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Religion and Education as Tools of Human Dignity and Civilization, Comparative Analysis of Relevant Islamic and Secular Viewpoints

Keywords: Religion; Education; Civilization; Peace; Human Dignity

As brutal jihadists continue to wreak havoc on humanity in the name of Islam, all over the world, many people are convinced that Islam is a religion of violence. In the opinion of these people, Islam has no regard for human dignity and civilization. The misleading perception is compounded by the reality that some Islamic scholars deliberately misinterpret the Holy Quran to justify their extremist and parochial motives. This Paper seeks to disabuse the people of this misconception arising from the ignorance of the jihadists themselves. Based on a qualitative approach, the Paper conducts a normative analysis of the symbiosis between Islam and education as instruments of human dignity and civilisation. In view of the nature of the analysis, the Paper uses the purposive sampling technique. The objective is to counter the dangerous narratives about Islam and to present empirical data on Islam as a religion of peace, dignity, and civilization. Among the literature reviewed are relevant verses of the Holy Quran and scholarly views on education, human dignity, and civilisation. Contrary to the jihadist mentality, the Paper concludes that Islam and education are partners in peace and tools of service to humanity. Based on the conclusion, the Paper makes a number of recommendations. Among these recommendations is a call on a section of Islamic scholars to avoid the (mis)interpretation of quranic verses in a way that promotes the jihadist agenda. Another recommendation is an appeal to the Muslim youth to resist the temptation of being used as apparatus of violence and other kinds of evil against humanity in exchange for paradise.

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Worship: The Purpose of the Church; Theological Reflections on "Purpose" and "Task"

Keywords: purpose; task; worship; vocation; commission; revelation; response; sovereign; covenant; gesture of worship; theophany; delight; duty; A.W. Tozer; Stanley Grenz; Wayne Gruden; Robert E. Webber; Russell Mittman

Many evangelicals assume that the purpose of the church is to make converts, grow disciples, or perhaps do mission work. Indeed, most of the emphasis in North American evangelical circles these days centers on these assumed "essentials" of church. Consequently, much of the activities of the church, including her worship, are shaped and evaluated based upon how they contribute to those purposes. But what if the church has only one purpose, not many, and what might be the difference between the church's purpose and her tasks?

This paper makes the biblical case for saying that the church has but one purpose, worship, and that her tasks are many. A brief etymological look at both “purpose” and “task” reveals surprising theological underpinnings that uniquely support their use. The bulk of the paper then examines three key theophanies in Scripture that strongly suggest a “gesture” of worship that supports the main thesis. The paper ends with a pastoral appeal for worshipers to shift their gazes from the personal dimension of their encounters with God, or any practical goals of church ministry, no matter how noble, to the eternal nature of the Kingdom and God’s big story.

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The Quest of Vision, Visual Culture, Sacred Space, Ritual, and the Documentation of Lived Experience Through Rock Imagery

Keywords: Ritual; Vision; Quest; Power; Belief

This document will approach the multifaceted concepts that arise through the study of rock art and the cultivation of culture and belief through vision. Through this document, the audience will encounter conceptual ideas regarding belief systems, ritual, experience, cognition, sacredness, and space/landscape — and how these are all essential dynamics that take place in the processes that cultivate the Shoshone visual culture. This document will employ an anthropological lens on the mentioned subject matters, while also approaching these concepts with an interdisciplinary curiosity of how they intermingle; creating a cohesive experience that focuses on these processes which empowered these people[s] to document their visions upon the landscapes that they existed within. In closing, I assert that the data, methods and theories being implemented from multiple fields can — and will — continue to guide scholars to crystalize educated hypothesis regarding cross cultural phenomenon such as sacred experiences and visions; along with the propagation, cultivation, and revivification of rituals with specifics to the creation of visual culture.

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The Rising Conflict between Pantheism and Christian Monotheism in India, A Search for a Common Ground for the Possibilities of Interfaith Dialogue

Keywords: Conflict; India; Monotheism; Pantheism; Panentheism

India has witnessed three major revivals in the Hindu philosophy since the beginning of the historical era of Mahājanapadas up to the present. The Vedic age was followed by the age of the Gupta’s and finally, the third revival was set in motion by the Advaita philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya. The third revival, after having imbibed remnants of the previous two, has contemporarily become the dominant religious philosophical thought in India. Advaita Vedānta or non-dualism implies pantheism.

This at times creates situations of anxious ideological confrontation between the current Indian majority and Christian minority, whenever the incidents of religious dialogue arise since, the tenets of Pantheism are in conflict with the Christian monotheism. Even when these dialogues are not necessarily religious in nature, such as in the political, cultural and social arena, this antithesis comes to fore. Presently, this dialogue and discourse is not merely a matter of choice but of necessity as India has witnessed the rise of the ideology of right Hindutva politics, especially in the last five years with the onset of the new political regime.

This paper aims to explore a philosophical middle ground, if any, for exploring the possibilities of interfaith dialogue. The religio-philosophical tenets of Panentheism appear to be one such possibility. The research methodology of this paper explores the existent philosophical tenets of panentheism in the existing tradition of the west and then makes a contrast with additional findings from the Indian philosophy such as that of Rāmānuja, the counter philosopher to Śaṅkarā. This apparently creates an interpretive context which seems to maintain the exclusivity of the Christian claims maintaining simultaneously, the religious sensibilities of Pantheism. If such a possibility is located from a dialogical platform then, some grounds for a common understanding may arise in praxis. This presently is the need of the hour in India.

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A Christian in India, Lessons from a Seminarian Who Finds Jesus in Hindu Temples

Keywords: Christian; Hindu; Culture; Inter-faith

Cescilio has always believed in Jesus, son of God. After teaching for 23 years, receiving two masters and his PhD Cescilio still feels empty. There is something missing. Does the genesis of Cescilio's sense of emptiness stem from his religious beliefs? He ventures to learn more about life and his Christianity. He enters seminary at age 52. After studying other religions and other gods in World Religions class, he questions whether Jesus is himself a "universal" God. What about the other many gods that exist in the world? Where are they in relation to Jesus, and where is Jesus among them?

Between his desire to learn more about his Christianity and his aspiration to learn other religions, Cescilio is afforded a fateful opportunity to search for his God in India.

Through Cescilio's eyes, we journey into India. Each chapter of "A Christian in India, Lessons from a Seminarian Who Finds Jesus in Hindu Temples," takes you deeper into who Jesus is, where God resides, and we see how Cescilio's Christian faith grows deeper and stronger through Hindu Gods.

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The Absolute Weapon and the Broken Body, A Theological Response to Nuclear Testing and its Effects

More than 2,000 tests of nuclear weapons have been conducted throughout history. Whereas some of these tests were conducted in desert areas and ocean waters, some were conducted close to areas inhabited by native and indigenous people. The damage caused to native, indigenous, and Asian bodies and their lands remain unmentioned; their voices remain unheard. Their pain demands a specific witness from the church. I draw from Asian liberation theologies to reflect upon the nature of "poverty" and oppression that some of the victims of historical nuclear testing and the atomic bombings have experienced, and what liberation would mean and entail for them. Most of the theological arguments offered on nuclear weapons have drawn from Just War theories, and are inadequate in addressing questions, such as the continued intergenerational effects of historical nuclear tests on people and the environment. "In an epistemology of the broken body, the restoration of bodies that suffer and bodies that resist becomes the dialectical site of redemption" (190). Using an epistemology of the broken body provides a way for the church to not only seek justice for the victims of past nuclear testing, but also work towards a world where the threats of future nuclear tests and accidental detonation do not threaten the bodies of the "poor" anymore. In this paper, I argue that the church, as part of its witness, is called to see the wounded and scarred bodies from radiological exposure as the body of the Suffering Christ. Secondly, since specific communities have been subjects of such exposure, a theological response needs to acknowledge the suffering bodies also as agents of change, and provide solidarity with them. This paper is, hence, a step towards the formulation of a theological response to the threat posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons to humanity. 1. Bong, Sharon A. "The Suffering Christ and the Asian Body." *Hope Abundant, Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology* (2003), 186-193.

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Permission Not Will: A Swedenborgian Approach to Theodicy

Keywords: Swedenborg; theodicy; original sin; evil; freedom; choice; permissio; inherited tendencies; society; heaven; hell; Providence; human inclinations

The topic of theodicy is concentrated primarily in Emanuel Swedenborg's book "Divine Providence" published 1763. There are many references do the origin and resolution of evil throughout his works. Swedenborg presents God as the source of all goodness, but not of evil. To satisfy His love, as Swedenborg defines it, God created beings who appear fully autonomous and free to choose to connect with God or not. The core principle the Divine Design was a human being capable of acting in freedom according to reason. People are specifically designed to connect with God, and God works constantly to promote that connection. Humans at some point chose self over God and evil was born. There is no original sin, Swedenborg describes a system of hereditary inclinations from one generation to the next, similar to the way physical characteristics are passed genetically. These inclinations are activated by the environment and are curbed by deliberate action

stemming from an understanding of the difference between right and wrong. In this system God does not cause evil, but permits it, even though He does not will it. As a God of love there are no punishments involved in hereditary inclinations towards evil, and the evil itself carries its own punishment. Heaven and hell are freely chosen states, and hell exists eternally by the will of the people there, not by God's desire. Despite human tendencies towards evil, He works unceasingly to lead people out of evil. By doing so He preserves human freedom and the human ability to have a relationship with God that is freely chosen and is developed as inclinations to evil are rejected in favor of obedience to God.

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Practicing Civility Behind Bars

Keywords: civility; maximum-security prison; civilized world; inmates; multi-faith world; interfaith world

Civility behind bars—or the lack of civility—is a topic that rarely makes the top ten list of how to provide instruction in a maximum-security prison. I would describe civility as a way of acting responsibly and decently in a civilized world. Even though stepping behind bars, opened and closed, by guards is a signal that uniformed men and women are in place to offer protection from the accused, those of us granted the chance to educate inmates must enter the prison in a manner that respects the rules, the institution, and those we serve without prejudice or bias, without holding up a moral compass and without disregard for the inmates' self-worth. Being cordial, kind, and open are the gifts we bring to those striving to find their way to healthy living as each of them struggles to reframe from the rough and tumble life while behind bars under the weight of day-to-day experiences. For the past four years, I have had the privilege of providing instruction to inmates enrolled in the New York Theological Seminary's Master of Professional Studies degree program. My Foundations of Ministry course is designed to give students a chance to engage and deepen their understanding of the nature and challenge of ministry and mission of the church in an increasingly urban, global, and multi-faith world. I am also encouraging them to study theology together from the deep wells of many faiths that includes Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Nation of Islam, Buddhist, Hindu, Rastafarian. The insights they gain through these interfaith encounters provide them an experience of being with people in a manner that both understands and respects. Practicing civility becomes a disposition, a way inmates and faculty relate to one another as well as everyone in the facility and a means of survival in a global world. Bibliography Haskins, Paul A., ed. *Essential Qualities of the Professional Lawyer*. New York, American Bar Association, 2014, McConnell, Douglas. "Educating Seminarians for Convicted Civility in a Multi-faith World." *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 16(4), 1. Mouw, Richard J. *Uncommon Decency*. Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2010. Reardon, Jayne. "Civility in America—It Matter." *2Civility*. November 6, 2017. Accessed June 26, 2019. <https://www.2civility.org/civility-in-america-matters/>.

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Weeks, Kent M. *Doing Civility, Breaking the Cycle of Incivility on the Campus*. New York, Morgan James Publishing, 2014.

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You Don't Look Jewish, The Stigma of Multiculturalism in Judaism and Why this Should no Longer be a Factor

Keywords: Judaism/Jewish Stigma; Multicultural Religion

Judaism can be a hard thing to define, to some it is a religion and to others it is their racial identity. Despite the plethora of definitions and the diversity of the people who consider themselves Jewish, one thing cannot be ignored that is the stigma of being Jewish and not "white". The diverse world around us has split racial and ethnic identity into percentages. If you are not full black, white, Hispanic or any other race one must identify themselves as 50% of this or as 25% of that. As someone of mixed race you must claim to be only a fragment of something that others get to claim as a whole. Whether biracial or not this same concept can be applied to anybody that is not "white" and also identifies as Jewish. It is important not to confuse the layers of identity as a dichotomy. Too often this concept is pervasive and comes with the connotation of two opposing factions. The assumption is that the person will choose one side to represent them solely. To live as a Jew that does not fit the stereotypical mold encompasses joys, prejudices, and confusion. One cannot claim to be a homogenous group of people and forget their historical lineage to Africa and the Middle East. This paper will explore to what extent race complicates the concept of Judaism as a religion and Judaism as an ethnicity. Considering this and the diversity of the world we live in today, why is there a stigma attached and how did that stigma take root?

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Jesus and the Early Rabbis; the Great Paradox? Does the Talmud Resonate with Early Christian Thinking?

Keywords: Judaism; Christianity; Gospels; Talmud

Jesus is rarely mentioned in the Talmud. Yet at times, it seems various Jewish Christian principles and precepts found in the Gospels reflect the same concerns as those found in the Talmud (e.g. divorce, forgiveness, eternal life, etc.). Hence, is it possible that the interpretation of some gospel pericopes (particularly those related to Jesus' teachings) may be brought more clearly into focus via an understanding of the Torah and early Jewish law when interpreted through the minds of the early rabbis?

For example, Matthew's story of the rich young man who seeks entrance into the Kingdom of God ("eternal life"; Matt 19.16-22) seemingly results in Jesus mandating that one must literally give up

his/her possessions and give to the poor in order to earn a place in the Olam Haba (“world to come”). In reality, from a Jewish perspective (likely Jesus’ own), this is not cogent. The Talmud makes clear that Israel already has a place in the Olam Haba, regardless of the performance of certain actions (m. Sanh. 10.1).

In this presentation, then, working from the general to the specific, I will begin by briefly exploring possible references to Jesus in the Talmud as well as what appear to be parallel passages found in Matthew’s Gospel and the Talmud. Finally, by means of textual and literary methodologies, the premise and message of Matthew 19.16-22 will be analyzed in terms of a possible connection to Jewish law and its interpretation as outlined in the Talmud. Ultimately, I will conclude that thanks to Talmudic insight, we learn that Jesus is likely not literally advocating that the rich young man surrender his wealth; the story is thus not to be taken literally.

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At the Bedside: A Theological Consideration of the Role of Silence and Touch in the Accompaniment of the Dying

I situate two embodied practices of palliative care, namely, the act of sitting with another in silence, and the act of gentle touch, within the broader conceptual framework of creatio ex nihilo. Centring on the themes of particularity, creatureliness, and relationality, I argue that these practices, understood theologically, can be reframed as active participations in the self-giving love of God – thus setting forth a mode of loving relation with the dying person, rooted in a deep, attentive presence.

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The Deification of Rebbe Menachem Schneersohn and Jesus’ Self-understanding

Keywords: Deification; Christian Origins; Jesus’ self-understanding; Christology; Second Temple Judaism; Creator-creature divide; Chabad-Lubavitch

I examine the deification of Rebbe Menachem Schneersohn (1902–1994) by Elokist Chabad Jews and how this might shed light concerning Jesus’ self-understanding.

I argue that there is no example of cultic worship (rather than merely literary speculation) of human figures in Second Temple Judaism that is analogous to the worship of Jesus, and one could hardly find any such examples in the subsequent history of Judaism. Schneersohn’s is the only case worthy of consideration.

Nevertheless, Chabad doctrines had compromised the traditional Jewish Creator-creature divide, while the early Christians affirmed it (Romans 1,18-25). Additionally, while Elokists constitute only a minority of Schneersohn’s followers, the Pauline epistles indicate that the gospel concerning Jesus was the common message of the early Christian leaders (1 Corinthians 15,3-11) (Dunn 2008). Given

the centrality of Jesus to the gospel, this would not be the case if the Jerusalem Christians held to a non-divine Christology contrary to Paul's, which regarded Jesus to be involved in the creation of all things (1 Corinthians 8,6), something done by God alone (Isaiah 44,24; Romans 11,36) (Bauckham 1999). This consideration implies that Paul's Divine Christology was also the Christology of the Jerusalem Christians led by the Twelve. Moreover, the Central Committee of Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbis, the highest ranked leaders of Schneersohn's followers, issued a statement in 1998 criticizing those who exalted his status as 'contrary to the Rebbe's wishes.' Given the early Christians' view that God's demands are supremely known through Jesus, they would have done the same if Jesus did not regard himself as divine. However, there is no indication that they condemned Divine Christology as 'contrary to Jesus' wishes.' Rather, there are hints in the Gospels that Jesus did regard himself as divine (e.g. Mark 14,61-62) (Bock 2011), which his interpretation of Daniel 7,9-13 may well have permitted.

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Muslim-Jewish Conflict Over The Temple

Keywords: Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif Jerusalem; Palestine; Israel; Judeophobia; Islamophobia

This paper derives from my new book soon to be published (In Hebrew) entitled, Muslims, Jews and Jerusalem—Ambivalence, Dialogue or Armageddon. It is based on extensive research and academic teaching on Muslim-Jewish relations using a historical approach, text analysis and comparative study of significant developments and processes in these relations. This paper discusses the religious and nationalist radicalization among both Jews and Muslims, notably in the middle east, Palestine and Israel that is charged with ideological, psychological, cultural and political factors, as well as influenced by social media. These developments have enhanced trend of Muslim judeophobia and Jewish islamophobia, following the occupation of East Jerusalem and al-Haram al-Sharif in June 1967. The acute conflict over these sites may in the worst-case scenario led to Muslim-Jewish armageddon unless these crucial issues are settled by pragmatic Muslim and Jewish leaders, with the encouragement of global powers

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Religious Symbolism of Nature and the Construction of an Ecological Civilisation: A Chinese Christian Perspective

Keywords: ecology; religious symbols; nature; eco-theology; neo-Confucianism; public sphere; environmental communication

This paper is a study of the possible contributions of religious traditions and their symbolic constructions of the world to the building of an ecological civilisation from a Chinese Christian perspective. Taking the approach of comparative theology and with reference to Christian eco-

theology and neo-Confucianism, it investigates how religious images concerning the relationship between humanity and nature can foster environmental communication in the public sphere and hence bring positive impacts to ecological actions and political decision makings regarding the natural environment. Since religion and theology deal with transcendent realities that direct human ideas and activities, they play an essential role in transforming human attitude toward the world. In particular, the panentheistic image of the Christian God and the Chinese idea of the harmony between humanity and nature together can serve as a basis to counter the monopoly of market capitalism and to envisage an alternative way of living.

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Understanding Polarization: Perspectives from Moral Psychology and Religious Ethics

Keywords: Religious Ethics; Moral Psychology; Polarization; Cognitive Science

My objective in this paper is to illustrate ways that recent work in moral psychology challenges traditional approaches to studying religious ethics, how such work can be incorporated in fresh approaches to the field, and how scholars of religious ethics can contribute to the interdisciplinary conversation. As practitioners of a discipline rooted in the analysis of arguments, scholars of religious ethics naturally approach issues of contemporary disagreement by attending to the various forms of discursive reasoning involved. However, according to a growing body of empirical research in moral psychology by scholars such as Jonathan Haidt, Joshua Greene, and Paul Conway, this often single-minded focus on discursive reasoning tends to overemphasize the importance of explicit, self-conscious reasoning in religious and ethical disagreements. More specifically, research in moral psychology and related fields strongly suggests, first, that ethical judgments depend in significant degree on near-immediate intuitive judgments and, second, that there are broadly identifiable patterns as to how intuitions tend to function. Although these insights have been touched on by scholars of religious ethics such as Christina McRorie, Erin Cline, and John Perry, the field in general has yet to sufficiently appreciate the great challenge that such findings pose to the ways that religious ethics have been traditionally conceived. My thesis, therefore, is that studies in religious ethics could benefit significantly from a more robust engagement with the insights supplied by recent studies in moral psychology. As a way of focusing the discussion, I explore a broad variety of recent work in moral psychology and related fields that attempts to understand the increasing cultural, political, and religious polarization in the United States. I also demonstrate how scholars of religious ethics can contribute to an investigation of these matters, both in terms of understanding the arguments involved and in developing normative responses.

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Ethnic Relations among Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago

Keywords: Race, Ethnicity, Islam, Muslims, Trinidad and Tobago

Objective, to examine historical data to determine the similarities and differences among Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Unstructured interviews were conducted with at least eight persons from both ethnic groups to gain first-hand insights into the current concerns facing these communities. The paper will define race and ethnicity generally as well as explore ethnic relations among the Muslim community. It will look at the settlement patterns of Africans and Indians during slavery and indentureship, respectively. It will show how their experiences impacted upon their interpretation and practice of Islam. It will examine issues such as ideology, political involvement, socio-economic differences, culture as well as relations with Caribbean neighbours as well as the global Muslim community. The paper also tries to determine factors that contribute to militancy, extremism and religious intolerance among the youth.

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Primordial Existence and the Soul's Cosmic Journey, A Comparison of Salvation

Keywords: Narratives in Mormonism and Sufism; Soteriology; Soul Mormonism; Sufism; Comparative Theology; primordial urcovenant

Theologians are increasingly addressing the need for an enhanced ability to build bridges of multi-faith understanding and cooperative engagement that are accessible to most believers within a given faith tradition within an ever more diverse global religious milieu. Comparison of salvation narratives across religions facilitates bridgebuilding, yielding a sense of shared perspective and purpose to adherents of different faiths as a prelude to a more informed and positive framework of interfaith engagement, and drawing attention to commonalities rather than differences. This paper identifies and explores one important aspect of a common narrative found both in Mormonism and in Sufism, namely, the primordial existence of the individual soul and the making of an original compact, an urcovenant, with the Divine as a necessary origin point in a broader salvation narrative that encompasses mortal and post-mortal existence within these traditions. Both traditions trace the soul's return journey to the Divine across five phases of existence, primordial, mortal, post-mortal but pre-judgment, final judgment, and eternal destinations.

Drawing upon the method and practice of comparative theology advanced by such professors Francis X. Clooney, James L. Fredericks, Keith Ward, Gavin Flood, John Hicks, and others, the paper explores the potential of salvation narrative as a source of common theology and divine intention across two divergent faith systems. The paper's essential thrust is to engage in theologizing across traditions, as expressed by Francis X. Clooney, "Theologies occur within the bounds of specific religious traditions, but such thinking occurs in ways that are broadly and commonly human, cultural and linguistic differences notwithstanding.

Sources include scriptural texts in both Mormonism and Sufism, wisdom literatures, and interviews with practicing Mormons and Sufis on the subject of primordial existence and covenant conducted across the globe (North Africa, Turkey, Serbia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Canada, the United States, and elsewhere). For an example of my own publication in this area, please see, Peck, David D. "Covenantal Pluralism in Mormonism and Islam, Alternatives to the Binary Logic of Apostasy." *Standing Apart, Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2014.

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Debating the Sagely Way, On the Apologetic Approach and Historiographical Relevance of a Nineteenth-Century Chinese Christian's Dialogue with Confucian Orthodoxy

Keywords: Confucian-Christian dialogue; Zhifei Zi; Late-Qing China; apologetics; orthodoxy

This paper examines a largely overlooked text written by a nineteenth-century Chinese Protestant and former Confucian scholar named Zhifei Zi, which engages in comparative, apologetic dialogue with the Confucian tradition. Titled *Rujiao Bian Miu* (Distinguishing the Faults of Confucianism), this text began serial publication in the Chinese periodical *Wanguo Gongbao* (Review of the Times) in 1878 and is one of the longest extant treatments of Confucianism by a nineteenth-century Chinese Christian. While this justifies research on *Rujiao Bian Miu* from numerous angles, this paper's methodology is also informed by the broader context in which the work was published, namely, the widespread dissemination in late-Qing China of anti-Christian polemics denouncing Christianity as heterodox in contrast with the "orthodox way" (*zhengdao*) of the Confucian "sages" (*shengren* / *shengxian*)—a juxtaposition observed by noted scholar of Chinese history Paul Cohen to be the most prevalent in anti-Christian texts at the time (Cohen 1963, pp. 4-5). In the relevant literature since Cohen's landmark study, however, Chinese Christian responses to anti-Christian polemics predicated on these Confucian ideals have not been adequately assessed. Thus, an analysis of Zhifei Zi's unique utilization of Confucian ideals of orthodoxy for his own apologetic purposes marks an initial step toward addressing this lacuna in the literature. By way of this analysis, moreover, a call is made for more consideration of Chinese Christian writings in the history of Confucian-Christian dialogue during the late-Qing period, as such figures—Zhifei Zi being an excellent case in point—often had more insightful and hermeneutically sensitive approaches to the Confucian tradition than their missionary counterparts who have received the bulk of scholarly attention to date.

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The Fall, Evolution, and Middle Knowledge: A Reflection on Theodicy

Keywords: Evolution; Original Sin; Fall; Molinism; middle knowledge

In this paper, I will investigate the relationship between an evolutionary approach to the origin of sin and the various issues this raises for theodicy. I begin by reviving an early 20th-century

evolutionary model and then discuss the most prominent objection which it elicits, an objection I dub the 'Responsibility Argument.' In essence, the Responsibility Argument states that if sin is merely the anachronistic misuse of natural animal passions and habits, then it seems God is ultimately answerable for the existence of sin and evil in the human sphere. Though I will suggest that this argument misfires, my main concern in this paper ultimately lies elsewhere. For, in rejecting an evolutionary account of sin's origin, the proponent of the Responsibility Argument will customarily opt to endorse something like the traditional Fall account—that is, doctrine of Original Sin. I will argue, however, that this explanation of the origin of sin is also vulnerable to the Responsibility Argument, if we take God to possess middle knowledge—or something very much like it—then God, too, appears responsible for the existence of sin. My discussion of Molinism will engage with some of the leading thinkers in this debate; while I will not pretend to have solved every issue, still my desired conclusion will emerge unscathed, if the Responsibility Argument is a problem for an evolutionary account of sin's origin, then it is a problem for the Fall doctrine, too. In short, I contend that the doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin are vulnerable to the same powerful objections as the evolutionary model, and so may not be uncritically endorsed as a simple, uncontroversial fallback for the theodist.

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Lament, Protest, and Hope, What Can We Learn from the Ancients in the Biblical Era to Cope with Pain and Suffering in the Modern World? --A Reading of Lamentations

Keywords: Lamentations; God; Pain; Suffering; Empathy; Theology of Pain-Kazo; Kitamori; Edith Stein

In response to catastrophes and the seeming absence of the divine, modern people question and even reject God's existence while the ancients accuse and protest against God through laments. The contrast is telling in both intention and focus. In this paper, I want to examine "the great shift," a phrase coined by James Kugel, in encountering God amid pain and suffering from the biblical times and the modern era. Specifically, I argue that the ancients can teach us how to cope with pain and suffering in the silence of God. To achieve this goal, I focus on the book of Lamentations and explore how the poet uses dialogical lament to generate radical hope in the divine silence. First, I offer a close reading of Lamentations as a "polyphony of pain, penitence, and protest" by incorporating speech-act theory and trauma studies. Second, I contrast the conception of pain in biblical and modern eras by engaging with Kazoh Kitamori's theology of the pain of God and Edith Stein's ethics of empathy concerning the spectators of suffering. Third, I demonstrate how the biblical laments, at times accusations and protests, can be helpful for us to cope with pain and rethink hope in catastrophes without denying God's existence wholesale.

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Making Mary Male: Some Religious Implications of a Transgender Saint

Keywords: gender; transgender; male; female; saints; sexism; Christianity

In 2017, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released an open letter offering guidance concerning transgender issues. Signed by leaders from many churches, including Anglican, Lutheran, Southern Baptist, and Presbyterian, Created Male and Female states “[t]he movement today to enforce the false idea—that a man can be or become a woman or vice versa—is deeply troubling.” Such conviction implies Christianity has always been clear on this issue, but this not the case. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus tells Peter that He will “make her [Mary] male, . . . For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.” This gospel is not canonical, yet the notion of a female making herself male metaphorically to achieve a higher level of devotion is commonplace. Legends depict holy women donning male attire to hide from pagan parents, lascivious suitors or enraged husbands. The scholarship refers to such women as transvestite or cross-dressing nuns. However, in some cases “transvestite” should be replaced by “transgender,” as in the 6th/7th c. saint’s life of Mary/Marinos. The account of her life in a monastery undetected suggests transgenderism, not opportunistic transvestism. This identity is linked to the attainment of the highest level of spiritual devotion to which only men could aspire. Thus, ironically, transgendered identity is found not in decadent secularism but in the intersection of piety and sexism within the early church, for as St. Jerome states in his Commentary on Ephesians, when a woman “wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man.” My study aims both to reveal the long history and occasionally positively inscribed depiction of gender fluidity and to unmask the inherent sexism at the root of the mission to make Mary male.

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A Study of Young Rawls’s Understanding of Reason in Morality — his Senior Thesis and Its Background

Keywords: John Rawls; Reason

A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith” has been published for ten years, however, its importance still lacks enough attention, especially its idea of reason in morality which is a primary theme in his mature work. Thus, by a reflective interpretation, my article aims to discuss young Rawls’s understanding of reason in morality and speculate a reasonable outline which young Rawls may hold. It will firstly analyze the text of that senior thesis and young Rawls’s own expressions regarding reason in morality. In this work of theological ethics, I think there is an understanding of reason from Neo-orthodoxy theology that argues reason is limited in realizing a moral society although its importance cannot be degraded. Then, because of the scarcity of young Rawls’s explicit discussion about reason in the senior thesis, I will also trace to his main intellectual sources to find out what kind of intellectual background about the understanding of reason he

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involves in. Five theologians' writings are selected which include Emil Brunner's *Man in Revolt*, *The Mediator* and *The Theology of Crisis*, Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Martin Luther's "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" and "On Christian Liberty", Philip Leon's *The Ethics of Power* and Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*. They are listed by young Rawls in the bibliography as the main sources of his paper. Finally, I argue that young Rawls possibly holds an understanding of reason which I call "finite reason" and it is mainly influenced by Emil Brunner. I believe this study on young Rawls's understanding of reason not only is a biographical record of Rawls but also gives a new light to understand mature Rawls's non-Christian idea of moral reason as well as his whole theory of justice.
