Feeling the "Taint of Time"
On the Emptying of Churchly Time-Metaphors in Modern Societies

Abstract: Time is unavoidably and solely expressed in metaphor, and much of the past theological treatments of time serve to harden these metaphors into a religious reality. This essay delves into questions about the rise of these metaphors, their ongoing effectiveness in modernity, and what the Western religious traditions may have to say to an emerging conception of time. By taking a cursory and example-establishing look at the doctrine of purgatory, and its slow devolution, we may claim that notions of time are quickly secularizing and de-institutionalizing. The essay suggests that by asserting the degree to which the tradition itself secularized time, and setting aside much of the linguistic time dogma theology has built up over the centuries, the tradition may find itself having quite a bit of relevance and causality to the current frame of timed existence.

Essay:

The movement of time has been the chief anthropomorphic trick of much of historical western religiosity. The role has been to codify when, and how, it is that time may possess, set-aside, make righteous, or sanctify: to brew more time when societies have exhausted what time they had; steal time from those who use it unwisely; and create language for times in which words fall short. This role is satisfied through a particularized language of time which has increasingly forced society to confront many tales of our beginnings and would-be ends - a role which propositional theology had gladly filled as theology itself became quite time obsessed.

The Church busied itself with the tasks of time linguistics for generations in an effort to universalize a world where institutions, precedents, legends, and governments transcended the passage of time. These bodies prevented the full exposure of time. If one makes the truthful mistake of attempting to suggest that the nation of the United States of America will one day cease to be, or perhaps that certain football clubs will one day cease to dominate, one will likely come to understand that for many this is a mythos still held (and perhaps best held if one desires to escape secular angst and secular freedom). Yet, in a world with transcendent institutions, individuals are that which is disposable, marginal, and temporal. One could justly die for something beyond oneself, something beyond one's own time, while we have broadly condemned as unjust the potential for death on one's own terms. Lives were understood as an antecedent to these institutions to be served, as a body of work was to be presented before St. Peter himself in order that one may finally also become transcendent and dwell in that place beyond time. Monks, craftsman, nuns, and midwives dwelt in existence as modifiers to transcendent institutions, just as veterans of the World Wars and the archetypal IBM or bureaucratic career men dwelt as modifiers to their respective institutions. Popular theology told them that this existence was dutiful, honorable, worthy of merit and respect. Theology moved time at the bequest of the institutions which defined existence. Theology made the good, honest, successful business person righteous; the just warrior saintly; and the church bureaucrat sacrificial. Theology birthed institutionalized time: a time that could only be worked out after it was set by papal decrees, town-clocks, and

time cards. "Do not squander time," Ben Franklin said, "for that is the stuff life is made of." It would be a matter of societal shame if one were to squander one's time, because one's time was everyone else's time – institutionalized.

This essay will first entertain the proposition that time occurs in metaphor in order to present the thesis that institutionalized time is failing; failures which are giving way to an exposition of the annals of a time which has hardly been verbalized – a time which appears to be fleeting, momentary, slippery, private, and possibility infused. Then, with such a claim, we may address certain ramifications, amongst many, as to the role of theology as an explanatory exercise for persons' popular notion of time in the present arrangement. Because, if there exists a modern "complete man," to turn to Goethe, one must wonder how it is that he may be exposed to the "torrents of time" if that time has no vocabulary.

Historical theology had intuitively reconciled long before Einstein that time is a matter of relativity; that the present notion of time need not be the persistent notion of time. In fact, much of medieval theology is built upon the assumption that time is mobile. After all, how far is Dante's longing and finding of Beatrice from that old Einsteinian joke; "When you're in the dentist's chair, a minute seems like an hour. But when you have a pretty girl on your lap, and hour seems like a minute?" For Dante it was in purgatory, in pain and want, that time was elongated, while in heaven, in pleasure and satisfaction, that time was so fleeting it ceased to be. Aquinas makes even more explicit the fleeting nature of heaven when he describes eternity in terms of the brevity of time which is unceasingly 'momentaneum' (moment-like).[1] In this sense, time for both Dante and Einstein was inertial because it dwelt as a definer of the present in reference to what had passed. It created space to account for the weight of sins long ago committed, yet still lingering on seeking requitement. Hell was to leave time because the force of sin upon the soul could not be accounted for. So it was for Aquinas that the soul was necessary for the full proper existence of time, and those who were soulless must leave.[2] The weighted past overcame the potential for a reconciled present. When "a little water" will not cleanse one from the sinful, murderous, "deeds" of the past, Lady Macbeth reminds us, the current of inertial time will leave the "dead" weight behind – tragedy.

Amongst medieval figures, Kilwardby engaged the problem of relativity – albeit in critique – with the most seriousness, going to extended lengths to argue that all time does fit into space, because time occurs in substance which is located in a spatial continuum.[3] This jointed nature of time and space is quite important to medieval theology when one considers God's togetherness with creation as an example of 'simultaneity.' Aquinas writes;

> "And thus it follows that just as inferior agents which are causes of the coming to be of things, must exists simultaneously with the things which come to be, as long as they are coming to be, so also the divine agent, which is the cause of existing in act, is simultaneous with the existence of the thing in act. Hence if the divine

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[1] Aquinas, Super ad Hebreas. 10. 4. Super 2 ad Corinthios 4.5 in; Fox, Rory. *Time and Eternity in Mid-Thirteenth-Century Thought* (Oxford Theological Monographs). New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2006 pg. 285

[2] Ibid. Aquinas, *In Sent.* 1.19.2.1

[3] Ibid. Kilwardby, *de Temp*. 4. (10:21)

> action were removed from things, things would fall into nothingness, just as when the presence of the sun is removed, light ceases to be in the air."[4]

A notion which works well when considering matters of providence, creation, and revelation; however, it also sets a condition where someone must leave time and space if they are out of order with God's unity. New locations must be established for disunity with God.

In this sense, when Dante was being sung in Italian bars time was being theologized, that is institutionalized, in a spatial form. Herein, treating time as a relative of space is the second familiarity Dante has with Einstein – and is a habit which linguistics tells us long lingered in the annals of human history. Time has persistently moved from "down" to "up," from "ahead" to "behind." The linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have offered us important work in understanding the persistence of these phrases in the English language: that's all behind us, we're marching forward, the future is in front of us.[5] This collection of colloquial phrases has been termed the "time orientation metaphors;" that is, an immobile individual experiencing a mobile time. The second collection of time metaphors are the "moving observer metaphors:" there is trouble ahead, we're coming up for the holidays, we have passed the hour, we are partway through. Here we speak in metaphors of an mobile individual experiencing an immobile, or unavoidable, time. The final group of colloquialisms we use for time are the "moving time metaphors:" the time has arrived, the time will come, the time has passed, the time is approaching, time is flying by, time is fleeting. These terms place time as a mobile substance happening upon a mobile individual and – as I will address later – are the most pertinent to us today.

When Paul Ricoeur claimed that talk of time could not occur in direct means, that it must be spoken of in metaphor in the indirect discourse of narrative, he had in mind those who have attempted to say too much about time. He was writing to those who forgot, or never knew, that the language of time is the language of metaphor and most often spatial metaphor.[6]

Because, spatial metaphors are easily given, in each of these three examples, religious locations. An immobile-individual experiencing mobile-time is largely the language by which Christians engage the Last Supper, speak of conversion stories, and of the revelation of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Ritual occurs within these mobile-time/immobile-individual metaphors because they are what allow societies raise the dead, call into being future spirits, and reenact the past.

Lakoff and Johnson's second series of metaphors, immobile-time/mobile-individual, largely establish languages of eschatology, purgatory, hell, and unrequitable loss. This is the language of a planned revelation of God. This language, which is commonplace in theological writings, presents humans as merely actors in an eternally fated story.

While, a mobile-time occurring to a mobile-individual largely constitutes our metaphors of agency. Prophets, when they are not speaking of eschatological time, often

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[4] Ibid. Aquanas, *In Phys In Phys 2.6 (195)*

[5] Johnson, George; Mark Lakoff. *Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2003

6 Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Reprint. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1990 Ricoeur, Paul. Time and Narrative. Vol. 3. 241

utilize this language. These metaphors are those through which many gospels narratives move by when they utilize amorphous phrases interchangeably like "after those days," "immediately," "following that." Mobile-time/mobile-individual is often the linguistic of secular ages, as well, in that these metaphors highlight immediacy, responsibility to the moment, and one's power to "seize the day," "take their time," or "have their moment."

In a moment I would like to return to immobile-time/mobile-individual linguistics through a brief look at purgatory. But, it should be said, that there are two form of time metaphors less common in the West. The first being immobile-time/immobile-individual which one finds in societies that are traditionally economically disadvantaged; this occurs when the future is not quite imaginable or not sufficiently different from the present - such as the Swahili phrase "Haraka haraka heine Baraka" (to hurry is no blessing), or Trinidadian time metaphors as written about by Kevin Birth.[7] The second missed time linguistic is the cession of time which is a rare linguistic that occurs when a conception of tomorrow, or an eternal next, no longer exists; I have heard this language used in palliative care settings when people are not "out" of time, not "passing" to another place; yet refuse the constructions of time all-together. That said, both these later constructions of rare in the West, so we may turn our attention back toward immobile time/mobile individual.

Because, it was that in telling the story of redemption in spatial and linear language that Dante – and his 13th Century companions – took the metaphors of time and hardened them into a immobile-time/mobile-individual religious reality. The Medievals set forth a tradition which took immobile-time/mobile-individual and dogmatized it as to, utilizing Dante's language, continually stain us with the "taint of time." The progression of the idea of purgatory in history is an apt example as to what I mean by the 'hardening' of the particular metaphor into a religious reality.

Purgatory became a place in 1254. While purificatory fires had existed long before the 13th century within the Gospels and tales of the Last Judgment (having their beginnings in ancient near Eastern apocalypticism), they were yet to have a theologized spatial dwelling place.[8] Origen believed the soul ought to require more time to grow, that this life was not enough, and hoped that the individual may continue to purify after death. And, Augustine regarded life and death as a series of purificatory trials leading one's soul into paradise.[9] Yet, Augustine's period of purgation leading to the Last Judgment is situated firmly in this world instead of the next; for Augustine earthly "tribulation is the primary form of purgatory."[10]

The hardening desire to give one's guilt, or society's guilt, a particular place did not become explicit until the twelfth century, when the first clues of a time of purgatory as a proper and singular noun come into usage. Prior to this point purgatory had been used as an adjective to qualify "fire," "torment," or other "places" in theological texts.[11] Christians had long known, largely from the Greeks, that evil, sin, and fire came from below, so it was the by century's end "purgatory would exists as a distinct place" with an

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7 Birth, Kevin K..Trinidadian Times: Temporal Dependency and Temporal Flexibility on the Margins of Industrial Capitalism. *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (Apr., 1996) pp. 79-89.

8 Goff, Jacques Le. *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages.* New Ed. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1982. Pg. 52ff

9 Fenn, Richard K.. *The Persistence of Purgatory*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pg. 4

10 Le Goff Pg. 69-70

11 Ibid. Pg. 133

downward address.[12] In the latter half of the thirteen century the church would first directly assert purgatory's location in Innocent IV's letter to the Greeks (1254), and later it would be officially set at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274.[13] In a period of mere centuries a societal need for more time would meet the linguistic spatial metaphors of time to harden a new location whereby time may be worked out.

Important when considering the hardening of purgatory is also noting that its popularization coincides with the development of mechanized clocks throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Dante, for one, was reported to be fascinated by the development of clocks.[14] Clocks which would come to be a matter of grave political consternation when, in 1370, Charles V in Paris ordered that all the clock bells in the city conform to the palace's clock, and "the new time thus became the time of state."[15] As Richard Fenn says, time was becoming the essential component of "political, civic, and commercial life in the fourteen century: the bell summoning the living to pay their debts and fulfill their obligations. Only a century earlier time had become the essence to enable the living to pay the debts of the dead and to obtain their own redemption from social and spiritual bondage." [16]

According to Dante, after all, it was in purgatory where one heard "how God wills debts be paid."[17] These debts were clearly institutional, societal, and arranged in such a way as to subject one's individual salvation to one's relation to the broader community. Many of the debts were explicitly financial, and the survivors to the departed were those obliged to pay for the debts the dead still owed, while other debts were explicitly against the souls of others and had to be paid with time, in time, on time, and over time. Within Dante's purgatory most are weighed down by the burden of their sins as indebted by their social relations. Some had coveted the talents of rival artists, while others had used their familial name to steal recognition from lesser-thans, and still others ruled with brutal force. For those trapped in purgatory, time is running out. The weight of their communal debt is the currency that pays off those at whose expense they either lived or died by. God is a transactional force to negotiate society's debts in this arrangement. Burdens, like rocks in a torrent, are the outcomes of cultural expectations to answer for the troubling realities of human nature.

This creation of a new place for working out time is in no way exceptional. Rituals, holidays, and dogmatics have long been the means by which societies have utilized, or brutalized, the dead. As in times of war, where an Armistice Day may become a Memorial Day, the passions and deaths of those past are apt tools for raising the passions of the present. Yet, purgatory is perhaps the most explicitly verbalized theological attempt for the living to stake claims upon the dead so that they may move forward unhindered in time. Though, to be clear about the un-uniqueness of purgatory, these linguistic habits frequently find themselves hardening in our everyday ritual (war talk, theologies of incarceration, and child rearing are also all apt examples of religious

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12 Ibid. Pg. 135

13 Ibid. Pg. 283, 237)

14 Neustradter, Roger *"Beat the Clock: The Mid-20th-Century Protest against the Reification of Time,"* Time & Society, 1992. Pg. 381

15 Le Goff 1984:50

16 Fenn, pg 45

17 Alighieri, Dante, John Earle, and Walter Pater. *The Purgatory of Dante Alighieri ...: The Earthly Paradise (Cantos X)*. Toronto: Nabu Press, 2010 Pg. 107-111

hardening of time linguistics), especially in the West which has – since the advent of clocks – insisted on efficiency and punctuality as matters of virtue, on measuring growth by means of time, 'doing time' (educationally, vocationally, or punitively) before one may commence with their desires, and frequently meeting aptly named 'deadlines.' We are, unquestionably, stained with "the taint of time."[18]

God, in the West, can easily become just a character of time; to the extent where the notion of God as a divine clockmaker emerged as "the ultimate in the culturally peculiar fetishization of time."[19] This God was torturous; he left persons fully exposed to the future with no grace, justice, or mercy. For many time was becoming the means of oppression, a means of cruelty, the means by which their individuality was shortened by an over-committed society. One can understand why "it is said that when Rousseau threw away his watch in order that it could no longer remind him of time, he was full of joy and thanked heaven."[20]

Rousseau sought to soften, or secularize, time in order that his taste for revolution may be quenched. Fortunately for him this was coming to be a common task in his era as the popular notion of God was withdrawing from the world and reality became something far more constituted than simply presented. Time was left up for grabs. In fact, once Luther empties purgatory of its souls, notions of time become much more a matter of temporal political debates than spiritual fact; it would take generations for Lutherans to accept the Gregorian time reforms of their late sixteenth century catholic neighbors, a political statement that led adjoining villages to utilized completely different dates and clocks. The scholastic union of God, time, and world began to be broken down by the hard facts of relativity, pluralism, and mobility. The institutions whose past transcendence was established by their control over time became objects of use rather than worship. Even the Church became increasingly material[21]: Marcel Gauchet writes:

> "When the gods abandon the world, when they stop coming to notify us of their otherness to it, the world itself begins to appear other, to disclose an imaginary depth that becomes the object of special quest, contacting it purpose and referring only to itself."[22]

In the language of sociology, the world became self-organizing and self-referential.[23] Like when the Gods of Lucian cheapened the Gods of Homer, secularity occurs when the world is taken in its own terms. It occurs when the depths of the past and the future are emptied. The emperor may very well adorn himself in the purple garments of the Gods, fancying himself in their timeless court, but everyone knew that

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[18] Ibid. Fenn 47

19 Alverson, Professor Hoyt. *Semantics and Experience: Universal Metaphors of Time in English, Mandarin, Hindi, and Sesotho (Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society).* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994 Pg. 95

20 Neustadter 1992:394

21 Fenn, Richard K.. *Time Exposure: The Personal Experience of Time in Secular Societies.* New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2000. Pg. 48

22 Gauchet, Marcel. *The Disenchantment of the World.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Pg. 203

23 Fenn 2000:21

behind that trabea dwelt a naked man: even a simple carpenter knew that – because the power of Christ is a secular power.

Lacking the institutions which sheltered individuals from the passage of time, and lacking the social commitments that communal time creates, individuals must seize the day; Carpe Diem is the axiom of secular ages because their time is all secular ages have. You may hear that the dead can entomb themselves, and that you ought to leave your familial commitments, in secular ages. Individuals are left to their own devices as to what exactly it means, if anything, to be a being-in-time. As Fenn writes, "The world is becoming increasingly impersonal: not only a matter of fact, but a matter of time."[24] No prophet may stand, as is Reinhold Niebuhr's concern with modernity, apart from society as if she dwelt from some transcendent watch tower to warn of the hazards ahead. No souls can be raised from a sacred history to embolden the moment; one must be joking to rationally view any nation as a "city on a hill;" constitutions are explicitly, hence Rousseau, against the transcendent nature of statehood by virtue of their mutability – they no longer emerge from mountain-tops. Even the "religious" ones are secular documents, because society openly self-creates constitutions and most every other once covenantal arrangement within the passage of time. Values, morals, institutions, property, armies, and families are clearly the work of society and not the residue of a transcendent past; they are clearly dated and can be changed without threatening the gods.[25] The transcendent perspective on institutional life is largely lost when time is secularized.

Society no longer stands for what is best in the individual, because to 'be a part of something' is far less significant and meaning-given when a person is a part of a lot of fleeting 'somethings.' 'What is best in the individual' is left to the individual to define. What clubs will she join? What morals will she attend to? Will she choose to be a pacifist, a vegetarian, a neo-conservative, or an artist? Her means are her own. She can no longer see as dignified or merit-worthy herself as represented in the values and beliefs of the institutions which matter-of-factly govern her society. They no longer govern her transcendence. She is told to move to Canada if she finds the United State's morals wanting. She is left to her own devices to find a means by which she may transcend, or bear, the inevitable passage of time. And so it is, Warhol's pithy statement concerning each person's fifteen minutes of fame is an expression of the fact that in a flat modernity one may only have fifteen minutes of individualized immortality; "the clock is running out even on one's life after death,"[26] because, returning to Fenn;

> "Even the bureaucracy of the churches, which used to mediate guarantees for the soul, is nearly as rational and impersonal as the state. It is up to the individual, therefore, to embark on the quest for salvation without the benefit or hindrance of clergy. What once was understood to be the freedom of the Christian has become widespread, if not universal."[27]

Knowing one's identity is amiss when it is free from others, let alone by the Gods, as one is left – in the words R. W. Emerson used for his new Adam – "sinless," "naked," with a

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24 Fenn 2000:48
25 Ibid. Pg.48
26 Ibid. Pg.110
27 Ibid. Pg.48

future for ones own crafting.[28] Though it may be easily said that Emerson's, and western societies', stance on freedom is not far from that which the Gospels throw first century Judea into when their secularizing spirits echoed, "You have heard it said, but I say unto you." Because, Christ's power is a secular one by means of the freedom it carries.

Secular forces destroy the timelessness of the state, the church, and traditional identities which trace history back through the generations. They make all fleeting. As Barbara Adam argues, there is a "feeling of time running out" in the secular world; a dangerous feeling – if one looks to Masada, Muntzer's followers, the Millerites, or the Branch Dividians – which often leads to private apocalypses. Yet, for Adam, this feeling is becoming all the more the status of society, rather than the exception, because of the incompatibility of highly rationalized and social "clock-time" with the creative and individual times of existential life.[29] The moments which the personal life wishes to recall are increasingly not related to the moments the society wishes to recall. They are too scattered, accidental, private, unnoticed and numerous, to be ritualized by others. The individual does not have the temporal support of the community for the significant points in one's life – they are largely had in one's own time.

Nor do the now non-transcendental institutions require the individual's temporal support, and remembrance, for their continuation into the future. There is no single ideal for a perfect future, no Kingdom of God to establish on earth, no comradity in fate – and, thereby, no manifest destiny or tools by which to give the societal passing of life a public purpose. Individuals are burdened by private joy and private grief, which is difficult to rise above or share; they, according to Fenn, "experience the passage of time, the loss of others, and their own temporality without the anesthetic formerly provided by a community and institutions that claim to transcend time itself."[30] Someone may come along and say the Sabbath is as much for man as it is for God, the ill may demand immediate healing, the defiled may be touched, and the most retched may claim forgiveness in secular ages. And the followers of that holy man who brings such desecrations may find themselves quite troubled that their bearer of the Sacred appears quite secular.

Of the few remaining matters which still regulate time in quite a medieval way are matters of justice, as Oliver Wendell Holmes explains, "If I were having a philosophical talk with a man I was going to have hanged I should say, 'I don't doubt that your act was inevitable for you but to make it more avoidable by others we purpose to sacrifice you to the common good. You may regard yourself as a soldier for dying for your country if you like. But the law must keep its promises.'"[31] Because the "promise-keeping" bases of justice – to use Steven Pinker's language – underlines the policy of applying penalty regardless of cost or common sense.[32] Such it is that when a death-row inmate attempts to cheat time by committing suicide we rush him to the emergency room, resurrect him, only to kill him on society's own time. This is how churchly, ritualized, institutionalized time once existed. The Church went to extraordinary means

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[28] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Journals & Essays*. New York: General Books Llc, 2009. Print.
29 Adam, Barbara. *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time.* London: Polity Press, 1995
30 Fenn 2000:54
31 Kaplan, John. *Criminal Justice: Introductory Cases and Materials.* Second ed. New York: The Foundation Press, 1978. Pg. 143
32 Pinker, Steven. *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature.* 2003. Reprint. Boston: Penguin (Non-Classics), 2003. Pg. 181

to keep members within the fold, the measures by which last-rights and baptisms may be given were increasingly (and are still increasingly) expanded as to allow society to maintain as wishful of thoughts as possible for those who pass without the church losing dominion over their souls. (And, occasionally the Church went through just as extensive measures to keep some out of the fold.)

Yet, the metaphors by which the Church developed its linguistics of time are quickly becoming meaningless, or gaining new meaning, and this ought to raise a number of questions for a theology which is called – in the language of Vatican II – to be in dialogue with the 'signs of the times.' The church faces an institutional dilemma because of its history of ritualizing judgment, verdict, penitence, and forgiveness, in a way which hardens the metaphors of time. Metaphors were traditionally hardened by means of the double-entendre of the Kingdom of God. Either churches favor a 'real' time absolution in their ritual, or favor an 'end-of-time' absolution in their eschatology – neither of which performs the miracle of escaping time metaphors terribly well. As Fenn says, "the tension between the active and the passive forms of waiting is a product of the Church's rituals. On the one hand, individuals are told to wait with eager anticipation for the beginning of the end, a beginning that can be a bane or a blessing depending on one's faith or virtues. On the other hand, the Church steps in as a source of protection against an end for which the believer may not be ready."[33] The trouble, I am contending, stems from the fact that neither of these metaphors engages the immediacy of modernity and thereby fall increasingly on deaf ears. The challenge in the coming years will be for theology to hold itself closer to a God who appears quite secular (in that God is freeing, flattening, and questioning) than one stuck in the dogmatic tradition of metaphors of time.

Such was the task of the early missionaries to encounter speakers of Aymara in the Andes. Amongst the Aymara time metaphors are turned in a complete 180 direction from the languages which much of Christian theology has been conceived in[34]; to go forward in time is to travel backward through time; to gain time is to lose time; the past is what is in front of you, and the future behind.[35] The early confusion of the missionaries was immense. Perhaps it could be said, they were resurrecting those who have not lived, and acting as those past had not yet existed.[36] The missionaries, clinging to their hardened metaphors of time, worked hard to reverse this 'flawed' language and largely failed. The missionaries were not willing to secularize their notion of time by relativizing it; they attempted to convert a language instead of a people.

Herein, we ought to ask ourselves 'Does a commitment to Christ mean a commitment to certain metaphors of time?' Because we are facing a world where theologized, and institutionalized, time increasingly seems strange or falls on deaf ears – just as it was quite odd to the speakers of Aymara. The Christian savior after all, if we read the Gospels as the threat to religion and empire they were, was a profound secularizer. The

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33 Fenn 2000:97

34 Orta, Andrew "Living the Past Another Way:" Reinstrumentalized Missionary Selves in Aymara Mission Fields" *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Autumn, 2002), pp. 707-743

35 Pinker, Steven. *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature.* Boston: Penguin (Non-Classics), 2008. Pg. 192

36 Ibid. Orta

tradition of persistent critique, and thereby progress, he started has brought forth what Charles Taylor has aptly termed the 'Secular Age.'[37]

The *lingua-franca* of such an age is increasingly mobile time/mobile individual; in fact, it is becoming such the standard metaphor that a cursory analysis of the popularity of the word "moment" over the word "time" in major U.S. newspapers finds that "moment" is now far surpassing "time" – a reversal over a single century. People have their "moments," rather than their "times," because "moment" is mobile. And, "mobility" represents a disconnect from the past, distance from what you have heard, estrangement from your family, dismissal from your tribe of "Jew" or "gentile," rejection of your class as "slave" or "free," mobility is a defining feature of secular ages. While newspapers and the term "moment" provide just a brief example, we could say much more in a longer-format as to why mobile-time/mobile-individual is the language of science, bureaucracy, media, and secularity. It dominates seemingly everywhere other than the Church.

The Christians knowing themselves as stained with the "tainted time" of a foreign linguistics are increasingly unsure of what exactly that time is. Has the Church forgotten that the narrative it clings to, and the savior it knows, is quite familiar with time-despite-institutions? Has it forgotten that the story of the Christian God's encounter with humanity was and is birthed through periods when time appears quite short, when the institutions have been secularized, and when a people "tarrying through the night" searching for answers to the "torrents of time?" The best comfort for a secular age, perhaps, comes from secular ages passed, from the very sources which create such ages. Because such ages are those Sacred moments in which the present breaks apart from the past for the sake of the future. Secular time need not be a threat to the Church. After all it is the very foundation upon which the entire edifice has been built.

37 Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age.* Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007