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Grounded theologies: 'Religion' and the 'secular' in human geography

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Abstract
This paper replies to Kong's (2010) lament that geographers of religion have not sufficiently intervened in religious studies. It advocates 'grounded theologies' as a rubric by which to investigate contemporary geographies of religion in a secular age. Arguing that secularization can itself be conceived as a theological process, the paper critiques a religious/secular dichotomy and argues that individualized spiritualities presently prevalent are indicative of Taylor's (2007) nova effect of proliferating grounded theologies. Case studies are drawn from social and cultural geographies of religious intersectionalities and from critical geopolitics.

Keywords
cultural geography, geopolitics, intersectionality, postcolonial, religion, secular, theology

I Introduction: 'religion,' 'the secular', and geographies of grounded theologies

In the past decade, there have been more than 10 special issues and numerous single articles on geographies of religion in various human geography journals. However, Kong (2010) notes that geographers of religion are still relatively unknown in the interdisciplinary enterprise of religious studies:

> What remains is for greater effort to be put into clarifying what religion is and is not. Thus far, geographers have tended to treat religion 'as an object of empirical study' ... rather than to engage more deeply with the theological and philosophical underpinnings of belief. This means not taking for granted the meaning of religion and the sacred, but studying the complexity of religion itself ... [for] geographical insights have not yet significantly influenced religious scholarship in other disciplines. (Kong 2010: 769–770)

Similarly, Yorgason and della Dora (2009) argue that religion is the last *terra incognita* in geography because it is often assessed for its relevance to secular spatial theories instead of being studied in its own right. The problem, it would seem, is that religion remains an undefined 'black box' in human geography, undermining the imperative to rectify the error that while 'race, class and gender are invariably invoked and studied as ways by which societies are fractured, religion is forgotten or conflated with race' (Kong, 2001: 212). After all, if 'the religious and the spiritual were and are central

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to the *everyday* lives of vast numbers of individuals' (Holloway and Valins, 2002: 5–6; see also Ammerman, 2007; Falah and Nagel, 2005; Orsi, 1999), to leave religion as the great geographical unknown would ignore how it 'rather "speaks back" through its own specificities – constraining, redirecting, interacting with, and often problematizing the human geographer's colonizing narrative' (Yorgason and della Dora, 2009: 631).

While I agree that religion should be conceptualized as a category of geographical analysis, I suggest that it is not necessary to define the religious in geography, as if there were anything that could be considered outside the bounds of religious inquiry. Still, some working definitions are in order. My central argument is that the task of geographers who deal with religion is to reveal spaces, places, and networks as constituted by *grounded theologies*, performative practices of place-making informed by understandings of the transcendent. They remain *theologies* because they involve some view of the transcendent, including some that take a negative view toward its very existence or relevance to spatial practices; they are *grounded* insofar as they inform immanent processes of cultural place-making, the negotiation of social identities, and the formations of political boundaries, including in geographies where theological analyses do not seem relevant. By grounding transcendent theologies in immanent geographies, I take my cue from Taylor's (2007: 16) reference to a secular age tending to deny 'any form of interpenetration between the things of Nature, on the one hand, and the "supernatural" on the other, be this understood in terms of the one transcendent God, or of Gods or spirits, or magic forces, or whatever', and yet being unable to escape the 'schizophrenic, or better, deeply cross-pressured' feeling of 'the sense that there is something more' than the immanent (Taylor, 2007: 727).

Indeed, grounded theologies can describe processes that have conventionally been labeled either 'religious' or 'secular'. By *religion*, I mean the practice of particular narratives regarding divine action, transcendent presence, or supernatural reality in the immanent world that in turn inform conceptions of place-making. By the *secular*, I refer in particular to the grounded theologies that focus on this-worldly concerns, whether by attempting to create consensus among different positions through dialogue, by privatizing transcendent experiences as irrelevant to the immanent, or by imposing a political regime to eradicate 'religion' altogether. In short, I will demonstrate that geographies of the 'secular' fall under the rubric of grounded theologies. This view is based on my geographical reading of discussions in the interdisciplinary enterprise of religious studies which hold that, despite attempts to construct the present as a secular age, the modern world remains theologically constituted, albeit through a proliferation of new religious subjectivities, including atheistic ones (Asad, 2003; Milbank, 2006; Taylor, 2007). Such a view, I suggest, is also a critical return to Eliade's (1959) understanding of humanity as *homo religiosus* whose bent toward the transcendent has not been fully superseded by secular foci on the immanent. Indeed, in what follows, I shall demonstrate that a view of secularization as a theological process itself has particular relevance for geographers, whether or not their work deals with 'religion' as conventionally conceived.

II From secularization to secular theologies: appropriating radical orthodoxy

Despite my interest in grounded theologies, my assessment of the secularization thesis is consonant with Wilford's (2010) complaint about overly facile understandings of secularity in geographies of religion. An influential premise within geography holds that the sighting of the religious in modern contexts either disproves

the secularization thesis (Holloway and Valins, 2002; Proctor, 2006) or has ushered in an age of postsecularity (Beaumont and Baker, 2011). However, Wilford conceives of secularization as a social process of differentiation, fragmenting the modern world by transferring sovereignty once held by sacred authorities over the ostensibly non-religious to the secular state (see Casanova, 1994). The result has been an increasing individualization and privatization of social life worlds, including religious ones (Bruce, 2001; Lilla, 2008). That even practitioners can consider religion private demonstrates that their religious practice has been infused by secular ideologies. The issue is 'not *whether* secular differentiation has occurred, but rather *what* are its ultimate effects?' (Wilford, 2010: 335).

However, the very secularization processes of differentiation that Wilford attempts to salvage are themselves theologically constituted. In this section, I shall explore the influential claim that what we assert to be 'secular' is in fact an inversion of Christian theology. To do this, I heed Henkel's (2005: 6) observation that geographers examining religion 'can only do so in close interdisciplinary interchange' with theology and religious studies (see also Kong, 2010: 770). It may be strange, if not suspicious, to open a paper about religions with Christianity. Asad (1993) replies for me:

> Hasty readers might conclude that my discussion of the Christian religion is skewed towards an authoritarian, centralized, elite perspective, and that consequently it fails to take into account the religions of heterodox believers, of resistant peasantries, of all those who cannot be completely controlled by the orthodox church. Or, worse still, that my discussion has no bearing on nondisciplinarian, voluntaristic, localized cults of noncentralized religions such as Hinduism ... If my effort reads in large part like a brief sketch of transmutations in Christianity from the Middle Ages until today, then that is not because I have arbitrarily confined my ethnographic examples to one religion. My aim has been to problematize the idea of an anthropological definition of religion by assigning that endeavor to a particular history of knowledge and power ... out of which the modern world has been constructed. (Asad, 1993: 54)

Echoing Asad, my discussion of theology should not be read as arbitrarily limiting the field of religious discussion to the tradition that I prefer, or, worse yet, as an agenda to proselytize geographers to subscribe to my theological views. Instead, my aim is to show that the claims of the secularization thesis depend on a subversion of Christian theology.

An influential school of thought within Christian theology holds that secularization is theological because, as Schmitt (2005) once put it, 'All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularised theological concepts'. Cavanaugh (2011) argues that secularization signifies a 'transfer of care for the holy from the church to state' so that the state can 'absorb the risk involved in living a mortal human life'. Arguments in this vein of theology have come to be known as 'radical orthodoxy', a school critical of secular ideologies that 'police the sublime' by privatizing religion, rendering it irrelevant to the public sphere (Milbank, 2006: 106; see also Milbank, 1997; Milbank et al., 1999; Pickstock, 1998). Cavanaugh's (1998) own contribution to this approach arises from work on torture in Pinochet's Chile, in which he observes that violent interrogation is a process of atomization by which social bodies (including religious ones) obstructing the state's direct claim to the individual are scattered. What has been enacted, Cavanaugh (2002) argues, is a new 'theopolitical imagination' in which the state stewards responsibility over the individual bodies of its citizens without intermediary forms of solidarity like the family, the guild, and the church.

This analysis of the subversion of the Christian liturgy in secular practice has not been limited to theologians, but has been noted by

scholars of religion more broadly. Foucault (1999) suggests that, while Christian ascetic practices of confession were originally used by mystics to develop control over their fleshly desires, they were co-opted by the 16th- and 17th-century state to discipline secular governmentalities in their citizenry. For Asad (2003), this insight is a call to perform 'anthropologies of the secular' that analyze how secular reasoning performs the human body. He argues that theological anthropologies shape understandings of agency and pain, for example. Thus, while pain in the early Christian tradition was understood as redemptive, a secular anthropology splits a person into two subjectivities: a public citizen of the state and a private person. Like Cavanaugh, Asad suggests that the anthropology that matters in a secular public is that of the citizen, in which pain (such as torture) caused by the state is seen increasingly as illegitimate in liberal contexts because a state is supposed to promote the productivity of citizens, not render them incapable of social contribution. However, voluntary experiences of pain in one's personal life, especially to promote sexual pleasure, are – like religion – strictly private and not governed by the state, as long as they do not hinder civic participation (see Taylor, 2007: 766–767). For Asad, this dualistic understanding of the body in relation to pain is at once an implicit theological shift that subverts Christian liturgical practice and also suggests the central role of the state in producing secularized subjectivities.

Yet describing the secular as theological is not to disavow the secularization thesis, per se; rather, following Taylor's (2007) acknowledgement of 'a secular age' with its own conditions of belief, it is to reassess secularization as the proliferation of new religious subjectivities, including atheistic ones, in the modern world. This 'nova effect' of religions, as Taylor (2007: 300–304) calls it, is often characterized more broadly by individual quests for spiritual fulfillment due to an individuated sense of the self (Taylor, 2007: 506–513). Butler (2008) is thus 'less sure that our secularism[s] do not already carry religious content', pointing out that secularities have often been constructed in relation to theologies that they attempt to reject, not through one homogeneous temporal movement of progress (Butler, 2008: 13). Indeed, Milbank (2006) argues outright that such secular sensibilities are themselves *theological* because they were historically derived from the theological shifts that made secularization possible. Similarly, Gregory (2012) argues that the historical genealogy of modern secularity consists of carefully considered philosophical moves on the part of theological actors that simultaneously rejected a Catholic sacramental ontology while retaining some of its practices. These genealogical accounts show 'that "scientific" social theories are themselves theologies or anti-theologies in disguise' (Milbank, 2006: 3), for such secular 'theologies' also approach the world with assumed metaphysical and cosmological narratives about the relationship between the transcendent and the world, stories performed by religious practitioners in their everyday practices. *Theology* in this sense refers not so much to the codification of religious propositions to which religious adherents give cognitive assent, but rather to the performative practice of narratives about metaphysical divine action in relation to the immanent world (Benedict XVI, 2007; Hauerwas, 2001; Milbank, 2006; Orsi, 2001). Secular theologies tend to frame religious practitioners as individuals in relation to their private senses of the transcendent.

Such theological views should be of particular interest to human geographers, whether or not they ultimately agree with the premises of radical orthodoxy. While some have used radical orthodoxy to critique the explanation of religious phenomena via immanent social factors as doing 'epistemic violence' to grounded theologies (Ley and Tse, 2013; Milbank, 2006; Paddison, 2011; Yorgason and della Dora, 2009), here

is where geographers might depart from the 'imperative' of radical orthodoxy to return the world to a Christian sacramental ontology (Pickstock, 1998: xii). A new research agenda might demonstrate how grounded theologies, whether conventionally 'religious' or 'secular', are put to work in the contestations that continually shape everyday human geographies. Such an approach would neither dispute the secularization thesis on the basis of religious phenomena nor posit the secular as a purely non-theological social context for religions in the modern world. Instead, it would argue that a central but often overlooked task for geographers is to map the *grounded theologies* whose contestations shape a secular age.

III Recovering *homo religiosus*: transcending sacralizing constructivism

Mapping grounded theologies entails a critical recovery of Eliade's (1959) spatial understanding of *homo religiosus*, that humanity retains a sense of transcendence despite the advent of modernity. Such a return to Eliade must be *critical*, however, for his understanding of hierophany, the in-breaking of the sacred into the profane, still 'takes the sequestration of the sacred too far' as it perpetuates the normativity of a universal religion-secular dichotomy (Holloway, 2003: 1962). Following Asad (1993), I shall show that a critical return to *homo religiosus* would read 'religion' and 'the secular' as performing the boundary between the public and the private as a grounded theology.

As the founding fathers of modern religious studies originally conceived of 'religion', Kong's (2010) call to define the religious would have been simple. Durkheim (1915: 52) contended that the 'one common characteristic' of all religious beliefs was that 'they presuppose a classification of all the things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words *profane* and *sacred*'. Likewise, Weber (2003 [1930]: 181) posited a metanarrative in which the Protestant work ethic with its sacred calling to work had become 'disenchanted' into an 'iron cage' of secular asceticism apparent in capitalist organizational regimes that have no room for the transcendent. Recalling James's (2002) understanding of 'the varieties of religious experience' as psychological phenomena, Geertz (1973: 90) argued that religion could be seen as a 'cultural system' examinable for its 'system of symbols' that could induce 'long-lasting moods and motivations' in which 'a general order of existence' could be accepted as 'uniquely realistic' (see Luhrmann, 2012; Taves, 1999, 2009, 2011). In these founding texts, then, 'religion' is opposed to the public profane in which these private psychologically constructed moods are rendered irrelevant.

Geographical analyses derived from this sacred-profane dichotomy may see religion as but one social practice to be analyzed in a conception of space that is both 'material and metaphorical, physical and imagined' (Knott, 2005: 13). Within geography, such studies fall under Isaac's (1965) definition of *geographies of religion* that present theologically neutral readings of religious space, as opposed to *religious geographies* that advance confessionally theological readings of the world (Kong, 1990; Park, 1994). Following Lefebvre's (1991) triangulation of physical, mental, and social space, Knott (2005) argues that religion needs to be studied as it is lived in the contemporary spaces of global capital and unequal power geometries in late modernity. For Kong (2010), these spaces are represented by global shifts taking place in the 21st century: aging populations, environmental degradation, rapid urbanization, and increased human mobilities. Religion needs to be shown to be relevant to these broader social processes that will continue to proceed regardless of whether the sacred engages them or not (Pacione, 2000).

However, to *relate* religion to spaces that may be otherwise non-religious assumes that these geographical contexts for the sacred – the 'profane,' so to speak – begin as non-theological. When Knott (2005: 104) calls for an analysis of the contestations between the religious and the secular in making late-modern places, she suggests that geographers engage the work of Jonathan Z. Smith (1978, 1992). Smith argues *contra* Eliade that sacred spaces have to be *sacralized*, constructed through ritual practices, in arbitrary places as ideological emplacements of the sacred-profane dichotomy that map positions of power onto physical landscapes (see Duncan, 1990). Likewise, Kong (2001: 212–213) also conceptualizes 'the sacred' as 'situational ... tied up with, and [drawing] meaning from, social and political relationships' while preserving a 'substantial' quality that is 'poetic'.

However, understanding the sacred as socially constructed is laced with its own theological assumptions, for it follows the Durkheimian tradition of exclusively examining the social implications of religion. Durkheim's (1915) distillation of primitive religion to *totemism*, a collective force that unites primitive societies, is a theological statement, representing supernatural entities as impersonal forces (*mana*) that shape the configuration of social spaces. Based on this abstract theology, Durkheim polices what sociologists can and cannot know about the relationship between religion and society:

> Of the two functions which religion originally fulfilled, there is one, and only one, which tends to escape it more and more: that is its speculative function. That which science refuses to grant to religion is not its right to exist, but its right to dogmatize upon the nature of things and the special competence which it claims for itself for knowing man and the world ... [and] since there is no proper subject for religious speculation outside that reality to which scientific reflection is applied, it is evident that this former cannot play the same role in the future that it played in the past. (Durkheim, 1915: 478)

Durkheim's (1915: 476) totemic theological sociology was consistent with the universal ideals of the French Revolution that attempted to construct a society purely through scientific methodologies. While Smith (1992) argues that a priori non-sacred places must be sacralized, Durkheim suggests that what is constructed is not the sacred, but rather the 'profane', as he replaces 'speculation' with 'science'.

Eliade (1959) problematizes this implicit dichotomy between religious and secular space. While adopting Durkheim's (1915: 52) postulated differentiation between the two, he flips Durkheim's social primacy with a radical argument that humans are primarily *homo religiosus* even if they profess to be profane. Following Otto's (1923) ruminations on how the numinous as an encounter between humans and the 'wholly other' divine is integral to the formation of human sociality, Eliade (1959: 203) suggests that 'this nonreligious man [sic] descends from *homo religiosus* and, whether he likes it or not, he is also the work of religious man ... the result of a progress of desacralization' that is apparently still incomplete, as evidenced by the myths developed in the unconscious explored by psychotherapists. Such an analysis recalled Deffontaines's (1948) geographical argument that religions affected 'land exploitation' by framing specific times and sites as sacred, harnessing the rhythm of the seasons to a sacred chorus that was not humanly constructed. It also anticipated Taylor's (2007) later observation of the cross-pressures of a secular age toward world structures closed to sacred interference on the one hand while being privately fascinated by the macabre and the mythological.

Cultural geographers, whether of the older Berkeley school or of the new cultural geography, have rightly taken on Eliade's (1959) *homo religiosus* spatiality to understand how places are made. Sopher (1967) suggested that apparently anti-theological geographies of communism, nationalism, and fascism were in fact 'quasi-religious', ideological conceptions of the

world developed from theological thought that affected the geographical landscape as much as more self-evident religions might affect farming patterns. Similarly, Zelinsky (1961) argued that 'culture-regions' in America that may look non-theological at face value were in fact formed by dominant patterns of Catholic and Protestant denominational membership. In his study of ancient Chinese cities, Wheatley (1971) also contended that early urban centres were functional sites of ritual intercession before they took on political and economic functions. Religion was an interpretive key to the cultural landscape because the landscape itself was theologically derived.

With the advent of the new cultural geography, more attention was given to how the landscape was a product of contestation between parties that also bore implicitly theological assumptions (Duncan, 1980, 1990; Henkel, 2005). When Duncan (1990) read the pre-modern Kandyan city as text, he did so in relation to a Kandyan cosmology politically manipulated to legitimize the sovereignty of the king. For Duncan, this cultural geography was based on a religious imagination, but, instead of simply showing the Kandyan urban landscape as theologically derived as old cultural geographers would have done, Duncan skillfully showed that religious practices constantly reworked conceptions of Kandyan kingship, which were then reflected in the built environment. In modernity, such religious power relations often feature the secular state as an implicitly theological actor that polices religion to reinforce state power (Mahmood, 2007). Kong has performed a number of case studies of such state power in Singapore in spaces 'beyond the officially sacred' (Kong, 2001: 228): the disbanding of evangelical house churches in residential areas because they are in the wrong land-use zone (Kong, 2002), the tense interactions between the state's Ministry of Education and Muslim *madrasah* (school) curricula (Kong, 2005a), the collection of religious artifacts for state museums (Kong, 2005b), and new religious spatialities produced by communications technology (Kong, 2006). Likewise, Yeoh (1996) reads Singaporean cemeteries as the product of contestation between the sacred imaginations of colonized Chinese populations and a British technocratic colonial government that privileged urban functionality. In each of these cases, places are made through the contestation of actors who carry with them assumptions about the theological. The fault lines that lay between these parties often fall along factors of power, between theologies that support dominant ruling regimes and those who resist them.

However, emphasizing theological contestation in the new cultural geography ultimately leads to a postcolonial critique of Eliade's use of the word 'religion' as a universal impulse. After all, the landscape in cultural geography is often the outcome of a series of disputes, usually about the territorialization of particular grounded theologies over others, especially in colonial and postcolonial contexts. This suggests that 'religion' may not be an inherently universal impulse, for, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1991) argues, *religion* is itself a distinctively western concept that has morphed from its antique connotations of piety to its modern Enlightenment guise: the codification of cultural identity politics on the one hand and the construction of an ideologically non-religious secular space on the other (see Calhoun et al., 2011). Asad (1993: 28) contends that this universalizing impulse is a normalizing colonial ideology, a search for a 'transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon' that obscures a post-Reformation European history in which attempts were made to confine spiritual essences from this-worldly political activity. Masuzawa (2005) suggests that this European Christian project found its full realization in the construction of 'world religions' as a concept, dividing the world between the West, with its aspirations to universality, and the orientalized 'rest', with their localized, nationalized, and racially

exclusive religions. Kwok (2005: 6) thus laments 'the lengthy history of theology's relation with empire building especially in the modern period'. For these scholars, what is colonial about the word 'religion' is that 'religions' in colonized territories have been read through universalistic lenses that emphasize the private experience of interior transcendence, the primacy of cognitive belief over practice, and their irrelevance to public geographies. To use this framework, this critique suggests, is to commit epistemic violence on the religious traditions being studied, as it imposes particular strands of Christian theology as analytical grids onto faiths that might not fit. The examples drawn from the new cultural geography are cases in point, as they reveal that even processes as seemingly non-theological as urban planning are laced with theological assumptions about the place of 'religion' in the built environment.

However, pointing out that the genealogy of 'religion' as a term is problematic does not mean that the word is no longer salient. Instead, it is to remark on how 'religion' needs to be redefined so that it refers to particular grounded theologies at work in place-making rather than privately experienced universal spiritual essences with little relevance to issues of public concern. Indeed, Asad (1993: 54) contends that what we mean by 'religion' must be explicitly translated to avoid Enlightenment pretensions to universality: 'The anthropological student of *particular* religions should therefore begin [by] unpacking the comprehensive concept which he or she translates as "religion" into heterogeneous elements according to its historical character.' Following Stump's (2008: 222) understanding of religious territoriality as 'the social ordering of space' through theological sensibilities, human geographers could follow Secor's (2007: 158) understanding of religion as a 'way of being in the world'. Grounded theologies are not abstract speculations, for they have concrete implications for how practitioners understand their own existence in ways that inform their place-making practices (see Hauerwas, 2001; Milbank, 2006; Taylor, 2007). Such an ontological reframing recalls Holloway's (2003) argument that when the sacred is studied in the context of the everyday, the issue to be examined is not constructive sacralization (see Holloway, 2000, 2010). Such observations suggest alternative ontological possibilities for understanding geographies of religion and the secular. Instead of placing the burden on practitioners to sacralize places that are otherwise non-sacred, Holloway observes that the everyday, mundane objects in the New Age Movement reveal that modern practitioners are not sacralizing space; they are revealing and interpreting its a priori sacred character. Rather than assuming a dichotomy between 'religion' and the 'secular', a better approach is to study the contestations over the particular grounded theologies that practitioners, even presumably 'secular' ones with seemingly little concept of the transcendent, think appropriately interpret these geographies. After all, a secular theology that has little patience for transcendence – indeed, even an interpretation that regards transcendence as false consciousness – is itself a position on the transcendent.

Accordingly, the various spaces presumed to be secular – especially public ones – should receive similar ontological treatment. Drawing from religious contestations in American public life such as controversies over the place of the Ten Commandments in public spaces, Howe (2008, 2009) notes that the popular lambasting of 'secularity' as normatively iconoclastic toward religion is empirically tenuous at best, for multiple forms of secularity employing differential understandings of religion are at work in public discourse (see Butler, 2008; Jakobsen and Pellegrini, 2003, 2008). Following Taylor (2007), the heterogeneity of possible secularities can also be subsumed under what Asad terms the 'particularities' of what we translate as 'religion'. Rejecting the 'subtraction stories' that premise secularity as simply omitting religion from public

discourse, Taylor argues that a 'secular age' refers to new conditions of belief best characterized as a 'nova effect' of a mélange of religious subjectivities. These too are theological ontologies able to be mapped in conversation with each other as well as in broader reference to the 'conditions of belief' that enable such proliferation.

If the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane is a false one, then a case is to be made for geographers to map how the contestations of grounded theologies with all of their various historical particularities have shaped the modern world. Religions are not merely objects of study either as transcendent phenomena disproving the secularization thesis (Holloway and Valins, 2002; Kong, 2010; Proctor, 2006; Yorgason and della Dora, 2009) or as sacred archipelagoes fragmented by a sea of secularity (Wilford, 2010). Rather, both 'religion' and the 'secular', as reconstituted in religious studies, are terms that refer to how grounded theologies inform place-making in a secular age.

IV Placing grounded theologies: lived religion in the 'nova effect'

In this section, I demonstrate that the secular theologies I have discussed previously are implicitly present in social and cultural geographies of religion and need to be explicitly revealed as such. Given a religious studies framework, the descriptions of intersectional religious experiences in geographical case studies are revealing of grounded theologies in quotidian place-making (Holloway, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2010; Holloway and Valins, 2002; Kong, 2001, 2010). However, the theological constitutions of such geographies have seldom been clearly revealed. Placed against the backdrop of Taylor's (2007) nova effect, lived religions are part and parcel of the new religious subjectivities in the modern moral order, reflecting the fragmentation of a differentiated society (Bruce, 2001; Cavanaugh, 1998, 2002, 2011; Gregory, 2012; Lilla, 2008; Wilford, 2010). Accordingly, I use the nova effect as a framework to reinterpret both the literature in geography that studies the social and cultural geographies of religious intersectionalities (see Dwyer, 1999a, 1999b; Hopkins, 2007b) as well as the literature on *lived religion* in religious studies that demonstrates that individuals and local communities practice their religions in distinct forms that are often unsanctioned by official religious authorities (Ammermann, 2007; McGuire, 2008; Orsi, 1998, 1999, 2010).

Social and cultural geographers have taken note of the intersections of religion in the construction of everyday subjectivities, especially after the events of 11 September 2001 (Kong, 2010). Indeed, before that, Dwyer (1999a, 1999b) had already demonstrated that the social participation of young Muslim women in Britain in both their religious and school communities led to hybrid practices of dress and communal life that constituted 'alternative femininities', identities expressed as being British Asian women. After the subsequent al-Qaeda attacks in global cities in the Atlantic region, this work expanded to quantitative analyses of the segregation of different ethnic blocs of Muslims in London (Peach, 2002), a problematization of the 'parallel lives' thesis (Phillips, 2006), and a call to understand Islamic practitioners in an intersectional matrix of religion, age, gender, and class (Hopkins, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2010). Efforts were made also to unpack the racialized logics in anti-mosque-building politics (Dunn, 2004; Naylor and Ryan, 2002), to destabilize the monolithic image of the Muslim woman (Falah and Nagel, 2005), and to demonstrate that Muslims all over the Islamic world were in fact heterogeneous with varying understandings of identity, citizenship, and belonging (Aitchison et al., 2007). Such geographical studies of the paradoxical intersectional assemblages in the everyday lives of Muslims often portray their quotidian practices as non-violent and diverse in the context of escalating geopolitical tension between the Islamic world and the West.

Such concerns with religion as an integral part of these assemblages typify these geographers' concern that religion is not merely an 'opiate of the masses' that veils the contribution of more immanent social factors in the construction of subjectivities (see Marx, 1972: 12). Hopkins (2007b: 165) argues against how 'religion is often forgotten about or is combined and subsumed under the study of race'. He calls for studies of the relations among religion, race, gender, and age to counter the situation that, for example, 'the experiences of religious and racialized young men are marginalized from geographic scholarship, and the geographies inhabited, contested and manipulated by this particular group are somewhat ill-defined and unclear'. Hopkins's initiative does not only apply to men: in a collection designed to problematize the unitary figure of the veiled Muslim woman as a universal ideal type, Nagel (2005: 13) holds that the volume 'makes a special attempt to explore the ways in which religious beliefs, institutions, practices, and discourses shape women's spatiality'.

Accordingly, geographers who have studied religion often demonstrate the surprisingly liberating possibilities enabled when religions intersect with other social factors to create new modern subjectivities. While focused on secular economic development, Olson (2006) argues for an analysis of 'the power of ideas' in modern religious traditions (see Olson and Silvey, 2006). In Latin America, she examines the ineffectiveness of Catholic liberation theologians for Peruvian economic development because their promises of social justice were left unfulfilled in the long run. In contrast, transnational 'health-and-wealth' American Pentecostals are locally revered because they subscribe to a more holistic tradition that combines religious ecstatic experience with pro-development action. While acknowledging that such theologies are themselves susceptible to co-optation for state governmentality (see O'Neill, 2009; Taylor, 2007), this assessment corroborates Garrard-Burnett's (1998) analysis of Protestantism in Guatemala as simultaneously bringing an ethos of order while furthering a liberal political agenda that feels liberating in relation to historic Catholic hegemony in Latin America. Similarly, Gökariksel (2009) demonstrates that Muslim women who wore headscarves in secular Turkey resisted the (then) anti-veiling discipline of the state by merging their civil subjectivities and their personal religious expressions. The individual women she studied each journeyed toward an individual religious conversion to Islam, some born into the faith, others later converts, each discovering the wearing of headscarves in Istanbul to be what Secor (2004) sees as spatial strategies of resistance to the Turkish regime's hegemonic secular spatial structure (see also Asad, 2003). Piety aside, however, Gökariksel and Secor (2009, 2010) find also that, in the Turkish veiling industry, veiling fashion itself is better conceptualized as a producer of modern fashion commodities whose decadence is resisted and reinterpreted by their wearers. These religious practices are discussed as 'modern' practices, 'enchanted' though they are by faith, with piety as integral to a religious interpretation of modernity as spiritual progress in the world (Deeb, 2006).

These geographies are paralleled in religious studies of lived religion, which often show how local religious practices do not necessarily reflect official institutional teaching. McGuire (2008: 4) found through her decades of fieldwork among popular American religious movements that individuals were instructed to 'blend their "traditional" Catholic practices (which already varied greatly, for instance by ethnic group and education level) with new religious expressions that spoke to their movement's values or to their individual lives' (see also Orsi, 1998, 1999, 2010). Warner (2005) thus argues for a 'new paradigm' of American religious sociology that focuses on how individuals choose to become members of religious congregations where religious life is lived in gathered communities (see Chen, 2008; Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000, 2002; Jeung, 2005; Suh,

2004; Warner and Wittner, 1998). As Stark and Finke (2000) have shown, part of this choice reflects the presence of a 'new religious economics' in which persons rationally choose sects to which to belong, although, as Ammerman (2005) also shows, social change also affects how the people who make up religious congregations choose to adapt – some succeeding, others failing. Indeed, this is a key issue facing immigrant congregations in North America for, while they once provided social services, emotional support, and a community built on common language and backgrounds to first-generation migrants in need, the second generation and newcomers who may not share these backgrounds may be unintentionally excluded, often to the detriment of community growth (Beattie and Ley, 2003; Ley, 2008; Ley and Tse, 2013; Tse, 2011). In short, to study lived religion is to accord individuals within religious communities the agency to compose their own intersectional subjectivities.

However, the very fact that new religious subjectivities are developed at such local levels implies that Taylor's (2007) nova effect is particularly relevant to these studies. After all, Taylor's notion of a secular age focuses on individual questing spiritualities, framing secularization as a theological process. To miss this is to uncritically assume that individual religious practice is inherently normative, a methodological issue particularly brought out by recent social geographies of sexuality in the Anglican Communion. Vanderbeck et al. (2010) question 'Christian relationality' in their study of local Anglican congregations in England, South Africa, and the United States, showing at the local level how differences in theological doctrine are differentially accepted. Sadgrove et al. (2010) critique how the bishops at the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem in 2008 attempted to construct a monolithic Christian orthodoxy by discouraging participants from speaking with the media and researchers. Nevertheless, Valentine et al. (2010) note that events such as GAFCON and the Lambeth Conference are moments when differences come together, emplacing the complex intersections between factors as divergent as sexuality and religion. Indeed, for Vanderbeck et al. (2011), not even the progressive 'gay rights' groups are monolithic; rather, they have to construct consensus themselves by stressing at various points their Christian orthodoxy and life-long monogamy in an effort to show that they are a united movement (see Cheng, 2011, 2012). With so much proliferation of difference from the intersection of various social geographies, the general argument being made here is that the focus of research should be on how individuals negotiate their own personal intersections among faith, sexuality, and society despite hierarchical attempts to construct hegemonic unities among diverse theological groups.

However, what is seldom explicit in these various literatures is that examples of 'religion as expressed and experienced in the lives of individuals' (McGuire, 2008: 3) are themselves contextualized by the theological backdrop of the modern world in which these subjectivities proliferate in a secular 'nova effect' (Taylor, 2007). Even when liberal logics of individual self-fashioning are resisted, the geographies that result are often contestations over grounded theologies between 'secular' and 'religious' parties. Mahmood (2005) illustrates this point brilliantly in her study of the Egyptian women's mosque movement in the 1990s. Eschewing the language of liberalism by calling her subjects 'nonliberal' in their practice of piety in the face of state secularist attempts (see Mahmood, 2005: 38–39), her alternative is to frame the state as a proponent of secular theology that is threatened by such piety movements in a clash of grounded theologies (see Mahmood, 2007). Like Mahmood, Taylor (2007) also concludes his account with stories of orthodox Catholic conversions to non-secular sacramental ontologies that are born of radical discontentment with the cross-pressures of an immanent frame. That not *all* the actors Taylor describes make these

conversions, however, suggests there are also those who cope with the cross-pressures of a secular age by themselves taking on secular theological narratives even while justifying their own religious practices. For example, in pointing out the fragmentation of the putatively orthodox and progressive parties in the Anglican Communion, geographers may well have uncovered de facto secular grounded theologies in the constructions of orthodoxies and meanings of communion vying for legitimacy in global Anglicanism. Likewise, that Gökariksel's (2009) headscarf-wearing women are individuals who come to *discover* fulfillment in their newfound Islamic subjectivities marks them as participants in Taylor's (2007) modern spiritualities of quest, using piety as a vehicle to find spiritual progress and personal fullness (Deeb, 2006). Following Mahmood (2005, 2007), I am not making an argument that *all* modern religious practice is inevitably secularized by discourses of liberalism, and I am not saying that *all* religious persons become Taylor's converts out of an immanent frame. What I *am* saying, though, is that both pious conversions to nonliberal traditions as well as unintentional secular practices within religious traditions happen in reaction to what is perceived as the policing power of secular theologies (Mahmood, 2007; Milbank, 2006).

Such a view would problematize recent trends in postsecular geographies (see Habermas, 2005, 2006; Habermas and Ratzinger, 2004), though not in the same way as Kong (2010) when she notes the continuing presence of religion in a world assumed to be secular. When postsecular geographers argue that faith-based organizations fill a service gap in neoliberal cities while allowing persons of varying faith traditions to mingle while pursuing common social causes (see Beaumont, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Beaumont and Baker, 2011; Beaumont and Dias, 2008; Cloke, 2002, 2011; Cloke et al., 2005), are they not in fact describing the grounding of secular theologies in faith-based organizations? After all, to portray de facto interfaith mixing in religious spaces for *secular* causes is to bracket the transcendent and elevate an immanent sphere of action, precisely the grounding of a secular theology. Likewise, in Levitt's (2007) study of migrants of different religions to Boston, all expressed interest in the American dream and thus often straddled the middle of the political spectrum, performing what Sopher (1967) calls a 'quasi-religious' nationalistic grounded theology (see Levitt, 2001, 2003; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Such research would give insight into the presence of the theological in geographies that look 'profanely' non-religious but that are fraught with the contestation of grounded theologies. Indeed, such contestation is precisely what Taylor (2007) calls the nova effect of new religious subjectivities made possible by secular conditions of belief.

V Peaceful cohabitation: critical geopolitics and lived grounded theologies

This section imports lived religion into a discussion of critical political geography. Agnew (2006: 183) has called the 21st century the age in which 'religion is the emerging political language', a view that I have modified with the foregoing argument that even secular discourses are theological. Agnew's perspective recalls Casanova's (1994) evaluation of public religions in the late 20th century as ambivalent forms of religious resurgence. Tracing the historical privatization of Catholicism and Protestantism in five nation states, Casanova suggests that their forays into civil society for popular solidarity against totalitarian regimes in the 1960s–1980s were temporary, as they were often relegated to the private sphere after their public interventions were made. At the turn of the 21st century, Agnew suggests that the new issue facing critical geopolitics is not the use of religions for social justice, but the increased apocalyptic tenor of new public religions that seem to advocate for regimes of terror and exclusion.

Following the previous sections, I contend that religion in geopolitics must also be understood as grounded theologies in practice, not as veils for immanent factors of injustice. Ammerman's (1993) chastisement of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) handling of the Branch Davidians in a Department of Justice Report is instructive. Ammerman criticizes the FBI for handling the apocalyptic sect in Waco, Texas, as a mere military operation, so that when armed forces were deployed to force David Koresh to surrender, Koresh enacted a mass suicide by immolation because he thought the literal end of the world had come. Ammerman argues that this blunder could have been avoided had the FBI understood Koresh's grounded theology through which he interpreted the events that were besetting him. Juergensmeyer (2010) calls these grounded theologies a 'socio-theological paradigm', a combination of sociospatial contexts (which I have argued are themselves theologically constituted) with explicit theological articulations. For Juergensmeyer (2001), comprehending the role of these paradigms in the 'cultures of violence' that inform religious terrorism enables us to understand how religious practitioners make sense of the world politically instead of uncritically assuming that 'religion' necessarily promotes violence.

Accordingly, while much attention has been devoted to the motivational ability of religious imaginations to underwrite political exclusion and expansionism (Dijkink, 2006; Han, 2008; Sidorov, 2006; Sturm, 2006, 2008; Wallace, 2006; West, 2006), current discussions of religious geopolitics are increasingly nuanced (e.g. Han, 2010), shying away from assuming that religions necessarily enshrine what Milbank (2006) calls 'an ontology of violence' (see Girard, 2001). In particular, theological eschatology, the theology of the end times, has been underscored as a key factor in religious geopolitical imaginations (Dittmer, 2008; Han, 2008; Sturm, 2006, 2008). Dittmer and Sturm's (2010: 3) collection on the topic attempts to be sensitive to 'some strands of American evangelicalism in perpetuating injustice and bodily violence (and equally ... may hold the keys to reducing injustice and violence)'. The volume continues critiques of a premillennial Christian eschatology enshrined by the fictional *Left Behind* series in which the Bible is interpreted to uncritically perpetuate American exceptionalism and orientalism (see also Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer and Spears, 2009). However, as Connolly (2010: xiii) notes in the foreword, there are evangelicals who, while continuing to subscribe to conservative Christian doctrine, do not 'demonize opponents' and seek 'expansive engagements within [their] church' with a 'presumptive generosity' toward the world (see Connolly, 2008). For example, Megoran (2004, 2010) demonstrates that an alternative to geopolitical conflict can be found when religious practitioners apologize for their historical violent actions. These theological differences among Christians suggest that geographers also need to research geopolitical imaginations produced by different theological eschatologies, including pacifist versions with an interpretation of the end as a divine new creation of a world of peace, justice, and charity (e.g. Benedict XVI, 2007; Brueggemann, 2001; Moltmann, 1967; Volf, 1996; Wright, 1992, 1996, 2003, 2008; Yoder, 1994).

In short, critical political geographers are in a unique position to explore the diversity of lived grounded theologies as they are put to work in the shaping of geopolitical boundaries and in peacemaking. Butler (2003) sees this as a seminal contemporary issue in her critique of charges of anti-Semitism directed at any criticism of the Israeli state. Butler argues that there are many kinds of Jews, some associated with the state, some disassociated, and some (like herself) who are emotionally invested and critical. What is needed, Butler (2011, 2012) proposes, is a new formulation of religious life in contemporary geopolitics in which the narratives of dispossession enacted

by internal dissenters in each religious tradition are explicitly discussed. These conversations would establish continuity between the social justice Casanova (1994) describes and the apocalypticism Agnew (2006) decries. Indeed, Juergensmeyer (1993, 2008) provocatively suggests that recent forms of religious violence can often be explained as theological actors seeking to replace secular political ideologies because of their perceived failures to seek the common good. As Mahmood (2005: 17) reminds us, 'an appeal to understanding the coherence of a discursive tradition is neither to justify that tradition, nor to argue for some irreducible essentialism or cultural relativism' but rather 'to take a necessary step toward explaining the force that a discourse commands'. In the face of the nova effect, geographers must be able to map the multiplicity of religious subjectivities so as to lead away from violent action toward Butler's prescription of religious cohabitation founded on the humility that emerges from sharing experiences of loss and grief and apologizing for historic wrongs (Megoran, 2010). The ethical imperative of such geographical analyses is not to show that religions are relevant to secular political discourse; it is rather to demonstrate that what continues to shape contemporary geopolitical formations are contestations and interactions among grounded theologies, both conventionally religious and secular ones.

VI Conclusion: grounded theologies and human geography

To say that religion is a category of analysis is to reveal the theological constitutions of contemporary human geographies. I have advocated a critical return to Eliade's (1959) postulation that modern geographies have not ceased to be theologically constituted. However, I also acknowledge that 'religion' as a term is a construction that in the modern era has demarcated an illusory line between matters of faith and secular spaces of the purely social and political. The argument of my paper has been that this division is not possible, for it conceals the theological constitution of the world. Moreover, I have shown that such secular conditions of belief are themselves theological, described most aptly by Taylor's (2007) nova effect of new religious subjectivities. Case studies of individual socio-theological intersections become important when placed against this backdrop, for doing so shows a hybridity between the presumably religious and the secular modern. Such geographies are politically salient, for they reveal that even geopolitical formations are constructed through lived grounded theologies.

My aim has been to show that mapping religion reveals the theological constitution of the world, empowering geographers to describe the interaction of grounded theologies, even secular ones, at various scales. Research agendas that follow from this might ask how secular theologies in the modern world police and are contested by other grounded theologies in place-making processes in fields as diverse as urban geographies, geopolitical formations, and transnational migration. Moreover, they might inquire how those who claim to be 'religious' may be performing secular theologies in their spatial practices and how those who purport to have no 'religious' leanings make places informed by implicit theological narratives. Religion should thus not be defined for what it is and is not so as to be made relevant to a secular age. Instead, it should be used as an analytical key to show that the spatial subjectivities studied in geography are in fact theologically constituted, an ontology that often entails contestation among theologies. Indeed, such research programs would have the ironic effect of showing that it is not religion that must be made relevant to secularity, but that secularities are but grounded theologies among many others in the continuous making of modern space.

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