Encountering Religion: Encounter, Religion, and the Cultural Cold War, 1953—1967

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ENCOUNTERING RELIGION: *ENCOUNTER*, RELIGION, AND THE CULTURAL COLD WAR, 1953–1967

That the Cold War included a cultural dimension as well as a political one has become an established area of discussion, scholarship, and analysis, yet it is only recently that the understanding that a religious Cold War also existed has gained currency.[1] This essay considers the intersection of the religious Cold War with the cultural Cold War, taking as its starting point Paul Tillich's statement, "As religion is the substance of culture, so culture is the form of religion."[2] My contention is that the cultural Cold War was also involved in what can be called the religious Cold War, with the resultant issue of where the line between religion and culture both is and can be drawn. It is proposed that Tillich's statement is indicative of the blurring and interchange of these concepts and expressions in mid-twentieth-century modernity. It needs to be continually noted that culture and religion are notoriously difficult terms to classify and differentiate, for when does religion stop being "religion" and begin being "culture," and vice versa? Likewise, given the central thread of Christianity in Western culture, drawing any firm line is not only a matter of personal opinion, but even more so

I wish to thank Dianne Kirby and anonymous reviewer B for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this essay.

[1] See the numerous works of Dianne Kirby, who has led the move into the analysis of the religious Cold War. For a thorough discussion of the religious Cold War, see the essays in Dianne Kirby, ed., *Religion and the Cold War* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[2] Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary* (London: Collins, 1967), 69–70.

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a case of where and how one views explicit and implicit forms of religion and religiosity.[3] To seek to clearly differentiate the two as distinct spheres serves in the end only to endorse a secularization thesis that reduces religion to a sectarian identity and role, a secularization thesis that has itself been recanted by its most vocal midcentury proponents.[4]

Dianne Kirby traces the oversight regarding the religious Cold War to three main issues. First, the contested history of the study of religion in American secular universities has resulted in what she terms "a frigid attitude" in the main toward both religious and church history.[5] Second, as noted above, "religion" is a fluid term and claim which means, third, "Religion is as intricately intertwined with the political as it is with the social and the cultural."[6] Therefore, religion becomes a problematic area and cluster of ideas to differentiate: not only as an issue with which many do not wish to engage, but, paradoxically, also as an unseen or unacknowledged participant in political, social, and cultural debates. Such scholastic blindness has resulted in what Russell Bartley, writing of the cultural Cold War, terms "a cultural lexicon . . . that in effect confined all discourse to fixed semantic parameters."[7] The present essay, engaging with the etymology of religion, takes as its starting point a double claim that the religious Cold War, because it also involved politics, society, and culture, actually serves as both a *religare*, a binding together of Cold War history, and a *relegere*, a rereading of Cold War history.

However, the religious Cold War cannot be separated from the larger issues of culture, for sitting at the heart of the cultural Cold War were questions of what liberal humanism involves, and how it can be represented and discussed. Such questions not only helped drive the creation of religious studies in America as "the humanistic study of religion,"[8] it also required sites of discussion and propagation whereby the newly emergent Western mass society could be reminded of the values of what Edward Shils termed "superior culture" against the siren claims of mediocre and brutal cultures.[9]

[3] See Tomoko Masuzawa's essay on "Culture" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 70–93.

[4] See Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

[5] See D. G. Hart, *The University Gets Religion. Religious Education in American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Dianne Kirby, "Religion and the Cold War—an Introduction," in Kirby, *Religion and the Cold War*, 18.

[6] Ibid., 20.

[7] Russell H. Bartley, "The Pied Piper Played to Us All: Orchestrating the Cultural Cold War in the USA, Europe and Latin America," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 14, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 573.

[8] See Russell T. McCutcheon, "'Just Follow the Money': The Cold War, the Humanistic Study of Religion, and the Fallacy of Insufficient Cynicism," *Culture and Religion* 5, no. 1 (2004): 41–69.

[9] Edward Shils, "Mass Society and Its Cultures," *Daedalus* 89, no. 2 (Spring 1960): 288–314.

This was especially important for rethinking the culture of Western Europe, for while Adenauer had been calling for the centrality of Christianity for a reconstructed German, and indeed wider Western European identity from the late 1940s,[10] there was a significant argument over the basis and focus of Western identity in postwar Europe. As noted by David Ryan, those who sought an identity linked with the United States found themselves against those who saw such identities, with their "commercialism and religious elements" as situated against "progressive social transformation."[11] In short, European elites could view America and a linking of Western identity as the triumph of mediocre and brutal cultures. What was seen to be required was a site to express a rethought "superior culture" identity that could state an alternative cultural identity against and between what Ryan terms "US and soviet Manichaeism."[12]

A central site was *Encounter*, developed and promoted as a journal of culture and opinion that, as expressed by Volker Berghahn, "targeted the intellectual elites, calculating that swaying them would generate multiple effects and their more sophisticated anti-communism and pro-Americanism would complement other efforts and percolate down to the rest of society."[13] As *Encounter* demonstrates, the cultural and religious Cold Wars were intertwined and Cold War journals are an underutilized resource for gaining an understanding of the degree to which there is no real break between culture and religion—except for militant atheists, and dogmatic religious believers. The oversight occurs because scholars often wish to differentiate culture and religion and reduce religion to institutional forms and expressions. This results in either an overemphasis on institutional religious forms and expressions, or a particular scholarly blindness to noninstitutional religion. The value of *Encounter* is because, as Kirby notes, the use of religion as tool of analysis for the Cold War cannot be confined to the United States.[14] This study of *Encounter* demonstrates how religion is used as part of that noted "cultural lexicon" of the "rhetoric of crisis"[15] in a culture journal that locates itself primarily as a London-located, North Atlantic response seeking to primarily influence European and commonwealth elites. In charting the discussion of religion in the pages of *Encounter*, I argue that the culture journal presentation and discussion of religion is an integral part of the

[10] See Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 129.

[11] David Ryan, "Mapping Containment: The Cultural Construction of the Cold War," in *American Cold War Culture*, ed. Douglas Field (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 55.

[12] Ibid., 51.

[13] Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 133–34.

[14] Kirby, "Religion and Cold War—an Introduction," 23.

[15] Bartley, "The Pied Piper Played to Us All," 573. McCutcheon, "Just Follow the Money," 56.

cultural front of the Cold War.[16] For in reading and analyzing such journals of ideas and opinion, the scholar of religion can gain a new insight into the role of religion in the cultural Cold War—and the way in which religion was considered a central element of liberal humanism and anticommunism, expressed as part of what McCutcheon terms "the humanistic makeover" of religion as "the abiding permanence of Meaning lodged in the human spirit."[17]

While such a view of religion can be traced back to Schleiermacher and the influence of liberal Protestantism, it is still important to clarify what is meant by "religion" in the pages of *Encounter*. In the main "religion" covers Christianity, Judaism, and Zen. Within "Christianity" the focus is on mainstream Protestant denominationalism and Roman Catholicism, especially as Christianity occurs and is practiced within Europe and North America. The interaction of Christianity within Western culture and Western European history is a dominant concern. Any discussion of Catholicism is primarily concerned with Catholic political intervention. While the focus on Zen occurs as a response to the rise of Zen as countercultural "other" to Western, and especially American, Christianity. In a climate concerned with the promotion of a specific type of culture and cultural values against communism, Zen as the spiritual force of a nascent counterculture was viewed as a distinct threat, especially given its attraction among those who could be viewed as possible future elites. For Zen was interpreted as either a nihilistic spirituality or as, for all intent and purposes, a type of atheism. In either view, Zen ran counter to what was deemed the liberal humanist project in a Cold War environment. In the pages of *Encounter* the discussions of "religion" therefore include specific discussions of types of Christianity, and more generic and undefined references to Christianity, Judaism, Zen, Buddhism, and often "religion" in an eclectic sense. This of course fits within the wider societal designations of religion as including within it whatever forms the designator or describer so wishes. By this is meant that "religion" becomes a remarkably fluid, yet often also reductive term when used in the wider population. In the pages of *Encounter*, religion was used in the same ways Zen, Catholicism, and Christianity were used, as generic catchall terms that spoke to a wider body of anticommunist liberal humanists and elites. The specifics and taxonomy of "religion" or indeed any of these terms did not arise. Rather, such terms were used within a general social, cultural, and political framework—influenced perhaps for some by the emerging field of comparative religions but more generally by either sociology or, in Europe, by the *religionweissenschaft*.

[16] My article is the first in a proposed series of investigations into midcentury culture journals and religion that will include *Partisan Review*, *Quadrant*, and *Commentary*.

[17] McCutcheon, "Just Follow the Money," 43, 55.

Therefore we can apply the critique of Jonathan Z. Smith to this environment. The terms Zen, Catholicism, Christianity, and religion were primarily used as a descriptive and comparative "second-order abstraction."[18] Further, as Smith reminds us, "the academic study of religion is a child of the Enlightenment," which is further amplified by Charles Winquist's statement that "the generic concept of religion is not innocent of the genealogy of its origination in the Enlightenment."[19] Likewise, in *True Religion* Graham Ward has argued for the need of a genealogy of religion to help us understand not only "the trajectory of the history of the social production of religion" but also the "discursive practices" both closely linked to religion and antithetical to "the changing understanding of religion."[20] The cultural Cold War therefore involves within it the religious Cold War as part of the wider self-defining of the enlightenment and modernity in the mid to late twentieth century. It also needs to be remembered that the religious Cold War is also situated within a wider Manichean dualism of "religion versus communism," which of course leaves "religion" open to a variety of possibilities arising from that Western genealogy of religion.[21]

Encounter, on first glance, may seem an unlikely repository of religious history, especially as the two major histories dealing with the journal and its parent body, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (hereafter CCF) seem almost blind to the discussion of religion that was undertaken. Likewise, the majority of historians and scholars of religion tend to be more focused upon explicit examples of Cold War religion and have either dismissed, or not considered, the important role played by *Encounter*. Of course this is partly to do with the distrust of *Encounter* that emerged following the revelation of its CIA funding.[22] While suspicions as to the source of its funding had circulated almost from its inception, once the truth was made public in 1967 many left-wing critics and scholars dismissed the journal *en toto* with, it must be said, a remarkable degree of hindsight. However, this article argues that funding did not necessarily determine content. Furthermore, in its heyday *Encounter* was arguably the dominant journal of cultural critique

[18] Jonathan Z. Smith, "'Religion' and 'Religious Studies': No Difference at All," *Soundings* 71, no. 2–3 (1988): 233.

[19] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 104, quoted in Charles E. Winquist, *The Surface of the Deep* (Aurora, CO: The Davies Group, Publishers, 2003), 183; Winquist quote also on 183.

[20] Graham Ward, *True Religion* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), viii.

[21] For discussion on this genealogy, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[22] See George Szamuely, "The Intellectuals & the Cold War," *Commentary* 88, no. 6 (December 1989): 54–56; and Terry Teachout, "Going Highbrow at the CIA," *Commentary* 125, no. 3 (March 2008): 59–61, http://www.commentarymagazine.com/viewarticle.cfm/going-highbrow-at-the-cia-11249.

and opinion in the English-speaking world.[23] Central to its impact was the quality of its contributors. *Encounter* provided space for the extended essay of critique and opinion that, while supportive of the cultural heritage and expressions of Western culture, did not act as an uncritical Cold War cheerleader. In fact a constant theme was the critique of what was perceived as a growing materialistic nihilism in postwar European and American culture. Perhaps only now, forty years on from its "unmasking" and from the location of a small nation not still caught up in the wake of the Cold War, can a more considered reading of *Encounter* occur. Furthermore, upon a careful reading of the journal, it appears that the neglect of *Encounter* is the result of ignorance concerning what was actually discussed in its pages. The political legacy has resulted in an assessment most often conducted by hearsay.

While *Encounter* has been the subject of books and articles, these are what I term nonreligious texts: those texts written in the main by historians and cultural critics, presenting a view on *Encounter* that is almost entirely secularized. In such analysis *Encounter* is presented primarily as an organ of political opinion and impact whereby *Encounter* as a journal of postwar culture and cultural critique is subsumed to political agendas and readings. Alternatively, the more doctrinaire scholar of religion often regards such a mainstream culture journal as neither a serious nor a viable source. As previously noted, such disregard occurs because of a type of intellectual snobbery whereby the study of religion as a cultural expression and debate often neglects the public presentation and discussion of religion in mainstream journals of opinion. Yet if we consider the influence and readership of such journals, the analysis of how religion is presented and discussed in their pages offers another exciting and important source for the historian of religion. Such journals as *Encounter* enable the historian of religion to gain valuable insight into what were considered important contemporary debates and issues concerning religion among those who saw themselves as cultural critics and societal opinion makers.

As this article demonstrates, the question of religion played an important and recurrent role within the pages of *Encounter* as part of its activity to express an alternative postwar European society to what was commonly presented as the two main options of either communism or nonalignment. Central to the debate of *Encounter* and religion is that of what type of secularity was going to occur: was it a secularity that reduced religion to a sectarian identity, or was it a secularity that took religion as part of a wider cultural heritage and contemporary debate? As noted by Kirby, there

[23] Berghahn notes that in 1960 *Encounter* had 24,000 subscribers, of which 5,000 were in Africa and Asia (*America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*, 218). While such numbers do not make it a major journal by circulation, the fact that it was held in many university libraries (including that of my own university in Christchurch, New Zealand) speaks to its global impact among those who may have counted themselves among Shils's superior culture.

is a distinct difference between a French-derived complete separation of religion and politics that involves a repudiation of religion and the wider Judeo-Christian secularism that includes religion, under controls and limits, as part of a wider project of public order and democracy.[24] *Encounter* took the latter path, seeing the laicization of culture as a dislocation that made it too easy to ally atheism and communism. The result was that in the pages of *Encounter*, a critique and engagement with religion occurred as part of the wider liberal project of postwar, North Atlantic ideology and identity.

Rooted firmly in an Enlightenment legacy,[25] *Encounter* was critical of religion yet also recognized religion's role as part of the wider Eliot-derived definition of culture that was to have such an impact in the immediate postwar years. For T. S. Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* is a central source not only for *Encounter*'s position on religion, but for *Encounter*'s (and the CCF's) cultural policy toward rebuilding European society as a whole.

T. S. Eliot, the Anglo-Catholic modernist poet and critic, in a 1946 broadcast to a shattered, postwar Germany stated the centrality of Christianity to Western culture: "It is against a background of Christianity that all our thought has significance. An individual European may not believe the Christian faith is true, and yet what he says, and makes, and does, will all spring out of his heritage of the Christian faith for its meaning."[26] Eliot's plea for a return to "civilization" after the destruction of the war warned that the disappearance of Christianity would mean the disappearance of European culture: "If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes."[27] This statement needs to be understood not only as an expression of concern directed against an encroaching Soviet Union and the European turn to communist politics in the immediate postwar years, but also as a repudiation of both a lingering National Socialism and a wider societal nihilism. This is not to claim that *Encounter* looked solely to Eliot for intellectual foundations. Its roots were too involved in the sentiments and battles of the New York anti-Stalinist and "post-Trotskyist" intellectuals to turn wholeheartedly to the Anglo-Catholic convert for legitimacy.[28] Yet, based in London

[24] This point was raised by Dianne Kirby in correspondence, March 2009.

[25] In his admittedly partisan account of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Edward Shils stated that *Encounter* "stands in a tradition of intellectuals of a common outlook joined together in a common task-it is a product of the Enlightenment" (Edward Shils, "Remembering the Congress of Cultural Freedom," *Encounter* 75, no. 2 [September 1990]: 56).

[26] T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948), app. 3, 122.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Giles Scott-Smith, " 'A Radical Democratic Political Offensive': Melvin J. Lasky, *Der Monat*, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 2 (April 2000): 274. Scott-Smith notes the important influence of Eliot's writings on culture on Melvin Lasky.

and coedited by the poet Stephen Spender, *Encounter* was also modernist enough in ethos to recognize the central role Eliot played in critically assessing the religious and cultural legacy that had resulted in twentieth-century culture.[29] However, such recognition of the cultural significance of Christianity did not mean, in *Encounter*, the uncritical support of religion. As shall be seen, *Encounter* took religion seriously as a cultural and intellectual force but this also involved taking seriously the challenge of religion to an Enlightenment-derived democracy. Of particular concern to *Encounter* would be religious institutions that sought to express and represent an alternative authority to the democratic state.

At the same time that T. S. Eliot was broadcasting to Germany, the future "Cold Warriors" Melvin Lasky and Michael Josselson were in Berlin watching Soviet prisoners being transported by train to the gulags. In his history of the CCF, Peter Coleman reports Edward Shils as claiming that this experience made Lasky and Josselson decide "to save Western civilisation."[30] They agreed that to pursue such an aim involved promoting and defending a notion of Western cultural freedom against totalitarian regimes and institutions. To this end they set about establishing the provocatively named Congress for Cultural Freedom. The establishment of the CCF, run between 1950 and 1967 by the CIA agent Michael Josselson,[31] has been well documented in contrasting ways by Peter Coleman and Frances Stonor Saunders,[32] with a necessary reassessment being undertaken by Giles Scott-Smith and others in the attempt to find a middle truth between the two alternative histories.[33] As part of its activities, the CCF

[29] Eliot had begun to develop these ideas in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939) but expanded them postwar into a wider discussion of culture. The Catholic historian of culture Christopher Dawson was likewise developing a comprehensive discussion of the Christian heritage of Western civilization. For a contemporary Catholic analysis that builds on the legacy of Dawson, see George Weigel, *The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America and Politics Without God* (New York: Basic, 2005).

[30] Edward Shils to Peter Coleman, 1982, reported in Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Post-war Europe* (New York: Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan, 1989), 13; see also 279 n. 36.

[31] For the CIA internal history of the CCF see https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/95unclass/Warner.html.

[32] Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 1989; Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 1999). For the CIA review of Frances Stonor Saunders see https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol46no1/article08.html.

[33] See Giles Scott-Smith, "A Radical Democratic Political Offensive," 263–80, and "The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference: 'Defining the Parameters of Discourse,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 3 (July 2002): 437–55, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and Post-war American Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2002); and Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds., *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960* (London: Frank Cass, 2003). See also Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*; Dianne Kirby, "Divinely Sanctioned: The Anglo-American Cold War Alliance and the Defence of

published more than "twenty prestige magazines" in an attempt to disabuse the attractions and activities of the Cold War tactic of the promotion of Soviet culture and society as being superior to that of the West.[34] Therefore the CCF and *Encounter* in particular were concerned as much with providing an outlet for the intelligent and accessible discussion and analysis of Western culture as it was of countering Soviet claims. Such a need arose because the CCF recognized that intellectuals, trained to be self-critical, often extended their analysis and criticism to their surrounding society and found it lacking against their ideals. The success of the Russian Revolution meant that during the Depression, and with the rise of fascism, many intellectuals, if not converting to communism, had become fellow travelers at the very least sympathetic to an alternative critique. This was especially so in Europe and Asia, where those intellectuals described as nonaligned were often perceived as open to communist overtures. In response to this situation, *Encounter* became the flagship journal of the CCF, positioning itself as *the* English-language journal of cultural and societal analysis[35] that critiqued not just the Soviet cultural efforts but also showed a willingness to challenge conservative influences within Western culture. To understand this dual focus, it is important to recognize that many involved in the CCF had been Trotskyites who turned against the betrayal expressed by Stalinist totalitarianism.[36] Therefore *Encounter* became a vehicle of self-critical Western intellectuals who, viewing themselves as heir to the Enlightenment tradition, used their position and privilege to critique totalitarian impulses of the Left and the Right.[37]

Western Civilization and Christianity, 1945–48." *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 3 (July 2000): 385–412; Christopher Shannon, *A World Made Safe for Differences: Cold War Intellectuals and the Politics of Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), and Hugh Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals: From Vanguard to Institution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), and *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[34] Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 1.

[35] See Hilton Kramer, *The Twilight of the Intellectuals: Culture and Politics in the Era of the Cold War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 314, where Kramer quotes Raymond Aron's view that *Encounter* was "the first, the best monthly review in English."

[36] Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 2; Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 16. See also Irving Kristol, *Neo-Conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea; Selected Essays, 1949–1995* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

[37] For a wider perspective on the period and the links of intellectuals and culture, including a discussion on the CCF ("What Was the Congress for Cultural Freedom?" 305–18), see Hilton Kramer, *The Twilight of the Intellectuals.* Arising mainly out of Kramer's essays and reviews for the *New Criterion*, Kramer's book is that of a self-described neoconservative (xvi). In this Kramer raises the fascinating issue that neoconservativism is where a particular type of liberal humanism, allied with anticommunism/antifascism and concerned with the promotion of modernism, ends up. This has implications for understanding the current "neo-con" opposition to militant Islam and its populist designation via Christopher Hitchens as "islamofascism."

The tension within *Encounter* derived from its twin editors. Published in London, *Encounter* was ostensibly the journal of the British CCF. To this end the poet Stephen Spender was appointed one editor. His purview was naturally that of literature and culture in the general sense. However, because *Encounter* was always a Cold War journal, the real heart of the enterprise was the political-cultural pages always edited by Americans: first William Kristol and then latterly Melvin Lasky. Both Kristol and Lasky appear responsible for the amount of religious writing and analysis that appears in *Encounter*. Kristol's memoirs continually emphasize his interest in theological scholarship and religious ideas. Lasky too, influenced by Eliot, saw the necessity of charting and critiquing religious developments.[38] Also, both Kristol and Lasky had attended City College of New York and so had been influenced by *Partisan Review* and its changing attitude to religion. For a while in 1943 *Partisan Review* under Sidney Hook had famously castigated the return of "a pagan and Christian supernaturalism" as "a Failure of Nerve,"[39] and by 1950 it had reassessed the cultural climate with a four-part symposium on "religion and the intellectuals."[40] While still critical of the return of religion, it was noted by *Partisan Review* in 1950 that there was "a new turn toward religion among intellectuals" coupled with "the growing disfavour with which secular attitudes and perspectives are now regarded in not a few circles that lay claim to the leadership of culture."[41]

One of the major influences behind this return to religion was the American neo-orthodox Protestant theologian and social critic Reinhold Niebuhr. In a series of writings in the 1940s and 1950s Niebuhr promoted a critical support for the United States that at the same time challenged state and civil religion, fascism, communism, and the Catholic Church.[42] Niebuhr also served on the governing committee of the CCF and so can be discerned as

[38] Scott-Smith in "A Radical Democratic Political Offensive" notes that Lasky, in a series of memos from 1947 that outlined the plan for what became Lasky's Berlin journal *Der Monat*, includes the call for "American views" on "French and Italian spiritual developments" (269).

[39] Sidney Hook, "The New Failure of Nerve," pt. 1, *Partisan Review*, January–February 1943, 2–23. The "Failure of Nerve" discussion in the *Partisan Review* ran for two issues: 10, no. 1 (January–February 1943): 1–57, and 10, no. 2 (March–April 1943): 134–76. Hook borrows the phrase "Failure of Nerve" from Gilbert Murray's *Four Stages of Greek Religion*. For Hook it is signaled by the turn to "unwarranted hopes and unfounded beliefs."

[40] "Religion and the Intellectuals: A Symposium," *Partisan Review* 17, no. 2 (February 1950): 103–42; 17, no. 3 (March 1950): 215–56; 17, no. 4 (April 1950): 313–39; 17, no. 5 (May–June 1950): 456–84. I propose to discuss both "the Failure of Nerve" and "religion and the intellectuals" in future essays.

[41] Sidney Hook, editorial statement, *Partisan Review* 15, no. 2 (February 1950): 103.

[42] Among Reinhold Niebuhr's books that are important for the cultural Cold War are *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defence* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946); *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), and *The Godly and the Ungodly. Essays on the Religious and Secular Dimensions of Modern Life* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959).

an important influence on *Encounter*'s position regarding religion. In fact, Kristol includes Niebuhr among his theological influences, a list that also includes the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritian, who also served on the CCF committee.[43] Niebuhr was also a major influence on the Jewish ex-Marxist Cold War sociologist and theologian Will Herberg,[44] whose *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (1955, rev. ed. 1960) had a major impact on American self-assessment. Herberg positions these three types of belief as three differing ways of being American, that is as differing, yet equally acceptable ways of belonging to the distinctly American religious democracy that becomes the civic religion of what he terms Americanism.[45] Herberg's promotion of a tripartite pluralism of religious and national identity sought to demonstrate how a secular nation was composed of three dominant forms of religious beliefs. For Herberg, these beliefs, rather than competing and resulting in religious and cultural sectarianism, actually served a wider purpose of providing the basis for a collective religious and cultural identity of Judeo-Christian America. In effect, they became transcended in a type of religious cosmopolitanism of the nation. Therefore, the argument was that America (American culture and identity) was inherently religious, because in Herberg's vision, particular religious identities were transcended by a truly national *religare*.

In a contrary fashion, equally important at this time in influencing public opinion were the anti-Catholic warnings of Paul Blanshard. In both *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (1949) and *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power* (1952), Blanshard positions American democracy as involved in a three-way struggle against the antidemocratic, authoritarian institutions of the Vatican and the Kremlin:[46] "Vatican versus Kremlin, Kremlin versus democracy, and Vatican versus democracy."[47] Blanshard's

[43] Kristol lists Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Jacques Maritain, and later Martin Buber, Theodore Rozenweig, and Gershom Scholem as his theological influences (*Neo-Conservatism*, 5).

[44] See Will Herberg, "Reinhold Neibuhr: Christian Apologist to the Secular World" (1956), in *From Marx to Judaism: The Collected Essays of Will Herberg*, ed. David Dalin (New York: Markus Wiener, 1989), 38–45. See also John P. Diggins, *Up from Communism: Conservative Odysseys in American Intellectual History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), esp. 272–88, for a discussion on Niebuhr's influence on Herberg.

[45] Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, new rev. ed. (1955; Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960), 256, 260, 263.

[46] See John T. McGreevy, "Thinking on One's Own: Catholicism in the American Intellectual Imagination, 1928–1960," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (June 1997): 97–131. McGreevy argues that anti-Catholic sentiment became part of the academic mainstream in sociology through the influence of Weber and Talcott Parsons. Further, the influence of Theodor Adorno, Else Frankel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950) and the linking of restrictive religiosity and fascism all combined whereby Catholicism was presented in the humanities and social sciences as inhibiting thought and free inquiry and opposed to democratic, liberal society, and socialism (see 115–18).

[47] Peter Blanshard, *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power* (London: Cape, 1952), 7.

influence is also apparent in the "anti-McCarthyite" stance taken by *Encounter*. For Blanshard was also opposed to the anticommunist demagogue Senator Joseph McCarthy, locating the basis for his anticommunist witch hunts in McCarthy's Catholicism. Therefore, in Blanshard's schema, McCarthy was also opposed to the freedoms of American democracy.[48] Blanshard's influence meant that while *Encounter* was opposed to Stalinism, it refused to become part of "McCarthyite" hysteria, accurately perceiving in such moves the totalitarian and fascist impulses *Encounter* came in existence to oppose.

The influences of Niebuhr, Herberg, and Blanshard are all evident when *Encounter* discusses religion, for in *Encounter* cultural freedom means both religious freedom and freedom from religious authoritarianism. However, religion is placed within the sphere of cultural politics not only because of the American influences of Kristol and Lasky. Religion rarely strays into literary culture partly because of the attitude of Stephen Spender, who, in his writings and journals, and also as reported in his biographies, seems to have been little troubled by religion or religious ideas. The only real hint of Spender's personal position occurs in a letter written to the American poet and critic Allen Tate in 1952. In it Spender describes himself as possessing "a respectful disbelief" that entailed "refusing to believe that Christianity was the only path."[49] While the phrase "respectful disbelief" can be seen to cover the general attitude of *Encounter* regarding religion, as shall be discussed not all forms of belief were equally respected.

There were two constant concerns. The first involved the dangers of an increasingly nihilistic society. The rejection of belief and the turn to nihilism was seen as laying society open to the influence of "bad faith." The second constant concern was the consequences of supporting antidemocratic religious institutions and beliefs merely because they were opposed to communism. This was commonly seen as a dangerous alliance, merely serving to undermine moves toward secular, pluralistic democracy. This position holds certain poignancy now that we have become aware of the consequences of the CIA support for the mujahideen and Islamist conservatives during the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Both of these concerns need to be remembered, for while Saunders is inclined to view *Encounter* and its authors as predominantly a conservative operation, those involved were often keen to emphasize that the CCF and *Encounter* were not to be confused with those who were religious or moral conservatives.[50] This is an impor-

[48] Ibid., 299.

[49] Stephen Spender to Allen Tate, December 21, 1952; quoted in David Leeming, *Stephen Spender: A Life in Modernism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 188 n. 273.

[50] See Shils, "Remembering the Congress of Cultural Freedom," 60; and Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 11. Likewise, Kristol, in *Neo-Conservatism*, often emphasizes the liberal nature of the religious thinkers who influenced him. It is important to discern between what has

tant distinction because *Encounter* saw itself as a journal of liberal views and opinion, wherein cultural freedom entailed the critique of religious and moral conservatism. In this *Encounter* was situated as a distinctly modern journal, in the legacy of Enlightenment values.

From the outset *Encounter* discussed religion. In the second issue, the Italian writer and leftist activist Nicola Chiaromonte contributed a guest editorial, "The Will to Believe." Echoing the arguments of *Partisan Review*, Chiaromonte's opening statement claimed: "Ours is an age of neither faith nor of unbelief. It is an age of bad faith, of beliefs maintained for lack of convictions that are genuine."[51] He argues that Word War I saw the beginning of the destruction of the belief in human progress, that belief which had taken the place of religious belief. Socialism was meant to have triumphed as the religious form of modern democracy, but this had all been destroyed by the nihilism engendered by the destruction of the war. This triumph of nihilism had overtaken both secular and religious belief, resulting in a world of the bad faith of "the will to power" expressed in communism, fascism, and nationalism.[52] In the face of such "bad faith," the role of intellectuals is to continually ask questions because their duty is "to expose fictions and refuse to call 'useful lies' truth."[53] Chiaromonte's critique of "bad faith" and the dangers of its nihilistic alliances with "the will to power" would sit at the heart of the *Encounter* position on religion.

Influenced by Arthur Koestler's critique of communism as "a phantom creed" and "secular religion for the frustrated and the starved,"[54] *Encounter* also extended its definition of religion and belief to include communism. Religion thus took various forms: traditional and secular, personal and institutional, and, most important, political. What became constant was the critique of any religion that opposed itself to cultural and intellectual freedom. Such critique included Aldous Huxley's stringent dismissal of Mormonism not only as among "the tallest of tall stories" but also for its failure to produce excellence in religious art as evidenced by Huxley's tour to Salt Lake City.[55] Huxley's critique is important because it dismisses an indigenous American religion precisely because it transgresses the limits of Huxley's reason and aesthetics. Therefore "religion" and "American" do not necessarily combine as acceptable alliances against communism in the pages of *Encounter*. In a manner similar to Blanshard's caution regarding

become seen as the political conservatism of neoconservatives (who are often ex-Trotskyites) and religious and moral conservatism.

[51] Nicola Chiaramonte, "The Will to Question." *Encounter* 1, no. 2 (November 1953): 1.

[52] Ibid., 2.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Arthur Koestler, "A Guide to Political Neurosis." *Encounter* 1, no. 2 (November 1953): 32.

[55] Aldous Huxley, "Faith, Taste and History," *Encounter* 2, no. 2 (February 1954): 2, 6.

Catholicism, Mormonism is seen as a closed culture that may be within America but not necessarily of it.

The position of the Catholic Church as the third element in the Cold War came under increasing scrutiny in *Encounter*. In particular, the Catholic Church in Poland was viewed as entering into an alliance of mutual benefit with the regime led by Wladyslaw Gomulka, a relationship between church and state similar, in a left wing-fashion, to the right-wing one between church and state in Franco's Spain.[56] The implication was clear: the Catholic Church, in tandem with religious nationalism, prefers the authoritarian government of left or right to the challenge of secular democracy.[57] The American journalist Robert Beville described the reasons for such an accommodation as originating from the perception of Pius XII that the mission of the Church is "to facilitate religious practice for the weak, who are in a majority, rather than create an atmosphere for heroes, who would be in a minority."[58] This means that the Vatican pursues, so Roberts reports, a policy of pragmatic accommodation to ensure the flourishing or, as in Poland, at least the survival of the church.[59] The problem, as Roberts presents it, is that the Vatican "is probably the most under-reported spot in the western world today," and yet through the Christian Democrat parties and para-church lobbying, there is substantial Catholic influence in Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, and Holland. Echoing Blanshard, Roberts sees undue Catholic influence "over education, news, media and entertainment" extending even to the United States.[60] The danger, as presented, is the extension of the Italian form of theocracy,[61] the alliance of church and state behind the shelter of Christian Democrat parties. The warning is clear, the Catholic Church is neither "uncompromising anticommunist" nor "unswervingly pro-Capitalist";[62] rather, it is always in pursuit of its own interests with whoever may enable them to be achieved. More recently, Peter C. Kent and Frank Coppa have discussed the relationship of Pope Pius XII and the Cold War. Kent notes that the Vatican, while providing "much of the ideological rhetoric of the Cold War . . . had little direct influence on the course of events. Frequently, the Holy See promoted an agenda which

[56] George Watson, "Letter from Poland: Poland, Left of Centre," *Encounter* 9, no. 3 (September 1957): 13–17.

[57] A latter variation on this is supported by Peter C. Kent, "The Lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII," in Kirby, *Religion and the Cold War*. The Catholic Church's position can be viewed as playing both a "long-game" (that is waiting for communism to collapse) and a pragmatic game of theological real-politik ensuring the continuation of Catholicism first and foremost.

[58] Robert Neville, "Vatican Report," *Encounter* 11, no. 5 (November 1958): 26.

[59] Ibid., 31.

[60] Ibid., 21.

[61] Ibid., 31.

[62] Ibid.

ran counter to the goals of the American government."[63] This analysis sits central to the engagement of *Encounter* with Catholicism; for the critiques of the Church are as much statement to the Holy See as they are to the non-Catholic readership. Likewise, in Coppa's analysis, the Vatican positioned itself between and against both major power blocs, and while rhetoric of anti-communism continued, the Vatican's supported a post-Stalin "cold peace" of East-West coexistence.[64] Such an accommodation became more problematic the further one was located from Cold War borderlines of continental Europe. For the wider Protestant and post-Protestant culture continued to view the third power bloc of the Catholic Church as an uncomfortable alternative to both Western democracy and communism, holding as it did both systems to critique.

The difficult position Catholicism found itself in regarding both communism and Cold War liberalism was discussed by the English author, Conservative Member of Parliament and "loyal Catholic" Christopher Hollis.[65] Hollis's question concerned the issue of the "freedom to differ" contrasted with "the freedom to conform."[66] Hollis reminded liberal readers that the "doctrinaire liberal . . . has no goal of his own," but rather continually opposes and does not provide an alternative beyond "the religious worship of democracy as the sole moral form of government," a position the Catholic finds "a trifle ridiculous."[67] For, as Hollis explains, liberalism, as a philosophy, is neither strong nor positive enough "to stand alone against the barbarian attack."[68] Yet while Catholicism may have been able to stand against both communist and fascist totalitarianisms, Hollis also argues that strong Catholicism and strong liberalism require each other in a reciprocal relationship to balance their extremes.[69] The Italian author and ex-Marxist Ignazio Silone in "The Choice of Comrades" further discussed the question of a beneficial alliance between liberals and religion.[70] Silone, noting the collapse of "the great politico-social myths" of the nineteenth century over the past forty years,[71] describes a world of spiritual crisis and nihilism in which modern progress, capitalism, and communism are all found wanting, resulting in a world whereby "we are neither believers nor atheists, nor are

[63] Kent,"The Lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII," 2.
[64] Frank J. Coppa, "Pope Pius XII and the Cold War: The Post War Confrontation between Catholicism and Communisim," in Kirby, *Religion and the Cold War*, 15.
[65] Christopher Hollis, "Catholicism, Communism and Liberalism," *Encounter* 3, no. 3 (September 1954): 46.
[66] Ibid., 42.
[67] Ibid., 45, 46.
[68] Ibid., 48.
[69] Ibid., 49.
[70] Ignazio Silone, "The Choice of Comrades," *Encounter* 3, no. 6 (December 1954): 21–28.
[71] Ibid., 21.

we sceptics."[72] Silone offers a modest proposal of trust and storytelling, of listening to the stories of others and "a few Christian certainties so deeply immured in human existence as to be identified with it."[73] The importance of Silone's essay, in its signaling of a possible, provisional way out of post-war nihilism, is that it seems to have been most influential among North American Protestant liberals. It was a major influence on the American death of God theologian William Hamilton,[74] and it can be seen as one of the early expressions of secular theology. It also reflects the turn toward an acceptance of the possibilities liberal Christianity could offer Western liberals as they attempted to counter both totalitarianism and nihilism. Stephen Spender, discussing the modern poetic imagination, also noted the challenge of nihilism, claiming, "the really important distinction today is not between different creeds but between believing and not believing."[75]

For *Encounter* the battle against nihilism was part of the Cold War, in that the collapse of belief in progress, democracy, and Western society was viewed as laying society variously open to the propaganda of Stalinism and the alternative belief of communism or the retreat into authoritarian Catholicism and right-wing dictatorship.

Yet what beliefs were acceptable was constantly debated; in particular the "religious eclecticism" of Arnold Toynbee's ten-volume philosophy of history was continually opposed for its irrationality and cultish potential.[76] *Encounter* dismissed Toynbee's utopian religious claims in a series on articles. Angus Wilson critiqued the appeal of Toynbee as offering false hope in a time of panic, while Trevor-Roper castigates Toynbee's philosophy as "a doctrine of messianic defeatism" whereby, in volume 10 of his *Study of History*, Toynbee steps forth as the awaited messiah of "the religion of Mish-Mash."[77] In a similar fashion, the political scientist Hans Morgenthau memorably dismissed Toynbee as "in danger of becoming a prophet of a new cult, a kind of Billy Graham of eggheads."[78] However, as one

[72] Ibid., 28.

[73] Ibid.

[74] See William Hamilton, "On Doing without Knowledge of God," *Journal of Religion* 37, no. 1 (January 1957): 37–43.

[75] Stephen Spender, "Inside the Cage," *Encounter* 4, no. 3 (March 1955): 22.

[76] Hans Morgenthgau, "Toynbee and the Historical Imagination," *Encounter* 4, no. 3 (March 1955): 75.

[77] Angus Wilson, "A.D. 56," *Encounter* 7, no. 4 (October 1956): 80. See Richard Davenport-Hines, ed., *Letters from Oxford. High Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson* (London: Phoenix/Orion, 2007). Trevor-Roper's disdain for Toynbee is evident in his correspondence with the Italian-domiciled art historian Bernard Berenson. Trevor-Roper gleefully describes his *Encounter* article on Toynbee as "wicked" (228) and declares that Toynbee is regrettably a prophet of great reputation in Asia (229) and someone "often referred to (though less often read) in the Middle West of America" (145), see also Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Arnold Toynbee's Millennium," *Encounter* 8, no. 6 (June 1957): 27, 21, 27.

[78] Morgenthgau, "Toynbee and the Historical Imagination," 74.

correspondent noted, in a similar fashion to how *Encounter's* readers "will all pride-themselves on being post-Marxists rather than anti-Marxists," the time has now come to "become post-Toynbeens too."[79] For the central point of the cultural Cold War as expressed in *Encounter* was the possibility of restating a religious expression of modernity in the West, arising out of a perception that only in religious expression can the reality of modern experience be truly understood and represented. Toynbee is rejected because of his syncretic, utopian messianism, and while art and literature may still be concerned with expressing a type of religious vision that reconciles "to its material in the life of nature and the life of men,"[80] this is recognized as existing outside of the life of most in society on both sides of the Cold War.

In such discussions, the influence of *Partisan Review* yet again arises as the basis for critique in *Encounter*. This in turn forces a reassessment of *Encounter* as perhaps more indebted to the influence of *Partisan Review* than is often suggested, for the *Partisan Review* line of the critique of religion and especially its return among the intelligentsia needs to be understood as the critique of "irrational religion" associated with inner, personal experience, mysticism, and emotional demands. If there was to be religion, then the suggested preference was the continuation of an intellectual neo-orthodox liberalism (in both Protestant and Jewish forms[81]) that saw a natural alliance with the socialist vision and critique.

Arthur Koestler in "The Trail of the Dinosaur" called for an alternative form of religious revival.[82] While continuing the *Encounter* line of the decline of faith and spirituality that results in nihilism, Koestler pursues an individual line calling for a modern faith that overcomes the "split brain" of modern humanity, that does not reduce humanity to "mental infancy," and that places limits on reason "without contradicting it."[83] Obviously influenced by Aldous Huxley, Koestler expresses the hope for a modern, ethical, perennial religion, expressed and experienced in contemporary language and symbols.[84] Fearful of a nuclear war viewed as a distinct possibility of the contemporary "spiritual ice age,"[85] Koestler views a modern, ethical religion as perhaps the only hope to limit the contemporary rise of "the

[79] Edmund O. Stillman, "Letter," *Encounter* 9, no. 3 (September 1957): 71.

[80] Vincent Buckley, "Notes on Religious Poetry," *Encounter* 9, no. 3 (September 1957): 63.

[81] What I mean by the paradoxical term "Jewish neo-orthodoxy" is the type of Jewish thought developed by Will Herberg or perhaps earlier by Theodore Rosenweig. This modernist, socialist-influenced Judaism continued a fruitful dialogue with Protestant neo-orthodoxy as distinctly modern forms of theology.

[82] See Arthur Koestler, "The Trail of the Dinosaur," *Encounter* 4, no. 5 (May 1955): 2–14.

[83] Ibid., 13.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 14.

power-curve" in society. Therefore, in his own way, Koestler is confessing his "failure of nerve."

Hugh Trevor-Roper, whose opposition to Koestler dates back to the first CCF meeting in Berlin in 1950,[86] suggests his own alternative historical model, arguing that Desiderius Erasmus should be the model for the modern intellectual because of his ability to state the necessity of rationality to both sides involved "in an ideological struggle."[87] For just as in his own age Erasmus threaded a way between the Pope and Luther, so today, the heirs of Erasmus needed to thread their own way of rationality and toleration. As such, Trevor-Roper's approval of Erasmus involves two demands upon the modern intellectual. The first is the necessity for the intellectual to critique both sides of the Cold War, while the second is a reminder of the necessity for the intellectual to carve an independent way free from the control and limitations imposed by the Pope. Therefore, Erasmus becomes the model for the *Encounter* intellectual: rationally assessing and challenging all claims upon his loyalty, standing against all attempts to subdue rationality and toleration in the name of systems, institutions, and authority. This criticism of Catholicism as, at most, a temporary ally against communism because of the recognition that the Catholic Church is not interested in defending cultural freedom as commonly understood by non-Catholics is also expressed by Stuart Hampshire. He stresses that an "alliance of expediency" against communism must not be confused as "an agreement of principle."[88]

The rejection in the west of the third way of Catholicism, combined with a fear of the results of societal nihilism, is also echoed in the critique of an alternative third way of Zen. For while Zen continued to have its adherents and supporters who presented it as a practical alternative to either "Marxist-materialist" or "Christian-supernaturalist" thought,[89] the *Encounter* line saw it as yet another expression of "the failure of nerve." Only, in the case of Zen, its attractions were either to "social misfits or psychological delinquents," or as opiate to the elite, the "sons and daughters of Oxford, Cambridge, Vassar, Bennington, Columbia, and Chicago."[90] The basis of the

[86] See Trevor-Roper in *Letters from Oxford. High Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, Writing to Berenson (July 28, 1950), he describes the 1950 CCF Berlin congress as "a totally illiberal demonstration dominated by professional ex-communist *boulevardiers* like Arthur Koestler and Franz Borkenau, confident in the support of German ex-Nazis in the audience" (47). Trevor-Roper described his unpublished paper for the CCF, "Truth, Liberalism and Authority," as analyzing "the antagonism of Christian and Marxist ideologues to intellectual freedom" (50 n. 2).

[87] Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Desiderius Erasmus," *Encounter* 4, no. 5 (May 1955): 68.

[88] Stuart Hampshire, "In Defence of Radicalism," *Encounter* 5, no. 2 (August 1955): 40.

[89] Richard Rumbold, "Catching the Mood of the Universe: A Personal Experience of Zen Buddhism," *Encounter* 12, no. 1 (January 1959): 20.

[90] Peter Hyun, "Beat Zen, Square Zen. An Eastern Dissent," *Encounter* 13, no. 1 (July 1959): 56, 57.

opposition arose from a perception that the attraction in such expressions of Western Zen of becoming "the instant mystic" meant it was a radically different experience from its monastic Japanese expression. Therefore, while Zen may have been perceived by many Western adherents as a third way of overcoming "the present struggle between East and West, between Christian idealism and Marxist materialism," the problem was that what is experienced was not Zen. Rather, in the pages of *Encounter* such expressions of Western Zen were dismissed as a type of inherently anti-Christian and misogynistic mysticism similar to that previously expressed by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.[91] To understand the liberal humanist fear of Zen, it is important to remember the wider fear of the links of religion and authoritarian regimes. As expressed in *Encounter*, the danger of such a syncretistic vision gaining a foothold in the West was that in Japan there had been the recent influence of "the fanatic manifestations of Zen" upon the samurai, the practice of hari-kari, and the kamikaze.[92] Therefore, Zen, taken outside the Japanese monastery and linked with the influence of Nietzschean nihilism, becomes a problem in its promotion of a countercultural Western mystical elite, who are described as having often confused mescaline with satori.[93]

The central issue is therefore one of context and what is considered to be a legitimate expression of value and meaning with the wider discussion of Western civilization. As Kirby explains, "In addition to emphasizing freedom and democracy, anti-communism embraced the defence of western civilization and democracy."[94] Such a defence included the rejection of Zen. Reviewing Eugene Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*, William Barrett, *Partisan Review* editor and professor of philosophy at New York University, cautions against Western intellectuals seeing Zen as "a solution to the spiritual problem of western man" who is "dying of spiritual inanition" as expressed in Eliot's "The Wasteland."[95] What Barrett called "the religious problem" was, he claimed, especially true for American intellectuals, yet Zen "or any other oriental form" could not solve this. For to turn to Zen or any other non-Western form of religion would only serve to dislocate Westerners from their "collective past," a civilization that "has essentially been formed by the religion of Judaism."[96] Here again is the restating of Eliot's argument that Western culture is inherently Judeo-Christian and to turn from those cultural roots is to turn from that civilization itself. What

[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 56.
[93] Ibid., 57.
[94] Dianne Kirby, "Harry Truman's Religious Legacy: The Holy Alliance, Containment and the Cold War," in Kirby, *Religion and the Cold War*, 2.
[95] William Barrett, "The Great Bow," *Encounter* 2, no. 4 (April 1954): 62–65, quotes on 62.
[96] Ibid., 64.

is interesting concerning Barrett's statement is that this emphasis on the influence of Judaism is a not-so-subtle challenge to authoritarian Christian conservatives. In a fascinating analysis on the rise of the term "Judeo-Christian," Mark Silk notes how the use of "Judeo-Christian" operated as "a catchword" versus "Fascist fellow travellers and anti-Semites."[97] From the late 1930s, the antifascist left, combined with Protestant neo-orthodoxy increasingly emphasized the term "Judeo-Christian" and the shared heritage of Christianity and Judaism as counter to anti-Semitism, fascism, and their Catholic supporters. In America in particular, "Judeo-Christian" and the emphasis on the close relationship of Judaism and Christianity was part of the opposition to Catholic demagoguery as espoused by Father Coughlin's Christian Front and those seeking a Christian American identity that expressed fascist sympathies and anti-Semitism. Barrett, in stressing Zen had nothing to offer the spiritual crisis of Western humanity,[98] would also have been aware of the recent links of Zen and Japanese fascism and the manner in which authoritarian and anti-Semite fascists and conservatives were and often are attracted to Zen as part of a "triumph of the will." This wariness of the rise and attraction of Zen among both the burgeoning counterculture and intellectuals was seen in turn as another threat to western civilization.[99] In critiquing "the failure of nerve" Sidney Hook had also dismissed the intellectuals' turn to "mystical theology, subjectivity and inner experience."[100] Barrett, as part of *Partisan Review*, was echoing the New York Left's wariness of counter-Enlightenment thought and beliefs, in effect acting as an early warning against what came to be seen as postmodernism.

Arthur Koestler, in a series of articles following a trip to India and Japan, also debates the possibilities offered to the West by both Yoga and Zen.[101] In his analysis, neither Yoga nor Zen can translate to the West, and the

[97] Mark Silk, "Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 66.

[98] William Barrett in *Irrational Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), *Time of Need: Forms of Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), and *The Illusion of Technique: A Search for Meaning in a Technological Civilization* (New York: Anchor Books, 1978) continued to develop this line of a crisis in the spirituality of Western society.

[99] For contemporary discussion and defense of the rise of Zen in America, see Van Meter Ames, "America, Existentialism, and Zen," *Philosophy East and West* 1, no. 1 (April 1951): 35–47. Here Ames positions Zen as the fulfillment of American pragmatism in a way that existentialism cannot. Existentialism's "rejection of the ordinary" (43) is viewed as more alien to American minds than Zen's economic and social indifference.

[100] Sidney Hook, "Religion and the Intellectuals," *Partisan Review* 17, no. 3 (March 1950): 226.

[101] Ian Hamilton traces the origin of Koestler's interest in Zen to the conclusion of *The Sleepwalkers* (London: Hutchinson, 1959) and his question of whether the "East has anything to offer the West in its crisis of modernity, that is, as an alternative to either a robot-state or self-destruction (Hamilton, *Koestler: A Biography* [London: Secker & Warburg, 1982], 291). For the generally positive reaction of Koestler's views on Zen, see Hamilton, 291–93.

Western fascination with them as an alternative way is a misunderstanding. If in the West, Zen becomes mixed with "Germanic mysticism" under the influence of Dr. Suzuki in "a hoax of truly heroic proportions," then in Japan Zen works because it is part of a balance of two opposite extremes: "the Lotus and the Robot, Confucius and Zen, rigid perfectionism and elastic ambiguity."[102] Yet the result, Koestler claims, is little, if any, religious feeling in Japan;[103] therefore as a possible middle way it cannot offer any hope to Western society and so must be rejected. For Zen, as practiced and taught in the West especially, "spells intellectual and moral nihilism."[104] Consequently, the turn to Zen is merely yet another example of "the failure of nerve," a false choice made in "a culture threatened by strontium clouds" by "a category of people in whom brutishness combines with pseudo-mysticism, from samurai, to kamikaze, to beatnik."[105] Koestler's warning is clear: the turn to Zen and Yoga is as potentially damaging to Western civilization as the alternative turn to Marxism, for they will merely increase the dangers of an already nihilistic society.

The discussion on Zen is part of a wider discussion as to what the religious-spiritual basis of Western society may entail.[106] For while it is recognized that Western society is increasingly post-Christian in its Protestant expression, the two alternatives of Catholicism and Zen are viewed with equal suspicion. If in *Encounter* Zen is rejected as an elite and destructive "failure of nerve," then Catholicism is perceived as uncomfortably close to authoritarian governments both Left and Right. Therefore, Arthur Schlesinger's description of the Soviet Union as "a theological society based on the principle of infallibility" opposed to "western scepticism and heresy"[107] is also making clear the *Encounter* critique of the Vatican as a similar institution. The title of Schlesinger's article, "Varieties of Religious Experience," is an obvious reference to William James's classic text *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, thus making even more explicit the argument that communism is an alternative form of religious belief. What is important about Schlesinger's critique is his stress upon the difference of what he views as the more open, more modern, and freer types of communism experienced in Poland and Yugoslavia. In Schlesinger's analysis, both

[102] Arthur Koestler, "A Stink of Zen," *Encounter* 15, no. 4 (October 1960): 21, 24, 32.
[103] Ibid., 30.
[104] Arthur Koestler, "Neither Lotus nor Robot," *Encounter* 16, no. 2 (February 1961): 58.
[105] Ibid., 58, 59.
[106] Van Meter Ames, writing in 1960, positions Western interest in Zen, especially among those of college age, as attractive to those who "feel that there is something in Zen which is fresh and present and has a future, in spite of being old on the other side of the world. There is a feeling that in Zen may be found what is needed in addition to science and technology" ("Current Western Interest in Zen," *Philosophy East and West* 10, nos. 1–2 [April–July 1960]: 26).
[107] Arthur Schlesinger, "Varieties of Communist Experience," *Encounter* 14, no. 1 (January 1960): 52.

Poland, which experiences intellectual freedom, and Yugoslavia, which experiences economic freedom, have in effect created a secularized communism that "is essentially a system of economic and political organization." Yet, in this freedom from the totalitarian dogma of the Soviet Union, it is suggested that Poland and Yugoslavia might actually be experiencing a purer type of communism, a communism that the West can perhaps accommodate and live with. In contrast, in Schlesinger's view, the Soviet Union seemed headed for a type of secularized communism "in somewhat the sense that the youth of Europe and America today are Christians." That is, communism becomes "a framework of life and belief" but not "a living and militant faith."[108] Schlesinger's hope is a gradual withering away of direct, dogmatic authority resulting in a type of "Protestantization" of belief whereby religion and the state separate. And yet Schlesinger conveniently overlooks the critiques of Catholicism and the communist state as applied to Poland, while the tragic identification of religious belief and ethnic nationalism that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia are a warning as to just how quickly the "framework of life and belief" can become yet again "a living and militant faith."

In a similar fashion, Zbigniew Brzezinski, later National Security Advisor in the Carter Administration, also perceives distinct similarities between Catholicism and communism especially in their "socio-political functions."[109] While quick to dismiss any implication of "general equivalence,"[110] his concern is with their similarities and especially as to how such institutions handle acts of doctrinal deviance whether it be Jansenism, Jesuits, or Tito. The pertinent question is whether Tito is a sort of communist Luther in that "both found haven for their doctrinal defiance in national power."[111] The unspoken implications are clear: the West, itself the legacy of Luther's break with Rome, should support Tito's break with the Kremlin in the hope that a reformation may in turn sweep the communist world. For just as it was internal disputes that challenged the power of the Vatican, so too it will be internal disputes that, in forging an alliance based in nationalism, will force the eventual breakup of the communist world.

For Schlesinger the future lies in the extension and expression of what he views as the "predominant pragmatic and pluralistic tradition" of the West.[112] This tradition, based on experience, not essence, is a brake on the turn to dogmatism and monism in times of crisis and hysteria: the rational society arises out of the rational tradition. Sidney Hook, the constant pres-

[108] Ibid., 55.
[109] Zbigniew Brzezinski, "How to Control a Deviation," *Encounter* 21, no. 3 (September 1963): 78.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 80.
[112] Schlesinger, "Varieties of Communist Experience," 58.

ence behind so much of what was written on religion in *Encounter*, certainly agreed in his defense of the secular rationalism of the Enlightenment. For Hook, as great a threat as "the failure of nerve" expressed in the "stupendous myths" of religious belief was the challenge of nihilism, which also accompanied the rejection of "the ideals of secular rationalism and Enlightenment philosophy."[113]

What becomes apparent in such a close reading of *Encounter* is that for the post-Marxists and the nonaligned who make up *Encounter*'s writers and readers, three main religious issues occupy their concern. If the issues of the role of the Catholic Church and the challenge of the turn to eastern beliefs are readily apparent, perhaps not so apparent yet underlying all concerns is the rise of nihilism. If the religious see nihilism as the result of the turn from religion, for those of the Enlightenment tradition nihilism is the sign of a society that has rejected the Enlightenment. For in its own way, nihilism is yet another sign of "the failure of nerve," that instead of seeking false hope in the "stupendous myths" of religion is equally deluded and morally irresponsible in giving up all hope in the human condition.

In the face of such a cultural impasse, the Italian intellectual Ignazio Silone was presented as someone engaged in the attempt to find a possible way forward within the European context. Silone, in his self-description as "a socialist without a party and a Christian without a church" yet still "bound to the ethics and idealism of each" provides areas of commonality with many of *Encounter*'s audience.[114] The central point of Silone's critique is the continuation, postfascism, of what he terms "the mass party."[115] This is the pragmatic groupings of both communists or Christian Democrats who belong and participate not because of what they believe, but who rather "practice the ritual without faith" for their own advantage and so are happy to continue to receive their orders from either the Kremlin or the Vatican,[116] and in the process expose their "frightful moral hollowness."[117] Silone's charge that a type of nihilistic fellow-traveling for materialist advantage occurs among both communists and Christian Democrats is one of the underlying claims of the *Encounter* critique. The Vatican and the Kremlin are equally feared as secretive, authoritarian institutions happy to make use of the unscrupulous.[118] In effect, the cultural Cold War includes a semi-declared front against the Vatican as a theocracy that extends its influence

[113] Sidney Hook, "Enlightenment and Radicalism," *Encounter* 17, no. 2 (August 1961): 48, 50.

[114] Kenneth Allsop, "Ignazio Silone," *Encounter* 18, no. 3 (March 1962): 49.

[115] Ibid., 50.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Writing to Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Italian-domiciled American art historian Bernard Berenson dismissed the Vatican as "the Kremlin on the Gianicolo" (August 28, 1956). See *Letters from Oxford. High Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, xxxv.

both East and West in pragmatic compromise. The realization that Protestant societies in Europe seem especially prone to materialistic nihilism only adds to the discomfort.[119]

Spender and Kristol discussed what might be involved in overcoming nihilism in "Materialism and Christianity."[120] Building on statements made by the West German chancellor Dr. Adenauer on a visit to the Soviet Union, their editorial argues that the central issue for contemporary society is "the kinds of ultimate answers to ultimate questions" that are offered and debated in a conflict that, on both sides "appears to be carried on mainly by non-believers,"[121] that is, non-Christians and non-Marxists. For both sides, the challenge is the lure of materialistic nihilism, whereby the world is perceived as seeking not the happy life but rather "the materially abundant one." Consequently, the challenge of the Cold War was not actually the overcoming of either system, but rather the overcoming of a reduction into materialism, for "we are all materialists now," whereby "all the world wants is not salvation (however defined) but a television set."[122] The problem of countering materialistic nihilism is hampered by an institutional church that has either tied itself to a now rejected Christian civilization[123] or failed to engage the interest of "the educated laymen." For the church is not on "speaking terms with scientists, philosophers, and all kinds of men of action" who may be reading Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Simone Weil, and Rudolph Bultmann, but are not "men already in the pew."[124]

It is into this context that Bishop J. A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* adds a further disconcerting element. Part of the wider death of God that was to claim considerable attention and debate in the 1960s, the return of "real interest" in religious questions "among large numbers of people usually deeply inarticulate about religion"[125] was viewed as significant within the pages of *Encounter*. This could not be easily dismissed as a further example of "the failure of nerve," because the debate not only spread widely from intellectuals into the general public, it was also variously viewed as secular religion, religion beyond religion, or as a view of God arising out

[119] Hook, "Enlightenment and Radicalism," 50.

[120] Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol "This Month's *Encounter*: Materialism and Christianity," *Encounter* 5, no. 6 (December 1955): 2–3.

[121] Ibid., 2.

[122] Ibid., 3.

[123] See Phillip Sherrard, "A Post-Christian Epoch," *Encounter* 6, no. 2 (February 1956): 25–29.

[124] See A. R. Vidler, "The Crisis in Theology," *Encounter* 7, no. 3 (September 1956): 50, 51.

[125] Alasdair MacIntyre, "God and the Theologians," *Encounter* 21, no. 3 (September 1963): 3.

of existential doubt and now entering mainstream debate in the English-speaking world. For while existential doubt and the death of God had been part of continental philosophy and theology for decades, in the English-speaking West it occurred with a radical newness, spreading rapidly through both the remnant Protestant laity and into the wider post-Christian society. Alisdair MacIntyre's long essay discussing the impact of Robinson, Tillich, Bultmann, and Bonhoeffer, points to the atheism engendered by ecclesiastical religious institutions that does not necessarily correspond to the erasure of religious feelings.[126] MacIntyre discerns that it is the practice of religion within an institutional setting that is increasingly problematic in the post-Christian West and the attraction of the new theology is that it takes seriously both the modern history of catastrophe as experienced in the Somme and Auschwitz and the challenge of a religious interpretation of modern industrial society.[127] MacIntyre argues that the contemporary crisis of the underlying nihilism of modern society arises out of the failure of attempts to instigate a secular Utopia that in turn results in a midpoint that is neither religious nor secular-atheist. In this context religious belief does not survive and the religious institutions are viewed both as passé and with suspicion. Yet, what does survive is religious language that while offering more possibilities than secular language is problematic in that we are unsure "what to say in it."[128] The result is a wider context of crisis concerning not only religion and religious belief but also what atheism can mean in contemporary times. The problem is that atheism itself becomes treated as "the private creed of yet another minority religious group," when, in fact, for MacIntyre it is the real experience of "most of our social life."[129] In commenting on MacIntyre's article, the Cold War theologian Will Herberg introduces the idea of modern man being supplanted by postmodern man. To be postmodern, according to Herberg, is to exist in a spiritual and moral vacuum, having lost faith in both oneself ("the religion of democratic Man") and in science and technology ("the religion of Scientific Method").[130] In Herberg's analysis it is important to note the difference between being post-Christian, and "post-religious" or "de-religionized."[131] Postmodern humanity may be post-Christian but in not being postreligious it is increasingly open to the attraction of "Ersatz-religion."[132] Herberg's conservative interpretation arises out of Luther's belief that humanity has either God or

[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 4, 8.
[128] Ibid., 8.
[129] Ibid., 10.
[130] Will Herberg, "God and the Theologians," *Encounter* 21, no. 5 (November 1963): 58.
[131] Ibid., 57.
[132] Ibid., 58.

idolatry, there is no third way; so that "*on an existential level there are no atheists*; there are only idolaters."[133]

MacIntyre's critique of the death of God is important in setting out the religious parameters of the cultural Cold War. The West is defined by both religion (Protestant) and atheism (social), whereas the Eastern bloc is defined by religion (Catholic, Orthodox, and Marxism) and atheism (political and state) that in turns separates the West from the Eastern Bloc in terms of individualism versus collectivism. Such a distinction also makes clear the collectivist political identity of the Catholic Church is inherently problematic for *Encounter* and the West.

Throughout the pages of *Encounter* the real subject are those described by MacIntyre as "the real half-secularized none too certain men who inhabit the real world."[134] This real world could be variously Protestant, Catholic, secular, or communist in orientation, yet it was inhabited by an uncertain humanity who may distrust doctrine and institutions, but still in the main sought some type of religious identity, community or language. Such "men," existing in a world of real-politic would make various compromises precisely because modern society was (and was only) half-secularized. As Henry Kamen, comparing present day intellectuals with the experience of the Spanish Inquisition, stated: "Should the individual conform to circumstances or does he have the right, perhaps the responsibility, to choose protest, persecution, and exile?"[135]

The importance in reassessing the religious/cultural Cold War as expressed in *Encounter* is twofold. First, there is the noted growing recognition that the cultural Cold War also included and participated in a religious Cold War. To fully understand the Cold War in all its dimensions, then this religious-cultural element needs to be considered. For without it, we reduce the Cold War to politics, or political culture, failing to properly recognize the ways in which religion and culture intersect in the wider cultural and intellectual discussions of society. The second importance arises because of the growing opinion that the West is undergoing another Cold War with militant Islam.[136] For example, Carlin Romano, writing recently in the *Chronicle of*

[133] Ibid., 57; italics in original.

[134] Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Well-Dressed Theologian," *Encounter* 27, no. 3 (March 1967): 78.

[135] Henry Kamen, "Intellectuals on Trial: A Backward Glance at the Spanish Inquisition," *Encounter* 27, no. 3 (March 1967): 19.

[136] Mark Juergensmeyer raised this possibility in *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Over the following years, especially since the September 11, 2001 attacks and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in particular with the rise of Iran, the rhetoric of a new Cold War, fought on religious and cultural lines, is increasingly common. See David Hazony, "Cold War II: What Islamist Iran Has in Common with the Soviet Union," *Wall Street Journal*, http://online.wsj.com, April 4, 2007 (originally published at http://www.Azure.org.il, March

Higher Education, raised the issue of reviving "the spirit and the structure of the CCF, if not its budget line" to oppose "Islamofascism and Russian State Communism."[137] However, such calls fail to recognize that those who engaged in the cultural Cold War had often previously associated with or belonged to those institutions and groups they now opposed. A cultural Cold War could use and critique religion precisely because the opposition occurred out of a varied background of individualistic Protestantism, Judaism, post-Christian secularism, and post-Marxism. This means, following the CCF model, that any contemporary religious cultural Cold War would be primarily undertaken by secular Western Muslims and post-Muslims, a grouping so far noticeably quiescent. In such a scenario voices of critique might also be raised by post-Christian secularists, Jews, and post-Marxists; however, if they remain the predominant voice of opposition then something different from the CCF is occurring. The situation today is also complicated by the rise of the contemporary conservative Protestant Christian right that, similar to the Catholic Church under Benedict XVI, appears to be restating its identity as the center of opposition not only to the Islamist challenge to the West, but also to Western liberal secular society itself.

While it would be easy to dismiss the revival of religion in contemporary times as yet another "failure of nerve," to consider this revival in light of *Encounter* reminds us of the two central roles for Enlightenment-derived intellectuals. The first is that intellectuals concerned with cultural and intellectual freedom need to take seriously the revival of religious feeling and engage with its various manifestations and expressions in a critical fashion, for the lesson of *Encounter* is that part of the promotion of the self-identity of the West includes by necessity a discussion and analysis of religion's role and influence. *Encounter*, following Eliot, recognized that culture and civilization are inherently religious and often gain their identity out of the struggle of individuals against religious institutions and authorities. Yet it also recognized that to be secular is still to be oriented toward—yet against—religion. The intellectual's second role, as expressed in *Encounter*, is to challenge any society in which nihilism has replaced secularism and indifference has replaced meaning. For in a world of little or no meaning, the individual chooses to compromise not only out of necessity but also out of ignorance.

The example of *Encounter* demonstrates how a middle ground can be pursued, promoting a liberal humanism that seeks progressive social transformation yet also that is aware and open to the central role religion

27, 2007). The centrality of religion and cultural values separates this Islamic/Iranian-focused Cold War from the return of the rhetoric of a Cold War with Putin's Russia.

[137] Carlin Romano, "Cold War Cultural Tactics Should Be A Hot Topic," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 52, no. 26 (March 3, 2006): B9.

continues to play in culture, politics, and social thought. For the religious Cold War, as part of the cultural Cold War, is part of a wider and ongoing question of how shall and can modernity be rethought and reengaged as an ongoing and unfinished project.[138]

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[138] See Helmut Peukert, "Enlightenment and Theology as Unfinished Projects," in *The Frankfurt School on Religion*, ed. E. Mendieta (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 351–70.