

Aligning with lives of faith

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Abstract The philosophical and theological discussion regarding religious faith has primarily concerned itself with the abstract issues of what faith is, whether it can be rationally held, and how an agent can acquire, sustain, or deepen faith. The issue of how we should orient ourselves to the faith of others and the role such orientation might play in the religious life hasn't been much discussed. It is this topic that I propose to address in this essay. I do so by considering a little-known nineteenth-century saint of the Eastern Orthodox church, St. Jacob of Alaska, exploring the ways in which the liturgy calls for its participants to engage with St. Jacob's life of faith. I develop and defend the claim that it calls for the religiously committed to align their lives with the lives of exemplars such as St. Jacob.

Keywords Alignment · Eastern Orthodox Christianity · Faith · Liturgy · St. Jacob of Alaska

Jacob Netsvetov, or “St. Jacob of Alaska,” is a little-known nineteenth-century saint of the Orthodox Church.¹ Of Aleut and Russian heritage, St. Jacob led a remarkable life, serving as an educator, physician, and priest among native people scattered across a two-thousand-mile stretch of Alaska. His life was extremely difficult: in addition to regularly enduring the rigors of travel by land and sea in Alaska, he lost his wife, his father (who accompanied him), and his home (to fire) in the span of a year. In his grief, St. Jacob petitioned his bishop to spend the remainder of his life in a monastery in Russia. The bishop granted his request so long as someone replaced

¹ For biographical details regarding St. Jacob, see Oleska (2010), part III, which contains some of his journal entries.

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him. No one did. As a result, Jacob continued his service to the native Alaskan people for another twenty years until his death.

The small parish I attend in Vermont is named after St. Jacob. (To my knowledge, it is the only parish so named.) Nearly every Sunday, we venerate his icon and sing hymns in his honor. The point of performing these actions is at least partially apparent. We do so to honor St. Jacob's memory, to keep it alive, and to petition him for his prayers. We do these things, in turn, as a response to St. Jacob's great faith. Or, to put matters a little differently, we do these things as a response to his life of faithfulness, his fidelity to the Christian way of life.²

Yet I've found something puzzling and even disconcerting about the liturgical actions that we perform week after week. What puzzles me is this: St. Jacob's life was remarkable. It is far beyond the pitch of what most of us could achieve—so much so that it's difficult to know how one could come close to approximating the depth and scope of his faithfulness in one's own life. Moreover, I find myself with little desire to emulate his life. This is not because there is something "off" about St. Jacob's life, say, in the way that something often seems off about the lives of some so-called secular saints who have dedicated their lives to causes such as effective altruism.³ Nor is my lack of desire to live a life like St. Jacob's primarily due to aversion to the suffering and hardship that he endured. Rather, it is because St. Jacob's gifts and temperament are not mine. I would be no good at what he did. It's because of these differences between me and St. Jacob that neither emulating nor identifying with him looks achievable or desirable.⁴ Yet to characterize what the liturgy calls for when we venerate St. Jacob's icon and sing hymns in his honor as mere admiration or appreciation doesn't seem right either. That feels too distant.

I find, then, that the liturgy presents me with a practical puzzle: though it directs me to engage with St. Jacob, I am unsure what stance I should bear to his life of faith, how I should engage it. Behind this particular, practical puzzle lies a more general question that concerns how the religiously committed should orient themselves to the lives of faith of moral and religious exemplars, especially when emulation or identification seems neither practically feasible nor desirable. The question seems worth raising if only because the philosophical and theological discussion regarding religious faith has primarily concerned itself with the abstract issues of what faith is, whether it can be rationally held, and questions regarding how an agent can acquire, sustain, or deepen faith. (In what follows, I'll use the term "faith" to mean *religious* faith.) The issue of how we should orient ourselves to the

² The view of faith with which I'll operate is McKaughan (2016)'s "action-centered" account, which understands faith to be a blend of trust in a person and a commitment to following that person or a way of life.

³ MacFarquhar (2015) offers fascinating descriptions of such people. In drawing attention to these so-called secular saints, I don't wish to suggest that nothing seems "off" in the case of some religious saints.

⁴ To be clear, I don't deny that there are ways to emulate St. Jacob's life that are both achievable and desirable. It's just that those ways are typically not ones that involve closely approximating the depth and scope of the man's life of faith. When I use the term "emulate" in what follows, I'll have emulation of this rich and specific sort in mind.

faith of others and the role such orientation might play in the religious life hasn't been much discussed. It is this topic that I propose to explore here.

The faith of others

Call the state of having or possessing faith *personal faith*. The New Testament indicates that personal faith is of great religious significance. (I'll assume, for present purposes, that something is religiously significant to the extent that it is poised to make a substantial, positive contribution to living a religiously committed life.) For example, Jesus indicates that when he restores sight to a blind man, the healing occurs because of that man's personal faith (Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 17:19). St. Paul is widely read as saying that agents are justified because they have such faith (Romans 5:1). In fact, personal faith looms so large in the Christian way of life that it is tempting to think that the various actions and disciplines recommended by the church are religiously significant to the extent that they contribute to the development and deepening of personal faith. Under this way of thinking, singing hymns to honor St. Jacob is religiously significant because of how it bears upon personal faith, inspiring those who sing to greater or deeper personal faith.

I suspect that the explanation of why actions such as these are religiously significant is more complex and interesting. Let me try to substantiate this claim by beginning with a case that is at once instructive and puzzling.

Those familiar with the Eastern Orthodox tradition know that infant baptism is the norm. Unlike other traditions, in the Eastern churches, infants become full-fledged members of the church upon being baptized, having the right to participate in all the rites of the church of which they are capable, including the eucharistic rite. Yet upon being baptized, infants make no confession of faith or anything of the sort. They can't. Given the church's assumption that having faith is a necessary condition of being received into the church, this is puzzling. Without faith, or even the ability to confess faith, how could infants (and small children) become full-fledged members of the church, having all the rights and privileges of their adult counterparts?

In his discussion of the matter, the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann notes that the ramifications of this question extend beyond the topic of infant baptism.⁵ The church agrees that it is only by an agent's having faith that a baptism is legitimate, effecting the sort of normative transformation that the one baptized undergoes.⁶ The question is whose faith this might be and what relation the one baptized must bear to it. Schmemmann's response is that the answer cannot be: it is the faith of the one being baptized by which a baptism is rendered legitimate. For "if faith and desire were understood as implying that the reality and efficacy of Baptism *depends* on personal faith, is contingent upon the conscious desire of the individual, then the 'validity' of each Baptism, be it infant or adult, should be questioned" (p. 67). Schmemmann's thought seems to be that such faith is often

⁵ Schmemmann (1974). I'll insert page references to this book parenthetically in the text.

⁶ I address this transformation in more detail in Cuneo (2014), reprinted in Cuneo (2016).

absent, even in the case of adult baptisms. But if the legitimacy of baptism does not depend on the faith of the one baptized, then we need to ask whose faith on which it is contingent.

Schmemmann's answer is that "it is on the faith of the Church that Baptism 'depends'" (p. 69). And that faith, Schmemmann continues, is "Christ's faith" as it is present in the church. To be sure, there is a distinct type of response in which representatives of the church, such as the apostles, engage insofar as they respond appropriately to God's call that Schmemmann also calls "faith." But the "fulfillment" of this responsive faith (as we might call it), Schmemmann says, is Christ's faith as it is present in the church: "our faith in Christ, Christ's faith in us: the one is the fulfillment of the other" (p. 68). The best way to understand Schmemmann's position, I think, is that by the "faith of the church" he means Christ's faith as it is appropriated by and adhered to in the church's life. It is on this faith that the legitimacy of baptism depends.

In short, Schmemmann identifies several conditions that must be satisfied for a baptism to be legitimate. Among these conditions are not simply that there be a confession of faith made during the baptismal rite—say, by a sponsor or member of the church—but also that there be an agent with faith that bears the proper relation to the one baptized. That agent is the church. But the church's faith is really Christ's faith as it is appropriated by and adhered to by the church, or at least some of its representative members. It follows that a baptism is legitimate in virtue of there being at least two sorts of relations to faith that obtain: the church must stand in a relation to Christ's faith such that this faith is present and operative in the church, and the church's faith must stand in a relation to the one baptized such that, while it needn't be present in the one baptized, it is sufficient (together with other conditions) to effect the normative transformation that occurs upon the performance of the baptismal rite.

Schmemmann's account of the role of faith in the baptismal rite raises questions: What, for example, would it be for an agent's faith, such as Christ's, to be present and operative in a group, such as the church? And what would explain why such a relation holds? As fascinating as they are, let me bracket these questions in order to ask a different one and then make several observations.

The question I'd like to raise is why it would be important for the proper sort of relations between the one baptized and the church's faith to hold. To this question, I take there to be two "live" answers.

The first says that the one baptized must stand in such relations because he or she suffers from deficiencies with respect to faith. It is because the one baptized lacks, or is incapable of having, sufficient faith that he or she must stand in certain relations to the faith of the church. Were he or she to have sufficient faith, then there would be no need for such relations to hold. But we have little reason to believe that many of us have such faith. In fact, we have excellent reason to hold that in some cases such faith is not and could not be present. Perhaps the best way to think of things under this approach is that the faith of the church stands proxy for, or stands in for, the faith of the one baptized, which would be present in ideal conditions.

As it happens, Schmemmann himself rejects this approach, writing that it "is not because of any deficiencies or limitations of ... personal faith" that the faith of the

church plays such an important role in the baptismal rite. Rather, it is “because Baptism depends—totally and exclusively—on Christ’s faith” that the faith of the church plays such a role (68). This brings us to the second approach, which holds that the faith of the church is sufficient (in combination with other factors) for the baptismal transformation to obtain. What matters is that the one baptized (or someone who stands proxy in some respect for the one baptized) stand in the right relation to that faith: he or she must endorse it, desire it—or to anticipate a theme that I’ll introduce in a moment—be *aligned* with it. In this way, the one baptized “latches onto” the faith of the church. It might be that under this approach some member of the church stands proxy for the child (in some respect) in the case of infant baptism. But he or she does so not because he or she remedies a deficiency in the child’s personal faith. Rather, he or she does so because the child him- or herself lacks the ability to stand in the proper relation to the *church’s* faith, not being able to endorse, desire, or be aligned with it.

I am not sure which of these answers is better, although I incline toward the latter. However that may be, let me make several observations about the topic we’re considering. The first is that the phenomenon of standing in religiously significant relations to the faith of others is not peripheral to the life of the church. To the contrary, it appears to lie at its core. Without it, the very rite of entry into the Eastern church would be impossible and, thus, there would be no such church as we know it. The second is that, in some paradigm cases, these religiously significant relations do not consist in agents sharing faith; while those baptized (or their sponsors) must bear some appropriate relation to the church’s faith, it needn’t be that of sharing that faith. Finally, when we appreciate the character of these relations, it’s evident that they are religiously significant not simply because, when they hold, they tend to inspire or deepen personal faith. The faith of people such as St. Jacob is supposed to be more than merely a shining example. It is the sort of thing that (in part) renders entry into the church possible.

Alignment

St. Jacob is an embodiment of faith: in his person, faith took a particular shape and was expressed by his words and deeds. Although there is a distinction between faith as it is present in an agent—say, in her sensibilities and dispositions to act—and how it is expressed over the course of an agent’s life—specifically, in her actions—I propose to use the locution an “agent’s life of faith” to refer to them both. The liturgy itself presents rather little information regarding St. Jacob’s life of faith. One can find icons of St. Jacob that depict events in his life, such as his journeying by kayak in the sea and his baptizing local people. And the church’s hymnody also presents bits of his biography, telling us that St. Jacob was a healer of sickness and offered his life as a “living sacrifice” for the good of others. But neither the liturgical art nor texts present anything like a detailed narrative of his life, let alone give insight into the workings of the man’s mental or spiritual life. The expectation seems to be that those who participate in the liturgy have enough background

knowledge to situate the bits of information the liturgy presents into a more expansive understanding of the person and his life.

The question that interests me is how those who possess this background knowledge and participate in the liturgy are called to respond to St. Jacob's life of faith. Of course there is no one type of response that the liturgy calls for; there are a range of them, and which is appropriate might vary from person to person. Nonetheless, I suggested earlier that responses such as emulation, identification, or mere admiration are for some of us not among the primary responses for which the liturgy calls, since often they are not feasible, desirable, or apt. What I now want to suggest is that the best way to understand what the liturgy calls for is that its participants align themselves with St. Jacob's life of faith. The more general suggestion I am going to make is that aligning oneself (or, perhaps better, *being aligned*) with the embodiments and expressions of faith of others is a phenomenon that lies at the heart of the religious way of life and cannot be understood simply as a way by which agents are supposed to develop or deepen their own personal faith.

To get a better sense of what I have in mind by the notion of alignment, let's begin with a parallel. Some of us have aligned ourselves with social causes or movements. For example, you might have transitioned from being a person who had vague concerns about the impact of the use of fossil fuels on the environment to a full-blown climate activist engaged in the fight for climate justice. In making this transition, you didn't merely come to endorse, appreciate, or admire the climate justice movement. You did that all along. Rather, you invested yourself in the movement by giving your time, energy, resources, and expertise to it, committing yourself to perform similar such actions in the future. And, in turn, you allowed the movement to shape your thinking about a wide variety of topics related to the climate and your sensibilities regarding them; what you previously found mildly disturbing about fossil fuel use, you now find distressing—the manifestation of a collective refusal, especially on the part of those who profit greatly from the use of fossil fuels, to face up to the hard evidence about the effects of such use. Indeed, if you have become deeply invested in the movement, you will probably find that its ideals play a prominent role in your practical reasoning, not only providing reasons for you to act in particular ways, such as engaging in organized protest, but also excluding other sorts of considerations in your decision making, such as investing your money in Exxon-Mobil.

Let me add that when we invest in a social movement, we typically do more than allow it to play prominent roles in our thinking. Social movements also elicit—and we allow them to shape—our loyalties because of their commitment and fidelity to ideals that we embrace and the ways in which these movements pursue them. Such loyalty usually involves being attuned to the health of a movement, sticking with a movement when things are not going well with it or it is under attack, and being ready to act in its defense when necessary. Aligning oneself with a movement, however, involves more than this. It also involves allowing, or authorizing, oneself to be represented by it. If you have aligned yourself with the climate justice movement, for example, its acts of protests and its legal actions, represent you.

The type of representation I have in mind is two-fold. In the first place, a movement represents those who align with it by advancing ideals and particular

ways of realizing them that its members jointly embrace. When a movement represents its members in this way, it does so derivatively. For, in the first instance, the movement stands for and advances its ideals and its ways of realizing them. It represents you only to the extent that you embrace these ideals and the movement's ways of advancing them. Were you to surrender these ideals or disassociate yourself from the movement's ways of advancing them by defecting, the movement would continue to stand for them but would no longer represent you. Representation of this sort stands in contrast to the type of representation that politicians, special-interest groups, or attorneys are charged with when advocating the interests of their constituents or clients. "Advocacy representation" (as we might call it) stands in contrast to the type of representation I have in mind because, in the case of advocacy representation, it typically doesn't matter what your ideals are, whether they are shared, or whether your interests shift. At any rate, in what follows, I refer to the type of representation according to which a movement represents you to the extent that you embrace its ideals and its ways of advancing them, *ideal representation*. When some entity, such as a movement, stands in this relation to you, I'll say that it stands in the *ideal representing* relation to you.

Second, a movement represents those who align with it by being authorized to speak and act—and actually speaking and acting—on their behalf. In this way, a social movement functions as an extension of its members' agency, performing actions that it would be difficult or even impossible for them to perform individually. When a group performs actions on your behalf, you have special reason to take pride in the movement's successes and to be discouraged by its failures. If you have invested yourself deeply in a movement, you might receive credit for its successes and be embarrassed by or ashamed of its failures. I'll call this second type of representation according to which a movement is authorized to speak and act on your behalf, *agent representation*. When some entity, such as a movement, stands in this relation to you, I'll say that it stands in the *agent representing* relation to you.

Although ideal and agent representation are distinct—one could stand in one relation but not the other—what I'll call *full representation* incorporates them both. Full representation, moreover, is such that its two components stand in a specific type of relation to one another. More exactly, some agent A fully represents an agent B if and only if (i) A stands in both the ideal and agent representing relations to B, and (ii) A stands in the agent representing relation to B only because A stands in the ideal representing relation to B. More exactly yet, since A fully represents B with respect to some action (or range of actions) of A's, we should specify that A fully represents B only with respect to some action (or range of actions) of A's. When we add this qualification, we can see that it is an implication of full representation that, if A violates the ideals it shares with B by acting in some way, it does not thereby fully represent B in acting in that way.

Aligning oneself with a movement, then, consists in investing oneself in that movement, allowing it to shape one's thinking, actions, and loyalties, and allowing, or authorizing, it to fully represent you in its words and actions. Let me now introduce some qualifications to what I have said.

First, while I've spoken of investing oneself in a movement, investment is something that comes in degrees. As the context will have already made clear, by "investing" I mean investing oneself to some significant degree in a movement (leaving it open as to how to specify this). Second, I've said that movements embrace ideals and that agents share these ideals. But typically some ideals are more central to a movement than others. Unless the context suggests otherwise, I'll have in mind by ideals ones that are central to a movement such that, were a movement to surrender them, we would have reason to doubt that it still counts as that movement. It is worth emphasizing, finally, that the ideals that a movement embraces, and its ways of expressing and advancing them, are not always consistent. Aligning oneself with a movement, however, does not imply that one must endorse all of its ideals or ways of advancing them. Selectivity is always an option—one that we often do and should exercise.

Aligning with faith

I want to develop the claim that aligning oneself with an agent's life of faith is similar to that of aligning oneself with a social movement. This claim might strike you as surprising, since there are some pretty obvious differences between a social movement and an individual's life of faith, especially one such as St. Jacob's, since he is no longer alive. But without insisting that the parallel is exact, I think we can make headway on the issue by noting the following similarities between the two cases.

First, in at least one perfectly respectable sense, both movements and people have lives.⁷ For, in the cases of both people and movements, there is a totality of states and events of which they are the subject—many of these being ones in which they, or their constituents act—and we are often able to identify when the first and final events in this totality occur. St. Jacob's life, for example, consists in the totality of states and events of which he was the subject from the years 1802–1864. In addition, and importantly for my purposes, movements no less than people have histories—these histories including but extending beyond their lives. It belongs to the history but not the life of St. Jacob, for example, that he was recognized as a saint in 1994. Likewise, it belongs to the history but not the life of the Prohibition movement that it was the subject of a book published in 2011. The history of a person or movement, then, is the sort of thing that undergoes alterations after the life of its subject is over. To be sure, in the course of our lives, we contribute in innumerable ways to innumerable histories. But only some of these histories are within our conscious purview and matter to us. When a history satisfies these conditions for someone, we can say that it is a *living history* for that person.

Having noted these similarities between movements and lives, I think we can better understand what it would be to align oneself with an agent's life of faith. Begin with that component of alignment which consists in investing oneself in

⁷ Here I draw upon comments in Wolterstorff (2008, pp. 141, 366–367). While the Christian tradition commits itself to there being post-mortem life, I limit my attention here to pre-mortem lives.

another agent's life of faith. In the case of someone who is alive, we can fairly readily see what it might be to invest in such a life; it could consist in dedicating time and energy to sustaining such a life, encouraging the expression of faith in such a life, enabling an agent's faith to be manifested in certain ways, and so forth. Admittedly, in the case of someone such as St. Jacob, things are less straightforward, as it wouldn't make sense to speak of investing one's energy, time, resources, and expertise into activities that contribute to his life of faith, since St. Jacob's life is over. Nonetheless, when a life of faith is over, it does make sense to speak of investing one's energy, time, resources, and expertise into positively contributing to the history of that life of faith. To stay with our parallel, when a movement is over, we often concern ourselves with its history, spending considerable efforts to ensure that it isn't forgotten, its lessons are kept alive, or it isn't misunderstood. In these ways, both the ideals of a movement and the ways it embodies and expresses them can be preserved and even advanced. Its history is for us a living history.

The proposal I want to advance is that, when participants in the liturgy perform actions such as singing hymns to St. Jacob, the liturgy is calling them to invest in the history of his life of faith, that is, in the history of the embodiment and expression of his faith, rendering it a living history for them.⁸ In a moment, I'll have more to say about why such activities matter, but for now think of this investment as being similar to that which a curator makes in some object of historical significance. A curator has a variety of responsibilities with regard to such objects. He or she is responsible for not only protecting them from damage or falling into oblivion, but also presenting them in such a way that they can be fruitfully engaged. In addition, a curator is responsible for interpreting these objects, and making salient certain of their features that might otherwise be difficult to discern. Members of the church who bear a special relationship to St. Jacob's history play a similar role. They function as the heirs and custodians of the history of St. Jacob's life of faith, not only investing their energies into preserving and presenting this history, but also interpreting elements of it, and making features of his life salient that might otherwise escape our attention.

Such interpretation is manifest, for example, in the following hymn to St. Jacob:

Today the assembly of the faithful rejoices in the memory of Father Jacob...equal of the apostles and prophets.... Like the patriarch Jacob of old, our holy father Jacob fled from the comforts of this life, and was granted a vision. A ladder from heaven appeared in the wilds of Alaska that the people might ascend to God.

The holy prophet Moses, raised up a tabernacle on Mount Horeb, and there he spoke with God face to face, as one might speak with a friend. The righteous Jacob pitched a tent in the Alaskan wilderness, where he celebrated the Mysteries of Christ, for the sanctification of the faithful.

⁸ Strictly speaking, this implies that we should speak of investing in a life, or history of a life, of faith. In what follows, I'll understand the locution "life of faith" to incorporate this qualification (and will sometimes simply speak of investing in the history of a life of faith).

The interpretation in this case consists in not only measuring the significance of St. Jacob's life of faith (he is equal to the apostles and the prophets) but also making evident significant events in his life of which we might be unaware (such as his having a vision). In the case of St. Jacob, the significance of these events lies (at least in part) in the way that they parallel events in the lives of figures such as Jacob and Moses. Of course the text draws attention to these parallels in order to highlight contrasts as well: whereas Moses raised up a tabernacle, St. Jacob stakes his tent in the wilderness.

Let me now add a qualification to what I've said. In our present system of the arts, artists do not typically function as the curators of their own work (or the work of other artists, for that matter). In the case before us, things are different, as the church invests itself in the history of St. Jacob's life of faith by functioning not only as its curator but also by way of creating and performing works of art. It has created and continues to create icons of St. Jacob. It has composed poetry about him and music to accompany this poetry. And it has regularly performed and continues to perform this music. Consequently, the investment that members of the church have made, and continue to make, in St. Jacob's life of faith is really two-fold: it consists in both functioning as the curators of St. Jacob's life of faith and producing and performing the works of art by which important (or otherwise interesting) elements of his life of faith are presented and preserved.

Once we see what it would be to invest oneself in the history of an agent's life of faith, we can also understand what it would be to allow that life, and the ideals that it expressed, to influence us. Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind when thinking about influence is that it often not does operate on us explicitly or consciously. We expose ourselves (or find ourselves exposed) to people, ways of thinking and living, and technologies, only sporadically paying explicit and conscious attention to them, but influenced by them nonetheless, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.

What is particularly striking about the liturgy's engagement with St. Jacob is its workmanlike character: week after week, year after year, at appointed times in the liturgy, its participants call to mind his life of faith. This workmanlike character stands in rather sharp contrast to the ways in which we ordinarily honor other important people in our lives, whether living or dead. Every so often, we'll explicitly honor someone on the occasion of a graduation, promotion, retirement, or the like. But I can think of no cases—at least in the social environments in which most of us live—outside of the liturgy in which we call to mind, direct our attention to, and honor someone's life week after week, year after year. Add to this that kissing images of such a person or singing hymns in that person's honor are not the ordinary way by which we honor each other. The mode of interaction with St. Jacob's life of faith, then, is both workmanlike and intimate.

While I doubt there is a one-size-fits-all answer to how engaging with St. Jacob's life of faith in the liturgy shapes those of us who do so, there are certainly recognizable effects, beyond those already noted, of performing liturgical actions of the sort I've been discussing. One effect of repeated action of these sorts is that it can expand one's world in unexpected ways. The lives of those of us in a small Vermont parish are now rather intimately connected with the history of a man who

lived well over a century ago in a distant place who belonged to cultures different from ours. And yet we are the curators of his history. That is not something that one would anticipate as a consequence of participating in the liturgy. One might anticipate being edified, uplifted, puzzled, or bored by engaging in the liturgy but not forging connections of this sort and exercising responsibilities as curators of a history. An equally important effect is that in performing these actions in the liturgy, our focus is squarely on St. Jacob's life of faith. It is not on our faith or lack thereof. One has the sense of encountering ideals that simultaneously transcend our individual lives but do not exist simply as some abstraction. These ideals take very specific forms, being embodied in persons very different from ourselves, and expressed in their lives. In this regard, the effects of aligning oneself with a social justice movement and the life of faith of a figure such as St. Jacob appear close indeed. In both cases, we find our worlds expanded in unexpected ways.

I have touched upon only some of the ways in which participants in the liturgy might open themselves up to being shaped by St. Jacob's life of faith. In some ways, however, it is the phenomenon of being fully represented by a movement or person that is the most interesting component of alignment. When it comes to social groups, the phenomenon is common: their purpose is (in part) to fully represent those who bear the proper sorts of relations to them, performing actions that it would be difficult or impossible for those individuals to perform on their own. It is, however, less apparent what it would be for the subject of a life of faith such as St. Jacob to fully represent one. But I think with some reflection we can also see what this comes to.

Earlier I adverted to the normative transformation that occurs upon being baptized into the church. A component of that transformation is that one becomes a member of the church, which has the following implications: the church not only stands for you inasmuch as you embrace (or otherwise bear a proper relation to) its ideals and the ways in which it advances them; it also represents you by speaking and acting on your behalf, performing actions that it would be difficult or impossible for you to perform on your own. In short, if you are an "engaged" member of the church, embracing the church's ideals, then the church fully represents you. Of course full representation needn't be without qualification; engaged members of the church can disassociate themselves from or disavow certain positions or actions of the church. When they do, they can make it evident that they do not endorse certain ways in which the church advances its ideals or that the church does not speak for them on certain matters. These qualifications notwithstanding, the fact remains that with engaged membership comes full representation.

The reverse is often also true. Some members of the church—so-called operative members⁹—fully represent the church. These members are authorized to perform actions of certain kinds on behalf of the church, thereby standing in the agent representing relation to it. St. Jacob is such a member. In virtue of being ordained to the priesthood, he was authorized to perform such actions as baptizing and chrismating, doing so in the name of the church. In addition, in virtue of his life of faith, St. Jacob represents the ideals of the church and the ways in which it advances

⁹ The terminology is from Tuomela (1995, pp. 232–234).

them. In this respect, St. Jacob stands in what I called the ideal representing relation to the church. Since there are actions such that by performing them St. Jacob stands in the agent representing relation in virtue of standing in the ideal representing relation to the church, he thereby fully represents the church with respect to those actions.

I have claimed that the church fully represents its members and that some of its members fully represent the church. The question before us is whether St. Jacob fully represents those of us who have invested ourselves in the history of his life of faith.¹⁰ The best way to address this question, I suggest, is to ask two further questions.

The first is whether St. Jacob, in virtue of his life of faith, can stand in the ideal representing relation to individuals such as you and I. The answer is, Yes. For St. Jacob stands in the ideal representing relation to the church: he represents the church's ideals in virtue of his life of faith. And if you and I are engaged members of the church, then St. Jacob stands in the ideal representing relation to us too. The ideal representing relationship is transitive in this way (at least provided that the ideals are what I earlier called *central*). Admittedly, the same will be true of every other saint of the church; in virtue of their lives of faith, these saints stand in the ideal representing relation to us provided that you and I are engaged members of the church. So, it's worth noting that ideal representation relations can be more or less intimate. If you and I have invested our time, energy, resources, and expertise in the history of St. Jacob's life of faith, the ideal representing relation that St. Jacob bears to us will be considerably more intimate than that which other exemplars of the faith bear to us in whose history or life we have not so invested. Such intimacy appears at least in part to be a function of the degree to which one has invested one's time, energy, resources, and expertise into positively contributing to the history of St. Jacob's life of faith. But it also seems to depend on the extent to which one identifies with the ideals embodied and expressed in a life of faith. (As I stated earlier, I don't think it must depend on identifying with the person who embodies those ideals.) Such intimacy I take to be characteristic of the ideal representing relations that are constitutive of aligning oneself with another in virtue of that person's life of faith.

Turn now to the second question: Is it true that St. Jacob speaks and acts on our behalf, given that we're engaged members of the church? At first glance, the question looks strange. Given the time interval between St. Jacob's life and ours, it's difficult to see how he could speak on our behalf; we didn't even exist when he spoke and acted. But I think the question and its affirmative answer are not as strange as it might first appear.

Consider a case in which you and I, as part of the climate justice movement, engage in some act of protest such as chaining ourselves to heavy machinery used in the fracking process. While engaging in these actions, we might make it public that we are performing them to not benefit ourselves but future generations, for they are the ones who will bear the most severe consequences of the continued use of fossil

¹⁰ In what follows, I'll speak of standing in the full representation relationship to St. Jacob. I'll assume, however, that, if we do so, it is in virtue of his life of faith. Recall, moreover, that the full representation relation concerns ideals that are central to a movement or life of faith.

fuels. Now imagine that these future generations come into being and learn of the actions that you, I, and others have performed. They could rightly say that years earlier you and I had represented them in our words and deeds, speaking and acting on their behalf. To accomplish this, it might be true that that future generation must come into existence. But it needn't be the case that any such generation existed when we acted in order for our actions to represent them (at any time at which they have come into existence).

Now consider St. Jacob's life of faith in which he acted as a representative of the church, doing such things as tending to the needs of the Alaskan people, translating services into their languages, and baptizing and teaching their children. You and I did not exist when St. Jacob did these things. Still, he performed these actions as a representative of the church and, so, on behalf of the church. Suppose you and I are engaged members of the church. And suppose it's true that, all else being equal, if an agent performed some action on behalf of a group and you are an engaged member of that group, then that agent performed that action on your behalf. It follows that St. Jacob performed these actions on our behalf. St. Jacob, then, stands in the agent representing relation to us. Now add that it is because St. Jacob stands in the right relation to ideals that we share that he can speak and act on our behalf. It follows that St. Jacob fully represents engaged members of the church.

Does it follow that when representatives of the church engage in actions that are evil, they also represent its members? Not if by "represent" we mean full representation. For full representation is such that A fully represents B if and only if A stands in both the ideal and agent representing relations to B, and A stands in the agent representing relation to B in virtue of A's standing in the ideal representing relation to B. In cases in which representatives of the church engage in evil actions, they fail to stand in the ideal representing relation to its members and, hence, the full representation relation. Let me emphasize that this last claim is compatible with the church's members being rightly held responsible for these evil actions or their being tainted by or complicit in them. For it may be that, while the representatives of the church do not fully represent its members when they violate the church's central ideals, these members have nonetheless enabled these evil actions—say, by looking the other way—or have failed to disassociate themselves from them. The key point is that, while full representation has normative dimensions, there is no straightforward relation between it and notions such as being responsible, complicit, or tainted.

Let me summarize the line of thought that I've developed in this section. The church's liturgies direct its participants to engage with the lives of the saints, doing such things as singing hymns in their honor and venerating their icons. When we engage in actions of these sorts, what sort of stance is the liturgy calling us to take up toward these figures? I proposed an answer according to which the stance consists in aligning ourselves with their lives of faith. To illustrate the phenomenon of alignment, I began by reflecting on the experience of aligning oneself with a social movement or cause. Alignment of this sort, I maintained, involves investing oneself in a movement, allowing it to shape your sensibilities, thinking, and loyalties, and allowing, or authorizing, it to fully represent you in its speech and action. There is, I suggested, a parallel phenomenon in the religious life, which consists in aligning oneself with the life of faith of an exemplar such as St. Jacob of

Alaska. According to the account I offered, aligning oneself with a life of faith such as St. Jacob's consists in investing oneself in the history of that life of faith, allowing this life of faith to shape one's sensibilities, thinking, and loyalties by way of liturgical action, and allowing, or authorizing, the subject of that life of faith to fully represent one.

Standing with others

I began this discussion with the observation that while personal faith looms large in the Christian tradition, there are relations to faith other than that of *possessing* that are of religious significance. In baptism, for example, the condition that must be satisfied for a baptism to be legitimate is that there be an agent who has faith. But that agent needn't be the one baptized. The one baptized must, however, bear an appropriate sort of relation (whatever that might be) to the agent of faith (whoever that might be). In this case, the religiously significant relations are those that the one baptized bears to others who have faith.

There are deeply ingrained tendencies for the religiously committed to consider and to engage others' lives of faith primarily for the purpose of building, edifying, or deepening their own personal faith. For reasons that I've already offered, I have found myself puzzled by such admonitions (or at least the central role they seem to play in the religious life). I've suggested that, when it comes to others' lives of faith, among the most religiously significant relations that one might bear to another's life of faith is that of aligning oneself with that person's life of faith.

Although I didn't explicitly make the point earlier, I take it that, were you to align yourself with another's life of faith, that needn't imply that you yourself have faith. To be sure, aligning with another's life of faith involves a positive response to that life of faith; at the very least it involves the endorsement of common ideals.¹¹ But, in many cases, such a response is probably best viewed not as an expression of faith, or presupposing the possession of faith. In fact, in some cases, aligning with another's life of faith might be motivated and rationalized by an agent's conviction that she lacks faith but recognizes its value, or considers it to be an ideal worth pursuing, and endeavors to position herself more adequately with respect to it. Nonetheless, my suspicion is that the liturgy calls us to interact with lives of faith such as St. Jacob's not primarily in order to enable its participants to address deficiencies of faith. Rather, I suspect it does so because it recognizes that it is not just personal faith that matters to the religious life. That we stand with some and not others, and that we align ourselves with some lives and not others, is itself of deep religious significance.¹²

¹¹ There are other characterizations of faith in which alignment might imply having faith, such as that presented in Kvanvig (unpublished).

¹² I gesture at why in Cuneo (2015), reprinted in Cuneo (2016). My thanks to the members of the Summer Seminar on the Virtue of Faith in Bellingham, WA, Luke Reinsma, Nick Wolterstorff, and two anonymous referees for their feedback on an earlier draft of this essay. Work on this essay was made possible by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, although the views presented in this essay don't necessarily represent those of the foundation.

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