

Promiscuous Incarnation

Laurel C. Schneider



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- Born June 25, 1961
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Laurel C. Schneider is an American theologian and a professor of Religion and Culture as well as a professor of Religious Studies at [Vanderbilt University](#). Schneider is known for her theological analysis of images of God in relation to questions of social justice and liberation. Her work has contributed to the development of a theological framework, using concepts like multiplicity and polydoxy, as an alternative to orthodoxy and more traditional approaches to religious belief and theological reflection.^[1] Schneider's work focuses on collaborative models of thinking and publishing. She has worked as co-convenor of the National Workgroup in Constructive Theology resulting in a co-written publication entitled *Awake to the Moment: Introducing Constructive Theology*. Her other areas of research are queer theory and Native American religious traditions.

Schneider has served as a professor of Religious Studies and Philosophy at [Colby College](#) and [North Central College](#), as Professor of Theology, Ethics and Culture at [Chicago Theological Seminary](#), and currently as a Professor of Religion and Culture, and Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University. Schneider's research focuses on the intersectional relationship between theology, Native American religious traditions, race, sexuality, postcolonial and

gender theories.^[3] One of Schneider's main theological proposals is the concept of a logic of multiplicity that works to move us beyond a [binary thinking](#) framed by a singularly correct ideology or theology. She identifies that a logic of oneness is dualistic and demands a separation of truth from falsehood and "God" from "not God". Differently, Schneider's logic of multiplicity results in "fluidity, porosity, a-centered relation, nomadic generativity, promiscuous love, and impossible exchange. Theologian, Patrick S. Cheng, notes that Schneider's logic of multiplicity is a creative example of how contemporary theologians have used queer theory to resist binary thinking."^[4]

Schneider serves as the co-chair of the national Workgroup in Constructive Theology where she works collaboratively with a group of theologians at the intersections of postcolonial theory, queer theory, race theory and feminist theory. She has served in the [American Academy of Religion](#), for two terms, on the Committee for the Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession.

“However, thanks to the colorful and varied history of the usage of “promiscuous” in English, in which its more primary meaning of “mixture” and even its rare occurrence as a “third gender” are allowed to come into play, “promiscuous” offers more to the concept of incarnation than just sex alone.” (p 233)



What are your thoughts on Promiscuous?

“Conversely, although subterfuge is possible in any system, the relative ease of accurately establishing the identity of mothers in childbirth is so great that one wonders why or how patrilineality ever took hold in so many societies and for so long. In matrilineal societies, the sexual activities of both women and men need not be (and generally are not) tightly bound to inheritance and family identity because property and family identity are not primarily affected by the sexual activities and reproductive consequences of either men or women. So long as the identity of the mother can be confidently established property lines of descent and distribution are clearly delineated and easily verified, regardless of who donates the sperm.” (p. 235)

Do you know of Matrilineal societies?

Matrilineal Societies

1. Mosuo, China
2. Bribri, Costa Rica
3. Umoja, Kenya
4. Minangkabau, Indonesia
5. Akan, Ghana
6. Khasi, India

1. The Mosuo women are China's last surviving matriarchy. There are about 40,000 of them, according to [The Independent](#), and they practice Tibetan Buddhism. Lineage is traced through the women of the family. This society is also matrilineal, meaning property is handed down the same female line. Mosuo women also don't marry. Should they choose to have a partner, the two don't live together and the mother plays the primary role in raising the children.
2. The BriBri people are an indigenous tribe with an estimated 12,000-35,000 members. In this society, land is handed down from the mother to her children. Women are revered and thus are the only people who can prepare the sacred cacao drink for their religious rituals.
3. The Umoja tribe is a true-blue No Mans Land, because men are banned. This village is a home to women who have experienced sexual or gender-based violence. The Umoja village, which means "unity" in Swahili, was founded in 1990. As occupations, the women and children show tourists their village and work to educate others about their rights.
4. The Minangkabau people are a part of the largest surviving matriarchal society encompassing approximately four million people as of 2017. The common belief in this culture is that the mother is the most important person in society. Women rule the domestic realm of life. And while marriage is feasible in the Minangkabau

society, partners must have separate sleeping quarters.

5. According to [Mental Floss](#), the social organization of the Akan people is built around the matriline. Within the matriline, identity, inheritance, wealth, and politics are all decided. As the name would have it, matriline founders are female. However, it must be noted that within the Akan Matriline, men do hold leadership positions.
6. As of 2011, this matriarchal society was comprised of about 1 million. Mothers and mothers-in-law are the only people allowed to look after children and, according to [The Guardian](#), men aren't even entitled to attend family gatherings. What's more, when women marry in the Khasi tribe, their surname is passed down instead that of their husbands.

In doing so they attempted to answer the question of “*Why him?*” by focusing on his miraculous virgin birth and thereby establishing his essential distinction in kind from all other human beings. This must have seemed easier than attempting to answer the question of “*Why not others?*” (p. 240)



Why him and why not others?

“To insist upon a solitary incarnate moment is to betray the very fleshiness of flesh, its innate promiscuity, pesky shiftiness, and resilient interruptions of sense.” (p. 242)



What are your thoughts on multiple incarnate moments?

How many times does a prophecy come to be before it stops being a prophecy?
Isaiah 9

“If, in a world of embodied differences, one body is not to be elevated above all others, then the image of incarnate God cannot reduce to a single referent or a single body.” (p. 242)



“the Christian doctrine of exclusive embodiment postdates the biblical texts and cannot be justified there.” (p. 242)

“Promiscuous incarnation implies a God outside of human control and even outside of religious rules but not outside of human life and experience, not outside of human hungers and desires, not ever far away from ecstasy or grief.” (p. 245)



How is God beyond our understanding?

“Christians can claim that God always becomes flesh for a purpose and so can be found wherever that purpose is being pursued. That purpose is radical, compassionate, promiscuous love of the world to such an extent that suffering in any person, any body, is a wound in God’s flesh, a diminishment of God’s won beloved, a gravitational pull on God to come, again. And again.”
(p. 245)