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MAKING A SPIRITUAL CONNECTION THROUGH JEWELRY

by

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This thesis is dedicated to all of God's jewels.

Abstract

Are people still experiencing the presence of the holy in today's world? If they are, through what means are they making this connection?

Jewelry is a reliquary of personal and spiritual memory. It is through conversations about their jewelry that I enter into my participant's important beliefs and experiences. My thesis focuses on the results from conversations with five adult participants; from diverse backgrounds, ages, sexes and spiritual paths, centering on the topic of the spiritual connection, which they have with their jewelry.

This is a narrative phenomenological study. The narratives cover four themes: jewelry as a vow; jewelry as a touchstone of spiritual story, and an invitation to relationship; the symbolic character of jewelry, which connects the individual experience to a larger tradition of meaning, and jewelry as a connection to the trauma and grace of past experience. The participants are shown making meaning of life in an individual way, while often drawing on their own spiritual heritage. The results inspire hope in the resilience of the human spirit, and humankind's ability to find the face of God in the world of object.

Theologians Rudolf Otto, with his profound ideas of the experience of the holy, and John MacQuarrie, who speaks to the spiritual practices of believers, provide the theological basis for my work. I also draw on the theories of Eithne Wilkins, who in her book *The Rose-Garden Game: The Symbolic Background to the European Prayer-Beads* describes the "presence" of the rosary, which embodies a "spiritual potency" waiting to be activated by the believer. This "presence" is revealed in unique ways by my participants, both through their thoughts and their interactions with their jewelry.

Acknowledgements:

A sincere "Thank-you" to my supervisor, David J. Goa,

To my right hand, Ann Salmonson,

My beloved brother, Harold Keller,

My spouse, Evelyn Porter,

My steadfast friend and source of encouragement, Mary,

To all of my participants for sharing their lives with me,

And to Richard, who died before this thesis was finished, but whose spirit remains.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When He cometh, when He cometh
To make up His jewels,
All His jewels, precious jewels,
His loved and His own.
Like the stars of the morning,
His brightness adorning,
They shall shine in their beauty,
Bright gems for His crown.[1]

This hymn, written in 1856 by William Cushing, is one of my favourites. Apparently, Cushing was inspired by Malachi 3:17, which in the *King James* version of the Bible says: "they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels..." As a Christian, I find it comforting to consider myself one of God's treasured possessions—one of God's jewels.

Some time ago, I sat with my five-year-old granddaughter, sharing her "treasures." She has a small, pink jewelry box, which when opened has a dancing ballerina in a pink tutu. Inside, she keeps her Hello Kitty rings, her plastic bangles and a Christmas ring of a felt reindeer head, which I gave her. She also has a dog necklace of a terrier, which she says is our dog Payton. Having been given permission to touch the objects inside, I handled each one solemnly and with care as she prattled on about the history of the different pieces of jewelry. The ritual opening of her treasure box was one of those sacred moments in a relationship, which is unexpected, but leaves a lasting memory.

[1] William O. Cushing, *When He Cometh,* 1856 and George F. Root (music), 1866.

Background

My granddaughter's jewelry box reminds me of the reliquary which was displayed at the Provincial Museum of Alberta's exhibit of *Anno Domini: Jesus Through the Centuries*, where I worked as a volunteer interpreter in 2000. Reliquaries were used to house the bones of the saints, and were often decorated with scenes from the life of Christ and the saints. In this thirteenth-century exhibit, was a small box reliquary casket entitled "Journey and Adoration of the Magi." It had the most beautiful blue-coloured enamelling, which reminded me of the brilliance of the heavens and the starry sky under which Jesus was born. Describing the process involved in making the reliquary, the exhibition catalogue for *Anno Domini*, states that, "the resulting works had a jewel-like quality which, combined with their intricate forms and scenes depicted, made them highly desirable objects of veneration. The patronage of the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers (this was originally a charitable organization, which cared for sick pilgrims to the Holy Land) helped to spread the popularity of enamels, particularly on the pilgrimage roads." [2]

This reliquary was box-shaped; however, there are also reliquary pendants, and other jewelry, which have compartments in which to put relics. One example is described by Harold Newman in *An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry*. Here Newman tells us that, "one handsome piece, (circa 1400), is a pendant in the form of a triptych with a suspended pearl, the two doors being slices of rock crystal that open to reveal an enamelled miniature depicting Christ between two angels holding the crown of thorns over his head, and the space

[2] Adriana A. Davies, "Journey and Adoration of the Magi," in *Anno Domini: Jesus Through the Centuries Exhibition Catalogue*, curator David J. Goa (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 2000), 67.

below the miniature being a compartment for a relic." [3] One definitely gets the impression, when looking at these reliquary pieces, that they contain something special, some mystery; each enclosure attempting to keep the mystery safe and in a sacred space.

During my time at the *Anno Domini* exhibit, I witnessed many striking responses to paintings and artefacts relating to the life of Jesus. Several times I noticed people bowing in the presence of the icons of Christ, while another time I witnessed a woman weeping at a painting of the Madonna and her child. As a docent for the exhibit, I understood some of the background of the pieces on display, but the reactions that I was seeing I simply did not understand. I knew then that the phenomenon surrounding the response to spiritual symbols and the connections people make to them would be a field of further study for me.

I am looking at the question: How does jewelry create a spiritual connection? By "jewelry" I mean to include any form of personal adornment, such as a pin, necklace, ring or bracelet. The word "spiritual" in itself is open to a broad spectrum of interpretations; I am including any practice which is associated with the development of a person's spiritual life. In this thesis, the words spiritual and religious are used interchangeably. I agree with John MacQuarrie when he says that, "fundamentally spirituality has to do with *becoming a person in the fullest sense*." [4] It is unfortunate that for some individuals, Church and religion have negative connotations, such as those voiced by jewelry designer, Jessica Elliot, whose views I quote later in this thesis.

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[3] Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry* (London: Thames and Hudson Limited, 1981), 255.

[4] John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 72.

I suspect that the renewed emphasis on spiritually symbolic jewelry is one of the ways in which seekers are satisfying their need for a spiritual connection. This is an area which I think deserves further exploration. However, having spent the majority of my life in the Pentecostal Church, I have very little experience with iconography. The church which I attended was a white, wooden building, which could have come straight out of a Christmas card. It had wooden pews and the only iconography was a wooden cross at the front, which was made by one of our members, who was a carpenter. "Thou shalt have no graven images," being the message.

Since most of us do not have reliquaries, iconic paintings, or seventeenth-century tapestries lying about, as was the case at *Anno Domini: Jesus Through the Centuries*, I started to notice and talk to people about their jewelry. One interesting aspect of this was the fact that individuals identified a lot of symbols as being spiritual, some of which are not what would commonly be understood as religious iconography. Some of the jewelry was obviously religious in nature, such as crosses; however, some were not, such as a pin which depicted a woman swimming through the water. But each wearer had a story to tell and the stories often reflected their spiritual life and the way jewelry symbolized that particular dimension of their life.

The word "symbol" comes from "syn" meaning "together" and "ballein," which means "to throw," so literally it means "to throw together." However, this thrown together word has the power to synthesize an entire worldview. In his book, *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts*, Mircea Eliade states that, "Symbols still maintain contact with the deep sources of life; they express, we may say, the 'lived' spiritual. This is the reason why symbols have a numinous aura: they disclose that the modalities of the Spirit are at the same time

manifestations of life, and by consequence directly engage human existence... This is why even symbols bearing on ultimate reality conjointly constitute some existential revelations for whoever deciphers their message."[5] One example of this is the symbolism of the stars and the brilliant blue on the reliquary in the *Anno Domini* exhibit. The image communicates not only the magic of a starry sky and the night during which Christ was born, but it also mirrors the heavens and the cosmic realities found therein. There is a layering of meaning here, which can only fully be understood on a spiritual level.

One of the things about jewelry is that it is available to everyone. It can range in price from a few pennies to thousands of dollars, and each piece provokes a story by the wearer. The accessibility of jewelry lines up with my main theological interest, which is the lived-experience of humankind's spiritual life. What is this important phenomenon about? Is it a means by which people make a connection to an often disconnected and disjointed world? Also, how do ordinary people live out their spirituality through their everyday lives? I am especially interested in those who do not attend church. How do these people shape their spiritual lives and, how is meaning embodied and shared with others through their jewelry? How do they understand and speak about the meaningful events in their life?

We know that First Nations peoples used seeds, feathers, shells, bits of fur, teeth and stones, to name but a few, to create their own jewelry and other adornments. They drew from the natural objects which surrounded and sustained them, and what was created was often accompanied by story and song. When reading Thomas Mails' book *The Mystic Warriors of the Plains,* which concentrates on the America Plains Indians from 1750-1875, I found a sketch made at the time portraying a member of the Cheyenne people. His name was Little

[5] Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred and the Arts* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 5.

Wolf, and in the drawing he is wearing what is termed a "silver cross medicine symbol."[6] The cross "represented the four winds, which helped the holy men dream and speculate about life beyond the grave." [7] "The top of the cross," states Mails, "was marked by an arrow, and represented the north wind and was worn nearest the head, where intelligence rests. The left arm covered the heart; it was the east wind, which sent life and love. The foot was the south wind, indicating fiery passion, illustrated by a sun symbol. The right arm was the west wind, covering the place from which the breath goes out at death, which was denoted by a star design."[8] This sketch shows how the Native population had been affected by the influx of Europeans and their religion, and the native people appear to have appropriated some of that symbolism into their own spiritual jewelry.

Some Contemporary Thoughts on Jewelry

My own culture has integrated jewelry into many of its most meaningful ceremonies. During the marriage rite, many couples exchange rings; a crucifix is often thought to be an appropriate gift at a confirmation ceremony, and a birthstone ring is a common possession. I suspect that jewelry symbolizes many things. It can be appreciated as an object of beauty, a fad or fashion; it can reflect relationship or perhaps symbolize something we simply cannot put into words.

I am not the only one wondering about the part jewelry plays in today's spiritual life. I recently read several articles which spoke to this very subject. One article was in *ELLE* magazine, which asserts that "faith grazing has reached a fevered pitch," and describes today's spirituality as a "smorgasbord". The article was accompanied by pictures of popular

[6] Thomas E. Mails, *The Mystic Warriors of the Plains* (New York: Marlowe and Company, 2002): 144.
[7] ibid.
[8] ibid.

"spiritual" pendants. One jewelry designer, Lydia Courteille is quoted as saying, "for me, religion is always hiding a mystery."[9] For Courteille, the spiritual connection lies in the symbols, which in turn provide the base images for her collection. Melissa Magsaysay of the *Los Angeles Times* in her article "Religious icons a hit in pop culture: Fashionable self-expression or symbols of the faithful?" quotes religion professor, Stephen Prothero. "We are at a moment in our culture where the emphasis is on the spiritual, not the religious," says Prothero. However, the irony of this is not lost on him, as he adds that, "jewelry is about materialism, and the spiritual message is the opposite. It is not supposed to be about things of this world." He sees spirituality as "not being part of an organized religion, but an assertion of self-reliance in spiritual things. I think that it is more about 'who I am' and jewelry is often that." [10] Jessica Elliott, who designs a line of jewelry called *Twisted Faith*, states that, "For me, religion is not something I choose to express through jewelry because I feel it (religion) alienates people. It is more about expressing spirituality and wearing these things as a personal talisman, not religious icons." [11] Even with such diverse views of religious jewelry, there is an encouraging outcome in Prothero's view. "I am torn," explains Prothero. "Sometimes I do get annoyed when venerable religious symbols get dumbed down, but when has it never been like that? Nobody owns religious symbols. The positive side is that it gets people to think about different religions and symbols." [12]

Both Prothero and Elliot voice the commonly held belief that "spirituality" and "religion" are in opposition to each other. I suspect that some of the polarization around the two concepts comes from the abuses carried on in the name of religion. However, in my

[9] Guy Saddy, *"Spiritual Smorgasbord," ELLE Canada* (December 2010):142.
[10] Melissa Magsaysay, "Religious Icons a hit in pop culture," *Religion*: *Edmonton Journal* (September 25, 2010): B9.
[11] ibid.
[12] ibid.

readings of Otto, Eliade, and MacQuarrie, I do not see this division. For that reason, I am using both terms interchangeably in this thesis.

In his book, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircea Eliade describes the complex structure of symbolism in Chinese jewelry. "Jade in China fulfilled or presented a magico-religious function," says Eliade, "but that function was not the whole of the symbolism of jade. Jade also had the values of a symbolic language in the sense that the number, colour and arrangement of bits of jade that a woman wore not only made that woman one with the universe or its seasons, but further indicated her 'identity'—showing for instance, whether she was a maiden, a married woman or a widow, to what family and what social class she belonged, from where she came, and much more." [13]

When questioned about the importance of jade, Confucius replied that, "anciently superior men found the likeness of all excellent qualities in jade. Soft, smooth and glossy, it appeared to them like benevolence; fine, compact and strong—like intelligence; angular but not sharp and cutting—like righteousness; hanging down (in beads) as if it would fall to the ground—like the (humility of) propriety; when struck, yielding a note, clear and prolonged—yet terminating abruptly—like music; its flaws not concealing its beauty, nor its beauty concealing its flaws—like loyalty; with an internal radiance issuing from it on every side—like good faith; bright as a brilliant rainbow—like heaven; exquisite and mysterious, appearing in the hills and streams—like the earth; standing out conspicuous in the symbols of rank—like virtue; esteemed by all under the sky—like the path of truth and duty." [14]

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[13] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 451.

[14] James Legge, translator, *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), 464.

The jade adornments had an unspoken language, but a language nonetheless that everyone in the community understood. Some of the religious symbolism of jewelry has been lost as many people no longer know the biblical narratives, and the symbols get "dumbed down" as Stephen Prothero observes. Filippo Salviati, in *The Language of Adornment*, adds that, "Shiny, bright or luminous qualities are inherent in precious metals or translucent stones such as jade and crystal. Their brightness and their light reflect upon the wearer so that they seem to create an enveloping radiant aura. These attributes are usually associated with manifestations of the divine in various cultures: thus they add an otherworldly dimension, which somehow brings the adorned person closer to the supernatural realm."[15] By comparison, several people I spoke with mentioned the fact that they do not feel "complete" without a particular piece of jewelry, and that they have turned around and gone home upon realizing that they had forgotten a ring or necklace.

While in Toronto in 2011, I visited the Bata Shoe Museum and was intrigued to note that they had an exhibit on the spirituality of shoes. Included in this display was a Hindu gold necklace with five round-shaped blue enamel medallions on which were painted yellow footprints, which depicted the footprints of Krishna. The believer was encouraged to visit each of the shrines in the world which were symbolized by the necklace as places where Krishna had walked. One of the tasks of the believer was tied to the footsteps of Krishna. This reminded me of those Christian travel ads, which offer the opportunity to visit the Holy Land and "walk in the footsteps of Jesus." Even the December 2011 issue of *The United Church Observer*, features articles such as "Christmas in the Holy Land," and "Sacred Journeys: Five new books on pilgrimage." The Hindu Kavach necklace in essence

[15] Filippo Salviati, *The Language of Adornment: Chinese Ornaments of Jade, Crystal, Amber and Glass* (Paris: Myrna Myers, 2002), n.p.

symbolizes the same concept as the Christian "walking in the footsteps of Christ." Whether viewed as gaudy or gorgeous, jewelry has been an intimate part of humankind's expression of memory and of spiritual being.

The connection between pilgrimage and jewelry is not a new one. For example, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Pilgrim badges were sold at shrines in England for travellers to wear on the return trip home. In *Artful Adornments,* Yvonne Markowitz tells us that, "pilgrim badges, rosaries, and decade rings, serve as visible symbols of faith or as devotional aids. Pilgrim badges gained popularity during the Middle Ages in Europe, and people wore them on hats, clothing and around the neck. Mass produced and typically made of non-precious metals, badges attested to personal piety, and indicated that the wearer had been on a pilgrimage to a saint's shrine. Decorated with emblems and saints' images, the badges also protected the owner in times of illness or danger."[16]

A Short History of Jewelry

What is believed to be the oldest example of jewelry in existence was found in a cave in Skhul, Israel, and consists of two tiny marine shells, which appear to have been pierced for use as pendants or in necklaces, and have been dated to one hundred thousand years ago.[17] Long before Christian iconic jewelry made an appearance, we know that there was a common use of bracelets and rings in the Hellenistic and Roman world. Often representing pagan deities, they were worn to promote healing and used as talismans. Though Christians maintained the amuletic quality of jewelry, the meaning behind the symbolism changed.

[16] Yvonne J. Markowitz, *Artful Adornments: Jewelry from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2011), 21.

[17] Natural History Museum , " World's oldest piece of Jewellery," http://www.nhm.ac.uk/about -us/news/2006/june/ accessed March 2011.

Hugh Tait, in his book *7000 Years of Jewelry*, states that, "The palm-branch of Victory, the peacocks of Juno and the doves of Venus are three of the many images which were used symbolically, though differently perceived by both pagan and Christians... as a result of the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, when the Emperor Constantine the Great gave official recognition to Christianity, the more opulent jewellery began to include Christian images and motifs, but the jewellers also brought into their repertoire new shapes, like pectoral crosses, and new forms for carrying holy relics."[18] The reliquary pendant "typically contained potent substances such as sacred texts, the cremated ashes of a religious leader, or a bone fragment or piece of clothing belonging to a saint." [19] So with the creation of sacred jewelry, we see emerging change not only in the symbolism, but sometimes in the composition of the pieces themselves. As Christianity spread, its iconic motifs grew as it was influenced by new cultures, languages and politics.

Iconography and Jewelry

The power of Christian symbolism signified by the sign of the cross proved itself to Constantine in 312 A.D. in a conflict with Maxentius at the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Thomas Mathews in his book, *The Clash of the Gods* relates that, "it was Christ who, in a dream, directed Constantine to fashion a Christian symbol on his standards. With his God's sign flying before him, Constantine caught Maxentius, who held Rome, in a defile (a narrow pass between mountains), on the West Bank of the Tiber and drove him and his troops into the river." [20]

[18] Hugh Tait, *7000 Years of Jewelry* (Richmond Hill: Firefly Books, 2008), 205.
[19] Yvonne J. Markowitz, *Artful Adornments: Jewelry From the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston; MFA Publications, 2011), 21.
[20] Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5.

The Church before Constantine is referred to as ante-pacem; this was a period before the "peace" of Constantine. The first depictions of Christian imagery appear in the Roman catacombs, and often reflected the themes of resurrection and eternal life. Early depictions were based on Greek portraiture. Two of the existing images from the second and third centuries portray Christ as Helios, who was the Greek god of the sun; and Orpheus, who was a great musician and a poet of Greek myth. However, during this time there was no portrayal of God as such. Graydon Snyder states that, "there are narrative scenes where God could appear (such as with) Adam and Eve, and the sacrifice of Isaac. Perhaps the presence of God is self-understood, though not portrayed." [21] The Eastern Christianity of Constantine prohibited a God image because such an image would be false. All that they could depict were things that were real, such as God as Jesus—God incarnate. There was a prohibition on graven images, as Christians were not to depict God as the pagans did. Christian iconography does not come on strong until the fourth century, and at that time consisted basically of Byzantine-style mosaics, which depicted Christ, the Virgin Mary or a saint. Later, small triptych pendants, which resembled miniature altar pieces, came into vogue. These were made of three panels, which folded in on each other, and were often decorated with enamelling depicting biblical scenes or characters.

Linda Sue Galate states that the earliest known written advice was given by Clement of Alexandria (circa 200 A.D.) to Christians choosing a design for their signet ring. Clement, "suggests using 'a dove or fish or a ship in full sail or a musical lyre... or a ship's anchor.'"[22] Here we see traditional images taking on Christian meanings. As far back as the ancient

[21] Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante-Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 64.

[22] Linda Sue Galate, " Early Christian Iconography," in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 473-474.

Egyptians, the image of the fish had been used as amulets in pendants and hair clasps to protect their children against drowning. [23] Baptistery wall paintings dated at the same time, explore narratives such as David and Goliath, Adam and Eve, the Good Shepherd, miracle scenes from the life of Christ, the women entering the tomb, and the raising of Lazarus. When many people could not read, the teaching aspect of this new symbolism would portray an important influence.

Jewelry in the Middle Ages

In Europe, during the Middle Ages (476 A.D. – circa 1450 A.D.), two dominant themes were religion and courtly love. Clare Phillips writes that, "In many jewels the devotional and the worldly were closely intertwined and this was perhaps most marked in the luxuriant paternosters (prayer beads), and rosaries, on which people counted their prayers, and which were so proudly displayed in portraits." [24] Lois Durbin in *The History of Beads* quotes a fifteenth- century chronicler saying that everyone wore a rosary; it served as a badge of Christianity and respectability.[25] Durbin states that the name "rosary" is derived from rosarium or rose garden, and that, "the spiritual identity of roses was extended to beads, which came to symbolize a permanent garden of prayer called the rosary."[26]

Phillips notes that, "stones were chosen, not only for color, but for their supposed healing and spiritual powers which were extensively written about and widely accepted. According to the treatise on lapidary, written by Marbodus, an eleventh-century Bishop of Rennes, the sapphire's virtues included not only protection against physical injury, fraud,

[23] Charles Freeman, *The Legacy of Ancient Egypt* (Abingdon: Andromeda Oxford Limited, 1997), 45.
[24] Clare Phillips, *Jewels and Jewelry* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 2000), 28.
[25] Lois Sherr Dubin, *The History of Beads: From 100,000 B.C. To The Present* (New York: Abrams, 2009), 90.
[26] Dubin, 91.

fear and envy but also the promotion of peace and reconciliation, healing for ulcers, eyes and headaches and the safeguarding of chastity."[27] However, it was also believed that a good stone, such as a diamond, could lose its power through the sin of the wearer. Sculptured animal pendants became popular in the sixteenth-century. Here we see gold and enamelled sheep and pelicans in Christian jewelry. The lamb symbolized the Lamb of God, and Phillips states that, " the fable of the pelican drawing from its own breast to feed its young had, since the Middle Ages, has been used as an allegory for Christ's sacrifice, and was known as " the pelican in its piety." [28]

Of this story, Thomas Aquinas wrote:

> Bring the tender tale true of the Pelican:
> Bath me Jesu Lord, in what thy bosom ran—
> Blood whereof a single drop has power to win,
> all the world forgiveness of its world of sin.[29]

An interesting development in religious jewelry was the creation of *memento mori* jewels. This jewelry came out of the Black Plague, and represents a contemplation of death. One example was a pendant of a coffin, which opens to reveal a skeleton; the inscription reads, "Through the resurrection of Christ we will be sanctified."[30] What may now appear as macabre symbolism, then, served to remind the wearer that this life matters, and we are to live a life of integrity. Clare Phillips states that, "... rings decorated with enamelled skulls were the most frequently occurring types, but more elaborate pendants were also worn during

[27] ibid.
[28] ibid., 36.
[29] Thomas Aquinas, *Godhead Here in Hiding* (1274), *translated by Gerard Manley Hopkins.*
[30] Clare Phillips, *Jewels and Jewelry* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 2000), 37.

the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." [31] Life is fragile, and death reminds us to act differently and to recognize the worth in every moment.

Secular monograms also had their spiritual counterparts, as with the sacred monogram IHS, which came from the Greek word for Jesus. Prayers and verses from the Bible could be inscribed on jewelry, which then acted as an amulet. In countries such as Spain, it was a common practice, especially among wealthy or royal children, for them to wear numerous amulets and small reliquaries for protection. Even today, many believe that the images of saints such as Saint Christopher continue to protect travellers.

Jewelry in the Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries

In the nineteenth century, stores such as Tiffany & Co., were offering what was referred to as "mourning jewelry," which consisted of crosses and mourning pendants made of materials such as jet (a black fossil coal or wood that can be carved into jewelry), onyx, and black-enamelled gold, and were described as being set with portrait miniatures or woven hair. Mourning jewelry was often worn to commemorate the death of a loved one. In *Bejewelled by Tiffany 1837-1987*, Clare Phillips explains that, "the steep rise in the use of mourning jewellery in nineteenth century America can be linked to the deaths of thousands of American husbands, brothers and sons in the Civil War of 1861-1865." [32]

A fascinating aside is the fact that some of the symbolism of the memento mori jewelry reinvented itself in the late seventeenth century onward to become mourning jewelry. An example is a skull and cross-bones mourning ring dated 1773. Tiffany's mourning jewelry really integrates materials and motifs borrowed from previous generations. As far

[31] ibid., 36.
[32] Clare Phillips, ed. *Bejewelled by Tiffany 1837-1987* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 137.

back as the Roman Empire, black was used to designate mourning. Hair has been used in mourning jewelry since the seventeenth century. It served as an insert into pendants; it was woven into bracelets, or enclosed in a brooch. For example, after my parents died, I was given a piece of mourning jewelry. It was a locket that had belonged to my father, and contained a picture of my grandparents and a lock of my grandmother's hair. I still cannot touch my grandmother's hair embedded in the piece without remembering, and missing a woman I never knew.

At present, the history of religious imagery in jewelry continues to evolve as the hip-hop culture has given jewelry the name Bling. "Bling" refers to the imaginary "sound" that is produced from light reflected by a diamond. [33] However, necklaces called "Jesus pieces," which are images of Christ and symbols such as crosses continue to be popular. Unfortunately, when we look at jewelry either from an historic distance or even now in the present, the intention of the wearer is unknown. We can guess at the personal translation of a piece in any given time period, but it is only a guess. With the wide open range of spirituality today, formerly "religious" iconic pieces may be worn simply for their attractiveness.

Theological Themes in Jewelry

One of the theologians I am using as a basis for my thoughts on this phenomenon of the spiritual connection people make with their jewelry is Rudolf Otto. I think that I was drawn to Otto because he saw that the concept of the holy in the Church at the beginning of the twentieth century had been degraded to ethics and morality, or in other words, to simply mean actions which made up a particular kind of moral life. His work strove to restore the

[33] Reggie Osse and Gabriel Tolliver, *Bling: The Hip-Hop Jewelry Book* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 15.

holy in its totality to religious thinking, not only as a part of a belief system, but as an inner spiritual experience as well. He referred to the holy as "mysterium tremendum fascinas." These three Latin words for Otto expressed the idea of mystery, and fascination. Otto studied many religions other than Christianity, and was not only interested in structures and dogma, but the lived experience of people. Otto's notion of "creature feeling," which he articulates in his book *The Idea of the Holy,* is really an experience without origins—it is a primal human experience. In Otto's concept of the "numinous", we are stripped away from the rational aspects of belief and find something forgotten and lost from which can be drawn our ultimate purpose and sense of meaning.

Because of the universality of the numinous experience, the theological themes touched upon are universal as well. In my conversations with people, searching in the world of object for the divine presence, I was reminded of the "doubt" of Thomas, the love of God, the fear of a child, the confusion and void pictured in Genesis, and the "specialness" of an object, because of the memory it carried. Birth, death, loss, love; all of these are at work in the numinous. God's presence is there in the world of object. Each story touched on the theme of relationship and its meaning as it related to the memory of the piece of jewelry being spoken of. For me, my granddaughter's jewelry box brought with it images of reliquaries and the Ark of the Covenant.

Another theologian I am drawing on for inspiration is John Macquarrie. Macquarrie is an admirer of Rudolf Otto, and argues in his book *Two Worlds Are Ours* that, "the holy is the very heart of religion. It is more fundamental and certainly more primordial from a

chronological point of view even than God." [34] Macquarrie is an Anglican writer, and states in his preface to *Paths in Spirituality* that he sees "great numbers of young people searching for spiritual experience, and rebelling against a culture which has discarded it. But most of them are looking for spirituality outside of the Christian churches." [35] Even though Macquarrie wrote this in the 1970's, I agree with him that this is the case, not only for some of our young people, but for people in general. However, if one cannot turn to the Church, how does one work this spiritual need through? My thesis elaborates on how people make the spiritual connection with objects such as jewelry.

Throughout his chapter on "The Practice of Religion," Macquarrie connects religion and spirituality, and speaks of the "religious dimension... developed through prayer, worship and spiritual practice." [36] As Macquarrie points out, the religious dimension of humankind leads to some sort of praxis or practice. If a person rejects the spiritual practices as they are laid out in the Church, does he or she create their own practices; if so, what does the person draw upon to create such a practice?

Choice of Methodology

I am using narrative phenomenology as my methodology; because I am speaking of a spiritual phenomenon, and I am combining my own personal narrative with that of my participants. Phenomenology comes out of the school of philosophical thought, and asserts that the experiences of people are important, and how they speak about them is important as well. It liberated us to take experience seriously. For instance, Otto's reflections on the nature of the holy were affected by an experience he had while visiting a synagogue in

[34] John Macquarrie, *Two Worlds Are Ours* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2005), 239.
[35] John Macquarrie, preface to *Paths in Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 1972), n.p.
[36] ibid., 5.

Morocco in 1911, where he heard a choir singing Isaiah's own prophecy in Hebrew, "Holy, holy, holy God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory." Obviously, deeply affected by the experience, Otto stated that, "In whatever language these words are spoken, the most sublime words that human lips have ever uttered, they always seize one in the deepest ground of the soul, arousing and stirring with a mighty shudder the mystery of the other-worldly that sleeps therein." [37] What Otto is saying here is in essence an example of the phenomenological experience. A common parallel example would be the sense of the infinite, which many people recognize when they stand alone on a star-lit night, experiencing the vastness of the universe and their own insignificance in comparison.

I am working with narratives because I want to explore the "lived experience" as Max van Manen calls it.[38] This is a methodology which stresses writing and creative expression of the subject, and it matches my personality and philosophical bent. I intend to keep a diary of the conversations with my participants, and stress what is most important to them, and my own responses and thoughts. I am using the jewelry as a gateway to these conversations, and will write about the way in which their experience and memory are linked to jewelry. There will be places in the conversations which will resonate with me, and these are the points I will be exploring at length.

[37] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 63.
[38] Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience : Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (London: Althouse Press, 1990)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Literature Review features (a) books about jewelry, cultural and spiritual (b) research written on the phenomenology of objects, and places (c) literature on the numinous, which is Rudolf Otto's word for the presence of the divine and (d) literature which expresses my chosen methodology; in thought, word and in the process itself.

Jewelry and Its History

Included are a number of books which cover the history of humankind's attachment to jewelry. John Peacock's *20th Century Jewelry: the complete source book* (2002); *Jewels and Jewelry* (2000) by Clare Phillips; *Jewelry: 7000 Years* (1986), edited by Hugh Tait, and *Artful Adornments* (2011) by Yvonne J. Markowitz, which all have lengthy sections on magical or religious jewelry.

Bejewelled by Tiffany: 1837-1987(2007), edited by Clare Phillips, and *Jewellery through the Ages* (1970) by Guido Gregorietti show historically how jewelry has reflected the cultures worldwide in which it was found, and many insights into the allure behind humankind's need for adornment. *Bling: The Hip-Hop Jewelry Book* (2006), by Reggie Osse and Gabriel Tolliver records the renaming of jewelry to "bling" by the hip-hop culture. Harold Newman's *Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry* (1981) provides a classic reference on jewelry history.

Anne Barros's *Brilliant Stories: American Native Jewelry* (1994); and Thomas E. Mails *The Mystic Warriors of the Plains: The Culture, Arts, Crafts and Religion of the Plains Indians* (2002), both illustrate how the First Nation's peoples used jewelry, and its symbolism. Mails shows how the Native culture integrated some of its new-learned belief in Christianity into its own jewelry designs. Native Americans used jewelry not only for

individual adornment, but as a way to identify themselves with a particular group. Jewelry was used in ceremonies of dance, healing and sacrifice. It was also a part of "rites of passage," such as weddings. Jewelry was often given as a bridal present, and used in wedding rituals. The wearing of beads and pendants reflected aspects of their social lives, economic, and political concerns and spiritual beliefs.

The Tibetan Way of Life, Death and Rebirth by John Peacock (2003) has a good section on charms and amulets, and it illustrates how Tibetans continue to wear reliquaries. *The Language of Adornment: Chinese Ornaments of Jade, Crystal, Amber and Glass* by Filippo Salviati (2002) is a fascinating look at the relationship which the Chinese people from the Neolithic period (8000-2000), to the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), had to their jewelry, and the cultural messages, which the jewelry conveyed. Stones, such as jade, were given magical or spiritual powers during this period in China, which parallels aspects of my readings on stones used in the jewelry of the Middle Ages in Europe.

Eithne Wilkins in *The Rose Garden Game: The Symbolic Background to the European Prayer-Beads* (1969), describes the rosary as an "aid to memory" of a presence which we do not want to forget, which embodies a "spiritual potency." I imagine that my participants will allude to the memories evoked by their jewelry and that spirituality in some form will be involved.

In *The Mystery of the Rosary: Marian Devotion and the Reinvention of Catholicism* (2009), Nathan D. Mitchell also sees the rosary as a "medium of presence," providing believers with direct access to the powerful presence of Mary. Mitchell also observes that the rosary is not rigid but a "flexible prayer" that allows the believers to customize it to suit their

own situation in life. I think that I will hear both of these characteristics spoken of by my participants, as they draw on their jewelry for strength and create their own meanings and rituals.

Biblical and Early Christianity

Both Graydon Snyder in *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (2003), and Linda Sue Galate in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (2003) discuss the history of iconography beginning in the catacombs, and illustrate some of the oldest archaeological pictorial representations of biblical images in existence today. *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai* edited by Sharon Gerstel and Robert Nelson (2010) not only looks at the inner workings of the longest continuously inhabited Christian monastery, and its amazing collection of Byzantine icons; but also contains diary excerpts of people who have visited the location. In the spring of 1349, Niccolò da Poggibonsi records the "spiritual joy" he felt while visiting the site, and the necessity which he "decided in his soul" to see and record all that he had experienced at the monastery.[39] This is an example of the awesome "drawing" power of the numinous, and the fact that one can experience the numinous not only through objects, but through places as well. Many people have had an encounter with the holy at Mount Sinai, and continue to do so to the present day.

Lord of the Rings

Of the fictional tales whose themes revolve around jewelry, I think that *Lord of the Rings* (1955) by J.R.R. Tolkien is one which adds texture to my subject. In this story, the

[39] Niccolò da Poggibonsi quoted in Sharon E.J. Gerstel and Robert S. Nelson, eds., *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 1.

Dark Lord Sauron forges the One Ring, to gain control over the other Rings of Power protected by the leaders of Men, Elves and Dwarfs. Sauron is defeated in battle and loses the ring, which ultimately is inherited by Frodo Baggins, who, accompanied by The Fellowship of the Ring, embarks on an adventure to return the ring to Mount Doom and destroy it. There are tremendous themes running through this story: one of which is the power of the ring, which made me consider the powerful amulet quality of jewelry as a theme for consideration in my research.

Tolkien's religious imagery is woven symbolically throughout the book, and even though he is quoted as saying that he himself has told readers not to allegorize what he has written[40], it is hard not to draw comparisons; as when Frodo offers the ring to Galadriel. Anne C. Petty (2011), describes Galadriel as a, " vaguely Elvish version of the Christian Mary, with her white robes, golden hair and shining eyes...(who) becomes bathed in light so blinding that her surroundings fall dark, indicating the isolating power that made her divinely beatific, but ultimately something terrible."[41] Upon reading this description, I was strongly reminded of Rudolf Otto's "mysterium tremendum," and that "creature feeling" one experiences, when entering the presence of the Holy. In effect, the ring acts as a spiritual conduit, reminding us of the world just beyond our reach, but always present.

My literature review incorporates two books on material culture: *The Comfort of Things* (2008) by Daniel Miller, and *The Material Culture Reader* (2002) edited by Victor Buchli. I suspected that some of the same themes covered in these two books would be reflected in my own conversations, and I wanted to read about the previous observations on

[40] J.R.R. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings,* 1966 edition, 6.

[41] Anne C. Petty, "Reflections of Christendom in the Mythopoeic Iconography of Middle-earth," in *Light Beyond All Shadow: Religious Experience in Tolkien's Work*, Paul E. Kerry and Sandra Miesel, eds. (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), 55.

this subject. People do draw comfort from "things" and I thought that jewelry would fit that pattern. Chapter seven of *The Material Culture Reader* by Nicholas J. Saunders, discusses what is known as "trench art." These are pieces of art or jewelry, which were created from bombs, mortars, shrapnel and bullets, left behind after WW I. Many of these pieces were created by the soldiers themselves, and Saunders records the intense emotions surrounding these objects and how they reawakened strong memories in the soldiers, who created or viewed these objects after the War. My supposition here is that some of my participants may have intense emotion or memory attached to their jewelry.

In 2006, Yael Guilat wrote a paper about the impact of jewelry on the lives of Yemenite women who immigrated to Israel. In their new homeland, their clothes, jewelry and embroidery made them noticeable, and they were encouraged to dress as did Israeli women. Their appearance became a "conflict site"—the loss of which shook the identity of these women. According to Guilat, the Yemenite jewelry was associated "with superstition, backward religiosity and the purchase of underage brides," [42] all of which made it ill-suited for modern Zionism. The Yemenite women's jewelry did not fit the new spiritual or cultural picture. I included this article because I wondered if I would meet people who treasure their jewelry, but do not wear certain pieces for fear of criticism.

Art and Theology

There are several books which influenced my thoughts on symbolism, religion and art, which include *In the Beginning is the Icon* by Sigurd Bergmann (2009). Here Bergmann explores what he refers to as "art theology," which is really a look at art from the Christian

[42] Yael Guilat, "Between Lulu and Penina: The Yemenite Woman, Her Jewelry and Her Embroidery in the New Hebrew Culture," *NASHIM: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* (2006), 210.

theological perspective, throughout history beginning with the icon. Mircea Eliade's *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts* (1990), brings out the idea that if one deciphers a symbol, one gains access to the universal; for Eliade this is the ultimate function of symbols. In Eliade's *Patterns of Comparative Religion* (1996) he speaks of the "logic of symbols" and sees them as capable of creating a transforming experience. An example of this would be that a cosmic symbol such as a stone, water or the moon can become symbolic of a whole universe, in other words it loses its concrete limits, and becomes infinite.

There is a potential for sacred revelation in art, and in the symbolism adopted by our culture. Paul Ricoeur in *The Symbolism of Evil* (1969) agrees with Eliade in his assessment of cosmic symbols, but adds that these realities manifest themselves in words. People not only experience this phenomenon, but they feel compelled to write them down, to communicate their experience as I am doing in this thesis, and as Niccolo` da Poggibonsi did in his diary after seeing the monastery on Mount Sinai.

The Interpretation of Cultures by Clifford Geertz (1975) explores the fact that different cultures consider different symbols to be sacred, and yet these symbols, woven together, make a "Religious System". Humankind has used symbols and artistic creations to help make sense of, and bring order to the universe since it began. Robin Margaret Jensen's *Understanding Early Christian Art* (2000) shows how visual art can serve as a form of theological expression.

On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection by Susan Stewart (1993) reminded me of my granddaughter's doggie necklace, which she described as our dog, Payton. Stewart states that miniatures do not exist in nature, but are

culturally created products. It cannot bark or move, yet my granddaughter recognized this pendant as Payton. She saw a miniature and gave it a personal meaning.

A Look at the Numinous

In Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1970), he coined the term "numinous feeling" to describe the aspect of deity which transcends our rational understanding. Otto was one of the formative influences in the phenomenology of religion. Even though *The Idea of the Holy* was published in 1917, his idea of the "numinous" is still being discussed in books and articles written today in areas such as art, religion, and literature. It appears that Otto's purpose is to emphasize the numinous as an objective reality, not just as a subjective feeling, or as that which breaks into life and lays hold of a person. Otto's translator, John Harvey, says that, "we do all speak of feeling the beauty of a landscape or feeling the presence of a friend, and the 'feeling' in these cases is not merely an emotion engendered or stimulated in the mind but also a recognition of something in the objective situation awaiting discovery and acknowledgement."[43] I would not be surprised if the idea of the "numinous feeling" was echoed by some of my participants. Two other books by Otto, *Naturalism and Religion* (1913), and *Mysticism East and West* (1970) reinforce Otto's thinking by bringing together naturalism and religion, as well as eastern and western mysticism to their basic point of connection; which emphasizes that both naturalism and mysticism are expressions of the divine.

There are an abundance of writings which connect nature and humanity. The hymn *All Things Bright and Beautiful* by Cecil Frances Alexander (1848) comes to mind:

[43] John Harvey, Preface to the 1978 edition of *The Idea of the Holy*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), xvii.

All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all

The psalmist, David, connects God and nature in Psalm 23, when he says:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters,
He restores my soul.

The wonder and awe expressed here could be described by Otto's idea of the numinous. We see the spiritual connection also described in the writings of mystics such as Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross in his poem *Dark Night of the Soul*, and by the German Abbess and visionary, Hildegard von Bingen in the eerily beautiful music of her " Canticles of Ecstasy."

Gerardus van der Leeuw's *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (1967) has a chapter entitled "Things and Power." Here he describes 1 Samuel 4:3 as a form of fetishism. Van der Leeuw states that it is characteristic of being able to carry the sacred power with one that is a trait of fetishism. This could easily be applied to jewelry, which is worn on the person and can give the wearer a feeling of protection or luck. "Its essence," states van der Leeuw "lies in the idea that power resides within a thing and emanates from it. Whence that power arises is however a question unto itself." [44]

Robert F. Davidson (1947) writes a thoughtful study of Otto's numinous in his book, *Rudolf Otto's Interpretation of Religion.* He observes that the prophet Isaiah's experience of God "is a particularly religious evaluation of man's status in which a unique, transcendent reference is not only obvious but essential." [45] In other words, it is a basic human desire to make a spiritual connection. C.A. Bennett (1931), the writer of *The Dilemma of Religious*

[44] G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, vol.2, trans. J.E. Turner (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1967), 38.
[45] Robert F. Davidson, 95.

Knowledge, states that, "the sense of mystery, in its simplest definition, is in the sense of the unseen order, supervening upon, shining through and transfiguring the seen. It is this that is here proposed as the central element of religion."[46] This description brought me back to Tolkien's description of Galadriel's transforming image, after she takes the ring from Frodo, in *The Lord of the Rings*.

A practical analysis of the numinous experience came through in Melissa Raphael's book *Rudolf Otto and the Concept of Holiness* (1997). Raphael draws a connection between the numinous and the mystical. She observes that, " the mystical and the numinous may indeed be continuous with one another if we accept that mystical experience is as mediated (valid) as any other type of religious experience, and that it requires and inherits certain conceptual frameworks in order to occur at all. Furthermore, the majority of religions, whether predominantly theistic or mystical, contain both types of experience in their traditions. It is not, therefore, unexpected that the numinous, as a fluidly emotional reaction, would straddle both the personal theistic and impersonal mystical categories." [47]

This book connects the mystical and faith, as do several of the jewelry books (Markowitz, Newman and Tait), where several of the traditionally religious pieces of jewelry are also described as magical. This is a concept which has been attached to jewelry from the Middle Ages onward.

Michael Downey's book *On Understanding Christian Spirituality* (1997) outlines an excellent discussion on the differing definitions of what "spirituality" means to a number of

[46] Bennett,7.
[47] Raphael, 155.

theologians today[48]. Downey points out that some believe in a "non-religious" spirituality; and states that such a person "would devote his or her life to the pursuit of peace and justice, bringing all of life's energies to bear on the pursuit of these values."[49] Downey reminds me that John Macquarrie's definition of spirituality, which I am using, is only one of many definitions. He also points out that, "there is awareness that there are levels of reality not immediately apparent; there is more than meets the eye... and there is a quest for personal integration in the face of forces of fragmentation and depersonalization."[50] I would have to agree that any study of today's spirituality must consider the personal search for God together with the disintegrating forces within our present society.

I will also be integrating the thoughts of John Macquarrie, beginning with *Paths in Spirituality* (1972). I need a baseline for talking about the meaning of spiritual life, and Macquarrie provides it. He sees the biblical imagery of the Spirit as essentially dynamic, and states that spirit was not so much a concept, but an image or a picture, which was seen in the movement of the air. "From the Beginning," Macquarrie says, "the Spirit of God has been understood as God in the midst of men, God present and active in the world, God in his closeness to us as a dynamic reality shaping the lives and histories of people. The Spirit in this sense is not something other than God, but God in the manner of the divine Being in which he comes closest, dwells with us and acts upon us."[51] This is the image that I want to use in my thesis, a God who is active and alive and, yet to be experienced.

In *Two Worlds Are Ours: An Introduction to Christian Mysticism* (2005), Macquarrie uses imagery again to describe God, but this time it is in the images of darkness and light. He

[48] Downey, 13-15.
[49] Downey, 15.
[50] Downey, 14.
[51] John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (London: SCM Press Limited, 1972), 42.

reminds us that I John 1:5 says that, "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." Macquarrie sees darkness for the mystic as symbolizing, "the unknowableness of God, and in the pilgrimage into God the soul is embarked on a journey into an ever-expanding awareness of God."[52] This light/dark imagery reminds me of the contrast of "All Things Bright and Beautiful" versus "Dark Night of the Soul." Both speak of how we experience God, and yet the experiences appear so different. My thinking here is that both the light and dark are aspects of the human experience. Macquarrie's book is an introduction to Christian Mysticism, and in the chapter on mystics of the twentieth century, Rudolf Otto is discussed.

John H. Smith, in his book *Dialogues between Faith and Reason: the Death and Return of God in Modern German Thought* (2011), is the only writer I came across to express the idea that Rudolf Otto saw Jesus, not just as a great teacher or a wise or good man, but as the ultimate numinous in Christian theology. This concept, according to Smith, shook the Christian community at the time of the writing of *The Idea of the Holy*, as it was a radical new way of looking at Christ.

Another theologian, who was an admirer of Otto, is Paul Tillich. Tillich includes a section on Otto and the idea of the holy in his *Systematic Theology* (volume one).[53] Sharon Burch, in her article "Tillich on Salvation" (2006) states that Tillich thought that it was the duty of theologians to free the generation in which they lived from concepts which limit their lives as Christians. Burch cites Tillich's view on salvation as one such concept. No longer bound by its biblical and historical limits, Tillich sees it as a dynamic force in human history. This idea is somewhat reminiscent of Tillich's article, "The Lost Dimension in Religion"

[52] Macquarrie, *Two Worlds Are Ours* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 15.
[53] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (*volume* one) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 215-218.

(1958). Here he suggests that we not throw out the old religious symbols, even though he admits that their meaning has been distorted; but we need to rediscover the relevance which they have in the present. Religion would then become a living, creative force for the betterment of our world.

Paul Tillich (1976) in his *Systematic Theology* (volume three), speaks of the "conquest of religion." Here he is not referring to further secularization of religion, but a complete breaking down of the barriers between the religious and the secular through what he refers to as the Spiritual Presence. He sees this as a reunion of love. I do not always understand Tillich, but the only numinous spiritual presence that I can imagine spanning this gulf would be Jesus Christ.

Phenomenology

This section of the Literature Review is broken down into books which aided in my understanding of both the history and the methodology of phenomenology, together with the importance of reading and writing phenomenology. The actual way that people talk about their experiences is important. For Rudolf Otto, his experience at the temple in Morocco was profound. This prayer, (as described in the Introduction), spoken in another language, dramatically took a hold of his heart, and Otto felt himself in the presence of the Holy. One cannot help but feel the attraction of his experience through his writing. It is through his words, that we in turn, share his experience.

If we look at phenomenology, we find two words; *phainomenon*, meaning "that which appears", to which the suffix "logos" is added, which means "study or reflection." In

essence, we have the idea of "reflection of that which appears." It is through this reflection that the researcher gains insight into the experience.

Understanding Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical school of thought founded in Europe. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher, is considered by many to be the founding father of this methodology; his influence can also be seen in religious phenomenology.

The literature Review includes *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, by Edmund Husserl, translated by Ingo Farin and James Hart (2006) and James L. Cox's *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates* (2006), both of which helped in my understanding of Husserl and the background of his philosophy. Archana Barua, the author of *Phenomenology of Religion* (2009); states that Religious phenomenology is "indirectly a search for the essence of religious experience."[54] Barua challenges researchers to listen sympathetically to their participants, and to remain open to what may be a very different worldview.

Michael Lewis and Tanja Staehler in their book *Phenomenology: An Introduction* (2010) note Husserl's thoughts on the importance of language. For Husserl, language and history were interconnected; he also saw language as essential not only to social interaction, but to personal transformation. Our experience is structured in narrative. It is by way of stories, myths and narratives that we connect to our ancestors and predecessors. In fact, most of history has been passed down orally, especially in First Nations cultures.

[54] ibid., 55.

Donald Polkinghorne's *Methodology for the Human Sciences: Systems of Inquiry* (1983) is a standard for phenomenological research. Polkinghorne outlines a concise look at Husserlian phenomenology, and says that, "phenomenological reflection ... produces descriptions of what is essential or invariant."[55] He brings out the importance of imagination in this methodology—not as something which is passive but is the "result of a strenuous, active search that makes possible the intuiting or seeing of the essence."[56]

Thomas Groenewald in his article "A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated" (2004) gives a detailed design and outline for a phenomenological research project, with examples and definitions. He begins with a thoughtful history of methodology, which takes into account, what was going on historically in the world at the same time, and the effects of these forces on this methodology. In their book, *Exploring Phenomenology: A Guide to its Literature*, David Stewart and Algis Mickunas state that, "the phenomenological approach to religion at the outset brackets all reductionist theories that attempt to explain religion as nothing but the project of unfulfilled desires, the manifestations of a particular culture milieu or a given historic situation, or as a subjectivist response to uncontrollable forces." [57] I will keep this in mind as I write this thesis. My aim is that each conversation will be a mutual exchange of stories as dynamic as the spiritual symbolic world which gives them structure.

Helpful books for the novice qualitative researcher include *Using Narrative in Social Research*: *Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* by Jane Elliott (2005) and *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* by Irving Seidman (2006). Elliott has a chapter on the ethics of

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[55] Donald Polkinghorne, *Methodology for the Human Sciences: Systems of Inquiry* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 42.

[56] ibid., 43.

[57] David Stewart and Algis Mickunas, *Exploring Phenomenology: A Guide to the Field and its Literature* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990), 125.

confidentiality, which contains stories of researchers whose lack of knowledge has harmed those who have allowed their narratives to be used. I intend to heed these cautionary tales. Seidman's advice in a nutshell is "listen more, talk less."

Some articles from which I have gained insight include "Women, Anger and Aggression: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis" by Virginia Eatough, Jonathan A. Smith and Rachel Shaw (2008), which demonstrates a practical application to their research, with definite suggestions for follow-up.

Kate Caelli, in her article "The Changing Face of Phenomenological Research: Tradition and American Phenomenology in Nursing" (2000) outlines the changing path of phenomenological research in America (the United States) from the European philosophy to the American philosophy of today. Caelli contends that they are diverse because they are being practiced in different cultures, with different foci on what is important, so the methodologies reflect that fact.

"Phenomenological Research Among Canadian and United States Indigenous Populations: Oral Tradition and Quintessence of Time" by Roxanne Struthers and Cynthia Peden-McAlpine (2005) shows how phenomenology lends itself well to the traditional oral storytelling of indigenous peoples. This method of narrative stories not only records the essence of indigenous experience, but does it in a way which respects the indigenous culture as well. We know that some cultures have a more cyclical understanding of time and history, rather than the more linear style that we use in the West. Therefore, this difference would have to be taken into account during the analysis of these narratives. These articles exemplify the effect of culture on both the researcher and those who participate in this methodology.

"Narrative methodologies: subjects, silences, re-readings and analyses," by Liz Stanley and Bogusia Temple (2008) makes a case for an ethically valid interpretation of the conversations, which the participant and the researcher share. Narratives are contextual, communal, and relational. The authors also stress the need for reflection by the researcher; even reflection about the silences in conversations.

Reading and Writing

Max van Manen's book, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (1997) gives a definition of phenomenology as a conscious experience which is "subjectively felt." This takes me back to Otto's concept of "primal feeling." *Writing in the Dark: Phenomenological Studies in Interpretive Inquiry* (2002) by van Manen states that we must insert ourselves into the work, to read and question the text. It contains a variety of phenomenological experiences written for us to enter into and discover that "Aha" moment, when the text speaks to our own personal experience.

This book strongly reminded me of Raymond Studzinski's *Reading to Live*: *The Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina* (2009). Studzinski laments the lack of spiritual literacy, which is greatly affected by the rush in which our society generally exists. He suggests that there needs to be a re-incorporation of *lectio divina*, or prayful reading of the sacred texts, which is reading slowly and deliberately. Studzinski further states that the sacred texts should not be treated as a "cold scientific equation, but as a symbolic reality pointing toward the invisible and infinite, (where) one can come to a new experience of awe and wonder."[58] When we prayerfully enter into our reading of the sacred scriptures, we re-experience our

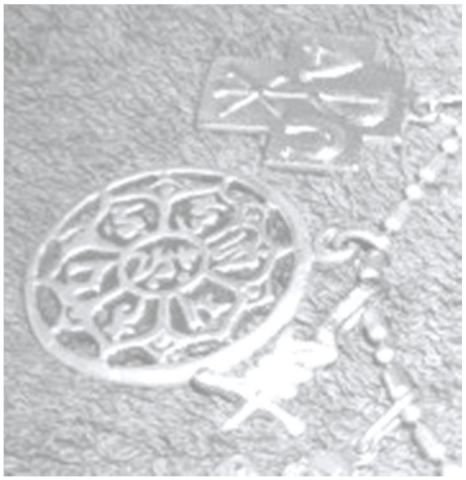
[58] Raymond Studzinski, *Reading to Live: The Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina* (Collegeville: Cistercian Publications, 2009), 19.

own spiritual history. I see a definite parallel between the stress placed on reading in both the van Manen and Studzinski books. They inform my way of talking with my participants by reminding me to slow down, and to be fully present as they share the meaning of their journey.

Summary

The Literature Review is an eclectic mix of books and articles, which have brought me to some realizations about my thesis subject. First, humankind has been making a spiritual connection to jewelry since ancient times. Secondly, written accounts of numinous experiences, whether biblical or modern, are important, as they show us a side of our relationship to God uncluttered by creed or dogma. Thirdly, they fire our imagination, freeing our concept of God and perhaps freeing ourselves as well. And finally, to do religious phenomenology, one must listen with compassion and an open heart. As I take up this adventure, I intend to remember these things, and apply them.

Chapter 3: Methodology



This chapter discusses three main areas: (a) the nature of my research, and my methodology, (b) my purpose, and (c) the importance of narrative. The title, *Making A Spiritual Connection through Jewelry*, is inherently the essence of this thesis. I am dealing with the world of meaning for individuals, each with experience given voice in story. Every individual's story and subsequent conversations provided an ongoing dialogue as the thesis work progressed. I develop my thinking along a set of themes including the following: 1) jewelry as a vow, 2) jewelry as the touchstone of spiritual story, 3) the symbolic character of jewelry connecting the individual experience to a larger tradition of meaning, and 4) jewelry as a connection to the trauma and grace of past experience. I then work on exploring meaning, and discerning common threads from what I was hearing; as well, I picked out themes which occurred, and showed how these themes captured the phenomenon, so that it may be better understood.

When I first started this study, my concept of jewelry included any form of personal adornment, such as a pin, necklace, ring or bracelet. However, before meeting with one of my participants, he asked if he could include his scapular. These are religious neck pieces often made of wool, which are worn by Roman Catholics. Scapulars are believed to provide help to the wearer who has faith, and attempts to live a righteous life. The Brown Scapular consists of two pieces of cloth, with one segment hanging on the wearer's chest and the other hanging over the back. These pieces are joined by two straps or strings, which overlap each shoulder, from which we get the word scapular. They are often made from wool, which harkens back to the material from which religious habits were made in the Middle Ages. Since this is a theological thesis about spiritual connection, scapulars are included.

My main theological interest encompasses exploring the everyday spiritual lives of people: "lived experience," as Max van Manen says. According to van Manen, "phenomenology is the study of the life-world, the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize or reflect on it. Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences... Anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest to phenomenology, whether the object is real or imagined, empirically measureable or subjectively felt."[59]

The purpose of phenomenological research is to find the meaning or the nature of something. It tries to describe what comes to us through immediate experience, thereby enabling people to better understand themselves and the experience itself. The phenomenon that I am researching is the spiritual connection that people have to their jewelry, and what meaning can be drawn from this connection. This is the correct research methodology for me as it fits with the topic, and with my personality and philosophical bent.

When choosing my participants, I approached people who appeared to have a special connection to a particular piece of jewelry. I was looking for diversity: in gender, in age group, and in spiritual path. Some of my participants were devout, and nurtured by a church, while others were re-entering the Church after a period of absence. Some said that they had no interest in God: in fact, they were quite antagonistic toward the idea; others were actively seeking a new spiritual home. One participant was a United Church member, two came from a Roman Catholic background, one participant was a Wiccan, and another identified as an

[59] Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Pedagogy* (London: Althouse Press, 1990), 9.

agnostic. My goal was to find people who both wanted to talk about their jewelry, and who came from diverse backgrounds.

In the conversations with my participants, I sought to be a "fellow-traveler," wanting to better understand their experiences, and to learn from them. At the beginning of this process, I gave each participant a number to protect their privacy. Since my recorder was digital, I also put the date, time, number, and location of our conversation in my notebook. The conversations varied in length. After an hour and a half, two of my participants had said all that they intended to say. However, I spent between five and six hours, over several separate occasions, with three others participants.

Our conversations usually started with me simply asking about the history of the piece of jewelry. Was it a present, inherited, adopted? From there, I asked what spiritual connection, if any, the piece had for them. Afterward, I asked them to describe their relationship to their jewelry. These are the questions which I had prepared to ask ahead of time, but often the conversations took on a life of their own; sometimes ending in stories of life-changing events. In my conversations, I tried not to "lead" my participants, but attempted not to get in their way with a lot of questioning, when they spoke about their experiences. At times there were tears and expressions of loss and confusion involving these events. I noticed that several of my participants would touch or hold the piece of jewelry in their hands as they told a story, either about the jewelry, or its history. I listened more than I talked, as I tried not to interrupt the flow of the story being told.

One of my participants, who is an artist, no longer had the piece of jewelry that I wanted to discuss with her; at least not in one piece. It was a coral necklace, which due to

constant wear, had finally disintegrated. Instead, she showed me a painting which she had done of her daughter wearing the necklace, and our discussion revolved around the painting.

I gained insight from Coralie McCormack's article entitled, "From Interview Transcript to Interpretive Story: Part 1- Viewing the Transcript through Multiple Lenses" (2000). Here, she breaks down the elements of her research framework, and I have modified her ideas somewhat for my own methodology.

We know that as a society, we use story to share our history and experiences. So the story related in conversation is often the essence of research. McCormack sees the translation of these stories as a series of reconstructions:

> The initial reconstruction is by the participant as he or she recalls an experience, and then describes it for the researcher. The researcher then reconstructs this experience as she or he transcribes, analyzes, and interprets the experience. A further level of reconstruction occurs as the reader reads and reacts to the experience. This process is simultaneously situated in a particular everyday context, and within a wider cultural/social context.[60]

I like this overview, because it plainly shows the different levels that a narrative goes through from its initial telling to its hearing, and ultimately its understanding, or comprehension. I think that it is important for the researcher to have knowledge of the process as it is unfolding during the actual telling.

Having done five audio-taped interviews, I took the following steps:

- immersed myself in each transcript by actively listening
- paid attention to both the language, and intonation of the speaker

[60] Coralie McCormack, "From Interview Transcript to Interpretive Story: Part I- Viewing the Transcript through Multiple Lenses," (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000), 282.

- took note of the context in which the story was told, and
- identified moments where something unexpected or important is happening.

During the entire process, I attempted to be true to the voices of my participants. I also strove to be both ethical, and accountable, especially when handling the words and experiences of others.

Even though the conversations were recorded, I took time immediately afterward to write out some of my initial thoughts and ideas. I also took note of other aspects of the discussions that I thought required more clarification. After listening to each taped conversation at least twice, I transcribed them. I then sat with the material and spent time simply meditating on what had been said by my participants and myself.

My musings ran along the following lines:

- How is the speaker's spiritual life shaped, both personally and within community?
- Is there a sense of vocation or responsibility flowing from their jewelry?
- What is the speaker's relationship to the piece? How do they relate a specific piece to other pieces of jewelry that they have?
- What in the conversation resonated with me?
- What is meaningful for my participant in this conversation?

I then drafted a flow chart, illustrating recurring themes, and parallel thoughts distilled from the conversations on a large piece of Bristol Board; thus giving myself a visual image with which to work. I also included the pictures of the jewelry. This is where the real work began and it is from this visual representation of my conversations that I drew many of my

conclusions. Several weeks after my conversations, I contacted my participants to get their thoughts on the overall experience, and the responses were positive. At this time, I also cleared up any lingering questions that I had regarding any meanings or contexts, which I was uncertain about in the portions of conversations that I used in my thesis.

Validation

It is difficult for us not to just see things through our own eyes. However, my own understanding of the spiritual lives of my participants was enlarged by our conversations. I was able to see not only through the prism of my own experience, but through the eyes of others. Listening to my participants broadened my own understanding of how other people experience their own spirituality, and validated this methodology for me.

Ethics

Prior to gaining consent, I briefly discussed my thesis question, and read through the permission form with each of my participants before having them sign it. Because I am using pictures of their jewelry, the permission to use the pictures was also included. I received permission to use the painting "Infanta dona Ana Mauricia de Austria" from the Board of Directors of National Heritage, Spain.

I conducted myself in accordance with "St. Stephen's Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans," and also shared several issues of concern with my supervisor, David J. Goa. One of which was the inclusion of a painting done by one of my participants, which showed the child of the participant. I was given permission to use the painting by the child's parents; however, we decided not to include the picture as the child was too young to give her own permission.

We also discussed the possibility that some strong emotions could be shared during our conversations, and that I should be prepared for that to happen. My overriding principle when in conversation with my participants was "do no harm." I was careful not to be intrusive, and made sure that they understood that they could stop the conversation at any time. I firmly understand the right to privacy, which my participants deserve. This aspect governed the rationale for a numbered identifier for each of my respondents. All information on my computer is "pass code" protected. Any person described in depth was given a pseudonym to assure anonymity, and all descriptions are free of personal information. I understand that the subject of spirituality is a personal one, and I attempted to approach each interview with sensitivity.

Chapter 4: Walking in the Landscape of the Holy with My Five Companions

Companion One: Andrew

Andrew is a Carmelite lay worker. (The Carmelites are a Catholic Religious Order). He has lived in a Carmelite community just outside of Toronto for the past fifteen years, and recently moved to Edmonton, when his father died. He now lives with his mother, who is also a devout Roman Catholic. He is now part of the Carmelite Third Order, which is for lay people, who through a profession of faith make a formal public commitment to living the Carmelite way of life. Andrew is soft-spoken, and in his mid-thirties. He says that for him, Carmelite spirituality consists of contemplative prayer, and the worship of "Our Mother," the Blessed Virgin Mary, who "kept the words of our Lord, and pondered them in her heart."

When we sit down, Andrew begins to describe two pieces of jewelry, which he always wears. He holds out his left hand, and shows me a silver ring. "I am my Beloved's and He is mine," he states as an explanation of the ring's meaning. This makes me think of the image of Jesus as the Bridegroom of the soul, which was portrayed in the *Anno Domini* exhibit. We see this in the Song of Songs 2:16: "My lover is mine and I am his," and in hymns such as Charles Wesley's *Jesus Lover of My Soul*. It connotes a sense of romantic love as divine love in the relationship between the believer and God. Andrew observes a vow of chastity, as he considers himself to be spiritually married to Christ.

The second piece of jewelry is called The Brown Scapular. (He then gives me one as a present). "I never leave the house without it," he says. "In case I get hit by a bus or something," he adds jokingly. We then look through the pamphlet, which accompanies the scapular. It states that this is the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel; and promises that, "This shall be to you and all Carmelites a privilege that anyone who dies clothed in this shall not suffer eternal fire; and if wearing it they die, they shall be saved."

Before Andrew arrived for our initial conversation, he let me know that he had what he referred to as a collection of Gothic symbol jewelry, which he would like to show me. “It is really “Memento Mori,” he explains as he opens the box, which is an assortment of skull rings, bracelets, necklaces and a skull watch. He then says:

> Memento Mori means “Remember you shall die!” There is also a sense of devotion to La Santissima Muerte or “Holy Death.” Death is the only force that is truly unconquerable. All must submit to her eventually. In Mexican folk magic, people seek her help in a variety of situations, because her power is unconquerable. She vanquishes obstacles, humbles and humiliates the haughty, the smug, those who

falsely believe they have any real power or control in life. Because her domination is absolute, her will can be put to bear on anyone; resistance to her is truly futile.

In my belief, only fools fear death, only cowards refuse to embrace it when it comes. Death is nothing to be afraid of, for me it is something to look forward to, the gateway that leads to disembodied peace; freedom from the "Iron Maiden" of the body, and the doorway to salvation. I believe that the Immortal and Eternal Creator made all things finite—"you are dust and to dust you shall return," that no creature or created entity might boast or hold itself higher than its Creator.

Andrew is passionate about death, and sees it as a force that will be reckoned with by all. His quote about dust reminded me, not of death, but of the account of the creation of humankind in Genesis 2:6, "the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." At some point, I had written in my Bible "became a living soul," in parenthesis. "A living soul" is a beautiful concept. A soul created by God, which for the believer never dies, is reunited with the Beloved.

Companion Two: Rita

Rita is in her early forties; she is a homemaker, and is the mother of two little girls, Patti and Sasha. Outside of her family, her painting is her passion. Rita grew up in the Roman Catholic tradition, and is now in the process of returning to the Church. Her parents had a boarding house in Vancouver, which had about twenty-two rooms in it, each with a different wallpaper on the walls, and all very colourful. This, she thinks, is why the backgrounds of all her paintings are so colourful. She considers her daughters to be her muses, and sees her paintings as not only about now, but about thinking back into her own childhood too.

"My paintings are about my daughters and about me being a girl. This is how I work out my worries or problems," she says. "Instead of talking about them I paint them."

I say, "Rita, tell me the story of this picture of Patti."

> Patti was having problems sleeping. I have done a lot of paintings about that, because it is so hard. She feels lonely in her sleep. It is a negative place for her. I gave her things in my paintings, in her slumber world, so that she would not feel alone. It did not dawn on me until later to give her something in real life.
>
> We have dress up times, so I put her in an old coat of mine, and put the coral necklace, which my mother gave me, around her neck. It made me feel as if I was surrounding her, protecting her. What finally helped was when Matt (Rita's husband) told Patti that, "God is watching you, and God is with you." That made a difference. And then my mother commented that, "you know Patti has her own guardian angel." That seemed to help too.
>
> I've always liked the feel of things around my neck; the heaviness. My mom bought me the coral necklace, and I never travelled without it. I took it everywhere. It fell apart with use. My painting shows Patti in my old coat, with the necklace surrounding her, but I also gave her animals in the picture, the wolf and the crow to guide her into morning. I was giving her the tools to get through the night.

My first thought, when I heard Rita's story, was of the tender mother-love which Jesus talks about in Luke 13: 32-34. Here, Christ describes himself as a mother hen, who longs to gather her chicks under her wings to keep them safe from the fox. A book that I read as a child, tells the story of a hen, who is caught in a prairie fire with her chicks, and how she covered her chicks with her own body to save them. One page shows a picture of the fire advancing, and the baby chicks scurrying under the protective wings of their mother. This is the kind of love that Rita is expressing. She tries to comfort her daughter's fears with words and actions, and finally paints a picture. She resorts to every means at her disposal to protect and comfort her daughter.

Rita's painting also reminded me of another work of art. It is by Juan Pantoja de la Cruz and is a portrait of Infanta Ana Mauricia of Austria. Both Patti and Ana are adorned

with amulets and protective jewelry. They look straight at the viewer, and I sense that they are both setting out on a journey, and are prepared for whatever evils or challenges lie ahead. When Ana's mother, Margaret of Austria, had her portrait painted, she wanted her daughter to be protected, as Rita protected her own daughter in her painting. Incidentally, they are both wearing coral. At the time that Infanta Ana's portrait was painted, coral was thought to have amuletic powers against magic spells.

Infanta doña Ana Mauricia de Austria
By: Juan Pantoja de la Cruz in 1602

Companion Three: Miles

Miles is in his early forties, and is self-employed. He comes from a Christian Reformed background, which came out of the Calvinist tradition, but he is now a practicing Wiccan. He has been reading about Wicca since he was a teenager, but has only really gotten involved in the last five years, since he found a coven in which to participate. He tells me that he is no longer a part of the Christian Reformed Church, because he hates the hypocrisy:

> They say one thing, but do something else. I was sexually abused while my family was involved in the Church. The Elders knew that there was a predator in the Church, but they did nothing about it. I do not believe in the black and white of heaven or hell. It was so hypocritical. Drinking and smoking was all right, as long as you did not do it on Sunday. I do not agree with that. Either something is right all of the time or not.

Miles' reaction to the hypocrisy that he experienced in the Church is similar to Christ's response to the legalism that he saw in the teachings of the Sadducees, and the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:27-28, Jesus says, "woe to you, teachers of the law, and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside is full of dead man's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." Psalm 62 echoes this thought when it says that, "with their mouths they bless, but in their hearts, they curse." Jesus must have experienced this also, with the kiss of his betrayer, Judas, still warm on his cheek.

Miles then shows me a pentagram necklace with an amethyst in the centre.

> I believe in the divine. I believe in divinity. It is in nature. Wicca is a nature-based religion. This is one of my favourite pieces, because my partner, Michael, made it specifically for me. The chain is fine silver, and the amethyst has psychic ability for Wiccans. Most stones have a protective or healing power. Any stones that we use in Wicca have an important meaning in themselves. Stones such as amber and jet are

> reserved only for the High Priestess. These are both fossil stones and they connect us to our ancestors. The pentagram represents earth, air, water, fire; the fifth point is for the Spirit. The pentacle is always with me; it is protective. I draw upon it for strength.

Looking at Miles' pentacle is like looking at a beautiful, shiny star. In Genesis, after making the earth, God made the stars, and "set them in the expanse of the sky to give light to the earth." Psalm 148 reminds us of how great God is when it says, "praise him, sun and moon, praise him all you shining stars ... praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created." Of course, there is always the star which led the Magi to baby Jesus. Matthew 2:9-10 tells us that they, "went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed." They followed the star to the child of promise. This is the same scene which is depicted on the reliquary box at the *Anno Domini: Jesus through the Centuries* exhibit, which is described in the introduction.

I understand how Miles sees divinity in creation when I read Job:

> But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you.

> Which of these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature, and the breath of all humankind. [61]

There is simplicity in this concept of God being in nature, and yet nature reveals so much about who God is. The story of creation can be found in a single fish scale or a stone. It is simple and yet complex at the same time. I was thinking of what Miles said about stones having important meanings. It reminded me of the pillar of stones created by Laban and Jacob, when they made their covenant at Mizpah. Mizpah translates as "the watchtower." This pile of stones took on new meaning, because of its relationship to the event which occurred there.

He then shows me another necklace.

> This is a necklace that I wear all of the time. It has an image of Zeus on one side and Hercules is on the other. It is a reproduction of a Macedonian coin. Alexander the Great put his face on it as representing Hercules. I lived in fear for a lot of my life, but Alexander was an ancestor, who I can emulate, who was brave and fierce. Making the connection to Alexander the Great helps me to draw on his strength when I need it. This was a really inexpensive piece, a bracelet that I have retails for about three hundred and fifty dollars, whereas the Hercules necklace cost me thirteen or fourteen dollars, and means so much more to me. It is more about the personal value. It is the piece that I wear the most.

I comprehend Miles looking for someone to emulate, to model his life after. For Christians that person is Jesus. We draw strength from the stories of Christ's love and forgiveness of others, which is often so hard to do in our everyday lives. We also draw courage from those who have gone before us, some of whom were martyred in Christ's name. It is a challenge to imitate Christ in today's world. However, Jesus is an ever-present image upon which the believer may draw.

[61] Job 12:7-10.

Companion Four: William

William is a teacher, and works on a First Nations reserve north of Edmonton. He is in his fifties, and has been a United Church member his entire life. He tells me that he has always wanted to connect with the First Nations peoples. William has travelled both inside Canada, and outside to do this.

> I went to India in 1987, and felt at home there. India is a religious place, their religion is everywhere; it is a very human place. The people are engaging. That is how our native people got their name. The explorers thought that they were in India, so they called them Indians. I understand my native clients better since going there.
>
> I used to work for a large corporation, but I was a round peg trying to fit into a square hole. It was hard to connect there. There is a lot of alienation in our society. For men, the work that they do is an expression of who they are. If we want to express our sexuality, we buy a sexy car. If we are lonely, we turn on the TV, and we have our TV friends. It is difficult for me to connect with my native clients. I'm a white person, and I understand the white culture. We have to stop trying to change them (First Nation's people), but help them to be more like themselves.

He also has an interest in Buddhism. "They are quieter; we do not seem to do quiet well," he observes. William enjoys experimenting and learning about other religious traditions, and thinks that, "they do not conflict with my United Church beliefs, but augments and enriches them."

> Right now, I am into witchcraft, and I'm reading *The Book of Shadows*. It has a Goddess. We are lonely—we do not have the Goddess. Sophia appears in the Hebrew text, but has been expunged. We are not served well by that. We need a balance.

He then shows me a silver ring, which is intricately etched on the outside with a sun and moon landscape design. "My cousin made it. My family spends a lot of time complaining about what she does not do instead of accepting her for who she is, and appreciating the talents which she has."

William has a copper necklace, which he made at the Naramata Centre, which is run by the United Church in British Columbia. William tells me that, "a Native fellow spoke at the Centre about the history of the Copper Masks that they made until the 1950's, which was how their stories were told before the white man came along."

William sees a lot of alienation in the world. His cousin is not understood for the talents she has; the white culture took away our First Nations people's ways of telling their own stories and communicating their history. As a culture, we are even alienated from expressing who we are as William states that we buy a sexy car, or watch TV friends to help deal with our loneliness. We are "strangers in a strange land," as Gershom was in Exodus. The son of Zipporah and Moses, Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land." We witness this theme repeatedly in the Old Testament as the Israelites see themselves as "sojourners" in the land of Canaan; a land which ultimately belonged to God. Peter too refers to God's elect as "strangers in the world." Jesus himself expressed his sense of alienation in Luke 9:58 when he said, "foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." As Christians, we understand that we are sojourners in this life in the sense that it is temporary, and passes quickly. It is the world beyond this one that is eternal.

William then shows me his favourite piece of jewelry.

> For everyday wear, I have an ammolite necklace. It was made by a Blood Indian friend. They mine the ammolite right here in Southern Alberta, so it is made by local hands. Ammonites are the fossilized sea creatures which the stone comes from, and they are sometimes used in shamanic rituals. It is a talisman that keeps me strong. If it is not there, I miss it.

From what do we draw our strength? It is a question which has been answered in several different ways in this thesis. However, I like what Isaiah 33:2 says. “O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning.”

Companion Five: Sarah

I have known Sarah for seven years. She is retired, but still works two days a week "to keep busy." We met over our common interest, which is dogs. Sarah is in her early sixties. Her parents were born in the Ukraine. They moved to Poland and later immigrated to Canada in 1945, settling in a small town in Saskatchewan. According to Sarah, the other kids treated her and her siblings like outcasts because they were the only Ukrainian kids. Her parents were Ukrainian Catholics, but there was no Ukrainian Catholic Church in town. There were two churches and they were both Protestant. For Sarah, the few church services that she attended in the nearby big city were long and strange, as they were conducted in Ukrainian. "We kids only went because my parents said that we had to." When Sarah got old enough, she did not go anymore. Sarah's mother, however, remained devout in her beliefs, and died with a Ukrainian Catholic prayer card in her hand. Sarah said:

> My mother's father was in World War I, and he killed a man. When he got back home, he couldn't live with the thought that he took someone's husband, someone's father. He shot himself. They buried him in a spot outside of the Church cemetery, because he was a suicide. That always bothered my mother.

Whenever I saw Sarah she was wearing a cross and a necklace with a dog charm on it. I asked her about them.

> Well, my sister Sophie gave me the cross, when my mother was ill—near the end. The cross is a connection, but not as important as my dog pendant. I looked for a sheltie dog pendant and found this one right after our first dog Bohdan died. I could always tell exactly what Bohdan needed, without anything being said; I knew what he wanted. The pendant became Maksym, our second dog, after he died. Maksym would just stick out his chest and look at you. They were a part of my family. I never did have any children, and my dogs took the place of the children.

My dog charm is like love. It is one hundred and ten percent more important than the cross. I feel an emotional closeness—my dogs are still there in the necklace. I never take it off. I've taken it off twice in eighteen years. I think that I would die if I lost that one. You know, there is a belief that if you are sleeping, and you wake in the morning, and the charm is touching the clasp that you can make a wish."

"And what do you wish when this happens, Sarah?" I ask.

"I kiss the charm, and wish that my puppy is alright, that he is happy. Sometimes I wish that they weren't dead; that my mother wasn't dead. I ask why all these bad things happened."

As Sarah is talking, tears are falling. She then raises the charm to her face, and kisses it.

Listening to Sarah, I cannot help but think about the death of Christ on the cross, and his final words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus has the weight of the sins of

the world on his shoulders, and his father turns his back on him. Sarah has experienced the terrible rejection that her mother felt when her father died, and was not buried on sacred ground. She also deeply feels the losses of her mother and her two dogs. Her heartbreaking pain, building to this one moment in time seemed embodied in that small dog charm. I felt that "darkness had come over all the land" in Sarah's mind.

When Sarah kissed the dog charm on her necklace, I was taken back to the funeral of a friend, who died several years ago in a fire, and was horribly burned. Her service was celebrated in a Ukrainian Catholic Church. At one point, the priest raised a gold-painted icon of Christ to his lips and kissed it. Sarah's action brought that day to my mind. I remember the smell of incense, and the memory of a friend who died too young.

There is the hope of resurrection in Sarah's story also, as she has brought her beloved dogs back to her in the form of a dog charm. She can now enjoy that relationship forever. It is similar to Christians and the hope that we have in Christ's resurrection. That relationship is eternal.

I was concerned about Sarah after our conversation, so I drove over to see her several hours later. It was Fall, and she was in her front yard raking leaves. "Hi, beautiful day isn't it," she said, as she saw me approaching. The sun shone on Sarah's face, and at her feet, a pile of golden leaves. Her husband looked up and smiled. "Yes," I thought. "It is a beautiful day."

Chapter 5: Conclusions

What I Learned from Rudolf Otto and John Macquarrie

Even though Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy* was written in 1917, and has been described as "dated" by the authors of some of my readings, I think that there are timeless concepts found in this book which are worth mentioning. Otto was one of the first people to try to explain the phenomenology of religious "feeling" in an objective way. It was systemized by others, such as Edmund Husserl, but one cannot miss Otto's passion for his subject in *The Idea of the Holy*. He also came up with words such as "numinous," which I had not heard before, and which is still in use today.

Otto had a sympathetic, yet critical outlook on the idea that there were similarities in all religions, even though their practices appeared extremely diverse. In effect, he was stressing what women and men of faith have in common, rather than what divides them. Some of the feelings of alienation towards the Church expressed by people such as Jessica Elliott, whom I quoted in my introduction, and some of the participants in my conversations, have been caused by thoughtless actions and attitudes. As a long time Pentecostal, I have been called "a holy roller" and have heard some judgemental and cruel assessments, from people of other faiths. Our world could use a few more believers, who were "sympathetic" listeners, when it comes to the beliefs of others. Until that day arrives, we will continue to hear the alienated stories of those living their lives outside of the Church.

Otto also stresses the use of Isaiah 6, in his book and in his thoughts on the numinous. This chapter is about Isaiah's commissioning into ministry and makes compelling reading. The picture painted by Isaiah's visionary call delivered by seraphs, calling to one another and saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty," models how we as humans feel in the presence of the divine; we are seized by the "mysterium tremendum" as Otto describes it.

This is not God's mystery, but our sense of mystery in the presence of the divine, which is the theme of Otto's book.

I was struck by Isaiah 6:1, which reads: "I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, *and the train of his robe filled the temple*." If it filled the temple, then there was no part of the sanctuary that God could not touch. This made me think about the vast chasm which is generally made between those things which are secular and what is considered sacred. The discovery that *God lives*; those sacred moments in life, where we find the divine, may not always be confined to religious spaces. We try to contain it within certain boundaries, and yet the Spirit of God, like the wind, blows where it may.

John Macquarrie in *Paths of Spirituality* states that humankind "stands out" among all of God's created beings as the only one with the capacity to transcend itself into a fuller form of life. "This possibility," according to Macquarrie, "was theirs from the moment that breath or spirit was breathed into humankind by God, bestowing on them the divine image and the possibility of closeness to God and participation in the divine life." [62] Macquarrie's thesis is that spirituality is becoming a person in the fullest sense. I was reminded of this in my conversation with William. When he spoke of his visit to India, he described it as "a religious place—a very human place." It is interesting that William drew a parallel between religion and humanness, because Macquarrie does the same thing, but views it from the other side. He observes that, "the more humankind turns inward and encloses itself in self-interest, the less human we become. This is the strange paradox of spiritual being—that precisely by going out and spending itself, it realizes itself."[63] This makes me think of the life of Christ. Only by spending his life could his purpose in the world be accomplished. Taking the step to

[62] John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (London: SCM Press Limited, 1972), 47.
[63] Macquarrie, 45.

engage people in conversation about their jewelry was my own way of spending myself spiritually, but that spending allowed me to transcend some of my own narrow thoughts on this subject.

What I Learned Through Conversation With My Participants

Humankind's wearing of jewelry as adornment has a long and varied history, and it continues today. The potent imagery found in pieces, either for relational or traditionally religious reasons continues in our culture. However, one outcome of our pluralistic society is that even images such as the cross, have changed in importance for some individuals. These people have in turn adopted other images, which carry significance for them. I think that some of the connection is created by the fact that jewelry is worn on the person. Some necklaces are near the heart, some bracelets rest on one of the basic pulse areas of the human body, and as jewelry is portable, it goes everywhere we go. As such, jewelry can be a constant, in an ever-changing world.

If we believe that spirituality is the basis of our religious practices, then the practice of wearing jewelry which expresses our spiritual beliefs reflects humankind's flexibility and innovation. Instead of kissing an iconic painting, one of my participants kissed her sheltie dog charm, which is an icon to her. However, this act is no less sacred. Before these conversations, I rarely thought of the importance I placed on jewelry, yet I cannot remember the last time that I had my wedding ring off. One of my participants took a considerable amount of persuading to let me take a picture of a piece which he wore, simply because he did not want to take it off, even for a few moments. He did not want to break the feeling of closeness, which he has to that piece of jewelry.

The picture which Sarah took of her jewelry shows the two pieces entwined as she typically wore them. One piece traditionally sacred, the other secular, yet worn together; each bearing its own symbolic meaning. The cross, a symbol deeply embedded in the history of Christianity, and a dog pendant, which held profound meaning for Sarah, and which she uses in a practice which is somewhat reminiscent of her Ukrainian Catholic background.

Each person who spoke with me used their jewelry to help them make sense of the world. They drew comfort from it, spoke to it, missed its presence when it was not there, and sometimes touched it when it was. For many of my participants, their jewelry embodied the essence of their spirituality.

This thesis has shown me four aspects of the spirituality of jewelry. First, that jewelry is an ex-voto signifier and vow; second, that it is a touchstone of story, and an invitation to relationship; third, that it is a way of claiming and symbolizing one's spiritual life, and fourth, that it acts as a connection to the trauma and grace of past experience.

Ex-voto means "from the vow," and is a term which describes an object which is a tangible expression of gratitude to God, where the worshipper seeks grace or wishes to give thanks. For Andrew, his ring is a symbol of the vow between himself and God, as he said himself "I am my beloved's and he is mine." For Sarah, her dog charm is a tangible source of grace as her dogs will always be close by when she wears it. For Rita, by picturing her daughter wearing the coral necklace which her mother gave her, she in turn, is a mother vowing to protect her daughter.

Jewelry also serves as a touchstone of story for my participants, and I found that people easily move into conversation if you comment on their jewelry. I was buying

groceries at the corner store, and saw a woman with a cameo-style pin of Queen Elizabeth II on her coat, and asked her about it. She told me that she was originally from England, and had bought the pin as she, with thousands of others, stood outside Buckingham Palace as Queen Elizabeth II was being crowned. There were stalls all around; selling memorabilia of this historic day, and she bought this pin. She wore it now to commemorate the Queen's sixtieth year of reign.

The pin opened a door to story and conversation about this woman's life. It was also an invitation to relationship, as we ended up chatting in that store, an event which probably would not have happened if it were not for the pin on her coat. The concept of relationship often entered into my conversations either in reference to the source of the jewelry as a gift or in relation to the event or significance which the jewelry marked.

Jewelry is a way of identifying with the spiritual life, which was shown in many of my conversations. For Miles, his pentacle reflected his Wiccan beliefs. William's ammolite necklace connects him to his Blood Indian friend, and to the power and the mystery of the shamans. Whereas, Andrew's ever-present brown scapular has a long Roman Catholic history.

Jewelry acts as a connection to the trauma and grace of past experience, and as a medium for unfolding meaning. Miles and Sarah told distressing stories; however, Miles' Alexander the Great necklace ultimately became a source of strength for him, and Sarah found closeness and comfort in her sheltie dog charm.

Our God is a God of material culture. We see this in the book of Exodus, where the construction of the tabernacle is minutely laid out, including the color choice of woven yarns,

the precise length of curtains and wooden frames and the design of gold filigree. This portable cathedral was to be the dwelling-place and the centre of worship—a visible reminder of God's central place in the lives of this Israelite community. It is interesting that Rudolf Otto also used material culture in the creation of his Museum of Religion in 1927 in Marburg, Germany. Originally drawing on objects, artefacts and icons which Otto brought back from his travels in places such as India and China, the exhibit has expanded and is still in existence. I am planning on visiting the museum next year.

Humankind appears to need a visible, material reminder to center us. To inspire us to let go of our rushed world and to help us get in touch with who we are. "The kingdom of God is in our midst," we read in Matthew 4:17 and Luke 17:21. To me this means that God is present within human experience. Rather than being stifled and shut in by tradition, my participants demonstrated that they are aware of how they can be touched by God's grace through their jewelry.

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Appendix A: Copy of Participant Permission Form

Permission and Confidentiality form

I have spoken to and understand the nature of the study being undertaken by Marlene Salmonson, a Master of Theological Studies student at St. Stephen's College. I understand that this thesis study is about the spiritual connection which can form between people and their jewelry.

I agree to be interviewed and audio-recorded for the purpose of said study. I also agree to have pictures taken of my jewelry.

I understand that I may refuse to participate or I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

I am aware that excerpts from the interviews may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, and the understanding is that the quotations will be anonymous unless I wish to be identified.

Participant's name (please print)

Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

Dated_____of_____ _____ in Edmonton, Alberta.

(day) (month) (year) (location)

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