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# Foreword from the President

Since its creation, fall, and subsequent rebirth, it cannot be said that the PSU Philosophical Society has never had an uneventful year, but the 2018-19 academic year was particularly noteworthy for the organization. As has become a tradition for the organization in recent years, we attended Truman State's annual Philosophy and Religion conference, but what made this year's trip especially significant was the opportunity to watch one of our own members present his work and research at the conference. Indeed, Braidon Beard's presentation over the use of religion in North American video games (the paper of which is included in this journal) was a highlight of the year for this organization. Seven members of PSUPS, including the faculty advisor, Dr. Don Viney, attended the meeting: Mark Weaver, Jason Davis, Christian Blaise Jacks, Jack Bertoncino, Hope Wilson, and Eli Brown. In addition, for the first time in a few years, the talent of various writers created a new edition of the *Logos Sophia* journal. Beyond these events, the club continued its weekly meetings, where discussion and debate sparked many of the papers in this journal while also cultivating a thought-provoking and welcoming environment for Pittsburg State University's students; where opinions and thoughts are challenged, but always welcome. The organization then, of course, hopes that these essays can help spread this kind of debate and discourse beyond their meetings.

The Philosophical Society thanks Hope Wilson for designing the cover of this issue of Logos-Sophia and Audrey Elmore for redesigning the Society's "Gorilla holding a human skull" logo.

- *Eli Brown* -

## Learning from Refutation: Examining the Importance of Refuted Argument by Using Anselm Of Canterbury's Ontological Argument

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When thinking of arguments in the Philosophy of Religion, the debate over the existence of a god (or gods) and its nature is certainly one of the most prevalent debates that exists. Regardless of which god is being referred to, countless arguments have been and will be made regarding if, how, and why one exists. Even more numerous than the debates themselves is the discourse about the arguments. This discussion permeates virtually all communities, concerned with who is making the strongest argument. Of all of the debacles, debates, and discourse, however, the ontological theory of God's existence, given in the 11th century by Saint Anselm of Canterbury, is among the most scrutinized. There have been many responses and examinations of this argument, but the most significant one is actually one that has been often disputed and ultimately seen as an improper critique of Anselm's argument. Gaulino of Marmoutiers attack on Anselm's ontological theory for God's existence does not hold up, but the important thing is not the validity of his argument, but the questions that arise from his critique, and how the ontological argument must respond to them.

To begin, it is crucial to present the ontological argument for God's existence so that it can be examined and critiqued in reference to Gaulino's views. The argument made in the 10th century by Anselm is likely the most widely known ontological argument and will be formulated as follows:

1. It is true by definition that nothing greater than God can be imagined.

2. God exists in the mind as a concept or idea.

3. A being that exists both in reality and in the mind as thought is greater than that which only exists in the mind as a thought.

4. If God were to only be a thought in the mind, then a being greater than God must exist, as a being that exists only in the mind is not as great as that which exists in both mind and reality.

5. Imagining a being greater than God is impossible, as the very definition of God is a being than which none greater exists.

6. Therefore, God exists.

There are variations of this argument; however, this is perhaps the first and most widely known version when referring to ontological arguments for the existence of God (Blackburn, 2016). As such, it will serve as the basis of this examination.

The first response to be examined is from Anselm's contemporary, Gualino. A Benedictine monk, Gualino performed a *reductio ad absurdum* on Anselm's argument by using what Gualino thought could be an absurd conclusion based on the same sort of reasoning presented by Anselm. Specifically, he essentially claimed that, should Anselm's argument be used, anything defined as that which nothing greater can exist is made to exist by thinking of it, considering that a thing is made even better by its existing in the mind and in reality. As described by Thomas Williams (2006), Gaulino illustrated his criticism by giving the example of an island that is defined as the greatest island and it can be formulated summarily:

1. The perfect island can exist as a thought in the mind.

2. There is no island that is greater than the perfect island.

3. That which exists both in reality and in the mind as thought is greater than that which only exists in the mind as a thought.

4. If the island was only a thought, then there must be an island greater than the perfect island.

5. The definition of this perfect island is that it is the greatest island, however, so there can be no conception of an island greater.

6. So, the perfect island must exist.

Of course, the perfect island that Gaulino is describing does not actually exist. This fact could suggest that there exists a flaw in Anselm's argument, specifically by looking at his connections of perfect beings, their existence, and thoughts about them.

However, Gaulino's argument contains a flaw in its critique of Anselm, mainly by ignoring what Anselm is referring to in his first and second premise. There is no being greater than the rather abstract thought that is God; nothing greater can be thought of. However, Williams (2006) mentions that, as many have responded no matter how great an island, a greater one can always be thought of; for example, it could always be larger, grow fruit at a more desirable rate, or be more suitable for living. This lack of connection with Anselm's argument means this is not a comparable argument, as the thing being thought of as greatest should not have concepts greater than itself. This has led many to view Gaulino's argument as Interestingly, Anselm himself never responded in this way or give any exact reasoning for that matter, but he did deny Gaulino's argument, as Williams (2006) points out), Ultimately, Gualino's lack of awareness of Anselm's very definitions is what causes the response to fail.

Yet, it cannot be said that Gaulino's argument is entirely fruitless. There is much important discussion and evaluation to be gained by examining what thoughts arise from

Gaulino's argument. The first of these lies in the question of something being greater than something else. As previously pointed out, there are many who have revealed the flaws with Gaulino's island argument, as it uses the example of something that doesn't necessarily have a greatest version (Williams, 2006). He misunderstands Anselm's definition of God. However, it is equally hard to examine the abstract ideas of what makes God the greatest being. God has to be the greatest being in all number of ways, which is the definition of God that was presented in the first premise of Anselm's argument. This does not only mean he must be the strongest, most infinite, or most expansive being, but it also means that he is the most morally sound, the most perfectly just, and the most reasonable. All of these are qualities could constitute what makes greatness. However, all of the qualities can differ wildly when trying to decide which version of the quality is the best version of that quality. This can occur even if it can be said that it is a needed quality to be the greatest. For example, it could be said that a trait necessary to be the greatest is "loving", but this is not a term with a precise meaning; two individuals could say God should be loving, but differ in why or how they feel God is loving. Even if it is said that a being has all of the qualities seen as objectively good (which is an area up to debate on its own merits, to be sure, but may include moral justness, reasonability, etc.), it's much harder to describe how these qualities are handled by God to make them great.

Gualino helps point out an important question to answer when talking about the premises of Anselm's argument that refer to the idea that God is the greatest being. This argument from Gualino, by forcing one to examine what greatness is, then helps to develop another critique of Anselm's argument because it calls into question if Anselm's own view of God makes the ontological idea that God exists as a thought, problematic for itself, even if Gualino is flawed in

his response. The problem with Gaulino was that his comparison did not fit into the definition of God as Anselm defined it, which is "a being of which there is no greater".

However, this raises questions over on what Anselm saw as God, especially when considering the debate over what makes greatness, and leads one to question what his views specifically were. Evidence on this timeframe is varying, but it is likely that he was named a saint of the Catholic church, and the very least, was definitely named a doctor of the church by Pope Clement XI ("Saint Anselm of Canterbury," 2019). The fact that he was recognized by the church in this way suggests that his view of God was in line with the Catholic church, a major sect of Christianity. So, his views of a greatest being (that is, God) and what qualities make it such are limited to his Christian viewpoint, as he would say that the qualities of a greatest being are likely the qualities important to Christianity, but taken to the point of perfection. To go even further, it could be said that his views align specifically with the Catholic church of the 11th century, which is a rather specific timeframe. Given that a millennium has passed, views have been altered and changed; recently, Pope Francis and other church officials have started using language that suggests homosexuality should be more accepted and integrated into the church. This is has proven to be a controversial decision, and one that was certainly not accepted by the Catholic population of the 11th century (DeBernado, 2016). Thus, the Catholic church of Anselm's time and the Catholic church of 2019 certainly have varying views on what is acceptable. If the Pope and Catholicism claim to represent and vouch for views of God, then views of what God stands for has varied and changed over time and between people.

This ultimately leads to a problem arising with Anselm's argument. Boiled down to an extreme level, Anselm claims that God exists because he can be thought of. Anselm had a specific view of God and what makes God great. God's status as the greatest being would be

threatened if God was just a thought, yet nothing greater than the greatest being can exist, and a quality of being the greatest would mean existing in reality and as a thought, so God must exist. It has also been established that what qualities make God great changes from person to person and from generation to generation; even if the qualities are being agreed upon, qualities may have different meanings for different people. It could even be assumed that Anselm himself had a specific idea of God that no one else has held, meaning that under Anselm's own definition: God's greatness is subjective to the person holding the thought that supposedly proves God's existence. This variation in belief leads to the following conclusions to be made, resulting from the same premises that were made within the ontological argument itself.

Person A and Person B believe part of God's greatness is due to God's status as the most morally just being, but have differing views on what exactly makes God morally just. Person A believes that, since the certain translations of Bible can be interpreted as condemning homosexuality as something immoral enough to punish with death in Leviticus (Leviticus, 20:13, King James Bible), part of God's greatness as the most morally just being is condemning homosexuality. Person B believes that, since the Bible says that God loves all who accept his testaments (Deuteronomy, 7:9, King James Bible), that part of God being morally superior to all others includes his ability to love all who accept him, regardless of other factors in the worshipper's life. Thus, two people can see God as the greatest being but disagree on how is great, and this leads to the following formulation.

1. There is one God under Christianity, the religion that Anselm of Canterbury follows.

2. This God is the greatest being by definition.

3. God exists as a thought in the mind.

4. A being that exists both in reality and in the mind as thought is greater than that which only exists in the mind as a thought.

5. Two people can think of the same God but differ in what they think this God needs to be in order to be the greatest being.

6. If the greatest being (God) exists as only a thought in the mind of either of these people, then there must be a being greater than this.

7. This contradicts the idea that God is the greatest being, so God must exist as more than a thought.

8. Both people have a God who exists as a thought, a God that is different from the others, but ultimately still the greatest being

9. If God must exist as both a thought and a real thing to be the greatest being, then, because both of these individuals contain a thought about their God being the greatest, then the two separate Gods of the two different individuals exist.

Of course, the conclusion to this argument would be most troublesome for many people, including of those who follow the Abrahamic God. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. These are all religions that have Gods who can be proven to exist as seen in Anselm's argument, but these religions also suffer from their own differing views of Gods. This is seen if the same logic that states God existing as a thought leads to his existence is applied to multiple people who think of God as the greatest being, but with different qualities and ideas of greatness.

There is still the pressing question of whether or not the arguments presented here have truly answered all of the questions or claims made by Anselm, and while the main purpose of these arguments is to examine the well-known arguments from Anselm's Proslogia II, it is also worth looking at the other thoughts presented by this philosopher of religion. Chapter III of

Proslogia also provides an argument that should be discussed. It could be formulated as follows, using the translated works of Anselm from Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (2000):

1. One can imagine that God may not exist

2. It is possible to imagine a being that must exist

3. The being that can be thought of as having required existence is greater than that which can be imagined to not exist.

4. If a being that which no greater can be conceived can simultaneously be thought of as not existing, it is not the greatest being.

5. This line of reasoning contradicts itself.

6. God exists as a being that cannot be thought of as not existing.

The primary issue with this argument also reveals issues that arise when attempting to have internal logic and thought experiments be the items on which God's existence hinges. Premise 3 and 4 are problematic; it is certainly possible to imagine a being that is necessary to exist as not existing. If a being necessary for any existence did not exist, then existence, as known by the universe for which that being is necessary simply, would not exist as it is currently known, assuming it would continue to exist at all without the necessary being, making it possible to conceive of a necessary being not existing. For example, if a human were to examine a lightbulb glowing and they had previously determined that electrons flowing through certain components were necessary for that lightbulb's glow, they could safely assume that these flowing electrons are present in the lightbulb without having to investigate the lightbulb too deeply. That being said, the necessity of the electrons for the light to function does not mean one cannot reasonably conceive of the lack of electrons flowing the lightbulb; it just means that the lightbulb will not shine in the imagination when it is imagined to not have that necessary component to its luminescence. In other words, if God (the greatest being) existed and was necessary for the universe, there is no reason that it could not be imagined that God may not exist, as long as that person who accepts both the necessity and power of God along with the possibility of nonexistence can also accept that nonexistence of God means the inability to perceive the universe as it is currently known. In the end, while arguments like Anselm's forces someone to question how they think of existence and beings like God and attempts to reveal the logical inconsistencies with imagining a being that does not exist, trying to use what almost amounts to mind games to prove God's existence is not effective; regardless of the strength of the arguments provided here and from Gualino against Anselm, they at least demonstrate the natural resistance towards arguments that try to think God into existence and the subsequent difficulty to prove something without any evidence beyond one's own definition of God.

This leads to another potential problem area with approaching Anselm, that being his own definitions and view. One might respond to the arguments here by bringing up another part of Anselm's definition of God, that being "God is greater than can be conceived" (Viney, 2019). There exist two outcomes from this that only serve to weaken Anselm's arguments. The first possible examination of this is that this is only true if one accepts the other parts of the definition that Anselm provides for God, which is problematic in the case that one believes in God but differs in Anselm's definitions. One could just as much accept the Abrahamic God's existence as a creator without accepting that God that which nothing greater can be conceived; perhaps some things are outside of God's ability. He would still be the most powerful being, but not necessarily a being such that nothing greater can be conceived. Something greater can be imagined, it just does not exist. The second possible outcome is that this is a problematic point because it is contradictory to say that God can both be thought of as something that has no superior (Which is

a perfectly conceivable item, such as a circle) and is also greater than something conceivable (An inconceivable item, like a circle with edges). It does not follow that God can both be conceivable and inconceivable any more than a circle can both have edges but also remain a circle without fundamentally changing the idea of how a circle is defined. After all, considering that a contradiction in logic regarding what makes a being the greatest is a key part of Anselm's argument in Proslogion II, it is unfortunate that his definitions inherently carry such a contradiction.

Ultimately, an examination of Gualino's argument can lead to questions that may provoke some uncomfortable answers from those whose religion may benefit from Anselm of Canterbury's Ontological argument. Gualino's argument was flawed, to be sure. However, flawed does not necessarily mean it is useless; regardless of the fallacies present in Gualino's arguments, there are still thought-provoking questions to be gained from it, including a brand-new argument that attacks ontology once again. Even if the arguments presented here are to be found fallacious or otherwise problematic, the maker of any discourse can only hope that their argument leads to some new form of thought or idea. Gualino may have failed in his quest to disprove ontology, but he certainly did not fail to raise further ideas about it, as the arguments presented here are evidence of. After all, after they are printed onto paper and perhaps even now, the arguments exist as more than just thoughts, and, according to Anselm, are more valuable than they would be if they just existed as thoughts in a mind. An idea, even refuted, can be useful, and it is vital to not dismiss certain aspects of an argument just because the larger idea is seen as dismissed.

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## Does the Bible Condemn Homosexuality?

### K. L. Altenreid-Wheeler

The story of the first murder in the Bible is well known. Adam and Eve produce two sons, Cain and Abel, both present a sacrifice to God, and God favors Abel's sacrifice over that of Cain. In a jealous rage, Cain murders his brother and attempts to hide his crime from God. Of course, being an all-knowing being, God at once knows what Cain did and punishes him to a life of hard labor, then gives him a mark that he and his future generations will carry. During the days of slavery and the years of legalized segregation that followed, white men confirmed their bigotry with this story. (Genesis 4)

Racists decided the mark of Cain was dark skin. The African Americans had dark skin, therefore, they carried the mark and curse of Cain. Since God cursed the black man, he was not in God's favor. Since they were lesser human beings in the site of God, it was right to treat them as such. [1]

Today, most people know this to be a fallacy. First, there is no mention of what the mark of Cain was. There is no mention of a curse, in fact, God insinuates the mark is a protection. God even says anyone who murders Cain will face the vengeance of God. Cain goes on to father the line that eventually leads to Noah, whom God sees as worthy enough to save during the flood. If the mark is a curse, surly Cain would not have been the beginning of the familial line that led to Noah, who would go on to repopulate the earth after the flood. (Genesis 5)[2]

As with the case of racism against the African Americans, Christians still use the Bible as validation of hate and intolerance against various groups, whether it be keeping women submissive with Ephesians chapter five or claiming God hates those who do not accept Christ

with John chapter fourteen, verse sixteen. (Ephesians 5:22, John 14:16)The cycle continues, with Christians feeling new legislation threatens their faith and way of life, many have gone on the offensive, going to extreme measures to defend what they believe to be the only way to eternal salvation.

When California wanted to strike gender identification from their laws on marriage, Franklin Graham, son of famed Baptist Evangelist Billy Graham, came out against the issue. He claimed this was an assault on the way God intended marriage to be. He went as far as to recommend President Barack Obama invest in extra lightning rods for the White House. With six scriptures claiming homosexuality was a sin, he felt armed and ready to attack extending rights to the LGBTQ community. [3]

There is no denying that the language of the six verses in question give Graham and others like him a compelling case against homosexuality. Should Christians take these verses at face vâlue? Many modern Bible scholars are looking at these verses and they are concluding all is not as it seems. Before using the Bible to confirm stripping a group of people of their civil liberties, Franklin Graham needs to revisit these verses, taking into consideration historical and textual context, and inconsistency in translation. [4]

Looking at the Bible, beginning with Genesis, we come to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 19. This story describes an instance when two men, who many Christians refer to as angels, enter the city of Sodom. Lot, Abraham's brother, notices them and insists they join his family for a meal. While dining, the men from Sodom come to Lot's home, as they know these visitors are inside. They demand Lot send the visitors out, so the men of Sodom can "know" them. Bible theologians take "to know" to mean "to have sexual relations with." Lot, the hero of this story, offers his two unmarried virgin daughters, telling the men to do what they will

with them. The visitors pull Lot inside, and the visitors tell Lot to flee with his family, saying there has been a great outcry against Sodom and they are there to dispense justice. God destroys Sodom in a hailstorm of fire, and the term sodomy, often used to describe sexual acts between two men, is derived from the name of the city. Many Christians point to this event as proof God hates homosexuality; after all, He destroyed an entire city over the matter. (Genesis 19:1-29)

While the men of Sodom did intend to have sex with the two visitors, it was not to be consensual, therefore, the men of Sodom were not just engaging in homosexual sex, they were going to essentially gang rape these visitors, and rape and sex are not one in the same. Furthermore, the visitors claim there has been a great outcry against Sodom, great enough to gain God's attention and great enough to call for the destruction of the city. Surely, there would have to be more happening in Sodom to gain the attention of the Lord God Almighty and convince Him to destroy an entire city. So, what was the sin of Sodom? A look at Ezekiel chapter 16 answers this question. (Genesis 19:13)

Ezekiel was a prophet, and his message to Israel was not uncommon amongst the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. He told his people that God had noticed their wrong doing and was not pleased. In chapter 16, Ezekiel says the Israelites are no different than their sister, Sodom, and her children. He then goes on to name the sins of Sodom in verses forty-nine and fifty. The sins of Sodom all have to do with arrogance, over-indulgence, and a lack of charity. He does not mention homosexuality or the events at Lots home. While Ezekiel leaving out this item might not prove homosexuality was not part of the reasoning behind God's wrath, it certainly shows it was not the primary reasoning. The primary reasoning had to do with the citizens of Sodom being overall terrible, selfish individuals, where the poor cried out to their God. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

The Bible further explores homosexuality in Leviticus. Leviticus gives a list of laws and regulations for the Israelites. While they received the Ten Commandments in Exodus, which gave a basic list of how to live harmoniously in a community, Leviticus takes these laws and expands and adds to them. Chapter eighteen and twenty both deal with the subject of homosexuality. Chapter eighteen gives the commands and chapter twenty list the punishments. (Leviticus 18)

The way chapter eighteen is laid out gives some clue as to what is meant by verse twenty-two, which says man should not have sex with man. In verses one through five, God tells Moses He is God and He has brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and that He is bringing them into Canaan. God commands the Israelites to not do as the Egyptians and Canaanites do but only as God commands. (Leviticus 18:1-5) Verses six through twenty list rules about who is not a proper sexual partner. Examples of these individuals are a sister, step-sister, mother, step-mother, aunt, and other close relatives. (Leviticus 18:6-20)

Verse twenty-one leaves sexual sins behind and forbids the sacrificing of children to the god Moloch. (Leviticus 18:21) Verse twenty-two then goes back to the sexual sin of homosexuality and verse twenty-three talks about bestiality. (Leviticus 18:22-23) Due to the approximation of the verse on child sacrifice and the verses on homosexuality and bestiality, this could be an attempt to guide Israelites towards procreation. Some argue the issue was prostitution that often went on in temples to Moloch, but the verse on Moloch does not mention prostitution but child sacrifice. (Leviticus 18:21) This sacrifice involved heating up a metal statue of the god and placing a perfect baby in the god's outstretched hands. The baby then burned to death. If the Israelites sacrifice babies, this means these babies are not given the opportunity to mature and produce more offspring. Also, surely the Israelites had figured out the

reproductive process and understood there would be no babies if two men were engaging in sexual relations. Procreation is important in the Bible. In Genesis chapter nine, God commands Noah to multiply and fill the earth with people.(Genesis 9:17) Psalms 127 says children are like arrows in a quiver and a blessed man has a quiver full. (Psalm 127:3-5) This, along with the high infant mortality of the time, shows why Leviticus forbids both homosexuality and bestiality. Like the mandates forbidding the consumption of pork, mentioned earlier, this rule is meant for a different people, in a different time and situation. [5]

After the mention of the punishments for homosexuality listed in Leviticus chapter twenty, the Old Testament no longer mentions homosexuality. Furthermore, Jesus Christ never personally preaches for or against homosexuality. He does, however, repeatedly tell people to love each other as he loved them. (John 15:12) He tells people to not judge others in Matthew chapter seven. (Matthew 7:1) If homosexuality is the huge sin Christians make it out to be, why is it never mentioned specifically by Christ? The next Biblical author to mention the subject is the author, theorized to be Paul, of Romans.

Romans chapter 1 addresses many issues. Paul starts by claiming to have been set apart by Christ; he then goes into a longing to visit the Church in Rome, wishing to personally preach to the people and give them strength. Starting with verse eighteen, Paul discusses the plight of Roman society. He talks about those who knew God, who had seen proof of His existence, yet continued to worship idols and practice their old ways. Paul talks about promiscuity that was rampant in Roman society. (Romans 1)

This chapter is not as much about homosexuality as it is about accepting God and turning away from the sinful ways in which the Romans chose to live. Like Leviticus eighteen, Paul's message is clear: do not follow what others around you follow. God has set the Christians apart

from other Romans and wants them to reject the Roman gods and the religious practices that surround the worship of these Gods. Paul's message is be better than that. (Romans 1)

The next mention of homosexuality occurs in Corinthians chapter 6. This is one of the most widely used verses, yet this verse has a significant issue: the translation. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 in the English Standard Version states: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." (1Coorinthians 6:9-10 ESV) This is clearly a poor translation. The word "homosexuality" was not in use until the nineteenth century. Latin, Greek Hebrew, and even the King James English had no such word, as they far pre-date the nineteenth century. However, The King James Version paints a different picture, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortions, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1Corinthians 6:9-10 KJV) There is no mention of homosexuality. It mentions the effeminate, often assumed to mean homosexual; however, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines effeminate as an individual who is unmanly. Unmanly does not equal homosexual, for there are many "manly" men who are homosexual and many "unmanly" men who are heterosexual. [6]

The final mention of homosexuality in the Bible is in 1st Timothy chapter one. Paul is writing to Timothy, whom he greets as a son in the faith. (1Timothy 1:2) He urges Timothy to preach the true word and doctrine, and then says love is the most important thing, though it seems many Christians are hung up on the law. (1Timothy 1:3-7) Paul hails the law as good

when used properly, but says it is for those who are disobedient. In verses nine and ten, Paul lists

those for whom the law is intended. (1Timothy 1:8-10)

Again, there is a problem with translation. Depending on which translation a person reads

the verse lists different crimes. For example, the New International Version (NIV) specifically

uses the term, "homosexuality," but as previously mentioned, this term was not in use until the

nineteenth century. The NIV also separates being sexually immoral from practicing

homosexuality, as to say they are different crimes. (1Timothy 1:10 NIV) On the other hand, the

King James Version says nothing about sexual immorality nor homosexuality; it only mentions

"whoremongers who defile themselves with mankind." (1Tmothy 1:10 KJV) This could refer to

homosexuality, but the use of the word "whoremonger" means a person who deals with

prostitutes. Therefore, according the King James Version, Paul is more concerned with

prostitution and promiscuity and less with actual homosexuality. [7]

For decades, the LGBTQ community have been demanding equality. They have been

tired of living in the shadows and having to hide who they are. They do not want to live in a

country that legally tells them who to love, how to love, or restricts privileges extended to

heterosexual couples. The other end of this debate is the Christian community, which claim

homosexuality is a grievous sin, punishable by an eternity in Hell. Christian groups like the

Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) warn extending rights to members of the LGBTQ community

will only bring damnation upon the United States. [8]

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# The *Real* Horror of *The Promised Neverland*

## Mark Weaver

Nearly everyone who's seen it will agree that the anime *The Promised Neverland* is horrific. By the end of the first episode, we discover that an orphanage full of sweet, happy children and a loving mother is in reality a farm raising children as livestock to be devoured by demons. We watch in horror with two of the children as one of their siblings, lying stripped, dead and cold in the back of a truck, is lifted up by a monstrous creature, salivating as he dunks her unflinchingly into a large jar of preservation fluid. And we fear what lies in store for the children who are going to be next.

But this isn't what horrifies me. Yes, it is undoubtedly terrible to watch a child be slaughtered for food, let alone for a society of monsters, but when considered alongside the quality of their lives until this point, the ultimate good or evil of this business isn't quite clear. Prior to being killed, the children living at Gracefield House are raised with the best possible care. They are healthy, happy, and well-educated, and are incredibly well-loved by their mother. And when their time is up, they appear to be killed swiftly, minimizing suffering.

Contrast this with the psychological trauma endured by the children who discover the secret behind the orphanage. They play a mentally, and at times physically, strenuous game against their mother in their efforts to escape their fate on the farm, and when they finally do, they find the outside world to be filled with danger and uncertainty. It's not clear where they'll find their next meal or how they're going to survive being hunted by demons, and this inevitably takes its toll on their well-being. One could make the argument that the children had better lives, however short, remaining at Gracefield House. And it's hard to deny this. If we consider our purpose in life as minimizing suffering, then this particular style of farming does an excellent job of actualizing that

goal. Aside from illness and minor playground injuries, the children only experience a few brief moments of suffering throughout their entire lives, and only at the very end.

But even if I can agree with the claim that the children suffer less under these circumstances, there is still something I find genuinely disturbing about this anime, and this would be how the mother functions—or, rather, how she fails to function—as a parental figure. At first glance, she is kind, loving, and striving to do the best she can to ensure that every one of her children lives a happy and healthy life before being taken to be killed. And she honestly believes that she is doing what is best for the children. As the children escape, she reflects on her actions: "I must provide all of the love inside of me. I must let them live as long as possible." But the responsibility of a parent isn't to ensure that their child has a happy life; rather, it's to ensure that their child has the tools necessary to survive on their own.

And this is what is truly abhorrent about this environment. Most of us may not be able to understand what it's like being raised as livestock, but we can understand the wrongness of a parent stifling their child's development. In *The Promised Neverland,* the children are not taught how to survive, but how to become high-quality products, and it's this kind of parental failure that I find unacceptable. It's impossible to be a perfect parent, and I don't expect this of anyone. People will make mistakes when raising their children, and as long as they are honest mistakes, keeping in mind the goal of teaching the children to become self-sufficient and to live well, I can respect them. But to actively prevent children from becoming independent is an atrocity that no parent can be excused from.

And this is finally realized by the mother of Gracefield House as the children escape: "I wasn't able to see through the growth of those children...I wish I could have just loved them normally." She recognizes that, despite her good intentions and her vast love for her children, it wasn't the kind of treatment they deserved as children from her as a mother. She shows a new understanding of what a parent's aim should be as she gives them a final farewell: "If the world will permit it, I sincerely hope you find a light at the end of the tunnel." She no longer wants to exert control over the children, but for them to succeed in their escape and quest for survival. And this should be the goal of every parent. Not to coddle their children for their entire lives, but to train them to be able to live independently, and in turn become good parents themselves.

# Unity in Diversity of Religions
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## Abstract

Swami Vivekananda delivered the thought of Unity in Diversity of Religions in the parliament of World Religions at Chicago in the year 1893 and thereby sought to unite the people who were the advocates of different religions through his notion of Hinduism. This paper explains the unity in the diversity of the different religious and how persons coming from a different religious background or no religious background, can have the ability to accept other persons, who comes from a different religious background, as unconditionally as they have been by their own parents and members of their own religion. This concept is penned by modern philosophers such as John Hick and others, as religious pluralism.

## Unity in Diversity of Religions

It will be a difficult task to explain religious pluralism, but in some writings, philosophers have tried to define the concept in a succinct manner. Many have also noted that religious tolerance is a form of religious pluralism. The notion of religious pluralism, however, deals with the idea that all religions, although different in their practice, can and must work together targeting themselves to a same higher goal. It has also been debated that, the concept of religious pluralism, may be similar to that of *Advaita Vedanta* thought, as given by Adi Shankaracharya (a prominent Indian Philosopher from 8th century AD). This thought speaks about the non-dualistic approach when the concept of God is kept in mind. *Advaita*, in Sanskrit, means non – dual *Vedanta* means the end of the Vedas. Shankaracharya, by giving the thought of *Advaita Vedanta*, meant to say that the approach till the end of the Vedas when speaking of ultimate reality, should be looked upon as one, and therefore, there can be many different paths (religious or non-religious) ultimately leading to that one ultimate goal. In other words, "many different paths leading to the same goal."

Nevertheless, the central idea of religious pluralism concedes that different religious systems are true in their own right. The problem arises when the truth that pertains to that specific system claims itself to be absolute. For instance, Christians can practice all the methods that encompasses Christianity and worship Jesus Christ with all their heart, self, and mind. However, if they claim that this certain religious path that they practice is the only real idea and other ideas are all lies and sinful, referencing from their certain religious text, this makes the idea of ultimate reality to be absolute and thereby makes themselves and their practice fundamental enough to reject other ideologies, which leads those persons astray when they attempt to reach harmony in differentiation of the religion.

It is evident from the writings of Vivekananda, John Hick, Immanuel Kant, and other thinkers that religious pluralism was highly put into proposition, which presumed that there can be unity seen within the diversity of religions that would not only unite the religions for one ultimate goal, but would also unite the humanity itself.

### Unity in Diversity of Religions as explained by Vivekananda

In 1893, when Swami Vivekananda addressed his speech at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, he addressed a parable of the "frog in the well" ( কুয়োর ব্যাং) or *kuor bang* in Bengali. The story is as follows: a frog was sitting in the well and has lived in the well his whole life. He always thought that his well is the most comfortable and the biggest. One day, a frog from the sea came and was going across a path and came across a well that the frog is sitting in and meets this frog. When the frog from the sea told the frog of the well that the sea is much bigger than the well, the frog of the well did not believe it and drove the frog of the sea away from his well. Vivekananda concluded, "That has been the difficulty all the while. I am a Hindu. I am sitting in my own little well and thinking that the whole world is my little well. The Christian sits in his little well and thinks the whole world is his well. The Muslim sits in his little well and thinks that is the whole world." Vivekananda, in this manner, highlights the necessity for the concept of the universal religion. He realized that mankind from the beginning, has been in the search of his ultimate destiny - searching for God. Hence, he emphasized a religion that is acceptable to all no matter where they come from. Vivekananda meant to put into proposition a universality in different religions and different backgrounds, which, in modern philosophical discussions, would be ultimately named as religious pluralism.

Different social class standing can define the needs of human beings. They come from certain class and they strive so that they can make ends meet, thereby displaying their nature and order within the society that they are a part of. Religion, on the other hand, contributes to the spiritual orientation of the human beings in which, through certain rituals and practices, attempt to come to terms with the meaning of the existence of their subjective life, and reconcile with the pain and suffering they endure. Some religions in the world have claimed absolutism, claiming universal empire in the field of religion over all mankind and thereby engaging themselves in ruthless wars and bloodshed in order to validate their claim. Vivekananda understood this conflict as well as the importance a religion holds in a person's subjective life. He writes in one of his letters:

> "There is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion."[1]

In order to understand the importance of every religion, one must also understand them well. Moreover, it is imperative to find a common ground within them in order to establish peace and harmony within them. Vivekananda understood the contribution of each religion, and he understood how that specific religion has contributed to the society in developing the society's strength and thereby underscored the equal status of all religions. However, he refrained himself initially from succumbing to this thought of plurality. He noticed that if a person accepts a certain religion, for him, the other ideologies become false. To Vivekananda, each religion

contributes toward the path of that ultimate reality; hence, it is an addition in the growth to walk towards that goal. In Vivekananda's words, "rather than an exclusion, it is an addition."[2]

Vivekananda, in his commentaries, gives an example of a photograph of a building to explain the phenomenon of unity. For instance, when a photograph of a building is taken from different angles, they all look different; however, they are all photographs of the same building. An important difference to notice here is the way that picture is taken, because it compels the viewer to say that it is a different building by merely looking at different pictures of the different angles of the same building. These different opinions are not contradictions, but only show the many sidedness of a single object. Hence, Vivekananda says that, "we are viewing the truth, getting as much of it as circumstances will permit, coloring the truth with our own intellect and grasping it with our own mind. We can only know as much of truth as is related to us, as much of it as we are able to receive. This occasionally includes even contradictory ideas; yet these contradictory ideas belong to the same universal truth" [3]

Strengthened by this notion of religion, Vivekananda understood the need for a universal religion. Furthermore, he also realized that such a religion cannot be established by converting people to from their religion to this ideology. He understood that different societies have operated and still operate in different manners. Universality is only possible when there is a concept of universalism in which there is a place for all religions suited to different types of humanity. He gave due consideration to the phenomenon of diversity in the different societies in the world. There are people with different habits, living conditions, and different mentalities, and these people may have different beliefs from one another. Together, they can contribute to the society in a manner so that the society can develop itself faster. This was the central idea of the

concept of universal religion that he addressed in his speech. He explained the characteristics of the universal religion in the following manner:

"But if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will hold no location in place or time; which will be infinite, like God it will preach; whose Sun shines upon the followers of Krishna or Christ, saints or sinners, alike; which will not be the Brahman or Buddhist, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its Catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms and find a place for every human being [...] It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize a divinity in every man or woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centered in aiding humanity to realize its divine nature. [4]

In one of his works he also explained:

"As human mind broadens, its spiritual steps broaden too. The time has already come when a man cannot record a thought without its reaching all corners of the earth; by merely physical means we have come into touch with the whole world; so the future religions of the world have to become as universal and as wide. The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and at the same time, have infinite scope for future development" [5]

Vivekananda's idea, in a nutshell, holds that unity exists in a diversity of religions all around the world. He explained this concept through his example of fingers on the hand. He said that if he has 6 fingers, the other person would consider it to be abnormal; similarly, if one

religion claims that it is the only way, then it would be abnormal for that one religion to examine a different way. One religion, claiming itself to be absolute, is like one set of 6 fingers which would be considered something unnatural. Therefore, many religions all together can be true and indirectly work towards one ultimate reality. In other words, *many lamps become one ray of light*.

## Unity in Diversity of Religions as explained in Bhagavad Gita

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ।। 11।।

*ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāns tathaiva bhajāmyaham*

*mama vartmānuvartante manuṣhyāḥ pārtha sarvaśhaḥ*

**Translation:** In whatever way people surrender unto me, I reciprocate with them accordingly. Everyone follows my path knowingly or unknowingly.

The verse above is taken from Bhagavad Gita Chapter 4 Verse 11. The Bhagavad Gita is considered by many Hindu monks and scholars to be the "song of God". Written by saint *Veda Vyasa*, it is a small segment of the longest poem in the world, *Mahabharata*. It explains the battle that took place between the cousins, the *Pandavas* and the *Kauravas*.

The verse, as explained by Krishna, explains that in whatever form a human being follows religion and worships God, it all ends up in one single place. He explains that God reciprocates differently according to the different ways people follow different religious paths, and that the manifold religions simply express different degrees and ways of worshipping God. These practices, in turn, determine the diverse practices of different religions. This diversity, however, does not negate the unity of religions, which rests solely on recognizing the divine being pursuing the path that leads to the realization of ultimate reality.

## Counter argument to Unity in diversity of Religions

Many fundamentalists that hold their particular religion to be true argue that this *unity in diversity of religions* ideology may, in a sense, offer religious toleration; however, it does not offer any pluralistic view on certain standpoints. For instance, for a strict Christian, only Jesus Christ is the way to truth and life as the verse in the Gospel of John mentions and hence, other religions become ultimately false, and therefore rule out the other possible theological truths. Moreover, some monotheists might want to argue "that some particular religious views have a greater degree of correspondence to reality than others, and that, therefore, some religions are more correct than others."[6] For instance, there is a conflict within the ideas of crucifixion of Jesus Christ between Muslims and Christians. Muslims, according to the Quran, believe that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross. Christians, on the other hand, according to the Bible – believe that he did. Hence, there is a fundamental conflict seen within the two religious views as both of them will tend to show that their ideas correspond to the reality. This raises a strict opposition between two practitioners of their particular religions.

Another counter argument is that the concept of *unity in diversity of religions* also advocates for a new meta-religion which subsumes all other religions and holds a quest for achieving the transcendent. The argument is that this type of ideology leads strict practitioners of a particular religion astray in their practice. Therefore, a limitation is observed when it comes to the practice of proselytization as it is observed in the practice of monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Islam.

## Refutation:

It is not the case that pluralism rules out the concept of the theological truth. In order to maintain this concept, one must also give a proper definition of a theological truth. Since the

concepts regarding truth are varied among different religions, it is not necessarily the case that pluralism rules out those variations; it combines them in order to lead them to one ultimate goal along with keeping other practices in mind. Hence, to say that this concept leads to the development of a meta-religion would be false and would be a strawman argument. Swami Vivekananda has described the concept in a proper manner. He explains:

> "Our watchword, there will be acceptance and not exclusion. Not only toleration, but acceptance. I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhists temple where I shall take refuge in the Buddha and in the law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu who is trying to see the light that enlightens the heart of everyone" [7]

Immanuel Kant in his *Religion Within Bounds of Bare Reason* (1793), argued that authentic religion is purely rational. One may or may not know God, but the concept of God can serve as a morally regulative ideal, while some religion can construct a certain path that leads to the development of a particular community. The notion over here is that of an "invisible church" which is made up so that a person can live a morally autonomous life. Thus, Kant makes the following claim, "There is only *one* (true) *religion*; but there can be many kinds of *faith*. One may say, further, that in the various churches, set apart from each other because of the difference in their kinds of faith, one and the same true religion may nonetheless be found"[8] According to this view, multiple traditions can exist, as long as they aim towards one ultimate goal and also

not undermine the other traditions in their practice. It is to convince people to accept one universal religion and not convert other adherents to another religion or meta - religion but to make them realize religious pluralism. Bear in mind that the soul of this paper does not mean to convert anybody, but to unite humanity itself.

### Conclusion

The concept of unity and diversity within religions has been the most debated issue among the philosophers under the issue of religious pluralism. One of the chief proponents of this thought is John Hick. It is also pivotal to understand that Swami Vivekananda has given a great contribution towards this goal with his ideas of Universal Religion. Following Vivekananda, the Bhagavad Gita, Kant, Hick, and other thinkers, it is also now time for society, which in this post-modern era are undergoing religious warfare, to accept the unity in diversity of religions. This ideology can be practiced not only by believers of different religions, but equally by non-believers, for it is founded on the ideal of oneness of humanity. It is geared for human self-realization, which is not a monopoly of any particular religion.

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# Faith in Post-Apocalyptic North American Society

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### Abstract

Over 171,000 video games have been made since 1950. (MobyGames Stats, 2018) Given the diverse genres of video games, theorists attempt to underline the successful aspects of various games to highlight what was done well. In this report, an argument is made that the Fallout franchise perfectly captures life in post-apocalyptic America. Through examining how video games utilize players' understanding of real life, how elements of religious ideologies (and lack thereof) only add to the diversity of video game experiences, and how non-playable characters are brought to life through the formations of their own worldviews, it is argued that the Fallout franchise completely masters the concept of immersion and that other games should seek to follow in its footsteps.

Keywords: video games, philosophy, immersion, religion

## Faith in Post-Apocalyptic North American Society

According to the community-run video game database known as MobyGames, there are over 171,000 video games that have been created since 1950 (MobyGames Stats, 2018). This fact highlights the growing importance of examining and understanding how video games are adapting to keep up with rising expectations. One such example of a game series that does exceptionally well at meeting consumer demands for a role-playing game is the *Fallout* franchise. *Fallout* succeeds at integrating intricate stories with many outcomes that allow for the player to explore possibilities as countless as the diverse characters one can create. The *Fallout* series is a game set in North America that depicts life after a nuclear war between the US and China that devastated the entire world, changing the landscape forever. The games depict harsh realities in post-apocalyptic wastelands that wastelanders try to rebuild. It is this very concept that raises the question: What are the best ways to capture the spirit of a post-apocalyptic North American setting? Arguably, an important element to add is religion (as done in the *Fallout* franchise) so as to correctly demonstrate how video games should accurately portray post-apocalyptic life. In order to understand how this is true, it first must be addressed how video games utilize reality to convey messages.

### Video Games Mirror Reality

The title above provides a notion that highlights how similar to reality video games are. They also depict scenarios that one may never face. From something as simple as walking down the road to defeating an army single-handedly, video games enable various outcomes and possibilities for players to explore. Thinking about the varied and extreme examples one could encounter in video games, the question is raised: Aren't there instances where unrealistic things can happen in a video game? The answer: Of course. Consider the subject of gravity. Almost all

people understand, to some degree, how gravity works. Something tossed up must come down. It is a cause and effect relationship that people learn at a young age, yet in nearly all video games gravity functions like it does in real-life. Now, consider this statement: One's character walks down the road. That very simple statement assumes gravity is affecting that person, so they are forced to travel under the effects of gravity pulling them down. That much is easily understood and recognized.

If one wonders, "but what about the games that let one defy the laws of gravity?" then readers are implored to consider this next point: Think about how video games let one do such a thing. The only two methods game makers utilize (that come to mind) are flying and floating. Yet, it is these ideas of defying gravity that already exist in reality. Extended jump time and weightlessness are states of existence in which gravity does not affect the person or item in the typical way. In space, one can jump higher and farther because gravity is lessened or nonexistent, meaning we have an idea of zero gravity. In addition, flying is something that already exists in reality. These ideas of defying gravity don't require games to enable the possibility of such things as they already exist in the universe and in theory. Therefore, it is safe to say that even the ways video games "break the rules" of reality are already based off assumptions and beliefs that exist currently in reality, or at least in theory. If one understands gravity, then that same person understands that defying gravity can only be done in so many ways. Moreover, if an object moves through the air, it is usually considered to be flying or falling. Sure, a human flying with no means of actual transportation is suspect, but the idea of a human soaring through the skies using superpowers and the like isn't entirely new either.

Consider a gun one would use in the *Fallout 3* video game, say, a Chinese assault rifle (Fallout 3, 2008). That gun recoils like a regular machine gun, has limited ammo like a real gun, is less

precise when shot from the hip like a real gun, and so forth. That gun behaves in ways that are common in reality. The gun doesn't defy logic, it doesn't shoot enemies in directions it isn't faced, and it definitely doesn't change shape or color on its own. One could easily see that video game makers utilize norms in the status quo and place these concepts in video games to appropriately convey messages without ever having to outright acknowledge or explain them.

In knowing how video game producers utilize a player's understanding of the world to subconsciously send messages about the setting, characters, and physics of the game, it is important to address how producers do so in a post-apocalyptic setting through the *Fallout* series. The *Fallout* franchise masterfully captures the struggles of living life in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Whether or not one observes life from the bleak landscape of Washington, D.C. in *Fallout 3*, or viewed in the brown, arid dunes of the Mojave Desert in *Fallout New Vegas*, in-game characters are suffering from the effects of nuclear war. This is interesting, but how many societies in reality have been devastated by nuclear warfare? Only one. Due to this, the game relies on what people think surviving in a world like this would be like. The game takes common concepts such as hunger, thirst, homelessness, violence, (all concepts that exist in reality) and places them in a post-apocalyptic setting. The idea of devastated communities isn't new either, as one could observe destroyed communities in areas that are stricken with poverty or ravaged by immensely dangerous weather. Beyond simply changing the setting, the game series introduces highly advanced sciences (lightly sprinkled with bits of fiction) that depart from our own understanding. These sci-fi themes allow for the possibility of mutated animals and humans that, thus far, could never exist. This is one way that the *Fallout* series departs from the status quo, however, the theory used to explain the possibility of such mutations is mostly based on true scientific theories and principals. This means that very little in the game is truly unique. It also

must be explained that this isn't a criticism of the games. Nearly all forms of entertainment utilize these very same techniques to convey subliminal messages about mood, danger, and such. One way that *Fallout* allows itself some wiggle room is that its timeline departs from reality. In the *Fallout* timeline, the nostalgic 50's setting lasts for several decades while expanding greatly on nuclear energy. Eventually most technology is powered by nuclear energy, even cars.

Returning to the idea that the game depicts common concepts of devastation to highlight the dangerous and dark reality that people face in a post-apocalyptic setting, it can be concluded that *Fallout* utilizes these concepts to mirror the worst of reality to convey the most obvious message of suffering. If video games didn't use these rules, they would be forced to address and explain their new rules and logic, which isn't appealing to players. At least, it wouldn't be appealing to players because of the degree to which the game would have to go to in order to explain its standard of logic and reality, much more so than the average tutorial. Now that the idea of video games mirroring reality (or at least how they mirror most people's understanding of the world) has been explained, it is time to examine how the *Fallout* series accurately depicts post-apocalyptic survival through its religious elements.

### Religion completes the Picture

Understanding the point above sets up quite nicely for this next point, which is that religion is the necessary component to completing a video games' use of reality. Before the faith systems that exist in *Fallout* are examined, the question must first be asked: when it comes to religion, what exactly is being mirrored? How does one define religion? If one were to google search the definition of religion, one would be met with many diverse definitions from several authors and dictionaries. In trying to define what religion is, it may be best to say in what religion consists. The characteristics of a religion are as follows: Experiences, rituals, social

practices, ethics, philosophy, tradition (both oral and written), artistic expression, and institutional organization (Viney, 2016, p. 7). Understanding that these various components comprise religion, one could suppose that anything that demonstrates all of these characteristics would correctly be called a religion. However, the focus of this information is not to prove that each religion in *Fallout* fulfills the criteria to be a religion, because some of the "young religious movements" (cults) are not exactly considered religions; the point is to give a working understanding of what is being reflected in the game. In the *Fallout* series, both religions and cults appear, and with them the various effects the faith systems have on the world. It is obvious that the games depict several religious systems and beliefs, however, what is not so obvious is how religion is actually necessary to a game that seeks to demonstrate the concept of rebuilding society. Think about the reality that video game producers seek to utilize in conveying messages about their games. If hopelessness and disaster are relatable and easily understood aspects of reality, then what must also be included to complete the picture? The answer: Coping mechanisms. It is obvious that people must find ways to deal with stressful situations. One could give up and accept death, another could search for new meaning through this new and welcome change in their life, or a person could look to the heavens for guidance and hope. It is the last of these choices that is arguably the most realistic to a simulated culture based off of North American reality.

A Pew Research Study which predicts that, given recent trends, in the years 2055 - 2060, seven in ten babies will be born either Christian or Muslim (Pew Research Center, 2017). This indicates that the world is full of many religious people that are growing in number each day. As such, this concept of religion must be included in a game that seeks to demonstrate the possibilities of life after a nuclear apocalypse utilizing concepts borrowed from reality. What

about the reality of religion? Because the *Fallout* series takes place exclusively in the United States, the game does accurately depict what seems to be a majority religious country. So how does religion in the *Fallout* franchise accurately depict common themes of reality? Take this *Fallout*-unique concept that the world has ended in the manner depicted. Considering that most of the "old world" has been destroyed, many people aren't aware of history. They only know that the way things were before are what led to the destruction of the world. Knowing this, it makes sense to have a mixture of both faithful adherents to old world religions, and leaders of newly founded religions. *Fallout New Vegas* captures an interesting issue. A man named Randall Clark, a soldier who lost his family to the atomic bomb, occupied the lands of Zion National Park (Fallout New Vegas, 2010). He watched over a group of children who enter the valley. These are the people who will eventually become the Sorrows Tribe. The children receive gifts, protection, and messages from the man who never reveals himself to them. Before dying, Clark leaves one final note telling them that he will be watching over them silently. The legacy he creates with them becomes a religion to them, referring to him as the "Father in the Cave" and when one's character encounters their descendants, the Sorrows, the player encounters another issue religious people deal with in reality. In *Fallout New Vegas*, the Mormons are depicted as highly advanced peoples who offer aid and evangelize their religion to neighboring tribes. Daniel is one such Mormon who is trying to do this same thing to the Sorrows. When players meet Daniel, they see that he is having difficulty converting the Sorrows because they liken their religion to Christianity, which makes them believe they already adhere to the same belief system. This very situation highlights how easy it is to ascribe supernatural ties to coincidental happenings one cannot explain. In this case, a religion is born through the invisible involvement of a protector and guide, never exposing himself as a person to this group of people. Not only

this, but the reality of difficulty in trying to convert others by pointing out similarities is also demonstrated.

### Religion makes Non-Playable Characters More Interesting

Religion in video games allows interesting, deep, meaningful, and even intense options and consequences for players to explore. Religion completes the picture by adding that interesting element that allows for the characters within the games to be more than quest-givers and checkpoints; they become real people with real beliefs about the world they live in. Characters come to life with opinions about the way things came to be, how their faith system defines their morals, and how they choose to treat people. These are the complex, interesting non-playable characters (NPCs) that players want to encounter in role-playing games. Arguably, religion opens up a new dynamic that not only supplies NPCs with interesting backgrounds and personalities, but it also allows the players to form opinions themselves. Has the cult obeying the talking mole rat named Brain (a cult in *Fallout 2*) discovered some divine truth; or have the Treeminders (a cult in *Fallout 3*) who worship the talking tree discovered it? The player is left asking the same questions a typical person in the *Fallout* universe would have to answer: What is it I believe? It is this very idea that proves religion is necessary for post-apocalyptic video games, because it is religion that adds the very serious, very developed, very real concepts that people deal with in reality: in times of turmoil or peace. Also, just as cold is the absence of heat, atheism could be described as the absence of a belief in God, and *Fallout* has that too.

Not only is there atheism, where people choose simply not to believe in a religion, but there are also examples of outright skepticism of religion. In *Fallout 4*, players may encounter a location called Cabot House (Fallout 4, 2015). Stepping inside, players will meet a family that, oddly enough, lives in a pre-war, fully furnished, beautiful house. The family that lives there all seem rather educated and clean, much unlike the rest of the Commonwealth. During the string of quests that are started in the home, players will be sent to fetch Jack Cabot's sister, Emogene. This woman has a habit of running out of the safety of their home to find the excitement of a new boyfriend, only to get bored and come back eventually. During the quest, players learn that Emogene has gone and joined a cult called the Pillars of the Community. Players learn this fact from a singer at a bar who describes the new boyfriend skeptically, "There was a preacher fellow who used to come in here all the time. One of the slick ones… always going on about remaking your life and so on." When asked where the boyfriend went, the bar's ghoul bodyguard Ham replies, "Had to throw him out. Wouldn't stop bothering customers with that "salvation" racket…" This adds another complex layer that also allows for religious worldviews, or the lack thereof, to be represented realistically. Some players believe, others simply don't, and then there are others who are skeptical of such ideas.

When including religion in a video game, as *Fallout* does, it also allows for common folk who simply don't care, or don't publicize their views. Just like in real life, a priest of a chapel may be much more willing to discuss faith, and a person one may meet on the streets may not feel like religion is a suitable topic for discussion. This is another dynamic that allows for truly diverse world-building as one experiences the faithful and the not-so-faithful.

### Counter Argument: Video Games That Include Religion Offends People

Of course, there are critics of religious elements being present in video games. An excellent article titled "When religion and games intersect—and how it often goes badly" describes the often-volatile relationship between religious groups and depictions of their religions in video games (Thompson, 2009). The article offers an objective portrayal of differing opinions and highlights a common issue: religious groups being offended at depictions of their

faith or holy places in video games. One interesting example the article brings up is a song in LittleBigPlanet. The song titled "Tapha Niang" contains excerpts of Islam's sacred text, the Qur'an. A video game tester who happened to be Muslim heard the words of the Qur'an in the song and requested the song be removed from the game. Also, a referenced article from the aforementioned one elaborates on how the Church of England voiced great concern over the game Resistance: Fall of Man's use of the official church in Manchester, citing that they, "... are facing a very real gun problem and feel that the use of their holy space for such a violent scene in the gaming undercuts their work with the community" (Kuchera, 2007). The argument against religious elements is not singular, so that all religious groups who disagree with depictions can unify under a single cause, the argument is relative to how each group feels they are being wronged. Certain members of the Muslim faith do not believe that the Qur'an should be played in music. The Church of England believes that violence depicted in their church does nothing to help their cause.

**Refutation**

It may be, that religion in video games may offend some, however, it does not mean that religion in general should be banned or not used at all. Much of the issue happens to be with religious beliefs being violated or their sacred places being used for imagery they don't condone. Arguably, the positions mentioned in this paper don't come close to the kind of material religions see as offensive. Allowing characters in game to be of different religious backgrounds does not offend religious groups, in fact, *Fallout* has usually depicted practitioners of real religions used in their video games very well. The Mormons are highly advanced, fortunate, and still evangelizing even after the apocalypse. The Christian woman named Marcella in *Fallout 3*'s DLC Point Lookout is trying to put an end to the Krivbeknih, a highly evil, occult tome that the

locals are using to perform dark witchcraft of sorts. Truly, it is the spin-off religions and cults in the game that commit the acts of violence and deception. For example, the Children of Atom have a humble beginning worshiping the atomic bomb in the middle of the town Megaton, however, they eventually become militarized and hostile to others as demonstrated in *Fallout 4*. Also, the Hubologists allow for people to pay money to become irradiated more and more, raising their status as a member simultaneously. It is through utilizing these other religions, to which people in real life aren't devoted, that the makers of *Fallout* completely avoid this issue, all the while respecting the real ones they do utilize. Therefore, this idea that religious elements in video games offend people can only work if the religions that they depict are doing things that counter the religion's doctrines. Would a Christian be offended that a Christian character is out trying to evangelize to tribals all while helping them learn new ways to live off the land? Surely not. As such, it could be stated that *Fallout* appropriately handles this issue by not portraying the realistic religions as carrying out offensive acts and by portraying the cults and fictional religions as the ones committing the acts.

With so many games made, and many more to come, it is important to address the best ways to make them. When it comes to the post-apocalyptic genre, it has been proven that the *Fallout* franchise correctly demonstrates the best way to depict the most reality-based post-apocalyptic games set in the United States. As more and more games understand how reality shapes their structure, recognize that religion puts the finishing touches on lore, and that religion also enables the possibility of truly dynamic characters to encounter, then games will be elevated to the best they can be.

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