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The Perils and Promises of (Post-)Human Salvation: A Close Reading of the Various Facets of a Theologically Engaged Posthuman Culture in Peter F. Hamilton's Salvation Sequence

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Abstract---The present study seeks to analyse Peter F. Hamilton's trilogy Salvation Sequence comprising three novels, namely: Salvation (2018), Salvation Lost (2019), and The Saints of Salvation (2020), to see how the theological concepts in a posthuman culture connect to or differ from that of our own, and what they can teach us about our own engagement with religious visions and missions. The study will attempt to bring out how even in a highly advanced and purely technologically driven society, where civilizations will have achieved an incredible command over the very laws of time and space, religious ideas like afterlife, resurrection, and immortality will continue to exert a significant influence in deciding the outcome of events. The study will also attempt to find a common ground between the highest form of ambition that a culture at its pinnacle of techno-scientific achievement might seek to materialize by conquering death and wielding maximum command over virtually every aspect of space-time and their innermost theological and spiritual longing. Also, it will be shown that unless the religious ideals find some ways to connect to the innermost needs and religious instincts of the individual, it can never persuade him/her to partake in the vision.

Keywords---afterlife, omega point, posthumanism, resurrection, science fiction, theology.

Introduction

In the alternating storyline that shifts between three main timelines, namely the "realtime present" of the year 2204, the post-apocalyptic world of the "Year 583 AA (After Arrival)", and the other far future Vayan-centric timeline from 54AB to

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56AB (“After Bioforming”), we see different phases of human history playing out in an attempt to thwart the oncoming attack from the formidable Olyix race who seek to capture as many humans as possible to preserve them for a possible resurrection before their God at the End of Time after the passage of some billions of years (Baxter & Reynolds, 2016; Pannenberg, 1968). In a setting that features various human-colonized worlds scattered across different solar systems in the galaxy, a portion of the human race establishing their habitats in the neutron stars, alien entities emerging from the depths of dark space and distant futures, sentient AI spaceships attempting to persuade a technologically advanced, weapons-rich humanity to join hands with aliens for a far-future pilgrimage to the end of the Universe, and humans and posthumans characters trying to fathom the situation in a grandest panoramic unfolding of events, Hamilton’s trilogy employs and reworks the notion of afterlife and resurrection in a space-operatic, galaxy-spanning, hard science fictional narrative where several seemingly unconnected narrative threads from every page come together to form a cohesive, final picture which is replete with big techno-theological possibilities (Pannenberg, 1967; Shoop, 2010; May, 1998). The article seeks to review Hamilton’s trilogy from a techno-theological perspective to see how in his three Salvation novels (2018-2020), the age-old theological tropes of afterlife, resurrection, and salvation have been reworked to construct an ultimately posthuman, post-scarcity future with endless possibilities. The study wants to show how the novels in Hamilton’s Salvation Sequence attempt a compellingly immersive, craftsmanly adroit, and extremely inventive kind of world-building, where techno-theological eschatology of posthuman technoculture serves as the fulcrum of the series (Winter, 1989; Hitchcock, 2010; Midgley, 1992).

The universe of salvation sequence

Encounter with the God

“Dear humans, you are welcome even though your intent is misguided. Please join us of your own volition. We love you, and wish only to elevate you to the final revelation of the God at the End of Time. Do not believe the lies your predecessors have cursed you with. Our voyage is the destiny and reward for all sentient species” – Peter F. Hamilton, *Salvation Lost*.

It is the vision of a final encounter with their God at the End of Time that drives the Olyix in their journey across the vast stretches of space in search of new sentient species whom they can immolate at the altar of their God. Olyix have transcended themselves to the level of a fully posthuman species (Dasih et al., 2019; Gepu et al., 2018; Selamat, 2021). However, it is not just the Olyix but also the humans who can be seen as being able to manipulate space and time with their hyper-advanced technologies, and the future human race at a certain point in the narrative seems to be capable of conjuring an entire fake civilization to lure the Olyix into fighting them when the former is most prepared. However, one significant aspect in which the Olyix differs from humans is in their ability to sustain their spiritual ardour for cosmologically significant spans and wait for the future while the humans seem too attached in the present to comprehend the ramifications of events spanning millions and even billions of years. This willingness and readiness to wait for cosmologically significant spans of time is a

distinguishing feature that separates the Olyix from the humans and also their posthuman descendants in alternate/future timelines (Keller, 2009; Reagan, 2011; Rhodes, 2019).

The encounter with the humans is just a passing and unremarkable event for the Olyix as they intend to voyage for millions of years more before meeting their God: “Our solar system was just another stop on the Olyix’s incredible journey to the end of the universe; they’d visited hundreds of stars already and would visit thousands—millions—more in the future before finally coming face-to-face with their God at the End of Time” (“Salvation”, 493). The Olyix ship *Salvation of Life’s* commanding intelligence named ‘onemind’ emphatically states that the message of their God is true and will remain forever unchanged: “Neither you nor I can escape divine destiny. The loop is closed and eternal” (“Salvation Lost”, 500). In fact, various post-singular, posthuman science fiction novels often feature highly advanced artificial intelligences with seemingly infinite capabilities. The SI (Sentient Intelligence) in Hamilton’s *Commonwealth Saga* novels, The Eschaton from Charles Stoss’ *Singularity Sky*, and the Minds from Iain M. Banks’ *Culture Series* are such examples of godlike and hyper-advanced AIs. In Banks’ novel *Excession*, the superintelligent Minds can create “fantastic virtual realities . . . vanishingly far away from the single limited point that was reality”, and sometimes, even “imagined entirely new universes with altered physical laws, and played with them, lived in them and tinkered with them” and also occupy in many activities that simply go “far beyond the sagacity of the human mind” (“Excession”, 153). For the Olyix, both their conception of God as well as the very basis of their own culture are based on the incredible advancements in the fields of science and technology. Their vision and mission both extend and expand beyond the limited confines of our mundane space-time, and they themselves can move across the bulk hyperspace and traverse enormous distances both in time and space with the help of their extreme, posthuman technologies. The human and alien protagonists discover that the Olyix have achieved some kind of extreme gravitational time dilation effect with their Enclave technology which allows time to pass for them at a much slower pace than in the outside universe, and so waiting for billions of years is not much of a stretch for the Olyix. Despite having attained capabilities to alter the very course of events on not just a universal but also a multiversal level, the core of their vision rests on the eternal and unchanging words of their God at the End of Time (Moravec, 1988; Odorcák & Bakošová, 2021; Rudin et al., 2011; Monteserin & Amandi, 2011). For the Olyix, nothing can alter the sequence of events in which their God would cause the events to appear and they have been already blessed with the vision of finality. The Olyix have based their existence around this idea of revelation that is destined to take place some trillions of years from now. Even when an Olyix mind feels its end to be near, it states its conviction in the divinely preordained purpose: “It is our gracious task to bring it to all life that lives in the light” (“The Saints of Salvation”, 453). For the Olyix, the time in the Universe passes linearly from the beginning to the end and their God is the one overseeing each and every aspect of Its creation and is literally uncreated and immortal, whereas for the humans belonging both to the present as well as the future Vayan society and their helper alien Neána biologics, the evolution of time is cyclic and the God of the Olyix is just another created being which can be destroyed if one goes back to the time when the Olyix first received their God’s tachyonic message. For

humans, the idea of a biological death is all that counts and they are not ready to suffer for some far-future encounter with an alien God. As Yuri, the chief of the security of Connexion states to the Olyix AI, “If not today, then your reckoning will come before the heat death of the universe. Life on every planet will combine to thwart the evil that you bring. Your god will die amid pain and suffering as it sees you fall in flames” (“The Saints of Salvation,” 268). Also, it is not just the Olyix and their God which comprise the only religious elements in the novel, but also in the future timeline, we find the younger soldiers revering the five soldiers from the 23rd Century storyline, namely, Callum, Yuri, Kandara, Alik, and Jessika as the five Saints and sending prayers for them as they prepare to embark on an intergalactic war with the Olyix in their future. Yirella, the genetically amplified human soldier in the Omnia society has now even built a civilization on a neutron star which she names as the “corpus humans” and she herself is being revered by them as the “genesis human” – all of which bear overt religious references. It is only when the past and the present commingle, we find that the humans grow strong enough to take the fight back to Olyix ([Post, 2010](#); [McClain-Jacobson et al., 2004](#); [Atkinson & Bourrat, 2011](#)).

So, the humans are presented as more engaged with the concrete realities of the present and are ready to deify actual heroes from their past, while the Olyix are more focused on the distant future and the final revealed destiny which they believe to be divinely ordained. The attitude of the humans to the divinity is at best agnostic which is somewhat similar to what Buddhism promotes. In the present timeline, we see humans finally emerging victorious in their battle against Olyix and the latter are forced to even reconsider the veracity of their vision that they had received from their God, while in the future scenario that the Neána alien named Jessika projects before the humans and the one that unfolds in the Vayan future, we see humanity has already been conquered by the Olyix and the only way available for the humans now is to flee the Earth and to move away in self-replicating spaceships to as many planets across the galaxy as possible. Throughout the entire novel, we move through a tense atmosphere surcharged with doubt, dissimulation, deception, duplicity, and subterfuge, where the only thing that stands firm on an unshaken ground is Olyix's unwavering faith in their Divinity which too however is challenged but not destroyed by the time the third book draws near its end ([Fyfe, 2002](#); [Häkli, 2018](#); [Gager, 1982](#); [Schelkunov et al., 2021](#)). Towards the very last moments, the AI named Gox Quint of the Olyix ship realizes that their vision of God might not be so unique and true after all as the human race combined with the aliens from Neana and Katos civilizations appear as a truly formidable force that has brought the Olyix to their knees. The combined forces of humans and aliens then seek to destroy the Olyix Enclave's central star by colliding it with a neutron star and thus turning it into a black hole. When faced with the prospect of a sure and imminent defeat, Quint questions the divine providence: “How could we have been chosen by the God at the End of Time if it did not believe us to be supreme? And how would our god not know, up there in the future, about any dangerous challenges that we would face?” (“The Saints of Salvation”, 413). In Hamilton's fictional world, we find several mentions of such exotic, hyper-advanced, weapons-grade technologies of astronomical scale. In Judas Unchained, we see ‘quantumbusters’ and Dyson Alpha generators that can convert the rest mass of an entire star into pure energy and by feedback loops cause it to explode as a nova ([Lorenz, 1993](#); [Gendron et al.,](#)

2017; Kelly, 1999). Now, in Hamilton's *Saints of Salvation*, we see that even when some serious fissures begin to appear in their otherwise impregnable belief-system of the Olyx in the divine providence, ultimately it remains intact. Even when faced with their imminent defeat at the hands of the humans, the Olyx mind of the arkship still proclaims the immortality of the Olyx race and the inevitability of the divine providence: "I am a single unit in the Olyx fullmind. Part of me will live on no matter how many of us are killed by your slaughter here today. This will not end our divine purpose. It is eternal" (*The Saints of Salvation*, 453). Now, after going through all the books of the trilogy, we can never be sure if there is really a God at the End of Time as Olyx feels or this message is being sent by some surviving Olyx arkship from the far future some two and a half billion years ago to the Olyx of the past to save them from the retaliatory 'Final Strike' by the humans. However, instead of forestalling Olyx's crusade, this tachyonic transmission seems to be creating a self-fulfilling paradoxical loop in which the message is being interpreted by the Olyx to further strengthen their own theology based on a divinely-ordained obligation of waging war against the unbelieving humans (Lei & Ghorbani, 2012; Hawe et al., 2012; Kamami, 2014). This reminds us of the situation portrayed in Iain M Banks' *The Hydrogen Sonata* (2012). British science fiction writer and futurist Arthur C. Clarke's immortal statement as found in his 1973 version of *Profiles of the Future* that "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" is quite applicable in this context. However, the belief in a true divinity should transcend all barriers of paradoxes and many seeming contradictions which are but inevitable results of our limited scope of thinking constrained by the limitations of our four-dimensional space and time (Taghezout & Zaraté, 2011; Stathopoulou & Tsihrintzis, 2011).

Interpretations of scriptures for the purpose of finding signs and prophecies about the future of the world and mankind is a very common practice among the scholars and theologians. The Olyx AIs are so taken in by their religious vision that they continue to feel the power of its apocalyptic vision as driving them inexorably to their destined end and it proves too strong even for the combined powers of humans and aliens to pose a challenge to. The Quint AI expresses its unshakable belief in the divine plan where multiple versions of an event play out in different branches of reality: "You cannot defeat a god...Dear human, my descendants will meet yours out there one day. This battle is merely one amid a war that will last until our god arises" (*The Saints of Salvation* 455). The belief of the Olyx in the everlasting afterlife and divine providence shows the power of religious principles to guide and direct one's course of life even when science and technology have advanced to the point of virtually making a civilization immortal and invincible. Various authors, thinkers and philosophers of our times have expressed their strong conviction in the infallibility and absolute accuracy of the prophecies mentioned in such religious texts as the Bible which again is quite similar in spirit to Olyx's belief in the prophecies from and about their God and the Eschaton. Mark Kitchcock asserts, "...the nature and character of God, creation, the nature of man, salvation, and the existence of heaven and hell—are 100 percent accurate" (*The Amazing Claims of Bible Prophecy*, 8-9). In fact, in Bible, as LaHaye (2011), points out, the doctrine of salvation is mentioned even more than the doctrine of Second Coming of Christ and so everything related to salvation must be fulfilled in the times to come (*The Second Coming in*

Scripture”, 2). In many ways, the vision of the Olyix is rooted strongly in the theological tropes of the afterlife, resurrection, and transcendence as envisaged by various Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic traditions. In Christian thought, just before the final battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ, a pretribulational rapture or resurrection will occur when all the dead will be resurrected in heavenly bodies. Lutheran Theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg opines that “the fate of Jesus Christ” (“Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation”, 143), and the Christological motif of resurrection can only be realized in terms of a general resurrection of the dead during the Second Coming (“The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth,” 112-122). In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, the end-times vision of the ascendance of the souls in heaven and their general resurrection bears close resemblance to the vision of resurrection posited by the Olyix. Olyix have also a very strong penchant towards extraction and preservation of the mind-states or souls of the individuals. Christianity envisages resurrection of the souls of the individuals not as some type of abstract entities but as whole-bodied, spiritually transformed beings whose bodies will no longer be composed of flesh and blood but pure spirit (Abubakar et al., 2016; Stonier, 2012; Teilhard de Chardin, 1969). Matthew 22:30 states how the resurrected beings in heaven will be “like the angels in heaven” who will no longer be driven by any bodily impulses or fleshly desires. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 also, we come across such a vision of the resurrection of the souls in transformed and immortal bodies. As Marcia W. Mount Shoop explains, Christianity envisages the resurrection of not just the physical or fleshly body, rather a body that comprises of physical, mental and spiritual components (Let the Bones Dance, 5-9). 1 Corinthians 15:51 prophesizes that “...the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed”.

The space-faring, universe-wandering Olyix civilization is described in fact as a single, giant arkship that travels the entire universe with a single-minded objective of finding cultures to uplift them and make them ready for the final encounter with their God: “The Olyix are a single arkship colony who care only about continuing their voyage to the end of the universe, where they will meet their God at the End of Time. Anything else is secondary to that doctrine...” (“Salvation”, 222). For Olyix, the abstract ideal is more important than any form of concrete embodiment since they are driven by the vision of a future ‘rapture’ where the souls of the individuals will be merged with their God (Rhodes, 2008; LaHaye et al., 2012; Hunt, 2006). They, along with all their machinic minds and super-advanced AIs are all convinced that their God has spoken to them from the moment of the final collapse of the Universe and that they are the final torchbearers or messengers of the God. In Hamilton’s *The Night’s Dawn Trilogy*, we see another mixing of spiritual-religious trope with hard science fictional imageries in which we see an advanced alien race finds a way to keep open a strange portal that connects our universe and ‘the Beyond’, which was created by entity known as the Naked God and which now harbours souls of the deceased individuals who can turn any wish into reality but are unable to interact with the physical universe and it is only through an Omega Point-like event that the souls could eventually merge with each other and create a new universe. In the first novel titled *The Reality Dysfunction*, we even see an entity named the ‘Sleeping God’, which is a naked singularity that thrives upon the vacuum energy (Troeltsch, 1991; Moltmann, 1981; Kasper, 2012). The Sleeping God also reveals how all souls are destined to pass through the Beyond and to emerge out into the

spaceless dimension of Omega Point event at the end of one Universe where all souls will merge to become thus initiating a new aeon and a new Universe. Stephen Baxter's *Destiny's Children* Series novel named *Transcendent* also features an eponymous hive-mind entity that seeks to initiate an Omega Point event to merge and collectively transcend the minds of the individuals. Baxter's description of the Transcendence closely resembles Hamilton's idea of the Omega Point event that the Olyix believe will occur some billions of years later in the distant future: "As it worked on a Galactic scale, bit by bit, humans were drawn closer together, knit more integrally into the whole - to be brought, ultimately, into the great confluence of the Transcendence itself" (2005, 56). Baxter goes on to describe the "tremendous ambition of joining every human mind into its own grand confluence of thought, a gathering into the ultimate embrace of the Transcendence. Then would come the day when the Transcendence, arising out of humanity, would become the highest consciousness of this cosmic age, and it would apprehend the form of the whole universe" (2005, 244). The *Cosmic Rape* (1977) by Theodore Sturgeon features an extra-terrestrial hive-mind named Medusa, which is hell-bent in assimilating many worlds across different galaxies and now is on its way to absorb Earth as well (Fox, 2001; Baker, 2007; Elledge, 2006; Suryasa, 2019). However, unlike in Baxter's *Transcendence*, the Medusa seeks to preserve the individual identity of each and every soul that it tries to assimilate. In the 2016 sequel to the short story, Stephen Baxter and Alastair Reynolds writes *The Medusa Chronicles* where again we not only see some immense Medusae in the planet Jupiter but also the adventures of the protagonist Howard Falcon who crashed his balloon and was later rebuilt as a cyborg, "the only true cyborg. The only living symbiosis of man and machine" (2016, 128). In Baxter and Reynold's novel, we see how the posthuman protagonist along with the machines that accompany him enters the core of planet Jupiter realizes that they are now part of a huge simulation that is being conjured by the great Jovian mind. Isaac Asimov's short story "The Last Question" features a hypercomputer called Multivac whose descendant AC seeks to rearrange and combine every bit of information into a global consciousness. In Asimov's novel *Foundation's Edge* (1982), we see how a hypothetical superorganism named Gaia extends the collective consciousness to the entire galaxy, and in the process creates a galactic supermind named Galaxia. So, the trope of attaining transcendence through the merger of individual states of conciseness into a gigantic, universal supermind has been quite in vogue across different science fictional narratives. However, instead of being guided by a truly transcendental vision of the soul, for the Olyix, the mind and the soul are synonymous with each other, and the bodies are merely the support systems for nourishing the brains of the individuals (West, 2003; Thweatt-Bates, 2011; Hayles, 2005).

Uniqueness and specialty of humans

One of the most defining characteristics of the Olyix spirituality and religious worldview is their insistence on the uniqueness and preciousness of the humans as one of the rarest kinds of sentient species who are fit for attaining transcendence (Sanders, 2016; Tipler, 2005; Tipler, 2005). Just as all the major world religions stress the specialty of the humans and attempt to formulate the worldview based on the liberation, emancipation, and transcendence of the

humans through divine planning, the Olyix too, at first presents the human race in the most admiring and glorified ways imaginable. To persuade the human race to join with it in its million and even billion years-long "pilgrimage", the Quint mind projects before the humans a vision of true and everlasting immortality whose parallels can be found in the traditional religions. Passages like Isaiah 26:19 and Ezekiel 37:13 speak of such a resurrection and an everlasting afterlife where Lord will call up the dead and reward or punish them according to their deeds. It was following the vents of the Babylonian Exile (586-638 BCE), that the belief in the afterlife where the dead will rise again for the judgment becomes especially prominent for the Jewish people (Hayles, 2006; Hayles, 2000; Geraci, 2012). 1 Samuel 2:6 and Ezekiel 37:1-14 are such passages which project the belief in the resurrection at the End of Days. Also, during the Maccabean Revolt (167-160 BCE), we find Jewish scriptures showing a strong tendency towards the glorification of the martyrdom of heroes and also a renewed faith in the concept of afterlife and resurrection. In Daniel 12:2, we see such a vision of an "everlasting life" clearly which is even more pronounced in such texts as The Books of Maccabees. In 2 Maccabees 7:9, we again find such mention of the King of the Universe or God raising up the dead people to an "everlasting renewal of life" because they have lived according to his commands. Here, in Hamilton's trilogy, such King of the Universe is none other than the God at the End of Time. In Hamilton's Void trilogy comprising of The Dreaming Void, The Temporal Void and The Evolutionary Void, we find another instance of Pilgrimage in which advanced alien races like The Living Dream have decided to embark on an ambitious 'Pilgrimage' into the Void at the centre of the galaxy which itself is an energetic microcosm that can help a civilization attain the pinnacle of evolution. However, there is also a latent threat as the Void wants to keep expanding by accreting and consuming planets, stars and other objects from the outer universe and any attempt of undertaking such a Pilgrimage could destroy the universe altogether. Now, as the story in Salvation Sequence progresses, the persuasion and promises of the resurrection of Olyix begin to get replaced by possible acts of coercion and even an all-out war in case the humans or any civilization refuse to join them in their process of transcendence: "Sentient species are the children of this universe, the reason it exists. It is our destiny to travel to the conclusion and join together in bliss and fulfillment with the final God" ("Salvation" 261). The vision of the eternal salvation that Olyix proposes to the human race is a very rare one and it attempts to persuade the humans by stating how the latter should feel extremely privileged to have been offered this opportunity (Tipler, 1994; Hodgman, 2017; Campbell Jr, 1947). The Quint mind Eol-3 describes the human life as one of the most precious and rarest of all events in the cosmos: "And sentient life is the rarest of all...Very few ever succeed in reaching the stage you have achieved...You are the most precious of all life; and to coexist in a galaxy so vast in space and time, to actually meet you and offer guidance, is truly a miracle" ("Salvation", 503). So, even in such a posthuman atmosphere, treating human life as one of the rarest forms of sentient lifeforms clearly invests the endeavour of the Olyix with a significance that is both cosmic and simultaneously humane. However, as we will see in the third book, the attitude of the Olyix towards humans is not so benign and adulatory after all, and it is purely to coax the humans into joining the Olyix that they have been praising the human race in superlative terms all along (Redford, 2012; Kelly, 2012; Hayles, 2010). The Olyix want the humans to submit to their one true God and want them to feel special because they have

been chosen by the Olyix after millions of years of careful and close scrutiny. The motif of submitting to one God is also a central tenet in Abrahamic religious traditions.

However, when the humans resist the Olyix's attempt to forcefully convert them, we can see the real attitude of the Olyix towards the humans comes out in the open. They have always held the humans in low esteem and seen them as nothing more than cannon fodder that can be expended at will. Their inherent contempt and indifference towards the human race are what that have further distanced the humans from their religious vision. When the Olyix AIs feel the defeat is near, a Quint-mind named Gox states that how the Olyix have been mistaken into thinking that the humans are an inferior species to them and can be easily conquered: "So now the exquisite history of the Olyix will be extinguished along with our existence (Webster & Watson, 2002; Wolfe, 2010; de Chardin, 1975). By humans. Humans! The dumbest species in the galaxy – subverted, manipulated and nurtured for millennia by the bastard Neána" ("The Saints of Salvation," 413). So, all the talks and adulations by the Olyix have been part of its subterfuge and deceptive strategies through which it has been trying to persuade the humans into embracing its vision. In fact, it appears more like a battle of ideas where the Olyix's vision of a transcendental, timeless, immortal creator and humanity's view of God as a being that can be defeated come to contradict and confront each other. Also, Olyix appear to have taken what Rhodes (2008), refers to as "unhealthy paths as a result of their understanding of prophecy" ("Northern Storm Rising", 199). which parallels the extremist ideologies of the religious fanatics and fundamentalists rather than those of the true saints and preachers. Commenting on how the core ideological differences and interpretations of prophecies embedded in the sacred texts can influence the worldviews of people belonging to different religious traditions and ethnicities, Hunt (1976), points towards the differences between the God of the Bible who has promised to forever protect and guide Israel, and Allah in Quran who has prophesied to annihilate Israel. Hunt remarks, "The real battle is not between Arabs and Jews but between Allah and Yahweh [the God of the Bible]" ("Judgment Day", 55).

The Olyix derive their spirit from their faith in predestination and afterlife, and even when they are defeated, they are not disheartened and do not feel it to be the end of their journey, rather they see their venture as spreading across multiple timelines, multiple realities, and in multiple dimensions (Bostrom, 2003; De Chardin, 2004; Collins, 1994). The concepts such as life and death, win or loss are merely semantic constructions that are to always remain bound within the spatiotemporal confines of mortal beings such as humans, while they act as cosmologically distributed machine intelligences for whom such constraints do not apply. Olyix have attained command over many formidable technologies such as stabilizing the wormhole-tunnels with pulses of negative energy so that they can travel almost instantaneously to any part of the universe/multiverse, traveling back and forth in time so that they might destroy any civilization which they envisage as a potential threat in the future timeline, and hijacking the minds of the individuals with their quantum entangled minds, etc. to name a few. Still, the core of their belief that drives them to do things that very few posthuman civilizations could do is rooted deeply in their vision of God and this somehow makes them some kind of religious fanatics before those who do not share their

vision of the End Times. It becomes quite clear that the humans and even the posthuman descendants of humanity fail to relate themselves to the vision of a divinely ordained Salvation at the end of the time when the cosmos itself collapses after the passage of some billions to trillions of years. No matter how much the Olyix and their Quint-minds attempt to present their religion and the possibility of a merger with their God in a most humane and spiritually relatable way, it still feels highly alien and distant to the humans. While experiencing the end-times revelation and the prophesied doom of the universe, Dellian feels "...the foreign thoughts of devotion to the God at the End of Time tearing free in agonizing ruptures" ("The Saints of Salvation," 13). As Moltmann remarks, the Christian God is a compassionate and humane one "who is present in the innermost centre of existence of an individual person" ("The Trinity and the Kingdom of God", 148) . Kasper even treats God as a "supra-personal" being based on whose essence the very existence of human beings is founded. He says, "God is a person in an incomparably higher way than we are" ("The God of Jesus Christ", 155). The anthropomorphic attributes are extremely manifest and clear in the portrayal of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible. It is in terms of its expressing mythico-anthropomorphic attributes that the God of the Bible seems to differ from the God of Olyix most. Also, as Patricia Fox maintains, human beings for their agency are ultimately dependant on the Almighty Creator since they do not possess "the freedom to escape fate and to become a unique self" (God as Communion, 33). The God of Olyix seems to mirror most closely the highly monotheistic and theocentric portrayal of the Quranic Creator Allah who forever dwells in the most sublime, transcendental, ontologically separate, heavenly plane and neither descends to his Earthly creation nor incarnates himself in an anthropomorphic form (Pagden, 2008; Esposito, 1999; Riley-Smith, 2008).

In fact, as the human soldiers begin to feel confident of their chances against the Olyix, they even start questioning the omnipotence of the God and feels that perhaps it is only to the Olyix that this vengeful God exists: "If we win, if we exterminate the Olyix, then the God at the End of Time will know it, because the Olyix won't be there delivering all the elevated species as requested" ("The Saints of Salvation", 56). In a way, the incredulity of the humans and their trans/posthuman descendants towards the cosmological God seem to mirror our own incredulity towards the very concept of God in an age of rapid material and technological advancement when our materialistic considerations have begun to outweigh the spiritual ones. In the Vayan future, the posthumans and the alien companions are described as harbouring no belief in God, afterlife, or any kind of religious idea. So, the Olyix seem to be acting towards filling this spiritual void among the human race. Humans, however, instead of finding ways to believe in the God only seek novel ways to destroy the God of the Olyix altogether. Still, no matter how incredulous and suspicious the humans appear to the God of Olyix, the Olyix and their Quint minds remain forever hopeful of their final encounter with their God. The Gox-Nikolaj Quint recalls how it has been betrayed by the Neána aliens and the humans who do not share their vision of God. It further states its belief in theodicy or divine retribution, "I'm sure the God at the End of Time will deal with them severely for their defiance" ("The Saints of Salvation", 111). The Gox-Nikolaj Quint's emphasis on meting out punishment to those who refuse to accept the invitation of the merger reminds us of several passages in the Bible (Matthew 13:30, 36-43, 47-50; 24:36-41; 25:30, and 31-45),

where it is stated that the unbelievers will be judged and extinguished following the return of Christ. The Olyix AI even at some point describes their act of cocooning the human bodies as “sanctified equilibrium until we present them to the God at the End of Time” (“The Saints of Salvation” 113). Olyix’s vision of an eternal communion during the end-times both mirrors and at the same time distorts the Christian vision of redemption and resurrection where religious love plays a defining role: “Human souls redeemed and sanctified through communion with the living God, raised up to God and bound to a realm that comes from God and is directed toward God, a realm of personalities inseparably bound together by religious love” (Troeltsch, “The Christian Faith”, 63).

Two disparate cultures

It cannot be denied that many of the religious ideals of the Olyix have their parallels in the world religions of the humans; however, it is their fanaticism and zealous orthodoxy that cause the humans to revolt against their ideals. For the Olyix, the body is simply an unnecessary burden and should be discarded or sacrificed in the pursuit of some higher cause, and it is when they try to take this literally and implement it on the humans that it becomes utterly devoid of spiritual significance.

Their eschatological vision both reminds us of the Christian eschatological vision of the rapture that sees death not as an end but a momentary pause in the face of an everlasting afterlife and a posthuman version of White Man’s Burden where the self-proclaimed white imperialist empires feel it to be their sacred duty to ennobel and uplift the supposedly barbaric and backward cultures. Also, similar to the Christian catholic belief, the Olyix too maintains that the body should be ignored and spirit needs to be given precedence over the flesh in one’s quest for attaining a true spiritual transformation. Despite making enormous progress in science and technology, before the eyes of the Olyix, humans have still not abandoned their animalistic self: “The Olyix understand. You are new to sentience. Your behavior is still affected by your animal origin. You seek to advance yourselves at the expense of others” (“Salvation”, 260). Their disregard for the human body hides another motive behind it which is to hijack the human body by infecting it with self-replicating Kcells. The Olyix want to know more about the human body and how it functions with the human mind lodged in it, and so they decide to share Kcell technologies with the humans in exchange for antimatter fuel for their spaceships, and also it wants to replicate the neural structure of the humans most faithfully so that the minds of the individual can be preserved indefinitely even when the body is gone: “We continue to learn how to adapt our Kcells to function in your bodies. Our growthmasters believe we can one day model clusters to duplicate your neural structure. When that happens, you can become immortal like us” (“Salvation”, 261). The Kcell basically acts like a tumour or cancer that infects and spreads throughout the entire body. Yuri Alster, one of the Connexion Corps’ warriors observes, “...(Kcells) they’re an integral part of the Olyix elevation program. They’re a specific cancer, formatted to transform a human body into a biological life support for the brain” (“The Saints of Salvation”,339). She further states that its purpose is to keep the soul “intact until the end of time, ready for when the Olyix God comes out to play” (“The Saints of Salvation”, 339-40). In fact, the Olyix uses some form of Kcells implant

to cause the human and other alien bodies to rot from within and cause them to transform into “mutated freak cocoon that’s on a trillion-year pilgrimage to meet an alien god” (“The Saints of Salvation”, 20). This is their way of preserving and sustaining their subjects' mind-states for their God. In Hamilton’s *The Reality Dysfunction*, we see an extensive use of various bio-genetic modification technologies. In the novel, the two rival groups named Adamists and the Edenists use different type of technologies in which the Adamists use “neural nanonics” to augment their mental and intellectual capabilities while the Edenists have built entire ‘biotek habitats’ and invented new genetic engineering techniques to help humanity advance to the trans-/posthuman level of advancements. Adamists feel that the technologies of Edenists that allow them to transfer their memories into the habitat while they are about to die are a clear violation of God’s judgment of souls. Again, through the frequent use of such terms as Adamists and Edenists, we again see how Biblical tropes and imageries continue to play a very significant role in Hamilton’s various works. In *Temporal Void*, we find how humans have used Bionics to advance themselves to the most extreme transhuman/posthuman state in which they have effectively eliminated physical death through continuous and controlled rejuvenation. Through Bionics, the implanted and inserted memory cells in human bodies can record and capture every bit of information in the human brain which can then be transferred and instantiated into new clones. Also, there is the advanced, super-sentient supercomputer named ANA (Advanced Neural Activity Network) in which the humans can upload their consciousness to the matrix and thus attain virtual immortality.

Conclusion

The study has attempted to analyse the three novels in Peter F. Hamilton’s *Salvation Sequence* to show how a posthuman reformulation of some core theological tropes such as God, afterlife, resurrection, and immortality can both relate to and also significantly differ from our own engagements with such ideas. It becomes clear after the present study that a common ground certainly exists between man’s innermost spiritual and theological cravings and the vision of a posthuman future driven by absolute command over each and every aspect of life and death. Also, the study has tried to show how the transformative power of the religious ideas primarily lies in its power of successfully addressing the innermost impulses of the individuals to connect to some greater power and thus construct a meaningful worldview around that relationship with the Divinity, and it is because of this failure to connect to the innermost human needs that Olyix’s religious vision centered around their transcendental God fails to attract the human protagonists into embracing its vision. Also, the study has endeavoured to analyse how even in a posthuman future, various issues such as fundamentalism, religious fanaticism, and zealotry continue to inspire and influence the course and the outcome of the actions of the sentient creatures in many significant ways.

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