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CROSSING AND DWELLING

A Theory of Religion

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To Van A. Harvey

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The Greek term *theorein:* a practice of travel and observation, a man sent by the polis to another city to witness a religious ceremony. "Theory" is a product of displacement, comprising a certain distance. To theorize, one leaves home.

James Clifford, "Notes on Travel and Theory"

This "theory of religion" outlines what a finished work would be: I have tried to express a mobile thought, without seeking its definitive state.

Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*

ITINERARIES

Locating Theory and Theorists

Books don't spring into existence, but, although I didn't realize it at the time, I now can mark the moment that I began the reflections that led to this book. It was a warm September night in Miami, Florida. There was nothing unusual about the weather or the place. Almost all September nights are warm in that subtropical city, where I lived and worked for five years. Yet that night in 1993 was significant because it was September 8, the feast day of Our Lady of Charity, the national patroness of Cuba. She was a shared symbol for hundreds of thousands of Cuban Catholic exiles who had transformed the cultural landscape of Miami in the years after Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959. It was the third feast-day celebration I had attended in Miami, and I had been doing fieldwork among Cubans at the Virgin's shrine in Miami for two years. So much was familiar that night in Dinner Key Auditorium, where the

annual rite was held after Hurricane Andrew displaced devotees from their usual site on Key Biscayne. I recognized the melody and lyrics of the hymn that links Our Lady of Charity with those who fought for Cuban independence in the nineteenth century, "La Virgen Mambisa," which the crowd sang as the diminutive statue of the Virgin entered the auditorium (Figure 1). I knew the bishop on stage presiding over the mass, and I had interviewed the priest who coordinated the liturgy. I had been doing archival research about the history of Cuban and Cuban American religion. I had observed masses, rosaries, *romerías* (annual provincial pilgrimages that involve eating as well as praying), and other rituals at the shrine, and I had talked with pilgrims and listened to their sad stories about exile. I remembered that many Cuban Catholics told me that the annual festival was the most important of their rituals. A fifty-seven-year-old woman who had arrived in 1966 explained, "For me it is a way of celebrating the Virgin's day united with all to ask for the liberty of Cuba." Yet I still didn't have a theory of religion that made much sense of all that I observed as the Cuban Virgin processed into the arena for the collective ritual—or when I wrote about the event later in my ethnography of devotion at the Miami shrine:

> At 8:30 on a Wednesday night in 1993 several Cuban-born men from the confraternity, dressed in traditional white *guayabera* shirts, carried the statue of Our Lady of Charity into an auditorium in Miami for her annual feastday mass. Recently arrived by boat from her short journey from the shrine, the Virgin was welcomed by thousands of devotees. She made her way through a sea of fluttering white, red, and blue as followers waved white handkerchiefs and Cuban flags. Fathers lifted children onto their shoulders for a better view. Flashbulbs ignited. Some in the crowd pushed toward her. From my vantage point a few rows from the altar, I noticed that some elderly women and men nearby were weeping. One woman sobbed aloud, "May she save Cuba. We need her to save Cuba." Many others smiled widely as they waved to their national patroness. As the Virgin weaved her way down the aisles of folding chairs

toward the temporary altar, a local Cuban priest led the crowd in a series of chants. "*¡Viva la Virgen de Caridad!*" he boomed in a microphone to be heard above the shouting and singing. "*Salva a Cuba*" (Save Cuba), the crowd responded again and again. The men from the confraternity lifted her onto the left side of the stage, where she stood in front of a twelve-foot triangular background. Arched across the top a prediction was inscribed in yellow flowers: "*Libre '94,*" signaling the people's hopes that the homeland would be "liberated" from communism during the coming year. Finally, Our Lady of Charity rested triumphantly on the altar, where she would preside over the rest of the ceremony, as the clergy positioned themselves on the altar to begin the mass and the crowd boisterously sang the Cuban national anthem.[1]

What sort of theory, I wondered, would make sense of this Cuban Catholic ritual? Trained in religious studies in graduate school, I had researched the history of Western thinking about the term *religion,* and I had taught an undergraduate course on the topic. I had read many accounts of the nature and function of religion, and almost all of them illumined something of what I observed that night. From the altar and the folding chairs, Cuban participants expressed "belief in spiritual beings," in E. B. Tylor's classic definition, and it is possible to interpret the rosary and mass as an "experience of the Holy," as Rudolf Otto's theory might suggest. Paul Tillich's notion of religion as one's "ultimate concern" offered useful language to talk about Cuban nationalism, and not just Roman Catholicism, as religious. Melford E. Spiro's definition of religion as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings" accounted for the formalized ritual actions and the venerated "superhuman being" (Mary) and also called attention to the role of "institutions" such as the Archdiocese of Miami and the Confraternity of Our Lady of Charity. Clifford Geertz's popular definition of religion as a "system of symbols" pointed to the image of the Virgin, and maybe the Cuban flag, and—like Friedrich Schleiermacher's and William James's highlighting of "feel-

1. Devotees wave Cuban flags and white handkerchiefs as Our Lady of Charity enters the feast-day celebration in 2001. American Airlines Arena, Miami, Florida.

ings"—provided an idiom for talking about the Cuban devotees' "sobbing" and "smiling" as it acknowledged religion's role in establishing "moods and motivations."[2]

I will return to these and other definitions in Chapter 2—and offer my own in Chapter 3—but here I want to note only that my account of religion originated with my observations in Miami and my dissatisfaction with available theories. Other theories illumined some of what I encountered, but I had a sense—at first, poorly articulated—that there seemed to be more to say than other theoretical lexicons allowed me

to say. It was not only that few theories were inclusive enough to consider beliefs, values, rituals, institutions, *and* feelings or that almost all seemed to overlook or minimize some religious expressions—for example, artifacts like the *guayabera* shirts and handkerchiefs or sounds like the shouting and singing. As I tried to name and ease my disquiet I came to the conclusion that I was looking for a theory of religion that made sense of the religious life of transnational migrants and addressed three themes—*movement, relation,* and *position.*

First, the entrance of the Virgin, and a great deal of the religious life of Cuban Catholics at the Miami shrine, is about movement, although most theories offer little help in talking about religion's dynamics. There were movements—waving handkerchiefs and lifting children—and there was movement. The men from the confraternity, who carried the Virgin through the crowd, were on the move. So was Our Lady of Charity, whom (devotees believe) three men found floating in the sea off the Cuban coast in 1611. She also traveled across the water that September night, when she came to the ritual by boat, and she returned to the shrine in the back of a Ford pickup truck. The statue that the confraternity members carried through the crowd had been smuggled out of Cuba in 1961 and driven to a baseball stadium in Miami, where 25,000 exiles greeted her with tears, applause, and singing at the second festival mass in South Florida. So Our Lady of Charity was an exile who had been forced from her homeland—like almost all of the thousands of devotees in the audience and on the altar that evening in 1993. The Reverend Pedro Luís Pérez, who led the rosary and the chants of "Salva a Cuba," had been exiled from the island in the early 1960s, and most of the laity who responded so vigorously to his shouts from the altar were transnational migrants too. The ritual moved participants back and forth between the homeland and the new land as they sang the Cuban national anthem and prayed to the Virgin of Charity, whom the pope had declared the patroness of their island nation in 1916. And the ritual moved them across time. Their religion was retrospective and prospective. It was about the Cuba of memory and desire. The elderly

women near me wept as they recalled the homeland, and the people they left behind. The chants from the crowd of "Salva a Cuba" and the floral message "Libre '94" looked toward the future and expressed a hope—that the national patroness would bring democracy and capitalism to Cuba.

Second, my observations in Miami led me to seek a theory that was not only dynamic but relational. Standing amid the fluttering of Cuban flags and white handkerchiefs that greeted the Virgin that night, I found myself wanting to make sense of all sorts of relations: the interdependence of religion and politics; the pathways between here and there, Havana and Miami; the links between the nineteenth-century wars for independence and the contemporary struggles for the "liberation" of Castro's Cuba; the bonds and tensions among the generations; and the contacts and exchanges among religious traditions, especially as those found expression in the continuities and discontinuities between the domestic piety that combined Afro-Cuban and Roman Catholic practices and the public religion that negotiated meaning and power in relation to diocesan clergy who condemned that "syncretism."

Consider two examples from the feast-day ritual in Miami that point to interreligious and intergenerational relations. Some of those waving white handkerchiefs at the Virgin as she arrived that night greeted her as *Ọ̀sun,* the West African *òrìṣà* of the river, and not only as Mary, the Catholic saint. Most theories of religions are silent about all this, and they fail to provide language that highlights the historical relations among complex and changing religious traditions—in this case Afro-Cuban and Roman Catholic traditions in Cuba. Yet Cuban American Catholicism as practiced that warm Miami night—though not as prescribed by the clergy—was hybrid, a product of long processes of contact and exchange. The ritual also foregrounds other relations among diverse peoples at the celebration—not only between clergy and laity, black and white, women and men, but also young and old. And familial relations are very important in this rite: "fathers lifted children" to get a better view and children gazed up at parents and grandparents who

wept at the singing of "La Virgen Mambisa." The children didn't know much about the Cuban wars for independence alluded to in that hymn. Most didn't remember the homeland their older relatives mourned, and their immersion in U.S. popular culture and public education increased the intergenerational tensions. But any account of this ritual that obscured family relations in Miami and the links with relatives still on the island, devotees told me, would miss a great deal.[3]

To make sense of these myriad relations and movements, in Chapter 3 I argue that religions involve two spatial practices—dwelling and crossing—but as I reflected on religion as I encountered it at the 1993 festival and found it interpreted in the most influential theories, I also felt a need to acknowledge my own shifting position as interpreter: "*From my vantage point* a few rows from the altar . . ."—and from my vantage point as a white, male, middle-class professor of religious studies. Theorists often have obscured their own position, and pretended that they enjoy a view from everywhere-at-once or nowhere-in-particular. I felt a need to consider the position of the theory and the theorist. I deal with the two other themes—movement and relation—in the rest of the book, but in this chapter I consider *positionality.* I try to locate my theory. This entails, first, saying more about what theory is and what theory is not.[4]

THEORIES AS ITINERARIES

Scholars in the humanities and social sciences have understood theory in a variety of ways, and one helpful overview lists five primary notions of what theory is and how it functions: (1) the *deductive-nomological view,* which understands theories as systems of universal laws deduced from axioms and corresponding to mind-independent external reality; (2) the *law-oriented view,* which trumpets the same ideal but suggests we cannot identify universal laws but only "law-like regularities"; (3) the *idealizing notion of theory,* which further refines the deductive-nomological view by suggesting that the regularities—not laws—

For my purposes, religion will mean orientation—orientation in the ultimate sense, that is, how one comes to terms with the ultimate significance of one's place in the world.

Charles Long, *Significations*

I'm not saying there are no locales or homes, that everyone is—or should be—traveling, or cosmopolitan, or deterritorialized. This is not nomadology. Rather, what is at stake is a comparative cultural studies approach to specific histories, tactics, everyday practices of dwelling *and* traveling: traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling.

James Clifford, *Routes*

DWELLING

The Kinetics of Homemaking

Even if the religious practices of first-generation Cuban exiles and other migrants seem to focus on remembering an earlier crossing and imagining a future one, they are about being in place as much as about moving across space. Consider my account of the 1973 consecration ceremony in Miami:

> More than ten thousand Cuban exiles gathered on a chilly Sunday afternoon in 1973 to dedicate the new shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami—waving flags, singing songs, and chanting petitions to the national patroness. After six years of work, the committee of laity and clergy that had assumed responsibility for planning and constructing the building had managed to raise $420,000, mostly in small donations from recent exiles who could not afford it. The conical-shaped concrete structure,

which they had toiled so hard to build, rose ninety feet above the crowd. Over the portal was a tiled image of Our Lady of Charity; perched on the rear were busts of two influential nineteenth-century Cubans. The focus inside was the pedestaled fifteen-inch statue of the patroness, the one that had been smuggled out of Cuba in 1961. In front of her stood the marble altar and the steps that led down to the circular interior. There only two hundred and ninety chairs (replicas of *los taburetes,* traditional Cuban stools made of wood and leather) awaited the Virgin's devotees in the small shrine. No one knew then that on many nights four or five hundred Cubans, with more spilling out down the steps, would crowd into that small space, pressing close to the patroness. Only the throng outside for the dedication that day signaled how important this shrine would become for Cubans in the diaspora.[1]

The consecration of that important shrine was a translocative and transtemporal ritual attended by migrants who longed to return to the homeland, but it was as much about settlement as about migration (Figure 7). Emplacement was as significant as displacement. It was about locating devotees in a religious-nationalist historical narrative and situating them in social space and the natural landscape. To use historian of religion Charles Long's language, this religious practice provided "orientation": it helped the religious establish their place in the world. The diminutive statue of the national patroness had been smuggled out of Cuba, but Our Lady of Charity had found a new home at the shrine. The chairs, the songs, the busts, and the prayers would have been familiar to relatives back on the island, but those artifacts and rituals also signaled a new start, even if devotees' focus continually shifted back and forth from the homeland to the new land.

In other words, to apply and revise James Clifford's understanding of the term, the consecration ceremony was about *dwelling.* To dwell, dictionary definitions suggest, is "to abide for a time in a place, state, or condition." It is "to inhabit." Note that dwelling is always "for a time"; it is never permanent or complete. Note also that the English verb *dwell* is

7. Dedication of the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami on December 2, 1973.

related to a Sanskrit root meaning "to mislead or deceive." The deception involved in understanding dwelling, I suggest, is that it appears to be static. It appears to imply the absence of action. Dwelling, however, is a gerund, a verbal noun, and that signals something important: dwelling, like crossing, is doing. Dwelling, as I use the term, involves three overlapping processes: mapping, building, and inhabiting. It refers to the confluence of organic-cultural flows that allows devotees to map, build, and inhabit worlds. It is homemaking. In other words, as clusters of dwelling practices, religions orient individuals and groups in time and space, transform the natural environment, and allow devotees to inhabit the worlds they construct. As the above account of the consecra-

tion indicates, finding a space and making a place involves a great deal of activity. Before the ceremony devotees were donating, planning, and constructing; at the consecration, which established the shrine as the Virgin's new home and provided the exiles with a new religious site, devotees were singing, waving, and chanting.[2]

An imperfect analogy from physics might help to make the point that dwelling is as much an active process as crossing, settling as much an activity as migrating. Consider the distinction between accelerated and unaccelerated motion. Both terms imply movement, even though accelerated motion signals that forces acting on a body *change* its velocity, and unaccelerated motion indicates that the motion is at a *constant* velocity. It's the difference between the motion involved when an intergenerational carload of Cuban devotees turns out of the driveway in Little Havana and the motion involved when that same car is moving along the highway at a steady velocity on its way to the shrine. In both instances, the car is in motion, and the passengers have the capacity to discern that both stages of the journey involve movement, though they're of different kinds. Psychophysiological studies have shown that the human visual cortex has two distinct pathways for the detection of accelerated and unaccelerated motion. Some cells are sensitive to accelerated motion; others detect unaccelerated motion. No evidence suggests that the middle temporal visual area of the human brain—even the brains of religion scholars—affords any special advantage in detecting the kinetics of religion. Nonetheless, I want to suggest that in interpreting the Cuban consecration in Miami, and religion in other times and places, it is helpful to draw on both "pathways" and cultivate more sensitivity to the complicated dynamics of religious practice, attending to both kinds of motion. The analogies from physics and physiology might not be perfect, but they point to the ways that dwelling, like crossing, involves movement.[3]

In this chapter I consider the kinetics of dwelling. I first discuss how religion as dwelling orients devotees in time and space and, so, functions as watch and compass. Second, I note that this spatial and tempo-

ral orientation involves both organic processes and cultural practices. Finally, I argue that the "autocentric" and "allocentric" reference frames that emerge from these processes and practices allow the religious to map, construct, and inhabit ever-widening spaces: the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos.

In that last section, and along the way, I draw on examples not only from the shrine in Miami but also from diverse cultural contexts, and before I continue on this theoretical journey it might be helpful to explain why I do this. If theory is a positioned sighting, as I suggested in Chapter 1, then why do I wander so far as I accumulate illustrations from other religions in other times and places? The short answer: this theory emerges from a particular site, the shrine, but I think it has applications beyond that site. As I noted in the last chapter, my definition is both empirical and stipulative, and the theory, which explicates and expands that definition, attempts to illumine what I encountered in Miami as it also offers angles of vision on religions in other cultures and periods. To put it differently, what follows in my analysis of dwelling (and, later, crossing) is a positioned sighting from not only the shrine but also the study. I wrote this book in my office, surrounded by shelves and shelves of books, and not far from a university library with even more shelves. I did not consult all those books, of course. I walked the office bookcases and the library stacks with questions in mind, questions produced by interactions at the shrine and conversations in the academy. Why, then, do I cite some examples from some passages in some books and not others? Because I decided they might be helpful in this theoretical itinerancy, this thought experiment, this attempt to see if motifs and metaphors that emerged for me at the shrine might make sense of practices in other times and places.

Toward that end, I select examples from varied cultures and multiple periods as I try to persuade readers by being amply illustrative rather than propositionally argumentative. After all, it would be difficult to convince anyone that this theory has some interpretive reach if I restricted myself to examples from the Miami shrine. Yet comparative

thematic analysis always risks the criticism that it is ahistorical. It seems to uproot practices from their native soil and plop them down where they don't belong. That's true, of course. And in my other historical and ethnographic work I have spent a good deal of time fingering fibrous roots that descend in complicated patterns into native soil. In my study of Buddhism I kept close to the ground, analyzing the historical shifts in terms of the beliefs and values of Victorian America; in my ethnographic study of Cuban American Catholics, I rarely ventured beyond the circular parking lot of the Virgin's shrine. But in this book, I traverse a wider landscape in order to see if this theoretical wandering might yield something of interpretive value. Doing so requires that I rely on histories, translations, and ethnographies from many colleagues, who offer interpretations of the sites along the way. It could not be otherwise. Theorizing—even positioned theorizing—can't stay put. It has to move, and in what follows, I move—back and forth between the shrine and the study, between the historical particular and the transcultural theme, between positioned questions and tentative answers. The primary criterion for the assessment of all this transtemporal and transcultural traversing, I suggest, is not whether I have fully represented the complexities of each case I cite. I haven't. It's this: do these interpretive transmigrations produce categories and prompt questions that allow more illuminating sightings at other sites? I think they do, and to begin to make my case I first consider some of the ways that religions provide orientation.

RELIGION AS WATCH AND COMPASS

Some religion scholars have explored the gritty particulars of religious orientation, but philosophers and theologians have talked about orientation—and the concomitant disorientation—in more abstract terms. In his "Lecture on Ethics" the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein told a Cambridge audience about a defining experience: "I believe the best way of describing it is to say that when I have it *I wonder at the existence*

of the world. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as 'how extraordinary that anything should exist' or 'how extraordinary that the world should exist.' " The Christian theologian Paul Tillich described a similar experience by noting that "the ontological question," the question of being-itself, "arises in something like a 'metaphysical shock' in the question, 'Why is there something; why not nothing?' " Even if some philosophers and theologians have framed the problem of religious orientation and disorientation in this way and some creation myths seem to answer metaphysical questions they have posed, it is difficult to know how many religious women and men have shared that experience of "metaphysical shock." As the cognitive theorist of religion Pascal Boyer has argued, citing an ethnography of the Kwaio people in the Solomon Islands, "the origin of things *in general* is not the obvious source of puzzlement that we may imagine." Boyer suggested that the Kwaio myths "assume a world where humans gave feasts, raised pigs, grew taro, and fought blood feuds," and what matters to people are *particular* instances in which the usual activities are disrupted. I would put it slightly differently: some people might sometimes pose Tillich's ontological question, but it is more common for individuals to ask more positioned and relational questions: Where do *I* belong? How did *we* get *here?* As far as I can tell, devotees at the shrine—and most people in most cultures—do not seem to be consciously aware of metaphysical shock, though they might have a fleeting experience of it, for example when encountering life's painful or joyful boundary moments: disease and death or recovery and birth. To be more precise, none of the hundreds of pilgrims I interviewed at the Miami shrine talked about being-itself. No one told me they wondered why there was something instead of nothing, though it's not the sort of thing that might come up, even when talking to someone who gets paid to think about such things. Almost every day during the five years I did fieldwork at the shrine, however, devotees reminded me in one way or another—a teary story about the hurried journey to South Florida or a ritual expressing longing for an imagined past—that the displacement of transnational migration had disrupted their sense of time and place.[4]

They did not have their bearings, and, as I suggested in *Our Lady of the Exile,* devotion at the Miami shrine can be seen as diverse attempts to situate Cuban migrants temporally and spatially. Consider the ways that the shrine's mural imagined a past and future and situated pilgrims in a present that, though painful, had some meaning (Figure 8). The 740-foot painting by the Cuban exile Teok Carrasco is wider at the base and narrower at its zenith, rising 36 feet from the sanctuary floor. It was begun in July 1974, and consecrated on the patroness's feast day in 1977. The painting evoked strong emotions among Cuban pilgrims, I learned, because Carrasco had managed to combine religious devotion and nationalist sentiment in a visual narrative that recounted the Cuban past. Carrasco saw himself as a historian: "It is my job as a painter to bring history to life." And the mural, *The History of Cuba at a Glance,* told the story of the Cuban nation from the voyages of Columbus (in the lower left corner) to the journeys of exiles (in the lower right corner). Overlooking the ill effects of colonization and evangelization, the painter narrates several centuries of the homeland's history, and on the mural's right side, which recounts the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Cuban history marches triumphantly and inevitably toward the successful wars for independence, with religious, cultural, and political leaders all playing their role. Bringing the story to a close in the lower right side of the mural, the Statue of Liberty points skyward, and a boat filled with exiles who will not make it to shore alive floats in the sea between the island and the American coast.[5]

Just as the mural offers a narrative of collective history that positions the exile in a longer time frame, the shrine's cornerstone orients devotees geographically. The building committee, which included the Cuban American architect José Pérez-Benitoa, Jr., and seventeen lay members, transformed the exilic sense of space in its design for the cornerstone. The six-sided concrete object, which rests in a triangulated space created at the altar's base, maps the natal terrain onto the Miami shrine. Affixed on each of its six sides are samples of soil and stone from the six prerevolutionary Cuban provinces. Those fragments were mixed with water taken from a raft on which fifteen refugees died at sea. The home-

8. Interior of the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami, 2005. A devotee, who holds yellow flowers for the Virgin, kneels as she looks up at the illuminated statue. Immediately in front of the woman is the altar, which is covered with a white cloth that conceals the six-sided cornerstone beneath it. In the background is the mural "The History of Cuba at a Glance."

land's regional divisions, recent history, marine environment, and native soil are all represented in that artifact, which bridges the homeland and the new land and establishes the site on Biscayne Bay in Miami as simultaneously Cuban terrain and American land.[6]

Other religions function in similar ways, as a Muslim pocket watch usefully illustrates (Figure 9). Concentric circles of calligraphy adorn the polychromatic exterior of this brass pocket watch, which was manufactured in Switzerland and decorated in India in the late nineteenth century for Sheikh Hadji Rahim Bakhsh, a Shīʿī Muslim gem merchant from Ludhiana, a market town in North India. It has an Urdu inscription and Arabic prayers and verses addressed to the five holy persons of Shīʿism. The interior includes a clock to determine the time for daily worship *(ṣalāt),* which Islamic ritual prescriptions suggest should be performed at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night. The compass in the stem also helps to discern the direction of prayer toward Mecca. Although Shīʿī prayer differs from Sunni prayer in some ways, all Muslims face toward the Kaʿba in Mecca during daily worship, and so the compass orients the devotee in space.[7]

The mural, the cornerstone, and the pocket watch orient both individuals and groups. Bakhsh, the late-nineteenth-century Muslim who consulted the watch and compass to mark the time and direction for worship, belonged to a North Indian Shīʿī community that recorded and transmitted the prescribed practices—washing, bowing, prostrating, kneeling, and standing—and passed on oral and written narratives about the holy persons of Shīʿism and the sacrality of the Kaʿba. In the same way, the Cuban devotee kneeling at the shrine's altar on a Saturday afternoon in 2005 to petition the Virgin learned the words and gestures of prayer in her home and in the church, and was part of a community that imagined its history and geography using shared symbols (Mary) and metaphors (exile) that were inscribed in artifacts like the mural and the cornerstone (see Figure 8).

Spatial and temporal orientation is not only individual as well as collective; as I noted in Chapter 3, it involves organic as well as cultural

9. Watch and compass, late nineteenth century. North Indian and Swiss; brass, enamel, silver overlay, and glass. $2\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{7}{8}$ inches.

processes. Depending on the position of the interpreter and the scale of the analysis, religions can be alternately, or simultaneously, about neurons firing and institutions working. My emphasis in this chapter—and throughout the book—is on the cultural. I leave it to others with more expertise in the life sciences and the behavioral sciences to explore that intersection where neural pathways meet cultural trajectories. As I did in Chapter 2, here I just want to signal that I remember it is always *embodied* beings who do the orienting, even if culturally constructed tropes, collectively enacted rituals, and socially produced artifacts play a decisive role in that process. So even though I intend this only as a gesture toward a fuller analysis—and a commitment to seek illuminating tropes and perspectives wherever we can find them, including the natural sciences—I want to say a bit about how organic and cultural forces interact as religions function as both watch and compass.

Biological and Cultural Clocks

The human central nervous system continually receives information that is important for spatial and temporal orientation. The neurophysiological processes involved in human perception and representation of time are not as well understood as the processes for the perception and representation of space. Much of the research, however, suggests that the basal ganglia, the frontal cortex, and the cerebellum are the areas of the brain most directly involved in human perception of temporal intervals. Recent studies of the psychophysics of temporal cognition have prompted several theoretical models, including the Scalar Timing Theory, which turns on the metaphor of an "internal clock" and suggests that this clock system, which allows humans to make judgments and decisions about time, includes a pacemaker, a switch, and an accumulator. On this model, the "pacemaker" emits pulses with a mean rate that pass through a "switch" on their way to an "accumulator." Whatever direction future research leads, it seems likely that cognitive scientists will continue to think that varied and complex neuro-

physiological processes set some constraints on the human perception and representation of time.[8]

Yet those neurophysiological processes are not the whole story. Brainminds are embedded in cultures, and the perception and representation of time involves a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and cultural processes. Even if there appear to be some cross-cultural constants about how humans process stimuli to form judgments about intervals, in representations of temporal passage—from the momentary to the epochal—a cultural clock interacts with the biological clock. Those culturally constructed processes for marking time, which are much more fluid than the clock metaphor allows, are continually being made and remade by the influence of multiple extra-individual forces and practices, including religion. It is not clear to what extent religions as organic-cultural flows shape microlevel judgments about small intervals—how did religion influence the perception of time as a devotee at the consecration ceremony whispered a prayer to the Virgin?—but religious practices are part of the confluence of forces that shape judgments about larger temporal scales. As with the Muslim watch and compass, religions measure time in midrange intervals—a day is this long and you pray at these five times during the day—and they establish annual calendars ritually, artifactually, symbolically, and mythically. For example, devotees from the same Cuban municipality visit the shrine for a weekday mass on the same day each year, and most exiles anticipate Our Lady of Charity's feast day on September 8. In that feast-day celebration organic constraints (memory processes) channel the recording and transmitting of cultural forms (ritual actions) as the annual rites' smells and bells—or, to use the language of some cognitive theorists, high sensory pageantry and low performance frequency—increase the chance that participants will draw on "flashbulb" or episodic memory systems to record the event. If cognitive studies of memory are right, this, in turn, will enhance the participants' ability to remember the ritual and to use it to mark the year—and the years. As confluences of retrospective and prospective practices, religions—including some

forms of Cuban American Catholicism—also look back to distant pasts and imagine distant futures. God created the world; the cross came to the island with Columbus; next year we will have Christmas dinner in Havana; when I die I will go to heaven. Culturally constructed, recorded, and transmitted forms—the symbols *God, cross,* and *heaven* as well as the narratives that frame them, the emotions that encode them, the artifacts that anchor them, and the rituals that convey them—mediate devotees' experiences and representations of time.[9]

Neural and Cultural Compasses

Humans' perception and representation of space also involves multiple processes—including the interaction of neural, psychological, and figurative processes. Spatial cognition emerges from the confluence of perceptual experience, emotional coding, and cultural forces. Research in cognitive science—cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, neuroimaging, and neurophysiology—has pointed to two modes of spatial cognition associated with distinct regions of the brain that, in turn, correspond to two forms of spatial representation. Using terms introduced by the psychologist Trigant Burrow in 1927, cognitive scientists have distinguished *autocentric* (self-centered) and *allocentric* (object-centered) spatial representations or reference frames. Autocentric frames of reference involve the parietal neocortex, draw on cognitive processes involved in action and attention, and orient humans in the immediate environment. In this sort of representation, space is framed in terms of the embodied subject, who constructs a spatial model from extensions of the three body axes—the head-feet axis, the front-back axis, and the left-right axis. A kneeling devotee at the Miami shrine, for example, might say that the image of Our Lady of Charity is *above,* or that the Saint Lazarus statue stands to her *right.* In contrast, allocentric reference frames involve the hippocampus and adjacent cortical and subcortical structures, concern large distances and long-term spatial memory, and aid humans in orienting and navigating space beyond the body and the immediate environment. Allocentric framing relates locations to each

other and to environmental landmarks. There is no privileging of the subject's position, and no location to which all others are related. Space is represented allocentrically in terms of fixed, not relative, points—for example, north, south, east, and west—and many researchers have appealed to the metaphor of the "cognitive map" to explain this mode of spatial perception and representation, although the psychologist Barbara Tversky has argued that "cognitive collage" is a better image, since these allocentric representations are put together unsystematically and involve multiple media. For example, twentieth-century exiled Cuban devotees constructed allocentric representations—cognitive maps or collages—when they told me that their homeland is *south.* That nineteenth-century Muslim in North India used his compass to discern that Mecca was *west* as he placed his prayer rug on the floor for the midday prayer.[10]

Even if research in neuroimaging and neurophysiology has shown some remarkable continuities in the perception and representation of space and even if most cognitive scientists agree that spatial terms are prominent in language and cognition, some recent studies in psychology, anthropology, and linguistics suggest that there is a good deal of cross-linguistic variation in spatial semantics and symbolization. Most languages have a root meaning "where?," and most linguists agree that cross-cultural patterns are evident. They point to autocentric and allocentric reference frames, although some rename them *relative* and *absolute.* And linguists add a third type of spatial representation, *intrinsic,* which subdivides the ground and locates the figure by relating it to one part of the ground. For example, a Cuban devotee might say that the image of Our Lady of Charity is "in the front of the shrine." Here the spatial representation is not oriented according to fixed points on a map and does not designate a site relative to a speaker; rather, it identifies the figure in relation to a part (the front) of the ground (the shrine). Not all languages use all three linguistic frames of reference. Many culturally constructed linguistic systems make no regular use of autocentric or relative frames of reference—and would have no way to say, for instance, "the image of the Virgin is above"—and even if they

do represent space autocentrically, the relational terms do not always follow the same pattern. For example, Japanese conflates *on* and *over* in ways that English does not. Many languages use allocentric frames of reference to designate almost all locations or motions, but those map-like schemes also are diverse. As one specialist in psycholinguistics notes, the Inuit use prevailing winds as the source of their spatial representation and identify up to sixteen directions around the compass, with subdivisions down to 22.5 degrees. In this and other examples, even the "fixed" directions of cognitive maps vary. It is at this point in the analysis that it becomes clear that spatial orientation, like temporal orientation, is a cultural as well as a biological process. If recent research proves right in the long run, hippocampal and parietal neural processes seem to set some constraints on the forms of spatial representation, but there is a good deal of variation across languages and cultures.[11]

Religions are among the cultural trajectories that help construct spatial frames of reference as institutions record and transmit tropes, artifacts, and rituals that encode representations. In particular, tropes—especially analogical utterances—seem important. Even though I understand tropes differently from some theorists, it is important to note that other interpreters have acknowledged their significance. The philologist and religion scholar F. Max Müller suggested that analogical thinking—making comparisons between unlike things—was at work in religious development. Humans, according to Müller, enjoy a "mental faculty" that "enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names, and varying guises." Religion "grows" as humans attempt to capture this vague sense of the Infinite derived from their encounter with nature in analogical language, often applying terms for the most "exalted" things in their experience—solar phenomena. Rejecting Müller's "naturism" (and Tylor's "animism"), Emile Durkheim still left some room for analogical representation in religion. Tribal traditions, he argued, turned to comparisons with animals and plants in totemic beliefs and practices. They used "physical emblems and figurative representations" to create a sense of the unity of the clan. In fact, Durkheim

proposed, "social life is only possible thanks to a vast symbolism." The sociologist Max Weber considered the role of "analogical thinking"—especially simile—but he argued that it originated in magic, not religion, and that devotees later "rationalized" it into symbolism in the religious realm. To offer a final example, in his theory of religion as anthropomorphism, anthropologist Stewart Guthrie, like Freud, highlighted the role of personification.[12]

Yet other tropes—including other forms of analogical cognition—mediate religion as well. Metaphors, as I have suggested, are especially important, even though I would not go as far as Müller in suggesting that "the whole dictionary of ancient religion is made up of metaphors." Yet metaphors do mediate representations of space in ancient and not-so-ancient religions, as most theorists have failed to emphasize. For example, Durkheim, who said as much about spatial representation as any interpreter, brilliantly pointed to the role of emotion—or "affective colorings"—when he noted that regions are associated with affect. Anticipating the distinctions that cognitive science would draw between autocentric and allocentric spatial representations, Durkheim also noted that "to have a spatial ordering of things is to be able to situate them differently: to place some on the right; others on the left, these above, those below, north or south, east or west, and so forth," but he obscured metaphor's role in this "spatial ordering." As I suggested before, metaphors function by propelling users between cognitive and emotional domains, as when we map language (and the concomitant inferences and sentiments) from the medical domain onto language about computers in the statement "my computer has a virus" or when we draw on networks of inferences from family relations to imagine the gods as "father" or "mother." This cognitive-affective fluidity, or metaphoric domain crossing, is one important source of cultural creativity and religious innovation—and it shapes spatial representation. As with some forms of Judaism and African American Christianity, for example, it is difficult to overemphasize how much the biblical metaphor of exile—*el exilio*—framed and transformed Cuban Americans' representations of where they are and where they are going. As the Virgin's devo-

tees at the shrine told me again and again, they saw themselves as a people displaced from their homeland and destined to return again, and they inscribed that exilic metaphor in a wide range of stories, artifacts, institutions, and rituals that mapped space in terms of the difference between here and there, Havana and Miami, the homeland and the new land.[13]

Yet even if that metaphor was important, it was only one cultural trajectory in the crisscrossing flow of biocultural processes that created and re-created religious homemaking. Turning to allocentric and autocentric frames of reference produced at the intersection of neural pathways and migratory routes, Cuban Americans understood themselves as *far* from relatives and *north* of the island. For them, the exilic metaphor co-mingled with biblical narratives and familial memory in accounts about leaving and returning. That metaphor also intertwined with another trope, the symbol of Our Lady of Charity, which was anchored materially in the shrine's diminutive statue. It was a nationalist symbol that triggered powerful emotions—including sadness—in translocative and transtemporal rituals associated with institutions like the (uprooted) family and the (diasporic) church.

So far I have argued that religions function as watch and compass and that organic and cultural processes interact in temporal and spatial orientation, but there is more to say about the kinetics of dwelling practices. Cubans at the Miami shrine and the religious in other periods and places, I propose, use autocentric and allocentric reference frames to map, construct, and inhabit four ever-widening spaces, or, to signal that spatial and temporal orientation intertwine, what we might call four *chronotopes:* the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos. Highlighting cultural more than organic processes, I suggest that religiously formed bodies function as the initial watch and compass, but religious women and men construct habitats, intimate spaces for dwelling, and inscribe those homes with religious significance. Moving beyond those intimate spaces and the kin who inhabit them, individuals and groups draw on religion to negotiate collective identity, imagine the group's shared space, and—in the process—establish social hierarchies within

the group and generate taxonomies of others beyond it. So the homeland, which might be as small as a river valley and as large as a colonial empire, is not the largest space in religion's figurative world. Religions also imagine the wider terrestrial landscape and the ultimate horizon of human existence—the universe and the beings that inhabit it.[14]

THE BODY

Religion begins—and ends—with bodies: birthed bodies and dead bodies; polluted bodies and purified bodies; enslaved and freed bodies; bodies that are tattooed, pierced, flagellated, drugged, masked, and painted; sick bodies and healed bodies; gendered bodies and racialized bodies; initiated and uninitiated bodies; bodies that are starved and fed, though fed only *this* way; exposed bodies and covered bodies; renounced and aroused bodies, though aroused only *that* way; kin bodies and strangers' bodies; possessed bodies and emptied bodies; and, as humans cross the ultimate horizon of human existence—however that horizon is imagined—bodies that are transported or transformed.

So bodies cross and dwell. They cross not only that ultimate horizon but many other boundaries as well, as I argue in the next chapter. Here I focus on the ways that spatial and temporal orientation begins with the body, which, since distance and sequence initially are represented autocentrically, is the first watch and compass. Even if humans have unconscious circumspatial awareness, a hidden capacity for sensate inferences about the world that confronts the body on all sides, and even if some traditions represent the body allocentrically by using tropes to compare the body to the landscape or the cosmos—for example, in terms of the cardinal directions—corporeal axes constrain (but do not determine) spatial and temporal orientation. The cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has argued that "vertical-horizontal, top-bottom, front-back, and right-left are positions and coordinates of the body that are extrapolated onto space." Considering temporal as well as spatial orientation, sociologist Alfred Schutz made a similar point when he suggested that a human is "primarily interested in that sector of the world of his ev-

eryday life which is within his scope and which is centered in space and time around himself." He continued: "The place which my body occupies within the world, my actual Here, is the starting point from which I take my bearings." In this sense, the body is the *actual Here* that surveys other spaces, both close and distant; it is the *actual Now* from which humans narrate the past and imagine the future. Drawing initially on this sort of autocentric framing, religions record, prescribe, and transmit figurative language and embodied practices about food, sex, health, drugs, dance, trance, gesture, and dress that position the body in time and space.[15]

Religions construct the body as watch and compass by figuring, regulating, and modifying that organic-cultural form. First, they use figures or tropes to imagine the body in a variety of ways. The religious turn to myths about the origin of the human body—which often intertwine with stories about the universe's origin—and they draw on analogical language to represent the corporeal form. One famous Buddhist text, for example, imagined the body as a chariot. In the *Questions of King Melinda,* the Buddhist Nāgasena explains the nature of the embodied person as a confluence of multiple forces or an aggregation of multiple parts by employing a metaphor from modes of transport. Just as the term *chariot* is only a conventional designation for multiple parts—pole, axle, and wheels—personal names are imperfect designations for the confluence of embodied processes: the five *skandhas* and thirty-two parts of the body. Some passages in the Hebrew Bible propose that embodied humans resemble the divine: "So God created humankind in his image." The likeness suggested here is not imagined as similar physical appearance but as a parallel in relationship and role: humans are like divine children just as Adam also fathered a child "according to his image" and humans, like God, have "dominion" over the earth. In this analogy, the embodied person is imagined in relation to benevolent cosmic forces—the divine creator. Other narratives, from the Zoroastrian tradition, use martial images to imagine the body as battleground between cosmic forces of good and evil. The body is a symbol of the integrity of the world order of Ahura Mazdā, the good creator, against the

chaos of Angra Mainyu, the hostile spirit. Turning to a simile, an important Zoroastrian text suggests that the devout "makes his body *like a fortress*" and thereby "does battle" against the demonic forces that threaten to enter.[16]

Second, as in this Zoroastrian example, religions mark boundaries that exclude as much as they enclose. They chart the cosmos, patrol the borders, and fence the home, but they also monitor bodily orifices and habituate sensory processes. For example, just as Zoroastrians have engaged in multiple practices to protect and purify the body, some Jain monks have worn masks over their mouths to avoid inadvertently ingesting an insect or some other small living being; some Seventh Day Adventists have followed Ellen Gould White's *Counsels on Diet and Food* by eating a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet of fruits, grains, nuts, and vegetables; some evangelical Protestants have cited scriptural authority as they condemn homosexual bodily contact and even try to re-habituate the sensory processes of those who are willing to allow the divine to transform their sexual urges.[17]

Finally, religions do not only represent and regulate the body; they alter it. As religion scholar William LaFleur has noted, traditions fall on a continuum from prescribing acceptance to prescribing modification, even if most religions do seek to modify the body in one way or another. Some embodied practices—or, in Marcel Mauss's phrase, *bodily techniques*—do not change the body much: for instance, not only Adventists practicing vegetarianism and Jains wearing masks but Catholics baptizing babies and Baktaman painting faces. Other practices transform the body more drastically, even intrusively and permanently: circumcision, flagellation, and tattooing. Among them are gendered and racialized practices that carry religious sanction and involve violence: African American lynchings in Mississippi or female clitorectomies in the Sudan. All these spiritual practices alter the corporeal form in some way, even if only temporarily, and they simultaneously situate individuals and groups in time and space. Ellen White's dietary prescriptions, for instance, determine what happens in domestic space, the kitchen, just as vegetarianism situates followers in social space, setting them

apart from the carnivorous within that Christian denomination and in the wider society. At the same time, vegetarianism positions Seventh Day Adventists temporally, since they believe that those culinary practices constituted humanity's "original" diet and, therefore, that it best prepares them for Jesus' return and the world's consummation.[18]

As the example about Adventist food practices indicates, religions position the body in relation to other chronotopes—including the home, the homeland, and the cosmos. Religions position bodies, first, within the home: they not only organize the interior spaces but also prescribe embodied practices for those sites: sleep only with your spouse in the bedroom, and—as with some Adventists and many Buddhists—don't eat meat in the kitchen. Or, as with many Jews and Muslims, eat only meat that has been slaughtered and prepared in this way. Some artifacts and rituals extend the boundaries of domestic space and kinship networks, as when Cuban American devotees at the shrine wear Marian medals given to them at home by their mothers. Bodies also signal collective identity, as when nomads tattoo their bodies with the animals that symbolize their clan, and bodies situate individuals in national space by affirming—or rejecting—the homeland, as when exiled Cuban American women wearing yellow, the national patroness's color, wave, sing, and weep as the Virgin makes her way to the altar during the annual feast-day celebration. Dress can negotiate national identity in other ways: eastern European orthodox Jewish women in late-nineteenth-century America wore wigs, shawls, or scarves that reaffirmed Old World affiliations—and embarrassed their daughters who were eager to acculturate to Victorian Protestant customs. In a similar way, the dress of the Eastern Dakota in the mid-nineteenth century alternately accommodated and resisted the Euro-American Protestant missionaries' exhortations not only to accept Christ but to signal their affiliation with the American nation by abandoning their blankets, beads, and braids and accepting the civilizing power of fitted bodices, cotton undergarments, and lace collars (Figure 10).[19]

Bodies also become pathways to the wider universe. Consider the Cuban Catholic Eucharistic celebration, in which devotees ingest "the

10. Sioux woman, circa 1870.

body of Christ." Or, among many other examples, consider forms of trance: spirit possession among middle-aged northern Sudanese Muslim women, who were inhabited, and made ill, by *zarain,* invisible and nocturnal beings; spirit mediumship among middle-class Victorian Protestant women, who contacted deceased husbands and mothers in the other world; or shamanism among the Bear River, who consulted ritual specialists to perform curative rites that called on spirits for aid in the healing process. In these instances bodies are channels joining this world and another world. In some traditions, however, bodies are not so much paths as emblems: they symbolize the cosmos. As I have noted, Zoroastrians imagine the body as a cosmic battleground, and in some Daoist interpretations, which combine autocentric and allocentric framing, the head corresponds to the heavens, the heart to the earth, and the lower abdomen to the underworld (Figure 11). It is in this sense that religiously formed bodies, which are simultaneously organic, domestic, communal, and cosmic spaces, function as the initial watch and compass.[20]

THE HOME

Religiously formed bodies function as watch and compass, but the religious also autocentrically and allocentrically orient themselves by constructing, adorning, and inhabiting domestic space. Religion, in this sense, is housework. It is homemaking. Yet homes vary widely in form, permanence, and scale. Home is not always a permanent dwelling, and it is not always a built structure. For some hunter-gatherers it might mean no more than a clearing in the brush. The !Kung bushmen most often do not inhabit permanent structures; rather, the family eats and sleeps around an open fire that is near other families. For them, the entire encampment is the home. This is in keeping with some of the meanings of the term *home.* The Indo-European roots of the English term indicate that it is a "dwelling place," but the term can refer to anything from a single fixed residence to a collection of dwellings in a village or town. As one theoretical geographer has noted, the English term

is related to the German *heimat,* "whose sense slides along the continuum from 'domicile' to 'world.'" So just as bodies are organic-cultural sites that interconnect with other spaces, the imagined boundaries of the home contract and expand across cultures and in different semantic contexts. Home, then, might refer to places of varying scale: a clearing, a hut, a nation, the earth, or the universe. In this wider sense, religious dwelling means finding a place or making a space, however small or large. However, as I am using it here in a more narrow sense, *home* refers to an intimate controlled space, whether cleared or constructed, that provides for bodily needs—shelter, sleep, sex, healing, and food—and usually, though not always, is inhabited by some members of the family.[21]

As confluences of cultural as well as organic processes, bodies are social spaces, but in some ways the human collectivity originates with the home. As the first and smallest inhabited space, its boundaries open and close to the wider society. Just as the physical body mirrors the social body in some ways, so too domestic spaces and practices reciprocally interact with culturally constructed images of the society and the cosmos. To illustrate, consider anthropologist Fredrik Barth's ethnographic representation of domestic space among the Baktaman, whom I mentioned earlier. The group occupied a tract of mountain rain forest near the center of New Guinea. The huts' arrangement in the main Baktaman hamlet reflects the male-dominated ancestor cult. At the far left, surrounded by a border of sanctified ground, sit the Yolam and Katiam temples, which enshrine the bones of deceased male ancestors and house senior men from the clan. Facing the most sacred spaces in the village are the two men's houses, which are larger, elevated, and forbidden to women and children. Off to the far right are the women's houses, where women, children, and pigs reside. Beyond the village boundaries are huts where menstruating women stay during their

11. The Cosmic Body, woodblock print, nineteenth century. Baiyun Temple, Beijing. The head corresponds to the heavens, the chest to earth, and the lower abdomen to the water and river delta areas close to the underworld.

monthly cycle. Myths and rituals encode this mapping of domestic and cultic space: for example, one Baktaman myth about the first ancestors—an elder sister and two younger brothers—explains the origin of gender-segregated housing and male-controlled worship. According to the myth, women originally inhabited the temple or cult house, but the primordial sister eventually chose to move to her younger brother's hut and leave the temple to men: "What a good house you have," she said, "will you change with me?" "And," the myth concludes, "so the men took over the cult houses." This religiously sanctioned segregation of domestic and worship space reflects and reinforces the ancestor cult, which highlights taboos and privileges men.[22]

Social hierarchy and cosmic order are not always as transparent in the arrangement of homes or the design of exteriors—the men's houses were on stilts, after all, and they faced the worship space—and the home's religious significance usually is inscribed in its internal organization and interior furnishing. Whether it is an undivided enclosure like a conical hut or a split-level multiple-room house, interior space is mapped not only by the pragmatics of use—cooking ought to happen where smoke from the fire can escape—but also by the prescriptions of piety. Artifacts on the threshold can mark the space as religious—as in the Jewish practice of affixing a *mezuzah* to the doorpost—but religions also designate interior domestic spaces for sleeping, eating, coupling, gathering, and worshipping, and, as I noted above, prescribe what happens in those spaces.

The significance of domestic interiors for religious orientation is clear, for example, in the ways that artifacts and rituals combine to create home shrines. There are many examples from multiple cultures. Hindus set up home altars for morning and evening *pūjā,* or veneration of the gods and goddesses. In similar ways, many Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains use artifacts to create domestic spaces for religious practice. Many Muslims and Jews also sacralize domestic space, though they don't usually enshrine images of deities. Many Muslims, for instance, use a prayer rug, or even a wall plaque, to set aside a space for daily prayer and indicate the direction of Mecca. Some Christians construct domestic altars.

12. Mexican home altar in Quintana Roo.

Cuban Americans at the Virgin's shrine told me that they created small domestic altars by placing an assortment of artifacts in their bedroom, kitchen, or living room: images of Our Lady of Charity and other saints that they had received as gifts, purchased in Miami, or carried from the homeland. In a similar way, Catholic altar makers in rural Mexico have constructed sacred spaces in their one-room dwellings. Note how one Mexican home altar juxtaposes the familial network and the metaphoric kinship system established by the cult of the saints: it includes not only images of Jesus and St. Theresa but also framed photographs of relatives (Figure 12). Even Protestants, who sometimes are portrayed

as iconophobic, mark the home, or spaces within it, as sacred. For example, a 1940 entry in the *Doctrines and Disciplines of the Methodist Church* prescribed a house-blessing ritual that began with a scriptural passage: "it is written that, 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' " The rest of the domestic rite includes prayers interspersed with hymns, including one song that allocentrically maps the home in terms of the cardinal directions: "Bless the Four Corners of this House." And even if many Protestants have tried to guard against the idolatrous impulses of Catholic sensibilities, some corners in Protestant homes have included artifacts—from motto cases and bible stands to mass-produced paintings and hand-made quilts—that mark off domestic space as religious.[23]

In some instances, religious artifacts extend domestic space to yards, gardens, and neighborhoods. Consider a few examples from North America. In Miami, Cuban American followers of Catholicism and the Afro-Cuban tradition Santería built modest yard shrines that venerated saints: Saint Lazarus, Saint Barbara, and Our Lady of Charity. Most often these sites were religiously inspired landscaping, but sometimes they have served as altars for family or neighborhood rituals. As I reported in my ethnography, Mauricio, a fifty-nine-year-old yard shrine owner with obvious leanings toward Santería, organized a "block party" that drew hundreds of devotees to his yard on the Virgin's feast day. Each September 8, Mauricio told me, he invites a Santería "priest" *(un cura)* to say a mass *(una misa)* in front of the eight-foot image of Our Lady of Charity on his lawn. In a different way, Howard Finster, the former bicycle repairman and Protestant preacher, sacralized the space around his home in rural Georgia by using found objects to build Paradise Garden, an extension of domestic space that he imagined as a representation of the Garden of Eden (Figure 13). "It just come to me," the millennialist Protestant explained, "that the world started with a beautiful garden, so why not let it end with a beautiful garden?" Orthodox Jews in Toronto who constructed an *eruv* around their neighborhood were less interested in rural gardens than in suburban streets. The Torah prohibits some activities on the Sabbath, including carrying objects in public space. This

13. The Bible House, with an angel on top and a sign on the lower left that says "Welcome to the Coming of Jesus Christ," at Paradise Garden, created by Howard Finster.

prohibition has been challenging for many orthodox Jews, and the Talmud prescribes ways to get around it: establishing an *eruv,* a system of poles and wires that encircles a neighborhood or town and, thereby, transforms it from public space to domestic space.[24]

THE HOMELAND

As the *eruv* extends the boundaries of the home, the religious also move beyond intimate spaces and kinship relations to imagine the home-

land—and the people within and beyond its borders. In other words, religions do more than autocentrically orient individuals in terms of bodily axes and personal memory. They do more than situate embodied persons in domestic space and familial history. Dwelling practices also position the religious in longer time frames and wider social spaces. Homemaking does not end at the front door. It extends to the boundaries of the territory that group members allocentrically imagine as *their* space, but since the homeland is an imagined territory inhabited by an imagined community, a space and group continually figured and refigured in contact with others, its borders shift over time and across cultures. As with the idea of home, the boundaries of the homeland can contract and expand. The homeland's scope depends not only on the tropes used to imagine it—*motherland* or *chosen land*—but also on the form and complexity of social organization. Small groups based primarily on kin relations, such as bands of nomadic foragers or relatively sedentary horticultural clans, might view their collective space as a rather small region. An ethnic group—or to use the language that most anthropologists now avoid, a tribe—can conjoin peoples on the basis of not only kin relations but also shared language, common practices, and contiguous territory, and they might lay claim to a larger natal space. Confederations of such groups—for instance, the Iroquois' Six Nations, which shared a common language and the Eastern Woodlands cultural area—imagined a still larger area as part of the homeland. The boundaries can expand further in other intermediate forms of communal organization such as chiefdoms: for example, the Aztec, Incan, and Mayan chiefdoms, which included thousands to millions of residents and employed cultivation techniques that yielded surpluses that, in turn, allowed for the formation of towns and cities. With the emergence of the modern nation-state, the borders of communal space enlarge again, and as transnational migrants like Cubans and others make clear, even if the homeland's space remains linked with the natal territory, it also includes the new places imagined and inhabited by the displaced peoples—refugees, slaves, exiles, and immigrants. So nationalism—and

diasporic nationalism—creates an imagined community that has affective bonds with the natal land, but it also extends that bond beyond the borders of the native place. Finally, colonial empires—for instance, British, French, Dutch, or Spanish—stretch natal cartographies still further by tracing the reach of the state's expansion across national borders.[25]

Religious homemaking not only maps the boundaries of the natal place, whether this is imagined as a foraging route or a transnational empire, but also charts taxonomies of the people within and beyond its borders. In other words, it maps social space. It draws boundaries around *us* and *them;* it constructs collective identity and, concomitantly, imagines degrees of social distance. Social differentiation, which is complex in most modern nation-states but clearly present in the smallest itinerant band, varies with the scale and form of the communal organization and the tropes and practices used to imagine social space. The classic example of social differentiation is the Indian caste and class systems, but most cultures have similar taxonomies, even if they are less elaborate and systematized.[26]

Religions map natal place and social space by employing tropes—symbol, metaphor, simile, and myth—and anchoring those in artifacts and transmitting them in rituals. I already have noted how Cuban exiles use the metaphor of exile and the symbol of Mary, as well as artifacts like the cornerstone and the mural, to imagine the homeland. Let me mention two more examples of this sort of homemaking. First, at the rear of the shrine, facing the water and the island, stand copper-colored busts of José Martí and Félix Varela, two of the most influential Cuban writers of the nineteenth century. Varela was a Catholic priest who migrated to the United States, and Martí was a thinker who promoted Cuban nationalism on the island. The post-1959 socialist government in Cuba has celebrated both of them as proto-Marxist symbols, but the shrine's planning committee claimed them for the exile community and the national patroness by placing their images in Miami. Some pilgrims to the shrine might miss the nationalist significance of those busts, but

few could fail to catch the meaning of another symbol, a Cuban flag, which was formed using painted stones and placed in the garden that encircles the shrine.[27]

Religions have mapped the homeland, and the peoples within and outside its borders, in many other ways as well. Some traditions have proposed that the landscape itself is sacred. For example, in India some rivers, mountains, and cities have been considered holy, so bathing in the Ganges River or visiting Banaras, one of the seven sacred cities, brings the devotee directly into contact with the gods. In some times and places, the boundaries of the homeland have been drawn by the gods. In the ancient Near East, the Sumerians linked each city-state with a deity. Since the primordial creation, they believed, each city-state had been assigned a particular god, who owned it for all eternity. So the water god, Enki, owned the city-state of Eridu, and the moon god, Nannar, reigned over the territory of Ur. In a slightly different way, Jewish sacred narratives suggest that God exhorted Abraham to relocate to the land of Canaan, and God made a promise that has bound the people to the landscape for generations: "And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God." He was the God of King David, who founded a dynasty that lasted hundreds of years, and, as with David, the rule of other kings has received divine sanction in one way or another. Although ancient Chinese political theory left room for overthrowing rulers who did not do their job, texts from the Han Dynasty suggest the king's role was no less than harmonizing the three realms of the universe: Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. The ruler fulfilled this threefold obligation, one Chinese text proposed, by cultivating filial piety and the other virtues among the people; venerating his own ancestors properly; and by reverentially officiating at the public ritual offerings at the altars of Heaven and Earth. In this way the emperor established his rule over the homeland and its people—and dismissed those who lived beyond the borders as "barbarians."[28]

So spiritual cartographies of the homeland negotiate power as well

as meaning. Sacred geographies are contested. This is clear, for example, in the violent disputes in the Indian city of Ayodhyā, which is simultaneously (for Muslims) the site of the Babri Mosque and (for Hindus) the birthplace of the god Rāma. In a similar way, Jerusalem is a site of contestation—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—and Jewish claims to "the land of Canaan" conflict with Palestinian claims. Sometimes the site of contestation is not a temple or a city but a nation. Those who drew the United States' national map, which expressed America's "manifest"—and divinely sanctioned—destiny, imposed a colonialist grid on another grid: the boundaries of the six nations of the Iroquois and the other Indian nations across the continent. Sometimes one homeland displaces another. Homemaking exerts power as it makes meaning.[29]

THE COSMOS

Homemaking extends beyond the homeland's borders, and the religious also negotiate power and meaning as they imagine the structure, history, and limits of the wider landscape and the entire universe. Using allocentric reference frames, they produce geographies, cosmographies, cosmogonies, and teleographies.

Religions offer *geographies,* cognitive maps of the earth that include not only the home and the homeland but also the vast regions beyond intimate space and collective space. At its most basic, geographies involve autocentric framings that survey space in terms of the binary *here* and *there,* with *here* understood as the boundaries of the body, the home, or the homeland. This sort of mapping also involves chorographies, positioned representations of a region, as in the *pinturas* drawn by Amerindians at the request of Spanish colonial officials in the sixteenth century, but in many instances sacred geographies include mental maps that imagine the widest inhabited area of the earth. Using various geometric shapes (including the circle and the square) and a wide variety of symbols, the religious have mapped terrestrial space. In Sanskrit texts called *Purāṇas,* the flat disk of the earth is represented as

seven concentric islands, each separated from the next by oceans, and in the center of the innermost island is the mythical Mount Meru, which reaches from heaven to earth. One of the earliest printed European maps, produced by Hans Rüst in Augsburg around 1480, used a circular form to offer a "map of the world and of all countries and kingdoms with their positions in the world" (Figure 14). Like medieval maps—and this one is medieval in design and content—Rüst's printed woodcut with German lettering inscribed a Christian sacred geography. For example, note that Jerusalem is at the center, and at the top, the east, Adam and Eve stand within the walled Garden of Eden, through which flow the four Rivers of Paradise.[30]

As in this European map, representations of the terrestrial landscape often employ tropes—the symbol of the Garden of Eden—and so do *cosmographies,* representations of the structure of the entire universe, including the earth. An influential Chinese account of the universe's structure turned to the metaphor of an egg, which is also a common trope in creation stories. This elliptical theory, which was championed by Zhang Heng (78–139 C.E.) but circulated much earlier, imagined the universe this way: "Heaven is like an egg, and the earth is like the yolk of the egg. Alone it dwells inside. Heaven is great and earth is small. Inside and outside of heaven there is water. Heaven wraps around the earth as the shell encloses the yolk." This Chinese cosmography proposes two cosmic realms—heaven and earth—but there is wide variety in the ways religions have imagined the universe's structure. Roman Catholics added an intermediary realm—purgatory—and Muslims multiplied the terrestrial and celestial realms: the Qur'án counts seven heavens and seven earths. The Hindu *Upaniṣads* map seven realms. Some Pali Buddhist texts propose thirty-one realms of existence, but many Buddhists have embraced a more limited, but still com-

14. Hans Rüst, "This is a map of the world and of all countries and kingdoms with their positions in the world," circa 1477–1484. Woodcut with handcut lettering. 40.0 × 28.2 cm. Augsburg, Germany.

plex, cosmography. They have imagined a hierarchy of six realms, where different types of beings reside and where karmic forces send the reborn: at the bottom are the various hells; at the top are the heavens, the abodes of the gods. In between—and in ascending order—are realms for suffering ghosts, animals, *asuras* (semidivine or semidemonic beings), and humans. As with the Hopi of the American Southwest, even if religions imagine more subdivisions, many use autocentric reference frames to map a tripartite cosmic structure: *above, here,* and *below.* Vertical autocentric mapping often is supplemented by allocentric framing that positions the individual and the community in cosmic space. Note how one Hopi ceremonial artifact, which was built as part of an initiation into one of the male religious societies *(Wuwtsim),* employs a central symbol (maize) to fashion a six directions altar, which Armin Geertz has called an "astrosphere altar" because it "recreates the spatial dimensions of the Hopi cosmology": axes that run north-south, southeast-northwest, southwest-northeast, and an imagined perpendicular line that intersects in the center and links the zenith *(oomiq)* and nadir *(atkyamiq)* (Figure 15).[31]

Religions not only map the contours of the terrestrial, subterranean, and celestial realms; they also orient devotees temporally and spatially by creating cosmogonies and teleographies that represent the origin and destiny of the universe. A *cosmogony* is a representation of the origin of the universe, and cosmogonic myths are most often intertwined with rituals and artifacts, just as the Wuwtsim altar is constructed as part of a complex initiation ceremony that re-creates the Hopis' primordial emergence from the underworld. A Hopi cosmogonic myth suggests that in the beginning there was only the creator, Taiowa, and "all else was endless space." It continues: "There was no beginning and no end, no time, no shape, no life. Just an immeasurable void that had its beginning and end, time, shape, and life in the mind of Taiowa the Creator." Then the creator god "conceives" of the world, and he creates Sotuknang, his nephew, to make manifest what his uncle, the creator, has conceived. The nephew, doing as he is told, arranges endless space

15. The "Astrosphere Altar," or Tawvongya, *in situ* during the Hopi Wuwtsim Ceremonial at Orayvi.

into "nine universal kingdoms." From there, the rest of the universe is created, with the help of other supernatural beings, including Spider Woman and the Twins. Most important for Hopi religious life, the myth continues by recounting the origins of the Hopi, who originated beneath the earth's surface and lived there in three previous worlds. At the beginning of the current age they ascended from the underworld to the present Fourth World, the World Complete, and after that "the people divided into groups and clans to begin their migrations." In this sense, the Hopi cosmogonic myth maps natal space and social space as well as cosmic space.[32]

Many other cosmogonic myths do the same, but those narratives have varied widely across cultures and periods—even within the same religious tradition. The Hopi myth represents the origin of the universe as a creation, but there are variations among such myths, and not all traditions imagine the universe's origin this way: religions, I suggest, have either presupposed the universe as already *existing* or imagined it as eternally *enduring,* or, if they narrate an ultimate cosmic origin they imagine that as either a process of *emerging* or, as in the Hopi example, an act of *creating.*[33]

The first two cosmogonic types, which view the universe as already existing or perpetually enduring, point to narrative traditions that reject or de-emphasize the claim that the universe had an ultimate origin—or redirect attention to other concerns. Most Buddhist traditions, for example, have challenged the premises of those who ask about cosmic origins. Such questions, the Buddha suggested in a famous passage in the *Cūla-Māluṅkya Sutta,* are unhelpful. The Pali text mentions ten matters "unexplained" by the Buddha, including whether the world is eternal, and it recounts an encounter between the Buddha and an insistent monk who pressed him for answers. In response, the Buddha told him a story about a man struck by a poisoned arrow. Just as that man should not try to reconstruct a full biography of the archer before pulling out the arrow, so too, the narrative implies, devotees should avoid such questions. The Buddha's focus was on the pragmatic concerns of life: to

relieve suffering. As he tells the insistent monk, "Whether one holds the view that the world is eternal, or whether one holds the view that the world is not eternal, there is still birth, ageing, death, grief, despair, pain, and unhappiness—whose destruction here and now I declare."[34]

Some myths from other traditions do not redirect inquirers' attention or deny ultimate origins; they focus instead on natal space and social space, tracing the origins of the community. An Inuit myth, for example, begins by assuming the existence of the terrestrial landscape, but one without human inhabitants: "It was in the time when there were no people on the earth plain." The myth goes on to recount the unintended and unexpected origin of humans from a peapod that Raven, the trickster god, had created: "I made that vine, but did not know that anything like you would ever come from it." It is not that a careful listener could not reconstruct a cosmography and cosmogony from the narrative, since the story assumes a three-tiered universe (heaven, earth, and the sea floor) and presupposes that Raven has played a primary role in each realm. But this is not the story's focus. Rather, the Inuit narrator seems more interested in the differences among the spirits who dwell in the sky, earth, and water and, most important, the differences between inland and coastal peoples.[35]

Other myths do not simply assume the existence of the universe, but self-consciously imagine it as *enduring:* the world is eternal and time is cyclical. In these accounts there is no ultimate origin, but only the initiation of another cycle. And as with some Hindu myths that recount the role of Brahmā as creator and Śiva as destroyer, sometimes supernatural agents participate in the ebb and flow of these endless cosmic cycles. Another Indian tradition, Jainism, reaffirms the notion that the universe is eternal. The *Mahāpurāṇa,* a Jain text from the ninth century, directly challenges narratives that tell of a creator and a creation, raising questions about those stories: for example, how can an immaterial god create that which is material? In this Jain account, as in some Hindu narratives, the uncreated world is "without beginning or end."[36]

Many myths chronicle a cosmic beginning, although they imagine it

variously as an emergence or a creation. Some portray cosmic origins as an impersonal process in which the universe *emerges* from some inanimate substance—even if supernatural agents get into the act later in the story. For example, consider two cosmogonic myths that take water as the primordial stuff from which all things emerge. In an ancient Near Eastern text that recounts a Babylonian cosmogony, the *Enuma Elish* imagined the time before the gods and the universe. At the start, there was only the ocean *(Apsu)* and the primeval waters *(Tiamat)*. These two "mingled together" and "in the water the gods were created." The natural divine forces then go on to order the chaos and produce the universe, but it first emerged from the waters. In a similar way, the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa,* a Hindu text written in India, proposed that "in the beginning this (universe) was water, nothing but a sea of water." And the waters are granted primal creative agency: "The waters desired, 'How can we be reproduced?'" They performed devotions and heat was generated, and from that process "a golden egg was produced." After a year, in turn, that egg produced the creator, Prajāpati, who broke open the egg and began the next stage in the production of the universe.[37]

These Babylonian and Indian myths eventually got gods into the act, but many other myths narrate the universe's origin as the creative act of one or more supernatural agents. These creation myths vary widely depending on several factors: the number of gods involved, whether they had some primordial stuff to work with; and how they actually initiated the creative process. Creator gods originate the universe in multiple ways—from speaking to vomiting—but there are five basic variations: crafting, ordering, procreating, battling, or differentiating. In differentiating creation stories, which resemble emergence myths, the universe emanates from the divine body. These accounts are common among Polynesian cultures. In a Tahitian story, for example, in the beginning the creator god Ta'aroa "dwelt in his shell." "It was round like an egg," the account continues, "and revolved in space in continuous darkness." The shell cracks open, and the deity overturns his shell to

form a dome for the sky, and gradually the whole universe emanates from the original divine substance, so in this account the creative process is one of differentiating the subsequent plurality of things from the original unity of the divine body. When the primordial stuff is imagined as chaos, and not as the divine body itself, creator gods order rather than differentiate. The Pelasgians, who brought narratives about the Near Eastern mother goddess with them to Greece, suggested that "in the beginning, Eurynome, the Goddess of All Things, rose naked from Chaos, but found nothing substantial for her feet to rest upon, and therefore divided the sea from the sky, dancing lonely upon its waves." Her dancing set the wind in motion, and from the North Wind she created the great serpent Ophion, who coupled with her. She then assumed the form of a dove, and laid the "Universal Egg." With the egg's hatching, the process of creation continued until everything was in place. This story involves coupling, and some other myths suggest that the world originates from an act of procreation between two divine beings, as in the myth told by the Jivaran Indians of Ecuador in which the universe is the result of the sexual union of two divine "parents"—Kumpara, the creator, and Chingaso, his spouse—who start the creative process by producing a son, Esta, the sun. In other myths that involve two co-eternal supernatural agents or forces, the interactions are less amorous. In the Manichaean creation myth, for example, the world begins with two principles that are imagined as good and evil, light and darkness. The creative process involves the continuing battle between these forces, and the attempt to release the light from the darkness in matter. Other accounts, which imagine a single benevolent divine being, narrate the origin as a process of crafting, and those from Western monotheistic traditions—as well as some myths in other traditions and cultures, including the Zuni—propose that the creation is out of nothing. According to the Priestly account in Genesis (1:1–2:4a)—one of two creation myths in the Hebrew Bible—in the beginning there was only a watery chaos, as in the Babylonian myth, and from that the divine, an autonomous eternal power, creates "the heavens and the earth."[38]

The Genesis account and other cosmogonic myths focus on beginnings, but, as I suggest in the next chapter, religions also imagine a *telos,* an "ultimate object or aim," a temporal and spatial endpoint. In other words, they offer *teleographies.* The religious, I propose, mark and cross all sorts of boundaries, including the ultimate horizon of human life.

We are beings at the limit . . .

Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*

Indian tradition has always offered a way to "cross over" whatever the situation, be it overcoming a personal problem, passing over to a new stage of life *(āśrama),* crossing from one life to rebirth, traversing the realms *(loka)* for a temporary visit to heaven *(svarga)* or hell *(naraka),* or ultimately transcending the cycle of reincarnation itself.

Katherine Y. Young, "Tīrtha and the Metaphor of Crossing Over"

CROSSING

The Kinetics of Itinerancy

I have analyzed how dwelling practices situate the religious in time and space, positioning them in four chronotopes: the body, the home, and the homeland, and the cosmos. Yet religions, I suggest, are not only about being in place but also about moving across. They employ tropes, artifacts, rituals, codes, and institutions to mark boundaries, and they prescribe and proscribe different kinds of movements across those boundaries. I argue that religions enable and constrain *terrestrial crossings,* as devotees traverse natural terrain and social space beyond the home and across the homeland; *corporeal crossings,* as the religious fix their attention on the limits of embodied existence; and *cosmic crossings,* as the pious imagine and cross the ultimate horizon of human life.

TERRESTRIAL CROSSINGS

A prominent historian once noted that U.S. religious history had been characterized by three centuries during which "people in general did an incredible amount of moving around." The movement of peoples within and across the boundaries of the homeland is not new, and it is not confined to the modern West. Although the pace and form of the movements have changed, people have been on the move since the wanderings of the first humanoid species out of Africa. Population geneticists have traced the migrations of genes, just as students of culture have traced the movements of languages, artifacts, and practices across the globe. As world historian Peter N. Stearns suggested in *Cultures in Motion,* each period of human history has brought new crossings, from the development of agriculture about 9000 B.C.E. and the emergence of civilizations along river valleys in Asia and Africa about 3500 B.C.E. to the sustained exchanges along the medieval trade routes and the colonialist encounters between 1450 and 1750 C.E. Focusing on more recent movements, James Clifford proposed that "everyone is on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel." And from the wanderings of nomadic clans to the round-trip journey of jet-plane pilgrims, religions have prompted travel.[1]

⇝ Mediating Terrestrial Crossings

To highlight the differences between nomads wandering on foot—or by camel or horse—and contemporary pilgrims resorting to air travel is to acknowledge that terrestrial crossings vary according to the shifts in travel and communication technology. Technology mediates religious crossings. Oxen and asses drew wheeled carts in Mesopotamia as early as 3000 B.C.E., and camels were a primary means of transport in the Sahara 2,500 years later. In other parts of the world other animals, including the horse, were used to transport people, goods, and practices across the terrain. For aquatic crossings, water craft have been around for at least 5,000 years, and the form of religious travel shifted with changes in sea transport. Ocean travel was easier for the Chinese at an earlier date

than for European ships, and their junks were the most advanced ships in the world at the end of the fourteenth century. A century later, when the Portuguese developed the caravel, a small three-masted ship, it opened new possibilities for transcultural contact and exchange. In 1497 Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and made it all the way to the west coast of India. Catholic priests were on that ship, and later in the sixteenth century Portuguese mariners brought missionaries to all parts of their colonial empire in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The same happened with the widespread use of the four-masted galleon in the seventeenth century and the steamboat in the nineteenth century. Each technological change prompted increased, and transformed, contacts. For example, the steamship allowed less dangerous and more frequent oceanic crossings and mediated the transnational exchanges with America and Europe that transformed Buddhism, Shintō, and Christianity in Meiji Japan. Rail, automobile, and air travel also transformed transportation—and the transported religions. Despite ongoing segregation and occasional lynchings on trains, many ex-slaves in late-nineteenth-century America commonly symbolized spiritual journeys as railway travel, viewed the train as a means of escape northward toward liberty, and imagined conversion as the moment when "Jesus handed me a ticket." Turning to other forms of transport, many middle-class Hindu migrants to the United States in the late twentieth century used regular air travel to maintain connections between India and the diaspora, and this affected religious practice in both places. So even though there is no simple linear progression in transportation technology in any region or across the globe, since multiple technologies co-exist at the same time, and even though religious practice is not determined only by mode of transport, we can distinguish biped and quadruped religion, galleon and steamship religion, railroad and airplane religion. We can even talk about motorcycle religion, as with the Unchained Gang, a Pentecostal outreach ministry that has traveled to Indiana prisons and biker rallies to spread the Christian gospel (Figure 16).[2]

In the same way, changes in communication technology have had

16. The blessing of the bikes. In 1996 at the House of Prayer in Ellettsville, Indiana, Irv Goldman, a traveling evangelist, lays his hand on the chest of Pastor Larry Mitchell, president of the Unchained Gang, before Mitchell and others set out on a journey to bring others to Christianity.

implications for the sorts of crossings available to the religious. To note only a few of the Western innovations since the early modern period, the introduction of movable type made texts available to many more people, just as the electric telegraph (1836), telephone (1876), radio (1899), television (1926), and computer (1949) expanded and transformed how technology mediated interpersonal contacts and virtual transits. As with travel technology, the Chinese were ahead of the Europeans: they had paper a thousand years earlier and printing as early as the late seventh century. Yet as many scholars have noted, the Western introduction of the printing press had enormous implications in Europe and around the world. The Protestant Reformation, for instance, was the first self-conscious attempt to use that recently invented media to channel a mass religious movement. As historian Mark U. Edwards has noted, "The

printing press allowed Evangelical publicists to do what had been previously impossible, quickly and effectively reach a large audience with a message intended to change Christianity. For several crucial years, these Evangelical publicists issued thousands of pamphlets discrediting the old faith and advocating the new." In the twentieth century, radio, television, and film also opened new possibilities for religious communication, including appeals for conversion during Charles E. Fuller's "Old Fashioned Revival Hour" radio program in the United States, representations of the sacred and the demonic in Ghanaian popular cinema, and dramatization of Hindu classics in the televised *Mahābhārata* in India. With the widespread use of the computer in the late twentieth century came other changes, as Internet technology and electronic mail mediated traditional and new forms of religious practice: devotees could hear the Muslim call to prayer online, email "cybermonk" to ask about Buddhist meditation practice, or attend a virtual Roman Catholic mass on their home computer. As with travel technology, multiple media forms have co-existed at the same time, and none fully determines religious practice, but it can be illuminating to consider the differences among print religion, telegraph religion, radio religion, television religion, and computer religion.[3]

↠ Round-Trip Travel: Pilgrimage and Missions

Terrestrial crossings are mediated by divergent transport and communication technologies, and they also vary according to the nature of the journey and the motive for the transit. That travel can be one-way, as when persecuted Puritans sought permanent shelter in the British colonies or when Hindu devotees have journeyed to the holy city of Banaras to die—and begin a different kind of journey. Yet much religiously motivated travel is a round-trip passage for one purpose or another. The Hindu *sadhu* Ludkan Baba, the Rolling Saint, made an unconventional terrestrial crossing in 2004 when, as part of his ascetic practice and moral strategy, he vowed to roll the eight hundred miles from his home in central India's Madhya Pradesh state to the Pakistani city of Lahore,

17. Mohan Singh, whom some followers and reporters have called Ludkan Baba or the Rolling Saint, makes his way through Hodal on his way north toward Pakistan in 2004.

where he hoped to urge the Pakistani president to reach a lasting peace with his homeland (Figure 17).[4]

More conventional round-trip religious travel includes pilgrimage to sacred sites and missions to spread the faith. From a family's circumambulation of the small holy well at Glendalough in pre-Famine Ireland to a contemporary bus ride around the eighty-eight sacred places of Shikoku, where Japanese devotees venerate Kūkai, founder of Shingon Buddhism, pilgrimage has been an important ritual practice in a number of cultures and religions. Pilgrims travel to sites they consider sacred for a variety of reasons. As one anthropologist has suggested, devotees embark on instrumental, devotional, normative, wandering, initiatory, and obligatory journeys. For example, some pilgrims go for

instrumental purposes such as healing, as they do at the Grotto in Lourdes, the transnational Roman Catholic shrine in southwestern France. Soon after Bernadette had her visions of the Immaculate Conception on the site in 1858, water from the nearby spring began to be celebrated for its curative powers. Since then the injured and the ill have drunk from the Grotto's fountains and bathed in its pools as they have sought miraculous intervention. Although some Muslim pilgrims to the Ka'ba, the flat-roofed shrine in Mecca, have drunk water from the *Zamzam,* a well that is known to grant blessings to those on *ḥajj,* most have traveled to the Arabian Peninsula not only for instrumental reasons but also to fulfill a fundamental religious obligation (Figure 18).[5]

Like pilgrims to Mecca and Lourdes, most missionaries also go on round-trip journeys beyond the homeland's borders. The term *missionary* is of Latin and French origin, and it refers to a person sent on a mission. It has referred more narrowly to a Christian charged with spreading the faith, though by extension scholars have used it to label emissaries of other traditions as well. Not all religious traditions have dispatched representatives to convert others, and even those that have a history of such activity—especially Christianity—have not supported religious emissaries as vigorously in all times and places. However, trying to follow Jesus' scriptural injunction to "make disciples of all nations" and emulate Paul, who proclaimed the gospel in Rome "with all boldness and without hindrance," some Christians have done their best to "make disciples" beyond the homeland's boundaries. Some have evangelized with little ecclesiastical or governmental support and by attempting to entice converts by appeals to reason, as with Ramón Lull (ca. 1232–1316), the Franciscan tertiary and lay missionary who preached to Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula and northern Africa. At other times missionaries were representatives of the state and used coercion, even violence, to win converts. Charlemagne, whom Pope Leo III crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800, turned to coercion to bring the Saxons to the faith, even laying out penalties in the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae* that included death for any Saxon who refused bap-

18. Muslim pilgrims circumambulating the *Ka'ba.*

tism. Missionaries have been less prominent during most of Islamic history, yet there are some instances of systematic attempts to seek converts. For example, the Ismā'īlī Shī'ī caliph-imāms of the Fāṭimid Dynasty, especially al-Mu'izz (r. 953–975), the Fāṭimid ruler who transformed the caliphate from a regional power to an expansive empire, did draw on a network of *dā'īs* or "religio-political missionaries" within and outside the boundaries of the Islamic state. Before and after al-Mu'izz's rule, those missionaries managed to gain Ismā'īlī converts from north-

ern Africa to the Indian subcontinent. As with Islam and Christianity, at some moments in its history, Buddhism also has been spread by state-sponsored representatives of the faith. Buddhists, for example, have trumpeted Aśoka's role in the tradition's early expansion. They have suggested that Aśoka (ca. 300–232 B.C.E.), who was the third ruler of the Indian Mauryan Empire, sent missionary-monks, including his own son Mahinda, to regions within and beyond his empire, including Sri Lanka.[6]

The fact that some missionaries have been directly or indirectly linked with a sponsoring state—such as Aśoka's Mauryan Empire, al-Mu'izz's Ismā'īlī empire, or Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire—indicates how the concern to spread the faith often has intertwined with political, cultural, and economic motives. These sorts of religious crossings have negotiated power as well as meaning.

Religious and Other Crossings

In turn, other itinerant practices—colonization, war, trade, tourism, and migration—sometimes have been linked with religiously inspired travel in complex ways. Sometimes the gods consecrate the soldiers' march to foreign soil; sometimes tourism overlaps with pilgrimage as consumers of aesthetic pleasures and leisure diversions invest their travel with spiritual significance. Migrants sometimes have been propelled by visions of religious utopias, traders have carried their faith along with their bartered goods, and colonizers have venerated the flag as well as the cross or the crescent. In some cases, they have been lured by coins as well as by converts. As I suggested in Chapter 3, religion, economy, society, and politics are transfluvial currents, transverse flows that cross and, thereby, impel new cultural streams. And multiple motives converge in some terrestrial crossings. Cubans' migration to South Florida after 1959 had political and economic causes—as they boarded planes, ships, or rafts to flee Castro's socialism—but many imagined that crossing (and their dwelling in the new land) using religious tropes: the symbol of the patroness and the metaphor of exile, as with the

balsero who holds an image of the Virgin aloft as rescuers approach his raft after the dangerous passage by sea to South Florida (Figure 19). Florida and Cuba were once part of New Spain, and early Spanish Catholic colonization in Mesoamerica also was propelled and sustained by multiple overlapping motives, even if Aztec narratives of the conquest emphasized that the Spaniards' "bodies swelled with greed" for Moctezuma's gold. The colonizers were driven by nationalist competition for territory, Catholic obligation to the "heathen," and the male quest for adventure—as well as the potent allure of minerals, gold at first and silver later.[7]

Silver was discovered in Mexico in the mid-sixteenth century, but other trade goods were more important in the economic exchanges along the Silk Road, the ancient and medieval trans-Asian network of roads where commercial, military, diplomatic, cultural, and religious interests crossed. That complex overland route, mostly east and west, lasted from the second century B.C.E. to the fifteenth century C.E. and stretched from the Mediterranean to China. Biped and quadruped religions traversed that path, as merchants transported multiple religious practices—Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Manichaean, and Zoroastrian. Sogdian and Iranian merchants had brought Nestorian Christianity to China by the seventh century. Missionaries also used the opportunity the route afforded, and at least as early as the tenth century, Sufi masters traveled with Silk Road caravans to spread their practices to Central Asia. Buddhist merchants and monks also took the overland route, and, as one interpreter has noted, sometimes religion and trade became mutually reinforcing: "the expansion of Buddhism brought an increased demand for silk, which was used in Buddhist ceremonies, thereby further stimulating the long-distance trading activity that had facilitated the spread of Buddhism in the first place." The transregional pathway, which had been cleared by the desire for economic exchange and the concern for military security, also allowed other forms of religious travel, including pilgrimage: Christian Turks from Mongolia made their way to the holy sites in Palestine by the fif-

19. A Cuban *balsero* holds an image of Our Lady of Charity aloft as rescuers approach his raft in 1994. © Walt Michot/The Miami Herald.

teenth century, and as early as the fifth century Chinese Buddhist pilgrims like Faxian had followed the Silk Road west and south to seek the origins of their faith in India.[8]

Crossing Social Space and Constituting Social Roles

The Indian society those medieval travelers encountered classified residents according to a more or less fluid hierarchy of social distinctions—the four primary *varṇas* or classes and the hundreds, even thousands, of *jātis* or castes. And religions not only mark those shifting economic and social boundaries, but prompt crossings that traverse social space, just as some leaders in India—for instance, Mohandās Gāndhi and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar—have appealed to religion to challenge the class and caste systems. Sometimes religions propel devotees across lines of social stratification and transport them to altered social status. Although women remained subservient to men in most ways and class lines sometimes proved intransgressable—as when Hildegard of Bingen defended the exclusion of non-nobles from the noble convents by arguing that "the lower class should not elevate itself above the higher"—some marginalized women in the twelfth century who joined religious communities found that Catholicism allowed nuns temporary and incomplete passage over some social obstacles. Even if the color line remained in place back home, Malcolm X reported that the pilgrimage to Mecca allowed him to cross racial boundaries: "Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and the overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this Ancient Holy Land." In a similar way, the religious sometimes have claimed that their faith has prompted economic mobility as well. In a lecture that he delivered more than six thousand times across the United States and around the world, Russell Conwell, founder of Philadelphia's Baptist Temple, claimed that even the poorest of his listeners had "acres of diamonds" within their reach, and it was their "Christian godly duty" to get them.[9]

After a career as a lawyer, in 1879 Conwell had been ordained as a

Baptist minister, an example of the way in which religions also mediate devotees' transitions to new social roles. Religious rituals authenticate some religious specialists—including ministers, priests, nuns, monks, rabbis, imāms, healers, diviners, and shamans. In some cultures where politics and religion intertwine, spiritual rites consecrate rulers too, and not only the pope's establishing of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor. In ancient Mesoamerica, for example, rituals marked the transition to the new social roles of priest and warrior, and the Mayan kings ascended to the throne through an elaborate religious rite that included bloodletting, whereby the gods passed into the world to be reborn and the royal person achieved new spiritual and political status. Rituals also mark the shift of status among the Yorùbá in contemporary western Africa—including the *oba* or chief, who serves as political and religious authority for the town, the *oloogun* or medicine specialist, who prescribes cures for physical and spiritual maladies, and the *babalawo* or diviner, who communicates with the gods to discern future events.[10]

↠ Compelled Passages and Constrained Crossings

In earlier centuries, the ancestors of the Yorùbá were sold into slavery and forced to make the harsh transatlantic passage chained in slave ships, and it is important to note that religions do not only enable crossings of the natural landscape or social space. They also *compel* passages and *constrain* movements. They justify the forced or coerced migration of peoples, as with slavery to the United States and Latin America, where slavery's Christian advocates in the Atlantic World appealed to sacred narratives to defend their practices. For example, citing scriptural passages (such as Timothy 6:1–5) for support, the Reformed minister Samuel B. How published a volume in 1856 entitled *Slaveholding Not Sinful,* and, as Frederick Douglass noted, some masters "found religious sanction for [their] cruelty": one of his own masters even recited a scriptural passage—"He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes"—as he whipped a lame young woman until she bled. We do not know if that young woman ever made

the passage out of slavery, as Douglass did, but religions also slow or block terrestrial crossings of other kinds as well. In most Orthodox Jewish synagogues, custom has prescribed that women cannot cross the line that divides them from the male worshipers, and men were discouraged from visiting some sacred sites in Okinawa. Dutch Calvinist sermons buttressed racial apartheid in South Africa, where blacks could not cross into whites-only neighborhoods. In India, even though religiously sanctioned social taboos have eased in urban areas, Hindu marriages across caste lines are still proscribed in some rural villages, and religious institutions have restricted or discouraged interreligious marriages—and lineage crossings—in many other cultures and periods.[11]

CORPOREAL CROSSINGS

As the betrothed, with their garments tied together, circumambulate a sacred fire at the climax of the traditional Hindu wedding *(vivāha),* they make a crossing of a different kind. In a literal sense, as the man and woman walk around the fire, they make a terrestrial crossing, but they are doing more than that. They are performing a rite of passage *(saṃskāra),* and the religious also cross the limits of embodied life and traverse the transitions through the life cycle.[12]

↠ Confronting Embodied Limits

We are "beings at the limit," as Richard Kearney suggested in the passage I quoted at the start of this chapter, and religions confront limit situations of various kinds. One limit is the boundary between the embodied self and the natural world, and encountering that limit can evoke joy or sadness, or a range of other emotions. It is the line where the individual encounters, to use Max Weber's language again, the world's perfections and imperfections (Figure 20). It's where the individual meets corporeal limitations (illness and death) and suffers natural disasters (floods and earthquakes). It's where questions mount and answers fail. At the same time, the limit is the bridge to sexual intimacy,

20. Sitting in front of a skull and bones in 1989, a Theravadin Buddhist monk meditates on the inevitability of death. Dondanduwa, Sri Lanka.

where embodied selves meet, and the path to natural wonders, where the self moves outside itself—the meaning of *ecstatic*—and encounters the world's perfections. It is the line that, when crossed, allows religiously mediated encounters with the natural world that generate delight. So as I am using the term here, limit situations are culturally mediated moments—or time-spaces—when selves approach the threshold of the humanly possible and face the limitations of embodied existence. The limit is the zone where theodicies are born and nature mystics exhalt.[13]

To say that religions *confront* limit situations and that encounters at the limit of the embodied self are *mediated* is to suggest that religions

provide tropes, narratives, codes, artifacts, and rituals that mark those boundaries and clear paths across them. Religions interpret limits and promote crossings. As long as we don't go too far toward an epistemology that denies any stubborn reality beyond the self, we could even say that religions constitute or create the limits they seek to cross. A life-threatening fever could be confirmation of the sufferer's sinfulness, for example, or the welcome passage to a better world. A comet's trail across the winter sky could be a sign of divine wonder or a millennial warning of the world's impending doom. There are no culturally unmediated experiences, and religions mediate encounters with corporeal and natural limits.[14]

Some of those encounters are painful, and, as I noted in Chapter 3, religions confront suffering, including natural evil. Religions make sense of life-threatening fevers, and other natural evils like floods and tsunamis, famines and hurricanes, plagues and tumors. To put it differently, natural evils pose questions that religions formulate and answer. Why did the flood wash away my village? Why did my daughter die from that fever? The formulation of the problem of evil varies across and within religious traditions: For example, should we ask which deeds in my daughter's past life led to the karmic retribution that brought on the fever or should we ask why a good, omnipotent God would allow it? And the answers also vary among and within traditions. Weber offered a typology of theodicies, explanations for evil. He pointed to (1) "messianic eschatologies," which promise it will all work out in the end; (2) deterministic views, which suggest that humans cannot do much about the course of events; (3) "dualism," which posits two co-eternal forces, Good and Evil or Light and Darkness, that struggle for control in the universe; and (4) "the doctrine of karma," which suggests that humans get what they deserve since "guilt and merit within this world are unfailingly compensated by fate in the successive lives of the soul." We could add a few other types to Weber's list, including approaches that suggest natural evil tests, improves, or punishes the sufferer or those that appeal to mystery and note the distance between the human and

the divine. Consider, for example, God's "thundering" answer to the lament of Job, a righteous man who had lost his children and his flocks and had contracted leprosy: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"[15]

Job, who is eventually silenced by God's counterinterrogation, had begun by asking a simple question that expressed his frustration: "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?" Although religious elites in systematized traditions sometimes have framed the questions—and answers—about natural evil abstractly, often disease and disaster have prompted pragmatic questions: How can we avoid another flood in the village? Didn't we perform the rite properly? Have we transgressed the will of the gods? And since religions offer healing, as well as relief from other natural evil, the devout also have asked not only why the child got the fever but what they can do about it. As when a Yorùbá *oloogun* serves as a conduit for the healing power of the *òrìṣàs* or a Pentecostal minister enacts the transforming power of Christ's atonement on the cross, religions diagnose maladies and prescribe cures. Religions sometimes try to propel devotees across natural barriers, such as injury and disease.[16]

It's difficult to say where the natural world ends and the human community begins, and the religious, drawing on figurative language, moral codes, and ritual practices, also identify and transform moral evil, suffering that arises not from impersonal forces in the natural world but from the free actions of persons in human communities. The Confucian thinker Mengzi, who lived in China in the fourth century B.C.E., turned to horticultural images to explain moral evil and seek a solution. Humans are born with inclinations to do the good—as our spontaneous reactions to suffering, for instance the sight of a child falling into a well, show us. However, Mengzi proposed, these inclinations are "sprouts" that must be "cultivated" by proper moral education, just as farmers must tend to seeds for them to grow. Turning to a very different metaphor—and offering an alternate diagnosis and cure for moral evil—the North African Christian theologian Augustine pointed to the

ways that the inherited constraints of original sin couple with the added constraints of habit to restrain humans as they try to do the good. Augustine was "held fast" by the "fetters" of habit, which "had the strength of iron chains," he told readers of the autobiography he wrote at the end of the fourth century. Moral education is not enough, in other words, and the only way to escape moral evil, to be "set free from a nature thus doomed to death," is to find your will transformed by "the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."[17]

Augustine and Mengzi both recognized the challenge of accounting for evil, and religious responses to the world's imperfections are not always satisfying and not always simple. Sometimes the religious complain that moral and natural evil seems too horrific to be contained by the usual explanations. Sometimes situations bring answers to a limit, as when some Jews shook an angry fist at the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who seemed to abandon the six million during the Holocaust. Many—though not all—post-Holocaust Jews made their way back to the synagogue, if only to continue the argument with their god. However, especially after the late 1960s, some Jews suggested that the usual explanations fail to make sense of that event. In *After Auschwitz,* Richard Rubenstein claimed that God is dead after the concentration camps, and even those who have offered more moderate responses have remained troubled by that instance of moral evil. For example, Conservative rabbi and Jewish historian Arthur Hertzburg acknowledged that "I have never found a way to absolve God." In a similar way, natural evil sometimes has brought answers to a limit, as with the great Lisbon earthquake, which shook the earth on All Saints Day in 1755 and killed approximately 60,000 people in southern Iberia and northwest Morocco. Many Christians at the time might have sided with John Wesley, Methodism's founder, when he discerned "the hand of the Almighty" at work in that earthquake. Like other natural interventions of the divine, Wesley proposed, it was designed to convey a message: "Love not the world." Yet other contemporaries, including Voltaire, found the traditional theological explanations wanting. In his "Poem on the Lisbon

Disaster" Voltaire lamented "the scattered limbs beneath the marble shafts" and the tens of thousands who had been "entombed beneath their hospitable roofs." He also challenged the certainty of contemporary interpreters of the "hellish gulf in Portugal" who could discern meaning or absolve God:

> Are ye so sure the great eternal cause,
> That knows all things, and for itself creates,
> Could not have placed us in this dreary clime
> Without volcanoes seething 'neath our feet?[18]

The religious in many traditions also have acknowledged, and sometimes celebrated, the moral ambivalence and emotional complexity of human life, with its mix of perfections and imperfections, delight and grief. The twentieth-century Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor explored that ambivalence in her work, suggesting that even the immoral and the grotesque can be revelatory. In one short story she presented a vain and hypocritical woman as a vehicle of grace, and in another she portrayed "freaks"—midgets and hermaphrodites—as "temples of the Holy Ghost," sites where "God's spirit has a dwelling." Some Buddhists, despite their acute awareness of the inevitability of suffering, have pointed to a similar complexity. Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophers have turned to abstract language to signal the presence of goodness and beauty amid the suffering of *saṃsāra,* the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth—for example, by affirming the ultimate identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Yet Bashō, the Japanese Buddhist itinerant with whom we began this theoretical journey, put it more vividly in one of his poems:

> Come, see real
> flowers,
> of this painful world.

In this Zen-inspired haiku, Bashō expresses delight—and perhaps surprise—at coming upon beauty. He invites the reader to discover joy in

"this painful world." There's no denying the pain, the Japanese poet suggests, but the flowers are real enough.[19]

With some notable exceptions—for instance Manichaeism—most religions join Bashō in inviting devotees to notice the flowers, to recognize perfections and enhance delight. Religions, as I argued in Chapter 3, are about intensifying joy as well as overcoming sadness. They are about celebrating wonders as much as wondering about evil. Of course, it is not only religions that celebrate wonders. Sometimes artists and scientists—whether shaped by religious worldviews or not—have imagined a world teeming with wonders. Giambattista della Porta, the sixteenth-century Italian natural philosopher and researcher in optics who founded the first European scientific society, reflected on "the Causes of Wonderful Things" in the introduction to his major work, and Michael Faraday, the nineteenth-century British chemist and physicist known for his experiments in electricity and magnetism, remarked that "nothing is too wonderful to be true." From Tang Dynasty Chinese landscape painters to nineteenth-century Romantic poets, artists also have found—or imagined—wonders in the natural world. Daoism, which imagined mountains as the dwelling place of the immortals, inspired many of those Chinese painters, just as Christian themes informed the verse of Romantic poets like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who proposed that "Nature is ever an ally of Religion." In his famous 1836 essay "Nature," Emerson also exhorted readers to take a closer look at the stars in particular, since they "awaken a certain reverence." Yet many natural forms have awakened reverence among the religious—not only Bashō's flowers and Emerson's stars but other celestial, terrestrial, and maritime wonders. Some traditions, collapsing the distance between the sacred and the secular, have venerated the divine in nature or the nature as divine. There are sun gods and moon goddesses, holy rivers and sacred mountains. The sites of veneration also vary according to the topography of the homeland—so the tides, the desert, the forest, or the mountains become holy. For example, long-standing traditions in Japan affirm that *kami,* deities or sacred powers, reside

temporarily or permanently in mountains, and across the landscape. The rice *kami,* one of many that inhabit the landscape, dwells in the rice fields during the growing season, ascends to the mountains in the autumn, and descends again to the fields every spring.[20]

In a similar way, religions in many cultures mark transitions in the seasonal cycle, including rituals celebrating the solstices, and sometimes devotees offer requests and gratitude to the gods for the harvest or the hunt. For example, the Green Corn Ceremony, performed by precontact tribes throughout the southeastern woodlands of the United States when the late corn crop ripened, was a rite of renewal and thanksgiving dedicated to the Corn Mother. The Bladder Feast, a midwinter ceremony celebrated among Alaskan Inuit hunters, returned the bladders of all the seals caught during the year to the sea, so that their souls might find new bodies and be caught again in the coming year.[21]

So religions confront the limitations of embodied human life, including disease and disaster, as the religious wonder about suffering, and spiritual flows transport the individual beyond the confines of the self to celebrate—and constitute—the wonders of the natural world, the blossoms near Bashō's hut in Edo and the stars above Emerson's home in Concord, from the bounty of the midwinter seal hunt to the abundance of the corn harvest in the summer field.

↠ Traversing the Life Cycle

Although the death of an infant or mother during childbirth can bring suffering, religious traditions have celebrated the arrival of a child as one of the world's wonders. Religions mark not only the cycle of the seasons but also the transitions in the life cycle, conveying the individual from birth to death. The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep called the rituals that mark those transitions *les rites de passage,* drawing on analogies between societies and houses. Just as dwellers pass through rooms, corridors, and doorways in their home, members of a society cross thresholds *(limen)* that lead from one social status to another. Through rites of passage the individual leaves one status, passes through

21. Birth of the Hindu god Kṛṣṇa. Nineteenth-century miniature painting, North India.

a liminal, or transitional, state, and arrives at a new developmental stage and social role. Religions imagine those transitions differently—just as the design and structure of homes vary across cultures—and traditions mark them by drawing on narratives, tropes, and artifacts as well as rituals. Whatever the variations—for example, the Inuit ritually celebrate a boy's killing of his first seal as an important developmental stage—most religions have erected thresholds at birth, puberty, marriage, and death.[22]

Birth is the first of those thresholds (Figure 21). In childbirth, a woman—although the Wana in Indonesia claim men get pregnant and carry the fetus for seven days before it enters the womb—brings a new life into the home and the homeland. Like other rites of passage, childbirth actually involves several moments, each marked ritually in some religious traditions: conception, pregnancy, birth, naming, and

initiation. Initiation might mean, for example, Christian infant baptism or Jewish male circumcision, or some other postpartum ritual. The Bukidnon people of the northern mountains on Mindanao in the Philippines have several postpartum rituals designed to exorcise evil spirits and encourage benevolent ones. Those spirits have been involved in the process since conception, according to Bukidnon beliefs. When a woman becomes pregnant, the spirit *(magbabaya)* at the "navel" of heaven sends one of his subordinate spirits as the human soul, *gimukod.* After the birth of that child with the heaven-sent soul, the father buries the placenta beneath the home's floor or hangs it from a tree. Then *magbabaya* transports the placenta to heaven and infuses it with a guardian spirit, which becomes a sibling of the newborn. Sometimes after birth the midwife detects evil omens in the umbilical cord, and in those cases the *datu,* or ritual specialist, performs another ceremony that includes animal sacrifice to petition the spirits and safeguard the infant.[23]

Muslims safeguard the infant in other ways. Islamic postpartum rites include circumcision for boys, from a week to thirteen years after birth, and Islamic custom prescribes other practices at the birth of a child. As soon as possible after that birth, comes the first rite: the father or an imām recites the *shahādah*—the first pillar of faith—in the child's right ear and then the left. Usually the whispering in the right ear takes the more elaborate form of the *adhān,* or the call to prayer that Muslims hear five times a day. It begins with the *takbīr,* "God is Great" *(Allāhu Akbar),* repeated three times, then the *shahādah* itself: "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his messenger." In this way, the name of God is the first word the child hears, and then a chewed date is placed in the child's mouth, signaling the beginning of life outside the womb. Seven days later, many Muslims perform another ritual, *'aqīqah,* which gathers family and friends to welcome the new family member. At that ceremony, the parents usually name the child, who now has identity as a full member of the family and the community.[24]

Islam does not have an elaborate initiation rite at puberty, but many

other religions do. In many of those ritualized transitions to adulthood, the young woman or young man has special power at the threshold moment, and moral codes and ritual prescriptions exhort community members to either approach or avoid the person—and objects associated with him or her. Among North American tribes, for example, pubescent Apache girls wear a copy of the beaded buckskin dress of White Painted Woman, the goddess of life who originally received the gift of menstruation, and the community aims to touch objects she has handled and eat foods she has blessed. In a slightly different Chinook rite, the menstruating daughter of the chief is hidden from the community and attended only by a postmenopausal woman. She engages in prolonged fasting and ritualized bathing, in a creek far from the village, and she is encouraged to keep her distance during this long transitional period: "She must never look at people. She must not look at the sky, she must not pick berries. It is forbidden. When she looks at the sky it becomes bad weather. When she picks berries it will rain." Other religious traditions include fewer prohibitions, but still mark the passage to adulthood, as with the Bar Mitzvah ceremony for thirteen-year-old Jewish boys. In the months before that ceremony, the boy masters the skills—including chanting the *Haftarah,* or selection from the Book of the Prophets—that prepares him to be an adult member of the community with the responsibility to observe the *Mitzvat,* or religious acts.[25]

The next major transition in that young man's life is marriage, and religions mark this transition too, by publicly sealing the union, establishing new kin relations, and constituting the new family. The Shintō wedding ceremony does all those things. That ceremony, which has long roots in indigenous and Chinese traditions but was not standardized until the twentieth century in Japan, invokes the *kami* as witnesses to the public ritual. As one recent version of the rite prescribes, the participants offer the *kami* food and sake, and the bride and groom take vows that bind them together: "Growing old together, until our hair is long and white, we have been caused to be tied." It also links them with the

wider world: "So does our bond exist in the universe, just as the sun and moon exist in the heavens, just as the mountains and rivers exist on earth." Those natural bonds form social ones as well, reaffirming a lineage of ancestors and descendants:

> The connection to the ancestors is to be continued and not neglected.
> The family name should flourish, be highly respected and widely known.
> Our grandchildren and grandchildren should continue forever.

The Latter Day Saints (LDS), who dedicated a temple in Tokyo in 1980 and have built more than sixty others outside the United States, affirm the eternity of marriage in another way. According to LDS doctrine, Adam and Eve were given to each other in the Garden of Eden, at the culmination of God's creative process, and in a "celestial marriage" in the temple Mormon couples also make an eternal covenant with God, each other, and future generations, who will form a family in the celestial kingdom after the resurrection. The eternity of the couple's bonds is vividly symbolized by the mirrors on the opposite sides of the temple's celestial room: as they kneel to face each other across an altar in the middle of the room, the mirrors reflect an endless series of images of the couple, who will remain together after death.[26]

Even if the LDS couple will reunite in the celestial kingdom for all eternity, at some point they will die, and Mormonism, like other traditions, also propels adherents across that final threshold of the life cycle. The Latter Day Saint funeral serves several functions, as one church leader noted: "It helps console the bereaved and establishes a transition from mourning to the reality that we must move forward with life. Whether death is expected or a sudden shock, an inspirational funeral, where the doctrines of resurrection, the mediation of Christ, and certainty of life after death are taught strengthens those who must now move on with life." In turn, as ethnologist Louis-Vincent Thomas has proposed, most other funeral rites serve these same functions: (1) they preside over the future of the departed; (2) attend to the surviving close kin; and (3) revitalize the group, which has been disturbed by the death

of one of its own. The community moves from disintegration to integration, the family moves from grief to acceptance, and the deceased moves from death to the afterlife.[27]

Even if they have served similar functions, rituals that mark the passing of the dead have varied widely across cultures, from a tenth-century Viking's conflagration in which the deceased, accompanied by a female slave, was burned along with his ship, to a contemporary American Catholic burial, which usually involves solitary interment in a coffin. As with the Scandinavian and American rites, funerals usually include multiple practices, from rites of separation to rites of integration. The community prepares, displays, and disposes of the corpse and then reintegrates the mourners as it replenishes the community and conveys the dead to another state or place. For example, separation from the dead and restoration of the community began for early-nineteenth-century Moravians, a Christian sect organized in 1457, when the *posaunenchor,* or trombone choir, played a hymn from the church's tower or entrance to announce the death. The hymn even identified the age, status, and gender of the deceased: "Hayn" meant it was a little boy, for example, and "Nassau" told the community a widow had passed on. The funeral service, which helped the family mourn and the community heal, provided more particulars about the departed, as it also reassured them about her ultimate fate. During that service, which included responsive reading and hymn singing, the minister read a memoir, the traditional Moravian biographical or autobiographical account of the deceased's life. Consider the memoir read aloud at the funeral of Susanna Zeisberger in 1824. The account, most of it in Zeisberger's German script and the rest finished after her death by an anonymous community member, recounted her birth in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1744 and her marriage in 1781. Like other missionary-minded Moravians, soon after that "she embarked on a journey with her dear husband to Indian land," where they endured capture by "terrible savages" and enjoyed the kindness of her "faithful Indian Sisters" who slipped her food.

The anonymous narrator picks up the tale of terrestrial and corporeal crossings with her later years and last weeks, when she suffered from "a consumptive cough." Finally, at eighty years of age, she "blessedly went home." The next step in her "homeward journey"—and the community's reintegration—was the burial itself, when they interred Susanna's corpse in "God's Acre," the unadorned graveyard whose entrance bore an inscription attesting to the risen Christ's power over death and whose uniform marble gravestones signaled the deceased's spiritual equality before God.[28]

Moravian missionaries like Zeisberger have preached the gospel on the Indian subcontinent too, and the religious traditions that have flourished there have very different funeral rites. Sikh death rituals, for example, involve cremation—and a more elaborate series of separation and integration practices. The Sikhs, who predominate in the Punjab, imagine death using several different tropes: they say the deceased has finished her life span *(purā ho giyā)* or, employing metaphors about dwelling and crossing, they say the departed has taken abode in heaven *(surgwās ho giyā)* or completed the pilgrimage of this world *(sansār yātrā poori kar giyā)*. The pilgrimage to the next world begins with the ritual of *dharti te paunā,* lifting the corpse from the bed to the ground, which reconnects the deceased with *dharti-matā,* mother earth, and secures a more auspicious death. Then in a series of practices that constitute the funeral *(atam-sanskār)* they give the corpse a ritual bath, which purifies the body, thereby making it ready to be carried on the bier by the sons and brothers of the deceased. When the procession approaches the cremation ground, the chief mourner, the eldest son, makes a circle around the bier with water from an earthen pot, which he shatters on the ground to symbolize the release of the corpse's soul. Then the procession continues to the cremation ground, where they perform the ritual burning of the corpse *(agni-bhaint)*. All that is left then is to restore the community and secure the fate of the deceased. If it was a father who died, the son receives the turban, symbol of household authority,

at the ritual feast after the funeral, and, if it is in India, three days later the ashes are scattered in the sacred Ganges River, from where the deceased crosses beyond death's threshold.[29]

Compelled Passages and Constrained Crossings (Again)

Yet religions also compel and constrain corporeal crossings at transitions in the life cycle. The menstruating Chinook daughter must leave the village and cannot return until after a series of purification rites, and—as with a widow burning on her husband's funeral pyre in the Hindu practice of *satī*—though the surviving tenth-century account of the Viking funeral recounts that they asked for volunteers among the dead master's slaves, the slave's passing hardly seems voluntary. Usually the Muslim father—not the mother—whispers the *shahādah* in the newborn's ear, and the girl preparing for her Bat Mitzvah is exempted from some of the commandments required of her male counterpart after the Jewish puberty rite. Caste restrictions have prohibited lineage crossings in Hindu—and Sikh—marriages, and other prescribed codes and rituals enforce limits on sexuality as well as on marriage. Although temporary homosexuality occurs in some male and female puberty rites and gender inversion accompanies some communal festivals, religions often have prohibited sexual relations—and marital bonds—between those of the same gender or the same family. Other codes constrain and compel crossings at funeral rites. In the Sikh ritual, for example, women cannot carry the bier or enter the cremation ground.[30]

COSMIC CROSSINGS

Some Sikhs within and outside the cremation ground have imagined death as the completion of an earthly pilgrimage, and all religions propose that death is not a barrier but a transition. Not only do religions enable and constrain terrestrial and corporeal crossings, but they also permit and restrict other sorts of crossings. As I suggested in the last

chapter, religions produce teleographies, representations of the end, the temporal and spatial limit of human life, the ultimate horizon. Those teleographies are cartographies of desire. They map what the religious want. What do they want? One Hindu account detailed the four "ends" of humans: they want to fulfill moral obligations *(dharma),* secure material well-being *(artha),* find sensual pleasure *(kāma),* and achieve final liberation *(mokṣa).* Yet there are many more ends, and even when traditions seem to agree—on liberation as a goal, for instance, among Indian religions—the religious differ about what that might entail. So no single or simple answer is possible. Religious women and men have wanted lots of things. The ends vary across cultures, among religions, within sects, and across the lifespan—and even from hour to hour. But a theory of religion—if it is to explain not just how religions function but why they manage their hold on people—must offer some account of what the religious want and what religions offer. The previous chapter offered a partial answer to that question: they want to find their own place. Like the displaced Cubans in Miami, humans don't have their bearings, and they want to be oriented in the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos. But we can say more, and here is where religion as *dwelling* meets religion as *crossing.* As I have suggested, the religious want to negotiate the limits of embodied existence, confronting suffering and intensifying joy—and traversing the stages of life. And the religious seek ways to imagine and realize the zenith of human flourishing, however that is conceived. They draw on tropes, artifacts, and rituals to produce teleographies, representations of the ultimate horizon and the means of crossing it.[31]

⇝ Transporting and Transforming Teleographies

There are two prominent types of religious teleographies, even if there is enormous variation within each type, most traditions include both, some individuals alternate between the two, and this typology fails to include some ways of imagining religious means and ends. These two

Table 5.1 A typology of religious teleographies.

	Transporting	Transforming
Horizon	Horizon as *boundary* between this world and another world.	Horizon as a personal or social limit or *limitation.*
Space	Focused more on the *home* and the *cosmos,* on domestic and cosmic space.	Focused more on the *body* and the *homeland,* on corporeal and social space.
Crossing	Crossing as change in *location:* ascent, descent, rebirth, encounter, communication.	Crossing as change in *condition:* insight, purification, healing, reform, revolution.

types—transporting teleographies and transforming teleographies—can be analyzed according to the horizon they imagine, the space they highlight, and the crossing they propose (see table).

As I noted in the last chapter, spiritual homemaking maps the farthest horizon of human existence, and *transporting* traditions imagine that horizon as a boundary between this world and another world. For the Hopi it is the boundary that separates them from the underworld, from which they emerged and where they will return. The Aztecs imagined an earthly realm separated from thirteen celestial and nine subterranean realms. For ancestor cults, like the Baktaman of New Guinea, it is the border between the realm of the living beings and the realm of absent spirits, as it is in different ways for traditions that highlight shamanism, spirit possession, or spirit mediumship, such as nineteenth-century American Spiritualism, which marked a line between this world and the "other world." For dualist traditions like Manichaeism, the horizon separates two eternal realms, matter and spirit, or the realm of light and the realm of darkness. For many monotheists—most Muslims and Christians, including Cuban Catholics at the shrine—it is the boundary between earth and heaven, however that celestial realm is imagined. Indian teleographies—Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist—often have

imagined a boundary between the "near shore" and the "farther shore": the ultimate horizon is the division between the round of rebirths *(saṃsāra)* and the realm where those cosmic transmigrations—and all they bring—come to an end *(mokṣa)*.[32]

Focused more on the body and the homeland than on the cosmos—and, so, more "this-worldly" in Weber's language—*transforming* teleographies imagine the ultimate horizon as a personal or social limit. Both teleographies can imagine the horizon as an individual or a collective end, and for transforming traditions that focus on the individual, the horizon is represented as an ideal personal condition: for example, insight, purity, or health. In Sōtō Zen, the horizon is a transforming insight into the true nature of things, just as it is in forms of Advaita Vedānta, and sometimes that insight concerns the past or the future, as in traditions, like the Yorùbá, that use divination practices. Humans in the Manichaean worldview are a mixture of light and darkness, and the first step to full flourishing, the liberation of the eternal soul, is an awakening of the *psuché* to its true divine origin in the realm of light. In healing cults, including some forms of religious Daoism, the horizon is health or longevity. In twelve-step programs, which can be quasi-religious, the horizon is some other form of mental or physical well-being: sobriety, for example. In clan traditions where spiritual or material pollution is a central concern, purity is the imagined personal horizon. Where the religious propose a collective end, the horizon can be imagined in a variety of ways. It can be the borders of the chosen land, as in some forms of Judaism; and, as with Cuban Catholics in Miami and other diasporic groups, it can be the boundaries of the homeland. With more or less abstract ends in mind, transforming teleographies can imagine the horizon as a collective condition—from shared prosperity to social justice—as with millennialist cargo cults and the Protestant Social Gospel—and a range of quasi-religious practices, including civil religion, environmental activism, and Marxist utopianism.[33]

Readers will have noticed that Cuban Catholics appeared in my discussion of both types of teleographies, and this signals that these ideal

types do not mirror any particular tradition perfectly. Both modes often are found within the same religion. Most Cubans I interviewed at the shrine seemed more focused on the horizon as the shoreline of their island nation, but I encountered them at the shrine of their national patroness, and it seems natural that a collective transformative end predominated in our conversations. Yet when I talked long enough I also found—often when they mentioned illness or death—that they embraced a traditional Christian cosmography and eventually hoped to cross the boundary that separated them from a future life in heaven, which was usually, though not always, imagined as another cosmic realm.

So among Cuban Catholics—and many others—these two teleographies imagine different kinds of crossing, different paths to the religious end. All traditions seem to share—to use theorist Kenneth Surin's phrase—a "desire for the new." In one way or another, they presuppose that things as they are—or as they appear—are not all they could be. Seeking to heighten joy or ease suffering, they presuppose that some change is necessary. Transforming teleographies imagine religious crossing as a change in *condition:* it is personal insight, healing, or purification. *The Platform Sutra,* for example, champions wisdom or insight—"seeing into your own nature"—as the necessary transformation. Using meteorological tropes, the eighth-century Chan text attributed to Huineng compares the human condition to a cloudy day: "sun and moon are always bright, yet if they are covered by clouds" we cannot see the light. In a similar way, humans have "inherent enlightenment," and they must penetrate the clouds of delusion and awaken to their true nature as enlightened beings, or buddhas. Or, in other times and places, the cosmic crossing is a collective transformation that brings reform, uplift, revolution, and, in the end, more just and satisfying social relations, as with the Kingdom of God that some American Social Gospel Protestants and Latin American Catholic liberation theologians have hoped Jesus will inaugurate. For example, in his 1917 volume *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* the American Baptist theologian Walter Rauschenbusch imagined salvation as "the regeneration of the social

order." It is "the necessity and the possibility of redeeming the historical life of humanity from the social wrongs which now pervade it."[34]

On the other hand, for transporting traditions cosmic crossing is imagined as a change in *location:* it is ascent or descent—or transversal movement across some border. It is rebirth in another realm, up or down, or it is an encounter or communication with supernatural agents or suprapersonal forces that inhabit some other celestial, terrestrial, or subterranean world. For the Inuit in Alaska it is passage to the land of the dead in the sky or in the sea; for Pure Land Buddhists in Japan it is rebirth in Amida's Western Paradise; and for the Yorùbá in western Africa it is transport to the good heaven *(orun rere)* to dwell among the ancestors. The Qur'án promises Muslims who traverse the "straight road" that they will be transported after death to 'Illiyyín, where they will enjoy a royal banquet and "laugh on couches," while at the day of reckoning *(yawm ad-dīn)* those who went astray will be transported to Jahím, where they will burn in its fire. Sister Susanna, the Moravian missionary remembered at the 1824 funeral, made "her homeward journey" to heaven, where "her redeemed soul went over into Jesus' arms and lap." And other Christians have used the journey metaphor to imagine the cosmic crossing, as with Bonaventure of Bagnoregio's thirteenth-century work, *The Mind's Road to God,* which charted the path to a mystical vision of the divine, and John Bunyan's seventeenth-century allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress,* which traced the itinerary of Christian on his travel from the earthly realm to the celestial city.[35]

Relying on the journey metaphor but figuring it as aquatic passage rather than terrestrial travel, religions in India have emphasized the importance of *tīrthas,* a term that originally referred to a ford, or a place to cross a river. Extending the metaphor, some Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains have talked about crossing the river of existence, and those fords can be places, persons, or practices. So Hindus have imagined pilgrimage sites as *tīrthas,* places where a crossing occurs, just as gurus and devotional practices ferry the devotee across to the other shore. In Buddhism, the Buddha's *dharma,* or teaching, is the vehicle that carries the

22. Statues of the Twenty-Four Tīrthaṅkaras at Śatruñjaya, a Jain pilgrimage site above the town of Palitana in Gujarat, India, that includes 863 temples.

follower across, and even the body can function as a means of transport: for example, Śāntideva exhorted readers of his poetic reflection on the bodhisattva path, *Bodhicaryāvatāra,* to "take advantage of this human boat / free yourself from sorrow's stream," and the eighth-century Indian Buddhist hoped that "for those who want to go across the water" he could "be a boat, a raft, a bridge." Jains venerate twenty-four beings—the most recent is Nataputta Vardhamāna, known as Mahāvīra, who lived a little over 2,500 years ago in northern India—who have made the passage themselves and ferried others across, and the Jain tradition explicitly appeals to aquatic tropes by calling the venerated *tīrthaṅkaras,* because they establish *(kara)* the ford *(tīrtha)* to cross the river of rebirth and reach the other shore of liberation (Figure 22).[36]

↠ Concealed Crossings

In this chapter I have analyzed terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic crossings, and I hope the usefulness of the crossing metaphor seems clear in the interpretation of Muslim pilgrims, Shintō marriages, Sikh funerals, and Jain liberation. Those examples, and the others I have offered, seem to be about movement, about crossing of some sort. However, using one theorist—Bruno Latour—and two case studies—one Christian and one Buddhist—I want to suggest that the trope of crossing has even wider application in the study of religion, even with narratives, rituals, codes, and artifacts that are less obviously about movement.

Playing with the twin themes of *close* and *distant,* Bruno Latour's Templeton Lecture, "Another Take on the Science and Religion Debate," opens ways of talking about religion that, with some revision, can interpret these more subtle dynamics. Religions don't transfer information, Latour suggests; they transport persons. So the "conditions of felicity" for religious language, the grounds on which one might say it is "true," require that religious speech-acts produce new states that make the distant close. Drawing on analogies with lovers' talk and emphasizing the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, the notion that the consecrated host embodies the "real presence" of Christ, Latour suggests that religions do not deal with *the beyond,* as most interpreters suggest. *The near* is religion's domain. "Religion does not even attempt to race to know the beyond, but attempts at breaking all habits of thoughts that direct our attention to the far away, to the absent, to the overworld, in order to bring attention back to the incarnate, the renewed presence of what was before misunderstood." Religious speech-acts initiate movement "which aims at jumping, dancing towards the present and the close, to redirect attention away from indifference and habituation, to prepare oneself to be seized again by this presence that breaks the usual, habituated passage of time." And *truth* in this context means the ability to mediate between the distant and the near, the past and the present. Emphasizing the "flowing character" of religious language, action, and artifact, Latour suggests that "freeze framing, isolat-

ing a mediator out of its chains, out of its series, instantly forbids the meaning to be carried in truth." "Truth," he continues, "is not to be found in correspondence—either between the word and the world in the case of science or between the original and the copy in the case of religion—but in taking up again the task of continuing the flow of prolongating the cascade of mediations one step further." So religions, analogized as rivers or waterfalls, generate and sustain a "cascade" of mediators that transform persons as they bring close what was imagined as distant.[37]

Latour gets religion moving, but we can accelerate and multiply the movements even more. His account needs one more nudge, since religions don't only dwell in presence and bring the distant near. He commits one of the sins he chiseled onto his own tablet of prohibitions: Latour "freeze frames" religious movements. Religions bring the distant close, as he suggests, but they are flows that also propel adherents back and forth between the close and the distant. Religions move between what is imagined as the most distant horizon and what is imagined as the most intimate domain. To use traditional Christian language, they travel vertically back and forth between transcendence and immanence. They bring the gods to earth and transport the faithful to the heavens. And they move horizontally, back and forth in social space. The religious also are propelled through time, allowing travel among imagined pasts, presents, and futures. As itinerants, the religious never remain anywhere or anytime for long. It is in this sense, I suggest, that religions are flows, translocative and transtemporal crossings.

Let me illustrate those crossings, and extend the usefulness of this trope for the study of religion, by interpreting a Christian artifact and a Buddhist narrative that don't seem to have much to do with crossing. First, consider an artifact that Latour interprets in his Templeton Lecture: Fra Angelico's "The Resurrection of Christ and the Women at the Tomb," a fifteenth-century fresco he painted, with the assistance of an apprentice, in the convent of San Marco, Florence (Figure 23). The image does not approximate multiple-exposure photography's capturing

23. Fra Angelico, "The Resurrection of Christ and the Women at the Tomb," 1440–41. Fresco, 189 × 164 cm, on the wall of cell 8 at the Convento di San Marco, Florence.

of movement, or even Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase,* which puts Cubist cartography in motion. There are few overt signs of movement in the Dominican friar's painting of Christ's empty tomb: the heavenly messenger points, and the four women gathered at the tomb gesture in ways that indicate surprise or disappointment or awe. Yet as Latour suggests, there is redirection going on in this representation of a scene from the Gospel of Mark. Note that "the angel's finger points to an apparition of the resurrected Christ which is not directly visible to the women because it shines in their back." As the passage from Mark's Gospel suggests, the fresco nudges viewers to find presence amid absence:

> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man [a heavenly messenger], dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."[38]

In an indirect way, the image, which would have been in conversation with the scriptural passage for many fifteenth-century Christian viewers, transports the women (and the viewers) to Galilee, where Jesus awaits them all. Yet even more prominent in the fresco, the large and central image of the risen Christ is the elephant in the room. It is the presence misread as absence. This hovering image brings the divine close, and transports pious viewers—since there seems little immediate hope for the women, who persist in their inattention—to the here and now. As Latour proposes, the visual redirects viewers: "there is nothing to see *there,* but you should look *here* through the inward eye of piety to what this fresco is supposed to mean: elsewhere, not in a tomb, not among the dead but among the living."[39]

And I would suggest that the painting can move viewers in other ways, and not only by stirring affect. The image directs viewers out from

the empty tomb to find the sacred among the living, in Galilee and everywhere else, but viewers also cross back and forth, as their attention shifts—to the hovering Christ, to the alarmed women below, to the angel's finger pointing upward, back to the Christ again, and then to the apparent absence that surrounds the viewers themselves. There in the cavernous emptiness, the image invites them to ask: where can I find the risen Christ? It transports them across social space to seek him among others outside the tomb, and—with Christ's apparition chastising them for their inattention—the fresco brings viewers back to the here and now to seek presence in absence.

Consider another religious trace that illumines concealed crossings, even if at first it also might seem to have little to say about movement of any kind. It is a narrative from the *Mumonkan,* a thirteenth-century collection of forty-eight cases (Chinese: *gong'an;* Japanese: *kōan*) edited by a Chinese Chan master in the Song Dynasty and used for generations in ritual settings, the private interviews with teachers, as a tool for understanding reality as it is. This *kōan* recounts an encounter between the Tang Dynasty Chan master Zhaozhou Congshen, or Joshu in Japanese, and a monk who came to him one day for advice about how to attain enlightenment:

> Once a monk made a request of Joshu. "I have entered the monastery," he said. "Please give me instructions, Master." Joshu said, "Have you had your breakfast?" "Yes, I have," replied the monk. "Then," said Joshu, "wash your bowls." The monk had an insight.[40]

There has been a great deal of commentary on this enigmatic story, but most interpretations point to the ways that the *kōan,* as Latour might say, redirects the monk's attention from absence to presence, from the distant to the near. It transports the earnest monk to where he already is. Seeking a distant state, he gazes upward and outward. Yet the Chan teacher's response propels him back toward the here and now. As one Japanese interpreter, Zenkei Shibayama, suggested in a lecture *(teisho),* the conclusion of the narrative—"the monk had an insight"—docu-

ments the monk's transformative redirection. "His spiritual eye was opened to the fact that it is as it is—that he, as he is, is 'it'; that 'it' cannot be outside himself. Once having awakened, he has always been 'it.' Essentially he has always been 'it,' the Truth. His walking, standing, or sitting are nothing but 'it.' "[41]

As I have noted, there is a long tradition in Chan Buddhism of emphasizing that all beings have Buddha-nature, original enlightenment, so to look outside the self is silly, even if you are seeking human or suprahuman exemplars of wisdom and compassion, buddhas and bodhisattvas. Explaining the source of most spiritual confusion, the Chinese Chan teacher Linji, who founded the lineage that came to emphasize *kōan* practice, put it this way in one lecture attributed to him: "When students today fail to make progress, where's the fault? The fault lies in the fact that they don't have faith in themselves! . . . But if you can just stop this mind that goes rushing around looking for something, then you'll be no different from the patriarchs and buddhas. Do you want to get to know the patriarchs and buddhas? They're none other than you, the people standing in front of me listening to this lecture on the Dharma!" Just as Linji tried to redirect and transport his monastic students, so the *kōan* of Joshu's Bowl enacts a movement. It shifts devotees from there to here. It says: what you seek is not distant or outside yourself. It is close. It is *here.* However—and here Latour's theoretical vision reaches its interpretive limits—the monk requires the redirecting response from the master, and subsequent adherents need to hear the narrative again and again, because they don't spend much time *here.* If they ever manage it temporarily and partially, they always slip back to *there.* If not, why would subsequent generations need to ponder this *kōan,* and others, again and again? The religious not only need to be propelled to imagined pasts and desired futures, they need to be called back, summoned to the present. Narratives, rituals, codes, and artifacts do that. In the Linji Chan tradition, that is also what *kōan* practices do. But to remain where the story of Joshu positions hearers, fixed in the here and now of enlightened *presence,* is to "freeze frame" the dynamics

of religion in practice, which always shifts back and forth in time and space. The sweet torture that some mystics have reported—that the transforming and transporting presence never lasts—is a shared fate. Immanence is no less fleeting than transcendence. Like the shimmering divine presence barely noticed and then forgotten in Fra Angelico's fresco, the "insight" pursued in Chan stories doesn't bring rest for long. Religions' translocative and transtemporal work is never done. The religious, even in these and other less obvious ways, are on the move. Whether lamenting at Christ's empty tomb or carrying the monk's breakfast bowl, in pilgrimage and in marriage, and as they traverse the ultimate horizon of human life, the devout are crossing.[42]