YHWH: THE USE OF RELIGIOUS THEMES IN "PERSON OF INTEREST"

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ABSTRACT

The television series *Person of Interest* calls on biblical and religious stories, themes, and concepts. The show not only references various biblical narratives in symbolic ways, it also appropriates the rhetorical histories of cast members who have previously done films or shows involving religious and philosophical concepts. The show's use of religious symbolism portrays surveillance as a form of salvation and legitimizes some elements of fundamentalist belief systems.

Introduction: God Gets Real…Technical About It

There is no shortage of work, both academic and popular, that examines the influence of religious and philosophical literature and thinking on contemporary popular culture. There have been such treatises on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (South, 2003)*, Lost* (Pearson, 2009)*, The Harry Potter film series*, (McCauley, 2015)*, The Simpsons* (Irwin, Conrad, & Skoble, 2001), and *South Park* (Weinstock, 2008) just to name a few. What these examples demonstrate, however, is a tendency to examine religious and philosophical influences on shows that either qualify as science fiction or fantasy or on animated programs that do not unfold according to natural time and continuity. In other words religious and philosophical examinations of popular culture are, at least in broad and general terms, the terrain of shows that do not purport to be "realistic" (in the common sense meaning of the word).

This essay builds on the work of the preceding analyses of religious and philosophical themes in popular culture but does so by applying the concepts to a show that does not fall into the supernatural genre and that unfolds via a live-action, linear narrative. *Person of Interest* premiered in 2011, a decade after 9/11. Indeed, the events of 9/11 serve as a narrative touchstone throughout the show. As a show clearly inspired by issues surrounding security and surveillance in a post-9/11 world *Person of Interest* seems, on the surface, to be a very contemporary crime procedural. Further, the importance of technology and surveillance to the show's storylines place it in a world where anything unbelievable that occurs does so not by magic or divine intervention but by shrewd applications of scientific, technological, and intellectual principles. On the surface, it is not a show that readily suggests a reliance on biblical or religious semiotics.

This essay argues, however, that *Person of Interest* indeed does call on both ancient and contemporary articulations of biblical or religious stories, themes, and concepts. In doing so, the

show advances the kinds of popular culture that can be seen through the lens of religious iconography and establishes a rhetorical agenda of surveillance as a form of salvation.

Jesus and Linus

The first invocation of religious rhetorical history in *Person of Interest* involves its lead actors. The stars of the show are Jim Caviezel and Michael Emerson. Both casting choices draw on recent articulations of religious and philosophical ideas in contemporary popular culture. Caviezel portrayed Jesus Christ in the film *The Passion of the Christ*. Emerson, meanwhile, was a star of the hit series *Lost*, a show knows for its intensely deep dive down the hatch of religious and philosophical symbolism (Piatt, 2006). A variety of scholars take differing approaches to thinking about the use of influences and prior discourse. Some, such as McGee, argue that understanding the relationship between a piece of discourse and that discourse's sources is a key to effective criticism (1990). Others, such as Bloom, see influence and derivation as factors that can constrain and inhibit creators of discourse (1973). Postmodern scholars, meanwhile, see appropriation and invocation of prior discourse as an inevitable and regular part of contemporary popular discourse (Shugart, Waggoner, & Hallstein, 2001). All three of these approaches seem to apply to *Person of Interest* to some degree. CBS invited the show's audience to call upon and apply a certain knowledge of its stars when it cast Caviezel and Emerson, suggesting a kind of leaning into the inevitability of an audience's awareness of prior discourse and working to make it an asset rather than a liability. And, of course, this understanding adds another layer to critiquing the show.

Beyond the invocation of Caviezel and Emerson's rhetorical histories, the narrative arcs of the characters portrayed by both unfold in a way that can be seen as both an inversion and extension of their relevant prior roles. In *The Passion of the Christ*, Caviezel portrayed a

character who is arguably the most enduring and popular personification of salvation in western culture and literature. Further, the film was controversial for the intense violence that the Christ character endured (Lundberg, 2009). Both these elements of Caviezel's portrayal of Christ are relevant when considering his character in *Person of Interest*.

In the series pilot, the character of John Reese (portrayed by Caviezel) is living as a homeless man who is wanted by the police and contemplating suicide. The actor who portrayed a character who offers complete salvation is now playing a character in desperate need of salvation. The iconography of the pilot episode draws on the Christ connection by portraying Reese with long hair and a scraggly beard. Of course, in the context of the show that is a perfectly reasonable visual expression of a homeless character. But, when drawing upon Caviezel's rhetorical history, the semiotics of the Christ connection is also present. And, when combined with the way Reese's narrative begins, we see an inversion of Caviezel's portrayal of Christ. The "savior" is in need of salvation.

In Reese's backstory we also see a kind of "march to the cross." Just as Christ endured a variety of trials, tribulations, temptations, and tests that ultimately led to his crucifixion, so to has Reese endured a harrowing road paved with various "stations" that bring him to a breaking point. Reese is an unusually gifted combat fighter and spy. Through flashbacks, we learn that Reese spent years in the army and with the CIA honing skills that make survival on the streets and in the subways much less of a challenge for him than such an existence would be for the average person. This parallels how Christ spent years mastering religious and spiritual concepts in a way that made miracles and overcoming death possible. Beyond some parallels between Reese's journey and the Christ story, we see another specific response to Caviezel's portrayal of Christ. In *The Passion of the Christ*, Caviezel's character was subjected to intense and brutal physical

abuse and, staying consistent with the Christ story, was never allowed to meet that violence with violence. Such a quandary is not a problem for Reese who, even as a homeless man with no resources available to him, is able to deliver swift and decisive violence. Armed with the knowledge of Caviezel's fate in *The Passion of the Christ*, the viewer is provided striking imagery in the form of a long-haired, bearded, destitute-looking Caviezel mowing down a staggering number of foes. It is nothing less than the type of retribution biblical literature never gave Christ but that contemporary popular culture (for better or worse) demands. It is a kind of transferred catharsis that is aware of its rhetorical history.

Ultimately Reese is targeted by a reclusive billionaire and tech impresario named Harold Finch (portrayed by Emerson) to serve as the "brawn" that complements Finch's "brains" in a vigilante effort to stop crimes before they are committed. Finch has become aware of Reese's plight and his abilities through surveillance and the use of technology. Whether Finch recruits Reese or forces him into service is a matter of opinion. But the union with Finch saves both Reese's life and his soul. And here we see the rhetorical ground that *Person of Interest* treads. The show presents a narrative where technology in general and surveillance in particular are seen as sources of salvation. Further, the show offers this "contemporary" form of salvation to an extension of the ultimate ancient symbol of salvation. So technological surveillance is not only a source of salvation, it is an evolution, co-opting, and perfection of forms of salvation that came before.

The story of technology offering salvation is one of two general narrative approaches to fictional accounts of the rise of technology (Papacharissi, 2010). But in many of these cases technology improves life or human functioning in practical, tangible ways. Historically technology is not so much in the narrative business of solving existential crises such as the one

Reese faces at the beginning of *Person of Interest*. Reese doesn't need a robot to make his coffee. Nor is he burdened by the fear of a cyborg coming from the future to kill him before he can be born. Rather, he needs to recover from a lifetime of fighting with the wrong allies, making the wrong choices, and finding his skills inadequate when it comes to saving those he loves most. He is a different kind of hero for a story about technology but, through his association with religious imagery and narratives, he also functions as an argument that technology and surveillance have had the torch passed to them by prior forms of religious or mythical salvation.

Many popular culture texts that draw on religious symbolism naturally articulate ancient or classical themes, characters, and ideas. By referencing as recent (and as popularized) a portrayal of Christ as Caviezel's, *Person of Interest* suggests what may become an evolution in popular media, particularly in an age of digital curation (Burgess, Green, & Hartley, 2009). That possible evolution is the invocation of recent or contemporary religious and philosophical artifacts instead of, or at least alongside, ancient ones. This turn is taken a step further in *Person of Interest* through its references to Emerson's character from *Lost* and the development of his character on *Person of Interest*. And, as is the case with Caviezel's Christ, *Person of Interest* inverts and extends Emerson's character from Lost.

Since its premiere in 2004 *Lost* has been the subject of a variety of academic and popular criticism. A fair share of that analysis has specifically mined the show's deep use of religious, spiritual, and philosophical themes while also noting the show's blending of those elements with genuine scientific principles (Kaye, 2011). In this way, *Lost* moved the fantasy and science fiction genres forward by weaving developments in science and technology into its narrative DNA in a way that complemented the show's magic or supernatural elements. Indeed, *Lost* can be seen as a direct forerunner to *Person of Interest* in its willingness to engage scientific

concepts. There is nothing fantastical or supernatural on *Person of Interest* but it is so reliant on concepts rooted in technology and science that it reasonably qualifies as science fiction in that it is fiction about the use of scientific and technological principles.

On *Lost*, Michael Emerson portrayed Benjamin Linus, a character whose single-minded desire to protect the show's "magic" (but really just unique in its electromagnetic and geographic qualities) island led to a descent to the dark side. In the show's final two seasons, Linus's narrative became one of redemption as he learned how to perform his role as a protector of the island without being an oppressor of the people on the island. By the series end, he and one other character, Hurley, were designated as the island's official guardians and Linus' redemptive emergence from darkness was complete. A coda to the series made available on the final season's DVD release suggests that when those on the island must interact with the outside world, it is Linus who facilitates and manages that interaction.

Words like guardian and protector, terms used in *Lost* to describe those who watch over the island, suggest religious concepts. And just as *Lost* was known for dropping references to various philosophic and spiritual works, *Person of Interest* uses a vast book collection owned by Emerson's character to make similar types of references and stake out similar philosophic territory. Further, like Benjamin Linus on *Lost*, Emerson's character on *Person of Interest* is motivated to immerse himself in a life-consuming mission by a desire to protect the world around him. His character, a wealthy technology and corporate tycoon named Harold Finch, is tasked by the U.S. government with creating an artificial intelligence that can predict crimes. He is ultimately successful and this artificial intelligence is named The Machine.

Through flashbacks we see that Finch is motivated to create The Machine because of the events of 9/11. He works with his business partner, Nathan Ingram, to develop The Machine so

the U.S. government can predict future terrorist attacks and stop them before they happen. Nathan is the "public face" of the effort while Finch is the brain behind the mission and the primary developer of the technology. This arrangement is necessary both because of Finch's reclusive nature and because he lives under an assumed identity due to youthful crimes involving sedition and treason. This notion of Emerson's character working with a partner where one remains in the shadows is both a callback to, and an inversion of, Linus' partnership with Hurley at the end of *Lost*.

Indeed, we see a variety of elements that recall Benjamin Linus from *Lost*. In some ways, Finch is the other side of Linus. Where Linus succumbed to the dark side in his mission, Finch never does. He is altruistic from the beginning and remains so even as his involvement in the development of The Machine leads to the loss of his best friend, his fiancée, and even the full use of one of his legs. Like Linus, Finch demonstrates a single-minded devotion to a mission that has world-changing, possibly apocalyptic consequences. But unlike Linus, Finch never strays from principles that involve certain limits on how to treat others in the pursuit of his goals. Throughout the series, Finch demonstrates consistent disdain for, and discomfort with, some of the violent and even homicidal methods Reese and his other agents employ. In some ways, he is Linus if Linus had never gone over to the dark side. Further, it is almost as if Linus' story continued on after *Lost*, with the island being replaced by The Machine, the inhabitants of the island being replaced with the residents of New York City, and Hurley being replaced first by Nathan and then by Reese.

Creating God

Finch's story certainly references Emerson's character on *Lost*. As such, the general use of religious and spiritual symbolism on *Lost* can be seen as at least mildly transferred to *Person of*

Interest through Emerson's prominent role in both series. But it is Finch's relationship to his creation, The Machine, which allows the series to develop its most complex philosophical and religious themes. The Machine is not merely a supercomputer. Nor is it simply a complicated computer program. It is consistently portrayed as a seismic, paradigm-shifting advance in artificial intelligence. As the show goes on, Finch is referred to more and more by terms such as "creator" and "father" and "maker" when others reference his relationship to The Machine. It becomes clear about midway through the series that The Machine is indeed self-aware, capable of ethical reasoning, imbued with instincts toward survival and self-preservation, and invested in the lives of the people it encounters on a daily basis. In other words, it is a human intelligence (which is distinct from being a human physiology). Further, we learn that The Machine was also specifically and intentionally given all these (and other) human characteristics by Finch. Through flashbacks we learn that Finch thought human reasoning would be necessary for The Machine to understand the human plight of the people it targeted. So The Machine's ascent to a human-like type of consciousness is no accident. It is no "robot gone too far and become aware" narrative. The Machine's story is one of intelligent design.

Clearly, then, Finch can be seen as a God figure. He created a sentient, conscious, self-aware being. And, like the God of the Bible, Finch does not always hold his creation in high regard. Finch consistently demonstrates discomfort with the idea of The Machine having a consciousness or a "mind" as its conceived of in human terms, even as evidence mounts that this is indeed the case. He seems reluctant to regard it as more than a computer program. Further, we see through flashbacks that Finch destroyed several earlier iterations of The Machine if they demonstrated traits that he deemed inappropriate. In one particularly compelling example, he destroys an early version of The Machine simply because it is able to lie to him. So, as in biblical

stories, Finch is not always a benevolent creator. Like the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition, he is willing to destroy his creations if they displease him and he is sometimes flummoxed and frustrated at the ways in which his creation operates.

One could expand and detail the narrative surrounding Finch and the machine and end up with a very substantive discussion of *Person of Interest* as simply a contemporary techno creation myth with Finch as God and The Machine as humanity. But there is a Frankenstein element to the relationship as well because The Machine ultimately becomes something beyond what its creator intended. The Machine has the ability to access any surveillance device anywhere in the world. It also has access to every bit of data and information that has been digitized in any way shape or form. It is also an amazingly accurate predictor of human action. In other words, it knows all and sees all in both the present and the future. The Machine, then, has the capacity of a God. The story of The Machine attempts to answer a question that has bedeviled philosophers and theologians ever since the dawn of those disciplines: Who made God? The answer, according to *Person of Interest* at least, is some other intelligence that God then superseded.

Of course religious texts in the Judeo-Christian tradition suggest that God must have an adversary. Yahweh must have a Satan. During the show's third season, a rival artificial intelligence every bit the equal of The Machine in terms of power is introduced. Dubbed Samaritan, this rival A.I. was developed by a former colleague of Finch's named Arthur Claypool. But Claypool did not imbue Samaritan with the ethical or humane aspects that Finch built into The Machine. So Samaritan is not benevolent. Nor does it care about humanity or ethical reasoning at all. For example, we learn that The Machine has an algorithm built into it that restricts its range of possible solutions to a given solution when human life is at stake. It is

designed to mathematically give more weight to the preservation of human life than other variables. Samaritan has no such algorithm. And when Samaritan becomes aware of The Machine it seeks to wipe it out not so much out of jealousy or a rivalry but because it is not built to conceive of another intelligence like itself, nor it is built to value any "live" consciousness in any particular fashion.

It is worth discussing the name given to the rival A.I. It is named Samaritan because it is designed to do good. The name is a reference to the Good Samaritan. And for it to become the villain of the second half of the series run is, at that level, a nice use of irony. However, the choice of the name Samaritan also references a biblical literary context. The parable of the Good Samaritan was, in Christ's time, so powerful because it inverted the representation of Samaritans in public discourse of the time (Funk & Hoover, 1993). In other words, to tell a story where a Samaritan was the good guy was a kind of narrative "twist" on Jewish attitudes toward Samaritans in Christ's discursive context (Knoppers, 2013). So to name the rival A.I. Samaritan is actually an articulation and legitimization of classical biblical contextual characteristics as much as it is an ironic spin on what the term has come to mean in contemporary contexts.

It is worth noting that when we meet Claypool, the creator of Samaritan, he is suffering from a brain tumor. Here we symbolically see that his mind is not functioning as it should. A man who has spent years in the company of a metaphorical devil has ended up with his mind twisted and bent, just as Satan is blamed for doing to mankind. Further, Claypool is not an evil, or even bad, man by any means. So his link to the Satan figure is one that calls to mind various ideas about how Satan can corrupt all of humanity.

Claypool is a man of science, concerned with ones and zeroes and algorithms. He is not particularly invested in humanity in the way Finch is. His intellect, at least prior to the onset of

his brain tumor, is every bit the equal of Finch's. But his soul is not. When Claypool realizes what Samaritan is, though, he attempts to destroy it. He is a man who has seen what Satan really is and wishes to renounce his association with evil. But Samaritan has anticipated this and arranged to trick Claypool in order to ensure its own survival. Like Satan of biblical literature, Samaritan is a great deceiver even capable of deceiving the mind that gave rise to its consciousness.

So *Person of Interest* trades not only in a good versus evil story, but it places its representation of good and evil in conflict in characters that are not human. In that way, it is certainly like genres such as fantasy, horror, or science fiction genres. But its combatants are not angels and demons or other supernatural figures. And they certainly aren't flesh and blood humans. They are a form of intelligence that quite frankly humans can't truly access or relate to. Where most literature and popular culture tries to ameliorate the inaccessibility of God and Satan by personifying or humanizing them, *Person of Interest* goes the other way. It makes God and Satan into competing artificial intelligences that live in cyberspace somewhere. Certainly they have their human agents, just as God and Satan do. Indeed, when they finally sit down to attempt a truce in a scene that recalls God and Satan's meeting in the book of Job, they are forced to use human interfaces. Further, just as many people have fought wars over competing religious ideas, many acolytes on both sides lose their lives in the battle between The Machine and Samaritan. But their war is primarily fought on a plane that humans can't access or even really understand in a physical sense. In this way, *Person of Interest* seems to use the metaphor of cyberspace as both a distancing mechanism and as a representation of a spiritual plane. The show suggests a shift in how to represent God, Satan, and other mythological figures in a technological era.

About Those Human Agents…

Indeed, the war between Finch, his agents, and other allies of The Machine and a shadowy group that believes in Samaritan's view of humanity as irredeemable is one of the show's most compelling critiques of contemporary social and political culture. The show aired between 2011 and 2016, a period that has seen an intensification of division along religious, political, racial, and ideological lines. One of the great hopes of technology was that it would bring us all together (Qualman, 2012). But increasingly we are coming to the realization that it can also further divide us (Baym, 2015) for a variety of reasons including its ability to allow us to avoid competing worldviews and opinions (Pariser, 2011).

As Finch and his crew take on Samaritan's followers, we see reflections of our own culture's problems with social division, religious zealotry, and ideological intransigence. An examination of two key characters allows us to see how the show calls upon biblical literature and prior religious narratives to articulate these aspects of contemporary culture. In the show's second season, Finch is kidnapped and tortured by a character named Samantha Groves who goes by the online identity Root. Root is villainous in her methods if not her agenda, as she commits various crimes including murder in an effort to free The Machine from Finch's control. Finch and Reese see her as a villain. Finch seems emotionally scarred by his traumatic encounter with her and Reese, in an effort to avenge his friend and mentor, obsesses over capturing Root. So she begins as an adversary of The Machine's creator.

Root, is of course, a name ripe with symbolic potential. Of course, the name suggests a legacy or a beginning. One could also infer stability, as in putting down roots. In Groves' case, though, the first and most obvious metaphoric possibility has to do with the use of the term root in

computer science lingo. In such parlance, the term refers to a default account that has access to all commands and files on an operating system - a kind of super user (Callaghan, 2000). And true to that name, The Machine ultimately chooses Root as its human interface, much to Finch's dismay. The Machine communicates with Finch and Reese via a complicated numeric code that must be deciphered. The communications between Finch and Reese and The Machine also tends to occur via pay telephones and at random, unpredictable times. There is something archaic and inaccessible about The Machine's choice of communication methods when it comes to Reese and Finch. But The Machine chooses to communicate with Root via a simulated human voice. Further, Root wears an earpiece that keeps her in constant communication with The Machine and The Machine employs more contemporary technology to facilitate communication with Root.

The name Root, then, matches the character's role in the show from a technological standpoint. But it also implies a biblical articulation that situates Root as a kind of cross between Christ and various flawed characters that God chooses to do His bidding in biblical literature. Root calls to mind such biblical characters as the thief on the cross, Saul of Tarses, and David; characters God chose to use as instruments in spite of large capacities for sin and imperfection. Further, Root's Christ-like status as a kind of intermediary for The Machine to interact with the world in a new way is emphasized by the character's name. Christ, after all, is sometimes referred to as the "Root" of David. So the character's name carries a biblical reference that belies the character's role as an intermediary for The Machine.

It is also worth noting, if only briefly, that the actress who portrays Root also portrayed a "god" from another dimension on the television series *Angel*. Like Root, this character was generally malevolent toward humans and prone to easy violence and mayhem because of her

indifference toward humanity. So, as is the case with Emerson and Caviezel, Acker's rhetorical history does play a part in establishing her character in *Person of Interest*.

On the one hand, Root is a kind of Christ figure in that she interjects a new variable into the relationship between The Machine, its agents, and the world. In another way, though, Root demonstrates a narrative of salvation and redemption in line with Christian theology. In Root, we see an imperfect, sinful character who is redeemed through a relationship with The Machine. By making Root its human interface, The Machine forges a much more personal relationship with The Machine than it ever did with Finch, the kind of relationship the New Testament claims God wants with humans. While all this bothers Finch, Roots notes that his distance from The Machine was his intention. As she tells Finch, "You have the relationship with her that you wanted. She respects that. My relationship is more intimate." In a twist on the God/created by God relationship established between Finch and The Machine, Finch is a human who denies fellowship with God, a kind of Adam after the fall. Meanwhile, Root, a sinner in the mold of King David or Saul of Tarses, is offered spiritual intimacy with The Machine and readily accepts.

Indeed, Root can be seen as a representation of a religious zealot. Since she happens to eventually fight on the side of the show's heroes in an effort to save The Machine, we can readily root for her. But, by contemporary terms, she certainly qualifies as an ideologue. She values The Machine's "perfect" intelligence over humans, often showing disdain for humans. She refers to humans as "bad code," a computer term for code that just doesn't work (Graff & Van Wyk, 2003) and that is generally discarded. Root would prefer to usher in a posthuman world, with The Machine as a supreme being. And she has no problem using horrific violence on anyone who would threaten or constrain The Machine, even its creator. In Root, we see a

representation that reflects fundamentalist strains in contemporary religious thought and practice. The value judgment one places on such an ideology depends upon one's perspective and Root certainly navigates a middle ground for, and potential glorification of, this kind of character through her evolution from villain to anti-hero to hero. But in the end she is always about protecting The Machine, her Goddess.

The only other thing that really seems to matter to Root is her relationship with the character of Sameen Shaw, another agent who works with Reese and Finch. This relationship covers a trajectory that evolves from vengeful enemies to lovers. The relationship between Root and Shaw runs the gamut of human emotion and experience. Indeed, Shaw only joins "Team Machine" because she sees it as an opportunity to track down and extract vengeance on Root following a violent and sadistic initial meeting between the two. But when Shaw returns from being kidnapped and presumed dead in the show's final season, she confesses to Root that the thought of seeing Root again was the only thing that enabled her to survive captivity.

So Root, a character who embodies a variety of religious ideas and principles, turns out to be the key to survival and reintegration when Shaw finds herself separated from the life she knew. At this point, it is worth discussing the meaning of Sameen Shaw's name and the evolution of the character. Sameen is a Persian name meaning "precious or expansive (Gandhi, 2004)". "Shaw" derives from Norse words for "a group of trees or forest (American Heritage, 2011)." So the character's name is really "precious, expansive forest." This description could easily fit the Garden of Eden.

We are introduced to Shaw when she is working as an agent for the U.S. government responsible for eliminating terrorist threats based upon information provided to the government by The Machine. When her partner begins to question some of the government's methods, he is

killed. Shaw suspects something is fishy and begins investigating the matter. In doing so, she realizes what really happened and begins to ask questions she is not supposed to ask and begins to seek out information she is not supposed to have. Of course, this leads to a violent confrontation where Shaw is left for dead by the very authority she served. This is Shaw's fate for seeking the truth from those to whom she is a subordinate. Shaw's origin story has clear parallels to the biblical story of Eve, a connection further cemented by the translation of her name.

After this experience, she begins working with Finch and Reese. This, of course, leads to a confrontation with Samaritan, the show's Satan figure. And, like Eve, this leads to what appears to be her final downfall as she is presumed dead with Finch, Reese, and Root unable to find any evidence that she is alive. But her relationship with Root, a figure representative of a variety of religious figures and themes, provides her with the salvation and recovery that the Christian salvation myth promises. Indeed, in this way *Person of Interest* offers a symbolic telling of a story that is missing from the Bible: That of how, or did, original sinners receive salvation.

Conclusion: God From the Machine

This essay has attempted to trace the use of religious, spiritual, and philosophic sources in *Person of Interest* for the purposes of highlighting the interesting use of such ancient texts and themes in a show about technology and for situating *Person of Interest* alongside other popular culture artifacts that embrace similar themes. This essay has examined the use of the rhetorical histories of cast members Jim Caviezel and Michael Emerson as keys to the development of religious and spiritual themes in the show. This essay has also traced the relationship between Finch and The Machine as a creation myth that eventually gets turned around, and examined the conflict between The Machine and Samaritan as a kind of technological warfare between God

and Satan. Finally, the essay examined the development of religious ideologies and loyalties through an examination of Root, Shaw, and their relationship with each other.

This essay has not necessarily covered the rhetoric of these religious themes in *Person of Interest,* or the show's rhetorical representation of technology, with any particular critical judgment. But it is worth noting that the show legitimizes or saves its characters through the use of religious concepts or makes heroes out of characters who share certain tendencies with zealots. In that way, it does seem to uphold contemporary fundamentalist religious ideologies. Further, the show's representation of technology and surveillance as means to salvation, both spiritual and practical, seem to serve a pro-technology agenda. Hopefully this essay establishes the rhetorical territory of the show in a way that can contribute to a more critical examination of the series or other similar rhetorical works.

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