

# TRIBULATION ENSHRINED

by

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## ABSTRACT

This research and creative activity is a series of seven interactive art shrines called *Tribulation Enshrined*. Using my knowledge of Judeo-Christianity, my work compares that religious visual culture with art practices to inform the design of my thesis exhibition. The imagery in the work focuses on a religious apocalyptic event called Tribulation, which is a part of the Judeo-Christian belief system and a reality my family chose to believe. I am troubled that the basis of my family's faith and rituals revolve around the fear of the apocalyptic. My thesis series allows me to explore and analyze my doubts, which will aid me in changing my belief system.

I made seven shrines, which correspond to one of each of the seven events in Tribulation. During my childhood my father explained each of these seven events to me. His descriptions and examples of how to interpret Scripture into current events terrified me. My father insisted that awareness of the Tribulation sequence, current political events and more dedication to the Christian Commandments would keep us safe from these events. Each shrine incorporates one Tribulation event (called Seals), one Sacrament (rites of passage for Christian dedication) and a memory about my father's description. The final Shrine is interactive to convey the social component that I feel is crucial to transmitting and sustaining the beliefs associated with the visual culture of religion and art.

I used my research to create artwork that explores the connections between the visual culture of art and religion to determine whether rituals are mutually shared. The memories of a changing religious

atmosphere, from Christianity to a Judeo-Christian belief system, help to align the contradictions I believe hinder my social awareness. Awareness of the motivations behind ritualized practice will inform the visual design of my work, the sequence of their transition and their affect on my beliefs.



TRIBULATION ENSHRINED

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Presented to the faculty of the Department of the School of Art and Design

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master in Fine Arts, Ceramics

by

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Dedicated to my family.

Without your eternal  
support this would not  
have been possible.

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## **I. Introduction**

Having faith in others, the future, and myself was based on religious teachings given to me by my family. I was taught certain goals by following a Judeo-Christian process to reap spiritual rewards. It concerns me that a religious apocalyptic event called Tribulation is a part of that belief system. My research and creative activity allows me to create a voice for those doubts, which will aid me in changing my beliefs. Creating shrines for the teachings and stories that have caused fear and anxiety in my life will help to explore and refine what I want those beliefs to be.

This research and creative activity focuses on how my family's rituals influenced the conceptual design of my sculptural objects. I used that research to create artwork, in the form of shrines, which explores the connections between the visual culture of Judeo-Christian religion and art to determine whether rituals are mutually shared. Identifying their common links through my experiences allowed me to understand the motivation behind their ideologies. The venue for my work focuses on venerating shrines in a domestic setting in relation to a public art museum. By placing these personal shrines in a public venue I am advocating a necessary social component to their existence. The series of work is the beginning of a conversation that I invite others to openly participate in by making the final piece interactive.

During my adolescence, the concepts of my family's religious faith were imposed upon me. Researching the Biblical teachings for my work gives me an opportunity to take an active role in my family's religious exchange. My shrines combine my memories with imagery of Judeo-Christian rituals to become active mementos for transforming my mindset. The shrines I made are influenced by those found in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which houses multiple areas of dedicated spaces for Christian practitioners to address doubts in refining their faith. I revisit my shrines as often as necessary; each visit addresses one smaller aspect of spiritual conflict or doubt about religious practice. My pieces prepare me for positive change as I prepare them each day.

## II. Doubt: Families and Faith

Many people create their ideas of faith based on their familial environment. The concept of faith they form can be spiritual, moral, rational or irrational. In most cases it is a combination of all four depending on how faith is interpreted from one aspect of life to the next. The earliest influence on the four concepts that affect one's faith is transferred through their guardian(s) and/or family unit. It is important to consider that each aspect of religious faith that is formed is associated with an action or ritual of some kind. Each ritual, whether part of a daily routine, superstition or religious ceremony, reinforces the mental alignment of the group's ideas of faith (Bell 183). These rituals can have a comforting effect on the preparedness to navigate social situations, but they may also be an uncomfortable conformity to irrational ideals.

Families are a significant factor in shaping our worldview. Vern L. Bengtson, author of *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed down across Generations*, portrays the significance in this light: during heightened times of rapid social change two social institutions serve as a buffer for uncertainty: the family and religion. Involvement in church rose sharply in the years following World War II. Attendance declined during the 1960s, increased after the Vietnam War, but then declined again in the late 1980s. Despite the influx of Catholic and Islamic immigrants coming into the United States the overall religious attendance is in slight decline today. More Americans are choosing "none of the above" when asked their traditional religious affiliation. In the last five years five percent of skeptically undecided has increased to twenty percent. However, statistics state that ninety-five percent of Americans believe in a deity of some kind (Bengtson 4-9). Which could mean that the percentages point out a spiritual shift away from organized religion. The changes in religious and spiritual affiliation correspond to changes in family process in America. Despite the belief that religion and church attendance is important for those who do attend, many have claimed that it is difficult to be consistently dedicated. Most Americans, especially those in their thirties and forties spend long hours at work, raise

children, care for aging parents and/or go to school part or full time. One single-mother Ella Goldman, 29, was interviewed describing her struggle:

*Like I feel it (Judaism) is, you know, definitely a part of who I am... I know it's something I want to get back (to), like more involved in, but right now, it's kind of on the back burner, a little bit, because I'm kind of overwhelmed with having a young child and managing everything else...*

*(Bengtson 41)*

Goldman's testimonial may shed some more light on the limitations of faith that can be examined. If we assume Goldman wants to return to Judaism because she feels like it was a positive aspect of her faith, then what keeps her from feeling a part of it? Perhaps the communal aspect of congregations reinforces more of the beliefs associated with that organized religion. When not with their group, a person can feel left out and less hopeful until they find a niche again. This concept can be similar to family niches and how the unit functions based on the daily rituals or routine they establish. My family created a routine based around Judeo-Christian practices because they believed it would make our family morally conscious. From their perspective, following God's Commandments made us better people and rewarded for it. Is it necessary to have rituals centered on a religion to feel love, hope, productivity and the other desired benefits that having a religious faith proclaims? I believe any one has the capacity to feel love and hope as long as they are intellectually honest about the sources of their faith. As I explain my family's approach to acquiring their desired rewards, I will express my doubts and possible alternatives to living a life without religion being a part of it to achieve different goals.

## **II. A. Judeo-Christian Religious Rituals**

The reward for following a particular set of religious observances is to receive entry into an afterlife or heaven when one dies. Heaven in the Judeo-Christian religion is taught as a oneness with

God, which is considered a state of overwhelming internal peace. In heaven a person no longer feels the seven deadly sins of guilt, sloth, envy, pride, wrath, gluttony, or lust. These are all the driving forces for the emotions in our daily lives; and according to the Bible believers will be cleansed of those sinful expressions.

*Revelation 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

*(New 501)*

In Christian religious terms, observances that are rewarded are based around the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament and believing Jesus is a spiritually divine savior from the New Testament. The appearance of Jesus in the New Testament introduced a wide practice of an abridged version of moral codes called the Ten Commandments, meaning they were edited from their first introduction in the Old Testament. That distinction is important because it determines which teachings the practitioners follow. Believing in Jesus as the son of God means a focus on the New Testament. It emphasizes the testimonials of Jesus' time on earth and his gift of grace by dying on the cross for Christian "sinners". However, the New Testament version of the Ten Commandments also emphasizes less of the original

There is a main philosophical difference between Christianity and Judaism. In Judaism they believe that Jesus was a prophet while Christians believe him to be the son of God. The Torah, also known as Hebrew scripture compiled by Moses, influenced the editors of the modern Christian Bible known today. The books in the Bible's Old Testament are smaller sections of translations from the Torah's commandments. Moses' writings were translated from Latin to Greek then to Hebrew and other languages including English centuries after their original translation. The Torah is still practiced by Jews as a way of life today, and it embodies a larger set of religious obligations (commandments) and civil

laws outlining an extensive amount of dedication to God. In practicing Judaism, most aspects of daily life are ritualized to coincide with the teachings in the Torah. Observers of Judaism have ritual garments, meals, foods and prayers that dictate a divine involvement in their beliefs that adhere to the 613 commandments in the Torah. Judeo-Christian believers exist somewhere in between these two versions of teachings and rituals. They combine New Testament scriptural interpretations with Judaic ceremonies such as Sabbath or Passover called Seders.

### **II. A. 1. Judeo-Christian Doctrine**

The designation Judeo-Christian became widely used during the 1950s in America, but was coined by New York politician Joseph Wolff in the 1820s. Wolff was a German immigrant who conducted Jewish Christian missionary work throughout most of his life. His travels and studies focused on finding the Lost Tribes of Israel, which were Jewish descendants deported from Israel in the sixth century B.C.E. by the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Wolff 87). By the fourth century B.C.E. The Lost Tribes of Israel were associated with a Messianic message, and their return would signify the coming of the Messiah. Although Judeo-Christians believe Jesus to be the Messiah in this prediction, The Lost Tribes did not return (Wolff 212). Wolff's research relied on the belief that a second coming of Jesus would signify the return of the lost descendants. It is significant that the lost people of Israel are believed to inherit the same special promise (given by their god) to be let into heaven because of the centuries of devout servitude. The Lost Tribes could have survived to produce later generations that are entitled to that same promise. Based on his research, Wolff predicted that the second coming of the Messiah and The Lost Tribes of Israel would occur in the 1840s (Wolff 440). Perhaps Wolff thought he was one of those lost descendants and that would secure a place for him in heaven. However, his prediction did not occur, but it signifies an aspect of Judeo-Christian beliefs that includes the possibility of being a Jewish descendent through the lost lineage. It is hard to determine if a person could possibly be a descendent of Israel, but motivates Judeo-Christian believers to be more devout because of the possibility of divine lineage.

Heaven, for Judeo-Christians, is believed to be a state of overwhelming peace and oneness with their God as a reward for obedience. If a person follows the commandments and believes Jesus is the savior of humanity, at their death they will be ushered into heaven for their rewards. The second possible journey to the afterlife is interrupted by what is known as Tribulation. I will explain the progression of what constitutes following a Judeo-Christian ritualistic doctrine more thoroughly then describe how Tribulation interrupts that sequence. The basic tenants in the Bible that all practitioners are told to follow are the Ten Commandments. I will primarily use the New King James version of the Bible in combination with other Bible versions to explain scriptural significance. As the description of commandments and doctrine is examined, one may consider that the New King James Bible version is a translation of a translation, and information is inevitably lost in this process.

*The 10 Commandments List, Short Form:*

*You shall have no other gods before Me.*

*You shall not make idols.*

*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.*

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

*Honor your father and your mother.*

*You shall not murder.*

*You shall not commit adultery.*

*You shall not steal.*

*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

*You shall not covet.*

*(Holy 394-395)*

Initially the long version is in the Old Testament, which was simplified upon Jesus' induction into the Biblical narrative in the New Testament. The differences in text are easy to neglect because important

sections of the Bible were revisited and condensed. Here is the version from the chapter in Exodus where the first commandment comes from in the Old Testament:

*New Testament:*

*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only thou shalt serve*

*(Holy 394)*

*Old Testament:*

*You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

*(Holy 31)*

Some authors contribute the Old Testament version to metaphor and unconditional reverence of a higher power. The sense of sacredness of the source (God) calls people to express the basic ideas as having goodness, and the edited version reflects that idea. In much the same way that Americans view the Constitution; they can view the rules as having a basic foundation with different interpretations (Ward 49-53). The New Testament changes the idea of what to expect from a progressive religious practice. Initially, the New Testament's reform was meant to embody a general sense of moral good and eliminate some of the wrath associated with the original messages from the commandments (Ward 114). I focus on the final book in the Bible called Revelation, which revisits the wrath we see from the Old Testament. In

the final book it describes the elaborate destruction of Earth due to a religious apocalyptic event called Tribulation.

It is first important to ascertain if the Bible is a historical possibility. If one believes the history of the Bible to be probable, then its ability to predict the future becomes possible. The possibility has driven many scholars to go beyond language translation to metaphorical interpretation of scripture. This form of study is called eschatology, and it encompasses the study of all “end things”. This field can focus on the theories associated with the ending of an individual’s life, the world, or ideology (i.e. religion). Within the theoretical sphere of Christian eschatology, the hypotheses rely on both a natural history and a supernatural future (Hamerton-Kelly 99). Since the metaphorical interpretations of a religious apocalyptic prophecy timeline can vary, it is reasonable to understand how many Christians may avoid claiming whether they are entirely convinced. However, with each news story that covers religious conflict or war atrocities comes a renewed conviction of “end times” believers. The accessibility to what many may consider immoral acts of violence allows for the possibility of apocalypse prophecy to exist. Although the presumed “evil” in the world aids people to turn to a god-figure for reprieve, it is difficult to ascertain when that evil will end. It is one thing to turn to a supernatural salvation, but entirely different to condone the events prophesied in Tribulation in order to extinguish evil forever. In order to allow a prophecy to be relevant to one’s beliefs to prepare for it, they would have to create a timeline that coincides with their life expectancy. Predicted dates of an apocalypse have been identified and passed without incident for centuries, and the support of its prophecy ebbs with each occurrence.

## **II. B. 2. Predicting Tribulation: The Seven Seals**

The book of Revelation is about preparing Christian and Judaic believers for the war and destruction that accompanies Jesus’ second coming during a time called Tribulation. Almost abruptly at the end of the Bible is a collection of Apostle John’s visions of a religious apocalypse on earth. It is portrayed in a metaphorical way that followers have been interpreting for centuries. John’s Revelation claims that Jesus will be resurrected in a time of great political and social turmoil to prepare humanity for

war against Satan's son, the Anti-Christ (Hamerton-Kelly 34). Some researchers in the field of eschatology consider these statements by John and Jesus to be a figure of speech.

*In New Testament terms, according to T.N. Wright, 'Jesus and some of his contemporaries expected the end of the present world order, i.e., the end of the period when the Gentiles were lording over the people of the true God, and the inauguration of the time when this God would take his power and reign and, in the process, restore the sufferings of his people.'*

*(Hamerton-Kelly 99)*

Although this interpretation may be valid, some religious scholars and infamous enthusiasts have created various theoretical timelines that coincide with metaphor from the scriptural account to compare to current events. One must then consider if the scriptures were for political gain or as a historical and prophetic guide to gain access to heaven. Most Christians consider the latter to be true, but eschatologists have arguments for both perspectives for centuries. Whatever the outcome, the repercussions of John's vision have affected the spiritual ideology and physical well being of millions of people.

In John's vision the seals are seven scrolls sealed in wax that are opened one at a time by Jesus. The Tribulation timeline I chose to examine is compiled into a period of seven years, in which seven seals are opened to produce disastrous affects on earth (Malone). This timeline of seals most accurately reflects the events that my family brought me up to believe. The timeline comes from another online news site similar to Trunews.com that focuses on news sources to interpret current events, but specifically translated to predictions about Tribulation predictions. CalvaryProphecy.com reflects a trend in how current events are transformed into Biblical contexts to specifically prepare Christians for the religious apocalypse. These events are compared to how a scroll from John's visions can be broken due to several factors based around the Christian ideology. The scrolls become important when believers consider the world to be rampant with sinful practitioners. Anyone who does not adhere to the Ten Commandments is

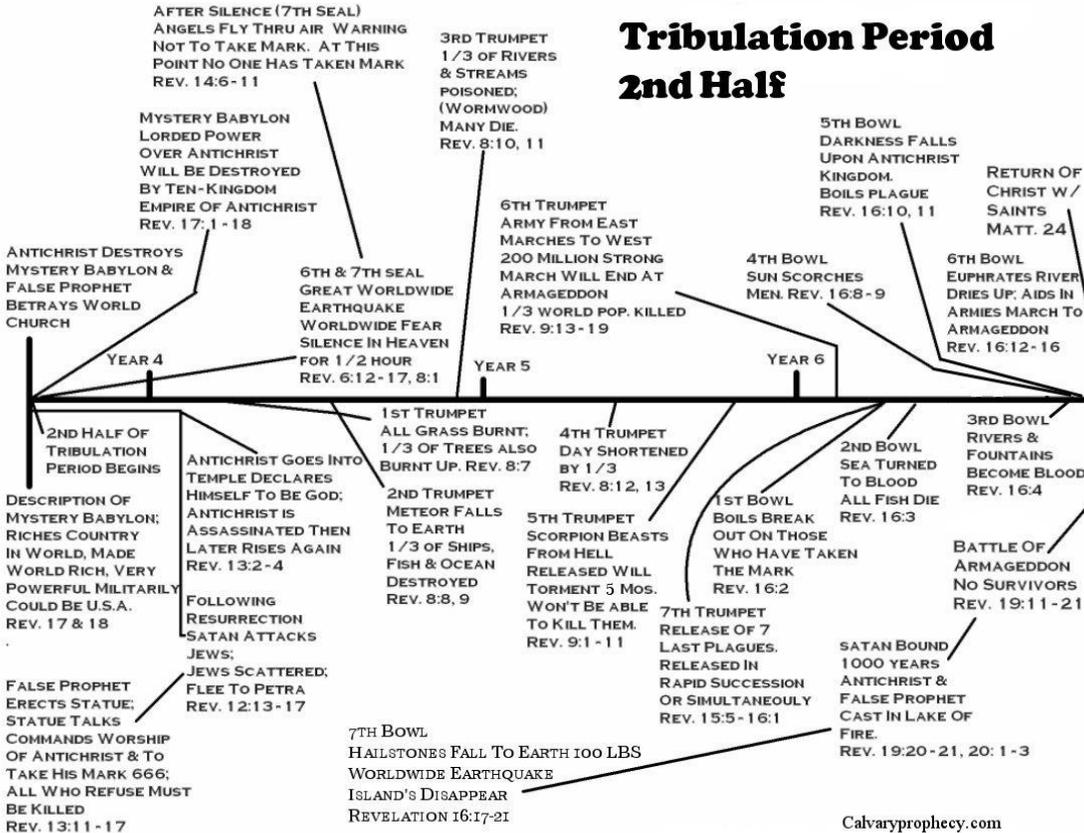
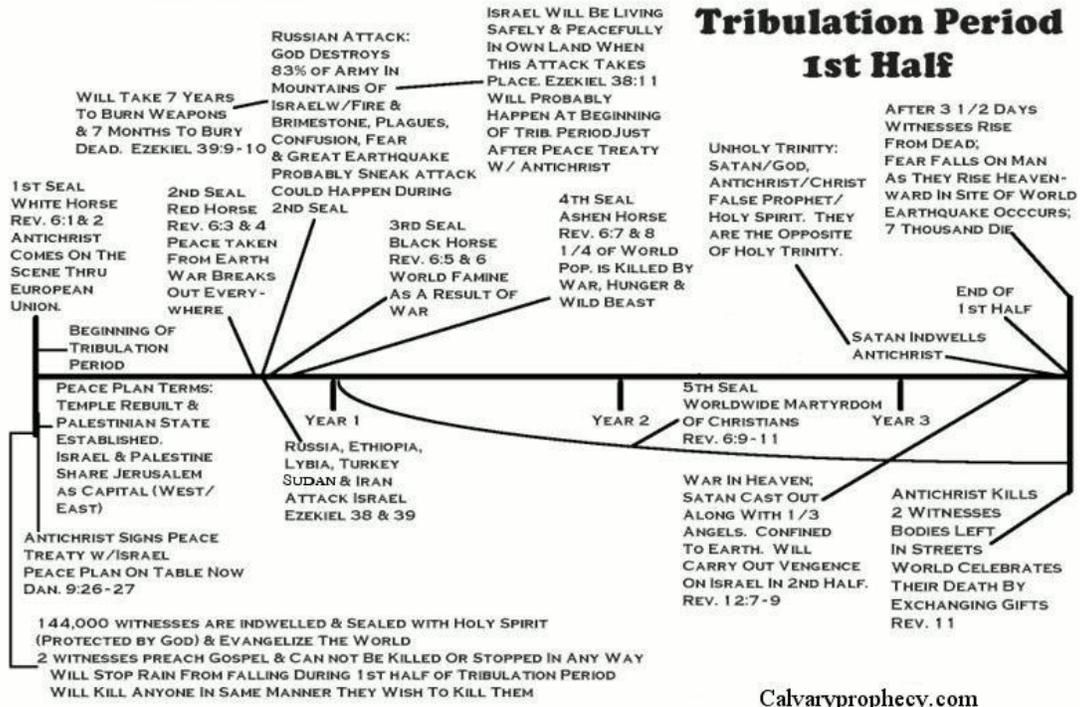
considered part of Satan's army. When the scales start to tip in Satan's favor, meaning less people believe in God, it becomes important for Tribulation to begin in order to influence more people to become reverent of God's fight for people's souls. One would have to believe that there are two spiritual choices: God or Satan. Those who believe in that choice think that when Satan becomes predominantly followed that the predictions of Tribulation will demonstrate a need to return to God. This will hopefully make more people begin to follow the Ten Commandments and get into heaven. The goal for this process is that if God acquires the most human souls Satan will be defeated. If Satan is defeated, the souls that go to heaven could find eternal bliss or a new earth could be created to start the process over again after a thousand years of celebration (Malone). There is further research on predicting both outcomes for what happens after Final Judgment, however Tribulation must happen first before anything else can follow. It is also important to understand why these events are predicted because it affects our social cohesion and desire to stay together in an eternal way. A belief in God and the predictions in the apocalyptic reflect a desire to conquer death and be able to stay with our social ties from one plane of existence to another. It is interesting that those desires are manifested to be possible through extreme hardships that must be overcome in this reality to receive rewards in another possible reality.

The seven seals are listed as Martyr, Famine, Natural Disasters, Plagues, War, False Prophet, and the seventh is a period when all seals are occurring at once. The timeline culminates in the seventh year where a renewed faith in God is stressed before Final Judgment and is represented by the sounding of seven trumpets. According to the Christian faith, without accepting Jesus (God's representative on earth) as one's savior in the seventh phase a soul could be cast into hell. Final Judgment is when a believer dies during Tribulation, and before moving on, they will be judged by God. He is the only one that is believed to know what challenge that may be. It is important to distinguish that Final Judgment is a different addition to God's moral judging that occurs when a practitioner dies before Tribulation. In the Christian faith all are judged when they die before they can enter heaven, but during Tribulation there is more emphasis on the process of judgment. This is just one circumstance among many in Biblical scripture where supernatural planes of heaven and hell are proposed as possible outcomes to the way life is

conducted while on earth. Once those planes were established a series of rituals were created that could reach and influence those supernatural planes. Ritual practices are a bridge to influence the balance between both theoretical outcomes.

Even though the description is terrifying, many Judeo-Christian believers consider Tribulation a desirable event. It is an opportunity for believers to prove their worthiness to their divine lord. They welcome the possibility of one day witnessing and overcoming this religious apocalypse (Hamerton-Kelly 52). My parents are an example of such believers. Many apocalypse-obsessed people scour scriptural interpretations to find information that supports Tribulation events coinciding with current conditions. In addition to the religious texts, and the creation of the Internet, many follow websites that theorize how current events can corroborate the Tribulation predictions. Most timelines have difficulty distinguishing metaphor from something codifiable, which allows the texts to easily create connections between current events and Biblical scripture. One such website is TruNews.com; it is a Christian online news source that reports on other news sources. This website takes other news articles and translates them into theories that support the Tribulation timeline predictions. These reports vary, but the intention is the same; it represents a growing support in the belief that a religious apocalypse is near.

Each event on a Tribulation timeline corresponds to interpreted text in Revelation. These two following tables are examples of a timeline that may occur. There are a few alterations with every differing Christian theorist group, however this timeline allows people to understand the theory. The events on these timelines have not yet occurred; the one event that most theorists believe initiates Tribulation is the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Palestine (Pond 18).



It has always amazed me that Tribulation is a desirable event for my parents. Most Christian churches are not as apocalypse thirsty as my parents are. Our family was asked to leave two Christian church congregations before I was twelve years old. This was due to the rejection of my father's desire for emphasizing Revelation in Bible studies. Or perhaps my parents rejected those congregations for not being as devout as they thought God deserved. It can be argued either way, but a separation occurred. Although, the emotional intensity of apocalyptic demands is perhaps overwhelming for many Christian believers; I acknowledge that I also experienced positivity from of my parent's beliefs. In spite of the changes and the terror in its description, Tribulation created a way for our family to bond. The habits that we formed through incorporating Judaic rituals into our schedule created a sense of family unity.

## **II. B. Religious Habitual Practices**

Candace S. Alcorta and Richard Sosis, researchers in the fields of sociology and psychology, determined that there are four distinct factors that cross-culturally practicing religious sects share.

- 1. Belief in supernatural agents and counterintuitive concepts*
- 2. Communal participation in costly ritual*
- 3. Separation of the sacred and the profane; and*
- 4. Importance of adolescence as the life history phase most appropriate for the transmission of the religious beliefs and values*

*(Alcorta 325)*

Although the specific rituals may vary from one religion to another, this four-part structure was identified to occur in every religion. The costs of the rituals of this type are seen through its consumption of time, energy and mental obligation. This content means that the structural elements maximize retention of a transmittable and engaging system of beliefs. These beliefs are then performed with physical rituals to create favor with a supernatural entity. The transmission, written or oral, from one

member to another is charged with emotional content (Alcorta 325-326). For example, stating “eating a Jewish Sabbath meal every Friday evening will get you into heaven” is charged to produce an emotional response. This type of statement fosters cooperation and coordination of social relations. Applying emotion through religious observances is powerful because the outcome could mean an afterlife of heaven or hell if any doubt is present. The introduction of a profane destination for religious observers furthers the inclusion of supernatural ritualistic practices to reflect the aesthetics of the otherworldly plane of existence. In order to make the beliefs and values transmittable the ritual practices are made into part of daily life and reinforced with further superstition.

A belief in the supernatural is a counterintuitive concept that emerges with fear of harm or death. The idea of *supernatural agents* developed simultaneously with the fear of the outcome to complex human social interactions. It is counterintuitive because it insists there is a more knowledgeable entity that will guide or help you through social challenges. The social architecture of knowing that the divine exists is irrational but is a bridge for justifying moral dilemmas (Alcorta 327). It is important to rationalize where the motivation for religious ceremonial practices may be rooted in order to understand how they progress. Ultimately, a society needs rules in order to organize a productive communal way of life. Rules allow people to function in ways that may be productive, however it does not guarantee that they will be followed. The visual culture of religious symbolism and active participation in rituals draws people into communal engagement that makes them emotionally attached to the group. Although the activities centered on religious observances are engaging, the development of positive and negative based superstition keeps the congregation attendance full.

*The extent to which positive and negative elements are emphasized varies considerably both across the rituals with a given religion and among religions. Whether religious ritual predominantly incorporates positively or negatively valenced symbols appears to be correlated with both the political*

*characteristics of the group and the risk-to-benefit ratio of their cooperative endeavors.*

*(Alcorta 339)*

Through incentive learning, rituals engender empathy among religious observers and condition them to the religious symbolism that is associated with internal metaphysical reward systems. There may also be an increase in costly rituals with the incorporation of negative stimuli to deter free loaders. However, a positive correlation to music and other art forms through religious expression suggests that rituals may benefit group members facing high stress situations. Both negative and positive costly rituals promote an effective and efficient group functioning for politically and socially sanctioned endeavors (Alcorta 340). Although a group may be able to function collectively and efficiently based on the rituals they sanction, that does not determine whether the actions taken are humane.

During my own experience, fear and ritual began to create emotional barriers between myself and other social interactions outside my family unit. I also felt alienated from my family because I am not as emotionally invested in a Christian religious narrative as they are. This series of work focuses on both aspects of my social alienation, from family and beyond, in order to address their similarities to one another. I chose to combine these artistic and religious rituals to inform their progression in visual culture and my own life.

### **II. B. 3. Social Dependency and Family**

The Bible is a collection of stories that elaborate on how God's rules can be applied to reach heaven. They are composed to motivate the Christian community in a higher purpose, which includes certain social expectations in and out of assembly. Initially, a Christian is convinced by a condensed sense of hope for future rewards that are reinforced by communal participation. After a person accept the idea of rewards, then they are given progressively more in-depth readings of the Bible to follow. It is optimum for the beliefs to then be transferred onto younger generations to establish religious lineage.

Parental warmth is an important factor in religious transmission. Furthermore, grandparents are just as significant in establishing a strong transferable link in cross-generational ties for beliefs. If grandparents support the religious affiliations of their children the next generation will be more inclined to become practitioners. Or if the grandparents have a religious dedication while their children do not, their grandchildren are more likely to gravitate to their beliefs. However, if grandparents subvert or challenge the religious beliefs of their children or their grandchildren, the cross-generational transmission of beliefs is not effective (Bengtson 186). Primarily close relatives have the most influence on the beliefs of later generations. Beyond that, religious social dependencies can arise based on participatory practices and social expectations.

The dedication expressed through ritual and religious habitual practices can go one of two directions based on the communal setting. I will initially examine two types of communal settings that influence the dependency on social engagement of Christian religious observers. The two types can be described as national versus small community (or singular) assembly of people of the same religious congregation. It is important to understand how the size of a group can affect the hope and anxiety of Biblical teachings to influence the participation or the dependency of its believers. If I am to transform my religious perspective, it is important for me to understand how religious obligations form and continue to influence a person's life. This will allow me to visually convey the transition in my work from one perspective to another. It will also communicate why it is significant to introduce a participatory element into my sculptural installation.

### **II. B. 3. i. Religious Saturation Influences Social Camaraderie**

One set of statistics from 2008 is based on college students from two different regions of the United States. It examines the testimonials of students from a Christian college in the Northwest and a secular college in the Southeast regions. It states that ninety-five percent of Americans believe in a deity or higher power, ninety percent of those freely express their religion, and two thirds are members of a congregation (Mvududu 172). The study approaches how faith, which is used as a part of the educational

practices of the college, can affect the hope of the students. In order to determine the scale for measuring its effects, they use what is called the Hope Theory.

*According to hope theory, hope is a reflection of an individual's perceptions of his/her capacity to "1) clearly conceptualize goals; 2) develop specific strategies to reach those goals (pathways); and 3) initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies" (agency) (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003, p. 122). Snyder et al. suggest that although the pathways and agency are related and complement each other, they are not synonymous. Students who see clear pathways to their goals have a greater sense of self-efficacy (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999).*

*(Mvududu 174)*

The goals of the study were to examine the impact of faith in fostering a hopeful outlook. Nyaradzo Mvududu & Michelle Larocque, those conducting the survey, hypothesized that there are relationships between religious conviction and a student's ability to cope with anxiety. They found that the students from the Christian college in the Northwestern region were more motivated. Motivation gave the students more confidence to conceptualize goals and carry out strategies to complete those goals. In the study, religious conviction is claimed to motivate a sense of obtainable goals and lower anxiety (Mvududu 176).

Since the first group was from a college founded on Christian beliefs, I would suggest the entire student body may have been more motivated because of what they had in common. Most students could feel they had similar goals with other students, thus more freely express themselves, which gave them more hope. The group of students from the secular college may have felt they were less able to freely practice their beliefs because they had smaller communities that followed the same belief system. It is necessary to point out that this was my interpretation on the survey data. The sociology professors

conducting the study did not come to the same conclusion. They felt inclined to believe that the students were motivated by the Christian beliefs rather than their relationship to the surrounding population. That might suggest that they went into the study to prove their values rather than to hypothesize further on the interpretive nature of the variables. If that is the case, it supports my theory that religious beliefs are communal based and manifests through social dependency. Based on this study, the social saturation of the same beliefs, practices and rituals (i.e. prayer, church services, singing and communion) of the Christian college reinforced a transmitted religious belief system. That social dynamic manifested in a non-threatening, hopeful environment for the students.

### **II. B. 3. ii. Communal Practice Influences Anxiety**

Another survey conducted in 2009 studied the relationship between religion and mental health in adults. The testimonials of the participants were accumulated from a NORC (National Opinion Research Center) General Social Survey provided from a national pool of community-dwelling US adults. Researchers Christopher G. Ellison, Amy M. Burdette and Terrence D. Hill hypothesized that various aspects of religion were linked to feelings of anxiety and tranquility in adults. The researches focused on the aspects of religion that dealt with a belief in the afterlife, sin and frequency of prayer to determine the trends in anxiety and tranquility. The subjects were asked a series of questions to determine their levels of anxiety and tranquility in daily function.

*Anxiety is measured via a mean index based on responses to four items.*

*Respondents were asked, “How many of the last seven days have you. . .” (1) “felt so restless that you couldn’t sit long in a chair?”; (2) “felt anxious and tense?”; (3) “felt fearful about something that might happen to you?”; and, (4) “worried a lot about little things?”.*

*Tranquility is also measured using a mean index based on responses to three items. As with items measuring anxiety, respondents were asked, “How many of*

*the last seven days have you. . .” (1) “felt at ease?”; (2) “felt contented?”; and, (3) “felt calm?”*

*(Ellison 658)*

The participating subjects were then asked questions about their religious observances, such as frequency and depth of belief structure. Adults who believed in an afterlife were found to have a more hopeful outlook on the future. The participants’ belief in the afterlife was reinforced by the higher frequency of religious attendance in a congregation. Researchers thought that these connections could be due to several factors. Shared rituals and collective worship are activities that can enhance the idea of the sacred. Creating meaningful interactions in a social setting, which happens to be a religious congregation in this case, could reduce feelings of uncertainty and fearfulness to promote a sense of inner peace and tranquility. Prayer was also examined across the survey pool, and they found that the solitary practice of prayer did not affect tranquility in their life. However, when asked if the participants felt it helped their anxiety to have others pray for them, the frequency of positive results increased. This is attributed to a collaborative coping activity, such as ritualistic ceremonies or prayer, that can reinforce aspects of religious faith to create a more hopeful outlook (Ellison 364). The ability to congregate in a setting where a person can share their hopes and obtain psychological confirmation through testimonials creates more feelings of ease.

It is profound that the researchers discovered that solitary prayer did not improve the tranquility of the subjects. It was when the act was performed in public that a communal sense of tranquility was heightened. This can be attributed to the cooperation and coordination that was identified by other researchers in the four-part religious structure. As it was discussed previously, the four-part structure was developed over time to understand and cope with complex social interactions. Within a communal setting, prayer and testimonials can be emotionally charged expressions that people respond to in kind.

I consider the statistical research important because of the progression of my family’s communal religious rituals. Our transition from a large communal structure to a smaller, immediate family in our

home decreased my hope and increased my anxiety. I felt more strongly tied to the social opportunities of religion than what the teachings represent. According to both statistical surveys examined one can speculate that the social component of religion is highly influential. I would even go on to add essential for transference and hopeful growth. On the other hand, attaching an early sense of anxiety or fear to a set of beliefs can alienate one from practicing that religion. This may allow for other rituals and practices to take its place. I understand how my artistic submersion becomes a way to fill the void of social interactions and beliefs left by my doubts about religion. The rejection and loss due to my doubts has affected me to the core, and I have endeavored to correct that course ever since.

Around the time my family left Christian church services we began practicing Judaic ceremonial rituals centered on the family home and meals. We participated in the Sabbath Seder meal every Friday evening at sunset followed by family prayer assembly. We also observed the annual Passover meal that occurs close to Easter on the Christian calendar. My parents began gathering Jewish ceremonial objects such as a menorah candelabrum with candles, devotional scripts in English and Hebrew, and specialty foods for the meals. These objects were used once a week and on display in our home the rest of the time as a reminder of our religious commitments. These habitual practices were used to replace our previous Sunday services and deepen our devotion to receive spiritual guidance and rewards.

### **II. B. 1. Jewish Seder Ceremonies**

Seders are family meal ceremonies centered on the eating of food and drinking of wine that are symbolic to Judaic beliefs. There are twelve Seders throughout the Jewish calendar year. The weekly Friday Sabbath, or Shabbat Seder meal, is considered the most important because it is specifically mentioned in the fourth commandment. The Old Testament commandments include, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Holy 31), which emphasizes its importance to Judeo-Christian believers. Christians do not normally observe Sabbath because it is not mentioned in the New Testament as a sinful act to neglect. It is considered a byproduct of Jewish ritual influence from the Old Testament. Jesus’ Last Supper supposedly pays homage to Passover while simultaneously initiates a new food ceremony of

communion. For most Christians, communion has replaced Passover during assembly in order to provide for larger groups of people. During communion, instead of an entire Passover meal, a piece of bread and a sip of wine are provided to the congregation to symbolize the internalizing of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. I believe this adaptation was used to provide for larger assemblies, whereas Passover is a smaller gathering in one's home.

The Sabbath meal begins with the lighting of two candles and singing Hebrew songs by the elder woman of the family. A glass of wine, to symbolize Jesus' blood sacrifice, is passed around the table to be consumed one sip at a time by each person present. More prayers and songs are voiced before the meal begins. Our family did not make special food for the weekly Sabbath; as soon as the initial ceremony ended, a normal meal was consumed in candlelight. Before we could leave the table, a final Hebrew phrase was chosen and proclaimed by the matriarch of the home. The phrases can vary, but we usually said, "baruch atah adonai eloheinu," which translates to "Blessed are you, our God, King of the universe." My mother would extinguish the candles and the Sabbath ceremony would end. I participated in ritualistic prayers and songs during our communal Christian church experience, but being introduced to new rituals was initially bizarre.

The annual Passover Seder is a more elaborate meal. It has a specific menu and script to follow that tells the participants when to eat certain foods and drink wine throughout the ceremony. At progressive points during the meal the script calls upon a different person to read a scripture or prayer. An empty seat and place setting are set at the table for Elijah. At the beginning of the meal the prophet Elijah joins by opening a door to invite him in for protection. His entry into the home is equated with an acceptance of God's protection. Rituals affirm a belief in the profane in order to be privy to the presence of the supernatural, which in the meal is God's presence through the invisible figure Elijah. I equate these ritualized meals to the art form of theater in their execution. Similarly people use many types of art forms to establish a connection with the profane, even if they claim it's a passage through a mundane vessel or action. Repeating these art forms creates a level of dedication to the "craft" that gives their practices meaning, which can be easily substituted with any religious devotion (Shusterman 4).

## II. B. 2. Christian Rites of Passage: Sacraments

There are other ways in the Christian faith that incorporate ritual to demonstrate higher levels of dedication. Sacraments are used primarily in the Catholic Church, but they outline the Christian rites of passage to faith. The practices associated with rites of passage in any religion are considered ritual events that mark a person's transition from one status to another. The seven sacraments of Christianity are Holy Baptism (spiritual cleansing with water), The Last Supper (eating bread symbolizes God's body and drinking wine as His blood), The Orders (Bible as the Word of God), Confirmation (accepting Jesus as a savior), Holy Matrimony (marriage through the church), Penance (self-flagellation), and Extreme Unction (spiritual healing) (Webber 38-42). Adhering to these practices provides evidence of a person's devotion, and allows them a better chance of getting into God's good graces.

It is interesting to note that it is perceived by many as evidence, and one can be educated through specified rites of passage about the supernatural or divine. The observations of R. A. Rappaport, the author of *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, claims, "ritual does not merely identify that which is sacred; it creates the sacred" (Alcorta 332). All sacramental objects were once mundane, but after being introduced into the ritual process they are transformed into sacred receptacles for God's anointing (spiritual healing). Christian rites of passage outline a religious education for its practitioners, in order to receive a higher understanding of God. Academic education is an accepted series of events that give people levels of status from one tier to the next to understand their chosen career. I would argue that the institutions of both art and religion have similar rituals and desires in their practices.

*Art expresses very deep meanings and spiritual insights that religion and philosophy once most powerfully provided, but that they now no longer convey in a convincing way to most of today's secular populations throughout the world. ... contrary yet equally interesting hypothesis likewise demands consideration: that art cannot be separated from religion, that rather than a real alternative, art is simply another mode or expression of religion.*

*(Shusterman 2)*

By this account, the pursuit of the spiritual in art and religion may be inseparable devices. Art may be the continuation of religion by other means, and executed in much the same fashion. The painful history of religion is what makes it stand apart from art. For centuries religion has been recognized as providing an effective adhesive of social unity in many societies. However, religion has allowed discrimination, intolerance, persecution, and crusades of religious warfare to taint its spiritual pursuits. These often violent intolerances threaten to divide the world rather than unify people (Shusterman 10). Why not then suggest that art is an effective replacement for religion? I see similarities to their construction, but I advocate art over religion as a more effective spiritual and socially responsible pursuit.

### III. Visual Cultural of Art and Religion

Prior to the written word, or its widespread education, classical art was used to remind religious observers of the Bible's narratives. Often only a priest, pastor, or other religious authority in the church could read the texts. This provided a need to commission artists to illustrate the Biblical stories into murals, paintings, statues and books. The "reader" would be able to associate the images with sermons, and the daily lessons that the stories are translated to provide. Historically, art was used to activate the dialog between religious teachings and its practitioners to nurture their education and social interaction. Many religious murals and paintings have collaged imagery to encompass several parts of a story into one image. It will usually include heightened aspects of the story that believers deem crucial to observing their faith. In classical art, ritual education played a key role in religious devotion in order to access the emotional connection people strived to have with their god(s). Art was, and still is, the backdrop to ceremonies and education of religious rituals.

*The use of images in religious ritual is a key element in their incorporation into the imaginative and spiritual life of antiquity. It was precisely because of the existence of festivals in which images were periodically dressed, paraded, washed and worshipped, and because of the stories which such repeated sacred actions came to generate, that art could attain the epiphanic and emotional heights..."*

*(Elsner 518)*

The use of art images and objects was designed to construct a visual culture centered on social engagement and participation. It was crucial to visually engage and participate, thus solidifying the

supernatural component of religious beliefs. It could be argued that without art forms, religious rituals would not have become such an important aspect of humanity's social and visual identity.

### **III. A. Church of the Holy Sepulchre**

I chose to focus on one specific site in Jerusalem that has inspired the construction of my shrines. My family believed in the possibility of being descendants of The Lost Tribes of Israel and based on that belief they hope to one day go to Jerusalem and participate in those rewards. In Jerusalem, The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is considered the religious destination of choice for Christian and Judaic practitioners (see fig. 1). The site is important because it is believed to have divine contents that allow its visitors to be in the presence of their god.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre dates back to the crucifixion of Jesus and was built on his tomb in Jerusalem (see fig.2). It is in this specific site that rituals and objects are used to emotionally charge the spiritual values of those who visit. The various murals, shrines and statues are meant to inspire the understanding of a spiritual reality beyond material world, but through the creation of physical objects (see fig. 4). The church has long been a place of pilgrimage for Jews and Christian believers.



Fig. 1: Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, (“History of Church”)



Fig. 2: Holy Prison (Tomb) of Jesus, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, (“History of Church”)

Those of Jewish faith and Judeo-Christians are taught they should pilgrimage to “The Holy Land” of Jerusalem at least once in their lifetime. For the Jewish people, the hardships of the journey are what make doing it so important. The self-sacrifice, usually described as endurances of pain, convey the faithfulness and dedication it would take to follow God’s commands (see fig. 3). These types of stories are passed down within Judaic rituals as part of the act of reaffirming or remembering the devout faith. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the primary destination of those pilgrimages to the Holy Land.



Fig. 3: Stone of the Anointing, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, (“History of Church”)

Inside the church, the building is sectioned off into six areas for each denomination. The church was expanded by Emperor Constantine in the eleventh century and prospered as a religious center. It grew to house six denominations of Judaic and Christian religious sects of Orthodox from Roman, Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian descent. Each has their own section of the church to construct shrines, worship, prayer and to perform ceremonies (“History of Church”). These denominations did not always live harmoniously within these walls. Although these six sects are based in the same religious

practices, some emphasize areas of Biblical or Torah scripture over others. Some sects would deface or steal ritual objects from other shrines because of ideological disputes. Often if a piece was stolen, that denomination would say they were merely reclaiming their property. In the fourteenth century a blanket truce was established in the church by a group of elder members from each denomination; no one was to move anything from another area or they would be evicted from the church (“History of Church”). Alas, this has done little to sooth the emotionally heightened tensions of a community in continuous battle over religious ideology.

*There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it.*

*(Shusterman 4)*

G. E. Moore, one of the founding fathers of analytical philosophy, claimed that ‘Religion is merely a subdivision of art’ since ‘every valuable purpose which religion serves is also served by art’ (Shusterman 4). He went on to argue that modern art might even serve more purpose than religion in providing a wider range of objects and emotions to be heard. It is perhaps in that idea that I find the most solace.

### **III. A. 1. Christian Murals and Shrines**

The shrines inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were made using all types of artistry crafts that make the structure appear profane. Stone was used to construct the architectural format of the alcoves and was then adorned with metal, wood, ceramic, glass, and precious gems to create an atmosphere for their messages of a supernatural presence. They embodied a sacredness that embeds ritualistic associations for those who practiced there. For example, the artistic representations of Jesus on

the cross allows for an illustration for the Biblical narrative of his crucifixion. These works are considered sacred in order to ideologically be placed on the supernatural plane of their depiction.



Figure 4: The Altar of the Crucifixion, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, (“History of Church”)

Murals were created throughout the church to further bestow the teachings of the Biblical beliefs (see fig. 5). Artfully designed, these murals are embedded with symbolism and iconography directly inspired by specific passages that influenced observance of the Ten Commandments. As part of the Judeo-Christian education, Jesus being considered the “anointed one” is understood through the ritual sacrament of holy unction. By allowing oneself to be anointed by Jesus they are accepting God as their savior, which is a commitment in the commandment to “You shall have no other gods before me” (Holy 393). Religious practice and imagery are intimately combined in each alcove of the church to convey a descriptive application of the religious rituals practiced there. Art forms were used to visually describe the ideological practices of a religious education.



Figure 5: Mural for the Stone of Anointing, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, (“History of Church”)

Murals also indicate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb on the left side of the narrative (see fig. 5). This image is also aligned with the belief that Jesus’ resurrection will be followed by a second coming to earth to assist in the battle against the Anti-Christ predicted in Revelation. The pictorial representations of the objects in the church all contribute to an understanding of the events that occurred and that are prophesied to come to fruition in John’s visions of Tribulation. They represent a series of beginnings, means and ends to the rewards for believing in a Christian way of life.

These illustrations convey a moral functioning for social interactions. There are many art forms that have alluded to these same ideals; as Richard Shusterman claims, “the highest art is the art of living with the goal of salvation in this world rather than the heaven of an afterlife” (Shusterman 6). He argues further that art is not free from religion because it emerged and flourished, and hopefully will survive the beliefs, rituals, practices and institutions of the cultures that gave it life and purpose. Art and religion both have aesthetics that visually convey the values that people choose to follow. The Ten Commandments have aesthetics in their meaning similar to the way they can be portrayed in a mural. Without the values associated with the images, the aesthetics of a painting would not be revered. Any art

forms is based on values and attitudes and are reflected by social opinion and beliefs. The popular arts forms reflect the mass acceptance of those values. With that in mind, could art be a formative influence for aesthetically reconstructing the world or myself in better ways? If art began to replace its religious supernatural dependency with another type of abstract ideology its practitioners could believe themselves to be separated from religion. The social values would be similar because they are based on the same human experiences, however the way they are carried out could change.

### **III. A. 2. Communicating Beliefs and Ritual Through Art**

In Western art history, following the Enlightenment, it can be argued that religion and art split paths. Art attempts to create evidence of a supernatural order to our understanding of the world. Art and religion have similar intentions as they both endeavor to weave a spiritually deeper reality beyond common sense and science.

*Art sustains its cultural image as an essentially sanctified domain of higher spiritual values, beyond the material life and praxis. It's adorned relics (however profane they strive to be) are sacredly enshrined in temple-like museums that we dutifully visit for spiritual edification, just as religious devotees have long frequented churches, mosques, synagogues, and other shrines of worship.*

*(Shusterman 10)*

Many parts of the world continue to use the art forms of antiquity to practice aspects of religious faith in religious spaces. However, it is possible to compare the function of art museums to that of religious cathedrals. In both locations the ideology creates a sense of sacred ideals associated with mundane objects that reinforce the conceptual relevance of supernatural forces at play. This possibility

has separated religion and art in much the same way that one religion self identifies as distinct from other religions.

The idea that art and religion have common ground is rooted in the notion of transfiguration. Arthur Danto made the concept of transfiguration a keystone of his philosophical conclusions of art. His explanation states, “artworks are somehow transfigured into a higher, sacred, ontological realm wholly different from the real things of this world from which they may be visually or sensorily indiscernible... or may even be physically identical” (Shusterman 8). Danto alludes to Warhol’s Brillo Boxes as an inspirational icon of this transfiguration in art with similar properties as the Catholic communal bread and wine (see fig. 6). Warhol’s post-modernist boxes represent the paradox of cultural identity in relation to art objects that seem entirely different from real things of this world. It is identical to other everyday objects, but represents a cultural construct of what the museum represents (Shusterman 8).



Figure 6: Andy Warhol, *Brillo Boxes*, 1934 (“Warhol Brillo Boxes”)

My work compares the settings of both cathedrals and museums to be equal venues of education, ideas and execution towards the desire of a higher purpose. Warhol’s work is referential in its

examination of the tenants of art in the museum as I hope my work will be in its relation to comparing the rituals of art and religion.

Artists, art curators and critics have contributed to the separation of art and religion by alienating the religious content from modern works of art. As John Dillenberger states, “... interpreters point to abstraction or abstract forms as particularly emergent in cultures when the visible world in and of itself no longer conveys meanings beyond the visible.” During the rise of modern art, when abstraction was replacing the spiritual element of classical paintings, it became ideologically contrary to create representations of religious icons. Dillenberger continues to argue that portraying religious icons in modern paintings turned sentiment into sentimentality, which he claims made the topic of religion no longer a legitimate representation of the spirituality of art. Paintings such as Salvador Dali’s *Sacrament of The Last Supper* and Thomas Hart Benton’s *The Lord is My Shepherd* illustrate his point when they were considered by the National Gallery in Washington as, “... junk... devoid of spiritual content” (Dillenberger 200) (see fig. 45 and 46). It is perhaps the emphasis of painting technique in modern art that makes their religious references insincere. However, it is significant to note that social opinions inform the changes in art and its topics.

James Turrell is an artist working with light to transform interior spaces into venues for expanding human perceptions about human sight (see fig. 7). He made some interesting claims about the experiences he thought his work conveyed while it was being viewed.



Figure 7: James Turrell, *Above Horizon*, 2004 (Weil Introduction)

Turrell stated, 'My work has no object, no image and no focus. With no object, no image and no focus, what are you looking at? You are looking at you looking. What is important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought.' (Weil Introduction) Turrell's reference to no image or object can be compared to the idea of God. His emphasis on what we do not immediately see as part of the experience of sight imparts an introduction to the metaphysical. His understanding, *to create an experience of wordless thought* could be compared to prayer towards those non-images or non-objects. Wordless thoughts or prayers are emotional exchanges brought on by the person experiencing the event. However, I believe the event is only possible to portray through objects and images. People do not normally attempt to imagine beyond seeing without first having it in their sight.

For religious observers, God is not considered a thing that can be made with an object; He is more than that for believers. This abstract notion is meant to set their religion apart from other forms of mundane social understandings. I consider Turrell's argument to read in much the same fashion; he considers his light pieces connected with something unseen, but able to be experienced. This may or may not be true, but it sounds considerably like how religious rituals came to be believed and influenced their practice. Rituals draw from a desire to connect with something a person believes is present, but in a supernatural or metaphysical plane that cannot be rendered directly. It is believed that one can experience the supernatural by participating with ritualistic objects that connect to a divine plane. People cannot experience objects or images without this desired referential affect. It is in this way that shrines can be considered an abstract representation of a supernatural connection that the participants determine engages with a sacred entity. The believers allow for a communal aspect that transmits the belief that a connection has been made and can continue to be made by repeating the artistic or religious rituals for both perspectives.

Outside sacred places where people are disconnected from religiously social climates and bogged down by the demands of modern life the shift in focus from religion to its more abstract spiritual claims become possible. Perhaps it was only a matter of time before art created its own four-part structure centered on the profane much like the progression of religion. Once people separated art from religion,

but continued to believe in spiritual possibilities, art developed its own supernatural agents, costly rituals, separated the profane from the mundane and began transferring those beliefs to others (Alcorta 329). These beliefs are expressed and transferred through the creation of objects that were once mundane, but become sacred in the ideological minds of those who are invested in their messages. People allow the association those objects have to pacify the fears and obligations connected to the politics they encounter on a daily basis. In my work, shrines visually and emotionally signify a way to pacify the fears of daily life. Shrines are located in sacred spaces that allow their visitors to express their desires and fears without repercussions. In most cases the shrines are associated with a deity of some kind, which the devotee is communing with over their grievances. I replace the deity focus to that of people in my shrines because my research stresses the importance of social interactions as the core component to religious intentions. My memories of the events in my childhood are crucial to my understanding of being connected to the history of religion and art.

### **III. B. Manifestations of Shrines**

Shrines give tangible shape to the realities of complex associations, memories, expectations, emotions, and communities involved in Christian ritual practices inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. People across multiple denominations experience the presence of religious realities through material objects. It is significant to consider the differing levels of sacredness within these religious icons. The site of Jesus' burial where his blood was spilt is more sacred than that of communion wine. People of Christian faith strive to visit Jesus' tomb and light a candle there, but also consider it important to surround themselves with icons of the cross as a reminder of their beliefs. The spaces that people create with various levels of sacred association are a tether to being part of a larger social network.

#### **III. B. 1. Collective Shrines and Memory**

In our visual culture it can be argued that seeing the *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo Da Vinci in person carries more weight than having a print hang in their home (see fig. 47). Standing in front of an artwork,

where once the artist stood, transforms the experience to a more personal level. That is perhaps why we create sites to house these sacred objects. A museum becomes a place where that idea can be experienced. Being in the presence of an unexplained reverence for the created symbolism of artwork can be likened for its similar qualities to shrines. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is one example of modern art and religious beliefs working together to create a site to enshrine the relics that keep this tragic historical event part of current, public memory. This site and its many representations contribute to a desire to preserve the memory of this event.

*The desire for memory comes in a variety of forms. In some cases, it is an intensely personal quest for narrative, for the ability to tell a story and thereby alleviate a burden. ... memory as desire is embodied by the people desiring it and the media designed to encompass and transmit it. Memory also takes the form of myth, understood as a sacred narrative that authorizes identity in the present, and of ritual, understood as sacred behavior that similarly authorizes one's connection to the past and "tradition".*

*(Stier 2)*

The environment of modern art objects or religious art objects is associated with a certain mentality when viewing the pieces in their designated spaces. Sites such as the Holocaust Museum contribute to a representation of the memory of past events. The image of thousands of discarded shoes, in one exhibit inside the museum, represents our desire to imagine having to go through what the victims experienced (see fig. 8).



Figure 8: *Victim's Shoes*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (“Remember”)

Our education of visual culture is intertwined with how the past is made known through symbol and ritual in the context of larger social groups. It can be argued that all memory, even “individual” memory is thoroughly social and discursive in multiple cultural representations and especially art. Since art depends on social discourse it can be understood that, “... the collective memory of the past is actually a reconstruction of the past in light of the constraints of the present” (Stier 5). Religion is one social institution that coerces its members to abide by various collective representations to inform the education of visual culture to coincide with their belief system. Christianity is focused on the past in an attempt to make it relevant to the present. It is in this way that I focus on my past to understand what is relevant to me in the present.

At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, shrines are used to impart a collective connection to the past and present in order to charge its rituals with meaning. Interactive rituals represent a desired involvement in a social history that makes people feel connected through a divine link. The communal

involvement of some shrine sites allows visitors to bestow and use already present objects to conduct rituals (see fig. 9). Each piece adds additional meaning to the shrine, and the display gives order to their significance in the teachings as well as their placement in ritual succession.



Figure 9: Coptic Shrine behind the Tomb of Christ,  
Church of the Holy Sepulchre (“History of Church”)

These highly adorned spaces endeavor to provide an understanding of the supernatural forces at play on earth and in a metaphysical plane (see figures 35-44 for more details). From what I have examined it is possible to align the intention of modern art ideology as a desirable replacement for religious belief systems. I agree with the argument that states,

*... Religion, is the enemy of pragmatism’s quest to integrate art and life, a quest exemplified both in the classical Western notion of the art of living and some Asian artistic traditions, where art is less importantly the creation of objects than the process of refining the artist who creates and the audience who absorbs*

*that creative expression. ... it provides the joys of mystery and myth without committing our faith to superstitions and thus inducing the bitter aftertaste of shame that our scientific conscience is likely to experience upon attempts to swallow discredited otherworldly beliefs.*

*(Shusterman 3)*

My shines leave me with the bitter aftertaste that Shusterman describes. As I make each piece I deal with another aspect of changing my perspective, and in doing so they instill a feeling of loss, but also a renewed sense of future possibilities. The potential of a renewed perspective will allow my sculptural work to develop into a wider acceptance of visual art culture. On a personal level, my wider vantage point will allow me to connect to a larger kindness for fellow humans. The harmony I desire within myself will contribute to further harmony for humanity as a whole.

#### ***IV. Tribulation Enshrined***

All of my research up to this point has helped me to understand the facets of ritual as it pertains to Judeo-Christian religious practices, shrines and art. Religious rituals appear to be affected by transmitted familial doctrine and the social dependency to continue the practices passed down by those compounded and communal interactions. It is maintained by establishing goals for the beliefs through physical participation that are funneled through emotionally charged scenarios of desire, fear and hope. Shrines are a location for these rituals to occur, giving the participation a physical conduit for testimonials and prayers. Artwork, in much the same manner, is physically constructed to represent a desired intangible experience that is applied through specific education of similar ritual practices. I believe that the metaphysical desires in art can be easily replaced with the religious entanglements that have caused my views to be intolerant, discriminatory and acts of fear.

It is my intention to create shrines that become more informative in the art museum to align its intentions as similar to that of religious claims, but with a more morally conscious desire. My work replaces one emphasis by being in a museum over that of a cathedral to allow for the negative aspects of religion to be considered. Each shrine examines one seal of Tribulation, one sacrament and a personal memory to justify my aversion to allowing the apocalyptic prophecies to affect my actions after this body of work is completed. The descriptions of my shrines are a testimonial of my own design to convey my hopes, my failings and to inspire a new direction for my life to unfold.

##### ***IV. A. Seven: If You Hear the Sevenfold Trumpets Sound, You Will Have Missed the Great Tribulation***

The Hebrew word for trumpet usually refers to a shofar. A shofar is made from a ram's horn; cutting off both ends creates a hollow instrument. When blown, a deep droning sound is released. These horns are used to signal the beginning of important parts of ceremonies in Judaic traditions (see fig. 10).

My father would sound the shofar while my mother lit seven candles to begin the Passover dinner. The shofar and candles signal an invitation to Yeshua to join the meal. The use of the shofar reminds us that we should accept Yeshua into our hearts and thoughts. The desire to accept Jesus into our lives reminds me of the sacrament for confirmation. Christians believe in order to get into heaven, one must converse and share their sins with God. Inviting Yeshua to the dinner table is a similar type of sharing to confession. Whenever I see the word trumpet in the Bible I hear the sound of a shofar and remember our meals that represented a desire for confirming faith.



Figure 10: *Seven: If You Hear the Sevenfold Trumpets Sound, You Will Have Missed the Great Tribulation*, back detail



Figure 11: *Seven: If You Hear the Sevenfold Trumpets Sound, You Will Have Missed the Great Tribulation*, full front detail

In Revelation, the Seventh Seal is marked by a series of seven angels, each blowing a trumpet. Every angel's trumpet sounding was followed by natural and unnatural disasters falling upon the earth.

*Revelations 8:7 The first sounded, and there came HAIL and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.*

*(Holy 498)*

The Seventh Seal has not happened yet. This seal is a warning; not for what may happen, but of what will happen. Despite the belief that these seven series of disasters plaguing earth is a metaphor,

people believe the disasters may be possible. My father is one such believer and considers scripture to be literal. He found scientific research to suggest the reality of God's wrath. Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) are explosions on the surface of the sun. Scientists theorize that one CME directed at earth will cause forests to catch on fire. The CMEs even at this distance could have a devastating affect on earth (McLamb "Earth's Greatest Threat"). If a person were outside when a coronal emission hit, it would cause intense third degree burns to their skin.

Since my father believes the predictions are going to come true, it creates this burden of anticipation. My father meticulously researches how events written in Revelations will come true. The ultimate goal is to get to heaven; smaller goals are confirming the Bible's predictions. For apocalypse believers, if the predictions are true, then heaven must also be possible. I was given a goal, told what to expect and how to find proof. However, I have trouble becoming motivated to accept the process. The anxiety that revolves around justifying the practice of getting me through Tribulation is daunting, and the more I know about the seals the more terrifying it becomes.

Since the Holy Land is an important pilgrimage ritual for Judeo Christians, I created the clay walls of my shrine to replicate the floor plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (see fig. 12). The lines of a floor plan are the structure for boundaries to the church. The walls become the division between what is sacred and what may not be.



Figure 12: *Seven: If You Hear the Sevenfold Trumpets Sound,  
You Will Have Missed the Great Tribulation*, front detail

Even though Jerusalem is a sacred city for the Judeo-Christian believers another level of sacred is created within the boundary of the church. The sacredness of my shrine is amplified by creating a vessel based on the church's floor plan (see figure 12). However, the vessel is destabilized once the floor plan is positioned vertically. The orientation and stand on which it rests were chosen because of their vulnerability to toppling over. The stand is tall and thin to draw the piece to a position of high regard (see fig. 11). The wooden stand is meant to show my reverence and trepidation simultaneously. At that height, the shrine can signify a desire to be drawn into heaven or propose a dangerous fall back to earth.



Figure 13: *Seven: If You Hear the Sevenfold Trumpets Sound,  
You Will Have Missed the Great Tribulation*, front detail

The Seventh Seal is the last before being drawn into heaven; a small illustration of this is included inside the shrine. A broken angel figurine lies on a shelf. Below the shelf three wax arms hover over an image of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre floor plan (see fig. 12 and 13). The number three is most used in Judaic Christian symbolism to reference the Holy Trinity. The Trinity is God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. The trinity arms hang just out of reach over the church below.

During the construction of this shrine my perception of my beliefs was to be reverent of my family's faith. I attempted to convey this seal in an uplifting way in order to feel more hopeful about its outcome. I reluctantly confirm the possibility of it coming to fruition, but at this point in time I was unclear whether it may become a reality. The shrine visually expresses my alarm at the potential of the predicted event and my father's research into it coming true (see figure 14).

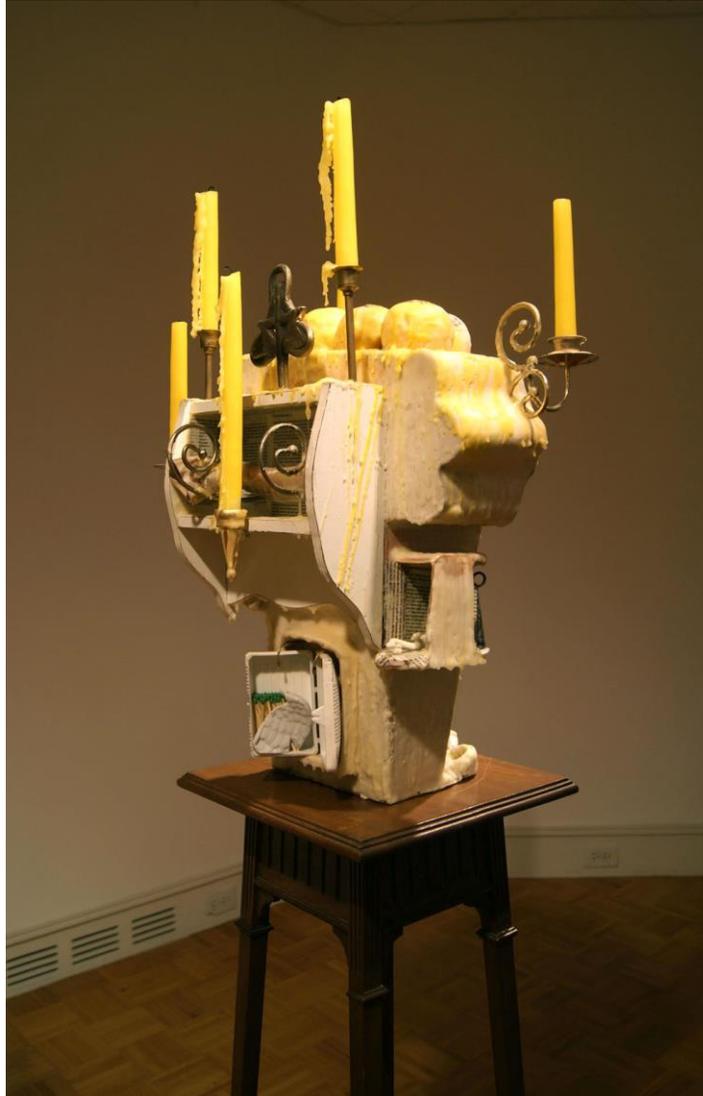


Figure 14: *Seven: If You Hear the Sevenfold Trumpets Sound, You Will Have Missed the Great Tribulation*, looking back view

#### **IV. B. Six: *Do Not Judge, Or You Too Will Be Judged***

The act of remembering with a meal is most recognized in Christianity with the Last Supper conducted by Jesus. “And Jesus said, ‘ ... do this in remembrance of me’.” (Holy 428) Passover is an annual Jewish celebration that resembles the Last Supper. For my family a weekly Sabbath and annual Passover meals were ways to add more meaning to our Christian faith. By sharing food during communion it represents the body of Christ so that we remember and internalize Jesus’ sacrifice for

Christians. During communion, we would consume wine and bread, which represents the body of Christ or the sacrament of the Eucharist. The two red Sabbath candles represent the half of the Eucharist sacrament conveying Jesus' blood being present (see figure 15).



Figure 15: *Six: Do Not Judge, Or You Too Will Be Judged*, front view

At the top of the shrine, a copper cake pan has been altered to act as a decorative sconce (see figure 16). This is important because in Jewish law certain foods are banned due to their impure associations. Leavening agents for baked goods are left out of kosher diets, but my family did not follow these restrictions. The inclusion of breads, like those eaten in communion, is more consistent for Judeo-Christian believers and not for strictly Jewish practitioners. Cake breads represent the sweet to the bittersweet concepts that the Passover meal entails in conveying the Jewish beliefs and their connection with pain. A believer must first experience suffering to receive rewards.

Salt is a necessity to the Sabbath meal; when eaten alone salt has a bitter taste (see figure 17). During the Passover meal, certain foods are eaten at specific times to act as a metaphor for the Jewish people's experiences during their exile from The Holy Land. Salt and salt water is eaten during Passover represent the tears of the Jews' hardship during their enslavement by the Pharaohs. The spice rack on my

shrine is identical to the one my mother had when I was growing up. It represents the care she took in preparing the meals to carry out these rituals, because the food is essential to how the meal is conducted.

At the end of the meal, we would all say in unison, "Next Year in Jerusalem!" This is partly to celebrate possible pilgrimages, but also to celebrate Yeshua's second coming. In the Bible Jesus promises his disciples that he will come again. It is said that his return will be in our hour of most need. When Christ comes back, the world will be in the final phase of Tribulation when extreme conflict is occurring. In my shrine, the Eucharist represents the desire for Christ's return and having the meal of remembrance. I have also represented Christ with repeating the number "3" on one half of the shrine. Three refers to the holy trinity of Christ, God and the Holy Spirit; and they are considered one entity in three parts. On the other half of the shrine I have repeated the number "6". The number six refers to Christ's opponent or Anti-Christ because the war that will ensue when this phase of Tribulation occurs. The first seal of Tribulation is for Conquest, which represents the appearance of the Anti-Christ to initiate a battle against Jesus.

*Revelations 6:2 John says--"And I looked, and behold a WHITE HORSE; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."*

*(Holy 497)*

The white horse rider is meant to represent the Anti-Christ. The Anti-Christ is also represented by what is called the "mark of the beast". The mark is considered to be associated with the numbers 666, and he can be identified by that numerical sequence (Holy 499).



Figure 16 and 17: *Six: Do Not Judge, Or You Too Will Be Judged, top view and right side view*

Similar to the research my father conducted on Coronal Mass Ejections, he has also tried to determine who the Anti-Christ is by the number “666” (see fig. 18). In the Hebrew language all the letters also have a numerical value. The numerical value of each character can be added, and most Jewish followers believe that is how the Anti-Christ can be identified. In order to determine a person is the Anti-Christ they would also have to be in a position of power and specifically in the midst of conflict. He/She would have to have a conquering mentality and an instigator of war (Forese “Mark of the Beast”). Even though my father is trying to determine who the Anti-Christ is, most believe we will not know until Christ’s second coming. Putting equal amounts of threes and sixes on the shrine, which represents Jesus and the Anti-Christ, I am representing their massing armies eventual conflict. There would not be one without the other, but once they are both present with their armies, the final conflict begins.

The inside of the shrine is divided into two areas. Cards are placed on the door arm with two prompts. One card states, “If you have had a bad experience with religion place this card in upper box”. The other card reads, “If you have had a good experience with religion place this card in lower box” (see figure 15). My theory is you get what you put into any pursuit. If one feels negatively towards religion, it would be hard to expect that a church would be a good atmosphere to be in. The choice is more about the person’s behavior rather than whether heaven or hell exists. Although believing in those two outcomes does influence the decision; some people may not believe there are rewards in the form of an

afterlife. That would make the basis of the question more about their outlook on accepting different perspectives in this life.



Figure 18: Six: *Do Not Judge, Or You Too Will Be Judged*, top back view

*Luke 6:37 Do not judge or you too will be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

*(Holy 419)*



Figure 19: Six: *Do Not Judge, Or You Too Will Be Judged*, looking back view

I have allowed my perspective to change by accepting what I consider to be valuable about the religious teachings I was brought up to believe. I have given myself the leeway to believe parts, but not all the teachings. I think that allowing myself flexibility on what to believe has made my approach to religion more positive. A year ago I would have chosen the bad religion card, but now I choose the good. While I made this shrine, my perception of religious faith became the potential for it to change. The title for this shrine became important in determining my stance because it can be interpreted to reflect an acceptance of more than just religious teachings. The messages in the Bible have been interpreted for centuries, and I have the as much license to use those to my advantage as anyone else. It is becoming aware of that ability that made making this piece important for my transition away from a Christian belief system.

#### **IV. C. *Five: And They Were Sore Afraid***

As a child I remember the twinkling glow of a thousand little light bulbs flashing to songs like jingle bells and Rudolph the red nose reindeer. We would pay special attention to the ornaments from some of my family's first Christmases. Some were crudely constructed, using paper, popsicle sticks or other small remnants, because they were made when my relatives were very young. Every year the older family members would share stories about the first ornaments each of us made, and those pieces would be placed on the tree first. Once the tree was adorned and gifts accumulated, my siblings and I would scour under the Christmas tree to find the presents with our names on them.

Opening presents on Christmas morning was highly ritualized in my family. Before opening presents my grandmother would read the Bible section that tells the coming of Jesus' birth.

*Luke 2: 6-14 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country*

*shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

*(Holy 417)*

Reading this section every Christmas morning was meant to remind us of the reason for this holiday. It wasn't about scouring for our gifts, but rather to remember Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. Giving gifts celebrates that God has blessed us and that we can share it with others. Once the verses were read we would pass out the gifts and open them one at a time beginning with the youngest child. Each person opened one present then the next oldest would open one. We would each open in this order with many rotations of youngest to oldest until all the presents were gone.

In the two years leading up to my twelfth Christmas, my parents were concerned that we might be going about the holidays the wrong way. By that time, my family had integrated Judaism into our weekly and yearly practices. More and more discussions of Christmas trees and holiday consumerism became disdainful in my father's eyes. He equated a Christmas tree to breaking one of the Ten Commandments, the commandment against idolatry.



Figure 20: *Five: And They Were Sore Afraid*, full view

*Exodus 20: 3-5, 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*

*(Holy,31)*

My father considered putting presents under the tree and our excitement over receiving presents to be similar to bowing down to an idol. Once that synonymous conclusion was made, we no longer got a Christmas tree for the holidays. My siblings and I put up a fuss the first year, but after continuous reminders for why the decision had been made, we stopped. No longer having a tree was just another

aspect of how our lives were changing. Whether it was a change for the better, I did not know at the time. It seemed ridiculous to argue for having a Christmas tree over going to heaven, so I became resigned to understand the changes.

One of the most well known punishments in the Bible for idolatry is the plagues of Egypt (see figure 24). The Jewish people were imprisoned in Egypt as slave labor to the Pharaohs for two hundred and fifteen years. God supposedly judged the Egyptians because of their abuse of the Jewish people, use of animal idolatry, sexual promiscuity and more abominations down to the foods they ate. God warned the Pharaoh in a series of dreams that doom was going to befall the people, but he did not listen. Since the fourth seal of Tribulation is plagues, my parents taught us to be cautious that wrath could befall us if we did not heed the tenants of the Commandments. I adorned this shrine with images of children's coloring book pages illustrating the ten plagues of Egypt (see fig. 21 and 22).



Figure 21 and 22: *Five: And They Were Sore Afraid*, details

These images reference my childhood confusion of trying to understand how they relate to the Christmas holidays. My father was trying to cure what he believed to be the sick aspects of our lives before they led us to damnation. That desire for curing and guiding our faith reminds me of the sacrament of Anointing. The ritual of anointing usually involves olive oil, which is dripped on the forehead. I poured wax starting from the top of the shrine and let it travel to the bottom to symbolize the curing I hope to receive. I overloaded my shrine with figurines and lights to reflect the embellishing rituals that

occurs during the Christmas holidays (see fig. 20). I made ornaments of my own to place on my shrine (see figure 23). These are the last ornaments that will reflect my family's attitude towards Christmas.



Figure 23: *Five: And They Were Sore Afraid*, detail

From this point forward, I consider the association of Biblical teachings in relation to Christmas rituals to be separate from one another. I am conscious of the reasoning for not having a tree, but I still wish to have one. I respect the decision my father came to, but I enjoy the Christmas rituals over the Biblical reasons for not having them.

An adolescent mentality greatly influenced how this shrine was visually designed. With a childish fury I created this Christmas monstrosity out of angst and spite and could be seen as a childhood tantrum to destroy all the teachings I was given with as gaudy a representation as I could muster. I needed to experience that childhood angst in order to turn it into a more constructive representation of my intentions for future shrines. This phase is still present in the shrine to follow, but allowed me to become informed about how my convictions were changing.



Figure 24: *Five: And They Were Sore Afraid*, bottom detail



Figure 25: *Five: And They Were Sore Afraid*, looking back view

#### ***IV. D. Four: For the Word of God is Quick, And Sharper Than Any Two Edged Sword***

Another aspect of Judeo-Christianity that can be distressing is the conflict between Israel and Palestine. This shrine is centered around the seal of War because of the foretold battle between God's followers and Satan's followers that will culminate during Tribulation. The vision of Tribulation includes a final spiritual and literal battle with Jesus and the Anti-Christ as the Generals to the armies on either side. The belief is that Satan will be defeated as long as God's words are obeyed. The words of God are the commands in the Bible that should be followed more strictly in the final hours of Tribulation.



Figure 26: *Four: For the Word of God is Quick, And Sharper Than Any Two Edged Sword*, top detail

My family is endeavoring to follow more strict interpretations of Biblical commands in order to prepare themselves for the trials of Tribulation soon to come. Further referencing my childhood memories I used army men to represent my confusion about who would be the enemies I would face in

this religious war (see fig. 27). Due to my lack of conviction for the Judeo-Christian teachings, will I be one of these fallen soldiers? Since I am not convinced that Biblical teachings and rituals will keep me safe, why worry about the outcome to this battle at all?



Figure 27: *Four: For the Word of God is Quick,  
And Sharper Than Any Two Edged Sword*, top detail

Initially, in the Christian faith there is the word of God, which must be followed. Those who do not follow the Commandments are enemies of the Christian faith. However, the teachings I was brought

up to believe are interpretations for how to navigate following those Commandments. It occurs to me that I fight the understanding of these rules as interpretations most of all when trying to comprehend my path to Judeo-Christian rewards. I do not understand the Biblical logic that tells me who my enemies are and closer examination of the Bible does not further establish my beliefs, but destroys them. The memories that I explore with each shrine contradict my personal convictions about our social dependence and my desire to correct it rather than create ways that separate me from others.

When we first started having church days at home, a few like-minded families would come over on those nights to conduct prayer meetings. At one of these meetings I remember the group having a discussion about different versions of the Bible. My parents were arguing that the New King James Version was wrong or over-dramatic in the interpretation of scripture. It had not occurred to me that the Bible I was familiar with was a version of something else or that it could be a wrong interpretation. I began to wonder how many interpretations were out there and how different from the New King James version could they be? That is why my shrine is a shelf overflowing with multiple versions of the same Biblical scripture (see fig. 28 and 29).

There is not as much difference in the texts as I originally thought there would be. I thought perhaps they would have much the same content, but I was imagining some differences in books, chapters and verses. This is not the case; they all have the same almost verse for verse. Some branches of Christianity such as Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses use only part of the Bible, but that allowed them to add new stories and beliefs. Some versions have extended, descriptive styles by using more words to tell the same message. Here is an example of the same verse in New King James, which is an older translation, compared to American Standard and New International, which are both newer translations.



Figure 28 and 29: *Four: For the Word of God is Quick,  
And Sharper Than Any Two Edged Sword*, details



Figure 30 and 31: *Four: For the Word of God is Quick,  
And Sharper Than Any Two Edged Sword*, left and right side details

*Exodus 11:7*

*New King James:*

*But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.*

*(Holy 27)*

*American Standard Version:*

*But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that Jehovah doth make a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel.*

*(Schaff)*

*New International Version:*

*But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal. Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.*

*(Long)*

Although this verse is out of context, some versions make more sense than others. The discussion about Bible versions has stayed with me as I became aware of their effect on my life. These teachings created battles within myself and made me consider denying the authority entirely. I battled the Christian church authority that gave me the New King James Bible and my father's authority to examine prophecies from the translations of the New Testament where Tribulation is described. In order to represent this conflict, I have placed two hanging fabric pieces on either side of the shrine (see fig. 30 and 31). One is constructed to look like the stole of a priest. A stole represents the religious authority of the church, and it is pulled taut by the Biblical texts that surround it at the base of the shrine. On the other side hangs a man's tie with a fishing lure pattern to represent my father, caught between two editions of New Testament books. I have internalized my father's interpretations to obey the Bible as long as I could. For

my family's sake I did want to believe as they do. That is perhaps why all the scriptural imagery is on the inside of the shrine is encased in a dark burly brown shell of wax.

I want to hide this aspect of my doubts most of all. My father's search for scriptural affirmation is further enshrined in the cross box that holds a magnifying glass (see fig. 28). His search is hidden when the books are in place to represent the further denial about my doubts that Tribulation could be a reality. I created this shrine to convey the original desires for my doubts to stay hidden in their dark cave replica on a book. It attempts to conceal what is being revealed with each shrine; the trepidation that has come with putting all these ideas out in the open while attempting to hide their effect on me. I feel strongly that I must first come to terms with my denial to move past it.



Figure 32: *Four: For the Word of God is Quick,  
And Sharper Than Any Two Edged Sword, Looking back view*

#### IV. E. *Three: And They Have No Rest, Day Or Night*

My father told me of a dream he once had about Tribulation times; in the dream our property was covered in tents with people who found haven at our home. He claims that there will come a time when social and political unrest will peak during Tribulation resulting in persecution of Christians by the government in power. His belief in this vision caused us to prepare by acquiring supplies, not only for our family, but also for others that may seek religious or political asylum. The bottom portion of this shrine is lined with small replicas of handmade bean cans to represent our accumulation of supplies and the buried bunker we acquired to house these goods (see fig. 33). With nothing more than faith to keep them warm, the two figures in the bunker half of the shrine is slowly filling with smothering wax as time passes and the candles burn to extinction.



Figure 33 and 34: *Three: And They Have No Rest, Day Or Night*, front and back views

The bunker was justified because we may need a haven from unnaturally occurring storms; the seal associated with this urgency is Natural Disasters. The effectiveness of the bunker, if everything about Tribulation is to come true about natural disasters, would not withstand the havoc that will ensue. My family acknowledges that possibility, but considers the bunker a way to prepare their convictions nonetheless.

*Revelation 8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast [it] into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*

*(Holy 498)*

*Revelation 8:9-11 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*

*(Holy 498)*

I chose to align this shrine with the sacrament of Holy Matrimony because of the associations I have with domestic life. I do not approach domestic unions with a positive perspective because of the daunting predictions of apocalyptic ends and the lack of preparation scripture bestows on the subject. Inside the top portion of this shrine I created a room (see fig. 35 and 36). Within the room there are religious icons of Mary, Bibles and wine. Mary is the iconic image of a Christian woman in the Bible and revered above all other women because she gave birth to Jesus. The image of Mary is used most often to

perpetuate the pious attributes of women in the Christian church. In the shrine one figurine is of Mary as a young girl looking into a mirror, while another older, white with piety Mary stands off to one side watching the younger one. I am using the room to express the absurdity of Mary's description and what that could mean for a woman living through Tribulation.



Figure 35 and 36: *Three: And They Have No Rest, Day Or Night*, back top details

The clues convey that the bride may not be as virtuous as she should be. The older Mary is there to try to keep the younger girl from straying from the path laid out before her. It is irrational for me to believe that Christian teachings will give me a better understanding of a domestic existence especially when Tribulation is involved. My construction is compiled to express an unattractive quality to being coached for domestic life through religious teachings.



Figure 37: *Three: And They Have No Rest, Day Or Night*, back bottom detail

On the lower back portion of the shrine is a series of compiled verses from the Bible describing the Bride of Christ being whisked away by the Lamb of God (see fig. 37). The relevance of being a Bride of Christ is that Jesus is the groom for all of humanity. That spiritual relationship is aligned with the concept of marriage in that everyone should want to be married to the Lamb of God based on Christian teachings (see figure 38). Even though this is a desired aspect of religious scriptural teaching; I made the text resemble a ransom note. That image represents my lack of willing participation in the belief system that I grew up in. I have been held captive by the teachings for most of my life and that scenario reflects my desire for freedom.



Figure 38: *Three: And They Have No Rest, Day Or Night*, top right detail

During the creation of this shrine I am beginning to understand how my perspective is changing. It is topics, such as the portrayal of women in the Bible, which I hope to address in future series. The Judeo-Christian past does not seem sufficient to inform my present circumstances. I desire to be morally conscience towards others around me, but the iconic ideal of the Virgin Mary is a one-dimensional view of how that could be accomplished. This piece in particular has given me the confidence to change my beliefs and to become an advocate for others who wish to do the same.



Figure 39: *Three: And They Have No Rest, Day Or Night*, looking back view

#### ***IV. F. Two: A Fruitful Land Into Barrenness, For the Wickedness of Them That Dwell Therein***

Whenever I tell my father that something is or may be going wrong in my life I know he will start to fast for me. Fasting is believed to increase the potency of prayer; devotion so great that a person would forgo worldly desires like food, drink or physical pleasure is believed to be seen more clearly by their god. Many religious cultures have practiced this belief for centuries as a way to show their dedication. For Christians it is reflected in the sacrament of Penance, which explains the steps for absolution by their god. Once a sin is committed, absolution is received through a series of penances. A person would confess their sins, pray for forgiveness and receive a punishment in order for the transgression to be resolved. Often the punishment was a monetary fine in the form of tariff penances. In other cases the punishments were more harsh and self-inflicted. Other forms of self-inflicted punishments were used to

show piety and a closer relationship to Jesus Christ; this is known as self-flagellation. In order to display a deeper understanding of Jesus' sacrifice, by being crucified on the cross, believers will lash themselves until bloody (see figure 44). The whips used for self-flagellation have leather cords adorned with hard objects ranging from beads and rocks to metal spikes and blades (Webber 56).



Figure 40: *Two: A Fruitful Land Into Barrenness, For the Wickedness of Them That Dwell Therein*, front view

It astounds me the length to which Christians and Jews have sought out suffering. If the wrath of God is not currently ensuing they have developed a religious ritual that justifies self-inflicted pain. The word for passion in Latin (*passio*) is derived from the word for suffering. Since all the original Biblical

texts are translations from Latin, it becomes clear how passion for Christ could not be understood without continual suffering in some way.



Figure 41: *Two: A Fruitful Land Into Barrenness, For the Wickedness of Them That Dwell Therein*, back view

The idea of self-penance is inseparable to the idea of being persecuted for Christian beliefs. Pain and suffering are connected to the language the Bible was first established in and to prepare its religious armies for the suffering they will befall from Satan's followers. I have mentioned the existence of the Anti-Christ and his armies previous to this shrine, but neglected to show their current relevance until now. This also indicates why Egypt has been important to my narrative thus far. For some Christian

conspiracy theorists, The Illuminati represents the developing army of Satan's following in current times. My father has told me many occurrences of the Illuminati's influence in current political events. Their existence dates back to Egypt's political dominance, and the creation of Satan's Army is believed to be orchestrated by the Pharaohs during that time. They are believed to continue to infiltrate several high levels of governments across the globe to this day (Stewart "Satan on Our") (see figure 41). Not unlike Christian followers, they are believed to be placing themselves in positions of power in order to influence the outcome of a holy war. I have adorned the back of my shrines with an account of how The Illuminati is attempting to take control and spread their messages using our cultural icons. The United States currency has been interpreted to be an open display of the hidden Illuminati efforts to take spiritual control. The "eye" on the pyramid represents the persistence of their efforts that dates back to the imagery used by the Pharaohs (Stewart "Satan on Our") (see figures 42 and 43).



Figure 42 and 43: *Two: A Fruitful Land Into Barrenness, For the Wickedness of Them That Dwell Therein*, back top and bottom details

It is speculated that all the conflict and atrocities that have happened to Jewish and Christian believers can be blamed on The Illuminati. If God punishes the earth for wickedness, that could be attributed to the desired destruction of Satan's army. However, if one has faith in God, they would be spared from any disaster that would or could befall earth much like the seal of famine. Famine, natural

disasters, disease and war are the four horseman of the apocalypse. Each occurrence of these plights is to exterminate the sinful followers of Satan on earth. The seal of famine is represented by multiple upside down bowls in my shrine, but could have easily been any of the four horsemen (see figure 40). However, you can not have one without all the rest in the apocalyptic narrative, which is why my shrines are shown together in succession, and as a whole.



Figure 44: *Two: A Fruitful Land Into Barrenness,  
For the Wickedness of Them That Dwell Therein*

I am conflicted by the portrayal of punishment by Judaic and Christian believers. Despite their efforts to be comforted by God and protected by the theoretical forces of “evil” they continue to take control of the atrocities of their history in a self-deprecating way. I chose to express the similarities between the sacrament of Penance and the Seal of Famine in this shrine because, whether the punishment is self-inflicted for not, Judeo-Christian observers contribute the occurrence of pain as a sign for becoming closer to God. Whether to experience Jesus’ suffering or to endure the pain inflicted by spiritual opposition; it all informs the piety that will hopefully be rewarded in the afterlife. What a great cost for striving to receive what can only be imagined to occur.

The negativity associated with the process of being a soldier for God during Tribulation is an aspect of religious beliefs that I wish to leave behind. I can only hope to remind myself each day that these punishments are not outside our control because they belong to spiritual forces. The social networks that we create to provide harmony and unity within cultures can also be twisted to create barriers between us as well. It has been my endeavor to understand the factors that influence these motivations and to change them within myself. The next and final piece to this series leaves all the doubt, fear and pain behind to invest in a new future. It is in that new ideology that I can begin to create new possibilities for myself and others. I am aware of the influence that religion has had on art and hope to use that information to create works that promote a sense of acceptance and social responsibility. It is not the past that dictates the future, but how we learn from it and move past it in order to work together.



Figure 45: *Two: A Fruitful Land Into Barrenness, For the Wickedness of Them That Dwell Therein*, looking back view

**IV. G. One: For Who Maketh Thee to Differ From Another? And What Hast Thou That Thou Didst Not Receive?**

The final shrine of this series was constructed to look like a clock and each piece before it counts down towards it. The metaphor emphasizes both the countdown towards an event and a reclaiming and/or going back in time. A clock is perhaps an appropriate depiction for the beginning and the end of a period of time simultaneously (see figure 46). It represents a desire to be connected to our past, be relevant to our present and conscious of the possibilities in our future.



Figure 46: *One: For Who Maketh Thee to Differ From Another? And What Hast Thou That Thou Didst Not Receive?*, full view

I think it's important to acknowledge that my future is dependent on social exchange. In keeping with an emphasis on how my future can and will change I made this shrine interactive. I put my hopes and fears out in the open for those to examine and allow them to participate in the same manner. I have aligned this action with the seal of the Martyr, which is why this piece hangs on the wall. I am by no means a martyr as most Christians view Jesus as the martyr for the Jewish people, but there is an aspect

that can be translated into my desired effect. A vulnerable act, such as my portrayal of the process of changing my perspective, can inspire the same action in others. I hope that what I have shared will inspire others to share their doubts or desires and place them in the different compartments of the shrine to become martyrs with me (see figures 50 through 53).

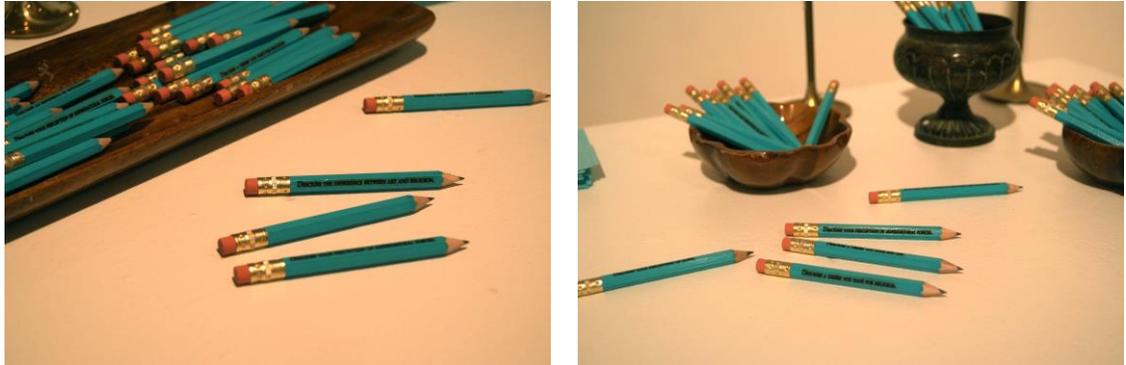


Figure 47 and 48: *One: For Who Maketh Thee to Differ From Another?*

*And What Hast Thou That Thou Didst Not Receive?*, left and right pedestal details



Figure 49: *One: For Who Maketh Thee to Differ From Another?*

*And What Hast Thou That Thou Didst Not Receive?*, front detail

At the base of this shrine there is an octagonal bowl that represents the sacrament of Baptism (see figure 54). The concept of baptism lends itself to a universal idea of renewal. In the ceremony of baptism one uses water to wash away sins in order to be considered cleansed by God's grace from that point forward. I have perforated my baptism bowl and connected strands of blue thread to reference a new possibility to the concept of renewal. I engraved blue pencils with seven different prompts that correspond to my research. The blue pencils can be used to write on corresponding blue strips of paper and placed in various compartments on the shrine (see figures 47 and 48). It signifies the importance to revisit our desires as often as necessary to remember what makes us all human. Seeing others participate in the same way may allow us to experience our social connectedness. For my purposes, it is more important to be aware of our effects on each other and to create a venue to express various perspectives in order to uphold a moral social interaction. Each place on the shrine is labeled with a hanging tag that displays various quotes (see figure 49). These quotes pertain to the similarities in art and religion, and in some cases triumphs one over another. People may choose to place their handwritten card in a box or alcove that correlates to a quote that aligns with their perspective. As each blue strip of paper is added to the shrine it changes the aesthetics of the piece, in affect other people complete the shrine.

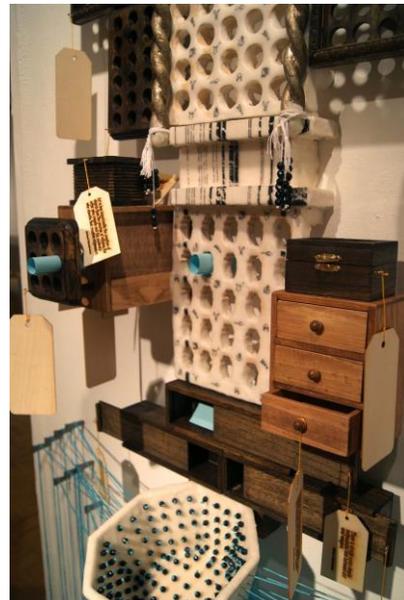




Figure 50-53: *One: For Who Maketh Thee to Differ From Another?*  
*And What Hast Thou That Thou Didst Not Receive?*, front details

It is my desire to convey that my perspective can only go so far and I need the help of others to complete my perspective and vice versa. I understand that my shrine is limited to the arguments for the connection between art and religion. However, art can be compared to many other institutions when determining the effects of the morality in art and how it affects our visual culture.

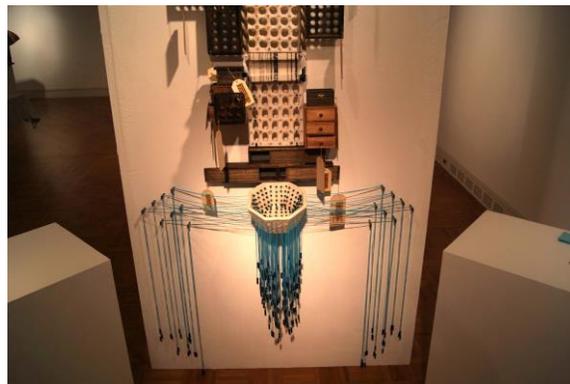


Figure 54: *One: For Who Maketh Thee to Differ From Another?*  
*And What Hast Thou That Thou Didst Not Receive?*, front bottom detail

## **V. Conclusion**

Initiating this research was paramount to visually constructing my shrines. I explored how people use art and religion to construct the visual culture that informs their beliefs. It was crucial to discover the importance of how those beliefs were formed and sustained throughout time. This helped me in communicating the aesthetic value of art and its similarity to religion. The relevance of art and religion gave my work the ability to convey my desire to encompass both perspectives towards a goal. As I described each of my shrines I was able to address how the various beliefs could be differentiated from what is important to me. Through the process of preparing these shrines I changed my previous perspective for a better one. In order to change that outlook it took the combined use of art and religious aesthetics to be aware of our social interconnectedness.

Through all of this change my parents have supported me in seeking out my own truth about faith. They went through a similar transition with their parents in order to structure their lives around their desired beliefs. Their faith in me to be as morally conscious as I can, based on my own convictions, is the same faith I am putting in other people. I can share my journey with others, as my parents shared theirs with me, hopefully to inspire a conviction in more social awareness.

My work led me to see a problem with the way that institutions can create boundaries between one another, which can cause intolerance, discrimination and sometimes violent exchange. If people are not willing to see how social interactions affect the exchange in aesthetics across our visual culture they will not change. Accepting my own transformation during the making of this body of work illustrated similarities that provided the infrastructure to determine if our actions against others, because of their beliefs, are morally warranted. By recognizing conflict and its social implications people can begin to accept the necessity for change. I hope that others will recognize their similarities in order to empathize and work together for a better social existence.

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APPENDIX A: Reference Photographs



Figure 55: Main Entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, (“History of Church”)



Figure 56: Chapel of Adam in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, (“History of Church”)

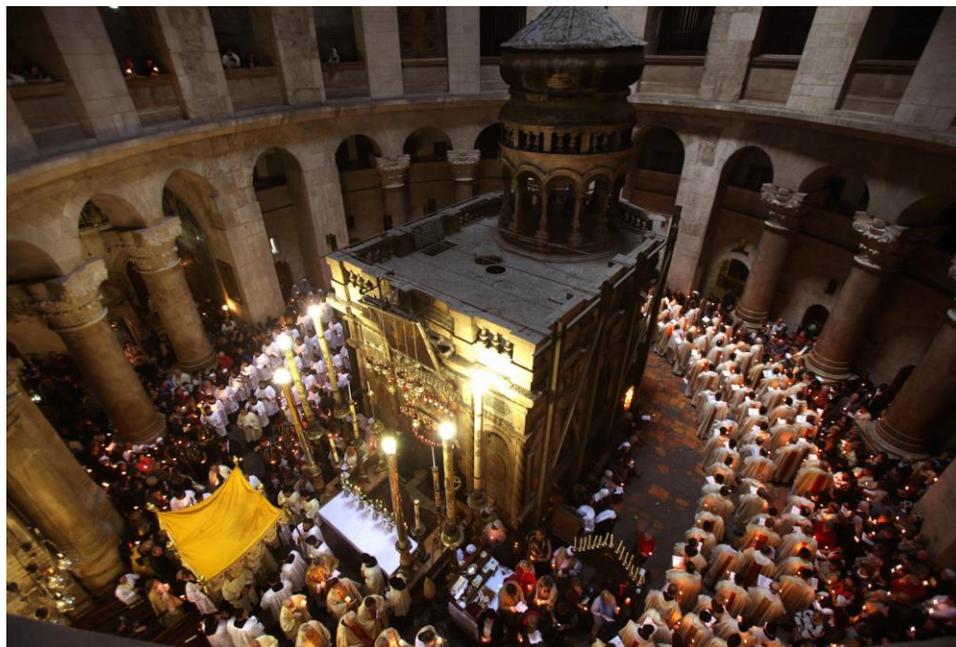


Figure 57: Memorial for Constantine, Main Courtyard, (“History of Church”)



Figure 58: Rock of Calvary (“History of Church”)



Figure 59: Chapel of Mary Magdalene (“History of Church”)



Figure 60: Crucifixion of Christ Altar (“History of Church”)



Figure 61: Chapel of Insults (“History of Church”)



Figure 62: Greek Chapel Division of Robes (“History of Church”)



Figure 63: Chapel of Rotunda (“History of Church”)



Figure 64: Ceiling Dome above the Stone of Anointing (“History of Church”)



Figure 65: Salvador Dali, *The Last Supper*, 1955, (“Pathoes: Hosting the”)

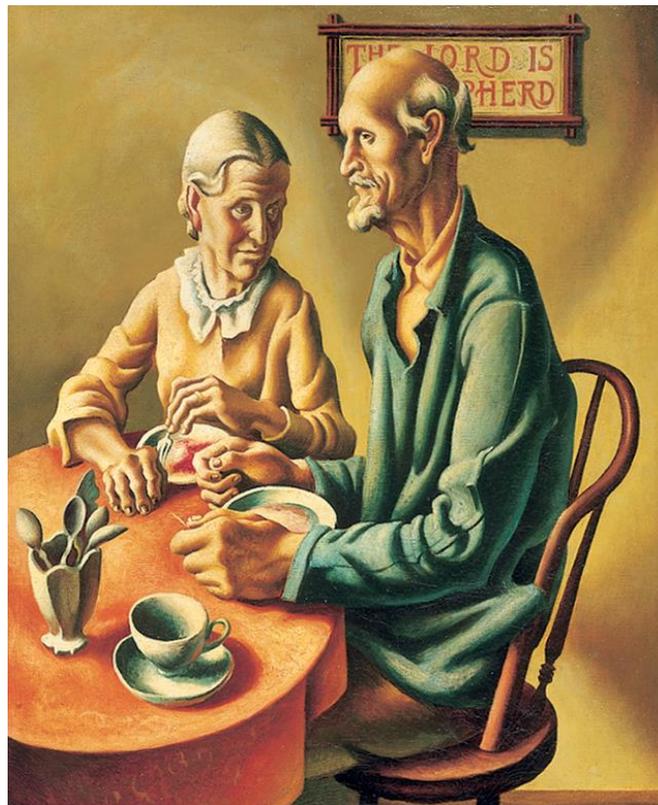


Figure 66: Thomas Benton, *The Lord is my Shepherd*, 1920, (“The Bicyclers”)



Figure 67: Leonardo Davinci, *Mona Lisa*, 1510, (Pawlik)

APPENDIX B: Glossary  
(An Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Anoint: transitive verb a·noint /ə'noɪnt/

- 1: to smear or rub with oil or an oily substance
- 2: a : to apply oil to as a sacred rite especially for consecration  
b : to choose by or as if by divine election; also : to designate as if by a ritual anointment

Christianity: noun Chris·tian·i·ty /,kris-ʃē-'a-nə-tē/

- 1: the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies
- 2: conformity to the Christian religion
- 3: the practice of Christianity

Baptism: noun bap·tism \ 'bap-,ti-zəm, especially Southern 'bap-\

- 1: a Christian ceremony in which a small amount of water is placed on a person's head or in which a person's body is briefly placed under water
- 2: a : a Christian sacrament marked by ritual use of water and admitting the recipient to the Christian community  
b: a non-Christian rite using water for ritual purification  
c: Christian Science : purification by or submergence in Spirit
- 3: an act, experience, or ordeal by which one is purified, sanctified, initiated, or named

Eschatology: noun es·cha·tol·o·gy \,es-kə-'tā-lə-jē\

plural: es·cha·tol·o·gies

- 1: a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind
- 2: a belief concerning death, the end of the world, or the ultimate destiny of humankind; specifically : any of various Christian doctrines concerning the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, or the Last Judgment

Eucharist: noun Eu·cha·rist /'yook(ə)rəst/

- 1: a : the Christian ceremony commemorating the Last Supper, in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed.  
b: the consecrated elements, especially the bread.
- 2: a spiritual communion with God

Judaism: noun Ju·da·ism /'jü-dē-,i-zəm/

- 1: the religion developed among the ancient Hebrews that stresses belief in God and faithfulness to the laws of the Torah : the religion of the Jewish people
- 2: a religion developed among the ancient Hebrews and characterized by belief in one transcendent God who has revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew prophets and by a religious life in accordance with Scriptures and rabbinic traditions

3: conformity to Jewish rites, ceremonies, and practices

4: the cultural, social, and religious beliefs and practices of the Jews

5: the whole body of Jews : the Jewish people

Judeo-Christian: adjective Ju·deo–Chris·tian /jü-, dā-ō-'kris-chən/

1: relating to both Judaism and Christianity

2: having historical roots in both Judaism and Christianity

3: a term used since the 1950s to encompass the common ethical standards of Christianity and Judaism, such as the Ten Commandments. It has become part of American civil religion and is often used to promote inter-religious cooperation.

Menorah: noun me·nor·ah /mə'nôrə/

1: a sacred candelabrum with seven branches used in the Temple in Jerusalem, originally that made by the craftsman Bezalel and placed in the sanctuary of the Tabernacle (Exod. 37:17–24).

2: a candelabra with seven or nine lights that is used in Jewish worship

New Testament: noun

the second part of the Christian Bible, written originally in Greek and recording the life and teachings of Jesus and his earliest followers. It includes the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, twenty-one epistles by St. Paul and others, and the book of Revelation.

Old Testament: noun

the first part of the Christian Bible, comprising thirty-nine books and corresponding approximately to the Hebrew Bible. Most of the books were originally written in Hebrew, some in Aramaic, between about 1200 and 100 BC. They comprise the chief texts of the law, history, prophecy, and wisdom literature of the ancient people of Israel.

Passover: noun Pass·o·ver /'pas,ōvər/

1: the major Jewish spring festival that commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, lasting seven or eight days from the 15th day of Nisan

2: a Jewish holiday in March or April that celebrates the freeing of the Jews from slavery in Egypt

Ritual: noun rit·u·al /'riCH(əw)əl/

1: a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.

2: the prescribed order of performing a ceremony, especially one characteristic of a particular religion or church.

3: a series of actions or type of behavior regularly and invariably followed by someone.

adjective: ritual

1: of, relating to, or done as a religious or solemn rite.

Sabbath: noun sab·bath /'sabəTH/

1: a day of religious observance and abstinence from work, kept by Jews from Friday evening to Saturday evening, and by most Christians on Sunday.

2: a time of rest

Sacrament: noun sac·ra·ment /'səkrəmənt/

1: a : a Christian rite (as baptism or the Eucharist) that is believed to have been ordained by Christ and that is held to be a means of divine grace or to be a sign or symbol of a spiritual reality

b: a religious ceremony or act of the Christian Church that is regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace, in particular.

(in the Roman Catholic and many Orthodox Churches) the rites of baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, ordination, and matrimony.

(among Protestants) baptism and the Eucharist.

Seder: noun Se·der /'sādər/

a Jewish ritual service and ceremonial dinner for the first night or first two nights of Passover.

Self-Flagellation: noun self-flag·el·la·tion \-,fla-jə-'lā-shən\

1: the act of hitting yourself with a whip as a way to punish yourself or as part of a religious ritual

2: the action of flogging oneself, especially as a form of religious discipline.

3: excessive criticism of oneself.

Seven Seals: is a phrase in the Book of Revelation that refers to seven symbolic seals that secure the book or scroll, that John of Patmos saw in his Revelation of Jesus Christ. The opening of the seals of the Apocalyptic document occurs in Revelation Chapters 5-8.

Shrine: noun shrine /SHrīn/

1: a place regarded as holy because of its associations with a divinity or a sacred person or relic, typically marked by a building or other construction.

synonyms: holy place, temple, church, chapel, tabernacle, sanctuary, sanctum

2: a: a place associated with or containing memorabilia of a particular revered person or thing.

b: a casket containing sacred relics; a reliquary.

c: a niche or enclosure containing a religious statue or other object.

Verb: enshrine.

Ten Commandments: also known as the Decalogue, are a set of ten biblical principles relating to ethics and worship, which play a fundamental role in Judaism and Christianity.

The Last Supper: is the final meal that, in the Gospel accounts, Jesus shared with his Apostles in Jerusalem before his crucifixion.

Torah: or the Pentateuch, consists of the foundational narrative of the Jewish people: their call into being by God, their trials and tribulations, and their covenant with their God, which involves following a way of life embodied in a set of moral and religious obligations and civil laws (halakha). It can most specifically mean the first five books of the twenty-four books of the Tanakh, and the rabbinic commentaries, which includes six hundred and thirteen of Moses' commandments.

Tribulation: noun trib·u·la·tion /tribyə'läSH(ə)n/

- 1: a cause of great trouble or suffering.
- 2: a state of great trouble or suffering.
- 3: a period mentioned by Jesus in the Olivet discourse as a sign that would occur in the time of the end.

Rapture: noun rap·ture \ 'rap-chər\

- 1: a state or feeling of great happiness, pleasure, or love
- 2: an expression or manifestation of ecstasy or passion
- 3: a : a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion  
b : a mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things
- 4: often capitalized : the final assumption of Christians into heaven during the end-time according to Christian theology

Unction: noun unc·tion \ 'ən(k)-shən\

- 1: the act of anointing as a rite of consecration or healing
- 2: something used for anointing
- 3: a : religious or spiritual fervor or the expression of such fervor  
b : exaggerated, assumed, or superficial earnestness of language or manner

