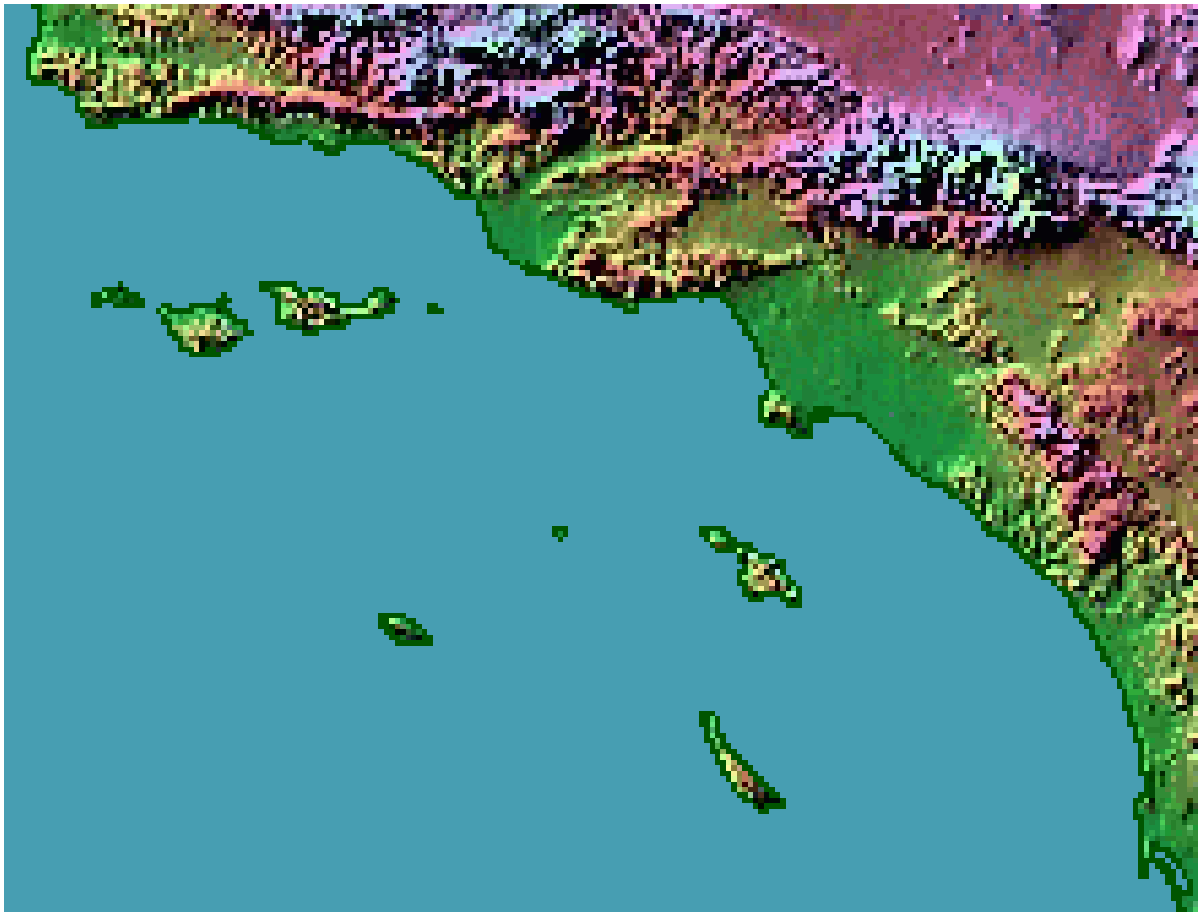


The Winds of Santa Ana:

Pilgrimages by Sailboat through the Islands and along the Coast of Southern California

By Rick Kennedy

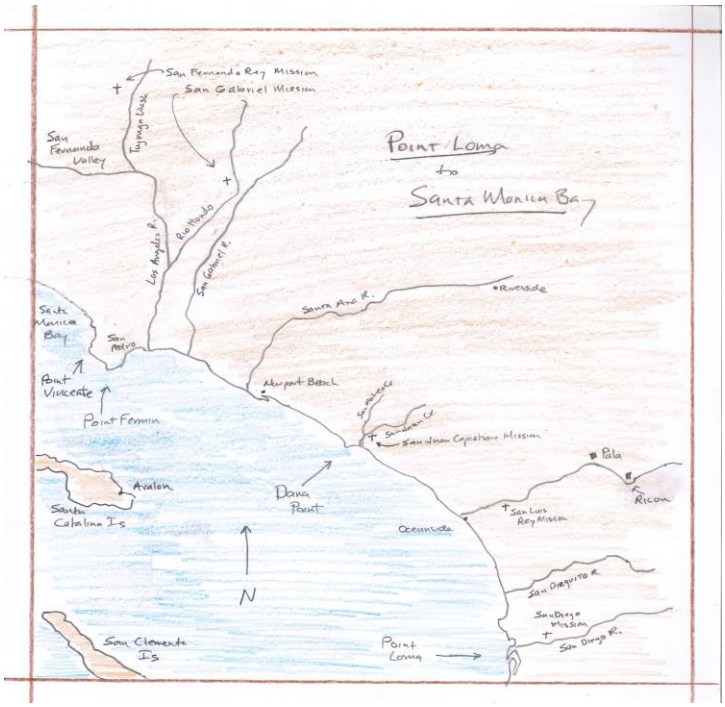
You who go down to the sea,
you creatures in the sea,
you islands, and all who live among them,
sing a new song to the Lord.
Isaiah 42: 10

The voices of the city and the sea.
The voices of the mountains and the pines,
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!
Thy fame is blown abroad from all the heights,
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard.
As of a mighty wind, and men devout.
Dante, *Paradiso*, prologue.

I hear the ancient footsteps like the motion of the sea
Sometimes I turn, there's someone there, other times it's only me
I am hanging in the balance of the reality of man
Like every sparrow falling, like every grain of sand.
Bob Dylan, *Every Grain of Sand*

Dedicated to

Harold Kirker
(1921-2018, UC Santa Barbara, 1966-1991)
who taught me to see California.



Chapter 1

Home Waters: Point Loma and San Diego Bay

Beginning sharply from the north at Point Conception and curving down to the bays of San Diego and Ensenada, embracing the upper and lower Channel Islands, is the Bight of California. By definition, a bight is a geographical feature too wide and open to be a bay, but still distinctively cut into a coast. California's bight, though, is more than just a geographical designation. It physically delineates a holy land. There is a sacramental quality to the California Bight. One does not need to be long the Southern California coast or boating through its islands before one catches sight of a grace, touches a joy, sees a beauty, or hears a voice. In, with, and through the Bight's topography, history, architecture, and even its scrub oak and eucalyptus trees is a spiritual density that exceeds normal expectations. Traveling the Bight, especially sailing its coast and through its islands, can be, if one is alert, a type of pilgrimage. By this I do not mean the kind of pilgrimage which is a long trek to one distant place, but rather, the kind which ambles the grounds of a monastery, notes the statues, visits the prayer chapels, and works through the Stations of the Cross. There is an old genre of travel literature called *chorography* which described the qualities of specific places. English parsons and school teachers use to

write humble chorographies about the rural counties in which they loved to ramble. What I write here is a combination of local pilgrimage and chorography. The book arises out of a desire to help readers appreciate the California Bight as sacred space.

Most people have a sense of the spirit in them. Southern Californians, to their benefit, live on a coast that inspires this spirit. It is rare to find a sailor, surfer or watcher of coastal sunsets who does not wax eloquent about being spiritually enlivened by the sea. William Finnegan, raised surfing the edges of Santa Monica Bay, ends his Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir of surfing, *Barbarian Days*, with a near Pentecostal worship service in the waves. The coastal town of Ventura is named for St. Bonaventure the author of *The Mind's Journey into God*, literally, a handbook for philosophical-pilgrims. His first rule is to be attentive to nature. Creation teaches, to those who are attentive, what the creator wants to teach. I have sailed into Ventura Harbor. Late afternoon winds blow strong there, and swells pound the rock breakwater after having traveled thousands of miles. The approach into the lee of the breakwater concentrates the brain and encourages the attentiveness that St. Bonaventure recommends as the first rule for a pilgrim's journey into God. I want here to tell stories, not only about sailing matters such as negotiating a swell-battered breakwater on one of Southern California's long lee shores, but also about the way a boat and a sailor can journey into God on this coast.

Sailing is a simple yet intricate craft that entangles persons, boat, wind, and water into both a physical and spiritual experience. Every voyage away from the dock, the smaller the boat the better, can be, if one will allow it, a pilgrimage. Sailboats, in my experience, are the best mode for pilgrimage, better than walking. Walking is self-powered, and the walker can pretty much go in whatever direction the self wills. Sailors have to be submissive. Movement by wind is a gift. Self-will effects little out on the water. Sailboats are listening devices. When a puff is given, the sails take shape, the windward hull rises, the hanging lines all swing to leeward, the tiller tugs against the sailor's hand, and the bow begins to surge forward. Most every religion in world history agrees that winds are messengers—winds are angels speaking to all who will listen. Most every religion in the world agrees that the oceans have a special sacredness. "Those who go down to the sea in ships," the psalmist says, "who do business on the great waters, they are the ones who see the works of the Lord and the creator's wonders in the deep."

This book then is an anthology of pilgrimages by sail. People of all faiths are welcome to read it. Cynics and atheists are welcome too, but they will not find themselves the center of attention. Pilgrims are believers, and the genre of pilgrimage does not require apology. Jews use to make pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. Muslims, in huge numbers, still make pilgrimage to Mecca. Christians in England

have their Canterbury, on the continent their *Santiago de Compostela*, and in Mexico their *Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. In the United States we have the California Bight. The creator seems to have made it topographically distinct and spiritually dense. I don't think it an accident that the most famous boats to sail the Bight, both crewed by Richard Henry Dana Jr. in *Two Years Before the Mast*, were named *Pilgrim* and *Alert.*

There is deep mysticism in the nautical charts of the California Bight. The Jewish, Christian, Muslim and possibly near universal belief throughout history that names have a power and reality beyond themselves is a fragrance that can be smelled by an attentive captain unrolling a chart of Southern California. When José de Gálvez, the Visitador Generál in New Spain in charge of the Spanish colonization of Alta California, instructed the missionary Fr. Junípero Serra and the expedition leader Gaspar de Portolá on what names to invoke for the protection of the new colony, he told them to keep the names San Diego and Monterey because they were already on maps; however, new sites should invoke protection "from the numerous and great saints of the seraphic family of our holy Father San Francisco." Specifically concerning the California Bight, Gálvez commanded that the third mission he envisioned, one for the Santa Barbara Channel, should be put under the patronage of San Buenaventura. The mission, town, and harbor of Ventura resulted; however, for the most part, Gálvez's plan for Franciscan names proved to be a failure. On the other hand, we can smell in the command of the visitador generál the fragrance of a Spanish Catholic version of the long held and deeply trusted metaphysics of naming places.

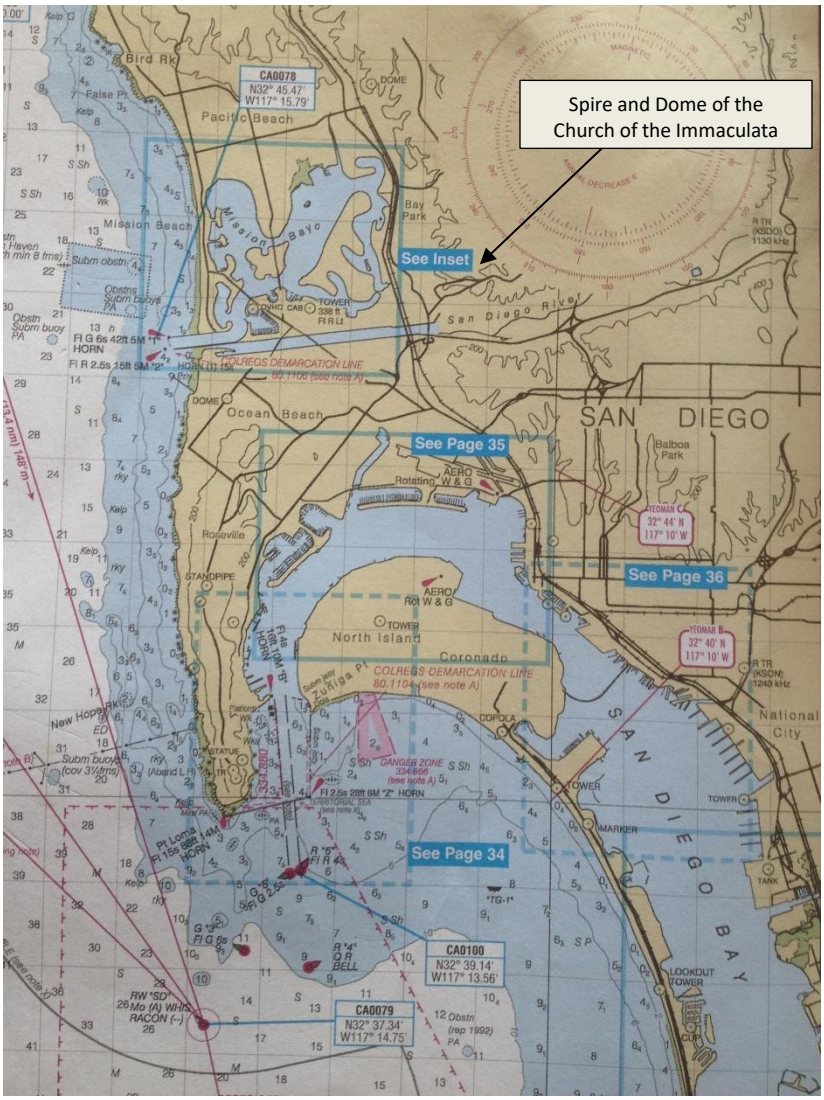
Unroll and spread out a chart of our coast and islands, and the first waft of spiritual protection and patronage a navigator smells has a feminine quality. On the northwestern border of the Bight are the Santa Ynez Mountains, named for St. Agnes (Spanish: *Santa Inés*), a young woman of strength, piety, and maturity-beyond-her-years venerated in Christian history and here expected to protect the mountains, valley, river, and mission under her oversight. Santa Rosa Island prays down the patronage of a nun born in Peru, a particularly austere young woman who embroidered fine linen so that it could be sold to feed the poor. She was the first American canonized by the church as a saint. Santa Monica bay and city name as their patron the hard-ass mother whose intercessory tears God could not ignore. Her wayward son, Augustine, would have never become a saint without her closely overseeing his development. The Santa Clara River is named for St. Francis' girlfriend, a powerful writer of spiritual wisdom in her own right who is the founder of the female version of the Franciscan Order. Santa Paula, first a rancho then a community just up the Santa Clara River from the coast, is named for the patron saint of widows. She is a smart and bookish saint who, when she was young and lost her rich husband,

devoted her life and wealth to scholarly enterprise, out of which came the Latin Bible. Santa Catalina, island and gulf, are guarded by another of the great female scholars of church history. Santa Margarita, river and rancho, is a warrior, subject of one of the great stories, mythic in its proportions, of a young woman who wrestles Satan into submission. Appropriately, her duties include patronage of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Less warlike, but in many ways more powerful, is Santa Barbara. She was a young woman abused by her father, imprisoned, paraded naked, tortured by having a breast cut off, then executed, all for embracing Christianity. Her island, channel, harbor, city, university, and mission have her beauty and, it is hoped, her resilience. Some, even in the church, continue to test her by saying she never lived and is a myth. She, however, does cower in the face of parsimonious and timid historical methods. In 1988 Mission Santa Barbara published a little pamphlet defending her existence with testimony of her answering the prayers of soldiers in An Khe during the war in Vietnam. All the saints of the Bight sing in the choir of the Bight's most influential patron: the Virgin Mary. Under one of her many names, "*Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porciúncula,* shortened for convenience to "Los Angeles" or just "LA," Mary, mother of Jesus, is the patron of a basin, county, city, river, two public universities, a national forest, and the busiest port of the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Refugio State Beach is also named for Mary, *Refugium Peccatorum,* Refuge of Sinners. In truth, all of these women have been prayed down to be a refuge to us who do business on the waters of the Bight. They work for the Creator and have responsibilities. Certainly there are male saints too who are charged with protecting Southern California, but unroll a chart, stand with your feet in the surf, or sail among the islands, and you will smell a spiritual fragrance that is overwhelmingly feminine.

Of the Bight's patron saints, the one whose story and place on nautical charts and maritime culture roots Southern California most deeply in Christian spirituality is St. Anne, in Spanish called Santa Ana. Not only do the river, city, mountain range, and all the churches, high schools, parks, and restaurants that use her name refer to the deep Christian story of long-planned fulfillment of all creation's potential that is associated with her name, but so too do the many places, buildings, and statues on the coast that refer to the Immaculate Conception. Such prominent place names as Point Conception refer to a miraculous moment of purified sex when St. Anne and her husband Joachim conceived a sinless daughter. Anne is mother to the mother of the Son of God, first born of all creation, in whom all things hold together, reconciler of all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross—Santa Cruz, the name most prominent island below Point Conception.

The Spaniards of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, especially the Spanish Franciscan missionaries, who came to California and named many of its places, were distinctly devoted to the doctrine and the implications of the Immaculate Conception. More than just a miracle of birth, the names Immaculate Conception and Santa Ana promote the Creator's family plan to restore the fullness of life to all creation. Santa Ana is mother to Santa Maria and grandmother to the Son of God, but also she is the matriarch at the center of a family network that surrounds Jesus and founds the church. St. Anne, herself, is not mentioned in the Bible, but the friars who came to California were devoted teaching the story that because two of her husbands died, she was married three times, and each time gave birth to a daughter named Mary. These three Marys appear in the Bible, as does Anne's cousin Elizabeth, and are these women and their husbands and children are entangled as an extended family and at the center of the Jesus Movement. John the Baptists, at least five of the twelve apostles, and the first bishops of Jerusalem are all relatives of Jesus through Anne. The many places in Southern California named Santa Ana or Immaculate Conception refer not only to a single miracle, they promotes a deep belief that in family-love God saves the world and, in the meantime, creates the church. The long river at the southern border of the Los Angeles Basin is named Santa Ana. Much of what is now Orange County is in the *Vallejo de Santa Ana*. The town of Costa Mesa sits on the old Santa Ana ranch that was managed by Indians under the jurisdiction of mission San Juan Capistrano. The mountain range behind Dana Point and Camp Pendleton is named Santa Ana. "Santana" is a contraction that appears on a Mexican map, drawn in 1823, designating the river. Today the contraction is attached to burrito stands, public parks, a high school, and even a production line of sailboats built by W. D. Schock, one of Southern California's most prolific boat builders. Most famously in Southern California, the elongated name, Santa Ana, is given to a distinctive wind and meteorological condition. The wind got the saint's name in the late nineteenth century for its route along the river-path along the base of the mountains at the southern rim of the Los Angeles Basin before it spews out from Newport Beach out toward Catalina Island. The meteorological condition is named for the wind. At some point every autumn and winter, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announces that Southern California is experiencing "Santa Ana Conditions." Often the announcement comes as a warning. High pressure in the desert will soon be sending hot winds racing down onto the California Bight. Out on the islands many of the safe anchorages will turn into dangerous lee shores. In extreme cases the east-facing harbors on Santa Catalina Island will be pummeled by waves. On the other hand, most often the announcement of Santa Ana Conditions is simply a grandmotherly heads-up. Be attentive. Listen and watch. Be careful.

I write this book under Santa Ana Conditions. Every time we sail home to our mooring in San Diego Bay or travel past Mission Bay at the beginning or ending of a pilgrimage north up the Bight, stark against the skyline is the huge, ornate, Spanish-style spire and dome of the Church of the Immaculata on the campus of the University of San Diego. Constructed during the post-WW II coastal building boom on the edge of the most widely visible mesa on the coast of San Diego, the church is shaped like a huge cross lying flat on the ground with a tower at it base and a large blue dome over the transept. Surmounting the tower is a cross and surmounting the dome is a large statue of *Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception*. Even on quick day-sails, out to the Point Loma lighthouse and back, on the return we can see, far ahead, above the bow, on top of the ridge, guiding us to our mooring, the tower and cross along with the dome and statue behind of the Immaculata. The message of the coast to the returning sailor is clear: remember the Holy Kinship, the family-plan of salvation.



The "we" means me and my boat. It is both traditional and appropriate for boats to have personal identities. We—my boat and I—are in this together like the scholar and his horse in the prologue of *Canterbury Tales*: "Gladly would we learn and gladly teach." My boat is my *Rocinante,* the horse of Don Quixote and pick-up truck of John Steinbeck. We depend on each other and share in each other's weaknesses and strengths. Since the middle 1960s I have sailed a variety of boats on the California Bight, but my pilgrimage-companion now is a twenty-four-foot Yankee Dolphin built in the winter of 1969-70 in, that most appropriate of places, Santa Ana. I paid $5000 for her in 2001, and I keep her year-round on a mooring off Shelter Island in the lee of Point Loma on San Diego Bay.

I found her well-used and much-loved up in Long Beach near the mouth of the San Gabriel River in the Alamitos Marina. She was named "Dancing Dolphin," but gave every indication that she would prefer a name change. Our first trip together was a run south, coasting in a pleasant northwesterly wind past Huntington Beach and Newport Beach, then docking for the night at Dana Point. The next morning, we were joined by my architect-friend, Kevin deFreitas. We motored till the wind filled in, then sailed further south past La Jolla Point. In the late afternoon off Point Loma, another friend, my diving instructor Robin Jacoway, the person who introduced me to Dolphin sailboats and advised me on the buying of this one, sailed out to greet us in his Dolphin. It was a good first pilgrimage on some of the most pleasant sailing waters in the world. The winds were gentle and consistent. The sky cloudless. The water blue. The friends good. The coast clear and distinct.

Much happiness has come with my boat. She is a good boat, well-designed, stronger than she needs to be, and pleasing to the eye. She is the perfect boat for my needs. I named her *Boethius* after an early medieval textbook writer who lived among the ruins of Rome. He wrote a beautiful little book, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. He wrote it while awaiting execution for a crime he did not commit. In the book, Lady Wisdom appears to him in his cell, angel-like. To Boethius she seems ancient and out of her time. Her appearance fills him with awe. Woven into the lower boarder of her cloak, on one side, is the Greek letter Φ, the first letter in the word philosophy. On the other, θ, the first letter in the word God. In one hand she holds a book and in the other a scepter. She is both angel and goddess come to talk with a frumpy and despondent textbook-writer.

Boethius a 24' Yankee Dolphin in San Diego Bay with Point Loma in the background.

In the *Consolation*, Lady Wisdom tells Boethius not to be a whiner. "If you spread your sails before the wind," she reminds him, "you must go where the wind takes you, not where you wish to go." Don't worry, she goes on to remind him, love holds all things together. The fabric of the universe, she says, is like a ship. A good God holds the tiller.

I named the boat *Boethius* because I too want to listen for Lady Wisdom, am willing to go where the wind takes me, and believe a good God is at the tiller of the cosmos. Like the Greeks, Jews, Christians, and Muslims I believe that winds can speak, teach, rebuke, and console. My job is to listen, and *Boethius* helps me listen. Angels talk to me when *Boethius'* tiller tugs against my hand or the mainsail luffs. They tell me to ease the mainsheet or pull the mainsheet in. Sailing off San Diego is liturgical in the way grace is communicated through action. We sail a few miles out from Point Loma, reaching into the wind, feeling the rhythm of leaning into every swell, sometimes raising a splash up onto the deck. Petition begins when I push the tiller to the lee, requesting all creation, all the laws and entities of nature along with the angels who speak through them, to take us home. The bow heads up into the wind and over, the wind fills the back side of the jib sail, the boom swings over my head as I duck under and reach up to release the jib sail. Bent low I straighten the tiller with one hand while reaching down with the other to coil the jib sheet on its winch. With both hands I pull the sheet, cleat the line, then reach aft to ease the main sheet. I find my cushion then lean back to steer us home. What

was windward has become leeward. The wind is now further back on my neck, the boat surges as it rides the swells rather than cutting into them. Creation conspires to push us home. If I am polite, I remember to say thanks.

One windless morning as *Boethius* and I were using its little outboard motor to putter north, two osprey flew out from Point Loma to commune with us. They swooped and swerved around us before one settled in on top of the swaying mast while the other continued to inspect our rigging. Had Lady Wisdom come in the form of these birds? Were they angels along with being birds? Maybe. I am not a cynic. My job is to be attentive and listen. Am I so cocky as to think that these two osprey might have flown out from the coast to give *Boethius* and me a blessing, a little affirmation, a little wisdom? I think the cocky people are those who insist that this can't be true. Did the real Boethius learn from a real Lady Wisdom? I think so. It makes sense to me given my experiences of the California Bight. The whole cosmos is wildly communicative. *Boethius*, the boat, and I were blessed by the osprey.

Two Osprey come to visit *Boethius*

The whole of sailing, everything that is involved with it, for *Boethius* and me, is a type of complex conversation with creation, an entanglement of conscious and unconscious living. I like sailing alone, but I never feel alone when sailing. I am a college professor, educated and educating on the California Bight, a card-carrying employee of the Knowledge Industry. I know how to dissect an argument, color within the lines, and get tenure. Sailing, however, takes me into the wild. Sailing teaches a wisdom deeper than the industrialized rationalism prevalent at universities. Sailing sinks me into the fellowship of creation. When *Boethius* and I go sailing on the California Bight, our home waters and home coast, we do not pretend to hear everything we are told or learn everything we should. I do think, however, that we come back to our mooring wiser than when we left.

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Under St. Anne's oversight, the patron saint of *Boethius'* mooring in the lee of Point Loma is Santa Isabel, the saint-queen of Portugal. She came late to Point Loma, long after Spanish sailors first named *La Punta de la Loma* (roughly: the Point of the Hill) to describe a safe anchorage on what is otherwise mostly a dangerously long lee shore. She was not here when California was part of Mexico and Richard Henry Dana Jr. lived in the lee of Point Loma. After conquest by the United States, Point Loma village first came to be dominated by fishing-families who had emigrated from China, but later the government suppressed Chinese fishing. Eventually Portuguese whaling and fishing-families from the Azores established themselves at the core of Point Loma's culture. Santa Isabel, their patron, came with them. She is always willing, like a guardian angel, to follow her people and spread her good will.

Today the Portuguese continue to thrive in Point Loma and promote their heritage through the local United Portuguese *Sociedade do Espirito Santo* (U.P.S.E.S.). The biggest event every year is the *Festa do Divino Espirito Santo*. The *Festa* celebrates an answered prayer when, long ago, Queen Isabel of Portugal was trying to feed the poor during a famine. Her husband, the king, was not a kind man. She had been born Spanish and been given to him as a political wife when she was thirteen. Throughout her life she resisted her husband's greed and haughtiness and was beloved by her people. Depictions of her usually show her holding flowers because, once, when she was sneaking food out of the palace to feed the poor, her husband, who had forbidden such kindness, confronted her. He demanded to see

what was hidden under her cloak. Then when she opened her cloak, flowers poured out onto the floor, not the food she had actually concealed.

As queen she loves her people. Seeing them suffering during a long famine, she prayed during her morning mass for the quick arrival of a shipment of food that was long overdue. In her prayer, Isabel made a promise to the Holy Spirit: “I will give my crown to the church if you will send me a miracle, so my people will be relieved of their hunger.” As she left the church, she discovered ships arriving in the harbor loaded with wheat and corn. In accord with her promise, she gave her crown to the church. Now God did not suddenly make the ships appear fully laden with food. They had been sailing for days. What happened is not technically a miracle; rather, it is a story of divine coincidence: God, in the long term, working things to the good, while, at the same time, in the short term, answering the prayer of a faithful leader of the people. Isabel, it can be supposed, could have rationalized her way out of giving her crown to the church, but she was not that kind of person. Since then, for over 700 years, Portuguese people have celebrated, wherever they live, this knot-like story entwining God, queen, church, and people.

In 1910 the *Festa* was formally established as an annual event in Point Loma Village. Today the *Festa* includes a parade of hundreds of costumed people, civic groups, and the local high school band. Hundreds more line the parade route. The central feature of *Festa* is a formal procession of the leaders of the Portuguese community along with young people elaborately dressed representing Queen-Saint Isabel of Portugal and her court. A teenage queen carries a crown, called the "Holy Spirit Crown," representing the one Isabel donated to the church. The parade begins and ends at a tiny chapel dedicated to Santa Isabel and designed to house the "Holy Spirit Crown." The chapel, built in 1922, is a facsimile of chapels that immigrants remembered from the island of Terceira in the Azores. Inside is a statue of Santa Isabel and in front of it, engraved in the cement, is a depiction of Santa Isabel. When it was built, the chapel was visible to all the boats anchored between the beach and what is now Shelter Island. Today the chapel is somewhat hidden, tucked behind a large condominium, but the *Festa* every year reminds those of us whose lives are moored to Point Loma that Santa Isabel looks after us. Sometimes when I walk down to the harbor, I turn down the tight little side-street called Avenida de Portugal and stop in front of the chapel. I stand for a moment on the outer ring of the side-walk depiction of Santa Isabel and say a prayer. I ask for her to ask Jesus to look out for all us locals, especially *Boethius* and me as we head out into the Pacific.

United Portuguese *Sociedade do Espirito Santo* Chapel and Portuguese Hall, Point Loma village. Santa Isabel is depicted in the circle embedded in from the the chapel. When the chapel was built in 1922 it was visible from the mooring field between the beach and a sand bar now expanded and called "Shelter Island."

The sea tends to encourage piety. It is a twentieth-century custom for Portuguese fishing boats of Point Loma to carry, up by the helm, reminders of spiritual presence, little statues or baseball-card sized images of patron saints. Beginning in the 1920s when tuna fishing became a big industry and tuna boats became huge, the boats often had elaborate floor-to-ceiling cabinet inside a cabin to serve as a chapel where sailors could pray, place a card of their particular patron saint, and light a candle (in good weather) before venturing on deck for a day's work. The Maritime Museum of San Diego has an exhibit of one of these boat chapels. The cabinet has three arched enclosures for statues and candles. The exhibit displays a random collection of saints' picture-cards along with a mid-century snapshot of a scruffy teenage sailor kneeling before a similar chapel-cabinet with hands clasped in prayer. I suppose there are some who visit the museum and smile at what they think to be evidence of superstition among immigrant sailors, but I am not one of them. I am a Protestant who has no tradition of patron saints to draw from, but I do keep a copy of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* in my boat's cabin. It is my own version of having a picture of a patron saint up near the helm. Over the more than two decades that *Boethius* and I have been sailing out of Point Loma, we have become more like our Portuguese fishing neighbors. We take comfort in the near-by presence of Santa Isabel and the oversight of Santa Ana. We listen for Lady Wisdom. We don’t have room on board for a chapel in front of which to kneel

and pray, but the sea encourages our piety. Like the scruffy young fisherman in the museum's picture, we say our prayers and are attentive to our humble place in the created order.

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Having a patron saint, like having a guardian angel, is no guarantee of safety. Remember, Boethius was innocent but still got executed. God did not design the world for any one person's particular benefit. Wind and sea teach piety, reverence, and obedience, not confidence. Yes, the psalmist says that those that go down to the sea in ships and do business on the great waters, they have seen the works of the Lord and his wonders of the deep. This sounds nice, but the next line talks about God raising up a stormy wind that melts the souls of sailors in their misery. Even though safely moored, I almost lost *Boethius* during an erratic weather condition named after baby Jesus. El Niño conditions, so named because they are associated with Christmas time and come to us from the south off Mexico, usually bring hope of rain for our desert climate, but the hope is always mixed with some fear. On the last day of January 2016, El Niño hit San Diego more with gusts of wind than needed rain. *Boethius* parted from its mooring soon after sundown. Electricity had just disappeared from my house when I got a call from the Harbor Patrol. My boat was loose. I asked if it had been blown onto the rocks. The lady on the other end of the line asked me to hold.

While I stood holding the phone to my ear I remembered that earlier in the day I had driven down the hill to look at the boat. I could see it fifteen yards off the beach. Winds were southerly, blowing in the fifties. The boat was tugging hard against its mooring line. The water was choppy, but she seemed to be riding fine. Directly behind my boat was the rock breakwater of the Shelter Island Boat Ramp.

Holding the phone, I waited, figuring that I would soon be told the boat was on the rocks. Dang it! I had thought about making a new mooring line at the beginning of the fall, but I had reached down off the bow and inspected it. It looked and felt strong. In December the San Diego Mooring Company, the private contractor that handles all the moorings in the bay, had lifted my mooring ball out of the water and checked the chain and shackle. They would have called me, and charged me, if they had seen a problem with my set up.

Still holding the phone, I bucked myself up with Stoicism. If the boat was lost, then it was lost. But *Boethius* is neither big nor heavy—How did it break loose?

The lady at the Harbor Patrol came back on the phone. She said that the boat was not on the rocks. I breathed a sigh of relief. The lady said the boat was now tied up at a restaurant dock at the north end of Shelter Island.

As I went out to the car, my wife told me to be careful. Next morning we would learn that trees all over Point Loma had fallen, boats throughout the mooring fields had gotten loose and bashed into other boats that were still moored, a trimaran had crashed into the rocks at the city front, a ketch drifting down onto the Maritime Museum had bashed into some boats then sunk; worst of all a tree had fallen onto the car of a young musician who was trying to get to a gig. She was dead. There had been gusts in the mountains measured at over 100 miles an hour.

When I got down to the dock behind the restaurant, no one was anywhere to be seen. I had to lean against the wind and worked hard to keep my balance. The tow company had cut my mainsheet to create bow and stern dock lines. In the wind and the dark, I could see that my VHF antenna was kicked down flat on the deck and a wind scoop on the lazaret was broken off its mount. A few weeks later, when I dove under the boat to clean it, I would find scars on the hull near the bow. The boat must have swerved bow-first into the beach before being pulled off by the tow company or harbor police. The damage on the stern probably happened when pulling *Boethius* back off the beach.

That night, with wind screaming in the rigging with the dock jerking back and forth, I thought for a second that maybe I should try to motor the boat back to its mooring or to the Shelter Island Guest Dock at the other end of the island. But no, the wind was blowing too hard. My little six horsepower outboard would not be able to move the boat against this wind. I decided to put some extra ties around the boom and the mainsail, set fenders between the boat and the dock, and tie additional lines to the stern and bow. She was safe for the night.

The next day the wind had lessened. I had to teach an early class, then a second class, but then went down to move the boat. I was feeling good about getting through the night, but when I walked around the restaurant to get *Boethius* from the dock, she was gone. I called the tow company, and they said the restaurant had complained and demanded that the boat be moved. So they had towed it to impound, and I would have to get it there. The impound dock was at Chula Vista, way down at the other end of the bay.

Twelve hundred and seventy-five dollars later, I was motoring *Boethius* up the bay back to its mooring. Twelve hundred and seventy-five dollars to get my boat back from impound! I try to find somebody to curse at — the tow company, the impound lot, the restaurant owner — but frankly I am too thankful.

I also feel guilty. Leaving the impound marina, there is no wind, the water was shallow, and I have to keep within a narrow channel. A young woman has died, but *Boethius* and I are safe. Duct tape will re-attach the antenna into its base and re-mount the wind scoop. I have already bought and brought with me a new mooring line. A hundred dollars will buy me a new mainsheet. I feel blessed, but I also feel bad. Puttering up the bay for more than an hour, I send up my queries. It seems random that a woman should be killed by a tree fallen by the wind. Why am I here with *Boethius,* happy and wishing we had a little wind, when wind killed that woman died last night? Many of my religious friends take comfort in randomness. When trees and wind kill people, randomness did it. Me? I blame God for everything—good or bad. Like the prophet Habakkuk I air my complaints. Like Bob Dylan I look for answers in the wind. Randomness makes no sense to me. Life is just too coherent. Life is just too good. "For the earth will be filled with knowledge of the glory of the Lord," God answers Habakkuk, "As the waters cover the sea." He says that before telling Habakkuk to sit down and shut up. "Let all the earth be silent before Him."

When I got close to my mooring, I phone my son, Steven, to come down and row out to get me. I then began attaching the new mooring line to the shackle under the mooring ball. Lo and behold, I realized what had happened to set my boat loose. The large shackle underneath the mooring ball has a big cotter pin as a preventer against the shackle bolt unthreading itself. The tongs of that cotter pin were spread wide and still tangled with bits of my old mooring line. My line had, in the storm, wrapped itself into the tongs of the cotter pin, and the tongs had become a dull knife cutting into my three-strand line. When I had stood on shore watching the boat tug against the mooring, the line was probably already in the process of being cut through by the cotter pin. Four hours later I would be getting the call from the Harbor Patrol.

Was Santa Isabel looking out for *Boethius* and me at our mooring on Shelter Island? I think so. In my short prayers over her monument at the little chapel I have asked her to look after us. The Bible talks about us having guardian angels. I don't see any reason to think parsimoniously about them. Was there no angel looking out for the young woman who died? I think we all have angels. I hope she had a bunch of angels with her when that tree crashed into her.

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After seventeen years out on a rough-water mooring near the boat ramp alongside the main channel, the mooring company told me that *Boethius* had to move so that the boat ramp could be

remodeled. They sent us into the parking-lot-style, bow-and-stern, mooring field around the corner of Shelter Island, still in the lee of Point Loma. Although now in flat water, we have to use our outboard motor to squeeze in and out of a tight slot between boats to our left, right, and front. Being without a crew, it is always a bit tricky to negotiate an elegant arrival or departure. Ideally, *Boethius* and I motor slowly down the fairway approaching a spot where we are opposite and downwind from our slot between other boats. At a point where the inertia feels right, sitting in the stern, I reach back to shift the motor into neutral, turn *Boethius* to coast up into the wind toward a thin pole sticking up from a small buoy tied to a small rope that is attached underwater to larger bow and stern lines. Coming up into the wind, the boat gradually slows, and again, ideally, at the final moment before the boat stalls, I walk calmly up to the bow, gracefully grab the thin pole, pull up the small line to have access to the heavier bow and stern lines, cleat the bow line, walk calmly aft, attach the stern line, turn off the motor, and again, ideally, receive the adulation of the two guys who live aboard the boats next to me. Given a pleasant westerly wind to point into, and a high tide that takes up the slack in the mooring lines, all things can work together for an elegant arrival. On the other hand, *Boethius* and I are often high entertainment for my two neighbors if the wind is gusting from the south when the tide is low. On those days, Michael in is boat ahead of *Boethius* would sometimes leans out from under his cockpit awning ready to fend off my bow if it came to close to hitting the stern of his boat.

To add to the mirth of my neighbors, *Boethius* is not dependable in reverse. Leaving our mooring is a roll of the dice. In my own defense, I can back up a thirty thousand pound, forty to fifty-foot sloop, with an inboard engine as well as most anyone else in the harbor. My little boat, on the other hand, a fore-and-aft rig with a long keel and tiny outboard motor that hangs behind the rudder, refuses to behave well in reverse. Every time I leave the mooring, I have to quickly throw off the bow and stern mooring lines, then, before the wind starts twisting us around, I have to step into the cockpit facing aft, kneel so that the tiller is between my thighs, lean over the outboard motor, grab the gear handle with my left hand and the throttle in my right, shift into reverse, give the throttle just enough of a twist, steer the rudder with my thighs, and hope that motor, rudder, wind, and inertia conspire to take us backwards and to the right into the fairway without raking the bow along the rails of John's boat to our starboard.

During our first year in that mooring, Michael and John, my live-aboard neighbors, helped me figure out how best to set our lines and offered good advice to get us through the seasonal weather changes. Eventually Michael stopped worrying that *Boethius* was going to ram him in the stern. John too eventually stopped worrying that *Boethius* would swung wildly into his side. They were patient with

me, and we had many nice chats as I rigged or de-rigged *Boethius*. They also introduced me to other live-aboards who row and motor in and around our mooring field. Both Michael and John, by the time *Boethius* and I arrived, had lived aboard their small boats for close to twenty years. Rent is cheap. There is a public toilet next to the dinghy dock. A grocery store, chandlery, and bookshop are all within easy walking distance. Most of the live-aboards never take their boats out of the harbor. Solar panels and TV satellite dishes hang awkwardly off makeshift brackets. There are families with little kids who live near me in the mooring field. The Point Loma waterfront, better than any other waterfront on the Bight, offers a wide range of opportunities for inexpensive and alternative lifestyles. Michael's father and brother also lived on boats in the harbor. John, for many years, had been a deckhand on fishing and sport-fishing boats that sailed in an out of Newport Beach, which is about seventy nautical miles up the coast. One day he was complaining about the taste canned refried beans, and said he had learned to cook refried beans the right way when he was in a Mexican prison. After getting out of prison he had come north and was living on the streets when his sister bought him the beat-up, twenty-seven foot, sloop next to *Boethius*. At the time it cost her about $7000.

About a year after I moved into the neighborhood John died. He had been having troubles with his health. During the night, he called the Coast Guard on his VHF radio. Apparently, he had suffered a stroke. The Coast Guard lifted him off his boat and put him ashore into an ambulance that took him to a local hospital. The next day I rowed out and saw his boat in disarray. Michael told me the story. He said he did not think John would ever be back. About a month later, Michael sent me a text saying John had died.

We all liked John. He gave me lots of advice on how to keep the birds from defecating on *Boethius,* and called for me to row over to his boat one afternoon in order to give me a pointy-thing to glue onto the top of my mast. One day we were talking boat to boat while I was rigging to go sailing when he asked, "You're a Christian, right?" I said yes, and he said he was too. He said that back around 1970 he had been saved during the Jesus Movement that exploded out of the hippie-beach-surfer culture of the Santa Ana, Costa Mesa, Newport Beach corridor. He said he really liked the sermons of Chuck Smith, the founding pastor of the world-wide network of churches called Calvary. By the 1980s Smith was one of the most influential evangelical pastors in the world—not as one of those political pastors on TV, but rather as one that changed way church services work, the way music is played, and the way people worship. The first Calvary Church started booming in Costa Mesa largely because on Sunday mornings Pastor Smith welcomed wayward young people like John even if they showed up looking like beach and boat bums with sand on their bare feet. I asked John to tell my about Smith, but

he said he never actually talked with the pastor. John did say though, that he later bought a cardboard box full of cassette tapes of Smith's sermons. Every morning, still today, he said, he listened to a sermon by Smith. I find it pleasant to picture John, cramped in the bow of his little boat, waking up every morning to the noise of squawking birds and the sport-fishing boats heading out to sea, reaching over to his cardboard box of tapes, punching one into a portable cassette player, laying back, and listening to a sermon by Chuck Smith. Such is the density of spirit on the California Bight.

Michael's boat. He is in shadow under the awning talking to John who is in the dinghy.

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Whenever we leave our mooring and head out into the Pacific Ocean, *Boethius* and I embrace slowness. Even when using my outboard motor on a windless dawn when the water is flat and the tide carrying us out, our fastest speed is slow. Slow is good for pilgrimages. Slow is the appropriate speed for contemplation. Slow is a what nature allows *Boethius*, and accepting creation's limits is the proper beginning of wisdom. Obedience to the physics of boat speed, I remind myself as I follow the channel out in a windless dawn, is the proper beginning of all good pilgrimages.

Maximum Hull Speed for a boat with a hull like *Boethius's* is roughly 1.34 times the square root of a boat's *Length at Water Line* (LWL). The LWL of *Boethius* ranges around 19 feet when standing straight up in a flat sea, so our minimum working numbers are 1.34 x 4.36 = 5.84 nautical miles per hour (kts). There are many variables, but, in general, it is easiest to just say that my theoretical *Maximum Hull Speed* is about six nautical miles an hour. This means that wind, sails, keel, and water negotiate on

blustery days to speed us along in the high five knot speed-range. On pleasant days of light winds, the boat settles easily into half its maximum or around three knots. Given that 1 kt = 1.15 mph *Boethius* are zipping on a good day at less than seven mph. More often than not, we are doing four knots or almost five mph. If *Boethius* and I want to go on long pilgrimages up through the islands of the California Bight, the cosmos says "fine, just be happy doing it at the speed of an invigorating walk or, at best, pleasant jog."

There are ways to design boats to go faster than nature's speed limits. I know a guy who bought a big twin-engine cabin-cruiser with a speedboat-shaped hull. It cost upwards of a million dollars. He told me that on his first trip to Catalina Island, he got out past the kelp bed, turned north, punched the GPS coordinates for Avalon into his autohelm, throttled up, and sat back. There are seat belts in his boat. He had his on, but his wife came up from below and did not put hers on. They hit a big swell, she flew up, hit the roof with her head, and came crashing down, sprawled out on the floor. When I heard about it, we were talking after our church service had ended. He was laughing and describing it with much animation. She was standing next to him, smiling, but had a bandage above her eye. I smiled too, but in my head I was thinking: “His boat is not designed for slow contemplation of the Bight's history and dense spirituality.”

On the other hand, there are times when even *Boethius* and I break all the boundaries and cast aspersions on the physics of slowness. Up along the southern side of the Santa Barbara Channel there is a pipeline of big winds and swells that first concentrate by coming around Point Conception from the west and then are held against their frothing will along the top of the northern islands. The boaters of Santa Barbara call this pipeline “Windy Lane,” as if it were a pleasant neighborhood street lined by eucalyptus trees and cute bungalows. Truth is: this so-called “lane” often channels the roughest winds and waters on the whole California Bight.

I have often been in Windy Lane with big boats and a crew. At those times, for the most part, we handle things with ease. When I am alone with little *Boethius,* these same things sometimes get crazy. One trip I remember well. *Boethius* and I needed to cross alone from Santa Barbara over to Anacapa Island. All started out quite Presbyterian, but two thirds of the way into the channel, all went Pentecostal. We left Santa Barbara around 10:30am in a pleasant wind of ten knots, a little to the stern of a broad reach. The wind steadily freshened out in the channel. About 2pm matters got serious as we reached maximum hull speed. During the next hour my handheld GPS began showing speeds in the high sixes, then into the sevens. We were racing along with sets of tall swells rolling in under our starboard quarter. It became harder and harder to keep the boat moving in a straight line as we raced down into

troughs and back up again. At the top of every swell the wind spewed white water. I had already reefed the main to make it smaller when I glanced down to the GPS and it showed 9.2 kts, half-again past *Maximum Hull Speed*. We had left textbook formulas behind. Dropping into a trough, I pushed the tiller away from me, let loose the sheets and their sails to flog wildly, and set the boat to languishing. Properly harnessed, I crawled up to the base of the mast, loosed the jib halyard, then crawled further forward to the bow in order to gather in the foresail as big rollers were lifted us high then flopping us down again deep into a trough. Having temporarily secured the jib with the short line and hook I keep attached to the bow for that purpose, I crawled back to the cockpit and pulled in the mainsheet. *Boethius* immediately perked up, stopped rolling randomly, and surged forward again. Regaining our course, I was happy that our speed had dropped back in the high sixes.

Soon after, as Cavern Point on the northeast corner of Santa Cruz Island, moved aft along our starboard beam, we were lifted into a last burst of Pentecostalism before being squirted out of Windy Lane into the flat water of Anacapa Passage. It was around 5pm. We were still racing along at six knots with no jib and under a reefed main. By ecclesiastical standards, we were still going too fast for Presbyterianism. We were at *Maximum Hull Speed* with only half of our sail area up and working. We were gloriously sledding between islands that harshly rise out of the water like the high broken edges of the monstrous rocks that they are. Like high-church cathedrals, one Roman and one Anglican, they stand across from each other, Santa Cruz more Romanesque and Anacapa high gothic. White water froths at their base as they reach skyward. *Boethius* and I, even running between them at nature's speed limit, feel safe. As if in prayer, we are overwhelmed by a sense of appreciation.

After rounding eastward and running along underneath Anacapa Island, we anchored at about 5:45pm in thirty-one feet of water in a beautiful little cut into the high protective cliff. There are no actual coves or protected anchorages on Anacapa. Just tall rocks. Given normal conditions, this little jog in cliffs, called East Fish Camp, deflects the winds for those willing to snuggle in close. Having anchored, I could see Anacapa lighthouse off in the west on top of the island's ridge. To the south I could see the high winds still blowing the tops of swells some 100 yards away. On the northern side of this thin ridge protecting us, Windy Lane was still raging along the top of the island. On this, the southern side of the island's thin ridge, were thousands of birds, arrayed in nests up and down the cliffs, swirling in the air, and diving into the water. I leaned back in the cockpit against a cushion, listening to the chorus of bird-music and contemplated the fecundity of a barren little rock poking up out of the ocean. Given the hundreds of birds splashing head first, one after another, into the water, I assumed that underneath us were thousands of fish schooling for fellowship and protection. All the island seemed in ecstasy. As for

me, writing the day's events into the log, I smiled at the memory that *Maximum Hull Speed* had lost its grip on us today. *Boethius* and I are normally, and appropriately, slow and steady. Today was just a reminder that textbook rules don't always apply.

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I should give you a tour of *Boethius*. She was designed in New England by Bill Shaw in the 1950s and revised by the famous east-coast design firm of Sparkman & Stephens. As yachting became more democratic after World War II when fiberglass replaced wood as the primary building material, the design of *Boethius* came west and was democratized in fiberglass as a production boat called a Yankee Dolphin. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Santa Ana, Costa Mesa, and Newport Beach triangle was the fiberglass boat-building capitol of America, probably the world. The post-war middle class could now afford sailboats. *Boethius* was built in Santa Ana as an inexpensive design targeted to appeal to people like me, a family-guy with a teacher-salary who has time in the summer to anchor at Catalina Island or sail through the islands.

Essentially, *Boethius* is a camp-out boat. She is seaworthy with a long keel and 4,250 pounds of displacement. I can stand anywhere on her, and she does not tip to my weight. On the other hand, I cannot stand insider her. She is not designed for the kind of yachting in which people wear white and enjoy drinks with little umbrellas. *Boethius* expects you to hunker low and watch your head. For a stove, it has a one-burner propane contraption that is very efficient. The propane canisters are expensive, but I can afford two or so canisters per week. I cook no meals that require long boiling or sautéing of thick vegetables. I tend to rely on canned soups and stews for dinner. Sometimes I will make a quick-cooking couscous with packaged tuna and vegies thrown in. I often bring the stove to the cockpit and cook outside. For light, I wear a headlamp. I have a sink with a fresh-water pump connected to a two-gallon collapsible container. Next to the sink is a top-loading insulated icebox. If I am going out for a few days, I freeze a couple of gallon-sized water containers and put them in the well of the icebox. As they thaw, they keep lunch meat, coffee creamer, and bags of salad fresh. My outboard motor, when it is running, is supposed to re-charges the batteries. I also carry a small solar panel that connects directly to the battery. I have a mounted VHF radio, and in 2017 I purchased a combination VHF and AIS that can tell me if large ships are nearby. My GPS is handheld, as is a second VHF radio. In the bow compartment I have my scuba gear, chain locker, various supplies, along with a six-foot inflatable raft. As for the needs of nature, I have a bucket with a plastic lid. This means I try to

submit to the needs of nature only when I am beyond three miles out to sea where the bucket can be dumped overboard. Otherwise, I have to store the bucket in a well-ventilated space, usually in the cockpit when I am below and below when I am in the cockpit.

At anchor I usually am outside leaning against a cushion with my feet extended, but every once in a while when a heavy wind leaves me exhausted, I spend the long evening in the cabin. With the anchor safely set, rigging vibrating in the wind, I hunker down to read or piddle about. I can't stand up. So if I am piddling below I do it with my back hunched over. Eventually I go to bed with a book and a headlamp in the quarter berth, my feet extending below the cockpit on the port side. There is a 12volt outlet near my quarter berth where I plug in my phone and set it on the companionway steps near my head. Early on, I had no phone and was fully detached. But I have trailed behind on the communication curve and now have my wife's discarded phone. I have four kids and a wife. I have responsibilities. Having a phone allows me more time to venture further while still staying connected.

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Almost every time I head out for a multi-day pilgrimage, *Boethius* and I find ourselves at about eight or nine o'clock in morning putzing northward under motor, fresh mug of coffee in hand, a mile or so off to the west of my college and my office. Of course I never leave when classes are in session or other campus responsibilities require my attendance. On the other hand, my small Christian college

desires that I think and teach about important things, especially the way faith and academic disciplines can integrate. My colleagues in the science building—the one I can see on the hill—are probably by that time in the day in their lab coats and working hard. Me? They pay me to teach California's history, and I want to do that well. Can a sailing pilgrimage be compared to a laboratory experiment? Maybe not. But if one of my deans or the provost sees me from shore, calls me on the phone, and asks "What are you doing out there?" I will lift my coffee mug toward the college as a toast and obediently answer: "Research."

Chapter 2:

Biologists and Other Mystics on La Jolla Shores

Many a pilgrimage begins with *Boethius* and I going slow, passing the west-side cliffs of Point Loma, headed northwest, targeting the bow to pass outside the kelp beds at La Jolla Point. Sometimes *Boethius* and I do a there-and-back-again, a one-day pilgrimage, one in which we reach up past La Jolla Point, circle in close within their north-facing bight, then fall back again into the lee of Point Loma. On such occasions *Boethius* and I ask only for long and easy hours to commune with the pelicans, play with the dolphins, and contemplate San Diego's coastline with its two distinct ridges with the San Diego River valley and estuary, now called Mission Valley and Mission Bay separating the ridges. Many who race up

and down the coastal freeway do not have an opportunity for slow thought about this distinctive topography, but those of us who sail obediently to hull speed have ample opportunity. Both ridges are about 400 feet high and have college campuses on them. Behind La Jolla Point, connected to the ridge, is Mt. Soledad that rises about 800 feet above sea level. For a simple there-and-back-again *Boethius* and I leave in the early morning calm and motor till around 11am. As usual, I am having my second cup of coffee when I lean back against a cushion to contemplate the college property on Point Loma that was formerly one of the most religiously famous sites in the world.

Between 1897 and the early 1940s, newspapers across North America, Europe, and throughout India kept the world informed about the activities on this ridge. Lomaland, the international headquarters and educational hub of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, sprawled out along the top of the hill. As adherents of a new world religion, the inhabitants of Lomaland invested their hope in their doctrine's ability to draw all the world's major religions together under its wings. Lomaland's Theosophy embraced all varieties of ancient scriptural wisdom, and taught a new eclectic mixture of monotheism, polytheism, and pantheism in Jewish, Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist forms. Peace, toleration, and spiritual fellowship were its political creed. Revelations about a "New Hope" for the future were its good news. Most helpfully Theosophy affirmed that we humans were not working alone to create this New Hope. Katheryn Tingley, the founder of the Point Loma colony, taught that angelic beings called "Masters" are afoot in the universe. According to W. Michael Ashcraft's study of the Point Loma Theosophists, "The Masters were among the most inherently natural aspects of the world"—natural and supernatural at the same time.

All this is not hard to appreciate when sailing the California Bight. Most of the world's religions have much wisdom in them and affirm that we humans are being helped by angelic beings that are, at the same time, both natural and supernatural, sometimes visible but often invisible. Christians, Jews, and Muslims have much scripture about angels. San Miguel Island to the northwest and the San Gabriel Mountains to the north are named for angels that appear in both the Bible and the Quran. Mahayana Buddhists have angel-like Bodhisattvas working in our favor. Boethius, the Roman, had Lady Wisdom to console him. La Jolla, as we will later need to think more about, has a famous speech by the angel Miguel mounted on the UC San Diego campus. The Mormons, who in the early 1840s claimed San Pedro and San Diego as ports of Utah, have a temple behind La Jolla's ridge that is surmounted by a statue of the angel Moroni, blowing a trumpet, announcing the coming of the Lord, to all below on the nearby freeway and university campus. On the California Bight as a whole, and this part especially, it is hard to get away from angels and talk of angels.

At this point on this pilgrimage our sails are not yet up. Our ability to listen is hampered by the constant puttering of the outboard. Coffee cup in hand, I muse about my job and purpose out here—and, further, I muse about the purpose of this book that I have decided to write about my wanderings up the coast and through the islands. I am, by temperament and vocation, a historian. I teach California history because it is my job, but also because I believe in it. So many of my students are taught to think that they create themselves, that they wake up every morning to a blank slate upon which they will write their life that day. As a historian I try to teach them that they do not create themselves, that most of the most important aspects of their life and thought have been written already. Yes, when we wake up we get to decide whether to be a Democrat or a Republican, whether to get or remain married or not, whether to be good or bad; but so much that we don't think about has already been decided. We humans are deeply embedded in varieties of cultures that have evolved and continue to evolve. Whether we believe it or not, we humans are also embedded in a natural world that has much more influence in our lives than my students normally allow. As a historian of California, I want my students to feel embedded in their state, to feel the power of this state's culture and its nature. Most particularly, I want them to be where they are at, to be aware of how deeply the culture and nature of this particular coast, the layers of its history, and the hopes invested want to converse with them. The fact that my students and I live and work on the Point Loma ridge long that has long been consecrated, first to Theosophy and now to Christianity, is an important awareness. We live daily on Holy Ground. I actually believe this of the whole California Bight. I undertake my waterborne researches as a historian-pilgrim-believer in the distinctive holiness of the California coast and islands.

Still puttering northward, high on the Point Loma ridge, visible behind some trees, is the most distinctive remnant of the Theosophical Colony: the Spalding House. Today it is the central administrative office of Point Loma Nazarene University, but it was designed and built in 1901 to receive messages of spiritual wisdom radiating through the cosmos. Katherine Tingley, the leader of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical colony, described Lomaland in general as a "practical illustration of the possibility of developing a higher-type humanity," and the Spalding House in particular was a practical illustration of this goal.

Geometrically the house is a system of octagons. In the nineteenth century octagon houses and rooms were promoted by high-thinking architects as more "natural" than quadrangular houses. The multiple octagons of the Spalding House went further than mere "natural" design and embodied anxious desire to listen to attract spiritual messages. The globe surmounting the octagon dome brought light

into the central parlor below. Throughout the day the light in the parlor changed with the outdoors. During the night, the light in the parlor radiated out from the ridge. Just as church architects have long understood that building design can negotiate the liminality between heaven and earth, the designer of the Spalding House hoped to embed the family in the wisdom and messages of coastal light.

Spalding family house, now Mieras Hall, built in 1901 on Point Loma with La Jolla Point in the distance.
Archives, Theosophical Society, Pasadena, California 91109 PLNU# 1 673-3 - 2679.tif

Puttering along down at sea level I think about this building and its theosophical purpose. I like the idea that a spiritualist satellite dish sits high on the ridge of Point Loma, visible to all off the coast who know where to look. On the other hand: What is it with all the self-designed spiritualities on this coast? Is Southern California some mixture of Western West and Eastern East? Are we the coast that purposefully amalgamates various ancient global searches for spiritual wisdom? *Boethius* and I do not pretend to know the answer. But we swim in these waters and are impressed by the intensity of spiritual communication on our coast.

A significant portion of California Bighters have always been health-conscious spiritualists. The Indians that lived here for thousands of years honed their spirituality on this coast. The Spanish and Mexicans institutionalized this spirituality in Roman Catholicism. When the railroad first reached Southern California, its owners paid for a promotional guidebook titled *California: For Health, Pleasure,*

and Residence (1873). If it had been written in Franciscan Latinisms it would have been *California: For Salvation, Scholarship/High Thinking, and Perfection/Rest*. All three of these goals have long enlivened the religious life of the California Bight. Health-conscious, high-thinking, retired people came here to flourish in both body and soul. Churches of all types flourished. Middle-class people came to the coast hoping to buy a small craftsman-style bungalow, plant some citrus trees, join a tennis, garden, golf, or yacht club, and give themselves to a church of some form. Upton Sinclair, the famous novelist who ran for governor of California, described us in his novel, *Oil!* (1926):

> Southern California is populated mostly by retired farmers from the middle west, who have come out to die amid sunshine and flowers. Of course they want to die happy, and with the assurance of sunshine and flowers beyond; so Angel City [Los Angeles] is the home of weird cults and doctrines—you couldn't form any conception of it till you came to investigate…. Wherever three or more are gathered together in the name of Jesus or Buddha or Zoroaster, or Truth or Light or Love, or New Thought or Spiritualism or Psychic Science—there was the bringing of a new revelation, with mystical inner states of bliss, and esoteric ways of salvation.

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As *Boethius* and I motor slowly from Point Loma toward La Jolla Point, waiting for the wind to fill in, the mouth of the San Diego River Valley opens up to the east between two mesas. The river's old estuary is now a park with marinas, hotels, lots of flat grassland, and, at one edge, a SeaWorld theme park. Today the estuary is called Mission Bay. Friar's Road flows into it, down from a stadium in Mission Valley built for the Padres baseball team. Behind and above Mission Bay on the northern mesa, looking like a fortress, are the Spanish-Renaissance buildings of the University of San Diego. Rising prominently among them, overseeing Mission Bay with beauty and grace, is The Immaculata, a church formerly attached to the university but now an independent parish. When it was built in the late 1950s, the bishop of San Diego had high aspirations for this church as a symbol of Spanish Catholicism's long and central history on this coast. High on top of its tower is a cross and surmounting its blue dome is a statue of Santa Ana in honor of the Immaculate Conception. From the upper corner of the California Bight to this the lower corner, every sailor, fisherman, surfer, and even jet skier has St. Anne watching over them.

Prominently on the edge of the southern mesa, high above the river and Friar's Road, is the medieval Islamic-looking (*Andalusian* they call it) tower of the Junípero Serra Museum. For a historian such as myself, an attentive listener to architecture and topography, the sight of The Immaculata and the Serra Museum on opposite mesas at the entrance of Mission Valley speaks volumes. Layers of California history pile on each other as I look at the two mesas, the river valley's mouth, and the watery estuary. Spanish and Mexican Roman Catholicism came here to bring health, both earthly and heavenly health. Franciscan friars full of idealism, perfectionism, even utopianism established themselves here among the Indians in the hope of doing good. Of course the history here is troubled. So much hope can only fail. Santa Ana, up high on the church dome, does not smile. She is part of the story of sin needing salvation. The history of her coast is especially troubling because so much hope has been invested in it. *Boethius* and I are unsettled by this coast's history. We are pilgrims, traveling sinners looking and listening for redemption. I have sat in long meetings, listening to important historians enumerate the sins of the coastal missions. I have read the angry books that would wish away California's Catholic past. I tell my students that our class has to dive deeply into the bureaucracy and ideals of Roman Catholicism. The California coast was, and is still, a mission field. Off in the distance, up below the Junípero Serra Museum, on the grounds of the old Spanish presidio, unseeable from out here, in a grove of trees, is a statue called "The Padre." Of all the Catholic statues on the coast, it is my favorite. Instead of looking triumphant as it stands on the mesa, high above the valley, river, estuary, and coast, the statue depicts a thoughtful missionary, humble, prayerful, even sad.

"The Padre" (1908) by Arthur Putnam, Presidio Park, San Diego

But right now, still puttering with no sails up on a course headed just west of La Jolla Point, I stand up in the cockpit to stretch my legs and look forward past my bow. Today's pilgrimage is not into the Bight's Roman Catholicism. Today's pilgrimage is into La Jolla's spiritualism, its mysticism, even its scientism.

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Doc Ricketts, the marine biologist in Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* (1945) wandered in the tide pools on La Jolla Point. Steinbeck tells how Doc drove down the coast from Monterey to La Jolla Cove to collect octopi in the nearby tide pools. Steinbeck says that even while sleeping in his car, Doc can feel a tide change. Doc is based on the real Ed Ricketts, a marine biologist and specimen collector, author of

Between Pacific Tides (1939). Steinbeck tells of Doc, beginning before dawn at high tide, following the water out, peered into every crevice, pulling up stones, sweeping back "long leathery brown algae." At low tide "he climbed to the place over the slippery rocks, held himself firmly, and gently reached down and parted the brown algae. Then he grew rigid. A girl's face looked up at him, a pretty, pale face with dark hair. The eyes were open and clear and the face was firm and the hair washed gently about her head." Stumbling back to the high tide line, Doc sits and hears music in his ears, "a high thin piercingly sweet flute" playing an "unbelievable melody." Who is this girl and what is her story? Steinbeck never tells us. La Jolla has a glittering reputation for wealth and science, not wisdom. I think John Steinbeck, even back before it was what it is today, wanted La Jolla to look in a tide pool at its reflection.

La Jolla Point pokes out into the Pacific and is topographically and culturally opposite to Point Loma. Both are within the city limits of San Diego, both are wealthy suburbs, both house the Scripps Institution of Oceanography—they have the main campus and we have the research vessels—but Loma pulls inward and La Jolla pokes outward. In a deep and essential way, Loma combines Portuguese Catholicism with the U. S. Navy, while La Jolla combines sharp-edged science with global tourism. On the other hand, neither is without spiritual density.

Boethius and I are motoring up toward La Jolla as day-trip, neighbor, pilgrims. From off shore, La Jolla looks different from when viewed from its streets. The relationship between the slope of the hill, the downtown, and the coast make more sense. So too does the placement of La Jolla Cove on the northwestern tip of La Jolla Point and the way that the coast then turns, reaching back as high cliffs beneath tall hotels and nice restaurants. There is then a tight turn north forming a little scoop of coastline that flattens into a long beach community called La Jolla Shores. Because this little bight presents itself wide open to the prevailing northwest winds and currents, there is no pleasant anchorage here under normal conditions. Boaters tend to bypass the area on their way north and south. Fishing boats also don't much venture in because the inner waters are protected. On the other hand, this scoop in the coast is loved by beach-goers, divers, kayakers, surfers, and swimmers. Tight clumps of harmless Leopard Sharks sometimes crowd into the shallows.

Above La Jolla Shores, on top of the ridge, is one of the campuses of University of California. Below on the beach is the pier of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Just off the end of this pier in the middle 1960s SEALAB II was sunk in 200 feet of water to experiment with undersea living. Scott Carpenter, first an *astronaut*, here led a team of *aquanauts*. I suppose *Boethius* and me, on this short pilgrimage into the area, can be called *La Jollanauts*, given that *nautis,* in Greek, means sailor.

Steady wind from the northwest at about 1130 told me to raise sails and shut off the outboard. The sky and sea sprawled out in blue as we angle northeastward toward the southern edge of the estuary of the San Diegito River. Off to starboard are high cliffs that run southward, surmounted by the highest levels of entrepreneurial science eventually sprawling out along the ridge as the campus of UC San Diego. On *Boethius* sailing in toward shore, I can see the whole north coast of La Jolla. I can see how it fits together as a community.

Going slow in a light wind, awash in sunshine, Lady Wisdom whispers to me. Flocks of pelicans, flying low in a line, advise me. The steep rise behind the shoreline spattered with interesting architecture speaks to me. The soft swells that come in from the northwest encourage me. If pilgrimage is the placing of one's self on a path with a heightened willingness to hear, see, and feel, then *Boethius* and I are the laziest of pilgrims. As afternoon Lajollanauts, I simply lean back on a cushion, keep a hand on the tiller, and allow *Boethius* to follow the wind into a symphony of sounds, sights, and feelings. Although lazy, I do not believe it is egotistical for me to think, at that moment on that sea, that La Jolla offers its own unique communication. On a chart, with a hand-held compass, pencil, and straightedge, I could place *Boethius* and me at the intersection of lines angling off to each coastal feature, each notch in the ridge, each distinctive building, and up to the cross on top of Mt. Soledad behind the town. Like a symphony, all of this little La Jollan cosmos comes together where I am at the intersection of all those radiating compass lines. No one else receives this particular message. I hear a sea lion gulp down some air as an erratic tern splashes into the sea seeking a bite to eat. These are grace notes in the symphony. My job is to listen. My obligation is to appreciate that I am blessed.

The analogy to a symphony is too limited, too narrowly phonic. My job is also to be aware of all the collage-like relationships that surround *Boethius* and me. The pilgrim tries to use more than merely the obvious five senses. The pilgrim strives for the highest, broadest, and deepest commonsense, the human commonsense that aspires to comprehend at the intersection of all radiating compass-lines. More than listening for a symphony, the pilgrim strives for ultimate sympathy. Each of the pieces of this coastal experience is important, but there is a collage-like wholeness that speaks too in the juxtapositions of that building to this statue, that cliff to this beach, this wind to that bird.

As kids in school we all made collages. These were great life lessons for future pilgrims. Cut various pictures out of various magazines, paste them together in an interesting way, and those pictures together say something new that they did not say individually. In the adult art world, this kind of art is called "Assemblage." Juxtapose diverse things, and they will speak something new. For example, place a glass of red wine on a table, and we hear the situation saying something about wine, its color, its taste,

maybe even a memory of Psalm 104 that says that wine gladdens the heart. Place a Christian cross next to the glass, and now the situation has greater communicative density as it associates itself with the biblical story of blood, sacrifice, suffering, sin, and grace. When I say that the California Bight has spiritual density, I mean our coast and islands are like that glass of wine. We can enjoy boating here as we enjoy a glass of wine. On the other hand, there is an island at the center of the Bight named after the Holy Cross. If we allow that the situation is more than superficial cartography, and we are willing to open ourselves to be pilgrims, then the California Bight becomes sacramental, a distinctive coastal arrangement in a state whose capital is named for the wine and bread, the blood and body, of grace.

I first learned about the fine art of "assemblage" when I was trying to figure out why there is a huge snake engraved into the top of the La Jolla ridge as a walking path leading up to the main library of UC San Diego. The campus is in a large eucalyptus grove and oriented around a stunningly sculptured library designed in the late 1960s by California's most famous mid-century modernist, William Pereira. The *Snake Path* was designed in 1992 by Alexis Smith, who, I learned from the university web site, is an assemblage, or collage, artist, a former student of Robert Irwin when he was an art professor at UC Irvine. I went back to my little college, checked out a book about Pereira, ordered one on Irwin from interlibrary loan, and found some articles and a video about Smith and the principles of assemblage art. Fortified with research, I then went back to UCSD to listen to the *Snake Path*, to walk it a few times, look at it from different angles, and see the fullness of its situation and the way it fits in with its surroundings.

UC San Diego's Geisel Library (designed by William Pereira) and the Stuart Collection's *Snake Path* leading up to the library (designed by Alexis Smith)

To those who visit or attend UCSD, the *Snake Path* sucks everything around it into a story of the fall and salvation of creation. Smith's snake turns Periera's library into the Garden of Eden's tree of knowledge and disobedience. Never mind that Periera said that the library was shaped to represent two hands, joined at the wrist, fingers splayed out, uplifting knowledge. Proximity to Smith's snake turns Periera's library into a tree. The *Snake Path* also sucks into its story the Charles Lee Powell Structural Systems Laboratory near its tale. Back in 1988, Bruce Nauman had been commissioned to wrap the top of the lab with seven-foot tall neon letters that spell out Roman Catholicism's seven vices and seven virtues. As an assemblage, the snake's body links artwork about humanity's ethical choices to the ultimate choice at the tree of disobedience at the snake's head.

Smith's assemblage could have been just interestingly about the Garden of Eden, but she more specifically nailed the whole assemblage to the Christian story of salvation by having the snake's body encircle a granite statue of the library's copy of John Milton's Christian classic *Paradise Lost*. By making the assemblage specifically Christian, Smith links her religious tableau with the cross on top of Mt. Soledad that overlooks UCSD. Although up at the cross, new buildings and tall eucalyptus trees block any view of the *Snake Path,* take the elevator to the upper floors of the library and La Jolla's cross easily is seen on skyline. When you view the cross from the within the tree/library, then look down at the

snake path, and over from its tail to the virtues-vices building you are physically participating in one of Christianity's most tightly entangled typologies.

Typology in the New Testament is a way of understanding how certain things, events and people in history are spiritually linked to enhance understanding of each while also pointing toward great truths of history. Typology is the Bible's own way of practicing the art of assemblage. Smith *Snake Path* sucks all who experience it into an assemblage of choices, snake, tree, and cross all wrapped in reference to the Christian salvation story in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Smith even offers a bench to contemplate the quote that is inscribed on the book: *Then Wilt Thou Not Be Loth To Leave This Paradise, But Shall Possess A Paradise Within Thee, Happier Far*.

The quote comes at the culmination of Milton's epic when the archangel Michael—the San Miguel who is patron of the island farthest west in the upper Channel Islands--tells Adam about the future coming of Christ and the eventual salvation of all creation. Michael tells him of the future redemption of the Earth:

… for then the Earth
Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
Than this of *Eden*, and far happier daies.

Adam then responds in his final speech in the book, declaring for himself and all who follow him:

Greatly instructed I shall hence depart.
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
Of knowledge, what this Vessel can containe;
Beyond which was my folly to aspire.
Henceforth I learne, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the onely God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simply meek; that suffering for Truths sake
Is fortitude to highest victorie,
And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life;
Taught this by his example whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest.

Did Alexis Smith in 1992 plan to use the *Snake Path* to create a typological assemblage that tells Christianity's most central story? Maybe. What is important is that the juxtaposition is there, a virtues-vices decision, a snake, a tree, and a cross. All of it comes together like a geoglyph into the top of La Jolla Ridge. Does it matter that it is hard to see the whole of it when on site? Not really. Geoglyphs are meant to be read from the sky. Who is the communicator? Are we receiving Smith's message or a message that comes unknown to its facilitators, Pereira, Nauman, Smith, and Donald Campell, who, back in the 1950s, designed Mt. Soledad's large, modernist, cross, four people who apparently never met each other? Or, is it the La Jolla Ridge itself that asked these artists, variously between 1950 to 1992, to

do what they did. Robert Irwin, Smith's teacher, wrote in 1985 that an artist must, before starting the work, must go to the site, "sitting, watching, walking," listening for what is "conditioned/determined" by the place. I tend to think the ridge, itself, conditioned/determined each artist's work with the purpose of creating this whole message.

Artists have a long tradition of being mystic-listeners. Louis Kahn, the architect of what is probably the most important work of architecture on the whole coast of Southern California, is famous for teaching his students to listen to bricks. *Boethius* and I can see his building on the ridge. As a student at UCSB back in the 1970s and in graduate school in the 1980s I was assigned to read about Louis Kahn and his Salk Institute of Biological Studies here in La Jolla. I was taught to see it as a wonderful example of the "Brutalist" desire for buildings to express their earthiness. In June 2017 the *New York Review of Books* came in the mail with Kahn's Salk Institute as the cover story. The article, titled "A Mystic Monumentality" discussed how, in 1944, Kahn defined "architectural monumentality" as finding "a quality, a spiritual quality inherent in a structure which conveys the feeling of its eternity, that it cannot be added to or changed." The book being reviewed was *You Say to Brick: The Life of Louis Kahn* (2017). The title comes from Kahn's belief that an architect must discuss with construction materials what should be designed. When he taught students, he liked to give this example: "You say to a brick, 'What do you want, brick?' Brick says to you, 'I like an arch.'"

A Mystic Monumentality

Martin Filler

The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California, designed by Louis Kahn and completed in 1965

Salk Institute for Biological Studies

tery of the use of light to show works of art against stone walls. Its big failure is the parking lot that fronts the main entrance and brings to mind a suburban strip mall, even though Kahn intended visitors to enter via the recessed court-

at the University of Pennsylvania); and religious groups (the First Unitarian Church and School of 1959–1969 in Rochester, New York, and Temple Beth-El Synagogue of 1966–1972 in Chappaqua, New York). How often

was master planner. The French architect's emphasis on Beaux-Arts principles such as bilateral symmetry and the *marche* (the central processional route through a building) recurred with particular force in Kahn's late work. These

Cover story in *The New York Review of Books*, June 22, 2017 with image of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies

Many probably suspect that Robert Irwin and Louis Kahn were just talking artistic gibberish when they recommended letting a site or a brick make demands upon of them as artist. *Boethius* and I, however, think that there is great wisdom in what they say. Too many are trained in schools and universities to deny the evidence that the cosmos is highly communicative and has a purpose that it wants to achieve. Lady Wisdom tells Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy,* that, even those things believed by many to be inanimate, actually have in them desires, desires for the good, the beautiful, and the end to which each thing has been, in Irwin's phrase, "conditioned/determined." Irwin and Kahn, when they listen to a site or a brick, are wisely following the deepest truths known by most of the world, through most of time. *Boethius* and I see no problem with talking to bricks. I see no problem with asking *Boethius* what she thinks. I see no problem with asking the coast, its buildings, its arts, and its history, what it wants to say. The coast talks, not necessarily with words, but often with signs, types, and wonders. The attentive pilgrim's job is to listen.

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Lady Wisdom would agree with the world famous oceanographers who work here at La Jolla Shores that the ocean is a vast mechanism, part of the vaster mechanism of the cosmos while encompassing a wide array of smaller, more individualistic, mechanisms like tides, swells, and buoyancy. *The Consolation of Philosophy* heartily affirms that the earth, and our human bodies also, are machine-like, but Lady Wisdom does not stop there. The cosmos is more than a world-machine and humans are more than mechanisms. In modern scientific parlance, everything mechanical is also emergent, 2 + 2 = 5.

William Emerson Ritter, the biologists who founded Scripps Institution of Oceanography, was a thinker and educational entrepreneur whose mind was open to the mystical qualities of a mechanistic universe. He was a smart Wisconsin boy called to the sea in ways similar to John Muir's calling to the Sierra Nevada. A big thinker who wanted to see the bigness in the little things. Me, sailing slow in a pleasant breeze, now parallel to the cliffs having gybed the sails over from starboard to port and let the billow out with a following wind, I see Scripps Pier and Ritter's first Scripps building up ahead. I wish I had Ritter sailing with me. He could teach me much about this ocean and the life it generates and supports. I think he would welcome Lady Wisdom to be with us. Apparently he was a pleasant person. When at dinner parties pitching the institute to the wealthy philanthropists, Ellen Scripps and her little brother Edwin, Ritter would show them that sciences were mired in "elementalistism." The sciences, he told them, were increasingly focused on parts not wholes. The Scripps family, convinced, gave him lots of money so that a new oceanographic research station would reform the methods of science.

Ritter's most important book advocating reform was *The Unity of the Organism: "Or the Organismal Conception of Life"* (1919). Biology, for Ritter, should have a commitment to understanding the way life is greater than its elements, that wholes can be greater than the sum of their parts. Biology should not ignore the "indubitable psychic life of organisms"—a statement that I take to mean the way organisms at all levels mysteriously communicate even without necessarily being conscious. Biology, for Ritter, needed to balance its elementalist, analytical, thinking with organismal, synthetic thinking, about how wholes emerged into things greater than their parts.

Ritter must have listened to the ocean that he loved, and I would have enjoyed being his student. I wonder how far he would go with his expansive views on life. Would he believe that a ridge could bring about a work of art, and whether bricks could respond to questions? What is Life? That is the question begged by all these biological laboratories hanging off La Jolla cliffs, surmounting the La Jolla Ridge, and sloping down to La Jolla Shores.

To be a Trinitarian Christian, as I am, demands an open mind. I can never be too committed to 2 + 2 = 4. *Boethius* and I sail with the flow of Christian tradition in which the Trinity dominates all senses of reality. The Trinity is a social relationship, a lively communication between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that spills over into all creation. In the Bible, winds, water, birds, furniture, buildings, wine, and bread communicate. Anything, it appears, can be an angel. If humans cease praising God, the rocks will. The Trinity is a loving relationship, and the love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit spills out into all creation. Anything, maybe all things, are alive. Lady Wisdom tells Boethius in *Consolation of Philosophy* that love also holds the cosmos together. John in the first four verses of his gospel describes Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, as both word and life. Communication and life, both empowered by love, seem to *Boethius* and me to be the dominant and most interesting characteristics of the world. Out here sailing, the wind, sea, and pelicans conspire to advise us to not to constrain our thoughts about love, words, and life. 1 can equal 3, and 2 + 2 often equals 5.

If Biology is the study of life, then we should expect La Jolla to be dense with the Holy Spirit. We should is rocks to cry out, its ridge to express itself as a geoglyph, its cliffs to support mystic monumentality. Life is everything. Life is why I sail. Life is the goal of every pilgrimage out here in the wind and waves. I would love to have William Ritter on board to talk with me about organismal and synthetic thinking. When I was in college at UC Santa Barbara I learned about the physicist Erwin Schrödinger who wrote the book that asked the question: *What is Life*. Schrödinger is famous for being one of the founders of quantum physics, and, being no small, merely elementalist, thinker, he did not shy from stepping up to the great biological question. I don't pretend to understand the depths of Schrödinger's book, but his basic argument is that life is measurable as resistance to entropy. Life is movement and organization working against the death of stasis and chaos. Heraclitus, the armchair philosopher five hundred years before Christ, had associated the *Logos* with movement. Movement, *Logos*, the Meaning of Life—it is here in the California Bight. It is, of course, not only here. But *Boethius* and I, after years of close engagement with the Bight, find it especially here.

Boethius and I are biologists—not the narrowly professional kind; rather we are waterborne students of life, riding the afterbirth of waves, tides, and currents when the Mother Creator depicted in the Isaiah 42, legs spread wide, gripping the edges of the bed, creates the all in all. *Boethius* and I are scientists in the largest sense. In *Consolation of Philosophy,* Boethius, himself, takes up the subject of life as the central pilgrimage of the book. Lady Wisdom criticized Boethius for being too quick to think of some things as "inanimate." Flames, she says, fly upward out of their desire to fulfill their created purpose. Rocks, she says, are solid because of their desire to cling tenaciously to itself within itself. I

hear Lady Wisdom in the winds off La Jolla coast warning us all not to draw too strict a line between the inanimate and animate. The book ends with Lady Wisdom describing God as “the whole fullness of boundless life.” The goal of the pilgrimage is not to become God. That is impossible. Pilgrimage is to be drawn toward that boundless life. Right now as I look at the cliffs under the Salk Institute, those cliffs are straining to hold up that mass of brutalist concrete while the sea below bides it’s time like a pack of wolves following a heard of deer. The rocks are at work, but so is the sea. Out here, less than a mile out, *Boethius* has little ribbons up on the sails that tell me about the wind and guide me as to the best way to the most fitting way to adjust my sails or point the boat. Out here Lady Wisdom advises me not to be too quick draw lines between what is alive and not. Sailboats teach that it is better to give benefit of the doubt to life’s abundant possibilities. In a poem that Boethius records in *The Consolation*, he writes of the natural law of love that holds all mechanisms together. The whole cosmos is like a rock within which a desire (love) binds and sustains it. The poem ends: “O happy human race, if the love that rules the stars may also rule your hearts.”

Boethius and I have come down the coast and are off the pier at Scripps Institute. We cinch in and shape ourselves into a broad reach to get out around the point so as to head back south to Point Loma. Our *Lajollanaut* day of exploration are coming to an end. As pilgrims we have miles to go before we sleep. The sun is still high in the sky, and there are lots of people playing in the surf. Behind us the pier leads back to the original Scripps building designed by Irving Gill. It looks like a box, nothing special, but, like Kahn, Gill allowed his buildings to be infused with cosmic messages. In an article at the turn of the twentieth century, Gill wrote that "There is something very restful and satisfying," about a cube, there is "bare honesty" in it, a "childlike frankness and chaste simplicity."

Scripps Institute building by Irving Gill at La Jolla Shores. Mt. Soledad is in the background.

From the cockpit of *Boethius* I look back on the Scripps building and even though it is now crowded around and behind with busy buildings, I can still sense the rest, honesty, and frankness that Gill meant for the building to communicate. I look up to the ridge and know that a geoglyph is embedded up there with a serpent path at its center. People walk over and through it every day and don't see it, but the birds see it. Maybe I first saw it because my osprey-angels told me about it. Today's pilgrimage started with the octagons of the Spalding House serving as a spiritual satellite dish, and here in the upper loop of the pilgrimage we look back upon the cubes of the Scripps building radiating honesty and simplicity. Today's gentle breeze will take us home to our mooring. I will have four or so more hours to watch the coast, listen to the wind, and enjoy the love that holds all things together.

Maybe you, dear reader, are worried that I am believing too much. Maybe you are one of the multitude of science-minded people who inhabit La Jolla and have been trained to apply to life what is popularly called Ockham's Razor, a rationality rule that favors parsimony over abundance. I urge you to continue reading. At minimum, you will learn why places have their names and about our coastal history and culture. Maps and street names will become more meaningful to you. You are not required to believe as if you were a pilgrim too. On the other hand, allow me to remind you that William of Ockham, the great medieval philosopher whose razor our schools have insisted we shave our minds with, believed in prayer, patron saints, and the central importance of Santa Cruz. Throughout his life he believed in miracles. Frankly, Ockham's actual "Razor" never proposes that nature is really, regularly, truly parsimonious. I imagine, sometimes, him sailing with me, discussing Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. Ockham was a Franciscan, a follower of St. Francis of Assisi, a brother to our coast's St. Junípero Serra. Ockham and I, splashing along together, could happily sing St. Francis' hymn:

> Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun,
> who brings the day; and you give light through him.
> And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
> Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.
> Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
> and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather
> through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,

which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,

who sustains us and governs us

and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Chapter 3

Rocks, Whales, and Dana's Point

Late one afternoon when *Boethius* and I were sailing southeast in the middle of San Pedro Channel, I heard a whale breathe. We were sailing wing-and-wing. This is a touchy way to configure the rig. It requires concentration to keep one sail filled to port and the other filled to starboard. It is pretty to see a boat sailing this way, but you should know that the person at the helm is not relaxed—especially if there is a following sea combined with a strong wind that is regularly blowing the tops off the swells before they roll underneath you. Within thirty minutes I would make a mistake and break my boom. I had set a "preventer," a line from the boom to a cleat on the side of the boat that will keep the boom from swinging all the way across the boat. Stupidly, maybe I was just tired, I decided I needed something, I have forgotten what, from inside the companionway. I would have to let go of the tiller to reach it. I hooked my autohelm to the tiller, leaned forward, reached down into the cabin, and suddenly the stern lifted and swung, the port rail rose high, and the starboard rail dipped low into the water. Thrown off balance, I tried to reach back to grab the tiller. Boethius was now broaching sideways to the white-capped swells. The mainsail back-winded. I didn't see it. I was focused on reaching for the tiller, but I heard *Boethius's* spar break loud and metallic: BANG! It broke at the bale to which the preventer was tied. The back half of the boom began to flail wildly, lines whipped back and forth. Having by this time grabbed the tiller, I pushed it deep to leeward, trying to point *Boethius* into the wind. Her bow would not come up. The steep swells and strong wind kept forcing it back. Happily, the mainsail did not rip. I tugged the outboard motor to life, gave the boat some momentum, pushed the tiller again to leeward and got the bow pointing up the swells and into the wind. After connecting the autohelm to the tiller, bashing bow first into every swell, I began to clean up the mess. Eventually all was secure. Long into that night and all the next day *Boethius* and I limped without a mainsail, first to Dana Point, then to San Diego.

[Limping toward San Diego, the day after we broke our boom.]

But back to the whale. It was like no other I had ever seen, and *Boethius* and I had seen our fair share. The population of whales in the California Bight has been increasing during my decades on the Bight. The older I get the more whales I see, and sailing with them nearby is always a thrill. They lumber along and allow us boaters to come close. I always feel blessed by them. They show us how to live deliberately. They have a slow dignity to which we humans should aspire. On the other hand, sometimes they fling themselves into the air with a joy to which we humans should also aspire.

In May of 2006 in the Santa Barbara Channel, when I was teaching California History during a two-week sailing excursion, my students and I saw two grey whales, a hundred yards or so off the bow, shoot themselves up into the air, two thirds of their bodies straining up into the sky, then crashing down with a huge splash. I was teaching about Mexican California on a calm morning when the sea was flat. We were all in the cockpit of a Beneteau 50 named *Faraway* when one of the students saw the first whale start to rise. She called out and pointed. Class immediately dismissed itself as students clamored up along the rails and scrambled forward. Soon another breached, breaking through the surface of the water, poking its nose high into the sky, and splashing down on its side. Students continued to watch knowing that at least two whales were underwater and might show themselves again. After a few minutes, one of the students at the bow called out and pointed. She was not, however, pointing out to sea. She was pointing down to the water below her feet. I was steering back in stern. I looked down into the water and saw the back of a whale as big as our boat crossing under us. Fear and wonder

overwhelmed me at the same moment, but the whale just swam on. Those whales, I'm sure, knew they were giving us a thrill.

[Whales! May 2006 with Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands in the background.]

Once, when *Boethius* and I were sailing south several miles off Del Mar at the estuary of the San Diegito River, a small humpback whale, going the same direction as us at about the same speed, hunched up close to take a look at us. Whale emotions are hard to read, but I sensed that this one wanted to share the journey for a while. I started talking to it. After about thirty minutes of it rising to the surface every few minutes, it went underwater and swam away. Maybe I talked too much. Maybe it simply wanted to be polite and did not really want to get involved in a full conversation.

I confess to talking often with sea creatures in the same way I talk with our family's cats. St. Francis talked with animals and birds. The Bible does not speak against talking or listening to other creatures. In fact, the Bible encourages it, most interestingly with the story of stubborn and obtuse Balaam and his donkey. The donkey sees an angel telling him and his rider to stop. Balaam does not see the angel and starts whipping the donkey that is trying to help him understand what God wants him to do. God then miraculously gives the donkey the power of human speech: "Why are you beating me?" the donkey asks.

Balaam responds, "You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

The loyal animal answers, “Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?”

Balaam replies, “No,” apparently realizing that the donkey is loyal and that he should be listening to it.

At that moment, the Lord allows Balaam to see the angel that the donkey sees. The angel is angry with Balaam for beating the animal that was trying to communicate to him that the angel wanted him to stop. “I would have killed you by now,” says the angry angel, but for the good donkey.

There is a lot to learn in that story. First, angels can communicate through animals, and apparently through all creation. Second, humans need to be listening for the non-verbal communication of animals, and presumably the non-verbal communication by all creation.

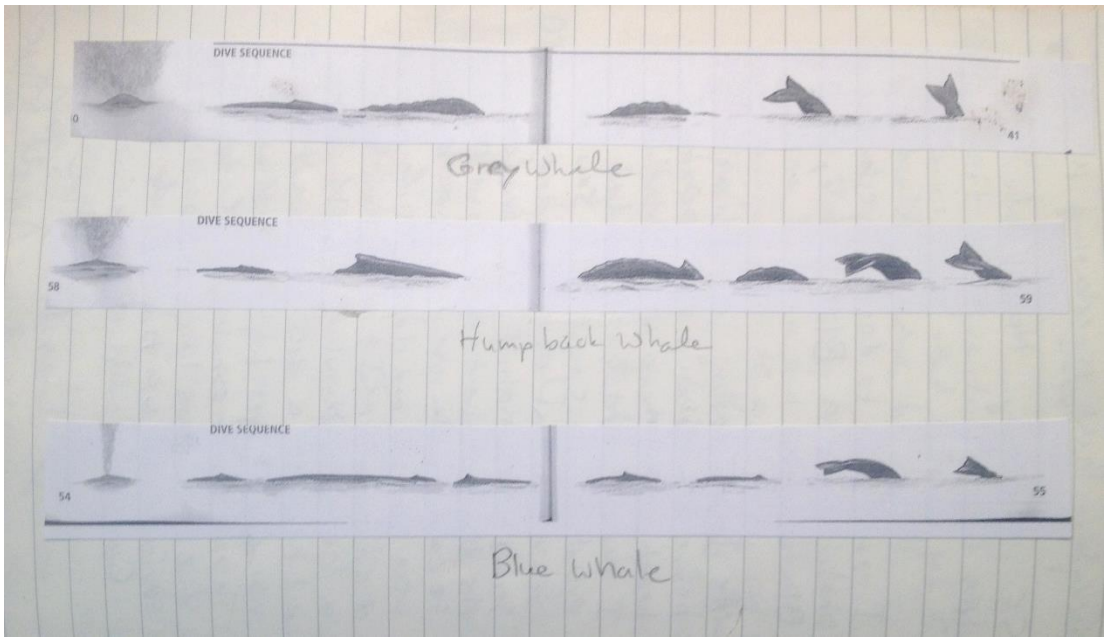
Only once do I think that I had an actual conversation, a back-and-forth communication, with a whale. It was very early on a Spring morning back in 1987. I was walking westward alone along the beach below UC Santa Barbara and Isla Vista. I remember waves washing up to my feet. Off in the distance to the south, Santa Cruz Island hunched its back out of the waters. I was rather despondently thinking that I would soon be leaving the California coast. I had accepted a job in Indiana and would be moving at the end of summer. Then in the surf, just beyond the line where the waves began to break, I saw the whole length of a grey whale. The beach was empty and the whale and, although I had to pick up my pace a bit, we walked/swam next to each other for maybe a quarter mile. Neither the whale nor I said anything out-loud to each other. I did sense, however, that it was consoling me. The whale was communicating empathy. I was appreciative, and hoped the whale sensed it. Later in life I began to doubt my memory of the event. It was too perfect, too poetic, too symbolic: a whale commiserating with me about my immanent departure from the Bight. But a few years ago, when on one of my sailing versions of California History class was at its end, my class and I were sailing south, close along the shore headed for the harbor entrance at Newport Beach. The beach was crowded and the sky bright blue when a student called out that there was a whale in the surf. We were motoring at that point, the sails having been brought in for the turn we would soon take into the channel. The whale was headed north, opposite to us. I turned the boat around, dropped the engine speed, and came up, about forty yards west of shore, parallel to a grey whale swimming at the edge of the surf. People on shore were crowding down to the waterline pointing. From the other side of the whale, my students and I were pointing also. Everybody was laughing and calling out to each other. On the beach clumps of people drew closer together as they moved north, feet in the surf, keeping up with the whale. Soon the whale headed out to deeper water and disappeared. After I had turned the boat back around and had it

pointed again toward the breakwater at the entrance to Newport Harbor, I thought about my whale experience in Santa Barbara. I felt confident that I *had* seen a whale in the surf that early morning some twenty-five years earlier. I had just seen one similar in the surf at Newport Beach.

I am pretty sure those two whales, the one in Santa Barbara and the one in Newport Beach, knew, in some way, what they were doing. They were where they were in order to bring messages of solace and joy. I have a hard time believing that whales do not comprehend the energy radiating from people who see them from the beaches and on whale-watching boats. Why shouldn't whale be communicating back with their own energy, sending their own message? The great mystery of life is the extent of communication between its members. The great fellowship of creation, from molecules to whales, seems to me to be in the conscious and unconscious understandings that creatures sense from each other. Here again, the Bible says that winds are angels, that rocks can praise, and that all creation can groan. The Bible has the creator calling to all creation, Jesus actually holding it all together, and creatures communicating with each other. Biologist, chemists, astronomers, and physicists are increasingly amazed at the amount and sophistication of information being passed around in the cosmos. All things have vocations, callings. Can it be possible that that whale in the surf at Newport Beach was oblivious to the tumult of happiness it was creating? Are we so cold-hearted that we must insist that that whale in Newport did not swerve over to the beach in order to bring happiness? I certainly am not so cold hearted. I felt that whale in Santa Barbara offering me consolation.

Back to the whale in San Pedro Channel. I heard it breathe. The wind was noisy. It was blowing hard and would soon break my boom with its power. But I heard clearly the whoosh of a whale exhaling behind me. I turned immediately and saw its back as its spout dissipated. Then a second whale's back hunched up into view and spouted before lumbering back down into the water. The backs of neither whale looked familiar. I had seen the backs of grey and humpback whales. These two whales I had just seen had broad backs that barely washed above the surface before sinking back below. I was moving fast, the wind and the waves were rough, I did not see much. But I yelled to them. I called out to them: "Hey! Come back!" I was pretty sure they were blue whales! The largest mammals on earth! I had been looking to see one for years, but had never yet met up with one. Later, after the boom broke, I had cleaned up the mess, the wind and water had calmed, and *Boethius* and I were motoring at away from the setting sun toward Dana Point, I went below to retrieve my *Whales and Other Marine Mammals of California and Baja* by Tamara Eder and Ian Sheldon. For every kind of whale, the book

shows a profile sketch-sequence of its rise and dive. Sure enough! I had seen two blue whales! More than seen, I had heard them breathe.



[Page from Boethius's log after confirming sighting of blue whales]

There is a Hebrew phrase, *nishmath chajim,* meaning "breath of life." Adam in the Garden of Eden receives the *nishmath chajim* from God. Another word is *Shechinah*, the physical "presence of God." *Boethius* and I are believers. We experience out on the Bight what we accept to be divine breathings and the presence of the creator. The idea that God wouldn't use whale breath to speak and whales themselves as manifestations of divine *Shechinah* makes no sense to us. Lady Wisdom says tells us that creation is layered with blurred liminalities. The physicist Lawrence M. Krauss wrote a few years ago in *The New York Review of Books* that "light itself is just one small piece of a continuous spectrum of invisible electromagnetic waves that are filling the space around us and bombarding us at all times." He further wrote, "every second over 600 billion particles called neutrinos penetrate every square centimeter of your body, traversing it, and the earth, without interaction." The easily visible world, he goes on to say, "is essentially an irrelevant sideshow. The important stuff is invisible, quite possibly made of some new type of matter." This is the kind of cosmos we sail in. This is the wild west of the California Bight. This is the San Pedro Channel. *Boethius* and I, rushing toward Dana Point with the sails wing-and-wing, wind blowing hard, swells from behind, have no problem with the idea that 600 billion

invisible neutrinos are also ripping through us. Lady Wisdom taught the real Boethius that all creation is an integrated whole, that the universe has a homogenous source of vitality, that the little and the big are entangled, and that a divine immanence, a Creator's love, holds everything together. This is why I named my boat *Boethius*.

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This pilgrimage began as a plan to rock-hop up the coast, first to the lee of Dana Point, then to the lee of Point Fermin, then to the lee of Point Dume, and from there west into the islands, eventually, hopefully, to anchor in the lee of Point Conception. As dawn was breaking on the morning after my third night, my wife sent me a text as *Boethius* were motoring westward from Point Dume: "Come home." I pushed the tiller to starboard, swung the bow southward, and called to see what was up. It was not an emergency, but I was needed at home. I like sailing alone, but I am a family guy with responsibilities. All the rest of the morning I headed toward the southeastern tip of Catalina Island thinking I would anchor there, then make the long run to San Diego on the following day. As noted earlier, the afternoon wind was strong in the San Pedro Channel, I was moving fast, so I decided to swing back toward the more distant Dana Point, which would give me an added jump, and better wind angle, for San Diego the next day. I would get into Dana Point late, but I knew well its harbor entrance and free anchorage. Little did I know that I would come limping in with a broken boom.

Dana Point is named after Richard Henry Dana Jr. whose classic book, *Two Years Before the Mast,* figures large in my sense of this coast's spiritual density. Between ages nineteen and twenty, in 1835 and 1836, Dana sailed into the lee of this point several times when it was called by the name of its nearby mission: San Juan Capistrano. He sailed here as a deckhand, but the crew and officers knew he that was an upperclass Harvard-boy, bookish, smart, and the child of a friend of the boat's owners. The boat, for most of Dana's voyage, was the appropriately named *Pilgrim*. Young Dana was the first literary pilgrim of the California coast. Having loved his book and taught it many times, both on sailboats and in classrooms, I confess this book of my pilgrimages exists in its shadow and aspires to the vividness of its observations, humanity of its perspectives, and underlying passion of its hopes. *Two Years Before the Mast* is a coming-of-age story. Dana, a teenager, feels out-of-place in the snobbish and staid Harvardian class of New England, a class in which he is expected to his place. American culture at the time is being up-ended by what we historians call the Jacksonian Age. Democracy and "The Common Man" are being extolled as the backbone of the future. "The Dignity of Labor" is being praised over aristocratic laziness.

Much of *Two Years Before the Mast* is about the high-technology of sailing and the dignity of sailors who know all the names of every sail, every line, and every action required to round Cape Horn, anchor in San Diego Harbor, and fight themselves off the rocks of Dana Point when wind and seas quickly whip up. One of the many memorable passages is an account of how Dana gains the grudging respect of his fellow sailors. The *Pilgrim* is anchored here in the lee of the point, surrounded by a high cliff that still today is Dana Point Harbor's most distinctive aspect. The sailors' job is to load the boat with stiff and dried hides gathered at the nearby mission. Instead of walking them the long way around, the sailors heave them over the side of the cliff, where they pile up and can then be carried, on the sailors heads, into the surf and onto boats that will row out to the *Pilgrim.* On this particular day, a bundle of hides gets caught half way down the cliff. Dana offers to be lowered down the cliff with a "top gallant royal halyard?????"—the longest rope on the boat. Dana successfully dislodges the bundle, and it falls to the beach below. Dana is pulled back up to the top of the cliff and what is his reward? An old sailor calls him a "damn fool."

Point San Juan Capistrano/Dana Point, ca. 1925 before the harbor was built. Photo courtesy Orange County Archives https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40004365

Two Years Before the Mast is most deeply a book about a boy finding purpose in life. Young Dana is searching, throughout the book, for his vocation. Early on, when anchored in the lee of Point Fermin at San Pedro, Dana realizes with great clarity that he cannot be a sailor. The political structure of a sailing vessel is closer to a Southern slave plantation than a properly governed New England town. The

captain has tyrannical powers. Dana compares himself and his fellow sailors to slaves. The last third of the book is driven by his desire to leave the California coast. His purpose in life is not to be either a sailor-slave or a ship captain-tyrant. He does not yet know what it is, but he must get off this coast and get back to Boston. Poignantly, to get himself off this coast, Dana must use his aristocratic connections, his father's friendship with the boat's owners, to get himself back to Boston. Dana has to buy himself out of slavery.

Back in 2003 I experimented with teaching Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* in a joint venture between my college and the San Diego Maritime Museum. They had just renovated the schooner *Californian,* and together we thought that a combination sailing and book-discussion class would be appealing to college students. Well, it was, but not to enough students. A big boat like that with a paid captain needs to generate significant revenue. We needed around twenty-two students on board the boat to break even. We did the first class at a financial loss to the museum, and the next year cancelled the class. In the meantime, my college had paid for me to get the certification to rent large sailboats, and I began more than a decade of sailing with small groups of students in Greece and the California Bight. By chartering large yachts and sailing them myself, we made the classes affordable to six or seven students. The college also paid for me to get a captain's license from the U.S. Coast Guard. Happily, I began spending every May out among the islands with students reading and discussing California history, especially Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*.

Discussing *Two Years Before the Mast* on the schooner *Californian* in 2003.

Although we sailed a variety of routes over the years, spending the first night in Dana Point became my favorite way to start the course. In either Long Beach or Newport I would rent a large sloop, between forty and fifty feet long with three or four cabins and two heads with showers. After loading the boat with food and gear we would do an easy afternoon sail down the coast to Dana Point. This allowed the students, who were mostly studying to be teachers, to get their sea legs and learn how to crew the boat. Many of the students know the coastal beaches, but very few have contemplated coastal topography. On the way south we study the coast, especially how the flatland of the Los Angeles basin ends abruptly at Newport Beach and becomes a steep mountainous coast. We talk about the real estate developer Henry Huntington, the history of Irvine Ranch, and note the large estuarial region of the Santa Ana River. With Laguna Beach to port, we would begin talking about the historical importance of rock-hopping the coast. Far off behind us we see Point Fermin where we can assume there is a place to anchor with security. In front of us, poking out into the sea, is the high rocky cliff of Dana Point. On the other side of it we speculate that we might find a safe place to anchor. Here, where we were sailing, is a long lee shore, the most dangerous kind of shore. Imagine the modern breakwaters on this coast gone—there would be no harbors at Los Angeles, Long Beach, Los Alimitos, Huntington, and Newport. This is why rock-hopping is so important to the maritime history of this coast. A boat has to snuggle in behind something substantial to feel safe. To the north is Point Fermin. To the south is Dana Point and,

to the south of it, is Point Loma. La Jolla Point offers safety only if the wind and waves are coming from the southwest, and that is rare. Before trains, cars, and airplanes, California was an isolated coast, hard to get to, and hard to be safe along. If one wants to understand the urban development of Southern California under Spain, Mexico, and the early United States, it behooves students to contemplate the crucial importance of the two best rocks: Point Fermin and Point Loma. Dana Point, before its breakwater, was never much of a safe anchorage. It has its own, distinctive, history between Los Angeles and San Diego, an isolated coast of an isolated coast—until it became the modern Orange County.

Sailing south, rounding out past what the Spanish named *Punta de San Juan Capistrano*, takes a sailor back in time. Its long elbow-like cliff patch of flat water in its lee have appealed to mariners for thousands of years. When my class and I in our modern yacht pass the point and have the breakwater off to port, we take a moment to be amazed. Then I explain to the students what we will do in order to anchor in the lee of that cliff. I turn on the engine and teach the students how to take in the sails. One student at the helm rounds us up into the wind, two students winch in the jib's roller-furler line, one hauls the mainsheet to center the boom then lets loose the main halyard to let the mainsail begin to fall, and a couple of others help me flake and tie the mainsail to the boom. This first maneuver of the trip is usually a bit rough, but over the course of two weeks the students will get into this rhythm of dousing sails at the end of every day's journey. At Dana Point, on this first evening of the class, with the sails doused, we turn the boat toward the buoy that marks the harbor entrance. When we reach the buoy we swing the bow to port and motor into the lee of the long breakwater that shelters a narrow channel. Inside the breakwater, we drop the engine speed, and, with no wake, we slowly pass the statue of Richard Henry Dana Jr., the author of *Two Years Before the Mast*. At the end of the channel we disengage the prop and slide into the free anchorage below the cliffs. Here in the flat water I show the students how to release the anchor and how to use the controls for the electric anchor winch. While I cook dinner, I put them to work with colored pencils, drawing maps of the coast and islands, labeling the significant points, bays, rivers, and mountains. The goal is to get them started at the skill of keeping history and geography closely linked. We eat usually at the cockpit table as the sun is setting. I wash the dishes in order to keep the students doing assignments. Then we all settle around the table below where, taking turns, we read aloud to each other from Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*—those who feel a little sea sick can just listen. By 11pm students are ready to go to their bunks. Most often I sleep up in the cockpit under the stars in the glow of the marina lights.

Housing developers renamed the point in the 1930s, hoping to capitalize on Dana's description of the point as “the most romantic spot on the coast of California.” Development of the area got rolling in the 1960s, and the modern harbor was finished in 1971. The statue of Richard Henry Dana boaters pass on the main channel was installed in 1972. It is a nice statue: a young, strong, sailor, shirtless, clutching a book—a sailor-scholar.

Here at this anchorage in 1835, Dana described himself not only descending its cliff, but also being revived by the place after being stricken with despair. He was twenty years old. He was homesick for Boston. The captain was a tyrant. He felt trapped on a far-off coast in a job he wanted to quit. He writes that here in the lee of the point now named after him:

> Not a human being but ourselves for miles; and no sound heard but the pulsations of the great Pacific! and the great steep hill rising like a wall, cutting us off from all the world, but the "world of waters!" I separated myself from the rest, and sat down on a rock, just where the sea ran in and formed a fine spouting horn. Compared with the plain, dull sand-beach of the rest of the coast, this grandeur was as refreshing as a great rock in a weary land. I was almost the first time that I had been positively alone—free from the sense that human beings were at my elbow, if not talking with me—since I had left home. My better nature returned strong upon me. Everything was in accordance with my state of feeling, and I experienced a glow of pleasure at finding that what of poetry and romance I ever had in me, had not been entirely deadened by the laborious and frittering life I had led.

"As refreshing as a great rock in a weary land." What a great line. I always have my students pause to think about it when we read it together. Picture the moment. Dana, a nineteen-turning-twenty years old young man, far from home, despondent, has his "better nature" revived by this high-cliffed point on the California coast—the cliff we now anchor beneath. Dana Point is well-named. To anchor here is to reach back through time to grip a moment when a rock helps a young man turn his life around. Dana thinks he has been frittering away his life, and now this great rock helps him find purpose and vocation. The importance of this is more than personal. Dana described it in a book that has become a great American classic, a book that has become infused into the self-understanding of California’s history. Kevin Starr, California’s most prolific and most spiritually sensitive historian, wrote in the first chapter of the first book of his magisterial series *Americans and the California Dream*, about the spiritual sensibilities of Dana and Dana’s book. Starr says that both presage California's long-lasting

cultural struggle with a Protestantism that is wrapped-up in the self, conflicted by sex, myopically industrious, and overly judgmental. I think Starr is right that Dana and his book have deep religious influence on the long history of the whole of California's culture, but I think Dana's personal conversion here at this rock presages the evangelicalism of this corner of what is now Orange County, maybe one of the most religiously influential counties in modern American history.

In an autobiographical sketch written by Dana in 1841, soon after he published his book, Dana wrote that the most significant aspect of the years 1830-1838 was not his voyage to California, but rather his turn away from the mild unitarianism and Congregationalism of his friends and family to what he called an "evangelical" view of Christianity. His conversion to a more zealous and Bible-oriented faith began around 1830 while living with his father and little brother in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The boy's mother had died when he was seven years old. His father was a kind, gentle, but rather lazy, poet. Dana described himself as "religiously taught, but very early gave up prayer & estranged myself entirely from God." Growing up, he suffered from what he called "depressions" and "spiritual warfare." His first great personal adventure, at age fifteen, was to leave the traditional church of his family—his family had long been among the stalwart elite of Cambridge, his grandfather worked as a diplomat during the Revolutionary war with both John and John Quincy Adams and became Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Young Dana left the family church and started attending a more dynamic church where he was moved to "deep religious convictions" by the dynamic preaching of the Rev. Nehemiah Adams.

Not long after, Dana did what teenage boys of his social rank were supposed to do: he entered Harvard, the local college. Within a year he was suspended. Some students caused a ruckus, and Dana would not snitch on them. The president decided to suspend them all. Dana's father, always placid, was unruffled. He told his boy that he had done the right thing, and arranged for the young man to live and study with a family up in Andover on the Merrimack River. For a melancholic, motherless boy, now pushing seventeen years old, the removal to Andover proved to be wonderfully happy and formative. In Andover he found himself embraced by the motherly Abigail Wood and plunged into a lively family of ten children. Across the street was a little evangelical seminary that, unlike parochial Harvard, was pietistic, world-conscious, and missionary-oriented. At the dinner table every night was Leonard Woods Jr., his tutor, eight years older, the future president of Bowdoin College, a man that Dana would venerate all his life. Woods Jr., Dana later wrote, exemplified delight "in the beautiful and the good, the strange and the ancient." Woods Jr. taught Dana to appreciate the aesthetics and ceremonies of European Roman Catholicism, and this appreciation shows up often in *Two Years Before the Mast,*

especially Dana's descriptions of a funeral and wedding in Santa Barbara. Woods Jr. was busy with his own scholarly project and gave Dana lots of unstructured time to pursue wide reading from the family's library.

Also at the dinner table was Sarah Woods. Two years younger than Dana, Sarah was infatuated by their house guest. Having lots of freedom, Dana spent much time with her. In a house full of evangelical zeal, Dana readily shared with her his struggles with melancholia, his doubts, and his fear that his new found evangelical faith was not as strong as it should be. Sarah, being spiritually precocious, took upon herself the project of helping Dana. Even after he left the household, gone back to Harvard, and eventually sailed to California, she continued to pray for him. When Dana returned from California and reconnected with the Woods family, he discovered that the now eighteen-year-old Sarah had just died. Sarah's mother told Dana that in the delirium before her death, Sarah had spoken his name. The mother said that in a period of lucidness she had asked Sarah why she had called out Dana's name. Sarah responded that she had long been praying for him. Dana recorded in his journal that Sarah, knowing that she would die soon, told her mother that she hoped that God, when she was in heaven, would permit her to "watch over me, keeping me from sin, & influencing me toward God & holy things." Dana further recorded that "in her very last moments she prayed fervently & impassionedly for me, & the last words that fell from her lips were 'Prepare him for a seat at thy right hand."

Deeply moved by this, Dana recommitted himself to his pre-voyage evangelical aspirations. The following year, 1837, became an intense time of finding himself spiritually and vocationally. Fully committed now to an evangelical path, he graduated from Harvard, entered law school, and, during six-months of intense legal studies and late night writing, he produced almost all of *Two Years Before the Mast*. Close readers of the book will feel passion of its morally passionate, anti-slavery, justice-oriented, political perspectives.

Up in Andover, before the voyage, was also Leonard Woods Sr., husband of the motherly Abigail, and ruling elder at lively dinners at a table-full of children and various student boarders. He was the opposite of Dana's aloof and mostly-silent father. This older Woods had graduated from Harvard in 1796 and was a leader among intellectuals at the time who thought that Harvard was a bastion of blandness. In 1808 he became one of the founding faculty and first professor of theology at Andover Theological Seminary. Two years later he was one of the founders of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Andover, both seminary and town, became a hot-bed of missionary thought for the next several decades. In 1812, Woods Sr. published a sermon that he had preached at the ordination of missionaries to Asia. In that sermon, writes Margaret Bendroth, "Woods

laid out, really for the first time, a theological rationale for global Christianity." Bendroth goes on to note that Woods Sr. saw missionaries as doing more than just conversion, they were to be "a labor of 'love for souls.'" Missionaries were supposed to be broadly interested in a foreign nation's "climate, color, language, government, education, manners." Woods demanded that missionaries be lovers of all: "Learned and ignorant, refined and rude, honorable and base, are all on a level in point of accountableness to God and immortality of soul." Woods Sr., himself, was a broad thinker who saw the evangelization of the globe in multi-dimensional terms. He was one of the founders of the American Tract Society (New England), The American Education Society, the American Temperance Society, and the Association for Better Observance of the Sabbath. He also promoted the work of the American Bible Society and the American Sunday School Union. Woods, along with his family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and students, were working to make Andover a model community of piety and benevolence that thought and acted both locally and globally. Angels in the form of young boys from the far off Pacific Islands had confirmed this calling, this vocation, this purpose for the town of Andover, its little seminary, and the Woods family.

Hawaiians started coming to Andover in 1810, and in *Two Years Before the Mast* it is Dana's relationships with Hawaiians that his Andover-evangelicalism is most evident. Recently, in *Bible Belt To Sunbelt: Plain-folk Religion, Grass Roots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*, Darren Dochuk shows how Southern California's religious culture is deeply affected by migrations from eastern Texas and Oklahoma. When I anchor with *Boethius* beneath the elbowed cliff of Dana Point, I feel the power of Kevin Starr's more mystical notion in *Americans and the California Dream* that young Dana and his book set "a prophetic pattern" on Southern California's future Protestant culture. Mysteriously, through Dana and his book, the Protestant evangelical idealism of this coast is most spiritually rooted in the angelic migration of Hawaiians to Andover, Massachusetts.

The first Hawaiian to come to Andover was Henry Opukaha'ia (spelled Obookiah by New Englanders of his day). He was sixteen years old when, after happily joining the crew of a ship sailing for New England, he arrived in New Haven. Adventurous and bright young man that he was, he was anxious to learn to read and write while experiencing this foreign culture. Having embraced Christianity, he eventually landed in Andover where Leonard Woods Sr. and others were just starting their new seminary. For the next four years, Opukaha'ia remained in and around Andover, he learning from them and them learning from him, working primarily on dictionary and grammar to support further communication. At some point, Opukaha'ia began writing an inspirational autobiography that was published in 1818. During these years more Hawaiians began to show up in New England. In 1816 there

were fifty to sixty Hawaiians, five of whom were much in the public eye for their desire to be educated and their willingness to become Christians. As news of these Hawaiians spread, they became a powerful witness that Pacific peoples on the far side of the globe were anxious for New England religion and culture. In 1818, philanthropists founded a special "heathen school" in Cornwall, Connecticut. Eventually the school diversified, but, as John Demos wrote in his book about the school, "Certainly it was built on the hopes of Obookiah (and others) for a mission to the Sandwich Islands." In 1818, Opukaha'ia soon died, but his hope of sending Protestant missionaries back to his homeland was fulfilled the following year when two students of Leonard Woods Sr. left Boston to devote their lives to Hawaiians.

Dana came to Andover twelve years after Opukaha'ia died. In the Woods' household, the Hawaiian was well-remembered and Leonard Woods' Sr. used the story of Opukaha'ia to inspire his students that God was already at work spreading the gospel. Missionaries need only come in behind to cultivate and harvest what God had already sown. Yes, everybody knew that Captain Cook had been killed by Hawaiians, but Opukaha'ia had proven that Hawaiians are friendly, smart, and anxious to embrace what good New Englanders have to offer.

The happiest passages in *Two Years Before the Mast* usually involve Hawaiians. He watches them closely to learn how to handle the Santa Barbara surf. He visits often with them at nights when anchored near each other. He learns to speak a pigeon-Hawaiian used on the California coast. On Point Loma where the Hawaiians had gathered a distinctive "colony" around an abandoned Russian bread oven, Dana notes that the Hawaiians called him *Aikane*, meaning "special friend," rather than their normal designation for white people, *Haole.* Dana tells of enjoying life for months at Point Loma's *Kanaka Hotel* and *Oahu Coffee House.* He begins to teach four Hawaiians to read and tries to get medicine for another named "Hope" for whom he says he "really felt strong affection." Dana notes that commerce with white men had brought vices and diseases. "The curse of a people calling themselves Christian," he writes in *Two Years Before the Mast*, "seems to follow them everywhere." Dana wants to offer an alternative. He strives for the friendly, mutually beneficial, relations that Andover had exemplified. The very last California-scene in the book is of Dana's Hawaiian friends escorting him down to the beach.

Cause and effect is hard to pin down in history. What does it mean when Kevin Starr says that Dana and his book set a "prophetic pattern" for California's Protestant culture? Is it mere coincidence that this rocky point named for Dana is the southwestern tip of what is now Orange County, a place of famous for increasing influence on the religious culture of America, a place of deeply entrenched

evangelical values and zeal? I have no answers; however, *Boethius* and I have a verse we like to sing to ourselves when we are out at sea, looking at the California coast, thinking about the little stories we know about place names. The verse is from a song by the folksinger Pierce Pettis:

Everything matters,
if anything matters at all.
Everything matters,
no matter how big,
no matter how small.

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In the darkness of night with stars above, with *Boethius'* boom lashed to the deck, we motored toward the seeming chaos of Dana Point's coastal lights. I am looking for the one small blinking light that marks the end of the breakwater and entrance to the harbor. It has been a long day. I still am a bit giddy with seeing the blue whales. I will send a text to Sue, my wife, when safely anchored in the harbor. We am close enough in to make out the lights of the freeway veering up San Juan Creek behind Dana Point. Those lights, we knew, head back into a little coastal valley named "saddleback" in honor of a dip up in the hills. Pastor Rick Warren's Saddleback Church is up there. I wonder what he thinks of whales. There is a psalm in the Old Testament that rings in my head: "There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there." Today *Boethius* and I had frolicked with the whales! It would be fun to sit and talk with Rick Warren about the purpose-driven life of whales. Does he have any thoughts about the possibility that great rocks, such as Dana Point, can be purpose-driven to be refreshing? What about *Boethius,* can a fiberglass boat built in Santa Ana be purpose-driven? I picture him out on his porch looking up at the stars that are watching over both of us tonight. His book, the global best-seller, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* exemplifies the best in Orange County's influence on the world. I think he would say that my questions verge into mysteries, but I also think that, he and I, would agree that God is a purpose-giving Creator. We could sing together, there on his porch (I'm sure he has a guitar in the house), the most famous Bible-song, from our youth:

To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven

Warren is about four years older than me, fifteen years older than *Boethius*. He graduated from the California Baptist College, up the Santa Ana River, and is the most famous and influential pastor living on the California Bight. His book promotes the kinder-gentler core of Orange County evangelicalism, which is the call to live well in the light of the both the Creator's absolute sovereignty and absolute involvement in each individual's life. Humanity's job, he preaches, is to listen for a call, a vocation, a purpose in one's life. The book has a great first line and following paragraph:

> It's not about you.
>
> The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.

As much as Southern California is famous for self-centered living, many of us evangelicals on the Bight don't live up to the image. We are seekers for a purpose that is outside of ourselves. I suppose someone could, with a smirk, say that our search is ironically self-centered about not being self-centered, but let the snarky be snarky.

The California Bight has long been amazingly attractive to people who think they have a creator-driven purpose in life. Darren Dochuk's *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* is full of stories of such people, "plain folk" who came to California, not only looking for both spiritual and physical health, but also the hope of finding and fulfilling their purpose in life. These plain folk were not airy spiritualists. They were commonsensical readers of their Bibles—and the Bible assured them that a wildly spiritual world existed in which God, angels, people, and all creation communicates in many ways, and that God cares about, and has ultimate control over, every sparrow and every person. These plain folk believe that that snake in La Jolla exists, that it is sneaky, but that goodness will prevail in the end.

Jews came here too with similar ideas. Orange County is also strong in Chabadnics, who, alongside the Jesus People of the 1970s, have thrived. Chabad Houses were first founded at UCLA but have now spread to all the major universities of the Bight. Chabad, like evangelical Christianity, now has an extensive network of campus youth groups, community centers, and private schools. Rabbi David Elierie of Yorba Linda, president of the Rababinical Council of Orange County and Long Beach, has written an excellent book on the subject: *The Secret of Chabad: Inside the World's Most Successful Jewish Movement* (2015). He particularly praises the ten acre Chabad school at Huntington Beach. I have been to the Chabad Hebrew Academy in San Diego, an equally impressive campus. Smaller Chabad schools are along the coast from La Jolla to Malibu to Santa Barbara.

Chabad is a strict, hassidic form, of Judaism that began in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century. Leaning heavily on the Kabbalah, the mystically-oriented scriptures that build upon Torah, Chabad began to blossom into a world-wide movement after World War II under the leadership of Rebbe Meachem Mendel Schneerson. It was Schneerson who sent a dynamic young Rabbi Shlomo Cunin to California in 1962. A master at organizing and fund raising, Cunin mobilized other young rabbis and created a thriving network of spiritually-charged Jews up and down the California Bight. Like Rick Warren and evangelical community, Chabad teaches that creation is purpose-driven. In Rebbe Schneerson's popular book, *Toward a Meaningful Life* (1995), the Rebbe begins by advising that "We must all seek to become aware of our mission and actualize it by conducting our lives from minute to minute, from day to day, from year to year in accordance with G-d's laws." The soul, he writes, "traffics in the suprasensory (emotions, conscience, intelligence, and most important, the subliminal spiritual forces)." *Boethius* and I are believers in this kind of soul. I hope that someday, in heaven, Rabbi David Elierie, Rick Warren and I can sail in *Boethius* with blue whales spouting nearby. Maybe, hope upon hope, Aristotle would join us. He could tell us how he first came to believe that everything has a purpose and an end for the good.

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I am getting bookish with you, reader. I suppose it is because I do not want you to think me naive. C. Stephen Evens, a prominent philosopher at Baylor University, writes in *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments* (2010) that God is probably anxious to communicate and probably does communicate in many ways. Why don't more people hear this communication? Because, says Evans, most people don't listen and don’t want to listen. He goes on to

write that it seems to be the case that God has made us capable of resisting communication. If we don't want to hear clearly, we will hear only partially. If we don't want to hear at all, we wont.

But when it comes to books, I am not much of a theologian or philosopher. The model for this book is not anything so grand. Rather, I uphold for you a pleasant, short, environmentalist classic, *The Outermost House* (1928). Henry Beston, the author, builds for himself a tiny two-room shack on the outermost dunes of Cape Cod, Massachusetts where, over the course of a year, he daily takes walks, communes with all that is around him, and attends to changes from season to season. Beston is especially attentive to shorebirds, believing that the precision communication among them shows that they have "psychic relations." When I read the book while vacationing on Cape Cod, I realized that this kind of format to say what I want to say. *Boethius* is my “outermost house,” and we agree with Beston when he says, "We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals." Beston believes that humans and animals are "caught in a net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth." *Boethius* and I agree. We are all in this cosmos together, birds, whales, winds, rocks, and people.

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I read my Bible and *The Consolation of Philosophy*. I listen to this coast and these islands. I have accumulated information about people and places. *Boethius* and I really are pilgrims. We are not sure whether we are returning to port wiser than when we left, but we are trying to understand the spiritual density of this region of the earth at a deeper level than allowed by mere academics. When *Boethius* and I are sailing the coast and through the islands we become oriented to rocks. We start looking at them differently and start hearing them talk to us. Over years of pilgrimaging, the rock I have grown to think of as the best of my rock-friends, a rock that seems always to be speaking messages of grandeur, welcome, consolation, and rest, is named Catalina Head. It is the rock that constitutes what is called Lobster Point on the west side of Santa Catalina Island.

Catalina Head and Lobster Point as seen from the northwest before the harbor entrance appears. (Author's photo)

Catalina Head calls out most loudly when completing an all-afternoon, wide-open, broad reach from one of the upper Channel Islands down to Santa Catalina Island. Coming from the northwest, landfall upon Lobster Point's isolated ruggedness gives one the feeling of being an explorer on far side of the world. On approach, the rock's northwest face warns of danger, but hidden around back of it, there is a welcoming harbor. Pass it, round up, take down the sails and motor in. The water flattens behind the rock's back wall. A surprisingly small and tight little channel draws us deep into the island. Gentle hills roll down to the water. The rock that had appeared dangerous now shelters us. Deep into the harbor, high in the distance, half way up the hill in a clump of trees, overseeing the emptiness, is the old hunting lodge of Joseph Brent Banning. The rock now behind seems to have talked to him as it does us.

In the excellent book, *Grand Ventures: The Banning Family and the Shaping of Southern California*, Tom Sitton tells how, in the second generation of the family, the three Banning brothers bought and tried to develop Santa Catalina Island. Most all of their money and energies went into the other end of the island, but Joseph Brent Banning, the least entrepreneurial of the three, built this isolated hunting lodge here as a place to escape his troubles. Personal tensions pushed him drink. His younger brother Hancock was much frustrated with him. In 1907, Hancock wrested most of the control over Avalon, and Joseph retreated to this end of the island. Joseph hired architect Carroll H. Brown to design a vacation lodge for him, his wife Katharine, and his family. Sitton writes that he could not find much evidence that Katharine and the children came over from the mainland to use that house. Joseph

seems to have mostly used it as a get-away for himself and sporting friends. Sitton also writes that at about this time the troubled Joseph appears to have found spiritual encouragement in the newly founded Church of Christ, Scientists in Long Beach.

Of all the Banning family, Joseph intrigues me the most. One of the richest men in California, he was not happy. Owner of an island paradise, he picked a lonely spot on the far end, and there asked his architect for a house that looks more westward than eastward, more to the Pacific than back toward the lights Los Angeles. When teaching California History, I have often walked students up to the lodge. I imagine him sitting out on the deck, lonely, reading Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. The main room looks mainly toward the tall, stark, rock of Catalina Head. I imagine him consoled by that rock, the afternoon light turning the leeward side of the rock dark. Looking past that rock, Banning could see a sliver of the Pacific Ocean and a bit of horizon where the sky touches the water of the far west, but the view from the house was not designed as ocean view. It is a rock view.

The Bannings sold the island to William Wrigley about the same time Joseph died. Many on the island appreciated this, the more troubled, brother. A memorial bench for Joseph was built high on the hill overlooking the San Pedro Channel. When giving my students a walking tour of Avalon, I like to take them there. On the bench, we read to each other while looking out over the water toward Newport Beach. On that bench, we remember Joseph Banning, the troubled brother who found consolation looking in the opposite direction, into the lee of a rock at the other end of the other side of the island.

Class time at the Joseph Brent Banning Memorial above Avalon looking out over San Pedro Channel.