'He, effortlessly and magisterially as we have come to expect from him, delivers a siren warning of the dangers of sidelining the gods to a comprehensive audience' Peter Stanford, *Observer*

'All religious life is here . . . The triumph of *Living with the Gods* is its marrying the aesthetic and political dimensions of religion without reducing it to either' Nick Spencer, *Financial Times*

'If I were to permit myself a household shrine, it's likely that it would consist of a silver-framed photograph of Neil MacGregor, a selection of his books and a collection of objects bought at the British Museum shop. . . . As with his other books, the pictures are gorgeous, the choices MacGregor makes of what to write about are often surprising and therefore fresh' David Aaronovitch, *The Times*

'Based on his wide knowledge of religious artefacts from all over the world, it presents religion not as a private matter, but as an essentially social and political phenomenon . . . In one sense the ancient past is made accessible to us: we could so easily have walked past objects like the Lion Man in museums without taking the trouble to pay attention to them. But when such objects are explained to us, not only is the ancient past made accessible, our present reality is also made strangely questionable' Angela Tilby, *Literary Review*

'This scholarly, elegantly written book is a reminder of how seldom, when visiting a museum, most of us take the time to inquire what lies behind the objects we look at. *Living with the Gods* is a celebration of curiosity' Caroline Moorehead, *Guardian*

'MacGregor's warm and friendly prose is often reinforced by contributions from a wide range of scholars famous in their fields . . . the device is effective: to place the unfamiliar and familiar side by side so that the echoes between them can be heard is to make the familiar fresh and sometimes startling. . . . rich and rewarding' Lucy Beckett, *The Times Literary Supplement*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neil MacGregor was Director of the National Gallery, London from 1987 to 2002 and of the British Museum from 2002 to 2015, and Chair of the Steering Committee of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin from 2015 to 2018. His previous books include *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, *Shakespeare's Restless World* and *Germany: Memories of a Nation*, all available in Penguin and now between-them translated into more than a dozen languages. In 2010, he was made a member of the Order of Merit, the UK's highest civil honour. In 2015 he was awarded the Goethe Medal and the German National Prize. In 2018 the radio series *Living with the Gods* received the Sandford Saint Martin Award for Religious Broadcasting.

Neil MacGregor

LIVING WITH
THE GODS

ON BELIEFS AND PEOPLES

BBC RADIO 4 92–95FM

PENGUIN BOOKS

The British Museum

PART FOUR

The Power of Images

16. THE PROTECTORESSES 240
17. THE WORK OF ART IN TIMES OF SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION 254
18. THE ACCRETION OF MEANING 268
19. CHANGE YOUR LIFE 282
20. REJECTING THE IMAGE, REVERING THE WORD 296

PART FIVE

One God or Many

21. THE BLESSINGS OF MANY GODS 316
22. THE POWER OF ONE 330
23. SPIRITS OF PLACE 342
24. IF GOD BE WITH US 352
25. TOLERATING AND NOT TOLERATING 370

PART SIX

Powers Earthly and Divine

26. THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN 388
27. THY KINGDOM COME 400
28. TURNING THE SCREW 418
29. 'THERE IS NO GOD!' 439
30. LIVING WITH EACH OTHER 456

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS 472
FURTHER READING 476
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 479
INDEX 480

INTRODUCTION

BELIEVING AND BELONGING

Living with the Gods is about one of the central facts of human existence: that every known society shares a set of beliefs and assumptions – a faith, an ideology, a religion – that goes far beyond the life of the individual, and is an essential part of a shared identity. Such beliefs have a unique power to define – and to divide – peoples, and are a driving force in the politics of many parts of the world today. Sometimes they are secular, most obviously in the case of nationalism, but throughout history they have most often been, in the widest sense, religious. This book is emphatically not a history of religion, nor an argument in favour of faith, still less a defence of any particular system of belief. Looking across history and around the globe, it interrogates objects, places and human activities to try to understand what shared religious beliefs can mean in the public life of a community or a nation, how they shape the relationship between the individual and the state, and how they have become a crucial contributor to who we are. For in deciding how we live with our gods we also decide how to live with each other.

Belief is back

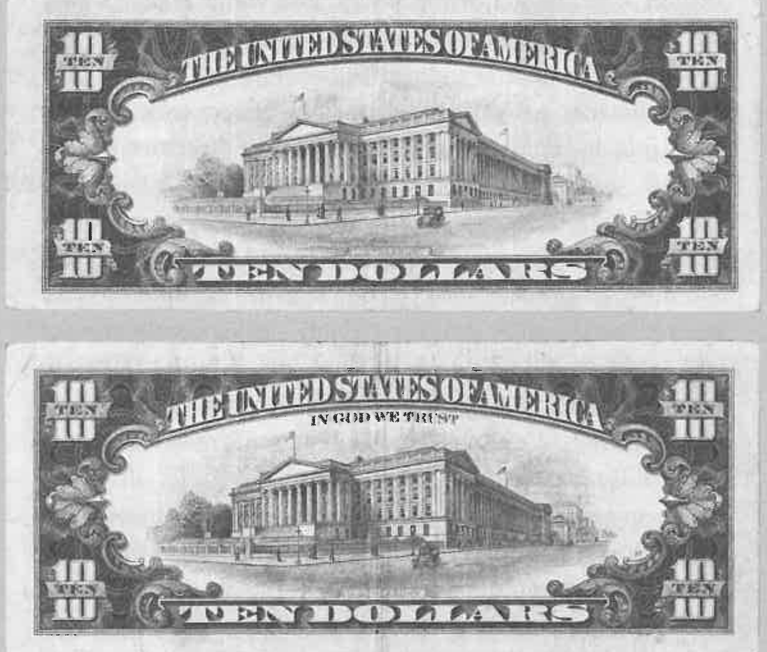
After the end of the Second World War the Western world basked for decades in a prosperity without precedent in history. The United States offered most of its citizens – and its immigrants –

what appeared to be endlessly rising standards of living. In 1957, the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, famously told the British public that they had 'never had it so good'. They agreed, and he comfortably won the next election. Across Western Europe and North America, economic growth was the norm: peace had on the whole led to plenty.

In the rest of the world, the Soviet Union and the United States were locked in bitter conflict, sometimes military, always ideological, competing to win new recruits for their preferred systems of Marxist state communism or liberal democratic capitalism. As both are essentially economic propositions, the debate increasingly and unsurprisingly centred not on their very different notions of freedom and social justice, but on which system could provide the greater material benefits for its society.

There is a striking example of this elision – equation – of ideals with their material outcomes on the US dollar bill, or, more precisely, on two dollar bills. Even though most of its population was Christian, the United States had been founded on the explicit basis, enshrined in the Constitution, that the new nation should not have an established religion. But in 1956, in an effort to distinguish itself even more sharply from the atheist Soviet Union, Congress resolved to make greater public use of the long-familiar motto 'In God We Trust'. In a gesture rich in unintended symbolism, it was decided that the words should appear not on public buildings or on the flag, but on the national currency. They have been printed on dollar bills ever since, and on the ten-dollar bill they hover protectively over the US Treasury itself. The ironic phrase the 'Almighty Dollar' had been circulating since the nineteenth century, warning against the conflation of God and Mammon. Now, however, one of the defining American beliefs was to be expressed on the most revered manifestation of its success: its money.

On the face of it, it might seem that the new wording on the dollar bills was an assertion of the supremacy of God in the US political system, a twentieth-century American version of the letters *DG – Dei Gratia*, 'By the Grace of God' – which accompany the portrait of the sovereign on British currency, or the Qur'anic texts on the coinage of many Islamic states. In fact, it was almost the reverse.



The ten-dollar bill, showing the US Treasury, before and after 1956

This striking combination of the financial and the spiritual, far from being a step towards theocracy in Washington, was symptomatic of a wider change in the balance between ethics and economics. On both sides of the Atlantic, the role of organized religion in public and private realms alike was receding. Society was becoming increasingly secular – more swiftly in Europe – and fewer and fewer were attending traditional religious services. The 'revolutionaries' of 1968 argued in terms of economic injustice that hardly mentioned God, let alone putting their trust in him. After the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s, the consensus almost everywhere was clear. The battle of ideologies was over: capitalism had won, communism had failed, religion had withered, and if there was a faith – a set of assumptions shared by almost everybody – it was now in material well-being. As Bill Clinton memorably put it in the US presidential election campaign of 1992: 'It's the economy, stupid.' Few disagreed; and, like Macmillan before him, Clinton was elected leader of his country.

Twenty-five years later, to the surprise or bewilderment of the prosperous West, organized religion is, all around the world, once again politically centre stage. To an extent rarely seen in Europe since the seventeenth century, faith now shapes large parts of the global public debate. The competitive materialisms of the Cold War have been replaced. The whole of the Middle East is caught up in murderous conflicts that are articulated and fought not in economic but in religious terms. The politics of Pakistan and Israel, both founded as explicitly secular states, are increasingly confessional. In Indonesia and Nigeria, Myanmar and Egypt, communities are attacked and individuals killed on the pretext that the practice of their faith makes them aliens in their own country. India, whose constitution enshrines the state's equidistance from all religions, is convulsed by calls for the government to assert an explicitly Hindu identity, with grave consequences for Indians who are Muslims or Christians (Chapter 25). In many countries, not least the United States, immigration policy – effectively the case against immigrants – is often framed in the language of religion. Even in largely agnostic Europe, the Bavarian

Prime Minister urges the presence of the cross in official buildings as the marker of a Catholic Bavarian identity, and the French government bans the public wearing of the full-face *burqa* (Chapter 28). In Switzerland a referendum is held to ban the building of minarets (Chapter 9), while thousands march regularly in Dresden to protest against alleged 'Islamization'. The most populous state on earth, China, claims that its national interests, the very integrity of the state, are threatened by the exiled spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, the Dalai Lama, a man whose only power is the faith he embodies.

The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, deeply shocking to the secular world, and which at the time appeared to be pushing against the tide of history, now seems instead to have been the harbinger of its turning. After decades of humiliating intervention by the British and the Americans, Iranian politicians found in religion a way of defining and asserting the country's identity. Many since then have followed the same path. In a way that could hardly have been imagined sixty years ago, the reassuring politics

The difficulties of faith in the public realm. Watched over by police, French Muslims pray in the street in Clichy on the outskirts of Paris, in protest at the closure of their unauthorized place of worship, March 2017

of prosperity has in many parts of the world been replaced by the rhetoric and politics, often violent, of identity articulated through belief. One of the arguments of *Living with the Gods* is that this should not surprise us, because it is in fact a return to the prevalent pattern of human societies.

Living in stories

'We tell ourselves stories in order to live.' Joan Didion's famous sentence opens a collection of essays she wrote around her experiences in the secular America of the 1970s. It is not a reflection on religion, but it speaks to exactly that compelling need which we all have, for stories that order our memories and hopes, and give shape and meaning to our individual and collective lives.

We begin where the oldest surviving evidence begins, in the caves of Europe at the end of the Ice Age. We shall see in Chapter 1 that a society with a belief in something beyond itself, a narrative that goes beyond the immediate and beyond the self, seems better equipped to confront threats to its existence, to survive and to flourish. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the French sociologist Émile Durkheim argued that without such overarching stories, what he called 'an idea that it constructs of itself', there can in fact be no society. Those stories, the ideals they illustrate and the ceremonies in which they are enacted constituted for Durkheim the essential elements of any system of communal belief: and, in a sense, the stories *are* the society. If, for whatever reason, we lose or forget them, in a very real way we, collectively, no longer exist.

Systems of belief almost always contain a narrative of how the physical world was created, how the people came to be in it, and how they and all living things should inhabit it. But the stories and associated rituals usually go far beyond that. They tell members of the group how they ought to behave to one another, and crucially they also address the future – those aspects of the society

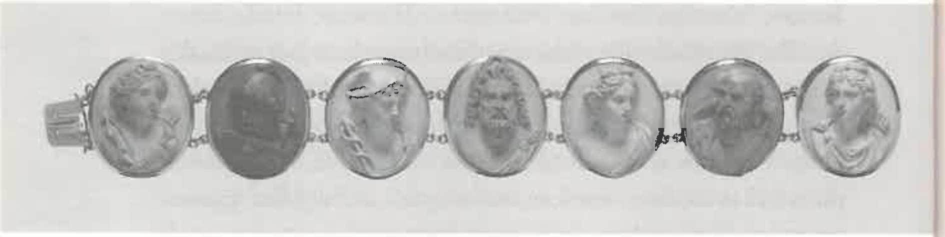
that will endure as succeeding generations perish and pass. They embrace the living, the dead and those still to be born, in one continuing story of belonging.

The most powerful and most sustaining of any society's stories are the work of generations. They are repeated, adapted and transmitted, absorbed into everyday life, ritualized and internalized to such a degree that we are often hardly aware that we are still surrounded by the tales of distant ancestors. They give us our particular place in a pattern which can be observed but not fully understood – and they do it almost without our knowing it. It is a process we can witness every day as we – and others – repeat that most familiar of sequences, the days of the week.

Living in time

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. The idea of dividing the cycle of the moon into four seven-day weeks may have begun in ancient Babylon. In its familiar modern form, it probably derives from a Jewish model, echoing the story of the Creation as told in Genesis, in which God, having made the world in six days, rested on the seventh – and ordered humanity and their animals to do likewise. In consequence, every week connects us to the beginning of time itself, as its days plot the round of our work and our leisure, the recurrent rhythm of our existence. But they do more, and what that is will depend on our language and our beliefs. The names that we give the weekdays in English are an inherited meditation on the cycles of time, as we observe the pattern of the sun, the moon and the planets circling above us; and the story they tell is for English-speakers only, for nobody else's week is quite the same as ours.

Sunday, Monday – it begins with the sun and the moon, which we see virtually every day, and whose separate movements mark the months and the years. After them, in most of Western Europe, come the days of the easily visible planets. In the Romance languages, this is obvious to all: Mars – *martedì/mardi*; Mercury – *mercoledì/mercredi*; Jupiter (Jove) – *giovedì/jeudi*; Venus – *venerdì/vendredi*. The order may surprise modern astronomers, but it is the sequence that the Romans followed and that they left behind them. In England, somewhere around the seventh century, the planets tethered to the exotic gods of Rome were renamed for the equivalent northern gods, and it is their Anglo-Saxon names – Tiw, Woden, Thor and Frige – that distinguish the days for English-speakers on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On Saturday, these homely Anglo-Saxon gods are, however, joined by Saturn, the one Roman immigrant who stubbornly retained his Latin name, making our week, like our language itself, a peculiar German–Latin hybrid.



Moon-day to Sun-day. The Roman gods of the English days of the week, on a mid-nineteenth-century Italian cameo bracelet

Encompassing the different cycles of sun, moon and the five planets, every week thus implies not just a long span of many years, but also the company of many gods and the vastness of space itself. In the names of our days is the entire solar system, the time–space continuum as it was known in the ancient Mediterranean world and transmitted to the north of Europe. The turn of the week is – in English – a concise cosmological history, in which we still live every day with the gods of our ancestors and our conquerors, inhabiting an ancient but stable structure of time.

This huge embrace of the week is pleasingly visible, and surprisingly portable, in a splendid nineteenth-century Italian cameo bracelet, where the sun and moon flank the planets in their due sequence, all carved in relief and rendered in characteristic Roman mode. But although the bracelet was made in Italy, it makes sense only in English: because the English weekend is very different from the one in Southern Europe. In Italian (and in French and the other Romance languages), after Friday there is no Saturn's day. Instead, the week shifts into a different religious world, and the fifth of the pagan gods gives way to the Sabbath of the single God of the Jews – *sabato* and *samedi*. And after the Jewish Sabbath comes not the day of the sun, but *domenica* or *dimanche*: it is the day of *dominus*, the Lord. In Latin Europe the weekend is not about the pattern of movement in the skies, but about how we should worship on earth. Thus the days of the week give time a shape, placing the everyday routine of our single lives in a pattern both of cosmic harmony and of social order.

The seven-day week is now a global phenomenon, but the different names for its days everywhere tell a series of local stories, depending on custom and language. Most of the Europe that was shaped by the Roman Catholic church retained the pagan Roman planetary gods, even though long supplanted, and the Romance languages added to them the Jewish and Christian holy days. But in Eastern Europe and the Middle East the Greek Orthodox church rejected those displaced pagan gods – and their planets – entirely. It chose instead to stay with the radically different tradition of the Jews, a model later adopted also by the Muslims. For all of these, the week has a clear centre: the one and only God, and the day principally devoted to his worship – Friday, Saturday or Sunday as appropriate for Muslims, Jews or Christians. The days in between have no pagan or cosmic resonances, but are simply numbered in sequence – the day after, or the second day, the third day, and so on. So the turn of the week in Hebrew, Russian or

Arabic, to venture no further afield, tells a story quite different from ours: a narrative of the active practice of faith and of rigorous monotheism, of one single god around whom alone the pattern of our lives is to be ordered – a god who emphatically does not share time with the gods of the heathens (Chapter 22).

To name the days of the week is, for most of the world, to declare, consciously or unconsciously, the religious history of your particular community. It is why the anti-religious French revolutionaries, eager to devise a calendar which, like the metric system, the whole world could use, concluded that the only way forward was simply to abolish the week altogether (Chapter 29) and move to a decimal system of days. It was logical, and they believed it should be universal. Yet here too, after a handful of years, the old gods returned.

Naming weekdays may be complex, but cultures diverge even more sharply, and far more bitterly, when it comes to numbering the years. Where to begin counting? When did time – or, more precisely, when did *our* story – start? For the Jews, that meant Jehovah's creation of the world, for the Romans the foundation of their city – in each case a perfect demonstration of their view of their place in world history. But for others it was the moment when the world began a second time, and all things were made new. For Christians that is the birth of Jesus; for Muslims it is when the Prophet moved from Mecca to Medina and the community of the faithful took shape. Imperial China began counting the years afresh with every new reign. For French Revolutionaries the establishment of the Republic and of new institutions of the state made 1792 Year One. In Aztec Mexico the sequence had neither beginning nor end, but moved in complex, endlessly repeating fifty-two-year cycles. There is in short no universal story: numbering the years, like naming the days, conveys each particular society's idea of what it is and of its own special place in time.

The expanding power of Europe and America over the last two

centuries has led (or compelled) most of the world to divide historical time as they do, into the years Before Christ and Anno Domini, the year of Our Lord. Many, despite their own very different beliefs, agree to use the same numbering, but understandably baulk at using the letters BC and AD, which endorse (or at least acknowledge) an exclusively Christian narrative. They prefer instead the neutral notion, increasingly popular since the late nineteenth century, of a Common Era, which retains the Christian chronology, dating events from the supposed date of the birth of Jesus, but relabelled as CE or BCE.

The idea of the Common Era is an ingenious and largely successful attempt to find a narrative framework which, irrespective of language, culture or religion, can embrace all humanity. But it is a rare example. Perhaps it is possible only because two (or, in the case of Iran, three) calendars can happily co-exist, each to be used for different purposes (Chapter 29), an ecumenical, even bilingual, view of time. Most conflicts between our local and global narratives have not proved so easy to resolve.

The limits of language

The familiar example of the days of the week and the calendar touch on many of the topics we shall be discussing in loftier contexts later in the book. They show with wonderful clarity the astonishing longevity of belief patterns once established, and the extent to which rituals of worship in many – perhaps most – societies structure the rhythms of life.

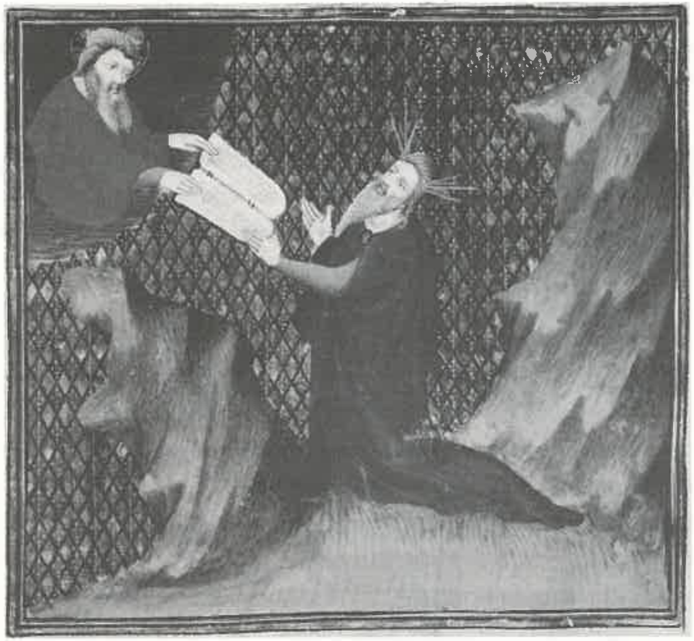
In *Living with the Gods* we shall be looking not at the life of monastic retreat, or private spirituality, at what individuals believe, or the abstract theological truth of religious ideas, which must be unknowable except to devotees. We shall be looking instead at what whole societies believe and do. It is a way of addressing religion – as practice rather than doctrine – that may seem foreign to those brought up with the idea that belief is based on divinely inspired texts held to contain absolute truths, from which religious authority ultimately derives. If there is one image that sums up that view of organized religion in the West, it would surely be Moses on Mount Sinai receiving, directly from God, the Ten Commandments: one all-powerful, all-controlling God, handing down a text, written in unchangeable stone, which sets out clear and immutable doctrine about how we should worship him, and what we should (but mostly should not) do.

Needless to say, that is a reductive caricature, as any Jew, Christian or Muslim would quickly point out. Moses on Mount Sinai is, for all three traditions, only one part of a much larger story, which embraces millennia of contact with God, many other divinely inspired texts, many other kinds of social practices, and constantly evolving interpretations of the Hebrew scriptures, the Gospels and the Qur'an. (Chapter 20). Nevertheless, literal, fundamentalist readings of those texts are still a major cause of violent disagreement between groups of Muslims, Christians and Jews.

The Abrahamic faiths really are unusual, and not just in their belief in a single God. Most faiths of the world for most of history have not had texts that claimed such unique status – if they had texts at all. Even fewer have any notion of a central authority, which, like the Vatican, might define a corpus of doctrine which adherents are required to believe. Hindus and Buddhists of course have many texts, but none that has self-evident primacy, and so the meanings accorded to them and the practices around them vary enormously from place to place. The Greeks and Romans, rigorous in so much else, had virtually nothing that we would regard as a statement of faith: their notion of religion was essentially something that citizens did. A view of faith systems that concentrated on doctrines and texts alone would be a sadly limited exercise.

It is in any case often difficult to say what specific beliefs people would, if pressed, affirm. We can, however, observe their actions, the ceremonies large and small that express their beliefs, and which, regularly repeated, shape a life and a community. So the book focuses on those significant ceremonies, on the things that people use in them, and the places where they perform them. I have chosen sites where large numbers gather for sacrifice, pilgrimage or ritual celebrations, over as wide a geographic span as possible. The objects come almost entirely from the collection of the British Museum, but that is hardly a restriction, as it covers the globe and ranges from the earliest human societies to the present day and enables us to embark on a worldwide journey through the material and social manifestations of belief.

The great advantage of this approach is that objects and places allow us to address on an equal footing the large global religions



The laws of life and faith, handed down from God to Moses, in an early fifteenth-century French manuscript illumination and much smaller belief systems that are embedded in one particular landscape (Chapter 23); practices tightly controlled by king or clergy, and those, like the festival of Christmas or the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Chapters 15 and 16), where the laity play an unscripted, pivotal role; religions that disappeared long ago and those that still flourish. They also let us consider forms of belief and behaviour not usually regarded as religious, such as state atheism, or the cult of the national leader.

There is another advantage too. In a world of several thousand different tongues, the silence of objects allows us into territory difficult to enter in other ways. Our bracelet of the days of the week, which is English-speaking and cannot be translated into Italian (let alone Arabic) without losing much of its meaning, powerfully demonstrates the profound links between language and belief. It is not just that together they are the most powerful forces in forging the identity of any community. The words in which we can talk about faith or religion are themselves inevitably shaped by – and in most cases limited to – our own habits and forms of thought. For obvious historical reasons, European languages are at ease with the notion of the single God of the Abrahamic tradition, or the classical gods of Greece and Rome. But beyond that, in Mesopotamia, India or Japan, for example, Europeans struggle to cope with unfamiliar, disconcertingly fluid ideas of the divine. When we try to find words to match the understanding of landscape that shapes the lives of people in Vanuatu or of Aboriginal Australians (Chapter 23), it quickly becomes clear that we simply do not have a vocabulary for ideas which are central to the lives of these communities, but which we have never encountered. 'Animate beings' and 'animated landscape' have an arid, abstract ring to them, far removed from the immediacy of the everyday experience itself. 'Spirits', which is probably the best we can do, sounds fey, and risks conjuring notions of table-tapping. All we can do, when we venture in our own language into the thought worlds of others, is to acknowledge our inadequacy: we are discussing matters for which we do not have the words.

This approach through objects, places and activities is inherently and necessarily fragmentary. It cannot in any way amount to a narrative history of faith. But it can, I hope, offer access, often refreshingly direct, into some of the different ways that societies have found of imagining and inhabiting their place in the world.

Who are 'we'?

Another of the central arguments of *Living with the Gods* is that religion addresses many of the same defining questions as politics. How does a society organize itself in order to survive? What sacrifices can society properly demand of the individual in the service of a greater good? Above all, who is included in the community that we call 'we'? The narratives of faith can create uniquely powerful symbols of solidarity. In the fire of the Parsis (Chapter 2) or in the statues of the goddess Durga (Chapter 17), every part of the community – rich and poor, weak and strong, living and dead – is represented and honoured. Few political units have found metaphors so emotionally compelling for a society in which everybody is included.

Religious beliefs have also of course been consciously manipulated by rulers and priests across the millennia to exclude parts of society – faith being used in the service of political oppression. The supreme example is the Nazi murdering of the Jews. We shall look here at the less familiar seventeenth-century persecution of Christians in Japan and Huguenots in France, in each case designed to define and to eliminate those who were not to be considered as 'we' by a powerful central state (Chapter 28). But those same faith structures can also be the refuge and the strength of the oppressed. The history of the Jews (Chapter 27) after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the campaigns of Hadrian, or the survival as a community of the enslaved African Americans (Chapter 10), can be explained only in terms of a set of beliefs which sustain when other supports have fallen away. In such circumstances religion offers an architecture of meaning in which people may find shelter and hope. And if it is not provided by those in power, those without power will often find ways of creating it for themselves, like the Mexican workers struggling for better conditions in the United States (Chapter 16). In each case, in politics and religion alike, people are defining their identity.

The thinkers of the European Enlightenment, among them the drafters of the US Constitution, hoped that, if they could separate organized religion from the government of society, they would banish for ever the spectre of religious wars. In that aim, they were by and large successful. Yet they perhaps addressed the symptom rather than the cause: the human need for belonging, and for a story to sustain it in which everybody has a part. The shared narratives of faith, uniting and inspiring, dividing and excluding, were quickly replaced by the no less strengthening and no less destructive myths of nationalism. It seems that Durkheim may have been right, and that what we venerate is often an imagined ideal form of society itself. Do we have such a notion of what our society should be today? In recent decades, as nation states have been enfeebled by economic globalization or, in parts of the Middle East and Africa, have collapsed entirely, religion has become an ever more significant marker of identity. Narratives of faith and the sense of belonging which they can offer are more attractive, more powerful and more dangerous than a generation ago.

The Enlightenment philosophers thought they had discovered how to accommodate different religious communities peacefully in one political structure: tolerance mixed with secularism. The Romans had achieved a remarkable degree of inter-faith harmony, by the elegant device of inviting the gods of the peoples they conquered into the Roman pantheon (Chapter 21): most were happy to accept the invitation and a new, expanded sense of imperial identity was the result. But such a relaxed and porous approach to faith was based on public rituals of worship, not a fixed doctrine of belief, and it is hardly open to the text-based monotheisms, with their single jealous god.

World-wide adoption of the Common Era calendar is a relatively trivial example of an agreement – generally acknowledged but hardly discussed – which established a universal commonality without denying individual identities. Is it possible now for humanity to find a pluralist global narrative, a set of assumptions and aspirations, which might embrace – and be embraced by – everybody in our hyper-connected and ever more fragile world? It is a question of life and death for the vastly increasing numbers of migrants in many parts of the globe (Chapter 30). 'Who are "we"?' is the great political question of our time, and it is essentially about what we believe.