

Pedagogical Pop Culture: Using Comic Books to Teach Religion

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Recent scholarship on comic books has tried tracing religious roots, archetypal underpinnings, religious themes, and intersections between religious thought and comics. With the accompanying use of the historical-critical method, psychoanalysis, and sociology to understand religion as manifested *by* comics, relatively few have capitalized on the unique opportunity to teach religious concepts *through* comics. Such an approach would not be concerned with the role that religious thought played in the genesis of comic book characters or storylines. Rather, it would take a character or a storyline as a given, and use that as a *paradigm* for discussing religious thought and history. This sort of approach would not only succeed in educating a much wider audience in the importance of religious thought and history in general, but would also serve as a point of entry for that audience into the studies of comic books and religion that have recently proliferated (hence, these two panels on the subject). In what follows, I will make a case for teaching religion using comics by 1) Showing how a similar approach was used in the Silver Age *Flash* comic book series, and 2) Demonstrating what such an approach would look like when applied to Batman and the religious concept of sacred power in clothing.

As mentioned earlier, some recent studies have focused on the religious roots of individual comic book characters and storylines. Among these are Weinstein's *Up, Up, and Oy Vey! How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero*,¹ Kaplan's

¹ Simcha Weinstein's *Up, Up, and Oy Vey! How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero* (Baltimore, MD: Leviathan Press, 2006).

From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books,² and Knowles' *Our Gods Wear Spandex: The Secret History of Comic Book Heroes*.³ Others have spent their time identifying the archetypal underpinnings of comics. These include LoCicero's *Superheroes and Gods: A Comparative Study from Babylonia to Batman*⁴ and Morrison's *Supergods: What Masked Vigilantes, Miraculous Mutants, and a Sun God from Smallville Can Teach Us About Being Human*.⁵ Yet another group has explored religious themes as *expressed* in comic books, such as Oropeza's *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*,⁶ Garrett's *Holy Superheroes!: Exploring the Sacred in Comics, Graphic Novels, and Film*,⁷ and Saunders' *Do the Gods Wear Capes?: Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes*.⁸ Finally, there are those whose attention is directed towards the depiction of religions in comics and comic books as sources of religious thought and authority, the best example being Lewis and Kraemer's edited volume *Graven Images: Religion in Comic Books and Graphic Novels*.⁹

² Arie Kaplan, *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2008).

³ Christopher Knowles, *Our Gods Wear Spandex: The Secret History of Comic Book Heroes* (San Francisco, CA: Weiser Books, 2007).

⁴ Don LoCicero, *Superheroes and Gods: A Comparative Study from Babylonia to Batman* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008).

⁵ Grant Morrison, *Supergods: What Masked Vigilantes, Miraculous Mutants, and a Sun God from Smallville Can Teach Us About Being Human* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2011).

⁶ B.J. Oropeza, *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁷ Greg Garrett, *Holy Superheroes!: Exploring the Sacred in Comics, Graphic Novels, and Film* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

⁸ Ben Saunders, *Do the Gods Wear Capes?: Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes* (New York: Continuum Books, 2011).

⁹ A. David Lewis and Christine Hoff Kraemer, eds., *Graven Images: Religion in Comic Books and Graphic Novels* (New York: Continuum Books, 2010).

These studies certainly have their proper place within academia. I wish to explore a *different* approach, one which emphasizes an underdeveloped avenue: the pedagogical possibilities of comic books. I really started thinking about this approach when I was reading the following passage in Morrison's *Supergods*. [Cover] In speaking of his involvement with DC's *Justice League of America*, he wrote:

We awarded the team a modern Mount Olympus in the form of the new 'Watchtower' on the moon...What's more, we added a few new members to adhere more closely to the lineup of Greek gods: Superman was Zeus; Wonder Woman, Hera; Batman, Hades; the Flash, Hermes; Green Lantern, Apollo; Aquaman, Neptune; Plastic Man, Dionysus; and so on.¹⁰

I thought, "Wouldn't it be *great* to learn about the Greek gods and Greco-Roman religion using the Justice League?" Such tantalizing asides such as this one by Morrison could (and should) be developed more fully. Using the insights afforded by such perceptive comparativists, a fruitful pedagogical approach can be developed. This type of approach would utilize the audience's familiarity with comic book characters and storylines in order to educate them about unfamiliar religious traditions, both modern *and* ancient.

This sort of impetus to utilize comic books in promoting education appears unabashedly in the series that effectively launched the Silver Age of comics, *The Flash*. [Showcase #4] Following a freak accident, Barry Allen supplemented his less-than-exciting career as a police scientist with a pulse-racing part-time job as the world's fastest crime fighter. However, thanks to Barry Allen and the creative team behind *The Flash*, science became a lot more interesting. Regularly inserted throughout the nail-biting narratives were tidbits of scientific knowledge that

¹⁰ Morrison, *Supergods*, p. 292.

often times related to the main story. [Gorilla Army w/ article] For instance, in an issue where the Flash travels to a secret Gorilla-city to meet the evil Grodd, an informative article educates readers on cutting-edge scientific research about the possibilities of humanizing primates (incidentally, something that I *still* live in fear of).¹¹

The same issue also contains a sort of public service announcement celebrating “Brotherhood week.” [B.Q.] In this chart, readers are asked to test their “Brotherhood Quotient,” which, among other things, promoted religious tolerance (notice the presence of Baptists, Catholics, and Jews). [Lightning Flash Fact] Months later, one of these “Flash Facts” actually aimed to educate readers on the role of lightning in the unfamiliar religious traditions of West Africa and Indochina.¹² These might seem quaint, but something important is happening here. In these cases, *The Flash* comic book was not only used to teach eager youth to appreciate science; it also promoted religious tolerance and awareness through education.

Following the lead of *The Flash*, I propose that a fruitful and as yet underdeveloped approach to comic books and religion is to teach religion *through* comic books. [Chopra books] Deepak Chopra came close to using this approach in his recent book, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Superheroes*.¹³ This book is actually a re-presentation of his 1994 book, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*.¹⁴ Here he repackages the main elements in this earlier book, using analogies from the world of comics to connect with a different audience. However, Chopra deals with

¹¹ *The Flash*, #106.

¹² *The Flash*, #119.

¹³ Deepak Chopra, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Superheroes: Harnessing our Power to Change the World* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

¹⁴ Deepak Chopra, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1994).

superheroes only secondarily and superficially, treating the category as an amorphous, monolithic whole.

Other scholars have taken more nuanced and scholarly approach to using superheroes pedagogically. Batman has been a popular character in such studies. [Zehr and White covers] Zehr's *Becoming Batman: The Possibility of a Superhero*¹⁵ answers the question "Is it possible for any human to attain the skills and abilities of Batman?"¹⁶ The author begins by looking at different situations portrayed in various Batman comics, and uses those as a jumping-off point to explain human anatomy, physiology, and medical science.

The "Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series" has also done this to a certain degree. The character of Batman inspired a volume entitled, *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul*.¹⁷ Utilizing characters, situations, and motifs from Batman comic books, the volume introduces lay readers to some significant and fairly complex philosophical categories. I would like to argue that this same sort of approach could easily be applied to religious studies. In what follows, I will demonstrate what such an approach would look like.

The following brief presentation *within* a presentation will explore the religious subject of sacred power in clothing, providing examples from ancient Babylon and continuing through early monotheistic religious traditions. This presentation hopes to show how these ancient examples can be made meaningful through the lens of the Dark Knight. More relevantly, it aims at helping those unfamiliar with contemporary religious groups that employ the category of

¹⁵ E. Paul Zehr, *Becoming Batman: The Possibility of a Superhero* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ Zehr, *Becoming Batman*, p. xiii.

¹⁷ Mark D. White and Robert Arp, *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

sacred clothing to understand its significance and build sympathy for these incredibly rich religious traditions. So, without further ado, *Glorious Tights: Power in Clothing from Batman to Babylon...and Beyond*.

[Slide – large Batman] In *Detective Comics* #33, Batman’s story begins with the murder of his parents. Following this traumatic event, [Slide - prayer] a surprisingly religious Bruce pledges to commit his life to avenge his parents’ deaths and to “[spend] the rest of [his] life warring on all criminals.”¹⁸ To do so, he “becomes a master scientist [and] trains his body to physical perfection until he is able to perform amazing athletic feats.”¹⁹ Mere mental and physical prowess, however, are not enough; Bruce Wayne requires something more. [Slide - thinking] In order to become truly powerful over the criminal world, he decides to suit up in clothing that would serve to “strike terror into their hearts.”²⁰ Inspiration arrives when “a huge bat flies in the open window.”²¹ [Slide – the Batman] “And thus is born this weird figure of the dark...this avenger of evil, ‘the Batman.’”²²

Evidently, this was not the first time someone had donned such a costume. [Slide DC #235] In the story “The First Batman,”²³ readers learned that when Bruce was very young, his father had actually dressed up as a bat for a costume party and (still in costume) subsequently foiled a criminal plot. To the right of this page, it is easy to see the two primary elements of the

¹⁸ *Detective Comics* #33, p.2.

¹⁹ *Detective Comics* #33, p.2.

²⁰ *Detective Comics* #33, p.2.

²¹ *Detective Comics* #33, p.2.

²² *Detective Comics* #33, p.2.

²³ *Detective Comics* #235

first Batman costume: a head covering (or cowl) with bat-like ears attached, and a cape shaped like a bat's wings. On the left, Bruce Wayne's costume maintains the cowl and cape while adding the insignia of a bat on the chest.

Batman's title "the Caped Crusader" practically begs us to incorporate this character into our discussion of religion. [Slide – DK in armor] The religious overtones of the word "crusade" are evident, especially in light of its etymology, literally meaning "a being crossed, a crossing or marking with the cross, a taking [up of] the cross."²⁴ And, in case we needed any more encouragement, the potential significance for studying religion through Batman is made explicit in this panel from Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*. [Slide – DKR "baptism"] Upon "taking up" his cape and cowl after a ten-year hiatus, the 56-year old Bruce Wayne describes his transformation in the following: "This should be agony. I should be a mass of aching muscle – broken, spent, unable to move. And, were I an older man, I surely would...But I'm a man of thirty – of twenty again. The rain on my chest is a baptism – I'm born again..."²⁵

From the contemporary pages of comic books, [Slide - tablet] we now turn to clay tablets discovered in the ancient archives of Mesopotamia (which roughly covers the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and corresponds primarily with the modern country of Iraq). Though not nearly as colorful, these tablets, seals, and statues²⁶ contain the "amazing and unique adventures"²⁷ of both gods and humans.²⁸

²⁴ "crusade, n.". OED Online. December 2011. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45256> (accessed February 21, 2012).

²⁵ *The Dark Knight Returns*, Book One, p. 34.

²⁶ Tammi Schneider, *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), p. 51.

²⁷ Cf. the cover of *Detective Comics No. 27* (Batman's first appearance): "Starting this Issue: The Amazing and Unique Adventures of THE BATMAN!"

[Slide – Melammu logo] Two of the most common words used to describe the appearance of Mesopotamian gods are *pulhu* and *melammu*. According to Assyriologist Leo Oppenheim, these words denote “a characteristic attribute of the gods consisting in a dazzling [aura] or nimbus which surrounds the divinity. This radiance is shared by everything endowed with divine power or sanctified by divine presence,”²⁹ such as the divinely appointed kings and priests. While both words are similar in meaning and can convey a sense of “inspiring terror” and “majesty” or “glory,”³⁰ their nuances can be explained in terms similar to those used to portray the Batman.

[Slide – Ashur flying] First, the word *pulhu* is almost always used in texts with a verb which means “to clothe.”³¹ Thus, both gods and priests were “clothed” with *pulhu*, which seems to denote a sort of supernatural garment. According to some texts, “the *pulhu*-garment is conceived as a wrap of flames and fire which is often alluded to with the words ‘the god is [‘clad in fire’] [and] [‘clad in flames’].”³² Elsewhere, “when [a] conjurer-priest equips himself for his fight against...demons, he is clad in a special garment which is called...[the] ‘red wrap of *pulhutu*.’”³³ Oppenheim states that this clothing was “obviously meant to imitate the flame-

²⁸ Any general survey of Mesopotamian gods should include an important caveat. Assyriologist Tammi Schneider writes that “because the data concerning gods span close to two thousand years, a number of inconsistencies appear, which is problematic for scholars trying to understand how the Mesopotamians constructed their world and religious system” (Schneider, *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion*, p. 51). With that in mind, I will look at only a few general trends in depicting the gods of Mesopotamia.

²⁹ Leo Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 63:1 (1943), p. 31.

³⁰ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 31.

³¹ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 31.

³² Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 31.

³³ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 33.

garment in which the gods and the demons are said to be clad.”³⁴ Such a supernatural “garment” or “wrap” is similar to Batman’s cape [Slide side-by-side]. Both added to the character’s mystique and often ominous presence.

[Slide – Ishtar]. Now to the second word, *melammu*. Sometimes translated as “awesomeness,”³⁵ this word is often used with a verb meaning “to wear,” and was frequently depicted as a sort of supernatural headgear. The difference between *pulhu* and *melammu* is made clear in the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*, where the god Marduk was described in the following: “in a cloak of armor, he was clad in *pulhati* / with a *melammu* of terrifying appearance his head was covered.”³⁶ [Slide – Gods w/ hats] In some cases, this *melammu* was depicted as a horned cap or a royal halo.³⁷ One noteworthy function of the *melammu* appears in the following text discussing demons: “They (the demons) cannot be recognized neither in heaven nor on earth (because) they are covered with a *melammu*.”³⁸ Thus, the *melammu* functioned to make its bearer “unrecognizable.” Oppenheim argued that “somebody covered with a *melammu* can see everything but cannot himself be seen. A head gear which is meant to inspire terror and at the same time make its bearer ‘unrecognizable’ is by these two clues clearly defined to be a mask, no other object meeting so perfectly these two requirements.”³⁹ Once again, significant parallels can be drawn between the Mesopotamian *melammu* and Batman.

³⁴ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 33.

³⁵ James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 62.

³⁶ *Enuma Elish*, Tablet IV, lines 57-58.

³⁷ Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 98.

³⁸ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 32.

³⁹ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 32.

[Slide – Batman window] Just as Batman’s cowl (or mask) was worn to make him both unrecognizable to the public and fearsome to criminals, a god’s *melammu* could function in much the same way.

Along these lines, the “aura” of the gods was sometimes represented by physical robes placed on the gods’ cult statues inside temples. These unique garments conveyed a sense of radiance, splendor, and in some settings, even invoked fear. [Slide – statue] Referred to as “golden garments,” the “clothing of these images [could be] decorated with beads of precious stones and with gold”⁴⁰ in order to evoke the splendor and radiance of the god that the statue represented.⁴¹ In time, this type of clothing was also worn by kings and priests.⁴²

Wearing a garment covered by discs of gold was sure to give its wearer a “sparkling appearance,”⁴³ but just in case this was not enough to overcome its onlookers with awe and fear, some of these sacred garments were given an additional element. [Slide – lion head] Sometimes tailors would sew onto the garments “lion heads with gaping mouths and menacing teeth.”⁴⁴ Worn by both kings and priests, “the function of these designs [was] in all cases to ward off dangers and evil influences, to inspire awe, and to impress the adversary.”⁴⁵ [Slide – fearful Batman] This practice of attaching a fearful animal to a garment in order to inspire both awe and

⁴⁰ Leo Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 8:3 (1949), p. 173.

⁴¹ In the words of Oppenheim, the use of such clothing “was probably done in order to enhance the power, prestige, and magic effectiveness of these images” (Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” p. 179).

⁴² Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” pp. 179, 180.

⁴³ Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” p. 180.

⁴⁴ Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” p. 188.

⁴⁵ Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” p. 191.

terror in its beholders should be familiar to those who have seen images of the Batman, [Slide – children] as well as those who may have worn such an emblem themselves.

Inevitably, the wearing of these sacred garments had an impact on the identity of the god, king, or priest. In some texts, *pulhu* can also carry the sense of “personality.”⁴⁶ Some have noted the connection between the words used for “personality” and “mask.” For instance, “striking evidence [is] offered by [the] Latin *persona*, which is [actually] an Etruscan loanword meaning ‘mask.’”⁴⁷ This holds true in both of the primary languages used in Mesopotamia, namely, Sumerian and Akkadian.⁴⁸ Thus, the wearing of sacred garments not only supplied the individual with a visual radiance, it also endowed (literally “clothed”⁴⁹) them with a conceptual radiance that transcended the physical garments themselves. [Slide – Old Bruce] Similarly, in *The Dark Knight Returns*, Bruce Wayne’s persona as Batman persists, even after his retirement. It seems as though clothing really *does* make the man.

Having established this ancient Near Eastern tradition of sacred clothing, I will now look at this tradition as it was manifested in later religious texts. [Slide - Blake⁵⁰] According to the Hebrew Bible, one of the earliest items of protective clothing was created for Adam and Eve by God: “And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and he clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). According to the Torah scroll of one early rabbi, the word translated as “skin” (עור) was spelled differently by one letter, providing a radically different reading. Instead of God

⁴⁶ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 33.

⁴⁷ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 33.

⁴⁸ Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pulhu* and *melammu*,” p. 33.

⁴⁹ “endue | indue, v.” OED Online. December 2011. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/62021> (accessed February 21, 2012).

⁵⁰ William Blake's *The Angel of the Divine Presence Clothing Adam and Eve in the Garments of Skin*.

clothing Adam and his wife with “coats of skin (עור),” he clothed them with “coats of light (אור).”⁵¹ *Genesis Rabbah* (an ancient Jewish commentary) explains that “[these] garments of light...refer to Adam’s garments, which were like a torch [shedding radiance].”⁵² Other Jewish commentaries describe these God-made clothes as “garments of glory.”⁵³ [Slide – spotlight] Like Batman, these garments served as a potent outward reminder of an inner condition or commitment, and at the same time could serve as a physical protection.

A sacred, priestly aspect of Adam’s garment was emphasized by many early Jewish and Christian authors who equated Adam’s garment with the garment worn by the High Priest officiating in the temple. One source states that “as Adam was about to sacrifice, he donned high priestly garments; as it says: ‘God made for Adam and his wife coats of skin’ (Genesis 3:21). They were robes of honor which subsequent firstborn used.”⁵⁴ While this task of offering sacrifices was later taken up by priests,⁵⁵ the tradition of the sacred, glorious garment of Adam was preserved in the clothing and identity of the High Priest.

The Jewish writer Ben Sira described the appearance of the High Priest Simeon in the following words [Slide – HP German plate]: “[He looked] like...the sun shining resplendently on the king’s Temple, and like the rainbow which appears in the cloud...when he covered himself with the garments of glory, and clothed himself in the garments of beauty. When he went up to the altar there was majesty: He made honorable the court of the sanctuary.”⁵⁶ The High Priest’s

⁵¹ *Genesis Rabbah* 20:12

⁵² *Genesis Rabbah* 20:12

⁵³ E.g. *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* 10 and *Targum Onkelos* Genesis 3:21.

⁵⁴ *Numbers Rabbah* 4:8. See also *Midrash Tanhuma* 1:24.

⁵⁵ See *Genesis Rabbah* 20:12

⁵⁶ *Ben Sira* (Hebrew) 50:6-7, 11.

appearance was meant to inspire awe and reverence in onlookers, [Slide – DC #33] as was the appearance of Batman [notice the awe in the faces of those in the getaway car].

This High Priest's clothing did more than just instill the fear of God into others; they also, in a sense, transformed his identity. [Slide – HP b/w plate] C.T.R. Hayward argued that “The high priest's entry in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur...typologically correspond[ed] to the first man's return to Eden, for a season, to be reconciled with his Maker face to face.”⁵⁷

Biblical scholar Marvin Sweeney agrees with this view and pushes it further by explaining:

Later texts of the Second Temple period...note that the priest in the Temple represents Adam in the Garden of Eden...The fact that only the high priest may enter the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant is guarded by cherubim much like the Garden of Eden, reinforces this image.⁵⁸

Wearing these sacred garments, the High Priest symbolically became the resplendent Adam, or at least his “latter-day representative.”⁵⁹ It was this new identity that allowed the High Priest access to the symbolic presence of God, and in so doing enabled the High Priest to right the wrongs of his people Israel. [Slide – DC #29 cover] Similarly, it was through the clothing and identity of the Batman that Bruce Wayne was able to right the wrongs of society by fighting crime.

In the interest of time, it suffices to say that this subject of sacred clothing has persisted across the millennia, and can be seen in many contemporary Western religious traditions: [Slide - clothing] Judaism, Islam, and a variety of Christianities such as the Coptic, Eastern Orthodox,

⁵⁷ C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 89.

⁵⁸ Marvin Sweeney, “Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile” in *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp.141-142.

⁵⁹ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, p. 14

Roman Catholic, and Latter-day Saint (Mormon) churches. In these contemporary religious groups, we see the same themes at play that we explored earlier: certain individuals wear symbolic clothing that is meant to invoke a sense of awe, reverence, and respect, and in the process of wearing such sacred clothing, the person receives a new identity and is in turn transformed into a holier person.

[Slide- White batman] Those familiar with the origins and adventures of Batman should be able to both identify with and appreciate this concept of power in clothing present in the religious world, both ancient and modern. Such an understanding should help foster a sense of respect for the adherents of these traditions in our own communities, preventing us and our society from sinking into the dark night that is ignorance and intolerance.

[Books & heroes] In conclusion, the success and accessibility of the “Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series,” suggests not only the feasibility of but also the need for a “Religion and Pop Culture Series.” I hope that my brief presentation on Batman and sacred clothing has demonstrated this. The same sort of approach could easily be applied to a number of religious categories. For instance, DC superheroes *alone* could produce the following: The Death of Superman and Religious Apostasy, Wonder Woman and Human Origins, The Green Lantern and Divine Creation, The Flash and Concepts of Time in Religious Thought, Captain Marvel and Sacred Words, The Martian Manhunter and Divine Manifestations, *Kingdom Come* and Apocalyptic Literature, and so on. Such studies would not only succeed in educating a large and diverse audience in the subject of religious thought and history in general, but would also help introduce that audience to the exciting work being done on the scholarship of religion and comic books. Thank you.