

## Engaging Religion: Inaugurating the Ansari Institute

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I take words seriously. In the end, what we *do* matters most. But it can help to think about the words we use to describe who we are and what we stand for. Our new institute's title offers hints: The Rafat and Zoreen Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion. It signals we care about people, places, and practices around the world, though that international focus doesn't mean we'll overlook connections with America. We'll stand with migrants trying to cross the border and take their place in the venerable story of many becoming one. We'll document how global faiths are transforming the nation and interact with diverse devotees in the local community. Considering multiple scales—the global, the national, and the local—and remembering that transnational forces always affect particular people in particular places, we'll study *grounded* globalism.<sup>1</sup>

The Institute's title also says we care about religion. But at a moment when research tells us the unaffiliated—and the “spiritual but not religious”—are increasing, we'll also make sure that we respectfully engage those who don't practice a religion.<sup>2</sup>

And that crucial verb—to engage—is also in our title. I'll say more later about what engagement is and what it isn't. But the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that one meaning of the verb is “to lay under obligations of gratitude.”<sup>3</sup> And that reminds us to begin with thanks. When classes started this fall, the Institute had no logo or web page, and many helped with that, especially Ti Lavers and Christine Cox. Dean Scott Appleby and Professor Atalia Omer helped conceptualize this first conference. Cindy Swonger, Barbara Lockwood, and Anne Riordon helped organize the event, as did Katherine Lane. I appreciate the support of Dean Appleby and the Dean of Arts and Letters, both John and Sarah—as well as the confidence of President Jenkins, who suggested in his 2005

inaugural address that we must “affirm the value of religious diversity at Notre Dame.” A great Catholic university, he proposed, has “a duty to think and speak and act in ways that will guide, inspire, and heal—not just for the followers of the Catholic faith, but for all our neighbors in the nation and the world.”<sup>4</sup> And, finally, I’m especially grateful to Rafat and Zoreen Ansari, who have helped us realize that dream of reaching out to “all our neighbors.” Your generosity and trust set in motion the inter-religious goodwill that I know you value as much as we do. Thank you.

But, of course, there’s more to do. As we ready ourselves for the task, we also recognize that to *engage* means “to pledge” and “to bind by a formal promise,” and so, aware of the challenges but excited by the possibilities, my colleagues and I promise to do our best. Working with friends here and partners around the world, we’ll do all we can to increase understanding, encourage cooperation, and “think, speak, and act” in ways that might mobilize the resources of religion for the common good.

### **Religion**

And there’s the Institute’s other key word, *religion*.<sup>5</sup> I’m not the only one who fusses about words, especially terms that define a field of study. Those of us who study *religion* squabble about what it means. I’ve written a book that offered a definition and proposed a theory.<sup>6</sup> But I won’t repeat all that. I’ll just give you some sense of my current views about what religion is and how it functions.

Religion begins with worry and wonder, metaphysical anguish and ontological delight.<sup>7</sup> More simply, religions ask and answer big questions—Why are we here? How should we act? What happens when we die?<sup>2</sup>—and they give devotees language to interpret suffering, like the loss of a loved one, and interpret joy, like the marvel of a squirming newborn. Art and science offer a vocabulary too, but religions are distinctive in two ways. They appeal to supernatural beings, like God or bodhisattvas, and imagine an ultimate horizon of human life, a final threshold, whether that

goal is a perfect place like heaven or a blissful condition like enlightenment. And religions map a path to get there. To seek that end—and ease suffering and seek joy along the way—devotees follow moral codes and ritual prescriptions. They make things and build things. Heal the sick and bury the dead. They tell stories and use analogies. Christians, for example, say Jesus is the Lamb (*amnos*) of God and, thereby, move between how we think about animals and how we think about humans, imagining Jesus as a sacrificial offering; Muslims say Muhammad is the Seal (*khātam*) of the Prophets and, thereby, move between how we think about documents and how we think about humans. They refer to the practice of putting a waxy sealant on a document to close it and certify it, as a way to interpret the prophet Muhammad's role: he closes and authenticates the prophetic lineage.<sup>8</sup> Religion requires that cognitive capacity.<sup>9</sup> Scientists aren't sure how analogical reasoning works or how neural networks interact, though we know it involves the brain's prefrontal cortex.<sup>10</sup> In this and other ways—including the function of mirror neurons—religion is biological as well as cultural. It's about embodied processes as much as cultural practices.

But I didn't form my view of religion by analyzing brain scans to see which areas light up when we use metaphors or say prayers. It started with historical studies of transnationalism and fieldwork with migrants. I've studied Asian and Latino migrants, and after five years of being with exiles at a Cuban shrine in Miami I came to see how religion was about moving across space and finding your own place. It involves crossing and dwelling.<sup>11</sup> Religiously-propelled crossings include foreign missions, holy wars, and pilgrimages; but the religious also mark and cross stages in the life cycle and the threshold between this world and the next. Religions orient individuals and groups in time and space. Religions, we might say, function as watch and compass, like this nineteenth-century artifact manufactured in Switzerland, decorated in northern India, and owned by a Muslim man who used it to determine that it was time for midday prayer and that Mecca was that way, to the west.<sup>12</sup> In a similar way, religions map the nearby and the distant, situating us in the body, the home, the

homeland, and the cosmos. The religious use *figurative tools*—analogical language like metaphors, symbolic actions like prayers, and special spaces like mosques and churches— to transform the local ecology and construct a world. In this sense, I suggest, religion is homemaking. It’s about making a dwelling or, to borrow a term from the evolutionary biologists, constructing a niche.<sup>13</sup> Humans’ ecological-cultural niches are more complex than those of other animals—think of beaver dams—and religion’s figurative tools have done some of that work of clearing the ground and making a world. Humans’ cultural niches also can be transported. Migrants have carried niches and recreated new ones by combining the cultural materials they brought from afar with those they found nearby. Much of religious history has involved transoceanic and transcontinental migrants doing just that.

Yet niches can be stressed, even “cracked,” to again use the scientists’ language; and religion has both exacerbated and eased crises of sustainability.<sup>14</sup> Problems haven’t arisen only when climactic conditions changed or residents depleted resources. The term *sustainability*, as I use it, has a broader meaning. Most simply, a habitat or niche is sustainable when the interplay between the community’s worldview, its way of life, and the environment allows residents to meet “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>15</sup> Those “needs”—or conditions for flourishing—aren’t just ecological. As the UN’s *Sustainability Goals* and Pope Francis’s *Laudato ‘Si* suggest, for a habitat to be fully sustainable, it must provide renewable resources, meaning and purpose, safety and health, equity and productivity, and as much individual freedom and political participation as the common good permits.<sup>16</sup> So, culture—and especially religion—plays a crucial role. How a community deals with resources—and imagines economic, social, and political life— depends, in part, on how devotees use spiritual stories, artifacts, and rituals to understand themselves, their homeland, and their place in wider universe. In turn, habitats can become stressed if some communal needs remain unmet, and that has happened in the past— among farmers after the dawn of the Little Ice Age, among displaced natives and enslaved

Africans during the colonial era, and among city dwellers after the onset of the age of factories. Religious beliefs and practices supported those stressed lifeways—but also inspired efforts to repair the landscape and restore the community. Habitats can become increasingly unsustainable again if deficits converge—if resources diminish, disease devastates, injustice pervades, violence mounts, and religious worldviews fail to provide individual meaning and collective purpose. We’re living now on the eve of another crisis, I think, and religion can either make things worse or better.

### **Why Religion Matters**

If you can agree that might be one way to see religion’s role in the world, we still need to say more about why religion matters today.<sup>17</sup> At an historical moment when globalizing forces have intensified and two apparently competing trends are at work—the world seems both more and less religious—all of us who want to be global citizens need to understand religion. It doesn’t matter whether you find it compelling or whether your community seems increasingly secular. What matters is that billions around the world practice a faith—and they *act* from it. It shapes how they enter the world and how they leave it, how they eat, dress, marry—and raise their children. It shapes their assumptions about who they are and who they want to be. Religious traditions that aspire to ease suffering sometimes cause it, but they can also promote the social good. Religion can combat injustice as well as sanctify it. Religion draws borders and bolsters nationalism, identifying us and them, but, at its best, it also condemns hate and calls believers to remember bonds beyond the household and the homeland. It affects law, economy, and government. Misunderstood scriptural passages have sanctioned ecological indifference, even an idolatrous faith in fossil fuels, but religions also have the moral resources to repair the environment. Religion also can start wars and end them. Peacebuilding efforts that overlook spiritual worldviews often don’t succeed, as disputes in Northern Ireland, Africa, and South Asia show. One Sri Lankan scholar has argued, for example, that problems persist because peace negotiators failed to understand how a religious worldview

grounded in a sacred text shaped the Buddhist majority's view of politics, and tensions in that island nation have erupted again, including between Buddhists and Muslims.<sup>18</sup> And if and when just peace and lasting reconciliation comes to Jerusalem it will be when all competing spiritual claims to the land are respectfully acknowledged.

In short, whether you notice it or not, religions play a role in how billions conduct their lives. We are called, then, to understand this important factor in human life today—and in the future. From the vantage of the present, it seems that the twenty-first century will be an age of displaced refugees, economic disparities, gender inequities, ethnoreligious nationalisms, artificial intelligence, genetic technologies, and climate changes. We'll meet those challenges—and the ones we can't anticipate—only if religious actors recover foundational values, cultivate transformative empathy, and partner with secular and spiritual groups like NGOs, educational institutions, media outlets, global corporations, philanthropic foundations, government organizations, and inter-governmental agencies.



### **Engagement**

That brings us back to the Institute's role, and the meaning of engagement. Let's begin with an illustration, the Institute's logo. I gave the designers specific instructions: the logo can't have a

have a cross—or a Jewish star, Buddhist wheel, or Muslim crescent; the colors can't suggest one religion; the Institute's defining image can't have a center with lines radiating from it, and if you add lines to signal global engagement, they must go in both directions. Whatever you think of the final design, I hope it doesn't make you think that engagement means pompous proselytizing, aggressive colonization, condescending aid, or do-gooding development. Engagement, for the Ansari Institute, isn't imposing a single religious vision. We'll open ourselves to new spiritual insights, though also be unapologetic about the traditions we bring with us, including our debt to Catholic social teaching, which is rooted in Jesus's concern for the marginalized, and our respect for Muslim charitable outreach, which recalls the prophet Muhammad's concern for widows and orphans. We won't demand uniformity or deny differences as we seek shared values and plan joint action.

Engagement also isn't colonialism. The Institute isn't an imperial center; our partners aren't provincial peripheries. We're proud of democratic institutions, which are now endangered at home and abroad.<sup>19</sup> We value human rights, seek restorative justice, and still believe in the power of religion to serve the common good. But we're not trying to save the world. On some matters, we need the world to save us.

So, we begin our efforts to engage globally with a profound sense of humility. It arises from an awareness of our own limitations and the mixed record of well-intentioned humanitarian and development projects, secular and religious. We should acknowledge that religious outreach projects, including those of the Catholic Church, the largest transnational institution in the modern world, have brought tragic failure as well as inspiring success. In the Americas that has meant, for example, displacing native peoples during the colonial era as well as championing the preferential option for the poor in the twentieth century. US Protestants have a mixed record of their own. Between 1880 and 1920, for example, "holy humanitarians" interested in aid spanned the globe to export Protestant commitments and American culture through informal transnational organizations, like

the Young Men's Christian Association.<sup>20</sup> As one historian suggested, “charitable engagement has been shaped by a mix of sincere religious convictions, shrewd business calculations, and complex cultural presumptions...” and “has always involved the exercise of privilege, prejudice, and power.” For humanitarian efforts abroad, “even the best intentions often produce tragic outcomes.”<sup>21</sup>

The same is true of international development. Yale's James Scott studied twentieth-century “development fiascoes,” to understand what went wrong when rich states tried to impose plans for social progress on poor ones. The problem was that planners “regarded themselves as far smarter and farseeing than they really were and, at the same time, regarded their subjects as far more stupid and incompetent than they really were.”<sup>22</sup> Development officials imposed a rigid system of abstract principles and ignored local knowledge, the practical know-how or embedded experience of the people they said they were trying to help. We can improve development practice, he suggests, if we take small steps, favor reversibility, and plan on surprises and inventiveness, always assuming that participants can improve our plans. Most of all, those who engage should be sensitive to local traditions and vernacular expertise and remain diverse and adaptable. To Scott's suggestions I'd add more religious values, but his list is a good start.

It's similar to the advice I got when I asked a distinguished guest at the Keough School, Dr. Atiq Rahman. He spent three weeks this fall in an office at the Ansari Institute, and we talked often, in part because he and I are hoping to co-direct a project. He is director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies and a UN-recognized leader in sustainable development and climate change—as well as a contributor to the IPCC climate report that won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. Dr. Rahman began his advice about the Institute by saying, “be open.” Then, after our chat shifted to biology, he added, “and diversity is important.” You mean biodiversity, I asked? “Yes, but *all* kinds of diversity—ideas too. It is more adaptable,” and he gave an example: “So if all the white, bearded men in the world...” He smiled and paused, as if it might be not nice to say aloud. I jumped in so he

didn't have to say it: "If all the white, bearded men died, human life would go on. And maybe," I added, "things might be better." Atiq laughed. Well, I'd prefer to be around a bit longer, but the rest of his advice seems right: we'll cherish openness and diversity. We won't offer settled ideas for others to follow but foster reciprocal collaborations that lead us somewhere together, and we'll partner with whoever joins us, even those who challenge what we value.

What do we value and how do those values shape our understanding of *how* we engage and *what* we engage?

### ***How We Engage***

We'll honor the values implied in the Keough School's goal of advancing *integral human development*, a holistic model of flourishing that celebrates the dignity of the human person. To engage is to hope for full flourishing, not bare subsistence, and to attend to the secular or religious symbol systems that empower and orient those we encounter. As I've made clear, humility is crucial. Engagement demands we recognize our blind spots and not just our opponents.<sup>23</sup> And other values inform *how* we engage—equality, honesty, respect, accountability, cooperation, and democratic participation.

If we had to elevate just one moral value it might be *receptive generosity*, the capacity to give and take.<sup>24</sup> To just take is theft; to only give is arrogance. Informed by a commitment to receptive generosity, engagement becomes a reciprocal encounter between equals. That value helps us think about *how* to engage, whether we're addressing, for example, poverty, disease, or violence.

Peacebuilding, John Paul Lederach suggested, depends on seeking "respectful and cooperative relationships," "context-based resources," and a "shared vision of desired change."<sup>25</sup> Joan Halifax, a Buddhist priest who has trained volunteers to work with the dying, suggests that it sometimes means just "sitting in ease and silence for long periods with a dying person."<sup>26</sup> Engaging others as they grieve or as they pass can mean nothing more than being fully present. In a similar way, preventing

deaths and treating diseases in poor countries requires, Paul Farmer has proposed, “community-based care” by companions (*accompagnateurs*), neighbors trained by Partners in Health to understand and support those suffering from diseases like tuberculosis, a major killer today.<sup>27</sup> Farmer attributes that “theology of accompaniment” to Gustavo Gutiérrez, our distinguished colleague who has spent his life accompanying the Peruvian poor and who has warned that it violates their dignity to aspire to be a “voice of the voiceless.” Rather, engagement means trying to “ensure that those without a voice find one.”<sup>28</sup> Engagement, then, means accompanying. It’s partnering. It’s walking with, not dictating to. That’s difficult to do, however, since engagement demands a moral courage and an unsettling vulnerability, an opening ourselves to what might happen when we can’t control things and where we might go if we walked together.

After all this talk about *how* we’ll engage, there is still more to say about *what* we’ll engage. So, I’ll end with that.

### **What We Engage**

I’ve already suggested we’ll engage institutions—from local religious groups to intergovernmental agencies. We’ve already begun. We recently hosted an interfaith group of Muslims and Orthodox Christians from the Republic of Georgia. I’ve reached out to universities in the US and abroad to think about how we might address shared concerns. I’ve spoken with the director of an international organization that serves faith-based NGOs and brainstormed with the head of an inter-religious center in the Middle East, strategizing about how we might increase religious literacy and improve Christian-Muslim understanding through workshops, exchanges, and media outreach. We’ll also engage students at this institution. Some might go abroad with us, and we already have two Ansari fellows in the Master of Global Affairs program. We’ll plan a three-course specialization in Religion and Global Affairs for the MGA, and I hope we can establish an undergraduate fellows program, offering support for Notre Dame seniors across campus who are

working on capstone research projects or participating in outreach initiatives that align with the Institute's aspirations.

Most important, we'll engage problems— and the ways of knowing and doing that might solve them.

### **Engaging Problems**

The Ansari Institute will be *problem-focused*, and we'll partner with the School of Global Affairs' centers and institutes to address pressing issues in ways that bring academic recognition but also contribute to policy and practice. As the strategic plan of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies announced, Kroc and Ansari will collaborate on religion and peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>29</sup> We'll also partner with Kellogg colleagues on projects about development and democracy. Joining Keough specialists and engaging disciplines across campus we hope to facilitate conversations. We'll collaborate with Theology and Philosophy, for example. Robert Audi, a Notre Dame philosopher, is co-planning our project on Climate Justice. Our Institute has agreed to co-sponsor a Theology conference on "Saintliness Across Traditions," and Gabriel Reynolds and I have been brainstorming about events that might advance Muslim-Christian understanding. I also am working with another Theology colleagues who is planning a multi-year collaboration on "sacred images," and I hope we can co-sponsor other projects in the Arts, which can be important for cross-cultural understanding and issue-oriented action. For example, we might collaborate with a photographer to document pluralism and co-produce exhibitions.<sup>30</sup> The Institute will also co-sponsor the Cushwa Center's upcoming conference on "Global Catholicism" organized by Kathy Cummings and John McGreevy; and, to provide historical depth to conversations about how spiritual rivals can get along, I've talked with the Director of the Medieval Institute about a workshop on "Crossroads of Cooperation," which would bring historians together to highlight times and places in the medieval and early modern world where we see toleration, like Baghdad in

950.<sup>31</sup> I hope to talk with colleagues in Science, Economics, Business, and Engineering about a possible initiative on religion's role in responding to the moral challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the changes happening now in economy and technology.<sup>32</sup> Within a decade, I hope we'll have partnered with many departments and every Notre Dame school and college.

In this initial phase, however, we'll continue the effort to "Change the Conversation about Religion" with a conference in 2019.<sup>33</sup> And, while remaining open to wisdom from our Advisory Board and Faculty Affiliates about other initiatives, we'll concentrate on four issues: migration and displaced peoples, climate change and environmental degradation, poverty and economic disparity, and religious literacy and inter-religious misunderstanding. The conference speakers will consider those topics tomorrow, and we've begun exploring how we might address them in the next few years— by collaborating on a study of how religion helps refugees acculturate, a project that uses religious and philosophical traditions to motivate citizens to slow climate change, and an initiative to improve religious literacy and reduce global conflict.

I care about those issues. I've spent most of my career studying migrants.<sup>34</sup> I'm now writing a book that foregrounds sustainability. And I've worried about religion-based conflict for a long time. I chose to do this for a living, in fact, after hearing a heartbreaking story from a Japanese survivor of the atomic bomb.<sup>35</sup> After the flash went off in the distance, he heard a Christian missionary declare, "It's God's just punishment to the heathen." I was saddened by that story—and decided then to study multiple traditions and seek inter-religious cooperation. I participated in Buddhist-Christian dialogue and wrote about the history of the encounter. I chronicled the history of Asian religions in America. Before 9/11, I wrote an online guide for high school teachers about how to incorporate Muslims into US history courses, and as Islamophobia rose during the last presidential campaign I got worried. So, in November 2015, as president of the American Academy of Religion, I drafted a public statement that the Board approved and circulated. It said we're

“deeply troubled by the rising anti-Muslim rhetoric in the United States and around the world. Hate speech and intemperate political discourse aimed at Muslims and other religious groups are opposed to the values of our learned society and to the most cherished commitments of American civic culture. We call on our members, other scholars of religion, and all Americans, to reject that divisive and dangerous speech and to reaffirm our shared commitment to a free and open society where all residents’ rights are recognized and protected.”<sup>36</sup> I’m even more worried today.

So, the Ansari Institute will try to challenge anti-Muslim rhetoric, as well as anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism, as we respectfully engage varied institutions and local actors to collaboratively address pressing problems and, we hope, make a better world.

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow the term *grounded globalism* from anthropologist James L. Peacock: *Grounded Globalism: How the U.S. South Embraces the World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press), 40-43.

<sup>2</sup> In Western Europe, for example, only 1 in 5 Christians go to church Pew Research Center, 29 May 2018, “Being Christian in Western Europe.” Available at [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org).

<sup>3</sup> “Engage, v.” *OED Online*. July 2018. Oxford University Press (accessed September 29, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Rev. John I. Jenkins’ Inaugural Address, 23 September 2005, the University of Notre Dame. Available at [http://inauguration.nd.edu/ceremonies/inaugural\\_address.shtml](http://inauguration.nd.edu/ceremonies/inaugural_address.shtml). Accessed 1 August 2018.

<sup>5</sup> We should respect those who don't like the word *religion*. Some evangelical theologians have said that religion is what humans create, and Christianity is what God gave us. Some Hindus would say it's a word the colonial British used to count the colonized and keep them in line but that it doesn't capture the richness of what they do and who they are. There are a few scholars who think we should abandon the word altogether and use an alternative—culture, ritual, or something else. I see the concerns. Yet I think the term *religion* is part of the vernacular and is inscribed into legal codes across the world, including the US First Amendment. As I've argued elsewhere, and David Chidester also suggested, we're stuck with it. Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2006), 36-42.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed explanation of my definition see Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 54-79.

<sup>7</sup> On “metaphysical anguish” see Henry de Lumley, “The Emergence of Symbolic Thought: The Principle Steps of Hominisation Leading towards Greater Complexity,” in Colin Renfrew and Iain Morley, eds., *Becoming Human: Innovation in Prehistoric Material and Spiritual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 19-21.

<sup>8</sup> On Jesus as “the lamb [*amnos*] of God” see especially John 1:29 and John 19:36. See also I Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:12-14; and Acts 8:32-35. As Raymond Brown points out, the classic scriptural passage (John 1:29) could be taken as referring to the lamb as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:7) or the Passover Lamb. It also could refer to the sacrificial lambs of the Temple cultus. The main point is that most of the New Testament's lamb references emphasize the sacrificial associations, as Invid Sælid Gilhus notes: “Even if the lamb symbolism is not identical in the different New Testament texts, the texts stand united in conceiving the lamb as a sacrificial animal and in identifying this animal with Jesus.” Invid Sælid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and early Christian Ideas* (London: Routledge, 2006), chapter 8 [Location 4151 in the Kindle edition]. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 55. C. K. Barrett, “The Lamb of God,” *New Testament Studies* 1 (1954-1955): 210-218. See also this analysis, especially pages 860-61: Marco Frenschkowski, “Lamm Gottes,” in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 22, Theodor Klauser, ed. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2008), 853-882. The Islamic tradition venerates Muhammad's ninety-nine names, and one of those is “the seal [*ḵbātām*] of the prophets” (Q 33:40). Like some of the prophet's other titles, for example *lamp*, it is a metaphor that

crosses cognitive domains and compares that religious leader with the material that seals—that is, closes and authorizes—a written text, like a letter or document. So he is associated with the sealant (a stamp or sealing wax) and the act of sealing. In this sense, Muslims are affirming that he closes and confirms the prophetic tradition. Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 254-255. Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Prophethood," in *The Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 4, Jane Dammen McAulife, ed., (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 289-306. I am grateful to Carl Ernst for helping me ponder the meaning of *kbātam*, and John Fitzgerald and Invild Sælid Gilhus helped me think about the meaning of the lamb metaphor.

<sup>9</sup> In my implied distinction here I am relying on Harvey Whitehouse's typology of the two "modes of religiosity," *imagistic* and *doctrinal*. Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, 63-84. I am inclined to agree with Whitehouse's hunch that "the presence of the imagistic mode almost certainly predates the emergence of the doctrinal mode by a very substantial margin. The former appears in the archeological record at least as far back as the Upper Paleolithic period, whereas the latter appears probably no less recently than the emergence of Bronze Age civilizations" (77). I am not suggesting, however, that the doctrinal mode is either inevitable in terms of cultural evolution or superior in terms of relevant criteria for scholars engaged in the cross-disciplinary and comparative study of religion.

<sup>10</sup> I rely on a great deal of research in neuroscience and cognitive science in my summary about analogical reasoning. See for example Emmanuelle Volle et al., "Specialization of the Rostral Prefrontal Cortex for Distinct Analogy Processes," *Cerebral Cortex* 20 (November 2010): 2647-2659; Ann Speed, "Abstract Relational Categories, Graded Persistence, and Prefrontal Cortical Representation," *Cognitive Neuroscience* 1.2 (2010): 126-152.

<sup>11</sup> Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 54-79. I have thought a good deal about spatial orientation and religion. See, for example, "The Interdisciplinary Study of Geography and Religion: A Pragmatic Approach." *Relegens Thréskeia: Revista de Pesquisas e Estudos em Religião* (Brazil) 3.2 (2014): 1-27; "Space." Special Issue on "Key Words in Material Religion." *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief* 7.1 (2011): 116-123.

<sup>12</sup> Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 85-91.

<sup>13</sup> For my recent analysis of niche construction see "On Narratives, Niches, and Religion: A Response to Jonathan Marks." *Philosophy, Theology, and the Sciences* 3 (2016): 183-187. I introduced the notion of "figurative tools" in Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 68. I discussed the process of dwelling, or homemaking, on pages 80-122. See especially pages 74-75, 82-84, 97, 112-113, 223n14. In that work, I talked about dwelling places and habitats, but I also have found the cross-disciplinary conversation about "niche construction" very helpful. That discussion began among evolutionary biologists: F. John Odling-Smee, Kevin. N. Laland, and Marcus W. Feldman, *Niche Construction: The Neglected Process in Evolution*, Monographs in Population Biology, volume 37 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). It extended to other fields. On that see Kevin Laland and Michael J. O'Brien, "Niche Construction Theory and Archeology," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 17 (2010): 305. A few scholars have begun to think about the implications of niche construction theory for the study of religion. For example, Joseph Bulbulia, "Meme Infection or Religious Niche Construction?: An Adaptationist Alternative to the Cultural Maladaptationist Hypothesis," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20 (2008): 67-107; Benjamin G. Purzycki and Richard Sosis, "The Extended Religious Phenotype and the Adaptive Coupling of Ritual and Belief," *Israel Journal of Ecology and Evolution*, 59.2 (2013): 99-108; William E. Paden, "Tracks and Themes in a Shifting Landscape: Reflections on 50 Years of the Study of Religion," *Religion*, 43.1 (January 2013): 94-97; and Agustín Fuentes offers a simple definition of niche construction: "The building and destroying of niches by organisms and the mutual dynamic interactions between organisms and environments." Agustín Fuentes, *Evolution of Human Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 260.

<sup>14</sup> The authors of the classic monograph on niche construction note that niches can be "destroyed" and introduced terms to describe how organisms "perturb" their environment ("inceptive niche construction"), as they also talked about "negative niche construction" or acts that "decrease the fitness of niche-constructing organisms": Odling-Smee, Laland, and Feldman, *Niche Construction*, 1, 420. On "cracked" niches, see also K. N. Laland, J. Odling-Smee, and M. W. Feldman, "Niche Construction, Biological Evolution, and Cultural Change," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 23 (2000): 131-175. For a suggestive application of the notion of "cracked" niches to the task of reimagining the tempo, development, and collapse of cultures see Ian Kuijt and Anna Marie Prentiss, "Niche Construction, Macroevolution, and the Late Epipaleolithic of the New East," in *Macroevolution in Human Prehistory: Evolutionary Theory and Processual Archaeology*, Anna Marie Prentiss, Ian Kuijt, and James C. Chatters, eds. (New York: Springer, 2009), 263-265. I usually use the term "broken," rather than "cracked," for several reasons, including because it seems more broadly applicable and has the advantage of signaling, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests, that people also can be "broken." I would add disease here since mental and physical health are necessary but not sufficient components of ecological sustainability and human flourishing. The changing habitats of humans have brought about transitions in the human-microbe relationship and had implications for the history of infectious disease and the sustainability of particular niches since the domestication of animals introduced new pathogens into agrarian human communities. For a helpful periodization see Tony McMichael, *Human Frontiers, Environments, and Disease* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 88-122 and A.J. McMichael, "Environmental and Social Influences on Emerging Infectious Diseases: Past, Present, and Future," *Philosophical*

*Transactions of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences* 359.1447 (2004): 1049-1058. On the fourth and most recent transition in pathogen ecology systems see Chris Otter et al., “Forum Technology, Ecology, and Human Health since 1850,” *Environmental History* 20 (2015): 710-804.

<sup>15</sup> This definition of sustainability is taken from a report issued by a group created by a UN resolution in 1983: *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, April 1987, page 16 (paragraph 27), available at <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>, accessed 29 September 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy L. Caradonna, *Sustainability: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-20. As Caradonna notes, the most common model of sustainability, which was endorsed by the UN World Summit in 2005, is a Venn diagram of the “three Es”—environment, economy, and equity. A newer model emphasizes the centrality of the environment; it represents economy and equity as nested inside the wider circle of the environment. My model builds on this second one but adds more factors (cultural-religious, psychological-physiological, and political) and reimagines the whole as the optimal conditions for sustainability. I am not sure that any niche on the continent ever met all these conditions. So, in that sense it is a high bar to clear. My understanding of the conditions for flourishing align with lists generated by some development experts and UN documents, including the UN’s 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the UN’s 2015 list of seventeen *Sustainable Development Goals*. The latter, a model that I find useful, includes even more optimal conditions: peace, justice, and strong institutions, good health and wellbeing, decent work and economic growth, quality education, reduced inequalities, and no poverty or hunger. The United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals*, adopted by the United Nations, 25 September 2015, available at <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>, accessed 29 September 2018. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> I discussed why religion matters in Thomas A. Tweed, “Relevance [of the Study of Religion].” In Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 804-814.

<sup>18</sup> Suren Rāghavan, *Buddhist Monks and the Politics of Lanka’s Civil War: Ethnoreligious Nationalism of the Sinhala Sangha and Peacemaking in Sri Lanka, 1995-2010* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2016), 190, 200-201.

<sup>19</sup> For a comparative analysis of the situation in the US and abroad, and the factors that lead to democratic decline, see Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America’s Moral Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2. It takes the phrase “holy humanitarians” from Heather D. Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> The quotations from Scott’s book are listed in the order of their appearance in this paragraph: James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 343, 345, 353.

<sup>23</sup> I talked about epistemic humility and blind spots in Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 14-15, 21-22, 28, 60-61, 171-178, 191n14.

<sup>24</sup> I advocate receptive generosity and a number of other epistemic, moral, and aesthetic values (including humility and empathy) in Thomas A. Tweed, “AAR Presidential Address: *Valuing the Study of Religion: Improving Difficult Dialogues within and beyond the AAR’s ‘Big Tent.’*” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84.2 (June 2016): 287-322. On “receptive generosity” see Romand Coles, *Rethinking Generosity: Critical Theory and the Politics of Caritas* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997), 1-23; and Roman Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics: Reflections for the Possibility of Democracy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), ix-xxx.

<sup>25</sup> John Paul Lederach, “The Origins and Evolution of Infrastructure for Peace: A Personal Reflection,” *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 7.3 (2012): 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> Joan Halifax, “Being with Dying: Contemplative Approaches to Working with Dying People for the Death in America Project, January 1995,” available at [https://www.upaya.org/dox/Good\\_Death.pdf](https://www.upaya.org/dox/Good_Death.pdf). Accessed 2 October 2018. See also Joan Halifax, *Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Haun Saussy, ed., *Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 141-142, 145-147. See also Partners in Health, “*Accompagnateur* Training Guide,” available at <https://www.pih.org/practitioner-resource/accompagnateur-training-guide>, accessed 2 October 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Griffin and Jennie Weiss Block, eds., *In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013) 156.

<sup>29</sup> Strategy 3 (for enhancing research on religion, conflict, and peacebuilding) notes that Kroc and Ansari “will seek opportunities for collaboration on scholarly research related to religion and peacebuilding in relation to a variety of topics, including migration and displacement; law and policy; and nationalism, populism, and strategic peacebuilding.”

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Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, *Strategic Plan, 2018-2023* (Notre Dame, IN: Keough School of Global Affairs, 2018), 8.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Liz Hingley, the British photographer, has collaborated on intriguing projects. Benoît Vermander and Liz Hingley, *Shanghai Sacred: The Religious Landscape of a Global City* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2018). Benoît Vermander, Liz Hingley, and Liang Zhang, "(Re)locating Sacredness in Shanghai," *Social Compass* 63.1 (2016): 38-56. See also Liz Hingley, "Photographer as Researcher in the Project 'Under Gods: Stories from Soho Road,'" *Visual Studies* 26.3 (2011): 260-269. Being open to the Arts also might attending to sacred music, images, dance, poetry, narratives, and architecture.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Berman directs the Medieval Institute and suggested Baghdad in 950 as one possible time and place where we see cooperation. On the Institute see <https://medieval.nd.edu>, accessed 27 October 2018. Cooperation, as I understand it, also was reinforced by religious ritual in early foraging communities, and the topic can be approached through perspectives from the natural sciences and social sciences. History in conversation with social science also can extend farther into the more distant past. See SESHAT: The Global History Databank, Oxford University, Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, available at <http://seshatdatabank.info>. For an overview see François, Pieter, Joseph Manning, Harvey Whitehouse, Rob Brennan, Thomas Currie, Kevin Feeney, and Peter Turchin. 2016. "A Macroscopic for Global History: Seshat Global History Databank, a Methodological Overview." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 10(4). <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/10/4/000272/000272.html>. See also "DRH: The Database of Religious History," University of British Columbia, available at <https://religiondatabase.org/landing/>. For an introduction see Edward Slingerland and Brenton Sullivan, "Durkheim with Data: The Database of Religious History," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 85.2 (2017): 312-347.

<sup>32</sup> Klaus Schwab explains the Fourth Industrial Revolution: "The First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used electronics and information technology to automate production. Now a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres." Klaus Schwab, "The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What It Means and How to Respond," *Foreign Affairs*, 12 December 2015, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-12-12/fourth-industrial-revolution>.

<sup>33</sup> The 2019 conference on "Changing the Conversation about Religion" will build on the two earlier meetings in Rome and London. On those gatherings see Atalia Omer, "From London to Rome: Changing the Conversation about Religion," Contending Modernities Project, available at <http://contendingmodernities.nd.edu>.

<sup>34</sup> For example, see Thomas A. Tweed, "Religious Identity and Emigration from Latin America." In *The Cambridge History of Religions in Latin America*, eds. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, Paul C. Freston, and Stephen D. Dove (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 680-689.

<sup>35</sup> I told this story more fully in a keynote address for a conference on "Buddhism without Borders" and in the subsequent article I published: Thomas A. Tweed, "Theory and Method in the Study of Buddhism: Toward 'Translocative' Analysis." *Journal of Global Buddhism* 12 (2011): 27.

<sup>36</sup> "AAR Issues Statement on Anti-Muslim Rhetoric," 21 November 2015, American Academy of Religion, available at <https://www.aarweb.org/about/aar-issues-statement-on-anti-muslim-rhetoric>.