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Religious Deep Structures—Understanding and Reaching Secular People

Interdisciplinary Scientific Basis of Religious Deep Structures

Regarding the topics “Invisible Religion” (Luckmann 1967), “Implicit Religion” (Thomas 2001), “Religious Emotion” (Beile 1998), “Personality Independent Religious Emotions” (Godina 2003), or even the psychosomatic significance of a “Positive Spontaneous Relationship with God” (Grossarth-Maticek 1999:110-113), research has been conducted in the past decades largely in the field of sociology, psychology, and even including the area of systemic epidemiology. A precise and interdisciplinary scientific presentation for the phenomenon of “religious deep structures” in the human being was provided in detail by me in 2007 at the faculty for Behavioral and Cultural Studies at Heidelberg University in Germany (Godina 2007:69-372) and thus the topic was introduced into scientific discussion. It was shown through these interdisciplinary studies that the media makers and marketing strategists successfully integrate elements of “invisible religion” into their products in order to address the subliminal human religious needs and desires and thus to increase product sales and media consumption.

Within the framework of the Adventist Church as an institution in 2009, further scientific evidence for human religious deep structures were delivered in the evangelistic context by the IKU Institute at Friedensau Adventist University in Germany (Godina 2009: 61-172).

In the following article, I will refrain from a detailed interdisciplinary scientific justification of the practice and instead will describe an application that is suitable for evangelistic practice. This article is a modified and advanced version of the evangelistic book Das Atelier (Godina 2009:69-103).
Biblical Evidence for Religious Deep Structures in the Human Beings

The most important biblical evidences for religious deep structures in human beings are found in the following texts:

1. “Eternity” was placed in the human heart (Eccl 3:11). Since God alone has immortality (1 Tim 6:16), this might be only a human desire for eternity/immortality.

2. Human being seems to have an inner sensorium for the existence of “divinity” (Rom 1:20); (see also Godina 2013).

3. Behind the phenomenon of conscience exists a fundamental cultural and socialized independent morality, a work of law that seems to exist inside human beings (Rom 2:14, 15). It is this phenomenon that allows people’s conscience to be able to contribute to universal decisions (Godina 1990) in line with their culture-specific ones (Godina 2002, see also Godina 2011:33-56).

4. All creation longs for deliverance from the bondage of decay so as to glory also in physical aspects (Rom 8:20-23; see also 1 Cor 15:35-53).

5. The Bible shows that everything in this life is just a “patchwork” of understanding and that perfect understanding is yet to come in the future (1 Cor 13:10). People not only search in terms of knowledge, love, and our bodies for perfection (“glory,” see Rom 8:21, 23), but also in relation to questions of moral capability (Matt 19:21) human beings also desire perfection, even though people can in fact be perfect only in Christ (Col 1:28; Jas 1:17) (see also Godina 2007:134).

Figure 1. Projections of religious deep structures
This means that deep inside human beings, that is in their deep religious structures, they have transcendent needs (Godina 2007:132-138) that really cannot be satisfied in this world.

In Isaiah 55:1, 2 God invites people who are thirsty and hungry in that deeper way to come to him to satisfy their thirst and hunger rather than spending their money for something which cannot satisfy and which will be revealed as mere illusions.

No wonder there are so many commercialized fraudulent offers through which people expect to fulfill their needs, desires, and dreams. As never before an industry with a highly differentiated consumer research department, with methods such as “neuro-marketing” (Lindstrom 2009), is able to exploit the deep religious needs for its own purposes by using subliminal marketing of an invisible religion (Godina 2007:259-372).

These needs and desires which cannot be fulfilled without God, offer not only the media, leisure, and consumer industry but also to countless religious and spiritual agents the possibility to offer projection surfaces to give people at least a short, temporary illusion of achieving perfect satisfaction. Overcrowded cinemas, LAN parties, football or soccer stadiums all testify in the urban context of more interest than some of our best and most expensive evangelism campaigns.

About 3,000 years ago God revealed to King Solomon that God had planted eternity in the human heart (Eccl 3:11). People were originally created to have a direct relationship with their Creator God, to enjoy paradise, for perfection, and for eternity. Even though this ultimate purpose for human beings was completely changed by the Fall, in the human heart there still remains a deep unfulfilled desire that witnesses to another world and of another determination. The following specific examples of different typologies serve as an explanation.

**Typologies and Examples**

According to an interdisciplinary view, religion is the strongest, though often hidden, motivational potential in human beings (Godina 2007:69-137). The religious deep structures of people and their motivating force can definitely be compared to a compass needle which always returns back to its origin (God, paradise, perfection, etc.). Various people and their different histories and personalities can be compared to the diverse locations of ships on the world’s oceans. In order to reach the same destination these ships will have to take different routes from different positions. In a similar way, people with diverse personalities are attracted by different routes to the destination of the Gospel.
In the same way that 13th century sailors subdivided the cardinal directions into eight radiating lines representing degrees to develop a better orientation (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2013), present day knowledge about religious deep structures in ten typologies could help to better systematize the way people search for God, paradise, and perfection—that is their transcendent oriented motivation structures—and to help them respond to them appropriately today (Godina 2009:69-70).

The following sections will present some experiences with different types of personalities and social phenomena as examples that demonstrate the various kinds of religious deep structures within a person and the strong motivation force which is manifested with different people within different fields and values.

**Type 1: Crosser of Borders (Extreme Sports)**

*The Men’s Journal* proclaimed Davo Karnicar as “The Best Athlete” in the world in 2000 and Laureus as the “World Alternative Sportsperson” (Laureus 2001). Davo, on 7 October 2000 was the first man to ski down Mount Everest. Even an ascent of this mountain proves deadly for many people. But to climb the mountain in order to descend all the way to base camp at 5,350 meters on skis was considered to be absolutely impossible.

In the past I, and many other people as well, dismissed these and similar high-risk performances in extreme sports as being things crazy people did who were tired of life. However, since Davo was a countryman of mine, I wanted to learn more of his background, and the more I learned of him the more I realized I had to revise my first impression and opinion of him. After studying the reports and later having personally conducted a three-hour interview with him it became increasingly clear that the deeper motivation mechanisms were of a religious nature (Godina 2007:137-138).

I would like to quote two statements from the book referring to the big question on why people do things like this and why some risk their lives (Roš; Eržen; Dordži 2000, trans. Godina 2009:71).

*It’s not about competition, but a challenge. . . . I feel that the time has come to take it. I’ll do it because I’m looking forward to life after Everest, because it seems to me, after that everything will start again.

I am high on the mountain. I drift with my thoughts for a moment. I look into my soul. Transience . . . how can I become part of eternity? Like a tree . . . like the sky, like dreams. We are just a moment in the moonlight of the night.

Pale, short and often oblivious is our track. And if we feel the longing in this night, we must do everything to realize it.*

By examining such statements more closely, one realizes that it is the desire to break out of the framework of our world, out of human immanence.
Meanwhile, I have started to take a closer look at the performances and testimonies of several extreme mountaineers (for example, Arx 2006, Humar 2010). I have found a new explanatory model that the ultimate experience and the increase of adrenaline and endorphins, can explain only one part of the attraction of extreme sports. There is a part of extreme sports that is guided much more by the transcendent and religious longing—although these are usually held unconsciously. Real trespassers are not only to be found in sports but also in other disciplines, like music, science, and art, where people are willing to invest everything in order to overcome the limits of our world. Drug consumption is also related to crossing the borders in some cases.

In the Bible, Nebuchadnezzar is an especially good example of crossing the limits; he was not only known for his extreme commands but also for his achievements. “He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual” (Dan 3:19b, NLT). “Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendour” (Dan 4:30).

Based on the above examples one can clearly see how a human being—in striving to exceed the usual limits of humanity—become perverted by self-deification. Each of the typologies can be a dead end for people if they do not accept the need for God’s offer.

Type 2: The Nature-Related Person

For from the first making of the world, those things of God which the eye is unable to see, that is, his eternal power and existence, are fully made clear, he having given the knowledge of them through the things which he has made, so that men have no reason for wrongdoing. (Rom 1:20)

A few years ago I conducted a psychological study of religious emotions and personality profiles among Adventist and non-Adventist young people (Godina 2003). I found that among all the various personality profiles of deep structures, religious emotions had been experienced. Most of the emotions were positive. I was especially impressed by experiences of young people who, in connection with adventures in nature or in connection with special personal relationship, for the first time experienced religious feelings. People not only long for nature because they want to overcome its limits, similar to extreme athlete Davo Karnicar, but they sense that even nature itself contains a force of attraction in its beauty and functionality and that it has the power to magically encircle many people under its spell.

There are many people whose inner compass is oriented to creation.
However, nature with its magnetic attraction that can point people to God, is hardly ever integrated into our evangelistic concepts (Janssen 2008:172-175).

In nature God has placed a language that speaks without words through its phenomenon itself:

The heavens are sounding the glory of God; the arch of the sky makes clear the work of his hands. Day after day it sends out its word, and night after night it gives knowledge. There are no words or language; their voice makes no sound. Their line has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. (Ps 19:2-5)

It is also interesting that the longest direct sermon by God is located in the Book of Job chapters 38-41, which mainly includes issues related to natural phenomena.

God has placed the language of nature in so many areas of his creation. Unfortunately, modern societies have been more successful in disturbing those aspects than was accomplished in ancient times. One of the most destructive forces has been the theory of evolution which was introduced over 150 years ago. Through this teaching cognitive schemes have been formed in the human consciousness to hinder and block people in their phenomenological spiritual amazement at God’s handiwork in nature (Godina 2013). Second, in recent years, the leisure time of people has become increasingly mechanized and computerized with a greater percentage of the world’s population living in cities (WHO 2014).

Some people have little contact with the silence of nature and cannot even perceive of the fact that nature has a language that speaks to the deep human needs. Fortunately, it is possible to observe a trend in the media and in various studies where people are once again looking towards nature to find the values of life.

Type 3: The Endangered Human Being

People maybe never have watched for so many uninterrupted hours from various news channels as they did on September 11, 2001. In addition to the events of that day, the news coverage also presented many exceptional situations. The pictures from New York as well as the ones that came in from the various worldwide news centers were often unfiltered allowing the world to see and experience an event with all its pain and danger.

This is otherwise almost never the case and it resulted in mistakes and improvisations. However, one was also able to see a lot of spontaneous reactions of people who were in real need.
This deep sense of need refers to the deep structures that are especially important. Most of us noticed how many people shouted and prayed to God during the collapse of the twin towers in New York. This calling out to God is a phenomenon which can be frequently observed when people are in deep need. When a peoples’ worldview collapses, they are generally more willing to make a fundamental paradigm shift in their lives (Dieterich 2009). The Bible tells us that people who are in need or in distress or are facing a threat of some kind, are often more open to seek God. Isaiah 26:16 says, “Lord, in trouble our eyes have been turned to you.” On the other hand the opposite effect also exists: “And men were burned with great heat: and they said evil things against the name of the God who has authority over these punishments; and they were not turned from their evil ways to give him glory” (Rev 16:9).

Type 4: The Self-Centered and Materialistic Person

The entrepreneur and fifth richest man in Germany, Adolf Merckle, committed suicide in January 2009. His family justified his suicide with the following words:

Adolf Merckle lived and worked for his family and his companies. The financial crisis which caused economic distress in his companies, the resulting uncertainties in the past week, as well as the powerlessness not to act any more, have broken the passionate family entrepreneur and he took his own life. (Preuss 2009).

When Merckle brought ruin on himself by speculating in the stock market in 2008, he caused his economic empire to be swallowed up in such a crisis that he had to ask for huge emergency loans from his banks. This was apparently too much for him. People who trust in materialism and the power associated with amassing huge fortunes as that which is most important in life, very often lose the meaning of life when they can see no way to expand or recover their lost power.

Self-centeredness may seem to have slightly negative ethical overtones. But I would like to also see in self-centeredness some positive sense. Everyone wants to be important and valuable to oneself and to one’s fellow human beings. Unfortunately, parents, people, and life itself do not always treat us as valuable subjects. By the end of the day, we will all return to the dust of the earth even in spite of beautiful wreaths and expensive grave stones. The longing for a valuable and unique identity always ends in transience.

Some people, in their need for self-esteem are so sensitive or unfulfilled that they desperately try to increase their self-image and self-worth by all
kind of auxiliary crutches. This difficulty, however, should not be treated only from a psychological perspective.

The Bible clearly says that people were originally created in the image of God. Therefore, it is not without a reason that people try to build themselves a good reputation. God himself says that a good name is better than great wealth (Prov 22:1). Many biblical examples describe attempts to compensate for a sense of insignificance by attempting some great achievement. “And they said, come, let us make a town, and a tower whose top will go up as high as heaven; and let us make a great name for ourselves, so that we may not be wanderers over the face of the earth!” (Gen 11:4).

The described typology can also be observed with Solomon during his search for deeper meaning in life.

I undertook great works, building myself houses and planting vineyards, I made myself gardens and fruit gardens, planting in them fruit-trees of all sorts. I made pools to give water for the woods with their young trees. I got men-servants and women-servants, and they gave birth to sons and daughters in my house. I had great wealth of herds and flocks, more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I got together silver and gold and the wealth of kings and of countries. I got makers of song, male and female; and the delights of the sons of men—girls of all sorts to be my brides And I became great; increasing more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem, and my wisdom was still with me. (Eccl 2:4-9)

Great works are not something seen only in materialistic areas, but they are also present in the spiritual realm. In the New Testament we are made aware of the good news that we received a gift from God; a new name, a title of honor, as it was given to Jesus who is standing above every name; and our lost identity as God’s children was returned to us.

To which of the angels did God say at any time, You are my Son, this day I have given you being? or, I will be his Father, and he will be my Son? (Heb 1:5)

See what great love the Father has given us in naming us the children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not see who we are, because it did not see who he was. My loved ones, now we are children of God, and at present it is not clear what we are to be. We are certain that at his revelation we will be like him; for we will see him as he is. (1 John 3:1, 2)

For you did not get the spirit of servants again to put you in fear, but the spirit of sons was given to you, by which we say, Abba, Father. (Rom 8:15)
Therefore, as people seek to make a name for themselves or to amass fortunes or leave memorials, it seems that there is a need for a transcendent identity behind this phenomenon (Godina 2007:133; 2009:96).

Type 5: Fortune Seekers in Sexuality and Eroticism

Eroticism and sexuality play an absolutely dominant role in the lives of many people and media (Attwood 2009). But from a biblical perspective it is important to distinguish that among this group there are not only passion-driven people, but also people seeking happiness and perfection.

Passion can be created, instincts can be satisfied, but in God’s imagination of the attraction and union of a man and a woman, it is all about something much deeper. In the biblical view it is clear that sexuality and eroticism hide a God-given gift, something deeply religious, spiritual, and heavenly.

Before the Fall of Adam and Eve God presented the human pair the following opportunity: “For this cause will a man go away from his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they will be one flesh” (Gen 2:14). This union in flesh is undoubtedly linked with sexuality. Paul adds the following: “This is a great secret: but my words are about Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32).

Sexuality is, therefore, in its original and God-created way closely connected with the mystery of God. In the Bible beauty and eroticism are in the proximity of perfection (compare Song of Songs 4:7ff with the theme of perfection 7.3). Perfection in the Bible also has a religious-spiritual meaning. In many other Bible passages these phenomena are moved to the vicinity of spirituality.

The Bible reveals that the euphoria sensed from erotic love and appreciation is absolutely in accordance with the godly ideal (Prov 5:19). This is also emphasized by the term “anytime” and “consistent” (םִּיָּהוּ) respectively, which is used for the “daily sacrifice” in the Old Testament.

In his Song of Songs Solomon describes how strong the interpersonal attraction can be. He uses pictures of honey (or grape honey) and milk which is used to describe God’s Promised Land (Exod 13:5) and the flavor of manna (Exod 16:31). “Your lips are dropping honey; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the smell of your clothing is like the smell of Lebanon” (Song of Songs 4:11).

Solomon describes a similar effect with another Hebrew term for honey (“from self-flowing honey”) which can develop even with the temptation of strange woman. “For honey is dropping from the lips of the strange woman, and her mouth is smoother than oil (Prov 5:3).

No wonder so many people can hardly resist extramarital temptations.
Solomon describes a man who is ready to abandon everything—even his own life for this experience. “The simple man goes after her, like an ox going to its death, like a roe pulled by a cord. Like a bird falling into a net; with no thought that his life is in danger, till an arrow goes into his side” (Prov 7:22, 23).

Many of us know people who have been ready to sacrifice their reputation, career, and even family and faith for this experience. Some people experience the power of sexuality and eroticism as uncontrollable. It is not for nothing that Solomon in the chapters of Song of Songs gives such an extensive integrative catalogue of measures to take so as not to be seduced.

In a time when chocolate or filled chocolates were not known, the reference to honey and grape honey syrup were the substances by means of which one was able to experience the release of endorphins. It is therefore, interesting to note in the Bible that there is still something stronger than honey, and that honey and also eroticism and sexuality in their God-given design can serve only as parables for something sweeter and bigger: “How sweet are your sayings to my taste! Truly, they are sweeter than honey in my mouth! (Ps 119:103).

Notice also Psalms 19:9, 10: “The fear of the Lord is clean, and has no end; the decisions of the Lord are true and full of righteousness. More to be desired are they than gold, even than much shining gold; sweeter than the dropping honey.”

It would be good if we do not condemn people seeking happiness in eroticism and sexuality, but rather try, as Jesus did, to approach the possibly more fundamental underlying desires of these people.

Type 6: The Seeker of Truth

Helmut Landher studied philosophy and sociology in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. He began a promising carrier within the socialist system of Yugoslavia and worked in Zagreb with others in the same office of the future Croatian Prime Minister, Ivica Račan. After Račan entered state politics Helmut Landher continued to lead out in studies on how the “bureaucracy” endangered the security of the socialist system.

During this same time he associated with a group of philosophers called “Praxis” that included Ernst Bloch. Landher had an increasing interest in religious issues so often interacted with Ernst Bloch, Max Scheler, Viktor E. Frankl, and Carl Gustav Jung.

Because of his interest in social democratic idea and in Christianity, twice he was denied admission to the Communist Party. Nevertheless, Landher wanted to finish his research on the question initiated by the
politician Vladimir Bakarić on why the socialist self-management system was in a state of decay. The pilot studies at the Institute for Sociological Research in Zagreb soon showed that the system deteriorated because of the immorality of the communists who were in key positions in society.

The first results of his study, namely, that the collapse of the system could be expected at any time, were soon confirmed by actual events. For this reason, Helmut Landher received permission to finish his investigations. However, he also continued to try to persuade the party members of the importance of morality by the leaders of the country. Another philosophical question that he was interested in was the issue of eternal life. When he discussed the issue with his philosophy professors during his studies, they requested proof. He tried to defend himself by using the philosophy of hope by Ernst Bloch (Bloch 1974), but he could never convince the professors. He continued his studies and in his lectures he often spoke about social democracy which no one else wanted to teach but was a topic that everyone wanted to listen to.

He spoke about the importance of ethics in the sense of Max Weber (Weber 1978) and emphasized the importance of making a distinction between Christianity and politically exploited religions that really could act as “opium for the nation.”

In his search for truth he was increasingly aware of the correlations between religion, politics, and ethics. Through his study in the Bible, he realized more and more that the politicians neither understood the biblical eschatological symbolism nor the Christian roots of Europe. Soon after that, he learned about the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Maruševac where he met one of the teachers, Dina Apostolović, whom he later married. His study led him to begin to understand the Gospel and the values of a biblical worldview.

This illustrates that there are people who are also seeking for truth in the form of ideology and systems of thought. In our evangelistic efforts, many of us as Christians encounter people with bits and pieces of the big picture about God; they have fragments of truth. They are looking for concepts and worldview values with which to make sense of the whole complex reality they see in this world. Such truth-seeking people long for a consistent, logical, ideological system. But how can anyone obtain such a system outside of divine revelation?

Solomon reminds us that even the wise men of the world cannot identify and understand such a system. “Then I saw all the work of God, and that man may not get knowledge of the work which is done under the sun; because, if a man gives hard work to the search he will not get knowledge, and even if the wise man seems to be coming to the end of his search, still he will be without knowledge” (Eccl 8:17).
It is impossible for people to come to a true understanding as they systematically explore life, the world, and its meaning if they do not depend on the revelation of God. However, it is interesting that God has very positive things to say about those who are involved in an honest search for truth. God affirms that a search for truth is the very foundation for all further spiritual steps and it is the first step mentioned in connection with putting on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:14-17).

It seems that people cannot even hear the voice of Jesus if they do not have an interest in or a seeking after truth. “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37).

Before people can serve God and trust him, they have to make the inner decision to seek for truth about God and the world, and then accept it for themselves. If people are willing to place a priority on the question of truth, no matter what that truth may be, they are already walking in God’s way. In this sense, the search for truth is a deeply religious issue. We as God’s people need to constantly be on the lookout for people on a journey who are looking for truth. People’s interests, the literature they read, the questions they ask often indicate that they are searching—from deep within their religious structures—for truth. For such people, our contribution will be to link the Gospel with their deep innate desires for God.

According to the ConVersion1-baptizing-process-study (Godina 2010), only a minority of humanity truly follows the ideological and scientific philosophical process in their exploration of life’s questions. Most others have a deep urge to overcome earthly limits and they follow, in their search for their origin, a different point of the compass which the examples below try to illustrate.

Type 7: The Mass Euphoria Oriented Person

It would be an unforgettable formative experience for most evangelists to attend a concert by a famous music star. Young people, but also adults at concerts in the past with the Beatles or Elvis Presley or today with Robbie Williams, Take That, One Direction, or with Tokio Hotel become part of a mass euphoric, almost hysterical and trancelike situation in relation to their idol. This type of celebrity cult can be seen particularly in the next typology, but we are also talking about the phenomenon of mass euphoria. However, this is not a phenomenon that can be observed only at concerts or among the feminine gender.

Many Yugoslavs remember 4 May 1980 when the people in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia cried when the media announced the news of the death of their almost 88 year old President Tito. Such a reaction to the death of a politician is incomprehensible for many. However, one
must not forget that Tito had been regularly celebrated almost like a God on May 25, the Day of Youth, for many years in the Belgrade stadium. Mass euphoria was staged annually during these celebrations. Hundreds of people performed acrobatic stunts in the stadium, a community atmosphere was achieved through the singing of songs, while thousands in the stadium and millions watched the event on their TV screens. In 1979 the majestic choir in the Belgrade arena sang the following as a repetitious mantra: “Tito is our sun, Tito is our heart,” while hundreds of performers formed a pulsating heart in the stadium. Even in 1982 after Tito had been dead for two years, his image was still serving to unite the people through mass euphoria dramatizations. And even thought there was now only a giant poster of Tito out in the middle of the stadium, the government still tried to maintain the emotions of a mass euphoria event tied to a personality cult.

Many older people here in Germany may still remember the mass euphoria events that occurred with Adolf Hitler. Recent research suggests that the Third Reich would never have been as effective at whipping up popular support without the staging of such events that created a religious hero cult (Behrenbeck 1996:214ff.). A more recent example took place during the election campaign of Barack Obama. He managed to create some of the same effects with his election concepts of “One Voice” and “Yes We Can” that utilized the very same psychological mechanisms to set many potential voters in motion.

These types of events in secular society show that deep down many people have hidden spiritual and religious needs. This should be encouraging to Christian evangelists as an indication that even in such political and social phenomena is found a hidden religiosity that cannot be concealed.

Similar euphoric feelings that originated from a unified goal and purpose seem to have been present during the building of the Tower of Babel. In the formulation of specific objectives to build a tower with its top “unto the heaven” is shown a religious connotation that can hardly be denied. In my opinion, mass euphoria rarely arises without some religious element and these religious elements also increase the motivation to achieve the project. Even God was aware that unity based on this kind of euphoria could allow for much to be accomplished. “But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. ‘Look!’ he said. ‘The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them!’” (Gen 11:5, 6 NLT).

In several places in Revelation the four living creatures and the 24 elders around the throne, all the angels, and all the redeemed people join in corporate worship, adoration, and praise to God the Father and the
Lamb (Rev 4, 5). This is not about human adoration or mass manipulation, but is closely tied to an association with the glory of God, who alone deserves such a reverence because, he really is almighty (Rev 4:8), has created the world (v. 11), gave himself for us (Rev 5:9), and made us a kingdom of priests (v. 10).

Just as the eternity which humanity lost after the fall into sin; and which God has nevertheless placed as a longing in our hearts (Eccl 3:11), so too the desire for unity in worship seems to have also been preserved deep in our hearts after the fall into sin.

I have the impression that the phenomena of mass euphoria is, at its very core, connected with an elementary desire for Paradise and closeness with God. Besides the longing for God’s exaltation there seems to be a desire for a unity that humanity lost after the fall into sin. The greater the number of people who are united in a mass euphoria phenomenon, the stronger the feelings that are triggered in those events. The more people that join together in adoration of the size and power, the perfection, or the dedication of a celebrity or a politician, the stronger the effect of the phenomenon. Since ancient times this phenomenon has not only been known, but it has also been abused in political campaigns and more recently in sporting events (in soccer or football arenas). Often mass euphoria is closely related to type 8: celebrity worshipers.

Type 8: The Superstar Worshiper

Celebrity followers can experience religious feelings even without a mass worship (type 7) in the community. This can happen without a euphoric experience involving large groups, but can take place through a personal relationship with a famous person. This type is based on the red carpet phenomenon and is another indication how people are deeply craving for another world and for closeness with God.

In a German TV report “The Red Carpet” (RBB 2006) it was openly pointed out that those fans on the carpet are looking for “an area for their projections.” Germany’s prominent actors such as Ben Becker, Heike Makatsch, Burghart Klaussner, Tilo Prückner, and others have made the following statements in their attempt to explain the fascination with the red carpet and the associated problems that become an issue: people see us fulfilling their dreams. They look to us because of the “lack of role models, moral codes, rules, and regulations.” People see actors as a “substitute for another life, what they would like to live . . . but we’re only acting it.”

The human need for God and Paradise can even adopt collective forms in the so-called fan clubs, although it does not necessarily need to reach the mass euphoria effect, but can focus on celebrity adoration in itself. One
only has to visit the websites of famous musicians to see that. I would like to finalize the presentation of this type and its hidden devoutness by using the example of one of the last divas and her fan club.

Barbra Streisand is regarded as the most influential mainstream pop personality nowadays (*New York Times* 2007). She is the highest-selling female recording artist of all time (Biography 2014). Her personality, her voice, her music, and her movies have made her a legend in the eyes of her fans.

If we take a closer look at her songs, one can find that the texts are often dealing with major themes such as love, dreams, memories, sadness, life, and sentimentalitY. Quite a few of the texts—similar to Xavier Naidoo in Germany—are so impregnated with transcendent (supernatural) terms that they can easily be interpreted as part of the religious sphere. The invisible religious effect appears only when Streisand’s personal charisma, her music, her staging, etc. come together in the lyrics and her unique voice.

When Barbra Streisand came to Europe for the first time in 2007 one could clearly feel the religious-like effects of the superstar on her fans in various fan portals in the Internet. I would like to quote some texts from an Austrian fan page in order to increase our sensitivity to how much the human heart longs for someone in whom to project the deepest religious desires which are actually reserved only for God. The texts refer to the following situation: Barbra Streisand’s performance in Vienna, which was almost entirely washed out because of a storm; yet on her request the concert took place a day after, instead. The fans from Austria and the fans who wanted to go to Berlin a few days later, wrote the following lines at www.barbrastreisand.at (accessed 30 November 2008):

Thank you..., that you allow us in this way to be part of it. I believe we are valuable for Barbra in the same extent as she is precious to us. She also has been waiting one day by taking the weather risk – also for her voice. Thanks to all. I am not a believer, but in moments like this I could start to pray. For Berlin.

At about 20:35 it happened, the orchestra began to play and I, huh, I still was very calm. Strange! And there, you could only see a few hair tips, everyone present knew that SHE was there! Yes, it was her! It was really her! BARBRA STREISAND!!!

There she was, up close in front of me, almost to touch, I could see her crystal clear, and she stood there, smiled and let her be cheered. As it became clear that these hair tips would belong to her, my soul made leaps into the air and my body jumped after! I jumped out of my seat, clapped and cheered, cried, yelled, screamed, clapped, cried, sobbed, strangely, but I had not blurred eyes.
My whole body was shaking inside and outside, I felt everything and nothing, I forgot who I was or wanted to be, I was a part of the uplifting atmosphere, Barbra was so close and so far away, I could not believe it and yet I knew, what I saw, I just experienced.

Every fibre of my body was in an uproar, the tears made their way out of the corners of my eyes, my heart was beating up to my throat, no, up to the ears, no, up to the tips of the hair. And then, out of nowhere, I was overcome with a peace of mind, only heat was there all over my body, the feeling “of finally having come home”, the tears stopped, my head was clear again, my hands peaceful again and I enjoyed it, I enjoyed this view, this moment, as if my eyes would have been opened for the first time in my life, as if I had never seen anything like that, as these would be the first colours that have ever reached my eye. I absorbed everything in me and I was incredibly, incredibly happy and satisfied. Barbra sang and I stuck to her lips, she spoke to the crowd and I listened. I managed to sit only during two songs in my chair; otherwise I could not help but jump up to cheer and applaud like crazy! If I were not a truly devoted fan since 20 years, I became one in this moment! For someone who does not share this love, it is hardly or even impossible to describe. But I think anyone who has ever seen her live knows what I’m talking about. Whether a fan or not. Barbra Streisand has that certain something. Surrounded by this mystery, she radiates an unbeatable inner and outer beauty, she attracts all under her spell, even if you constantly feel this invisible wall between her and the crowd during her game with the audience. She is here, and there are we. It is almost a cruel game as she stands here; sings and creates this feeling of closeness, of accessibility, of intimacy and yet it is clearly noticeable that although so close, yet so far she is! But well, as they say: Absence makes the heart grow fonder! In Barbra’s case this is true for both the spatial, temporal and spiritual distance and separation from her fans. Then the announcement that it shall commence in 10 minutes, it was again hectic because many still had not found their places.

20:25, the audience was repeatedly clapping, the tension was almost too much to bear. 20:30, the conductor finally entered the stage and I knew NOW.

A glance UPWARDS... my God sooo black-threatening and the wind, well, not exactly friendly. And then the OVERTURE, I was trembling and tears were running down my face. It seemed to me that it did not stop this overture and above us the sky sooo black. And then, oh my God, SHE came up with the elevator... everybody stood and shouted and applauded for several minutes. She said “we made it.” Honestly speaking, in this moment I cannot remember exactly what then happened, I was like in [a] trance... but I hope that my memory shall return in a few days:-) ….I thank YOU Barbra for this unforgettable evening which was not desired only be me, which was the most beautiful of my life and I thank you dear God that you answered not only my prayer.

What an emotional confession! Based on such experiences as reported
by her fan base, it is hardly possible to ignore the religious deep structures of human beings. The comments go well beyond worldly inherent descriptions.

Different superstars can actually, depending on their style and taste, represent a substitute for God for different people. Most people, especially in one’s youth, have probably experienced a deep devotion to one’s idol. I can still remember when I was teenager. I wanted to defend my idol, Elvis Presley, against any rational and factual accusations regarding his drug, prescription medicine abuse, and other vices. These were a part of reality I simply did not want to believe. Unfortunately, the fans in this world are again and again overtaken by reality and realize that superstars are also human, earthly, and perishable, like the rest of the world. A Barbra Streisand fan wrote on the same fan page the following words after the concert:

I was happy and completely filled with music and yet I felt empty and sad at the same time. The moment I had been dreaming of for 20 years, of which I thought it would never happen for 20 years, and now, now it was gone. Over, gone, finished! It was behind me and would never come back!

At various points, the Bible very clearly describes that human beings desire to come into the presence of God. With the image of the sanctuary the various stages of approaches to God are shown: “The passion of my soul’s desire is for the house of the Lord; my heart and my flesh are crying out for the living God” (Ps 84:2). “My soul is dry for need of God, the living God; when may I come and see the face of God?” (Ps 42:2). “And Moses said, O Lord, let me see your glory (Exod 33:18). “For now we see things in a glass, darkly; but then face to face. (1 Cor 13:12). “And they will see his face; and his name will be on their brow (Rev 22:4).

These texts suggest that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can provide what seeking people are trying to satisfy with other alternatives.

Type 9: People Sensitive to Art

When I was in pre-school I remember visiting a house where I saw something that deeply touched my heart. There in the hallway was a church-like stained-glass window. As the light was shining through the deep dark green and dark blue window with its lead frame I was deeply impressed with its beauty. I saw something mysteriously beautiful, but at the same time somehow unreal and strange. Many years later when I began to study the effect of light, I began to realize that light can have a transcendent effect on us. This is not something that human beings just place by chance in their buildings. Centuries ago cathedrals were built to
help people experience “the image of heaven” (Sedlmayr 1950:95). In the history of art light shining through church windows is called “revelation light” (Schöne 1994:55). In addition, art historian Wolfgang Schöne has designated other types of light as “other-worldly light” (1994:55).

Artists such as James Turell or Barnet Newman (The Sublime Is Now) try to express the liminal experience of the sublime by using light. I am convinced that they are also appealing to our religious deep structures. Transcendental light, not only in the history of art, but also in the Bible has the essential task to represent God’s presence (for example, the flaming sword in Gen 3:24; the pillar of fire in Exod 13:21; Jesus’ face and clothing shining with transcendent light at the Transfiguration in Matt 17:2; and the fact that God lives in unapproachable light in 1 Tim 6:16).

Art can be used in many ways to bring people close to transcendent related issues. Visible visual arts such as paintings or visual art or invisible art such as poetry and music can agitate the religious sentiments of the human heart. Music can also be used as a strong medium of religion. Many people know the inspiring feeling they receive from listening to a good piece of music after a pleasant sermon or the stirring of the heart after attending a concert or during a movie. If one were to delete the famous melody, “My Heart Will Go On,” by Celine Dion in the movie Titanic, the most dramatic visual scenes would lose most of their emotional effect. In the area of religion, the so-called “Strong Emotions in Music (“(SEM) perspective, is important in understanding the deep religious structures that impact people. There is music that generates strong reactions in people in the autonomic nervous system, creating such things as goose bumps, rapid heartbeats, tears, and shivers down the spine (Godina 2007:243).

It has been pointed out in the Bible (Luke 2:9), and in the science of religion that God’s revelations and encounters with the transcendent are often associated with admiration and trembling (Mysterium tremendum) (Otto 1922). In recent times this kind of music is often used in movies, especially, in those scenes that depict in one way or another dedication or redemption.

Just as the transcendent light element can be misused by those in opposition to God (2 Cor 11:14), the arts—whether architecture, painting, or music—can also be religiously abused. Nevertheless, we should respect the idea that many people gain a religious experience through the arts when the needle of their inner compass, that is part of their religious deep structures, move them closer to the Creator of beauty and goodness. Even though evil, despair, and senselessness can also be precipitated by the language of the arts it does not change the fact that the arts speak to the deep religious structures.
Type 10: The Media Religion Explorer

Most people, as part of their personality, are not courageous or unconventional enough to select their profession for purely ideological or truth-seeking reasons as a philosopher does (type 6) in the above mentioned example. Even fewer people are, as part of their personality and their experience, capable of doing extreme mountain sports. Many people struggle to find time in order to seek solitude in nature in order to allow the natural world to touch them to awaken their religious emotions. Many people are also too lazy to take the time or to spend their money to meet their stars in stadiums and experience mass euphoria. Today people spend most of their leisure time after school or work in the various worlds of media. All the above mentioned typologies describe deep religious structures that are often intentionally cultivated by media. The religious deep structures or the longing for the transcendental can be satisfied to a certain degree through media reports or through fictional-media constructions (films).

There are quite a few films that seem to go in this direction. One day when I was conducting a “Lifestyle Analysis” at a clinic I asked a person what his favorite film was. The person began to cry. The film which touched this person so deeply and inwardly was called “The Big Blue” (original title “Le grand bleu,” Concorde Video). I immediately decided to watch the film and when I did, I was also deeply touched.

This French film, produced in 1988, impressively shows that behind the desire of the extreme divers for depth there is much more than just sporting rivalry or seeking after an adrenaline rush.

Using the example of Jacques Mayol (played by Jean-Marc Barr) and his friend Enzo Molinari (Jean Reno) the film shows that free-divers are looking for another beautiful and better world in the sphere of unknown ocean depths. This view about the spiritual dimension of their sport is confirmed by testimonies of other extreme divers. Tom Sietas, a German extreme diver, describes a dive without oxygen to depths between 120 and 150 meters with the following words: “I feel like I am on another planet. It is simply mystical, a great feeling” (Sietas 2008).

The story in “The Big Blue” speaks to the deep religious structures of some viewers. It describes a sport in which the boundaries of this world are touched in the same way as happens in extreme mountaineering or with extreme skiing. The human longing for another world is masterfully staged in the media and brought close to a wider audience. Religious emotions are stimulated or re-experienced.

There are other movies which disclose the search for paradise in even more obvious ways. The successful Swedish film “As It Is in Heaven” (Sonet Film/GF Studios 2005) is a good example. It directly carries the theme stated in its title:
The successful and renowned international conductor Daniel Dareus returns after suffering a serious collapse (heart attack) to his Swedish home village. Actually, he wanted to retire from the world, but when he takes the position of the cantor, he finds through his passion for the music also his way back to the people. During his work with the colourfully mixed choir of the small community gradually a whole microcosm of human concerns and needs unfolds before him and he is thrilled when he realizes that with the help of music he finds a way into the hearts of the others. This is the fulfilment of his dream which he had when he left the area decades ago. (www.wie-im-himmel-der-film.de/start.html (accessed 22 December 2008)

What a noble and remarkable goal when a conductor tries to create music that opens every person’s heart in the world! But the climax of the film is not about music that opens peoples’ hearts, but in the way a community of love increasingly develops among his choir members. The film shows through the arts an interpersonal relationship and the deep longing for perfection in the human heart. Those of us who understand God’s intention in the Bible can quickly see the comparison between divine perfection and the cinematic interpretation.

In my research I have been amazed that through numerous films and media products people experience something that touches their deepest needs and stimulates their longings for God, for paradise, or for perfection (Godina 2007), while on the other hand the church seems unable to react to this reality and is not able to overcome the walls of prejudice it has against media. If the church could understand and accept the power and the depth of the actual message of the Gospel, the Gospel could fill the vacuum in human hearts, which at this point in history is largely being affected by various offers in the media.

Summary

The case studies or typologies mentioned above have not been fully developed. Additional invisible religious elements are also present in many other areas, especially in those areas where no one would expect them to be. In many cases, these additional types can be observed, perhaps not in a pure form, but as a mixture of several aspects such as in the media. The present-day rulers of the United Arab Emirates are, so to speak, “addicted to superlatives” (Follath and Zand 2008) as an illustration of type 1. They not only build the highest building in the world in Dubai, but also major projects on the coast, one of which can be seen from space (type 4, but perhaps there is also something hidden from typologies 7, 8 and 9 in the background). These types of things remind us of the similar building projects at the Tower of Babel.
This illustrates how religious effect mechanisms are mixed together utilizing the technical, star worship, mass euphoria, and art. Not even the fact based (sober) profession of science is protected from invisible religious mechanisms of action. Especially in the media, typologies are often combined using a mix of different effects without the consumer even noticing it, as is clearly indicated in the German TV-Journalist Markus Spieker’s book.

In an interview concerning his book, *Faithbook. A Journalist Investigates Heaven* (Spieker 2008), Spieker describes his ideas about heaven which reflect this mix in a few sentences:

*Like a summer Saturday afternoon in a park. Like a Rachmaninov symphony. Like the cathedral of Chartres. Like the victory at the football world cup. Like the hottest eroticism. Like the perfect groove, as the beach of Ipanema. Like the smile of a baby, like the warm gaze of a grandmother. Like all the glory of the world, minus pain and death, but endlessly multiplied.*

These examples serve to illustrate how important it is to perceive people in a very sensitive way, to *never attack their sanctuaries*, but instead to show them a path to perfection that God has prepared for us, and to the “star” that can permanently fulfill all their aspirations.

Our task as Christians is not to judge secular people, but to search out and understand their desires in order to take them from their various *projections* and imitations to the real thing, God’s original solution to their inner longings.

**Works Cited**


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