying their suppositions in an effort to contextualize the theology into whatever context liberation of the poor and oppressed is sought. Not all liberation theologians continue to address the necessity of revolutionary action, and the injustices apparent in various economic systems such as capitalism and socialism are also disputed.¹⁵¹ All liberation theologians, however, regardless of their varying conjectures, abide by the same foundational ambition: the liberation of both the oppressed and the impoverished.¹⁵² The means by which this emancipation is implemented can vary, but liberation theologians all necessarily actively employ *praxis* – or a “totality of practices” – aimed “to eradicate poverty and establish a just society.”¹⁵³ As opposed to other social justice movements, liberation theology strives to galvanize the Church specifically as the primary emancipatory force, bent towards “shaping the world in accordance with Christ.”¹⁵⁴

In the context of Latin American liberation theology, *praxis* is aimed specifically at emancipating Latin American citizens from the oppression instigated by certain

¹⁵¹ Manuel J. Mejido, “Beyond the Postmodern Condition, or the Turn Toward Psychoanalysis,” in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 123.

¹⁵² Muskus, *The Origins and Early Development of Liberation Theology in Latin America*, 1.; Petrella, “Introduction - Latin American Liberation Theology: Past, Present, and Future,” xv.

¹⁵³ Muskus, *The Origins and Early Development of Liberation Theology in Latin America*, 11.

¹⁵⁴ Mejido, “Beyond the Postmodern Condition, or the Turn Toward Psychoanalysis,” 123.; Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate*, 4; 42-43.

political and socioeconomic factors within their respective countries. The Medellín Conference, as Francis P Fiorenza contends in his essay on Latin American liberation theology, contributed heavily to this theology's understanding of what exactly the oppressed were being liberated from:

“In the document on peace [the bishops] denounce the extreme inequality among social classes, the unjust use of power by dominant groups insensitive to the misery of oppressed sectors, the international system of dependency with its exploitative distortion of trade, and those situations of injustice that constitute ‘institutionalized violence.’”¹⁵⁵

According to liberation theologians, the injustices endured by such a marginalized portion of society constitute offensiveness to God, and therefore rectification is required for the sake of furthering God's kingdom. In their christological interpretation of Scriptures, liberation theologians note that Jesus' preferential treatment of the poor throughout the New Testament is representative of the ways in which the Church also ought to respond to the destitute in the world. As God opts for the poor and oppressed, so ought the Church, for as 1 John 2:6 states, “Whoever says, ‘I abide in him,’ ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”¹⁵⁶ The following *praxis* of these theologians are then reflective of this call to act in accordance with Jesus' own *praxis*, and to furthermore address the sources of the injustices that are condemning families to destitution and oppression. Yet there is the underlying promise of salvation, that just as Jesus liberated the Gentiles from the bondage of sin, so too will the oppressed be liberated from the injustices that bind them.

¹⁵⁵ Francis P. Fiorenza, “Latin American Liberation Theology,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 28, no. 4 (October 1974): 445.

¹⁵⁶ 1 John 2:6, ESV.

The impoverished and oppressed in Latin American liberation theology are not merely the focus of emancipatory efforts, but they are in fact the *locus theologicus* – or the theological source – of the theology itself.¹⁵⁷ In their state of injustice, the oppressed – according to liberation theologians – are, in a sense, in an elevated state in comparison to the affluent. The affluent are most prone to the chains of the sin of greed, which liberation theologians believe is the primary ideological instigator of poverty itself. The poor, therefore, are in a privileged position to better receive the grace of God, being free of this particular chain. In this spiritually advantageous position, the poor better assume the “Spirit of Jesus,” being not simply among them, but in fact *in* them, and the church’s *praxis* ought to be founded upon such considerations, as they interpret Scripture through the perspectives of this population.¹⁵⁸

The Latin American migrant population is a prime exemplum of those who are considered poor and oppressed and are in need of emancipation in liberation theology. Though there are instances in which individuals undertake optional migration, migrants who fall under the category of ‘oppressed’ include those who have “suffered coercion while being uprooted from the land and the environment, and [have] had to search for better living conditions.”¹⁵⁹ Though the situation of each migrant is different, the existent trauma is not discriminatory. Often, migrants are fleeing the violence of their respective countries, faced with the infliction of trials such as sex trafficking, gang violence, and the thousands of miles trek to the border, where the uncertainties of the following journey are

¹⁵⁷ Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate*, 30-31.

¹⁵⁸ Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate*, 30-31.

¹⁵⁹ Catholic Church, “Where Are You Going: Theological Reflections on Migration” *The Ecumenical Review* 33, no. 2 (April 1981): 178-185.

still masked in uncertainties, especially considering the hostile and othering narrative associated with the Latin American migrant community.

Liberation theologians, however, highlight various instances in the Scriptures can be interpreted to reveal God's emancipatory actions for those who have faced immigration: the migration of Abraham, the mass exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, the forced slavery of Joseph, the life of Esther as a foreigner, the Babylonian exile.¹⁶⁰ Liberation theologians take note of the injustices that result in those who have been uprooted and forced into migration, and determine that these biblical passages are explanatory of passages that can be utilized by the church in establishing solidarity between the community of faith and the oppressed migrant community. Furthermore, apart from using historical narratives in liberation theology teachings, theologians also utilize allegorical comparisons to stimulate solidarity within the church. Liberation occurs not merely on the physical level, but spiritually, as well. Humankind is forced into "incessant migration" through the bondage of sin, which makes the Kingdom of God a foreign reality in comparison to the state of humankind. The salvation offered through Christ's sacrifice therefore liberates humankind from such migration, which therefore ought to galvanize the Church to encourage the liberation from the injustices of involuntary migration, as well, in accordance with the life of Christ. Though the majority of the Church is not beleaguered by those injustices that perpetuate poverty and oppression, the resulting spiritual solidarity that is offered through liberation theology's teachings can result in a means of participation for the entire "Ecclesial Community."¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*.

¹⁶¹ Catholic Church, "Where Are You Going: Theological Reflections on Migration, 182.

Whether through spiritual solidarity or particular emancipatory actions, *praxis* for liberation theologians is necessary to their theology, for merely conceptualizing the liberation of the oppressed from economic and social injustices by no means resolves the situations, and therefore an important element of their fundamental beliefs is unfulfilled.¹⁶² Nevertheless, liberation theology itself has often been criticized for the specific contextualized sociohistorical situation from which it has developed its scriptural interpretations. Despite assurances from the Catholic Church that a cultural lens lends itself to the ways in which a church views its own role in Christian eschatology, there are limits to the effectiveness of a theology that is exclusively speaking to certain communities.¹⁶³ Some liberation theologians claim that their particular theology arose as a means to decentralize Christianity from cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors that contribute to its contextualization. Nevertheless, the emergence of various forms of liberation theology pertaining to different oppressed populations reveals that a form of contextualization is at play.

Though Latin American liberation theology is highly informative on the ways in which the Church ought to respond to the injustices that are perpetuating poverty and oppression for immigrants, the majority of their migration theology focuses primarily on the emigration of the migrant. Decades – and even centuries – of voluntary and involuntary migration between Latin American countries and the United States have led to the United States becoming the fifth most populous nation of Latino/a immigrants. The

¹⁶² Michelle A. Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas: Bridging the Liberation Theology and Religious Studies Divide* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 25.; Muskus, *The Origins and Early Development of Liberation Theology in Latin America*, 14.; Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate*, 7.

¹⁶³ Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas*, 40.

strong presence of this population has created an influential minority, who has therefore established their own theological interpretations as a means of interpreting their unique place within a majority Anglo-American Protestant culture. The resulting theology is often referred to as U.S. Hispanic theology.¹⁶⁴

U.S. Hispanic Theology

The various “social, economic, political, cultural, and pastoral” factors that have informed the U.S. Hispanic community in the United States has created a “complex reality” for this population.¹⁶⁵ Due to the influx of Hispanic Americans in the United States and the general isolation many Hispanics felt from the majority culture, the need arose for a ministry that spoke specifically into the lives of this particular community. U.S. Hispanic theology arose out of this need. Theologians such as Virgil Elizondo – noted as one of the founders of U.S. Hispanic theology – began to interpret biblical texts through the cultural lens of the Mexican American experience. Elizondo endeavored to empower the *mestizos* – those who are of mixed race – as Anglo-American culture heavily mixed with Hispanic culture, thus leaving *mestizos* within a highly-marginalized portion of American society.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ A note on the terminology: the language around the delineation of this theology is in flux. Earlier versions refer to it as Hispanic theology, a convention which most of the sources I researched utilized and therefore which I maintain. Other scholars have adopted Latino/a or Latinx to refer to this theology and these peoples.

¹⁶⁵ Eduardo C. Fernandez, *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology (1972-1998)* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 37.; Allan Figueroa Deck, *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States* (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

¹⁶⁶ Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

Similar to liberation theology, Elizondo's U.S. Hispanic theology relies on a christological interpretation of Scripture, comparing the life of Jesus with that of the Hispanic American. Furthermore, Elizondo perceives the cultural inferiority felt by Hispanic Americans in the United States as being analogous to the oppression experienced by the Jewish people in the Old Testament. As an important aspect of his theology, the "Jerusalem principle" was coined as a means to establish this comparison:

"God chooses an oppressed people, not to bring them comfort in their oppression but to enable them to confront, transcend, and transform whatever in the oppressor society diminishes and destroys the fundamental dignity of human nature."¹⁶⁷

Just as the Israelites were called to be a "city on a hill" for the other nations, so too does the *mestizo* function as a bridge between the oppressor and the oppressed, called by God to transform the oppressor in order to address their injustices and revert their oppressive ways. This focus on the *mestizo* is comparable to the focus liberation theologians place on the oppressed, establishing the *mestizo* as the *locus theologicus*, or theological source, of U.S. Hispanic theological interpretation.¹⁶⁸

Establishing a *locus theologicus* in an oppressed population underscores the many similarities between Latin American liberation theology and U.S. Hispanic theology. Whereas liberation theologians focus primarily on the socioeconomically oppressed, however, U.S. Hispanic theologians emphasize a different type of oppression. Hispanic-Americans occupy a broad variety of social and economic classes within the United States. Even though there are Hispanic-Americans who have faced destitution at the

¹⁶⁷ Fernandez, *La Cosecha*, 40.

¹⁶⁸ Fernandez, *La Cosecha*, 41.

hands of unjust institutions, the primary root of their oppression does not stem from these oppressive forces. The primary form of persecution experienced by Hispanic-Americans is one that is exacerbated by cultural marginalization. As a result, U.S. Hispanic theology is highly culturally contextualized, as the culture of *mestizo* in American society is highly incorporated into the Christian identity of their church.¹⁶⁹ The *lo cotidiano*, or daily lives of the Hispanic-American, which includes their cultural practices and traditions, are highly influential in the development of their church practices.

On the one hand, U.S. Hispanic theology's theological interpretation of Scriptural passages as they pertain to migration utilizes similar passages to that of liberation theology, namely the narratives of the Israelites' mass Exodus from Egypt and the Babylonian exile, as well as the laws God commanded in Deuteronomy which forbade the oppression of foreigners among the Israelite nation, since they too were once foreigners in a foreign land.¹⁷⁰ Just as God has commanded the Israelites to act hospitably to foreigners, so too must Christians now receive migrants with hospitality rather than oppression. This is especially prevalent for the Hispanic-American population, since theologians claim that large portions of their church still often feel the marginalization associated with one who is a stranger in the lands which they occupy.¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, the majority of their interpretations in migration theology are also christological. Whereas liberation theologians focus on Jesus' preferential treatment of the poor and the liberating salvation he offers, U.S. Hispanic theologians impress upon

¹⁶⁹ Fernandez, *La Cosecha*, 108.

¹⁷⁰ Leviticus 19:33-34.

¹⁷¹ Miguel H. Diaz, "Life-Giving Migrations: Re-visioning the Mystery of God Through U.S. Hispanic Eyes," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 11, no.1 (May 2006), 24-25.

the fact that Jesus himself was also a migrant. As one who is divine, Jesus migrated from heaven onto earth and took up humanity in the Incarnation. The openness with which Jesus accepted his humanity in the Incarnation ought to implicate the ways in which the Christian community receives immigrants: in charity and solidarity.¹⁷² Furthermore, Jesus' migration was not into a culture in which he was the majority, but into what is believed to be the marginalized society of the Galileans. As Elizondo contends through his Jerusalem principle, the Galilean society was empowered and chosen by God through the Incarnation.

Nevertheless, just as the contextualization of liberation theology in Latin American countries reveals limitations to their interpretations, so does the U.S. Hispanic theology's contextualization within the unique culture of the *mestizo* create problematic theological conjectures. For liberation theologians, the problematic nature of this contextualization is due to the development of U.S. Hispanic theology within the confines of "the American way of life."¹⁷³ Manuel Mejido – an influential liberation theologian of the twenty-first century – asserts that U.S. Hispanic theology subordinates itself to the "dialectic of the Americas," a dialectic characterized by violence and supremacy. The faith of the *mestizo* is therefore subsidiary to the ambitions of the American economic and political institutes. It is extensively influenced by Western tradition and Anglo-American culture and identity. Yet this is similarly true concerning the influences of various Latin American cultures on this theology. As previously mentioned, U.S.

¹⁷² Diaz, "Life-Giving Migrations: Re-visioning the Mystery of God Through U.S. Hispanic Eyes," 30-32.

¹⁷³ Mejido, "Beyond the Postmodern Condition, or the Turn Toward Psychoanalysis," pg. 123

Hispanic theology arose in the specific cultural context of the American *mestizo*, which cannot be separated from the methods by which theologians interpret Scripture.

These concerns become palpable through discourse on the ways in which Western society has subsequently dehumanized the oppressed migrant. The evocation of terms such as “alien” or “illegal” or even “stranger” in reference to immigrants reduce the state of the migrant to something less than human, with the result that migrant concerns can become devalued as human rights issues.¹⁷⁴ Even U.S. Hispanic theologians are not immune to these tendencies, being influenced heavily by American society. *Mestizos* have often attempted to avoid association with characterizations that can liken them to an immigrant, which they view as being derogatory to their status as a citizen. Already marginalized, *mestizos* hope to prevent misidentification with those who are outcasts and homeless, since they often identify themselves as already being sojourners within American society.

Overall, liberation theology and U.S. Hispanic theology are able to expound upon slightly different ends to the theology of migration, with one focusing on the injustices that caused the migrants journey and the other anticipating the reception of the community. Both, however, confirm the need to recognize and advocate for the oppressed. Nevertheless, since U.S. Hispanic theology and Liberation theology are grounded in the contextualization of theology, they emphasize the lack of a paradigmatic authority within the Christian church.

Unity in the Era of Disunification

¹⁷⁴ M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 22.

A story was once related to me of an anthropologist who sought to validate the claim of the universal moral messages within Shakespeare's Hamlet.¹⁷⁵ Pursuing ethnographic fieldwork among the native Tiv people in Africa, this anthropologist was asked by the inhabitants of this nearly extinct culture to relate to them a story of her own people. As best as she could translate, the anthropologist relayed the tragic tale of Hamlet, fully expectant that the Tiv people in unanimity would concur with the Western cultural morals recounted in the story. Yet their reaction was beyond her expectations. The elders of the community decried Hamlet's actions, attributing his madness to witchcraft, deeming his pursuit of revenge as the duty of his father's acquaintances, and commending the marriage of Claudius and Gertrude, which – although considered incestuous by the West – was admirable to the Tiv people, since Claudius could then attend to the affairs of his deceased brother. The anthropologist was baffled at the elders' interpretations, but in turn the elders reassured her, insisting that she was fortunate that they were there to wisely elucidate the important moral messages within her story.

The anthropologist's account was meant to highlight the relativistic nature of moral interpretation between different cultures, since morals are deeply intertwined with the cultural institute into which a person is born. On the one hand, the account generates an appreciation for the effects of cultural structure on perspective. Nevertheless, for theologians, this ethnographic observation probes the question as to the universalism of certain morals as opposed to others. It can be difficult to differentiate between that which constitutes as a moral indorsed by tradition and a moral that is universal to humankind.

¹⁷⁵ Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush," *Natural History* (August-September 1966).

As postcolonial societies such as the Latin American community establish theologies that are relative to their own cultural environment, the struggle of Christianity to maintain a sense of universal truth that is not reductionary or negligent of the concerns of its constituents remains the trial of the age of cultural and truth relativism.

The existence of the Church Universal – unified in the image of God and the creed of the Trinity – cannot be eradicated. As Augustine states in his exposition *On the Unity of the Church*, the Church “shone over with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body separated.”¹⁷⁶ The Apostle Paul admonishes and beseeches the constituents of the earthly church, that they remain in unity, lest any schisms divide what ought not to be divided in doctrine. Nevertheless, the existence of great schisms between the various traditions and theologies existent in Christianity reveal that the Church Universal is not currently embodied by any one particular religious tradition, to the detriment of the theologies of both Western and non-Western peoples.

The contextualization of U.S. Hispanic theology and Latin American liberation theology reveal that their theologies can only be representative of one aspect of the Church Universal, for otherwise its Scriptural interpretations would not find its locus in the explication of the circumstances of the Latin American community. Latino/a theology, as theologian Fernando F. Segovia asserted, emerged from his disposition as an exile, and thus constitutes the “margins” of societal voices on theological matters.¹⁷⁷ Though he envisions the role of this theology as a means for bridging the first and third

¹⁷⁶ Augustine, *On the Unity of the Church*, 1.5

¹⁷⁷ Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?,” 71.

world, a bridge, nonetheless, is not representative of the whole. The necessity of such theologies, however, resulted from the self-other dichotomy existent within the Western church. Parallel to recognition of the Other within anthropological theory, Western Christians began to take notice of the othering narrative of Western ideological traditions. In the age of cultural relativism and the growing influence of postcolonial theories, theology also constituted a field which heavily influenced the societies oppressed by colonization, and thus was subsumed by the societies into their own cultural identity.

The resultant relativity of specific theologies to their respective societies, however, was a response to the undervaluing of marginalized peoples contributions to theological discourse.¹⁷⁸ As Michelle Gonzalez notes in her exposition on Latin American theological anthropology, “too often, the contributions of people of color are parochialized into a subcategory, seen as a quaint exception to the dominant rhetoric.”¹⁷⁹ The rampant Western centrism that characterized the ideologies of Western society led to the issue of theologians failing to recognize that even Western theology was limited by its own cultural contextualization. Many Western theologians have challenged the ideologies of contextualized theologies, for the specificity with which it attends to the specific identities of its people is not conducive to a unified image of the Church Universal. Gonzalez offers a solution to such disunity, however, by galvanizing the church to seriously consider the theological contributions of the marginalized community, such as those in Latin America or within the slew of the crisis of representation and identification

¹⁷⁸ Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?,” 78.

¹⁷⁹ Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?,” 77.

in the United States.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, God explicitly chose only one nation: Israel.¹⁸¹

Explicating Scripture through the lens of any national identity – whether it be Latin American identity or American – runs the risk of idolizing a version of God that one has fabricated for themselves.

The age of cultural relativity for both anthropological and theological inquiries reveal that both disciplines have yet to wholly reconcile the existence of the Other that has persisted throughout the history of the West. Though cultural relativity has allowed both disciplines to recognize their lack of cultural humility and Western centric focuses, the result has been the deconstruction of the field of anthropology and the exacerbation of the disunity within the Christian church. Overall, the attempt to demonstrate how the self-other dichotomy has persisted in both disciplines through the explication of Other theologies and anthropologies serves to bypass the difficulties associated with an historical explication of its persistence, which is beyond the scope of my own research and capability.

¹⁸⁰ Gonzalez, “Who is Americana/o?,” 77.

¹⁸¹ Dr. Barry Harvey, Correspondence with Author, November 2019.

CHAPTER FIVE

Statistical Analysis on the Americanization of the Christian Identity

Introduction

While discourse being the disciplines of anthropology and theology is revelatory of such othering mentalities in the West, it is much more difficult to recognize the continuation of this othering within American society, insofar as there are numerous confounding factors that complicate the discussion of identity in the United States. Christian exceptionalism is evident in the West's idolization of its own image as explained in chapter three, though how this mentality has persisted within the United States despite growing cultural awareness is a larger question for historical consideration, beyond the scope of my own studies. Nevertheless, as chapter five demonstrates, statistical analyses conducted using the Baylor Religious Survey of 2017 can be revelatory of vestigial othering mentalities associated with an intertwined American-Christian identity, which suggests an improper misidentification of the Christian-Self with the American-Self among many expressions of Christian tradition in the United States.

Initially, the founding of the United States seemed to reject this othering narrative which permeated the Western tradition in which it was based. The American identity was not intrinsically tied with any particular "national, linguistic, religious, or ethnic background," but only required a commitment to the ideals of liberty and equality.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Japser M. Trautsh, "The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism," *National Identities* 18, no. 3 (Sept 2016), 289-312.

Identity could be gleaned through language, culture, religious and political orientations, and even something as trivial as sports affiliations. Yet within the United States – the current exemplification of the West – the fluidity with which collective identities can be established within this mixing pot of a society becomes problematic when one identity is contradictory to another. The Christianized American identity, for example, has become the epitome of a people who has likened itself with the divine and erected an idol of a false god in its own image, distorting its vision of the Divine Other. Other political factions have become incredibly intertwined with what it means to be a Christian, thereby blurring the lines between political ideologies and Christian doctrine. The resultant ideologies are ones that have defined the Other as not only non-Western, but non-American, and to an extent non-Christian, thereby its ensuing relations with the Latin American refugee community is one characterized by an unjust othering narrative.

American Christianity

In the emergence of the United States as an independent nation, the American political context was characterized by an emphasis on individual liberties influenced by the era of the Enlightenment. This “liberal individualism,” which is described as “the idea that each person should have the right to think and act in a way that is largely free from communitarian or collectivists restrictions,” became a distinguishing attribute of American identity, instigated by the elite who vied for autonomy from British colonialism in the pre-Revolutionary era of United States history.¹⁸³ In whichever ways it

¹⁸³ Edward Grabb, Douglas Baer, and James Curtis, “The Origins of American Individualism: Reconsidering the Historical Evidence,” *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 4 (Autumn 1999), 511-533.

manifested throughout the following centuries, individualism became a distinguishing attribute of American society. Anthropologist Karen Brison in fact notes the uniqueness of Western individualism in her discussion on sociocentric identity in religious discourse in rural Fiji, as she examined the Western conception of the Self in comparison to other world cultures:

Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures.¹⁸⁴

Indeed, such conceptions of the Self translated from the era of the Enlightenment to American ideologies. Nevertheless, such ideologies were not initially upheld by the general American populace, though as the appeal of individual liberties intercepted the progression of Christianity within the country, a sense of Christian exceptionalism overcame the Self-identity of the American West.

The prominence of Christianity in America was first established prior to American independence. The missionaries associated with European colonialism had already introduced the New World to Christianity, particularly through the evangelization of Native Americans propagated by the French and the Spanish. The New England colonies, however, offered opportunity and a religious safe haven for Europeans seeking refuge from religious persecution for the sects of Christianity in which they practiced in Europe. Though as settlements politically organized, some colonies were less tolerant than others as they arose and advocated for particular religious authorities. Already, the

¹⁸⁴ Karen J. Brison, "Crafting Sociocentric Selves in Religious Discourse in Rural Fiji," *Ethos* 29, no. 4 (Dec 2001): 453-474.

entanglement of the affairs of church and state were evident in the pre-Revolutionary Era, as well as the centrality of religious identity within political institutions.

Nevertheless, it was the century following the American Revolution that saw the Christianization of American identity. As the population of the United States experienced an unprecedented expansion, an outburst of popular religious movements across the country followed. Influential historian of American religion, Nathan O. Hatch, estimated in his work *The Democratization of American Christianity* that within a little over half a century, the population of the United States expanded from two and a half million residents to almost twenty million. Christianity followed suit. The minister to populace ratio in this time frame went from a “one minister per fifteen hundred” people to a staggering “one minister per five hundred.”¹⁸⁵ Religious movements sprung up across the nation, as denominations emerged diverging from mainstream religious traditions. Characteristic of such religious movements were expressed dissatisfaction with orthodox traditions, the championing of the common populace, and sermons emphasizing both “individual self-respect and collective self-confidence.”¹⁸⁶

Such “individual self-respect” mirrored the ideologies of the Founding Fathers and ruling elites, yet it was slightly mitigated among the general populace due to the communal narratives of Protestant Christianity, as well as the communalism upheld by the “small-town community life” of the majority of Americans.¹⁸⁷ Some historians might claim that such an environment did not encourage “unconditional personal freedom, nor a

¹⁸⁵ Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3-4.

¹⁸⁶ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Grabb, “The Origins of American Individualism,” 522.

strong commitment to a wider national polity.”¹⁸⁸ Though, on the contrary, the diverse variety of Protestant sects and corresponding small-town churches established an environment that was on the one hand, individualized by the sheer uniqueness of variability of its Protestant sects, and on the other hand communalistic in its collective Christian identity. This “communalist orientation” dominated the majority of the American populace, especially in the era directly following Revolutionary America. While the “nascent American identity” was still unformed, the freedom of religious expression allowed early Protestants to determine the means of their own individual salvation.

Throughout the following development of the American nation, Christianity became intertwined with the American identity and the populism of democratic political authorities that strived to advocate for the collective identity of the nation utilized Christianity as an instrument for political gain. Since the Self-identity of the people manifested in Christian religious orientations, a government that claimed to aim towards federal authority “by the people, for the people” often assumed the Christian identity of its nation. The niceties of such a progression involve complicated historical explications within both religious and political studies that are beyond the scope of this research, but the resultant intermixing of a politicized and Christianized identity within the Western American Self can be perceived through statistical analyses that attempt to gage the religious climate of the American populace.

By reviewing variables that analyze the various levels of religious orientations in American identity, the following statistical analysis attempts to highlight those aspects of

¹⁸⁸ Grabb, “The Origins of American Individualism,” 523.

the American Christian identity that may retain an inclination of an othering mentality, specifically towards Latin American immigrants.

Statistical Analysis of the American Perceptions of Latin American Immigrants

Methods

This statistical analysis utilizes Wave V of the Baylor Religion Survey from 2017, the data from which has yet to be released to the general public but was provided for this study by Dr. James Davidson from Baylor University's Sociology Department. This survey is entitled "The Values and Beliefs of the American Public," and was self-administered by pen and paper through the mail by Gallup Inc., who mailed out 11,000 surveys to a simple, stratified sample targeted to all adults nationwide. The strata were created based on information from the census that aided in determining the densities of subgroups within the population. Sample sizes for each stratum were determined by such densities.

The sample was selected using an Address Based Sample methodology, a mode of data collection that utilized the Delivery Sequence File of the United States Postal Service to create a database of delivery addresses, aided with the help of the Marketing Systems Group (MSG). The surveys were sent by mail on February 2, 2017 and collected until March 21st. The final sample size was a total of 1,501 mailed surveys, with a response rate of 13.6% of the initial surveys sent. The demographics of this sample included a mean age of 48.8 and a minor majority of female responses at 52%, with 69%

of the participants representing the white population, as demonstrated in the following table.¹⁸⁹

Table 1. Demographics of Participants in the Baylor Religion Survey 2017

Variable	(Mean or %)
Age	48.8
Race	
White	69.0
Non-White	31.0
Gender	
Male	40.8
Female	56.9
Education	
Less than HS Diploma	5.2
HS Diploma, Some college	31.2
Assoc. Deg./Trade School Certificate	15.2
Bachelor's Degree	28.3
Grad Degree (MA, PhD, JD, etc.)	20.1
Political Identification	
Republican	30.1
Independent	30.6
Democrat	39.3

Notes: All data are weighted, using the variable *weight* for the BRS 5. The demographics of these participants are meant to represent the entirety of the United States adult population, and the random sample attained attributes to the ability of this sample to relay significant data concerning the values and beliefs of this targeted people. The limitations of this research, however, are the ability of this survey to account for an accurate representation of the values and beliefs of subgroups of the population, depending upon the rate at which each strata completed the available survey.

¹⁸⁹ BRS5 Codebook, Provided by Dr. James Davidson of the Baylor University Sociology Department, April 2020.

Variables

This national study on the values and beliefs of the American public survey a wide variety of variables. Apart from the general demographics of the sample, the study measures beliefs of the public concerning religious behaviors and attitudes, morality and politics, health, life and community, and technology. The focus of this study is to gage the relationship between various levels of religious orientation and beliefs concerning the immigrant population crossing the Mexican-American border and will therefore concentrate on the variables attained from the measures concerning religious behavior and attitudes as well as morality and politics.

In particular, the primary variable highlighted in this analysis is the question that gages the extent to which the survey participants agreed with the following statement: “Illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals.” The intensity of the statement is a limitation to the data, for it may not capture vestiges of an othering mentality among those whose othering tendencies do not equate with a perceived criminality of the immigrant population, but analyzing this variable may at least reveal statistically significant relationships between certain subgroups within the population who expressed an agreeance with this statement. I have often found that those who maintain othering perspectives towards Latin American immigrants have not been provided with distinctions as to who is categorized as documented immigrants and who is not. Until distinctions are made, generalizations are enacted clustering both asylum-seekers and those who are considered undocumented immigrants. It is my hypothesis that

this othering propensity would most likely develop within similar communities, hence why I am comfortable utilizing this variable for the purpose of this research.

As for the religious behaviors and attitudes of the sample, the battery of questions concerning religious orientation in the BRS5 range from specific religious tradition and associated places of worship to attitudes towards God and broad religious themes. Rather than focusing on broad opinions concerning God, this study concentrates on those variables which are representative of beliefs associated with certain religious traditions, for, as has already been established previously in this thesis, Christian doctrine itself is not advocative of the othering of other peoples. Instead, the religious variables utilized include those that represent individual and communal views, including the religious tradition of the participants and their beliefs concerning the Bible.

Furthermore, a variable that is indicative of the American-Christian exceptionalism present within Western society that exacerbates the self-other dichotomy is encompassed in the survey question that gages the extent to which the participants agree with the following statement: “The federal government should declare the United States a Christian Nation.” By analyzing the relationship between participant agreeance with this statement and the variable pertaining to immigrants, one can hypothesize concerning the association between American-Christian exceptionalism and the othering of non-Western populations.

Lastly, by visually representing the tendency of certain religious traditions to align with political identities, the final statistical analysis demonstrates the extent to which Americans have intermixed their religious orientation and political identification nearly indiscernibly within their individual Self-identity.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Samples for the Baylor Religion Survey 2017 Who Responded to the Statement “Illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals”

Variable	Agree (Mean or %)	Not Agree (Mean or %)	χ^2/t
Age	56.82 ^a (16.17)	54.42 (17.09)	
Gender			
Male	41.4	41.9	
Female	58.6	57.7	
Education			***
Less than HS Diploma	11.9	4.2	
HS Diploma, Some college	40.4	30.2	
Assoc. Deg./Trade School Certificate	18.3	14.6	
Bachelor’s Degree	13.8	30.2	
Grad Degree (MA, PhD, JD, etc.)	15.6	20.8	
Social Class			**
Lower Class	9.3	4.7	
Working Class	34.3	21.9	
Middle Class	40.7	45.0	
Upper Middle Class	14.8	25.4	
Upper Class	0.9	2.9	
Living Demographic			*
Rural Area	19.4	11.1	
Small City/Town	36.1	30.6	
Suburb	25.9	32.5	
Large City	18.5	25.8	
Political ID			***
Republican	58.9	27.1	
Independent	26.2	31.2	
Democrat	15.0	41.7	
Marital status			†
Single/Never Married	17.3	16.1	
Married	48.2	53.9	
Widowed	17.3	9.0	

Notes: All data are weighted, using the variable *weight* for the BRS 5 and the variable *wtssall* for the GSS 2016.

^a Standard Deviation in parentheses

† p<.10, *p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

The variable concerning participant agreeance with the statement that “Illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals” was initially recorded on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For the sake of analysis, this was recoded into a dichotomous variable, reduced to agree (1) and not agree (0). Out of the 1,431 respondents to this question, only 7.8% agreed to the statement that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals. Though this sample size is small, it is still statistically significant enough for further analysis. Table 1 records the differences in the demographics between those who agree and those who disagree with this statement. Based upon a chi-square inferential statistical test, the significance in the relationship between the variable and these particular demographics is recorded. The most notable significant relationships include the demographics concerned with political identification and education. The table shows that there is an extremely significant correlation between beliefs concerning illegal immigrants and education and political identification.

Analysis of Relationships

The statistical analysis of the relationship between the variables in this sample were undergone using analysis of variance, or ANOVA testing. The null hypothesis of each of the following tests is that there is no difference in the religious beliefs of those who agree and do not agree with the statement that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals.

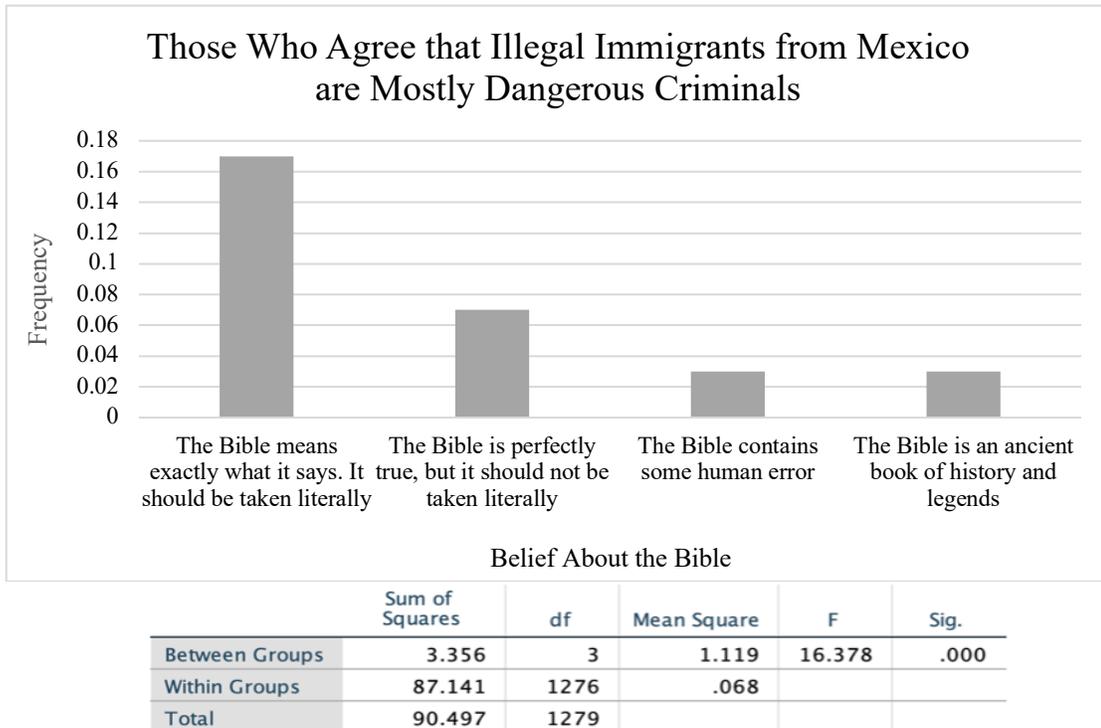
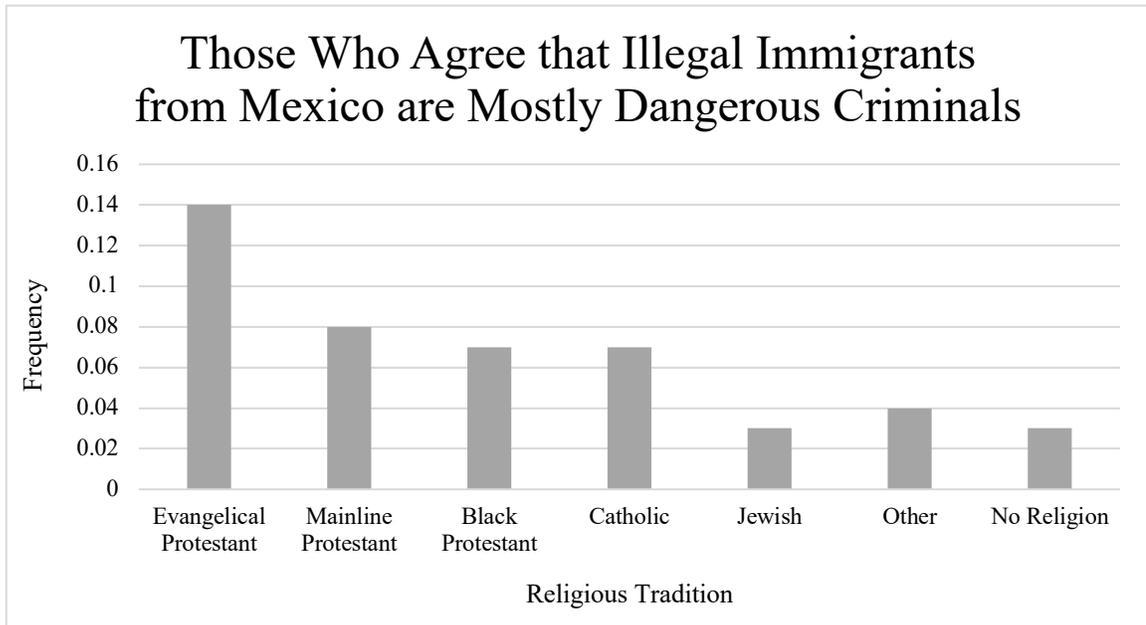


Figure 1. Visual representation for percentage of people in BR5 Sample who agree that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals, based upon personal beliefs about the Bible.

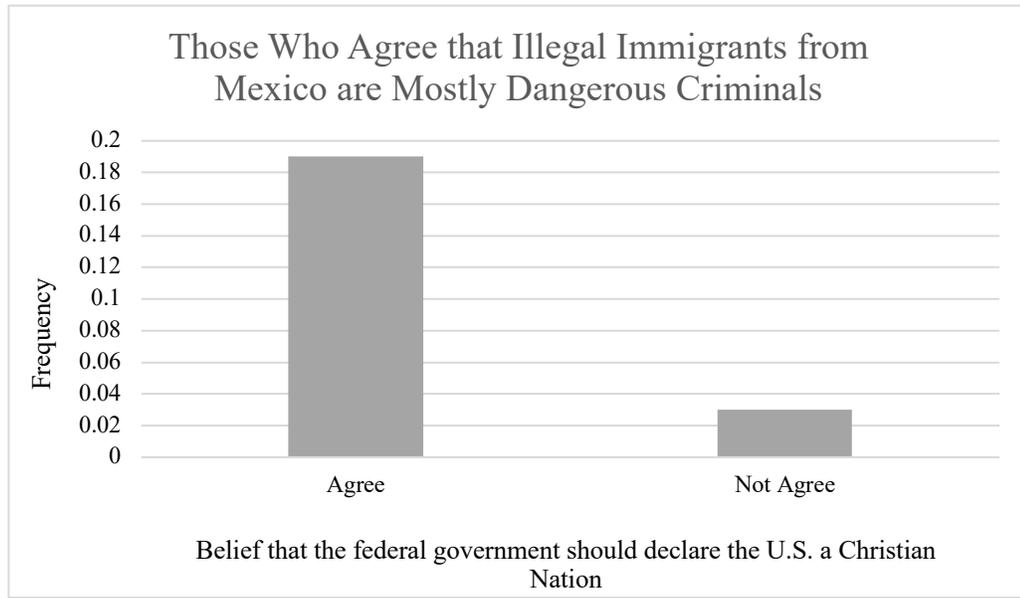
According to the ANOVA test, there is a significant difference between the beliefs about the Bible of those who agree and do not agree that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals. The sample means show that those who believe that the Bible ought to be taken literally are more likely to agree with the statement that illegal immigrants are dangerous criminals, followed by those who believe that the Bible is perfectly true but ought not to be taken literally.



	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.203	6	.367	5.179	.000
Within Groups	98.268	1386	.071		
Total	100.471	1392			

Figure 2. Visual representation for percentage of people in BR5 Sample who agree that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals, based upon religious tradition.

The ANOVA test reveals that there is a significant difference between the religious traditions of those who agree and do not agree that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals. The sample means show that Evangelical Protestants are statistically more likely to agree that illegal immigrants are dangerous criminals, followed by other Christian religious traditions. Those of no religion had the fewest participants who agreed with the statement concerning illegal immigrants.



	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.932	1	6.932	108.097	.000
Within Groups	84.654	1320	.064		
Total	91.586	1321			

Figure 3. Visual representation for percentage of people in BR5 Sample who agree that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals, based upon belief that the federal government should declare the U.S. a Christian nation

The ANOVA test shows that there is a significant difference between the belief that the federal government should declare the U.S. a Christian nation among those who agree and do not agree that illegal immigrants from Mexico are mostly dangerous criminals.

The sample means show that those who agree that the U.S. should be declared a Christian nation are statistically more likely to agree that illegal immigrants are mostly dangerous criminals.

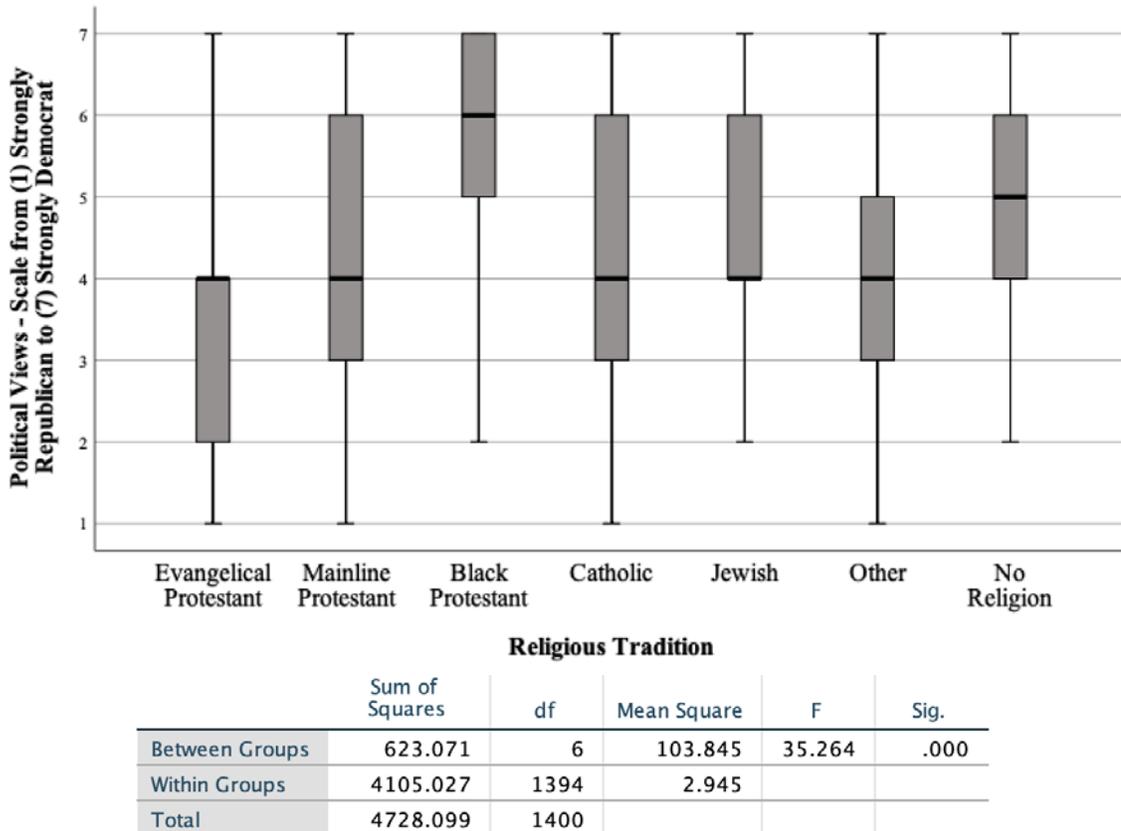


Figure 4. Visual representation of the association between religious tradition and political identification on a scale from Strongly Republican (1) to Strongly Democrat (7).

An ANOVA test analyzing the relationship between religious tradition and political identification reveals that there is a significant difference between the political identification of those of different religious traditions. At least one of the means differ significantly from the others. Based upon the visual representation provided by the boxplot, it appears that Evangelical Protestants tend to lean more Republican, whereas Black Protestants lean heavily Democrat.

Conclusions

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the purpose of utilizing the aforementioned variables were to gage the existence of an othering mentality in relation

to Christian ideologies. The statistical analyses of the relationship between agreeance to the statement that illegal immigrants are mostly dangerous criminals from Mexico and questions concerning religious beliefs reveal that religious beliefs appear to significantly affect the othering mentalities of the populace, as can be hypothesized from the analyses of this sample population. Those who contend that the Bible ought to be taken literally and who advocate for the declaration of the United States as a Christian nation were statistically more likely to hold prejudices against the “illegal immigrant” population. Furthermore, those who practiced Christianity – particularly Evangelical Protestantism – were more likely than non-religious participants to agree with the othering mentality, suggesting a relation between certain religious traditions and the tendency to reserve prejudices against immigrants.

Historically, such positions concerning religious beliefs are often associated with more conservative political views, which is corroborated by the apparent association of Evangelical Protestantism with a more conservative political identity. The limitations of this particular study, however, are that one cannot divorce the political identity from the religious identity to determine whether one viewpoint is more influential than the other. The inseparable nature of this intermixed identity, however, accentuates the American-Christian exceptionalism that is influencing the othering tendencies towards non-Western peoples.

CHAPTER SIX

Concluding Thoughts

It has been a little over a year since I encountered the lady in the Greyhound Bus Station. Since our interaction, I have imagined countless arguments with which I could have responded had I been prepared, or brave enough, to confront her prejudices. Some arguments were impassioned with what I believed was righteous anger, others in inflamed accusations, and all thoroughly immersed in incredulous disbelief. Yet at the conclusion of each argument I fabricated, I remembered the saddened yet composed demeanor of my friend, who had responded as I remained speechless. Rather than countering with anger or accusation, she had responded with grace and mercy, as John Garland had challenged our missions team to practice.¹⁹⁰ At that moment, the most merciful response I myself could have mustered would have been silence.

Throughout the year, I have instead endeavored to practice mercy, in an effort to understand how best I would respond to future encounters I may have with people in similar mindsets as the lady in the bus station. Apart from my own response to the situation, I have also attempted to imagine what circumstances in that lady's life could have contributed to her woeful ignorance of the inhumanity that persisted around her. Perhaps the narratives of fear that surround the perceptions of immigration in media had frightened her beyond compassion. Perhaps her own circumstances had hardened her heart, or previous experiences had led her to generalize a narrative of violence against

¹⁹⁰ John Garland, Correspondence with Author, March 9, 2019.

immigrants. Maybe she herself desperately wished for aid within her community, and had felt slighted by the lack of assistance that had ever been offered to her. To merely assume that she was an evil or horrible person – abounding in hatred and lacking in compassion – would be an unjust and unmerciful assumption. As different as we are in our perspectives, she is not wholly different from me as a sinner, as a child of God.

Indeed, the self-other dichotomy that had been exploited to justify ethnocentric prejudices within Western society had surely somehow influenced her perceptions of the Latin American immigrant community, for just as we are responsible for our actions, we are also influenced by the environment in which we live. As chapter two insisted, Western ideological traditions had been rooted in this dichotomy since its conception in Greco-Roman antiquity. A review of the history of anthropological theory revealed that such an opposition provided the epistemological framework upon which the discipline of anthropology was founded, which challenged the perceived purpose of its studies into the present-day, and revealed how such a dichotomy has persisted within the West and thus into the United States. Chapter one could not effectively handle all the nuances that accompany an attempt to trace an existent ideology across centuries of a civilization, but it revealed that such an ideology had indeed played a role in the institutionalization of an othering tendency.

Tracing the history of anthropological theory, as Jacob Pandian asserts, is the first step in understanding the rationalizations that have historically corroborated the justifications for the study of the Anthropological Other. The goal of this discussions is to understand why such a dichotomy has extended beyond the natural tendency to differentiate for the sake of self-identification and has manifested into such a detrimental

epistemological system. As chapter three attempts to elucidate, at the intersection of anthropological and theological inquiries lies a true explication of the Other as an epistemological framework created by the inability of Western civilization to recognize the Triune God as the Divine Other. Such an inability resulted in the elevation of idolized fabrications of God unintentionally created by the West within its own image, thus uplifting itself as a divine-like entity in comparison to others, thus manifesting in the ethnocentric prejudices of Western civilization towards non-Western peoples.

The Western fabrication of God is most revelatory in the parallel disunification of theological and anthropological inquiries, as chapter four has demonstrated. The existence of Other anthropologies is detrimental to the unity that once existed within the discipline, but necessary for the revitalization of anthropological studies upon an epistemological foundation that is not discriminatory towards non-Western societies. On the other hand, Other theologies is revelatory of the lack of unity existent in many Western Christian theological discussions, for if the Christianity that was introduced to the colonial societies was accessible and applicable to these people, there would be no need to separate it from the Western centrism that other theologians perceived in Western biblical exegesis.

While discourse between the disciplines of anthropology and theology is revelatory of such othering mentalities in the West, it is much more difficult to recognize the continuation of this othering within American society, insofar as there are numerous confounding factors that complicate the discussion of identity in the United States. Christian exceptionalism is evident in the West's idolization of its own image as explained in chapter three, though how this mentality has persisted within the United

States despite growing cultural awareness is a larger question for historical consideration, beyond the scope of my own studies. Nevertheless, as chapter five demonstrates, statistical analyses conducted using the Baylor Religious Survey of 2017 can be revelatory of vestigial othering mentalities associated with an intertwined American-Christian identity, which suggests an improper misidentification of the Christian-Self with the American-Self among many expressions of Christian tradition in the United States.

This thesis broadly asserts that at the root of the othering mentality perceived in United States relations with Latin American immigrants is the inability of Western civilization to recognize the Triune God as the Divine Other. The West has elevated an idol of itself in place of God, and in self-adoration has misidentified non-Western peoples as wholly Other from the divine West. As this distinction is further exacerbated by expounding factors – political factions, material wealth and social class, race, historical divisions, national boundaries – people continue to forget that the difference between ourselves and God is infinitely greater than any possible distance between human beings.

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