ABSTRACT

THE DOCTOR MEETS THE DOCTOR: STEVEN MOFFAT'S *DOCTOR WHO* AND THE FREUDIAN HERMENEUTIC OF SUSPICION

By

Kathleen A. Hanson

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Television is a widespread, easily accessible component of popular culture that we invite into the most intimate of environments: our homes. Like other forms of popular culture, it is not only influenced by religious belief, but also has the power to transmit both traditional and subversive religious ideas to viewers.

This thesis draws upon methods used in the study of religion and popular culture to argue for the potential of television to influence religious belief. Television can transform contemporary thought and renegotiate ideas of identity as well as reposition social debate and conflict in both secular and religious environments.

Focusing on the British television show *Doctor Who*, this thesis closely analyzes recent episodes of the series to illustrate the ways in which current show-runner Steven Moffat's story arc puts forth a Freudian critique institutional religion. Rather than banishing religion to the trash heap of history, however, Moffat's *Doctor Who* encourages believers to reevaluate traditional religious belief and practice.

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Committee Members:

Peter Lowentrout, Ph.D. (Chair)
Carlos R. Piar, Ph.D.
Jon R. Stone, Ph.D.

College Designee:

Amy Bippus, Ph.D

By Kathleen A. Hanson

B.A., 2012, California State University, Bakersfield

May 2015

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CHAPER 1

INTRODUCTION

First airing in 1963, *Doctor Who* stands as the longest-running science fiction program in history. Throughout the show's impressive run, the Doctor has been portrayed by twelve different men,[1] each actor bringing with him a new face, new mannerisms, and a new spirit, while still maintaining an unbreakable sense of continuity between the twelve incarnations of Britain's favorite 1500-year-old alien. After a significant absence from the airwaves beginning in 1989, the Doctor made a triumphant return to television in 2005 under the creative guidance of head writer and executive producer Russell T. Davies. Although Davies has since departed as the main creative force behind the show, the series has maintained success into the present, with Steven Moffat taking over as head writer and executive producer in 2010.

From its inception to the present, the show has chronicled the adventures of the Doctor, a member of an alien race called the Time Lords, who has unlimited access to all of time and space in his chosen form of travel, the TARDIS (Time and Relative Dimension in Space), a time machine disguised as a 1920s British police telephone box.

[1] Technically, there have been thirteen incarnations of the Doctor. This did not become a part of the canon until the fiftieth anniversary special, "The Day of the Doctor," which aired in 2013. In this special, John Hurt plays the role of the "War Doctor" the Doctor's warrior-like, forgotten incarnation. While this new numbering is greatly important among the fan community, and with all due respect to John Hurt's performance, the War Doctor is not relevant to the content of this paper, and I will thus stick with the traditional numbering system.

The last of his kind, the Doctor travels time and space, saving races throughout the universe from complete annihilation on a weekly basis, picking up human companions as he goes. If the Doctor suffers a fatal blow during one of his adventures, he simply regenerates in order to survive, emerging from his transformation unscathed. Such a hero, embedded in the British culture in which he was conceived—a culture largely influenced by its state religion of Anglicanism—has inevitably, throughout the show's evolution, taken on Christ-like qualities. As Brigid Cherry reminds viewers of the series, "Given that Christianity is an important constituent of traditional British culture, it should not be surprising to find Christian themes encoded within examples of British popular culture."[2]

Examples of such themes are to be found in classic *Doctor Who* (1963-1989), but the Doctor truly reaches the pinnacle of his Christly nature in his tenth incarnation under Davies. The Tenth Doctor repeatedly demonstrates his Christ-like nature: he sends one of his companions, Martha, on a year-long mission in the wilderness with the goal of spreading the gospel of the Doctor throughout the world, intervenes in world events in order to act as a savior, and even battles—and defeats—Satan. Even the Church of England has recognized this aspect of the Tenth Doctor's character and has sought to incorporate the series into its teachings in order to convey them to a younger audience.

Moffat's *Doctor Who* also makes the Tenth Doctor's status as a Christ-like figure a thematic focus. Far from seeking to uphold this portrayal of the Doctor, however, the

[2] Brigid Cherry, "'You're This Doctor's Companion. What Exactly Do You Do for Him? Why Does He Need You': *Doctor Who*, Liminality and Martha the Apostle," in *Time and Relative Dimensions in Faith: Religion and* Doctor Who, ed. Andrew Crome and James McGrath (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2013), 79.

Moffat-era directly, systematically, and often polemically seeks to dismantle it. Moffat's Eleventh Doctor subverts the Christ-like nature of Davies's Tenth. Moreover, the Moffat-era rarely utilizes the classic enemies of the Doctor, the Daleks and the Cybermen, who are in heavy rotation during the Davies-era, and instead replaces them with sinister monks, malevolent religious orders, and murderous creatures who emulate gods. Each of these enemies has not previously been encountered by the Doctor, and only emerge under Moffat's creative control. Moffat's Eleventh Doctor directly subverts Davies's Tenth. He annihilates the Tenth Doctor's status as a Christ-like figure by battling enemies who represent both the Church and an omniscient, omnipotent Father God, and ensures the destruction of the unwavering, unexamined faith of his companion, Amy Pond. In this thesis, I intend to demonstrate that the Moffat-era's deconstruction of the Doctor as divine causes the immensely popular series to transmit a Freudian critique of unexamined religious faith and encouragement of a hermeneutic of suspicion regarding religious belief and practice to millions of viewers.[3]

Chapter 2 of this thesis is dedicated to outlining the theories and methods used, which necessitate an understanding of the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion at the heart of this thesis. The understanding of this hermeneutic of suspicion that I employ comes from my combination of the work of two scholars. What I mean by "hermeneutic of suspicion" in the context of this thesis is gleaned from Sigmund Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* and Paul Ricoeur's *Freud and Philosophy*. A fuller treatment of these theorists and my employment of their work may be found in Chapter 2.

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[3] Doctor Who TV, "*Doctor Who* Series 8 (2014) UK Ratings Accumulator," Doctor Who TV, accessed February 11, 2015, http://www.doctorwhotv.co.uk/doctor-who-series-8-ratings-accumulator-66394.htm.

A secondary theoretical framework used in this thesis aims to convey the relationship between religion and television that this thesis assumes. I look to scholar of religion and popular culture Gordon Lynch to demonstrate the power television has in transmitting religious ideas. I also use the work of media studies scholar John Fiske to make clear the ways in which television programs can be catalysts for social change.

Chapter 3 outlines the history of positive religious imagery and the existence of a Christ-like Doctor in classic *Doctor Who* (1963-1989). Then, it explores the ways in which Davies's *Doctor Who* not only upholds this tradition, but presents to the viewer, via the Tenth Doctor, a more Christ-like Doctor than has ever been seen in any of his previous incarnations. I then present further evidence of the positive religious imagery found in Davies-era *Doctor Who* by delineating the ways in which the Church of England has used the show to convey religious ideas to its adherents. Finally, Chapter 3 presents the objections of some scholars to the idea that the Tenth Doctor personifies Christ and my rebuttal of their arguments.

My investigation into the Moffat-era's dismantling of Davies's Christ-like Doctor begins in Chapter 4 with a study of Moffat's monsters. Looking closely at the monsters created by Moffat and never before used in the history of the series, I aim to demonstrate how his creations present a Freudian critique of religion and call for a reexamination of religious belief and practice at both the institutional and individual levels.

Chapter 5 is a critical examination of one episode during Moffat's tenure as showrunner, "The God Complex." I contend that this episode epitomizes the tone of the entirety of Moffat-era *Doctor Who*. Its deconstruction of the Eleventh Doctor as divine and examination of the misplaced, unexamined faith of his companion, Amy, serves as a

call to viewers to critically evaluate their own closely held but unexamined religious beliefs and practices.

Chapter 6 offers a suggestion as to what religious fans of *Doctor Who* may do with the Moffat-era's Freudian critique of unexamined religious belief and practice. I look to philosopher of religion Merold Westphal's *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism* for suggestions as to how religious viewers may use the hermeneutic of suspicion encouraged by Moffat's *Doctor Who* to engage in a course of serious self-examination that can strengthen religious commitment.

Finally, I would like to make a note on authorship. My objective is not to commit an intentional fallacy by assuming the intent or purpose of the particular showrunners I discuss. Instead, throughout this project I have aimed to glean my reflections from the text each showrunner has created—and to allow these texts to speak for themselves. While I do argue that a shift in the series' treatment of religion and the Doctor's divine status occurs under Moffat's reign as showrunner, I do not argue that this was either his intent or purpose when he oversaw the creation of these episodes. Instead, I make observations based on the texts each showrunner has put forth. I do, however, acknowledge the self-identified atheism of both Davies and Moffat in this thesis because failing to do so would not only be disingenuous, it would ignore the influence that the atheism of each showrunner—especially that of Davies—has had on many other scholars' interpretations of the show.

CHAPER 2

THEORIES AND METHODS

The Hermeneutic of Suspicion

Although fully developed by Paul Ricoeur in *Freud and Philosophy*, the origin of the basis of the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion to which this thesis refers is found in Freud's seminal work, *The Future of an Illusion*. For Freud, religious traditions with an omniscient, omnipotent father God are guilty of engaging in wish fulfillment, a tendency that is rooted in childhood. Freud assumes that as children, we believe our fathers are infallible. Our father comforts us when we are scared, protects us when we are frightened, and is the source of our punishment when we misbehave. As we age, however, we come to realize that our father is flawed—he is not, in fact, infallible. Our response to this new, anxiety-inducing awareness, Freud argues, is to project a perfect supernatural counterpart onto our human father, a supernatural father who succeeds where our human father failed. This father is omniscient and omnipotent. He consoles us when we are scared, he both punishes and forgives our bad behavior, and, most-importantly, he is without flaw. Freud believed that this kind of engagement in wish fulfillment prolongs childlike behaviors and causes infantilization, which prevents people from becoming full-fledged adults. The religious beliefs created via wish fulfillment are what Freud refers to as illusions.

Although admittedly far less generous toward religious belief and practice than Ricoeur, Freud was careful to note the difference between an illusion—a technical term for his purposes—and delusion.

> What is characteristic of illusions is that they are derived from human wishes. In this respect they come near to psychiatric delusions. But they differ from them, too, apart from the more complicated structure of delusions. In the case of delusions, we emphasize as essential their being in contradiction with reality. Illusions need not necessarily be false—that is to say, unrealizable or in contradiction with reality. For instance, a middle class girl may have the illusion that a prince will come and marry her. This is possible, and a few such cases have occurred. That the Messiah will come and found a golden age is much less likely … [but] to assess the truth-value of religious doctrines does not lie within the scope of the present inquiry. It is enough for us that we have recognized them as being, in their psychological nature, illusions.[4]

Religious belief, then, fits firmly within the realm of illusion for Freud. This is important, because religious beliefs are classified as illusions *due to the motivations and functions that underlie them*—it is the harmful nature of the motivations underlying these beliefs that Freud calls into question, not religious belief in and of itself. As such, employing the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion to one's own religious beliefs and practices, thereby placing those beliefs and practices under rational scrutiny, does not require a believer to question the veracity of the beliefs he or she holds, but instead the often ignored motivations and functions that inform both religious belief and practice and the worldview created around those beliefs and practices.

Ricoeur notes this often ignored potential for generosity toward religion in Freud's work. He asserts that within *The Future of an Illusion*, "what is involved is not the truth of the foundation of religious ideas but their function in balancing the

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[4] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961), 39-42.

renunciations and satisfactions through which man tries to make his harsh life tolerable."[5] This focus on motivations and functions means that the origin of many religious beliefs and practices may be traced back to wish fulfillment, and once this fact is known, these beliefs and practices may be reexamined. Again, just because a hermeneutic of suspicion brings this to light does not mean that the truth-value of religious beliefs themselves is called into question. As a result, the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion holds within a potential to serve not as clear evidence that religious belief should be eradicated and has no potential to serve as a positive force in human beings' lives and cultures at large, but as a tool religious individuals and religious institutions can utilize to investigate the underlying human motivations for certain religious beliefs and practices, thereby allowing for more authentic and beneficial versions of each to emerge.

Erin White recognizes that Ricoeur's two-pronged understanding of the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion makes it a valuable tool for religious individuals and institutions. She notes that Ricoeur "is always informed by both a *suspicion* which makes him wary of any easy assimilation to past meanings and a *hope* that believes in complete appropriation of meanings while warning 'not here,' 'not yet.' Via suspicion and hope, Ricoeur plots a hermeneutic that avoids both credulity and skepticism."[6] In other words, for the purposes of this thesis, the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion allows individuals to question the pervasive traditional conceptions of an omniscient, omnipotent father God that are often simply taken for granted. It encourages believers to

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[5] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 235.

[6] Erin White, "Between Suspicion and Hope: Paul Ricoeur's Vital Hermeneutic," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3, no. 5 (November 1991): 311-321.

investigate the motivations and functions underlying their beliefs and practices, but does not call into question the *entirety* of religious belief and practice.

The use of both Freud and Ricoeur in partnership in this thesis is necessary in order to make clear the potential of the hermeneutic of suspicion employed by Freud—a man commonly associated with purely anti-religious sentiments—to serve as a valuable tool for religious individuals and institutions. As I will suggest later in this thesis, this tool is perhaps especially valuable in a British religious climate that sees traditional religious belief and practice in sharp decline in recent decades. This potential of the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion has not gone unnoticed by philosopher Merold Westphal, who contends that the critiques of professedly anti-religious thinkers such as Freud should not—and cannot—be ignored by the Church if it is to continue to strive for authentic belief and practice and maintain relevance in the future.[7] This thesis will utilize Westphal's work in order to demonstrate the potential of the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion to serve as a powerful tool for religious individuals and institutions in the modern era.

As will be discovered in later chapters, Moffat's *Doctor Who* offers a Freudian critique of religion and encourages a Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion. A clear departure from the Christ-like Doctor of the Davies-era, Moffat's Eleventh Doctor calls into question the motivations underlying the unwavering, unexamined faith of his companion Amy Pond. Moffat's *Doctor Who* also raises questions about the value of the institution of the Church, as it presently functions, via the monsters he creates. Moffat-

[7] Merold Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 1998), 18.

era *Doctor Who* serves to critique certain modes of religious belief and practice in a way that no other era of the series preceding it has, but in its encouragement of a Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion, does not necessarily ask viewers to cast religion aside and declare it unnecessary and outmoded. Instead, it allows for the possibility of well-examined—and therefore authentic—religious beliefs and practices.

Television and Religion

In order to understand the ability of Moffat's *Doctor Who* to transmit such a critique, one must first understand the power that television has not only in transmitting ideas, but also how these ideas can manifest themselves in the world via the viewers who experience them. John Fiske outlines the relationship between television and social change. Fiske, responding to the argument of other scholars before him that "television is always an agent of the status quo," asserts that while this may be true of much of what viewers encounter on television, it is not always the case.[8] Fiske maintains, "Social change does occur, ideological values do shift, and television is part of this movement. It is wrong to see it as an originator of social change, or even to claim that it ought to be so, for social change must have its roots in material social existence; but television can be, must be, part of that change, and its effectivity will either hasten or delay [that change]."[9] In other words, while Moffat's *Doctor Who* cannot serve as the singular catalyst for a shift in traditional understandings of God and religiosity, as a popular program beloved by and embedded in the consciousness of millions of viewers, it is an effective tool for social change. Fiske contends that television programs create, "a dialogue between [the

[8] John Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 45.

[9] Ibid., 45.

program] and the socially situated reader."[10] Fiske's assertions demonstrate that television programs, while not sufficient for a change in cultural consciousness in and of themselves, nevertheless have the power to become a part of viewers' everyday lives and social milieu, and thus, when embraced by the active viewer as a source for social change, can become a transformative power in the world. Moffat's *Doctor Who*, rampant with critiques of unexamined faith and traditional conceptions of God as father calls for viewers to actively make these critiques a part of their lived experiences by approaching their own religious faiths with a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Scholar of popular culture and religion Gordon Lynch echoes Fiske's assertions about the power of popular culture in affecting the consciousness of viewers. Lynch maintains that television has the power to transform contemporary religion and "function as a space for the negotiation of religious identities, debates, [and] conflicts."[11] He contends that products of popular culture are particularly effective media through which to convey both reverence for and suspicion of the sacred because they scramble the sacred and the profane, a quality Lynch maintains we may also apply to contemporary society. Lynch believes that the binary construction of sacred and profane that continues to pervade the study of religion is unhelpful regarding contemporary society. He asserts, "making clear distinctions between the sacred and the mundane is unhelpful because it fails to recognize the role of the mundane in the construction of the sacred."[12]

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[10] Ibid., 66.

[11] Gordon Lynch, "What is This 'Religion' in the Study of Religion and Popular Culture?" in *Between Sacred and Profane: Researching Religion in Popular Culture*, ed. Gordon Lynch (New York: I.B. Taurus: 2007), 125.

[12] Ibid., 136.

Lynch rejects a separation of the sacred and the profane in contemporary life and culture, and understands their scrambling in television media as a reflection of their scrambling in the lived experience of people in contemporary society. He contends that attachment to a binary construction of the sacred and the profane ignores the complexities of contemporary life and religiosity. Contemporary people, Lynch asserts, do not live their lives by drawing a definite line between the sacred and the profane.[13] He argues that the removal of this barrier between the sacred and profane in contemporary society allows products of popular culture to both uplift and subvert reverence for sacred objects. Lynch maintains:

> Contemporary forms of media and popular culture thus not only serve to deepen relations with sacred objects for some people, but at the same time provide a mechanism through which sacred objects can be rid of their compelling nature and treated in playful and ironic ways [and can] tell us about the ways in which the sacred [not only] compels and [binds] people, but [becomes] a focus for various forms of resistance against the lure of the sacred in the contemporary world.[14]

Television programs can thus serve as safe media through which active viewers can either reinforce or begin to question their attachment to sacred objects.

Given television's potential to bring about social change and its status as a medium that is ripe for the safe reexamination of closely held religious beliefs, it is within reason to assume that Moffat-era *Doctor Who* has the power not only to transmit a hermeneutic of suspicion to millions of viewers, but to encourage an application of that hermeneutic by its religious viewers.

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[13] Ibid., 137.

[14] Ibid., 141.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHRIST-LIKE DOCTOR AND POSTIVE RELIGIOUS IMAGERY IN *DOCTOR WHO*

Although the Doctor is the most Christ-like following his tenth regeneration, a basis for the Christ-like Doctor of the Davies-era may be found in classic *Doctor Who*. John Fiske investigated early *Doctor Who's* tendency toward religious themes in one of the first scholarly investigations of the series, and concluded that early incarnations of the Doctor have Christ-like qualities. He argued of classic *Doctor Who*:

> The significance of the Doctor lies partly in his structured relationship to gods and man. He is an anomalous creature in that he is neither God (or Time Lord) nor man but occupies a mediating category between the two. He has non-human origin and many non-human abilities, yet a human form and many human characteristics. In other words, he occupies the same space between Man and God as does Christ. Other Christ-likenesses include his consistent function of cleansing a society of evil and setting it on the paths of justice and goodness; the intergalactic timelessness of the Doctor is not unlike the eternal heaven of Christ; his dislike of violence and his sexual abstinence are other shared characteristics[15], as is the fact that both are leaders.[16]

These general parallels between the Doctor and Christ are apparent in classic *Doctor Who*, but with the Tenth Doctor we find both visual and literary parallels between the

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[15] It is worth noting that the Moffat-era, in its dismantling of the Doctor-Christ analogy, does away with his asexuality. In fact, Moffat's Doctor marries River Song, and their sexual exploits are alluded to often.

[16] John Fiske, "*Doctor Who*: Ideology and the Reading of a Popular Narrative Text," *Australian Journal of Screen Theory* 13, no. 14 (1983): 81.

Doctor and Christ that move beyond the general to the specific, solidifying the Tenth Doctor as a Christ-like figure.

The Davies-Era

Ruth Deller tells viewers of *Doctor Who*:

> Imagine a lonely god, the only one of his kind, who travels the world saving souls and bringing redemption. In his mission, he's accompanied by a loyal band of followers, whose lives are so transformed from meeting him that they go on to do even greater things. Through him the whole universe is transformed … but is he Jesus Christ, the New Testament Messiah, or the Doctor, a traveling television Time Lord?[17]

For Deller, the answer is simple: both. Davies-era *Doctor Who* has been branded by Deller and countless others as portraying the Doctor as Christ-like. The Tenth Doctor acts as the world's savior, is a redeemer in that he makes people and worlds better, always offers evildoers a chance to repent their sins, and has disciples who spread his gospel.[18] An examination of certain episodes and story arcs belonging to the Davies-era make apparent the similarities between the Tenth Doctor and Christ.

The Tenth Doctor's divine status is highlighted in "The Fires of Pompeii." In this episode, the Doctor and companion Donna Noble find themselves in Pompeii the day before the infamous eruption of Mount Vesuvius. During their time in Pompeii, the Doctor and Donna discover that the eruption is set to occur because an alien race of volcanic creatures called the Pyroviles are controlling Mount Vesuvius with the ultimate goal of conquering Earth to make it their new home. Having learned this, the Doctor now has an opportunity to change history—to stop the Pyroviles from causing the devastating

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[17] Ruth Deller, "What the World Needs … Is a Doctor," in Doctor Who *and Philosophy: Bigger on the Inside*, ed. Courtland Lewis and Paula Smithka (Chicago: Open Court, 2010), 239.

[18] Ibid., 240-241.

volcanic eruption, saving all the people of Pompeii. Donna is elated, but the Doctor tells her he has rules regarding time travel: Some points in history are fixed, and cannot—moreover, must not—be changed. The Doctor and Donna thus escape on their own, leaving Pompeii to its ruin. Donna, however, begs the Doctor to go back and save even one citizen, to use his power to save someone. He does, and elects to transport a Pompeiian family he and Donna met earlier to safety.[19]

The Tenth Doctor's divine status is not merely found in his becoming the Pompeiian family's savior who rescues them from a fiery, hellish fate; his divinity is directly acknowledged at the end of the episode. Six months after the eruption, the Pompeiian family is living in Rome and doing splendidly: the father is a successful merchant, the daughter has a flourishing social life, and the once rebellious, gods-rejecting son is studying to become a doctor. As the son leaves their new home, he stops to pay tribute to the family's household gods: sculptures in the form of the Doctor, Donna, and the TARDIS.[20] This scene is often pointed to by scholars of *Doctor Who* as evidence of the Doctor's divine nature during Davies's tenure.

Dee Amy-Chinn asserts that a religious reading of this episode can be made based on the visual imagery in the scene where the Doctor rescues the Pompeiian family. This imagery includes "the white light that emanates from the TARDIS, bathing the Doctor in its glow, as he returns and holds out a hand, inviting the chosen family into salvation."[21]

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[19] James Moran, "The Fires of Pompeii" in *Doctor Who: The Complete Fourth Series*, directed by Colin Teague (BBC One, 2008), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2008).

[20] Ibid.

Jennifer L. Miller further demonstrates the Doctor's divinity in this episode, asserting that the Doctor ultimately chooses to play God when he saves the Pompeiian family.[22] Moreover, Miller contends that this interpretation of the Doctor does not result from scholars merely grasping at straws—it is fortified by the qualities we know the Doctor possesses. She states: "Such a [divine] reading of the Doctor is reinforced by his ability to regenerate, his seemingly infinite knowledge of the universe, and the powerful technology that allows him to travel almost anywhere and access anything—a combination that renders him nearly omnipotent. Even the Doctor's very identity as a Time Lord contains a strong suggestion of divinity."[23]

The Davies-era chooses, in "The Fires of Pompeii" and many other episodes, to highlight this divinity rather than dismantle it. In the final episode of Davies's tenure, "The End of Time," a fellow Time Lord, hoping that the Doctor will act as the savior of his home planet Gallifrey, describes the Doctor as "his savior" who "looked upon the wilderness in the hope of changing his inevitable fate."[24] As Miller notes, this language "invokes the image of the Doctor as a god, and in particular, the figure of Jesus Christ in

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[21] Dee Amy-Chinn, "Davies, Dawkins, and Deus Ex TARDIS: Who Finds God in the Doctor?" in *Ruminations, Peregrinations, and Regenerations: A Critical Approach to* Doctor Who, ed. Chris Hansen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 28.

[22] Jennifer L. Miller, "The Monstrous and the Divine in *Doctor Who*: The Role of Christian Imagery in Russell T. Davies' *Doctor Who* Revival," in *Time and Relative Dimensions in Faith: Religion and* Doctor Who, ed. Andrew Crome and James McGrath (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2013), 106.

[23] Ibid., 106.

[24] Russell T. Davies, *The End of Time: Parts One and Two*, directed by Euros Lyn, (BBC One, 2009), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2010).

the gospel story of Jesus' temptation by the devil in the wilderness."[25] Davies-era *Doctor Who* does not stop there, however, and in a pair of episodes entitled "The Impossible Planet" and "The Satan Pit," the Doctor is pitted against what many viewers have concluded is the actual physical manifestation of Satan.

In "The Impossible Planet," the Doctor and companion Rose Tyler travel to a mysterious planet, Krop Tor, that is inexplicably orbiting a black hole. They land aboard a space station on the planet, built by human space explorers who are attempting to uncover how the planet is able to orbit around the black hole. These scientists have learned that a gravity funnel exists around the planet and surmise that this is the reason the planet is able to orbit the black hole without being destroyed. Having discovered that the source of the gravity funnel is below the planet's surface, the scientific team begins drilling into the planet. As they drill deeper and deeper, strange things begin to happen aboard the space station. As the Doctor and Rose explore their new surroundings, they discover eerie writing that the TARDIS is unable to translate,[26] causing the Doctor to conclude that the language is "impossibly old."[27] One crew member, Toby, is responsible for having scrawled the writings, as he has been possessed by a malevolent entity, unbeknownst to the Doctor, Rose, and the rest of the crew.

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[25] Miller, "The Monstrous and the Divine," 107.

[26] Typically, the TARDIS is able to translate any language at any point in time and space.

[27] Matt Jones, "The Impossible Planet," *Doctor Who: The Complete Second Series*, directed by James Strong (BBC One, 2006), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2012).

Due to the aggressive drilling, an earthquake occurs that causes the TARDIS to fall into the depths of the planet. The Doctor thus agrees to travel to the planet's center with a crew member in order to recover the TARDIS. After descending to the planet's core, the Doctor discovers the reason for the inexplicable gravity funnel surrounding Krop-Tor: a beast who identifies himself as Satan—and as the reality behind every religious conception of evil and who has existed since before the universe began:

> The Doctor: If you are the Beast, then answer me this: Which one? Because the universe has been busy since you've been gone. There are more religions than there are planets in the sky. The Arkiphetes, Quoldonity, Christianity, Pash-Pash, New Judaism, Saint Claar, Church of the Teen Vagabond. Which devil are you?
>
> The Beast: All of them.[28]

Rather than relying on the decades old tradition, found in classic *Doctor Who*, of having the Doctor explain away this creature's existence with a quick scientific fact or two, the Doctor is left powerless to explain the Beast. At the episode's end, Rose asks, "What do you think it was, really?" assuming the Doctor will provide her with the quick and easy reassuring explanation he usually has handy, but he merely replies, with an uneasy look on his face, "I think we beat it. That's good enough for me."[29]

In these and other episodes throughout the Davies-era, Christian themes and imagery are heavily used, reinforcing the Doctor as a Christ-like figure. In *The Unsilent Library*, Una McCormack details the many ways in which the Tenth Doctor personifies Christ. She maintains, "With the Tenth Doctor, Christian iconography and analogies between the Doctor and Christ become explicit . . . He is described variously as a 'lonely

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[28] Matt Jones, "The Satan Pit," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Second Series*, directed by James Strong (BBC One, 2006), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2012).

[29] Ibid.

god,' a 'lonely angel' and 'Lord of Time.'"[30] McCormack argues that the Tenth Doctor's Christ-like nature becomes most explicit in his relationship with his second companion, Martha Jones, and in the events that occur during their relationship.

Throughout much of her time with the Doctor, Martha views him as a salvific figure. In "Gridlock," Martha, after just meeting the Doctor, becomes separated from him after they travel to New New York, one of Earth's most bustling cities in the year 5,000,000,053. Trapped on a never-ending, gridlocked, underground highway and in danger of being eaten by giant crab-like monsters called the Macra, she proclaims to her fellow passengers as they pray for survival, "You've got your faith, your songs, and your hymns—and I've got the Doctor."[31] Martha's unwavering faith in the Doctor as a salvific figure, who stands in the city above the underground highway, actively seeking to save her, serves to reinforce his Christ-like nature.

In the same episode, after being saved by the Doctor, Martha receives a key to the TARDIS from him. She "receives [the key] . . . in cupped hands, as if receiving a sacrament."[32] This episode, chronicling the beginning of Martha's relationship with the Doctor, foreshadows her future task on behalf of her savior: her journey to spread the gospel of the Doctor throughout the world in order to defeat the Master, who in classic *Doctor Who* is depicted as having a "goatee, beard, and widow's peak hairline [and]

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[30] Una McCormack, "He's Not the Messiah: Undermining Political and Religious Authority in New *Doctor Who*," in *The Unsilent Library: Essays on the Russell T. Davies-Era of* Doctor Who, ed. Simon Bradshaw, Antony Keen, and Graham Sleight (London: The Science Fiction Foundation, 2011), 50.

[31] Russell T. Davies, "Gridlock," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Third Series*, directed by Colin Teague (BBC One, 2007), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2012).

[32] McCormack, "He's Not the Messiah," 51.

embodying traditional representations of the Devil,"[33] but in the Davies-era is a charming politician—and a clear representation of popular modern conceptions of the anti-Christ.[34]

Martha's task begins in "Last of the Time Lords," which sees the Doctor imprisoned by the Master, the only other Time Lord in existence, only recently discovered by the Doctor because he had hidden himself away as an innocuous old man on a distant planet in an even more distant future.[35] After regenerating into a young and charismatic man, the Master spends his time on Earth campaigning to be elected Prime Minister so that he may be in a position to conquer the earth and enslave humanity. Upon his return to present day Earth, the Doctor learns of and attempts to stop these events, but he ultimately fails in his quest to thwart the Master's plan. The Master captures the Doctor, holding him as his prisoner, and enslaves the human race, functioning as "an anti-Christ who has established a tyrannical kingdom on Earth."[36] The Master uses his laser screwdriver—the antithesis to the Doctor's sonic screwdriver—to age the Doctor 100 years, making him frail, close to death, and incapable of stopping the Master in his feeble state. Martha, having evaded capture, does what the Doctor previously asked of her and journeys out into the gray and dreary post-apocalyptic world to engage in a "year-long ministry in which she spreads word of a loving, ever-present but invisible

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[33] Amy-Chinn, "Davies, Dawkins, and Deus Ex TARDIS," 29.

[34] McCormack, "He's Not the Messiah," 51.

[35] Russell T. Davies, "Utopia," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Third Series*, directed by Graeme Harper (BBC One, 2007), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2012).

[36] McCormack, "He's Not the Messiah," 51.

Savior to the oppressed [human] slaves of the Master."[37] Martha covertly travels the globe, telling all she meets the same story:

> There's someone else. The man who sent me out here. The man who told me to walk the Earth. His name is the Doctor. He's saved your lives so many times and you never even knew he was there. He never stops, he never stays, he never asks to be thanked. But I've seen him. I know him. I love him. And I know what he can do."[38]

Martha's ministry culminates in the Doctor's defeat of the Master. Amy-Chinn describes his disciple's mission in no uncertain terms: "Martha spends a year in the wilderness preaching the gospel of the Doctor."[39] The words Martha spoke to people all over the planet, and asked them to spread to others, are meant to be thought of at a time set by the Doctor so that the faith of humanity, amplified by the Master's Archangel Network of satellites around the globe, capable of harnessing psychic energy, may restore the Doctor to his former state.[40] "Last of the Time Lords" ends with people all across the world believing in Martha's words, and, therefore, the Doctor as their savior, and all of humankind thinks of their faith in the Doctor at the same preordained time. The Doctor's plan is a success, and the faith of humanity transforms him from his frail state back to his former state. McCormack describes this scene, explaining that the Doctor "is transfigured into a being of light who fights an apocalyptic battle with the Master."[41] His

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[37] Ibid., 51.

[38] Russell T. Davies, "Last of the Time Lords," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Third Series*, directed by Colin Teague (BBC One, 2007), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2012).

[39] Amy-Chinn, "Davies, Dawkins, and Deus Ex TARDIS," 28.

[40] Davies, "Last of the Time Lords."

[41] McCormack, "He's Not the Messiah," 50-51.

final act in the battle is to offer the Master forgiveness and a chance to repent for his sins.[42]

This scene, in particular, provides powerful visual imagery that reinforces the Tenth Doctor's Christ-like nature. Near death, the Doctor miraculously rises and annihilates any doubt that he is the savior of humanity. Drawing on the faith of humankind as it suffers through a seemingly inescapable apocalypse, the Doctor resurrects, arms outstretched and bathed in light, in order to once again save the world. Dee Amy-Chin explains the visual impact of this scene, asserting that "the image of a newly resurrected Doctor, bathed in white light and floating God-like over the Master, surely relies for its impact, if not its meaning, on familiar, classical images of divine ascension. And the Doctor's forgiveness of the Master must invoke Jesus' forgiveness of Judas Iscariot."[43] Similar imagery also occurs whenever the Doctor regenerates, but in the Davies-era, the viewer sees this kind of divine imagery outside of his regenerations. For example, in a Davies-era Christmas special, "Voyage of the Damned," the Doctor, charged with saving a spaceship called the Titanic from crashing to earth on Christmas Day, ascends to the top of the ship, flanked by robotic angels on either side.[44]

The parallels between Davies's Tenth Doctor and Christ are abundant—the Doctor inspires the awe and faith of humanity, battles a Beast who likens itself to Satan, acquires a Pauline disciple in Martha, who is willing to travel the Earth to spread the

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[42] Davies, "Last of the Time Lords."

[43] Amy-Chinn, "Davies, Dawkins, and Deus Ex TARDIS," 29.

[44] Russell T. Davies, "Voyage of the Damned," *Doctor Who: The Complete Fourth Series*, directed by James Strong (BBC One, 2008), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2008).

message of his salvific nature, engages in an apocalyptic battle with the Master, representative of the anti-Christ, and, ultimately, is resurrected, returning to act as the savior of humankind.

The Doctor and the Church of England

That the Doctor functions as a Christ-like figure under Davies's reign as executive producer and head writer has not escaped the notice of The Church of England itself. In 2008, leaders in the Anglican Church began encouraging members of the clergy to study the series for its religious themes, in hopes that incorporating the popular show into sermons would make Christianity, and, more specifically, the Church of England, more relevant to teenagers.[45] This strategy was implemented by the Church Army, an evangelistic Church of England organization, which, during a conference held in 2008, showed participating clergy clips from Davies's *Doctor Who*. The organization maintained that Davies's *Doctor Who* regularly demonstrates the Christian themes of resurrection and redemption and tackles the problem of evil. Moreover, the conference included a panel which "analyzed the similarities between the Doctor and Christ and whether the Daleks are capable of change."[46]

The Church Army undertook this strategy as a result of the decline in youth church attendance between 2000 and 2006, when the number of children under the age of sixteen attending church fell by nearly 20 percent.[47] Recognizing the powerful influence of popular television programs, especially upon youth, a spokesperson for the Church

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[45] Jonathan Wynne-Jones, "The Church is Ailing—Send for Doctor Who," *The Telegraph* (London), May 4, 2008.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

Army and organizer of the conference, Andrew Wooding, said of the incorporation of popular culture into sermons: "Clergy shouldn't be afraid to engage with popular culture, as for many young people, television plays a large role in their thinking."[48] Organizers also said: "Drawing spiritual parallels with aspects of contemporary culture is meat and drink to anyone with a vocation to make the good news of the Gospel known afresh in every generation. *Doctor Who* is a good example."[49] Here, Davies's *Doctor Who* functions to positively represent Christian themes in popular culture in such a way that, as Lynch asserts is possible, Christian sacred objects are uplifted.

Outside of the Church, a former writer and producer of *Doctor Who*, Barry Lets, agrees that religious symbolism can be found in the series from its beginnings through the Davies-era, asserting, "I think it's inevitable because of Britain's cultural heritage that a long-running program about the fight between good and evil will have some Christian themes as backdrops."[50] Even Davies himself, a self-identified atheist who has openly disparaged religion, has said, "I think religion is a very primal instinct within humans, a very good one, part of our imagination."[51] The Church's reliance on *Doctor Who* as an avenue by which it may demonstrate complicated theological concepts in a package more appealing to young people demonstrates the undeniable presence of positive Christian themes in Davies's *Doctor Who*.

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

The Opposition

That idea that Davies's Tenth Doctor functions as a Christ-like figure admittedly does not sit well with many scholars of the series. Some have aimed to disprove his likeness to Christ entirely, citing the Doctor's simultaneous status as the rationalist/scientist. This popular conception of the Doctor—and certainly an aspect of his personality any viewer (even those who recognize the Doctor's Christ-like qualities) would be willing to concede—stems from classic *Doctor Who's* pedagogic function, as a program produced by the BBC with a public service broadcasting mission, to educate children about science and history. David Rafer sums up this view of the Doctor nicely:

> The "scientific" rationalist Doctor continually seeks out the irrational and the disordered and then imposes order and brings about resolution and the return to harmony. He frames mythical and monstrous opponents within a scientifically orientated worldview, providing pseudo-scientific rationalizations for the fantastic, the irrational and prenatural. The Doctor is thus positioned as a scientist-hero and generally imposes a logical worldview upon myth and the fantastic.[52]

Countless examples of this aspect of the Doctor's personality are indeed found throughout the series. A 1971 five-episode serial entitled "The Daemons" is often cited as an example of science triumphing over religious belief in *Doctor Who*.[53] In the episode, the Third Doctor encounters a being in a village called Devil's End that seems to test the limits of his empirical rationality. An archeological dig being performed in the village is exploited by the Doctor's recurring archenemy, the Master, who intends to

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[52] David Rafer, "Mythic Identity in *Doctor Who*," in *Time and Relative Dissertations in Space: Critical Perspectives on* Doctor Who, ed. David Butler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 128.

[53] Barry Letts and Robert Sloman, "The Daemons," in *Doctor Who: The Daemons*, directed by Christopher Barry (BBC One, 1971), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2012).

summon a being below the earth's surface called Azal. As the being's burial chamber is breeched by the dig, the earth shakes and a series of strange happenings begin to occur: large, cloven hoof prints appear in the earth and a hellish heat barrier surrounds the village, allowing nothing in or out. The Doctor and companion Jo meet Olive Hawthorne, self-proclaimed white witch, who believes that the creature and the trouble it has caused are supernatural—that Azal is in fact Satan. She serves as the irrational foil to the Doctor's rational scientist-hero throughout the episode.

As the Doctor prepares to battle the creature, he presents to his allies a lecture about deities from various religions, all of whom have horns, just like Azal. He tells them: "The Egyptian god Khunum, with horns … another one, a Hindu demon … creatures like those have been seen over and over again throughout the history of man, and man has turned them into myths, into gods or devils, but they're neither. They are, in fact, creatures from another world."[54] Thus, the existence of all of these gods and the fantastical, demon-like creature the Doctor and his allies now face, is rationally explained by the man who knows intimately all of time and space thanks to his travels: these gods are not supernatural, they are alien. What makes "The Daemons" so relevant to a discussion of the Davies-era is that Davies inherits this legacy of rational scientist-hero Doctors. While the rational scientist-hero remains an aspect of the personality of the Tenth Doctor, as it has with every incarnation of the Doctor, the Davies-era relies more heavily on that other, Christ-like aspect of the Doctor's personality. And when Davies's Tenth Doctor encounters a creature much like Azal in "The Impossible Planet" and "The Satan Pit," he does not offer us a clean, scientific, rational explanation for its existence.

[54] Ibid.

Instead, the Doctor has no explanation and the creature's status as Satan remains ambiguous.

Others scholars of the program have reluctantly admitted the Davies-era tendency toward a Christ-like Doctor. John Paul Green calls this portrayal of the Doctor "a worrying trend" and asserts, as both a scholar and a fan, "Part of the allure of the Doctor is his supposed apolitical, religiously ambiguous position. He should operate as the blank canvas upon which we the viewers ascribe meaning or significance, but with the Tenth Doctor, the iconography of Christianity comes to the fore, asserting the hero figure not only into the realm of the mythic, but also the theological."[55] Because most scholars of the show are typically also fans of the show—and many of these fans seem to see Christianity in an unfavorable light—there has been a trend to either discredit scholarship that points to Davies's Tenth Doctor as Christ-like or, when it is admitted that he is indeed Christ-like, criticize this portrayal of the Doctor. Miller, who in one stroke of the key says that much of Davies's imagery undeniably paints the Doctor as divine, simultaneously seeks to lessen this fact's impact by focusing on the disaster that often surrounds Christmas Day in the series' Christmas specials and various sacrifices made by the Doctor's human companions. She thus concludes that wary fans need not worry because the Tenth Doctor "is close to being divine, but ultimately falls short."[56]

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[55] John Paul Green, "The Regeneration Game: *Doctor Who* and the Changing Faces of Heroism," in *Impossible Worlds, Impossible Things: Cultural Perspectives on* Doctor Who, Torchwood, *and* The Sarah Jane Adventures, ed. Melissa Beattie, Una McCormack, and Ross P. Garner (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 16.

[56] Miller, "The Monstrous and the Divine," 112.

Davies himself has denied that at least one episode he authored, often studied for its religious meanings, the 2009 Easter special "Planet of the Dead," has any biblical references. He said of these interpretations: "Who came up with that one, in a godless world? People are so dumb about religion. *Doctor Who* is mythic, so it happens in a drama that naturally has things like bright shining lights and people rising in the air, and people go: 'Oh, that's Christian, therefore the whole program is Christian!' I'm saying the exact opposite of that."[57] Given Davies's personal religious leanings, this may indeed have been his intent, but the imagery and narrative supporting the Tenth Doctor's Christ-like status are undeniably present in the text that emerges under his authorship. His frustration over the supposed misinterpretations of "dumb" viewers of flashing lights and floating characters does nothing to explain Martha's discipleship or the ambiguity surrounding Satan's existence. The fact remains that the Tenth Doctor is the most Christ-like of all the Doctors to date. If Davies says his aim was to critique religious belief, the Moffat-era arguably does so more effectively and with more clarity.

As evidenced in this chapter, Davies's Tenth Doctor serves not only as a continuation in a string of Christ-like Doctors, but as the *most* Christ-like of any Doctor in the more than fifty years of *Doctor Who*—and this is the Doctor that Moffat inherits. The Moffat-era's portrayal of the Doctor, however, dismantles the divine nature Davies's Tenth Doctor possesses. Moffat's Eleventh Doctor, instead of maintaining the Doctor's divine nature, systematically destroys it.[58]

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[57] Gabriel Tate, "Russell T. Davies: Interview," *Time Out: London*, April 2, 2009, accessed December 14, 2014, http://www.timeout.com/london/things-to-do/russell-t-davies-interview.

CHAPTER 4

DISMANTLING THE CHRIST-LIKE DOCTOR: THE MOFFAT-ERA MONSTERS

Since the show's genesis in 1963, the Doctor has often acted as a savior figure, repeatedly rescuing the universe from seemingly inescapable destruction at the hands of various evildoers. In his travels through time and space, he encounters enemies who lack any resemblance to humankind. The most iconic of these enemies are the Daleks who, considering themselves a superior race, avidly seek to destroy all other races so that they may reign supreme. As genetically-engineered, emotionless killers whose primary function is "to simply conquer and destroy all life across the universe and to ensure the survival and purity of the Dalek race," the Daleks serve, throughout much of the history of *Doctor Who*, as the Doctor's archenemies, and he encounters them again and again in his travels.[59]

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[58] It is important to note that I do not argue that the Moffat-era's dismantling of the Tenth Doctor's Christ-like nature attacks the unexamined beliefs and practices of Christians specifically and exclusively, ignoring all other faiths. Instead, I argue that Moffat's *Doctor Who* functions as a call to reexamine any and all traditional concepts of the divine and unexamined faith of any kind. The series' focus, however, remains centered around Christian themes *because* of the culture in which the show exists and the Christ-like Doctor Moffat inherits. Advocating a Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion within the framework of a show that has evolved within British culture, heavily influenced by the Church of England, the Moffat-era largely focuses on critiquing Christianity, but this critique is certainly not limited only to Christian faith and Christian conceptions of the divine.

[59] Gary Russell, *The Doctor Who Encyclopedia* (London: BBC Books, 2011), 81.

Nearly as prevalent as the Daleks are the Cybermen. Created by a human man wishing to overcome death, they are constituted by "a human brain welded into a steel exoskeleton" and have been programmed to lack emotion, as their creator equated emotion with weakness.[60] Rather than seeking to destroy all other races like the Daleks do, the Cybermen aim instead to turn all human beings into Cybermen. Both the Daleks and the Cybermen emerge early, the Daleks in 1963's seven-part serial "The Daleks"[61] and the Cybermen in 1966's four-part serial "The Tenth Planet,"[62] and both remain a constant enemy of the Doctor throughout the series' long history, including within the new episodes that emerged in 2005 under Davies. The Davies-era of *Doctor Who* borrows generously from the rich history of the series. In Davies's *Doctor Who*, we often see the Doctor pitted against iconic monsters like the Daleks and the Cybermen—flat representations of evil who serve as the antithesis to the Doctor's innate benevolence, contributing to his status as a Christ-like figure.

The Moffat-era's dismantling of the Doctor's Christ-like nature may be seen, in large part, in the monsters the Doctor is pitted against. Moffat's Eleventh Doctor rarely encounters the most iconic monsters of *Doctor Who*, the Daleks. In fact, they are only encountered twice during Moffat's first series as head writer and executive producer, once in "Victory of the Daleks" and once again, briefly, in "The Pandorica Opens." In

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[60] Ibid., 76.

[61] Terry Nation, "The Daleks," in *Doctor Who: The Beginning*, directed by Christopher Barry and Richard Martin (BBC One, 1963), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2006).

[62] Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis, "The Tenth Planet" in *Doctor Who: The Tenth Planet*, directed by Derek Martinus (BBC One, 1966), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2013).

"Victory of the Daleks," the Doctor meets the Daleks when they are on the verge of extinction and engaged in a plot for renewal.[63] The Doctor goes to battle with the Daleks, but he fails in defeating them. As a result, an army of reimagined Daleks emerge. They are no longer the familiar bronze icons the viewer is accustomed to, but have become glossy, multicolored killing machines. At the end of "Victory of the Daleks," the Daleks are, in fact, victorious: renewed and primed for more evil-doing across the universe. Moffat, however, does not again utilize these reinvigorated Daleks in any significant story arc in either the first or second series of his tenure. While they do make a brief appearance in "The Pandorica Opens," along with many of the Doctor's other long-standing enemies, taking part in a communal plot to destroy him, they are not prominently featured again until the seventh series episode "Asylum of the Daleks." In this episode, the Eleventh Doctor and companions Amy and Rory must go to the planet Skaro, which functions as a Dalek asylum, where defective Daleks—considered an abomination by all other Daleks—are imprisoned. Inevitably, the trio must escape the planet. They attempt to do so with the help of the voice of a woman coming to them through intercoms throughout the asylum. The woman, Oswin Oswald, says she crashed on Skaro a year ago and has been hiding from the insane Daleks ever since. The Doctor ultimately discovers that the once human Oswin has in fact become a Dalek because of the nanogene cloud that surrounds Skaro and converts all other life forms into Daleks. She is, however, a defective Dalek because she refuses to acknowledge what she has become. Once she accepts her fate, Oswin uses her status as a Dalek to delete the Doctor

[63] Mark Gatiss, "Victory of the Daleks," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series*, directed by Andrew Gunn (BBC One, 2010), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2010).

from the Daleks' collective, telepathically-shared knowledge. In so doing, she erases the Doctor's entire history with the Daleks from their shared memory.[64]

Moffat-era *Doctor Who* thus diminishes the importance of the most famous monsters of the series—literally erasing their nearly 50-year history with the Doctor—and replaces these icons with newly-imagined monsters, all imbued with religious themes. Moffat has said of the Daleks: "There will come a series where we don't use anything from the past. That's quite possible. We'd probably always use the Daleks, because the kids absolutely adore them, and you're just being a mean old spiteful thing if you don't."[65] Thus, while Moffat acknowledges the Daleks as icons that are a part of *Doctor Who's* more than 50-year-long history, his dismissive attitude toward them as childish and outmoded is apparent. Moffat brings the Daleks back for the children and as an homage to early *Doctor Who*, but he ultimately has other plans for the Doctor.

The Silence

Moffat's religiously-themed monsters call for the viewer to regard traditional conceptions of a monotheistic God as well as the Church with suspicion. Rather than serving as flat representations of evil that contrast with the Doctor's benevolence, these monsters function as complex enemies that contribute to the Moffat-era's annihilation of the Doctor-Christ analogy and that convey some of this era's critiques of unexamined faith. The most notable of these enemies are the Silence, "the self-appointed sentinels of

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[64] Steven Moffat, "Asylum of the Daleks," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Seventh Series*, directed by Nick Hurran (BBC One, 2012), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2013).

[65] Nick Setchfield, "Steven Moffat Interview: Part Two," *SFX*, April 22, 2011, http://www.sfx.co.uk/2010/03/30/steven- moffat-interview-part-two/.

history who . . . experience all of time at once."[66] The Silence have been on Earth since the dawn of humankind, controlling the history of humankind via post-hypnotic suggestion, but remaining hidden as they do so because of their ability to make anyone who has seen them forget the experience upon looking away. They thus function as an omniscient, omnipotent power that has been personally involved in the history of humankind from its beginnings.

The Silence comprise a religious order "whose core belief [is] that silence must fall when the question [is] asked—the question being the oldest in the universe, but hidden in plain sight."[67] The Silence foretell that the Doctor will be the one to ask this mysterious question, and put in place an elaborate plan to ensure the Doctor dies before the question can be asked.[68] The religious order employs Madame Kovarian to create a weapon capable of destroying him. In order to accomplish this mission, Madame Kovarian kidnaps a newly and obliviously pregnant Amy Pond. Unbeknownst to the Doctor, her husband, Rory, or even Amy herself, a gänger Amy—a carbon-copy of Amy complete with her memories—is sent aboard the TARDIS in place of the kidnapped Amy. Meanwhile, the sedated, real Amy sits aboard Madame Kovarian's base at Demon's Run during the nine months of her gestation. The Doctor ultimately discovers that the Amy aboard the TARDIS is a gänger, and, when he destroys her, the real Amy

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[66] Russell, *Doctor Who Encyclopedia*, 314.

[67] Ibid., 314.

[68] Although not featured prominently until Series 6, the Silence are mentioned as early as the first episode of Series 5. The Doctor does not learn who and what the Silence are, however, until Series 6, when he learns of the death the Silence have planned for him.

wakes up, about to give birth to her daughter. This daughter, Melody Pond, as a child conceived by Amy and Rory on the TARDIS, contains both human and Time Lord DNA. It is revealed that Melody is the reason for Amy's kidnapping—the Silence and Madame Kovarian seek to turn this powerful child into a weapon capable of destroying the Doctor. Although the Doctor attempts to stop her, Madame Kovarian escapes with the newly born Melody, whisking her away so that she may become the Doctor's future assassin.[69]

The Silence, as the masterminds behind this plot, function as the Eleventh Doctor's central enemies throughout the sixth series. In seeking to kill the Doctor, they shape the course not only of human history, but of the entire universe. The death they plan for the Doctor becomes a fixed point in time, one that seemingly even the Doctor himself, capable of time travel, cannot avoid without tearing a hole in time and space and destroying the universe.[70] Thus, Moffat's Silence, as omniscient, omnipotent beings with a preordained plan for humanity, serve as a thinly-veiled metaphor for the father God. In this representation of the father God as the ugly, malevolent Silence who determine the course of human history—the enemies of the viewers' beloved Doctor—Moffat-era *Doctor Who* calls for a serious reexamination of this particular understanding of divinity.

The Headless Monks and the Clerics

Another of Moffat's monsters, the headless monks, are employed by the Silence to protect Madame Kovarian's base of operations at Demon's Run. "A mysterious 51st-

[69] Steven Moffat, "A Good Man Goes to War" in *Doctor Who: The Complete Sixth Series*, directed by Peter Hoar (BBC One, 2011), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2011).

[70] Steven Moffat, "The Impossible Astronaut," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Sixth Series*, directed by Toby Haynes (BBC One, 2011), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2011).

century order of monks overseen by the Papal Mainframe" they are "literally headless—lifeless meat puppets, controlled by their hearts, because they [believe] the domain of faith [is] there, not in the head, which always [contains] doubt."[71] The headless monks act as a none-too-subtle critique of unexamined faith. Not only do they lack any ability to think for themselves, their actions completely controlled by the Papal Mainframe, they also forcibly call others into their fold, decapitating each of their new, unwilling converts.[72] Given this gruesome form of initiation, Karma Waltonen aptly describes the existence of the headless monks and the viewer's reaction to them: "There is no capability for individual thought in the order—no choices … This lack of agency, represented by the lack of a head, is frightening."[73] The Moffat-era sees the Doctor set against these monastic figures and, in so doing, makes his enemy not the flat, purely evil Daleks, but the cold and calculating Church of the 51st-century. Moreover, the headless monks, far from being pacifists, fight—and kill—those on the side of the Doctor with laserized power-swords. Ultimately, however, all of the headless monks at Demon's Run are defeated by the Doctor and his allies as they seek to rescue Melody Pond. It is worth nothing that here, the Doctor is ultimately portrayed as a figure who, in being willing to go to war and engage in violent behavior, is markedly different than the Tenth Doctor, is not analogous to Christ, and as a character just as prone to violence as the future Church.

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[71] Russell, *Doctor Who Encyclopedia*, 153.

[72] Moffat, "A Good Man Goes to War."

[73] Karma Waltonen, "Religion in *Doctor Who*: Cult Ethics," in *Time and Relative Dimensions in Faith: Religion and* Doctor Who, ed. Andrew Crome and James McGrath (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2013), 150.

Also at Demon's Run are the clerics of the 51st-century, another of Moffat's creations. The clerics make the entire Church, not just its monastic component, an enemy of the Doctor. In support of the Silence's plan to kill the Doctor for the good of the universe, the clerics, fully militarized in the future, help both the Silence and the headless monks to fight the Doctor at Demon's Run. It is the clerics themselves, in fact, who physically kidnap a pregnant Amy and replace her with a gänger.[74] Moffat's clerics also appear in an earlier pair of episodes, "The Time of the Angels" and "Flesh and Stone." In these episodes, the Doctor reluctantly teams up with the clerics (who, in these episodes, have not yet aligned themselves with the headless monks and the Silence in a plot to kill the Doctor) in order to help them defeat a dangerous alien enemy, the Weeping Angels, and spends much of his time at odds with the leader of this particular group of clerics, Father Octavian.[75] Amy, clearly confused by the militarized clerics, asks, "Why do they call him Father?" and the Doctor, rather disdainfully, responds, "He's their bishop. They're his clerics. It's the 51st-century. The Church has moved on."[76]

Marcus Harmes discusses the clerics at length in his work. He says:

> The Church is a desacralized, militarized institution, mostly shorn of its religious character or functions. It still has clergy or officials with the traditional titles, such as bishop, cleric, and verger, but is no longer principally a religious institution … Moffat's vision of the dynamic Church of the future shows that it survives, but does so at the cost of being a religious institution.[77]

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[74] Russell, *Doctor Who Encyclopedia*, 63.

[75] Steven Moffat, "The Time of the Angels," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series*, directed by Adam Smith (BBC One, 2010), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2010).

[76] Ibid.

The clerics, while not a *Doctor Who* monster in the traditional sense, serve as monsters in Moffat-era *Doctor Who*. Eager to paint the Church as nothing more than militarized and violent in the future, the Moffat-era creates a vision of the Church that is visually startling to both believers and non-believers alike. Moffat's gun-toting, all-business clerics prompt viewers to ask if such a future is possible. This portrayal of the Church asserts that it assuredly is, and, in doing so, calls for viewers to examine the abuse of power and morally-questionable actions of religious institutions in the present.

Moffat's Freudian Monsters

The Moffat-era's critiques of unexamined religious faith via its monsters convey a Freudian tone. With its religiously-themed monsters—the Silence, the headless monks, and the clerics—Moffat's *Doctor Who* presents a hermeneutic of suspicion regarding belief in an omniscient, omnipotent God present in history, unreasoned religious faith, and the Church and other religious institutions, respectively. The Silence, as a representation of an omniscient, omnipotent father God, serve as a Freudian critique of the God of human projection and wish fulfillment. Freud argues, "One had reason to fear [one's parents], and especially one's father, and yet one was sure of the protection against the dangers one knew."[78] Freud believed that fearing the dangers and complexities of adulthood, human beings project the desire for both the guidance and comfort a father figure provides onto a god, creating the father God. In order to escape infantilization,

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[77] Marcus Harmes, "The Church Militant? The Church of England, Humanity, and the Future in *Doctor Who*," in *Time and Relative Dimensions in Faith: Religion and* Doctor Who, ed. Andrew Crome and James McGrath (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2013), 222.

[78] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 21.

human beings must learn to outgrow attachment to and reliance on such a God. The Moffat-era's representation of such a God in the Silence heightens the problem of the infantilization of humanity because the Silence have full control over the development of human society, with their powers of post-hypnotic suggestion. Human beings have no control over their own destiny and they are literally unable to question their attachment to the monsters because they cannot remember seeing the Silence upon looking away. Moreover, in portraying the Silence as a malevolent representation of the father God, the Moffat-era further encourages a critical reexamination of the conception of God as the omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent father. Where the real father fails—where he is flawed—so too are the Silence in their malevolence.

The headless monks serve as a Freudian critique of unexamined and unreasonable faith on the individual level, while the clerics do the same on an institutional level. Both the headless monks and the clerics, under the direction of the Silence, see their quest to kill the Doctor as an act resulting from devotion to God. This faith is literally unexamined in the case of the headless monks—they do not have the capacity to reason. The clerics, acting on institutional orders, also abandon reason in favor of blind devotion to the Church. In portraying each of these religious groups as enemies of the Doctor, Moffat's *Doctor Who* denigrates this kind of faith and upholds a Freudian understanding of enlightened self-interest. Freud understands enlightened self-interest, not religious moral precepts, as the ideal basis for social order.[79] Although Freud argues that human beings are prone to violence and self-interest, he also contends that if they are educated

[79] A. M. Nicholi, *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 72.

and committed to reason, human beings are capable of overcoming their less than benevolent natures in order to live moral lives and contribute to the evolution of humanity. Moffat's headless monks and clerics not only demonstrate Freud's understanding of unreasonable religious faith as unnecessary in the continuing evolution of humanity, but also as dangerous. Both the headless monks and the clerics—heavily armed and violent—represent the human potential for immorality and violence as manifested in the religious institutions created by humankind. In portraying each of these groups as power-abusing monsters, Moffat's *Doctor Who* makes them the enemy and calls for the viewer to regard both unexamined, unreasoned faith and the institution of the Church with critical suspicion.

The Moffat-era's use of monsters to criticize the Church has not gone unnoticed by other scholars of *Doctor Who*. Harmes asserts that for Moffat, the Church of the future is a theme repeatedly explored, while for Davies, the future Church is simply non-existent.[80] While Davies's *Doctor Who* does employ religious symbolism and puts forth the most Christ-like Doctor to date, his stance on the future of the Church of England is clear. The Church is present in some of the Davies-era episodes set in 21st century London, but in each instance a Church merely serves as the backdrop for a wedding.[81] In episodes set in the future, Davies, again a self-proclaimed atheist, makes it clear the Church no longer exists.

In "The End of the World," the Doctor takes companion Rose to witness the destruction of Earth due to the expansion of the sun from a luxury spaceship 5 billion

[80] Harmes, "The Church Militant," 222.

[81] Ibid., 225.

years in the future. An announcement is made over the ship's loudspeakers that politely reminds guests that the practice of religion is expressly forbidden, along with other apparently equally socially abhorrent acts such as smoking and the use of weapons.[82] In contrast, the Moffat-era presents a Church that is highly visible—and relevant—in the future. This does not mean, however, that it presents a more hopeful outlook on the future of the Church. Rather, instead of merely rendering the future Church invisible and outmoded, effectively ignoring it as the Davies-era does, Moffat's *Doctor Who* uses a militarized vision of the Church to make the critique of religious institutions all the more apparent.

This criticism is further underscored by the literary allusion made in the episode marking the clerics' first appearance. As noted by Harmes, this episode's title "The Time of the Angels" undoubtedly references the 1966 novel of the same name by Anglo-Irish philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch.[83] Harmes sums up the novel's connection to the episode: "[The novel follows] an atheist Anglican vicar and his strange family who are living through the 'time of the angels,' a metaphysical period when God is dead. The angels, which had been God's dreams are set free, and yet paradoxically the Church still exists and there is still a need for its priesthood."[84] This is similar to the Moffat-era's characterization of the future Church as something human beings have apparently clung to, without caring much about the beliefs it espouses or the violent actions it takes. Humanity continues to rely on a Church that it refuses to examine or critique, and this

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[82] Russell T. Davies, "The End of the World," in *Doctor Who: The Complete First Series*, directed by Euros Lyn (BBC One, 2005), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2006).

[83] Harmes, "The Church Militant," 222.

[84] Ibid.

failure has allowed the Church to become completely desacralized and militant. As Harmes notes, "the Church is a forceful, dynamic agent of action," but this action is in no way tied to the actions thought becoming of the Church in the modern era.[85] The Moffat-era's depiction of the future Church thus serves as a warning: If we do not critically examine our religious institutions in the present, they have the potential to become not only unrecognizable, but also morally corrupt in the future.

[85] Ibid., 233.

CHAPTER 5

THE GOD COMPLEX

One of the most significant religiously-themed monsters the Doctor encounters under Moffat's creative reign is to be found in an episode entitled "The God Complex." In this episode, the Doctor meets a monster who forces him to address the unwavering faith his companion Amy has in him, as well as his own occasional subconscious notion that he is a salvific figure. This episode sees Amy, Rory, and the Doctor unwillingly pulled into an endless maze of a hotel, where they meet four others, Rita, Howie, Joe, and Gibbis, who have found themselves imprisoned in the hotel under similar circumstances. Behind each door of the hotel lies someone's greatest fear, and, as Joe asserts, "There's a door for everyone."[86]

The episode begins by showing the final moments of Lucy Hayward, the last person to be trapped in the hotel, who was ultimately destroyed by an ancient, god-like Minotaur. Lucy's last words, before being devoured by the creature, are "Praise him."[87] As the episode progresses, and the four people the Doctor and his companions meet are possessed by—and as a result, willingly sacrifice themselves to—the Minotaur one by one, the Doctor determines that the monster shows each of the people drawn to the hotel

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[86] Toby Whithouse, "The God Complex" in *Doctor Who: The Complete Sixth Series*, directed by Nick Hurran (BBC One, 2011), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2011).

[87] Ibid.

their greatest fears in order to cause them to call to mind that which they have faith in. The Minotaur may then channel that faith, convert it into faith in himself, and feed on the faith, which gives him life. With this discovery, the Doctor asserts that the Minotaur, traveling through space, is able to seek out those who have faith in something and forcibly pull them into the labyrinth. The Doctor is forced to conclude that Amy's unwavering and resolute faith in him—the faith she has had since meeting him when she was only seven-years-old—has caused the TARDIS to be pulled into the hotel from which they cannot escape.

Feeding on Amy's faith in the Doctor, the Minotaur creates a room for her. Her room presents Amy with a fear she is confused by. After Amy looks into her room, Rita asks her what she has seen, and a puzzled Amy replies, "I don't know. It was weird."[88] After seeing her room, Amy begins to show the same signs of possession as those who succumbed to the Minotaur before her. Realizing he must destroy Amy's faith in him in order to spare her from being the Minotaur's next victim, the Doctor pulls Amy and Rory back to her room, discovering for himself the fear that so confused Amy. Once in Amy's room, both the Doctor and the viewer learn Amy's room contains 7-year-old Amelia Pond, sitting on her suitcase in her red rain boots, staring out of the window and waiting for the Doctor, who does not come, just as he did not come the night she waited after first meeting him.[89] Although the Doctor did, eventually, come back for Amy, her room demonstrates her fear that he will, one day, not come back and save her. This remains a

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[88] Ibid.

[89] On the night she met the Doctor at the age of seven, the Doctor left Amy, promising he would return for her. Intending to be gone only a few minutes, he was instead gone for twelve years.

central part of her worldview that has, since her childhood, informed her development as a human being just as prominently as her faith in the Doctor.

In order to save Amy from death at the hands of the minotaur, now stomping down the hall, growing ever-closer, the Doctor knows he must annihilate Amy's faith in him, so that the monster will have no faith to feed on. He tells her:

> I can't save you from it. There's nothing I can do to stop this … I stole your childhood and now I've led you by the hand to your death. But the worst thing is I knew. I knew this would happen. This is what always happens. Forget your faith in me. I took you with me because I was vain. Because I wanted to be adored. Look at you, glorious Pond. The girl who waited for me. I'm not a hero. I really am just a madman in a box. And it's time we saw each other as we really are. Amy … it's time to stop waiting.[90]

With this exchange between Amy and the Doctor, Amy's faith is, seemingly, destroyed, as the Minotaur begins to die without her faith to feed on. As the creature dies, the labyrinth hotel is exposed for what it is: part of a complex computer simulation that serves as a prison for the Minotaur, created by a civilization that once worshiped the Minotaur as a god. Having outgrown their blind faith in such a creature—a creature that fed on and killed the faithful—this civilization banished and imprisoned it. The Minotaur and the destruction of Amy's faith perfectly encapsulate the Moffat-era's Freudian vision: Amy becomes capable of realizing the full capacity of her humanity and escapes her infantilization with the destruction of her misguided faith in the Doctor, just as the civilization that imprisoned the minotaur became a more advanced and productive society with the destruction of its faith in the Minotaur.

As the Minotaur is dying, the Doctor translates its last words: "An ancient creature, drenched in the blood of the innocents. Drifting in space through an endless

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[90] Whithouse, "The God Complex."

shifting maze. [For] such a creature, death would be a gift." The Doctor replies, as he kneels down, comforting the creature, "Then accept it. And sleep well."[91] As the Doctor rises to his feet to return to the TARDIS with Amy and Rory, he looks startled as he translates the last words the creature speaks before dying: "I wasn't talking about myself." The viewer and the Doctor thus learn that the Minotaur, arguably one of the scariest monsters the Eleventh Doctor encounters, is not only a critique of those within society who possess unexamined belief, but a direct metaphor for the Doctor himself.

After helping to destroy Amy's faith in him, the Doctor whispers to the Minotaur, "I severed the food supply, sacrificing her faith in me. Gave you the space to die," causing the viewer to conclude that the Doctor did not entirely believe Amy's faith in him was unfounded. It was simply something he gallantly "sacrificed" in order to, once again, save her. The Minotaur's last words force the Doctor to confront his own occasional notion that he is somehow divine and possesses, as the episode's title indicates, a god complex. The point is clear: The Doctor should not consider himself to be a god. The Minotaur's last words contain a stinging truth, as they validate the words the Doctor said to Amy, words the Doctor himself did not fully believe to be true. Moreover, "The God Complex" seeks to demonstrate that the viewer should not consider the Doctor to be a god, and should approach the Doctor and other figures they may wish to put their faith in blindly with a healthy hermeneutic of suspicion.

That the creature is a Minotaur is not without significance. As Anne Malewski points out, throughout his tenure as showrunner, Moffat has relied on fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and myths as a common literary approach.[92] One of Moffat's earliest allusions

[91] Ibid.

to classical myth occurs in the companion episodes "The Pandorica Opens" and "The Big Bang," wherein Pandora's Box is referenced. In these episodes, the Doctor is in search of the Pandorica, an inescapable prison that is meant for a certain mysterious captive. The Doctor says of this fabled prisoner: "There was a goblin, or a trickster, or a warrior. A nameless, terrible thing, soaked in the blood of a billion galaxies. The most feared being in all the cosmos. And nothing could stop it, or hold it, or reason with it. One day it would just drop out of the sky and tear down your world."[93] As the episode progresses, the viewer comes to learn the Pandorica has been constructed by enemies throughout the universe to hold none other than the Doctor himself. The terrible fabled prisoner of the Pandorica, like the Minotaur, is analogous to the Doctor. As Malewski explains:

> The description of Pandora as 'beautiful evil' equally applies to the Doctor. This reevaluation of [the Pandora myth] within the episode brilliantly demonstrates that absolute truth is nonexistent and evil is not a straightforward category. It transforms the Doctor from a fairy-tale to a mythical character, a destructive force heading for a tragic ending.[94]

As Moffat's first series culminates, the Doctor must acknowledge that he is, in fact, the feared prisoner of whom he speaks and sees that in order to save the universe, he must imprison himself in the Pandorica and fly it into the center of the exploding TARDIS, restarting the now dying universe with a new big bang. Doing so, however, means that he will cease to exist.

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[92] Anne Malewski, "Fairy Tales, Nursery Rhymes, and Myths in Steven Moffat's *Doctor Who*," in *The Language of* Doctor Who*: From Shakespeare to Alien Tongues*, ed. Jason Barr and Camille D.G. Mustachio (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 207.

[93] Moffat, "The Pandorica Opens."

[94] Malewski, "Fairy Tales, Nursery Rhymes, and Myths," 204.

When the universe restarts, all is well: Amy awakens on her wedding day, greeted by her mother, and prepares to begin her life with Rory. Despite the happiness surrounding the day, Amy feels as though something is missing. During her wedding reception, she remembers the Doctor, and speaks him back into existence:

> There's someone missing. Someone important. Someone so, so important. When I was a kid, I had an imaginary friend: the Raggedy Doctor, my Raggedy Doctor. But he wasn't imaginary. He was real. I remember you! I remember! … Raggedy man, I remember you, and you are late for my wedding![95]

Michael Billings notes that at this point, Amy is unwilling to let the Doctor, dangerous or not, vanish from her life. He asserts of Amy's infantilization: "Amy refuses to let her inner child go; she chooses rather to incorporate the Doctor into her life than continue without him. The Doctor exists through her continued belief in him."[96]

Given Amy's continued unexamined faith in the Doctor, the Minotaur in "The God Complex" is a representation of the Doctor that serves as a warning. The reworking of the Minotaur myth in this episode points to the Moffat-era's characterization of the Doctor as "an ancient, ambivalent creature fighting glorious battles and consuming friendships like fuel … with a dark side whose adventures come at a cost."[97] Moreover, Malewski says of such myths, "Because of their tendency toward tragic endings, myths are always essentially pessimistic."[98] The Minotaur, and therefore the Doctor, are thus

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[95] Steven Moffat, "The Big Bang," in *Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series*, directed by Toby Haynes (BBC One, 2010), DVD (BBC Home Entertainment, 2010).

[96] Michael Billings, "The Doctor and Amy Pond: A Bedtime Story," in *The Language of* Doctor Who*: From Shakespeare to Alien Tongues*, ed. Jason Barr and Camille D. G. Mustachio (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 240.

[97] Malewski, "Fairy Tales, Nursery Rhymes, and Myths," 206.

[98] Ibid., 206.

represented in “The God Complex” as beings who bring pain and misfortune who should be approached with caution and regarded with suspicion.

When her misguided faith in the Doctor is destroyed, Amy, now seeing him as a friend rather than a savior, finds her own sense of wisdom, a new understanding of herself, the Doctor, and her place in the world, counsel in the Doctor as a friend and in her husband, Rory, and fortitude in her newfound faith in herself. All of this is possible because of the knowledge she gains when her faith in the Doctor is destroyed: she cannot rely on the Doctor to save her, as she has from her childhood. He is not a hero. He is unworthy of her worship. And, most importantly, he cannot provide Amy with anything that she is not capable of achieving on her own. The Moffat-era’s advocacy for a Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion regarding unexamined faith is captured in this portrayal of Amy's transformation from child-like believer to full-fledged human being.

Within “The God Complex,” Rory alone stands as the character for whom the hotel has no room of fear. Throughout the episode, he repeatedly sees fire exits in the hotel that are not visible to the Doctor, Amy, or any of the Minotaur's other captives. Upon learning this, the Doctor concludes that Rory is shown an exit because he is not “superstitious” and does not possess faith in anything.[99] The viewer, well acquainted with Rory, is left agreeing with the first part of the statement—Rory is assuredly not superstitious. The Doctor's assertion that he lacks faith in something, however, is incorrect. Rory, a man once willing to wait 2000 years for Amy, undeniably has faith in her.[100] His faith, however, is not blind and unfounded—he believes in Amy, whom he

[99] Whithouse, “The God Complex.”

[100] Steven Moffat, “The Pandorica Opens.”

loves, but never relies on this faith to save him, as Amy relies on hers throughout her many dangerous adventures with the Doctor. Throughout both the fifth and sixth series, Rory, unlike Amy, never possesses unwavering faith in the Doctor. He instead acts as the only character who is regularly critical of the Doctor for willingly and repeatedly putting Amy in danger.[101] But Rory does have faith in something—Amy and the love he shares with her. The Doctor is thus wrong in his assessment of the Minotaur. The Minotaur does not feed on faith, it feeds on unexamined and unreasonable faith. "The God Complex" calls for the viewer to conclude that Amy's faith in the Doctor as a benevolent savior, is, in fact, unreasonable.

"The God Complex" encapsulates much of the Moffat-era's vision for the Doctor in the course of one stand-alone episode, namely that the Doctor is not analogous to Christ and not god-like, but merely a "madman in a box." This episode declares, in no uncertain terms, that the faith Amy has in the Doctor is not only unfounded, but detrimental to her well-being. Amy's faith, then, serves as a subversion of Martha's Pauline faith in the Tenth Doctor. While the Davies-era portrays Martha's missionary work as a good that carries faith in the Doctor throughout the world and saves humanity from destruction, Moffat's *Doctor Who* concludes that Amy's faith is a detrimental, unfounded one which limits her capacity to function in the world and nearly leads to her own destruction. Rory, moreover, as the ever-present critic of the Doctor, reinforces the extent to which Amy's continued faith is unexamined, unhealthy, and idolatrous.

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[101] In his first adventure with the Doctor, Rory openly criticizes him for putting Amy's life at risk: "You know what's dangerous about you? It's not that you make people take risks, it's that you make them want to impress you. You make it so they don't want to let you down. You have no idea how dangerous you make people to themselves when you're around." Rory remains critical of the Doctor throughout Series 5 and Series 6.

In this way, "The God Complex" perfectly encapsulates the Freudian critiques Moffat's *Doctor Who* presents to its viewers. Prior to the destruction of her faith, Amy is infantilized—trapped revering the Doctor as a divine savior as she has since the age of seven. As Armand Nicholi asserts of Freud's theory of religion, "Biologically speaking, religiousness is to be traced to the small human child's long-drawn-out-helplessness and need of help."[102] Amy, the product of a lonely childhood, meets the Doctor and sees him as her protector in the chaotic universe, even though he repeatedly proves himself to be dangerous throughout their adventures. The Doctor is, as he says, merely a "madman in a box," subject to the same propensity for immorality and violence as human beings. While experience, knowledge, and social mores often help to Doctor to repress his malevolent tendencies, he is certainly not a purely benevolent salvific figure. He is "vain" and is guilty of projecting the same delusions of divinity onto himself that Amy projects onto him. In clinging to her understanding of the Doctor as her savior, Amy holds herself back from facing reality and evolving into a full-fledged human being. Once Amy's faith is destroyed, her evolution can begin. She is no longer seven-year-old Amelia Pond, but twenty-year-old Amy Pond, whose knowledge and agency are heightened in the absence of her deluded faith. The Doctor's call for him and Amy to "see each other as [they] really are" alludes to the Moffat-era's representation of the viewer as Amy and the viewer's faith as the Doctor. Both Amy and the viewer should embrace the Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion in order to see their unexamined faith for what it really is: wish fulfillment that prevents the development of and infantilizes the believer.

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[102] Nicholi, *The Question of God*, 42.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARD A WELL-EXAMINED FAITH

Moffat's *Doctor Who*, while encouraging a Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion, need not be understood exclusively as advocating atheism. Although Moffat is a self-identified atheist, his *Doctor Who* does not call for individuals to banish religion to the trash heap of history. Instead, the hermeneutic of suspicion his *Doctor Who* encourages calls for viewers to approach their religious faiths with critical suspicion, and does not necessitate that they discard their faiths altogether. In fact, this urging of viewers to examine closely their religious beliefs and practices can cause faith to be strengthened.

This is particularly relevant for religious viewers in the United Kingdom today, where traditional religiosity has been in sharp decline in recent decades. The Office for National Statistics census report, collected in 2011, found that only 59.3 percent of the citizens from England and Wales identified as Christian, while 5 percent identified as Muslim, 4 percent as Other, 7 percent declined to state, and an impressive 25 percent declared that they had no religion, up from only 14.8 percent in 2001.[103] In 2001, those who those who identified as Christian came in at 71.7 percent, more than ten percentage points higher than would be determined only a decade later. This evolving British religious landscape, with a sharp decline in citizens who identify as Christian, is the

[103] Office of National Statistics, "Religion in England and Wales 2011," Office of National Statistics, accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/sty-religion.html.

cultural context in which modern *Doctor Who* finds itself, and from which the Moffat-era's critiques of religion emerge.

Given that traditional religiosity is in decline in modern British society, it may seem counterintuitive that Moffat-era's *Doctor Who*, with its seemingly endless critiques of traditional religiosity, could have value among religious viewers. While many interpretations of the show are possible, including some that simply denigrate religion altogether and call for society to abandon it, it is possible for religious viewers and institutions to embrace the Moffat-era for its religious potential as eagerly as they did with the Davies-era. While this positive approach is not exclusive, it can be employed by religious viewers looking to the series for its religious potential. Within this approach, a positive restructuring of religious belief and practice can come from critiques of traditional religion.

This sentiment is echoed by Merold Westphal in *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism*. Westphal, looking to Freud and Ricoeur as his guides, defines a hermeneutic of suspicion as, "the deliberate attempt to expose the self-deceptions involved in hiding our actual operative motives from ourselves, individually or collectively, in order not to notice how and how much our behavior and our beliefs are shaped by values we profess to disown."[104] In Freud's theory, these self-deceptions are believers' refusal to acknowledge the underlying human motivations for religious belief. Freud maintains that in refusing to acknowledge these self-motivations, religious belief becomes an illusion that devolves into delusion.[105]

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[104] Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism*, 13.

[105] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 39.

Foreseeing a possible backlash among religious readers against his embracing of Freud's hermeneutic, Westphal is sure to explain the difference between suspicion and skepticism. He asserts:

> [Skepticism] gives rise to evidential atheism. Skepticism is directed toward the elusiveness of things, while suspicion is directed toward the evasiveness of consciousness. Skepticism seeks to overcome the opacity of facts, while suspicion seeks to uncover the duplicity of persons. Skepticism addresses itself directly to the propositions believed and asks whether there is sufficient evidence to make belief rational. Suspicion addresses itself to the persons who believe and only indirectly to the propositions believed. It seeks to discredit the believing soul by asking what *motives* lead people to belief and what *functions* their beliefs play, looking for precisely those motives and functions that love darkness rather than light and therefore hide themselves.[106]

In other words, suspicion grants religious belief and practice a generosity that skepticism does not in that its starting point is not to disprove their veracity. The hermeneutic of suspicion offers a mode of criticism that fosters an investigation into the often ignored motives and functions underlying religious belief and practice. Westphal contends, therefore, that if Freud's criticisms are taken seriously by believers, they have the power "to be the prophetic voices that challenge the Church to take seriously the critique of religion generated by suspicion [and] to lead the way in using it as an aid to personal and corporate self-examination."[107]

As White contends:

> [The hermeneutic of suspicion] recognizes that all symbols conceal phantasms or projections of inordinate fear and desire. In Ricoeur's hermeneutic, a hope which affirms the life-giving power of symbols is matched by a suspicion which exposes the false consciousness they conceal. Suspicion is the negative element which dislocates and opens the affirming power of symbols so that we can be continually reaffirmed in different ways."[108]

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[106] Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith*, 14.

[107] Ibid., 16.

[108] White, "Paul Ricoeur's Vital Hermeneutic," 320.

Ricoeur thus conceives of a hermeneutic of suspicion that becomes a necessary component of the continued vitality of religious belief and practice. Suspicion allows believers to begin to see new possibilities that allow for a more authentic set of beliefs and practices to emerge.

Moffat's *Doctor Who* encourages precisely this action. Set to enter its ninth series in 2015, it stands as a product of popular culture that can, as Fiske and Lynch describe, become a piece in the evolution of the religious consciousness of active viewers. Its clear departure from and dismantling of the Doctor created by Davies—the Doctor who served as the climax in a nearly 50-year construction of a Christ-like Doctor—reflects a suspicion toward the Church, traditional concepts of God, and unexamined faith. The Moffat-era takes this suspicion and runs with it, utilizing the series to construct a Doctor who is not an ally of the Church, not Christ-like nor divine, and not worthy of the blind worship of either Amy or the viewer. In so doing, Moffat's *Doctor Who* allows religious viewers to engage with the program, and apply these themes in their everyday lives, taking on the task of approaching their own faiths with a healthy dose of suspicion.

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