Capabilities and Contemporary Moral Theology: Likely Bedfellows or Inevitable Foes?

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Many moral theologians, magisterial documents, and pastoral constitutions have commented on trends of inequality and lamented social and economic disparity. Few, however, have employed empirical realities and economic trends in order to inform a moral theological approach to human development, preferring instead, to rely on a transcendental and eschatological worldview, thereby keeping moral and economic debate in separate arenas. Magisterial teaching, for example, while dealing in some detail with human development as a social justice issue, primarily formulates its treatises based on eschatological and transcendental presuppositions. This eschatological promotion of the Kingdom of God on earth has wide ranging implications for how human development is understood: these moral arguments on human development often rely upon heuristic concepts and prescriptive language which can lead to a disparity of approaches where different economic theories are relied upon at varying stages in the tradition. Arguably, this leads to ambivalence and incoherence in the area of human development. Thus, this paper argues that the capabilities perspective can enhance a theological analysis of development. Broadly speaking, the capabilities approach, as a theoretical and practical framework, demonstrates clearly that the quality of life and well-being of each person is of direct moral interest. By examining the core concepts and central debates around human development in the capabilities approach, this paper presents an account of human development that takes seriously the current approach by the Magisterium and moral theologians to human development, while investigating an economic and philosophical paradigm that places human well-being at its core; thereby extending beyond the sole reliance on the transcendental and eschatological in its assessment of justice, development, and morality. It hopes to make a valuable contribution to theology as it draws attention to the currently under researched area of capabilities in moral theological discourse.

Shall the Victim Triumph? Correlating a Concept of "Victim" with "Inhuman Innocence"

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This paper correlates Hannah Arendt's notion of "Inhuman Innocence" with Simona Forti's critique of what she calls, "The Dostoevsky Paradigm of Evil," depicting an innocent child at the mercy of an evil or wicked adult intending to do harm and enjoying the effects of moral injury rippling out beyond the harm accomplished. Illustrating the deleterious consequences of that paradigm, I suggest that Arendt's notion of "Inhuman Innocence"" asserts the absence of accountable agency justified by the victim when inflamed by the victimizer. The result is entitlement from the victim's side expanding to insatiability as abuse worsens and the victim's conduct approaches that of an infant, the perfect innocent.

By deploying Arendt's recipe for a totalitarian state, I suggest that her threefold deletion of value to truth, history or deeds, erases a victim's accountability who, exhausted by the capricious and unbounded actions of the victimizer, is rendered inhumanly innocent. But, for Arendt, that inhumanly innocent person or group is not absolved from agency even in its plight. When pleading total helplessness in the face of abuse, the victim is disinherited from any value or agency complicit in its own victimization. Forti's child is

inhumanly innocent, having not yet formed nor yet capable of forming an awareness of truth, memory or reflection upon actions. An adult or group claiming "victimhood," by not addressing the question of participation in their abuse by another denies accountability for his or her predicament and so deforms towards infancy.

I conclude with examples by Primo Levi on his personal experiences and Alfred North Whitehead on the necessary particularity of agency. The paper ends comparing the conduct of Adolf Eichmann with that of the incumbent president of the United States as inhuman innocents, ultimate victims.

God and the Dystopias
Pedro Erik Carneiro, Professor, University Center Unieuro, Brazil

Dystopia is a frightening society. Many use dystopian laws in literature to discuss real social and legal issues, as authors try to say something to the world. In Hamlet, Shakespeare wrote that the end of playing "was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image." The Bible mentioned at least one clear dystopia. God says in Ezekiel 16:49-50: "The crime of Sodom was pride, gluttony, calm complacency; such were hers and her daughters' crimes. They never helped the poor and needy; they were proud, and engaged in loathsome practices before me, and so I swept them away."
I searched for God in four famous dystopias: *Lord of the World* (by Robert Benson), *Brave New World* (by Aldous Huxley), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (by George Orwell) and *2084: La Fin du Monde* (by Boualem Sansal).

Benson, Huxley and Orwell presented dystopias that repudiated the Christian God, but the Islamic God is omnipresent in Sansal's dystopia. Benson, a Catholic priest, gave rise to a world supreme leader who abolished the Christian God in the name of the Humanity worship. Huxley, a pantheist, told us about two worlds. In the first, God is seen as unnatural and eliminated by conditioning. In the other one, there is a mix of theologically empty gods. Orwell was an atheist. There is no God at all in his dystopia. Sansal said he is a "Muslim not religious, who doesn't like Islam". He denounced Islam and its God in his dystopia. After that, I considered the debate over whether Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the same God. The problem of whom and what is God is a theological, philosophical, legal, political and social issue.

The Neurobiology of Fear-Based Religion
Angela Deulen, Associate Professor, California Baptist University, US

Soren Kierkegaard argued that fear-based or fear-driven religion is sinful religion. However, neurobiologists are just now beginning to understand the ways in which fear-driven religion, as measured by an individual's focus on a God of wrath rather than a God of love, changes the brain in fundamental ways that have significant behavioral and social impacts. Such dynamics, which are closely tied to religious anger, are clearly evident in recent current events. This presentation will explore the neurobiological correlates of such spiritual attenuation, as well as outcomes for the individual, the congregation, and the community. Research will draw from the body of scholarly literature as well as the presenter's own original research findings. Intended for a diverse audience, the work will provide a general understanding of religion and brain-based behavior as well as offer suggestions for application in congregations and communities.

Religious Tolerance Versus Religious Freedom: The Case of Persian Period Elephantine
John Gee, Professor, Brigham Young University, US

This paper will examine the distinction between religious tolerance and religious freedom, using the Egyptian city of Elephantine during the Persian period as an example. Thanks to the abundant documentation from Elephantine, we know more about Elephantine during the Persian period than about most other locations at the same time. Due to its strategic position, Elephantine at the time was a multicultural city with multiple religious and ethnic populations. The Persian period is noted for its religious tolerance. I will argue that the Persian Empire had religious tolerance but not religious freedom and point out indicators that show the difference. I will also discuss the implications that the lack of religious freedom had for events at Elephantine.

"The Quiet Affection In Their Eyes": The Good Shepherd's Re-emergence in the Domestic Landscape
Dorothy Verkerk, Associate Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, US

The Good Shepherd was the popular depiction of Christ in the third and fourth centuries CE. This early shepherd was firmly rooted in the agrarian and husbandry nature of Late Antiquity: he is a young man wearing a short tunic and tall boots and carrying a sheep slung over his shoulders. As popular as this figure was, he disappears in the fifth century, only to resurface in the nineteenth century. Traditional scholarship suggests that this agrarian figure no longer commanded the liturgical "heft" necessary for the now dominant religion.

From the twentieth century, the Good Shepherd is ubiquitous in Christian art. Bernhard Plockhorst's The Good Shepherd (1887), for example, has been reproduced, imitated and distributed throughout the world. A reproduction can be found in various media hanging in domestic settings from North America to Asia. People may not know the artist but they recognize the radiant image of the long-haired Christ, cradling a lamb, and walking beside a flowing river in an ethereal landscape. This Good Shepherd, portrayed through a softly-focused lens, no longer has any connection to an agrarian lifestyle or his ancient counterpart. The rugged youth of early Christian art bears no resemblance to Plockhorst's Good Shepherd. Rather, he is based on a romantic interpretation of St. Matthew's Parable of the Wandering Sheep (18:12-14) and Psalm 23 (22).

Based upon comparanda in contemporary material culture and primary texts, this paper explores the re-emergence of the Good Shepherd, not as the early Christian youth, but as the older, bearded pastor safeguarding his flock. The questions of why his reappearance and his enthusiastic acceptance by a traditionally iconoclastic Protestant audience will be addressed in this presentation. The Good Shepherd's appeal lies in a nostalgia for a pre-industrialized world and a deep longing for a benevolent caretaker.

Earth-Dreaming and the Mystical Milieu of Spirit in Matter: Religious Perspectives on Anthropocene Trauma and the Earth's Subtle Body
Claude Barbre, Professor, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, US

Sherman Alexie, drawing from his Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Native American memoirs, speaks of a Salish word that means "earth-dream"—a term that means that even as humans dream the earth into being, the earth also dreams us into life. Earth-dreaming conveys a world-spirit correspondence that links the psyche and the natural world. The psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar (2016) remarked that "if we look at the body through the Hindu Ayurvedic lens then the body is intimately connected with nature and the cosmos." These views correspond with diverse mystical teachings throughout the world that regard the material body that is intertwined with the natural world as also composed of a subtle body-- e.g. "the immortal body" (Christianity), or the "diamond body" (Taoism). In short, a subtle body is one of a series of psycho-spiritual constituents of living beings, corresponding to hierarchies of existence. Thus the body as matter is intertwined with the natural world, and the earth deeply affects the human psyche and spiritual well-being on many levels of existence. While considering the impact the environment has on the body and psyche in terms of the psycho-spiritual images of the subtle body, this presentation will examine the spiritual writings about the earth's subtle body in light of the Anthropocene-- the term for a new geological epoch and state named in light of human (anthropos) acts on the environment that have created catastrophic changes and crises. Drawing from the work of theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who envisions a "mystical milieu and diaphany of spirit and matter," and the writings of theologian Larry Rasmussen who writes of oikos, or earth community, we will explore how the spiritual writings about the earth's subtle body and "earth-dreaming" can better help us address the age of the Anthropocene.

Show Some Respect: Critiquing Religion's Role in Human Rights Violations, How Far is too Far?

Carrie Crisp, Lecturer, Texas State University, US
Jennifer Garcia, Lecturer, Texas State University, US

Human rights violations in the name of religion are nothing new. However, with the rise of conservatism around the world, the critique of the role religion plays in these violations is becoming harder to approach. While cultural and religious norms do deserve protection and respect, we believe that in instances of human rights violations no entity (secular or religious) should be above scrutiny. This paper will analyze existing conflicts between various monotheistic religious norms and human rights by highlighting the hesitation to label these norms as harmful for the purposes of promoting diversity and avoiding accusations of racism or promoting negative stereotypes. For the purposes of this paper, we will use standards applicable to human rights defined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We begin by pointing out that the religious texts of the three best known Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were originally developed, and later interpreted, in cultural climates that were biased towards oppressive power systems. Due to this, many norms of these traditions are antithetical to the needs and rights of anyone who is not a heterosexual cisgender male believer of said tradition. The violation of these "Others" is often rationalized by such religious norms. We will provide examples of human rights violations committed in this way, and how each violation is "justified" by its faith's rules.

We then explore potential ways of acknowledging and critiquing this issue. Some say religion must be "disrespected" in order to expose that it is at times against human rights for those outside a small group. However, we state that one can respect a religion while pointing out its flaws. Inspired by Martha Nussbaum's capabilities model, we explore what standards can be used to critique religions without promoting negative stereotypes or denouncing religion.

Encountering Ugliness: Selecting Views in Aesthetics for Insights in Religion
Jonathan Johnson, Graduate Student, Hong Kong Baptist University, China

The fruitfulness of the cross-pollination between religion and aesthetics is seen in the tomes of Hans Urs Von Balthasar or the more recent works of David Bentley Hart and Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen. The intercultural nature of such endeavors is both situational and subliminal. In the first case, theological aestheticians have situated theology within aesthetic considerations and considered aesthetics theologically. In the second, we must recognize that religion has always been aesthetical and that aesthetic philosophy has always been affected by senses of ultimate concern. Thus, we readily find spiritual discourse hitched to beauty in Plato, or beauty in the discussion of Aquinas' godhead. Yet my aim in this presentation is to argue for the usefulness of making an intentionally narrow approach to an aesthetic argument in order to provide new perspectives in a relatively narrow topic in religion. An attendant aim of my approach is to encourage thoroughness in such a narrowed frame so as to both give credit to aesthetic insights and also to prevent prejudgment due to preoccupation with religious necessities. It is obvious, I am persuaded, that broad aesthetic concerns map readily (and rewardingly) onto broad religious concerns. But this dialogue can be reinvigorated by close attention to not only a singular topic, but also the state of treatments within aesthetics. I will demonstrate insights such an approach via my present research into the negative aesthetic judgments – namely the notion of ugliness. My eventual aim is application to the problem of evil and related theodicies, but in order to do so, I wish to thoroughly examine merely the aesthetic riddles associated with ugliness apart from predetermination via apologetic concerns. Yet the project is already yielding fruit for creative ways to discuss its destination within religious philosophy, as well as highlighting challenges to such an enterprise.

Religions and Environmental Ethics: A Comparative Analysis on John B. Cobb, Jr and Seyyed Hossein Nasr
Md Abu Sayem, Graduate Student, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, China

Religions work as a source of moral values and virtues from which ethical codes and laws emerge. Though ethics and laws are thought now as independent of religions, still they are related to religious moral teachings in many ways. In academic discourse, environmental ethics has emerged as a new discipline in order to address the present ecological crisis from an ethical point of view. Some environmental ethicists and activists blame religions for allowing human supremacy over non-human creatures. Religious scholars or theologians have tried to respond to their allegations and then stated religious/spiritual approaches to the environment as potential factors for rectifying present scientific world-views of nature. Needless to say, the current ecological crisis is a result of uncontrolled human activities in natural world. Utilizing science and technology, greedy humans are exploiting nature for their economic benefit. Science and technology have given ample power to show human excellency over nature; but unfortunately, they could not provide them a strong ethical or moral consciousness on how to use these power for the benefit of all creatures. On the other hand, secular ethicists frequently talk about ethical behaviors with the natural world, but they could not articulate spiritual feelings for non-human creatures, which seem essential for generating a right and just treatment of non-human animals and other constituents of natural world. Science and environmental ethics cannot solve the problem without cooperation of faith communities. That is why scientists and

environmental ethicists need a deep collaboration with religions of the world for controlling the present environmental crisis.

After Kingship: Political Discourse in Chronicles
Rachel Slutsky, Graduate Student, Harvard University, US

As a product of the Second Temple period, Chronicles is a retelling of Samuel-Kings, intended for readers living years, even centuries, after the dissolution of the Israelite monarchy during the Babylonian exile of 587 BCE. A century of scholarship has explored the intentions behind the Chronicler's work and the messages implied throughout his narrative, often noting the emphasis on the Davidic monarchy and the priesthood. What are we to make of these emphases, given that the Davidic monarchy fell out of vogue during the early Persian period, to be replaced with priesthood as the focal point of Jewish authority? This paper argues that, while writing a story of Israel's kings, the Chronicler also subtly promotes the priesthood in place of kingship. In so doing, he aligns himself with, or at least anticipates, the reality of the Hasmonean dynasty in the second century BCE.

A Nomadic Spirituality of Home: Pilgrimage as Homemaking
Denise Starkey, Associat Professor, College of St Scholastica, US

"The sense of being lost, displaced, and homeless is pervasive in contemporary culture" (Walter Brueggeman). It is the cost of survival for many women survivors of interpersonal violence. Spiritual homelessness is the way that I name the lingering experience of displacement that persists even when physical shelter is found. Many survivors mime normalcy and religious narratives in order to find belonging in a place not their own. At the same time, many women on a healing journey find they are unable to adapt to dominant, mostly masculine, metaphors for God or explanations of suffering or salvation that do not illuminate their experiences. So, they search elsewhere. This is a healing, and I would argue, a holy quest that is often misunderstood and judged. A false stability is prized over what is misnamed as instability. My project constructs a nomadic spirituality of home that requires traveling beyond conventional metaphors and notions of home as destination in an afterlife while also mining resources and practices within religious traditions not readily available to the person who wanders or the one in the pew. In this paper I suggest that the universal and ancient practice of pilgrimage reveals liberative ways to "make home" that transcend problematic gendered understandings of home (using Simone de Beauvoir) while also constructing healing meanings and practices. The practice and metaphor of pilgrimage (informed by the classic work of Edith and Victor Turner) opens up imaginative ways to explore the liminality of one's self "on pilgrimage," as Dorothy Day expressed it. Pilgrimage as homemaking offers ways to explore that God travels with us and makes her home within us. This work offers a constructive proposal that draws on mystical theology, feminist philosophy, and qualitative studies of pilgrimage.

Literature Review on Islamic Juveniles' System
Hajed Alotaibi, Graduate Student, Bangor University, UK

While some researches such as Y. Ala'jam (2013) and M. Alhariqy (2001) examined juveniles' crimes in terms of investigational procedures only (e.g. capturing, arresting etc.), few others appeared without real

academic approaches to examine Saudi juveniles' system in a thematic manner. For example, this research can generally be classified into three clusters: newspaper articles, few dissertations and general juristic books that are only used for referencing . Unfortunately, these three typologies were insufficient to critically discover and address thematic issues faced importantly by Saudi juveniles, for instance, whether codifying their juristic rules or not, determining their ages of criminal liability, classifying their crimes in a distinct manner and consistency of their punishments. One reason for this is that those few dissertations were written by religious police who were not academics, as well as whose jobs are mainly to deal with pre-trial matters such as arresting, interrogation, and so on. Another reason is that those articles lacked scientific methodology that is far more important for accepting the outcome of any research, let alone the fact that all of those researches, articles came from unrecognized bodies according to the international and regional rankings.

This part of my research will review the previous literature and methodologies on this topic through analytical thematic methodology. Applying analytical thematic approach means concentrating on how certain topics present themselves during the story/study. According to Meirow (2014, p.1) this sort of writing requires us to look at specific parts of a work to cast light on the big picture lecture. Consequently, the main arguments will hopefully be identified as to compare and contrast some ideas in order to offer more critiques for the literature. Additionally, this methodology will strongly enable us to see the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this research. Unfortunately, during my critical reading through the literature I could not find any researcher who followed this style of professionalism, to the best of my knowledge. Thus, this literature review will start off by discussing and analyzing some important terms/concepts. Those conceptual words (e.g. Jarimah/crime, Jinayah, juvenile, minor, Tifl/child, Taqnin, Tadwin) are important because they involved in constructing the Islamic juveniles' system in Saudi. After that, we will move on to analyse main debates, ideas in a thematic way.

The Representation of Muslim Identity in British and American Universities
Anne Daguerre, Associate Professor, Middlesex University, UK

In Europe and the United States, the re-politicization of religion, especially Islam, has important implications for higher education (HE). As universities contend with a growing diversity of faiths in their midst, they have had to respond to requests with regard to the accommodation of Muslim students' needs, especially in terms of dietary and worship requirements. The other related issue is that of the relegation of Muslim students to positions of inferiority, reflecting patterns of direct or indirect discrimination in European societies, and to a lesser extent in the United States. Some scholars have argued that the expression of religious identity, especially Muslim identity, remains underrepresented in British and American universities with a secular mindset. Is that always the case?

This contribution investigates how two British and American public research universities characterized by a strong presence of Muslim students have developed specific policies to accommodate religious students' needs. The case study also assesses whether these universities have mitigated the impact of government policies on their Muslim student body, namely the travel ban in the US and the Prevent policy in Britain. The research is exploratory and qualitative in nature. It involved conducting a dozen interviews in each site with Muslim students, managers, and student affairs professionals with a stake in diversity. Provisional findings indicate that these universities have been quite responsive to the expression of Muslim students'

religious needs. It is argued that a comparative approach can help generate a nuanced understanding of the expression of Muslim students identity in both countries.

The Motivations of Pope Innocent III
Jamie Griffin, Graduate Student, Arizona State University, US

Pope Innocent III's famous erudition, kindness towards the humble and devout, knowledge of both secular and divine texts, and generosity, created a man with the image of greatness. This, coupled with his staunch persecution of heresy, regulation of the Jewry, and his brazen, unapologetic strictness in justice, come together to create the man credited with being one of the most influential and powerful popes who ever lived. The medieval Latin church was never so omnipresent nor more effective than during the eighteen years in which Innocent III sat upon the throne of Saint Peter. Innocent III published many works including: *The Misery of the Human Condition*, *The Four Kinds of Marriage*, and *The Sacred Mystery of the Alter*, which commented on proper Christian morality. He also eliminated the Cathar heresy and tried to regulate the actions of secular rulers. He increased church wealth and power, temporarily united the Latin and Orthodox churches, and spearheaded one of the most influential Lateran councils. But, there are always two questions about his pontificate that continue to circulate. How did Pope Innocent III accomplish this excellence and what were his motivations for doing so? Considering the registers and the canons enacted during Lateran IV, Innocent III's motivations were threefold: to maintain and expand clerical wealth and power, strengthen the organizational unity of Christendom, and to resist the tendency of secular princes to subordinate everything to their own political ends. This paper will discuss how he succeeded in these goals and used them to create a more omnipotent church whose consolidated power would carry for centuries. It will also discuss how, through the reasonable success of his goals, his pontificate unintentionally defined a new period marked with higher intolerances for the Jewry.

The Theological Conundrum of Interfaith Chaplaincy: A View From Hong Kong
Peter Youngblood, Graduate Student, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, China

Interfaith clinical chaplaincy is a field that has grown beyond the Christian, Euro-American context in which it began, establishing roots in places like Hong Kong, where the plurality and diversity of local religious traditions presents a major challenge. On the one hand, a city like Hong Kong is religiously diverse, but on the other hand, chaplaincy services are overwhelmingly provided by Christian practitioners, most from conservative theological traditions highly critical of other faiths. This raises both a theological and an ethical question. First, how can chaplains reconcile their personal beliefs with the basic philosophy of interfaith chaplaincy training (i.e. Clinical Pastoral Education) and practice, which is today normally guided by universalistic and pluralistic assumptions? Second, how can they do so while providing effective, sincere and non-generic—but also non-evangelistic—spiritual and emotional support? Theologians have used various methodologies in approaching interreligious dialogue, namely in the theology of religions and comparative theology, but can this meet the clinical, practical needs of a context like Hong Kong? This paper will critically evaluate the major theological positions—namely "exclusivism," "inclusivism," and "pluralism"—alongside alternative approaches and paradigms proposed in comparative theology and interreligious dialogue, with respect to their usefulness for interfaith clinical pastoral/spiritual care in highly-pluralistic contexts. I also incorporate qualitative data acquired through a series of interviews with Hong Kong chaplains from different theological traditions, part of my current doctoral work. I conclude by

showing that my early research suggests that the dominant approaches and paradigms drawn from systematic, academic theology are insufficient to the task. Thus I propose developing an alternative dialogical model that better integrates the theoretical-theological with the practical-ethical.

Colonising the Divine: The Paradox of Hindu Fundamentalism
Juhi Ahuja, Senior Analyst, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

This paper investigates how Hindu fundamentalism in India is essentially a reproduction of colonial rationale. While most scholarship on Hindu fundamentalism illustrates the phenomenon as a post-colonial one, both in epistemology and praxis, this paper presents it as a reflection of colonial thought. It argues that in striving for its set ideals, Hindu fundamentalists are trapped in Western modes of thought and systems of knowledge. It is a "Hindu" enterprise insomuch as the religious categorization is a colonial legacy. If it is to be a truly Hindu endeavor (according to the fundamentalists themselves who liken Hinduism to adhering to Vedic philosophy), its ideologues must break free from these ontological entrapments. The analysis in this paper aims to delineate the scope of Hindu fundamentalism, by focusing on its most influential embodiment in the form of Hindu nationalism – which is problematic in itself because it both accepts and rejects Western models of politics. The methods employed by Hindutva ideologues have been evaluated against the methods used by British colonisers in India to illustrate that the paradox of modern Hindu fundamentalism lies in its design and mode. In using the theoretical framework influenced by Lincoln's "Theses on Method" and Romila Thapar's approach to historicity and historiography, this paper makes use of historical ideological sources to analyse how history is repeating itself, albeit in a different form. It concludes that Hindu fundamentalism reflects the British colonial project in India in terms of its periodization of history, its reinforcement of modern religious categories, and the inherent ideological superiority as a basis for propagation. Hindu fundamentalism is certainly not a rejection of Western modernity, ironically, it is very much a reflection of it.

Zoroastrianism in Christianity: The Star Child and the Manger Child
Lavonna Lovern, Associate Professor, Valdosta State University, US
Sydney Beckmann, Graduate Student, University of Notre Dame, US

The Judaic influence upon Christianity is so widely acknowledged that it is impossible to study the history of Christianity without also studying Judaism. Yet Christianity is indebted to another far less known or acknowledged religious tradition, Zoroastrianism. As an example of such influence, this paper will focus on the traditions surrounding the birth of the Christ and the magi, in connection with the Zoroastrian tradition and imagery of the Star-Child. This paper does not intend to deny the Jesus traditions. Rather it seeks to multiply the voices in the study of these traditions in an effort to be more academically inclusive. The paper concludes that the early Church colonized aspects of the Zoroastrian tradition in order to advance the move from the historical Jesus to the Christ doctrine. Given the current geopolitical climate involving Western nations and the nations inhabiting what was ancient Persia, the authors further conclude that there continues to be a suppression of Zoroastrian influences on the Christ stories as is exhibited in the lack of

representation in classroom texts. The impetus of this paper is therefore to call for the complication of interpretation regarding textual and cultural analysis of the Christ traditions by placing Zoroastrian influences in an equitable scholastic position.

Mapping the Buddhist Lands of Russia: Understanding the Post-Soviet Sangha and its Political Connections

Dana Halfhill, Graduate Student, University of Washington, US

The first Buddhist monastery to be built in a European capital was in St. Petersburg in 1915. However, Empress Elizabeth officially recognized Buddhism back in 1741, and even now it is one of Russia's four official traditional religions. Like other faiths in Russia, it suffered from heavy persecution by the Soviet Union, but now Buddhism is practiced all over Russia. The three main centers of Russian Buddhism are located in the three autonomous republics of Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Tuva where their indigenous people practiced it for centuries. However, three different post-Soviet trajectories have developed in these regions. In Tuva, the Buddhist movement is a unified front. In Buryatia and Kalmykia there is a divide between local Buddhists and Tibetan Buddhists that came to help in Buddhism's revival. The purpose of this thesis is to understand why these three different trajectories have evolved. I argue that the main reasons for these different trajectories are historical and cultural in nature, in that they have occurred primarily as a result of the treatment they received under the Soviet Union. Each autonomous republic was treated differently by the Soviet Union. Buryatia was allowed to practice Buddhism, while Kalmykia wasn't allowed to practice until after 1988. As a result of these differences, Buddhism's influence in each region varied heavily, and it also impacted whether there were suitable leaders and monks to lead and teach Buddhism. Certain Buddhist movements required more help from foreign Buddhists, which in turn also affected the religious leadership and their stances on whether to focus on a more localized variation of Buddhism or the more universally accepted Tibetan Buddhism. The purpose is not to say which movement in these regions has been more successful, but to show what the differences are and how they have occurred.

The Rise of Religious Hegemony and the Subordination of Equality for Sexual Minorities in 21st Century America

Kris McDaniel-Miccio, Professor, University of Denver, US

Notwithstanding protestations to the contrary, religion has shaped both policy and law in the US. However with the election and instillation of the Trump Administration, Orthodox Christians have gained legitimacy. Consequently, this constituency is reshaping law as well as the discourse. The political environment coupled with the US Supreme Court decisions extending marriage equality to gay men and lesbians has created a perfect storm in establishing the primacy of Orthodox Christianity and a denouement of due process and equality for the LGBTQ community.

The article and presentation shall identify the political and legal issues that shall adversely impact religious and sexual minorities. Additionally, both article and presentation shall identify the antidote to religious hegemony, which left unabated shall devolve into religious fascism.

Fire in Religion and Nature of a Changing African Cosmology
Isabel Mukonyora, Professor, Western Kentucky University, US

This presentation starts by looking at the connection between fire and cultural and religious roles of women in the Shona past and present. The central role of women as agents of knowledge about fires is used to argue a case for harnessing to fire to support human life by mothers, farmers and guardians of a Shona society that has since been transformed by Europeans whose leading idea of fire corresponds with their use of guns and explosive to conquer and extract wealth of African lands. However, the main point is no longer to blame Europeans for colonialism bringing guns, explosives, and for spreading of the idea of a personal God with dominion of His creation.

The historical method used to revisit the African past is complemented by a more empirical method involving the scholar of religion in the study of visual art inspired by African voices of a national cult invoking fire to kill for freedom in Zimbabwe. Heroes Acre, Harare is looked at as a modern example of a militant cult honoring the use of guns to fight for independence (1965-1979), and build a troubled nation where the talk about liberation and social justice is coterminous with conflict and the ecological destruction of planetary life.

Finally, the use of anthropological method of inquiry via participant observation is used to show Masowe Apostles invoking fire in a positive fashion. These Shona speaking Africans adapt ideas about fire from the Shona past to create an oral tradition of Christianity distinguished by large numbers of adherents who theologize about God as a healing power on earth. Ultimately, an interdisciplinary approach to religion and nature puts us in a good position to promote environmental justice for changing African religious cultures.

Christ and the Homosexual: An Early Manifesto for an Affirming Christian Ministry to Homosexuals
Bernard Schlager, Associate Professor, Pacific School of Religion, US

In his book *Christ and the Homosexual* (1960), Rev. Robert Wood presented American Christians with a view of homosexuality that was revolutionary. In short, he argued that homosexuals held a rightful place in church and society and that they should abandon neither Christianity nor the church. More specifically, the author called for the advancement of civil rights for homosexuals; the construction of pro-homosexual theologies; the education, ordination, and career placement of "out" homosexuals; and marriage equality for same-sex couples. This article situates these topics within Wood's lifelong (and ongoing) ministry of promoting the full acceptance of homosexuals in American society and in The United Church of Christ, his own denomination. The following sources from the Robert Wood Archive at The Congregational Library in Boston, MA, USA, have been used in this article: the author's notes and early drafts of Christ and the Homosexual; his voluminous correspondence from the 1940s through the 1990s; and an unpublished biography of Wood. In addition, this article's author draws upon an oral history interview conducted with Robert Wood in July 2012.

The Possible Reconciliations Between Freedom of Religion and Gender Equality

Dania Suleman, Attorney, Roy Belanger Avocats, Montreal, Canada

My paper would focus on my Master's thesis, which addresses the potential constitutional tension between gender equality and freedom of religion within the Canadian context, with an outlook on the European dynamics relating to freedom of religion. This interdisciplinary thesis combines theoretical frameworks founded equally in the fields of law, feminist theory, and the sociology of religion, in order to consider the constitutional tension between identity perspectives, feminism, and law. With this in mind, my thesis provides a framework to address this issue which concerns me and from which I wish to propose an avenue toward reconciling different critiques.

From here, I take into account the manner by which the judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada and the civil courts address requests for reasonable accommodations, as well as public policies that handle freedom of religion. I subsequently address the significant differences between radical feminism and postcolonial feminism as they relate to the place of women within a religion. The constitutional tension between religious freedom and gender equality tends to be present at this level. In my thesis, I suggest that postcolonial feminism is a valuable theoretical framework to use when reconciling demands for religious accommodation while respecting gender equality.

Swimming Upstream: Equal Rights for Women in Buddhism

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According to the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya-Pitaka* (The Basket of Monastic Rules) of the Pali Canon, the Buddha was initially reluctant to allow women into the Order because he felt that the presence of women in the Sangha would shorten the "pure period" of the Dharma by five hundred years instead of one thousand years. During the fifth century BCE, Indian society regarded women as secondary status, relegated to domestic duties as wives, mothers, cooks, and even courtesans and prostitutes, in some cases. Women's options were limited and their sustenance and identity were dependent on their husbands who provided for them. Hence, there was concern about women renouncing their home life and joining the Sangha, thereby causing domestic turmoil and upsetting the existing social order. Nevertheless and with the wise mediation by Ananda, Buddha's cousin and one of his closest disciples, the Buddha allowed his foster mother, Pajapati, to receive ordination, provided that she agree to observe the Eight Cardinal Rules. This talk examines early Buddhist texts to better understand Buddha's view on women and women's effort to gain equal rights in early Buddhism.

Religion and Power: Comparing Political Factors in the Religious Conflicts and Terrorism in Maluku and Poso

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Indonesia is a pluralistic country inhabited by six religious adherents; Muslims, Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Budhis and Confucians. Indonesia is also known as a country with a majority Muslim population who live in harmony and tolerance with other religious adherents within democratic political system. However, in the outset of democratic transition (reformasi) era from 1998 to 2005, the democratic transitions which produce freedoms and other constructive changes were colored by unstabilities, conflicts and terrorism. Such conflicts were characterized by ethnic, tribal and religious symbols. Religious conflicts, or Muslim-Christian conflicts in the Maluku Island and Poso regions were intertwined with terrorism. In these particular tragedies, religious sentiments and religious symbols were capitalized for political purposes.

This paper seeks to present the comparison of political backdrops of the Muslim-Christian conflicts that intertwined with terrorism in Maluku and Poso. It seeks to find out similarities and differences of political factors explaining the conflicts and terror attacks. Using a qualitative approach with interviews and document studies as the data collection method and comparative method, this paper has come to conclusion that conflicts amongst political elites in central governments and local governments sufficiently matter in explaining religious conflicts, intertwined with terrorism in Maluku and Poso. It has also found similarities in the terms of conflicts of political elites amongst civilian political leaders who contested for political powers and between civilian political leaders and military elites whose political positions were being sidelined in central government. However differences were found in characteristics of conflicts amongst local political elites in Maluku and Poso. In the two conflicts, Muslim and Christian sentiments and symbols were used to provoke Muslims and Christian followers to get involvec in the conflicts.

Public Theology? A Conservative Side of the Reformed Church in Contemporary China
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In the past two decades, socio-political research usually viewed the contemporary Chinese protestant church as the most sustained structural challenge towards the PRC government, especially those named as urban intellectual church. Under this framework, the recent revival phenomenon of Reformed theology in China would then be considered as a kind of public theology (or Neo-Calvinism). The focus of this theology, therefore, will be on how the church uses Reformed theological resources to deal with the relationship with the government and constructs the public role of the church under authoritarian regime. However, this kind of interpretation may oversimplify the complexity of the Reformed church and the Reformed theology development in China.

This paper is based on my past two years' field-work data. It aims, firstly, to argue that the revival phenomenon of the Reformed theology is a conservative house church movement in China. The Reformed church leaders concern more on ecclesiology and orthodoxy of the Reformed theology rather than the church's role in public arena. Secondly, it discusses how this theological resource helps them to institutionalize their churches and preserve their original beliefs and practices in church. The concept of "cultural mandate" from the Reformed theology is usually being criticized as gao zhengzhi (being politicized) and should not be the focus of church. However, the reason for the popularity and founding revival of the Reformed faith in China is that this Reformed theology is re-packaged in a more modern and intellectual way. It is then well matches with and adapts to the conservative side of the house church in

China. This article tries to provide another view to investigate the phenomenon of the wide spread of Reformed faith in China.

Salah, Piety and Human Behavior: Empirical Evidence of Causality Mechanism
Khairul Anwar Mastor, Professor, National University of Malaysia, Malaysia

In many classic and contemporary literatures, Muslim religious scholars consistently argue that desirable, positive good akhlak and higher level of piety are among important consequences of salah but they lack empirical evidence. Thus, the aim of the study was to examine the effect of salah on the development of good akhlak and piety among Muslims. A total of 208 UKM Muslim undergraduate students participated in this longitudinal design study by reporting their ratings of their perceived quality of salah, behaviorial akhlak, and tendency to avoid sinful acts (piety) daily for a period of three months. In this study, repeated observations of data were restructured and a HLM data analyses was employed. Amazingly, we found that external dimensions of prayer (salah) did not predict the positive good akhlak, implying that mere and physical movement of salah does not genuinely lead to good behavior. On the other hand, internal dimensions of prayer (salah) and piety predicted stronger of the good akhlak. Further, the strength of the direct effects gradually declined from month 1 to month 2, and finally month 3. This suggest that the effect of salah is co-current in nature, explaining why salah is ordered 5 times daily, so that our inner strength of faith will be stronger day by day. Further analyses also indicated that quality of solat fully mediated the relationship between salah and desirable good akhlak and piety in 3 months. As a conclusion, salah plays a very vital role as protective mechanism against sinful acts and producing a good akhlak among Muslims.

Seperation of Church and State: Insights from the Jewish and Islamic Legal Traditions
Shlomo Pill, Visiting Assistant Professor, Emory University, US

Both Judaism and Islam are all-encompassing normative traditions; in addition to regulating "ritual" matters, they also prescribe correct conduct in the more mundane spheres of private and public interpersonal relations. While both of these traditions are often thought of as necessitating some form of theocratic government, both have historically maintained a relatively strict separation of religious and political authority. In both Jewish and Islamic practice, moreover, this separation of church and state encouraged moderation and accountability in political and religious affairs, leading to better religious doctrine and better state law and policy. As we grapple with these questions in this country, the examples of Jewish and Islamic law and practice offer helpful examples of what models of religion-state relations produce what kind of results in both the religious and political spheres.

From Silence to Be Silenced: the Case of Judaism in Iran
Alessandra Cecolin, Lecturer, University of Aberdeen, UK

The long-term existence of the Jews in Iran since the conquest of Samaria by Sargon II (722-705 B.C) influenced their culture and religious traditions. The Judeo-Persian tradition that developed during that period is one of the great examples that reflected a synthesis of Persian and Jewish cultures.
Iranian Jewry experienced more than five centuries of isolation from the rest of Jewry and their Jewish elements, rooted in the ancient history of Judaism in Iran, interacted with Iranian culture and society.

Judaism was filtered through the lens of Iranian culture and remained silent and isolated from European Jewry until the 19th Century. Up until the 19th Century, no formal contacts existed between Iranian Judaism and the European Jewry. The encounter between Iranian Judaism and European Jewry happened when the first European Jewish missions established organisation in Iran in 1878.

The theoretical framework of this paper examines Foucault's concept of confession and silence within Christianity and his further understanding of the pivotal role of confession as a "dispositif" used by Christianity to produce truth. I claim that Iranian Judaism, which has been silenced for many centuries due to its geographical isolation from European Jewry, had to go through the process of confession with Ashkenazi Jews in order to be accepted and recognised by them. Iranian Jews were asked to confess their inappropriate "Jewishness" and through the process of confession accept a new imposed truth. The confession of "Iranian Jewish primordial Judaism" broke the silence and allowed the dominant European elite to apply the "strategy of patronage." Under these conditions, they had the burden of correcting Judaism in Iran in order to reaffirm their socio-cultural superiority.

Mauritian Mahdara*: Resilient Bedouin Educational System in the Age of Globalization

Tarek Ladjal, Associate Professor, Effat University, Saudi Arabia

The Mauritian Mahdara is a unique and ambiguous phenomenon in the history of religious schools in the Islamic World. It is among the oldest surviving teaching styles. Curiously, despite its age and many accomplished graduates, it is largely unknown. This neglect is the result of its social, political, and geographical isolation, among other reasons. Despite the Bedouin style of teaching in Mahdara, its long history proved that its graduates are comparable with their likes in the Islamic World, in terms of mastering the Islamic Sciences. This paper highlights the Mauritanian Mahdara according to the various stages of its historical development, its curriculum, social system, and contributions to the Mauritanian society. The paper concludes with the existential threat and challenges that face the Mahdara, and the confusing question of continuity, whether to modernization or originality.

Muslim-Christian Relationships in Indonesian Reform Era Within the Framework of Democracy: Case Study of Bandung, Bekasi and Bogor (1998-2015)

Angel Damayanti, Assistant Professor, Christian University of Indonesia, Indonesia

A relatively peaceful and harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia has been dotted by religious intolerance and worship restrictions in the form of churches being destroyed, banned and closed. The majority of restrictions happened in West Java Province, mostly in Bandung, Bekasi and Bogor regions, where this research used them as case study. Ironically, the majority of restrictions occurred in the Reformasi era, where the political system should have promoted human rights and practices of decentralized system. Against this background, this thesis seeks to find out the cases of worship restriction in reform era and how a democratic government deals with such restriction.

To answer the questions, this research utilizes qualitative methodology including the case studies, historical studies and triangulation method to ensure the comprehensiveness of its data sources and analysis. By employing theories of democracy and democratization, decentralization, and human rights, this study finds that Muslim-Christian relationship since the beginning of their encounter in Indonesia has been spoiled by reciprocal threat perception in terms of the suspicion of Christianization *vis a vis* the suspicion of the establishment of Islamic state.

This study also finds multiple factors explaining the cases; first, the rise of radical Islamic groups which majority become the perpetrators of the restriction in addition to government officers and lay Muslims. Second, the obscurity on delegation of authority in decentralization system and the contradiction between central government regulations, which adopt the contradictive pretext of religious freedom *vis a vis* religious harmony, and local government regulations which only address the maintenance of order as parts of its function yet ignoring the promotion of religious freedom. Third, the ignorance of government to take firm measures resulted in the partisanship of local government to perpetrators, in the name of maintaining public order, yet providing no protection and/or accommodation to the minorities.

On the True God, the Creation and the Christian Apologetic Tradition in Lijadu's Ifá (1897)
Adrian Deese, Graduate Student, University of Cambridge, UK

Emmanuel Lijadu's Ifá is the earliest treatise on the West African deity. Lijadu, a second-generation Anglican evangelist, was from Abẹokuta, the first Yorùbá city-state whose rulers welcomed evangelism. The Church Missionary Society (1854) hailed Abẹokuta as the "Sunrise within the Tropics," the seat from which West Africa was to be Christianised. The Anglicans transformed this warrior polity into a monarchy, which was to undergird a State Church. Negotiating divination was a fundamental part of this attempted Christianisation. Ifá divination was the ruling cosmology of the Yorùbá city-states; its mythology enshrined the ideal of divine kingship. This paper discusses the first twenty-six dialogical verses of Lijadu's Ifá, which covers his exegesis on the Yorùbá account of the creation. It is based on my English translation of the manuscript, acquired during archival research in Nigeria. In his critique of governance by divination, Lijadu's use of the concept of divine "truth" reveals epistemic problems, with profound existential implications, in divination: a contradictory divine economy in the aristocratic Yorùbá theogony, the problem of the proper relationship of body and soul, and his critique of the divine prerogative charter of the Yorùbá dynasty. I argue that Lijadu uses a patristic model, drawn from the early Church Fathers Justin Martyr, Tatian, Tertullian, and Theophilus of Antioch, in the construction of his arguments against divination. He ridicules the immorality of the Yorùbá state deities, argues that the state deities are fundamentally anthropocentric, and frame divination's creation account as an impediment to divine sovereignty. Lijadu utilizes the Genesis account of creation, in order to reify the concept of human dominion as central to the consolidation of legitimate human social order. In doing so, Lijadu's difficult treatise theoretically paved the way for the subversion of divination, and the establishment of the Anglican Church as the Yorùbá State Religion.

Presence of Muslim Identity in Politics: Peace or Conflict?

Ertugrul Gokcekuyu, Faculty, Islamic University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam, The Netherlands

This doctorate research will have a focus on the Muslim identity whether this religious identity (according to Islamic theology) shows any overlap (correlation) with political/ European identity(ies)? I will attempt to measure the MI in consolidated democracies (from Islamic Classic literature vs Western literature) and the impact on the access to political multiple forums. Jesse and Williams claim in their book *Identity and Institutions* that religious identity having access to multiple forums and cross-border institutions will construct and enable new identities and eventually reduce social tensions.

European societies today are troubled with the birth of radical as well as populist narratives (Freedom House) in European consolidated democracies such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France and United Kingdom. In order to be able to conduct a reliable and representative research I need to develop the variables in order to be able to measure the Muslim identity in these countries. I work on the construction of a qualitative research in order to assess whether the theory posed by Jesse and Williams may be applicable to Muslim existence in Europe and whether Muslim identity is one that is different than the popular radical, islamist image of the Muslim and what the impact would be on conflict resolution.

The concept of "identity" has been a neglected concept in political sciences and now is experiencing a come-back. The Netherlands holds 850,000, Belgium 650,000, France 4,500,000, United Kingdom 2,700,000 and Germany has 4,100,000 Muslims. In order to have a representative and valid research with 95% reliability, I will conduct a research of at least 385 respondents per country. I wish to be able to bring in some understanding between the Islamic and Western perceptions of MI and hopefully cause a ripple in our academic understanding in conflict-resolution.

The Power of Praying Together: Christians and Muslims Overcoming Religious Boundaries in Crises

Christopher PreJean, Graduate Student, University of California Los Angeles, US

Little attention has been paid to the institution of Muslims going out to pray for rain (istisqāʾ) in the Abbasid period, and even less on Christians participating with them. In the 9th century, an issue for some early Ḥanbalī Muslims was whether or not dhimmis could join the ritual. In this paper, it is argued that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal permitted dhimmis, particularly Christians, to leave the city to go out and pray for rain alongside Muslims. Though it is contended that they went out together, its actualization need not hinder the more pertinent point that it was permitted at all. Why did Aḥmad permit it without citing hadith? The incentive to collaborate in this ritual is based partly on the economic institutions (and a vocational ethic) established between Muslims and Christians in 9th century Baghdad: (1) the Christian Employer-Muslim Employee relationship, and (2) the crop-sharing (sharikah) partnerships formed between them.

The argument looks for an economic cause for the rationalization of Christians joining the prayer. In the conclusion an economic cause is claimed; that is, a Christian crop owner crop-sharer who hires Muslim day laborers has as much interest in a crop's success as the Muslims he employees. And works alongside. Praying together, on these terms, is more important than forming a religious boundary.

The paper answers questions about how the economic bonds between Muslim and Christian communities contrasts with a broader Islamic religious ethic. It utilizes Aḥmad's responsa from the early Ḥanbalī training manual Ahl al-Milal as a source for drawing out economic activity between communities, while arguing that a religious traditionalist like Aḥmad could amend hadith and lend his opinion to his early followers based on what benefited the Muslims and Christians who worked together. Lastly, it poses new questions about how scholarship can discuss communal identities in Baghdad in terms of economic categories instead of religious ones.

The paper attempts to show how faith traditions can play a complementary role in environmental ethics. It will also be critical to some approaches of religions and environmental ethics. Then it tries to address the issue from eco-theological thoughts done by John B. Cobb, Jr. and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Both scholars have extensively worked on it and presented their proposals for environmental sustainability. So, a comparative analysis will be done on their thoughts about some key points. It aims to show how their understanding about human perception of nature can articulate religious moral teachings with the present form of environmental ethics, and why they are needed for rereading and analysis in the context of eco-justice. It also investigates their thoughts and proposals in the light of their own religious traditions, and different environmental ethical theories and approaches. In so doing, it tries to explore a new research in the present body of knowledge on the collaboration of religions with environmental ethics.

US Mediation Efforts in the Middle East: A Moral Religious Basis or a Set of Underlying Forces?
Sana Zirari, Graduate Student, University of Medea, Algeria

This paper is a study of US foreign policy in the context of international relations in recent decades, when the US assumed the role of the world hegemon. It deals with the issue of the US use of the religious justification in the course of its mediation efforts in the Middle East. To this end, US diplomatic efforts as a peace broker in the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict has been chosen as a case in point. More specifically, the study examines the extent to which the shared imperial culture and the claimed religious exceptionality of both American and Jewish races have shaped the US bias to and extraordinary generosity with the Jewish, as opposed to calculations of national interests.

This work is, then, intended to reconstruct American diplomacy *vis-à-vis* the undoubtedly most heated Middle Eastern question in the world politics nowadays. In addition to analysing major issues and developments, the present study will have critical moves between the geopolitical and the cultural discerning the institutional and ideational sources of American foreign policy. In other words, the work will merge the geopolitical aspect of America's "Special Relationship" with Israel with the cultural one, as the latter is the platform on which the former has been built. It will trace the cultural history shaping American visions of the "Holy Land" and the necessity for Israel. We will try to capture the ideological join formed by claims of American and Zionist national uniqueness and their production of exceptional races and subjects.

Given the need for a clearly-stated purpose, the research questions of the study are of paramount importance. Accordingly, three major questions have been formulated. First, amidst the multitude of complex and important regional issues facing the world hegemon nowadays, why does the US stand

committed and determined to keep a close eye on a far away Middle Eastern question such as that of Palestine? Second, what is the determining factor behind the US choice of diplomacy as a foreign policy approach in regard to the Palestinian question in particular? And, third, what are the clinching religious as well as cultural platforms on which present American/Israeli "Special Relationship" stands?

In my work, I suggest a couple of hypotheses. First, the "Palestinian question" is important not only to Palestinians, Israelis, and their Arab state neighbours, but to many countries and non-state actors in the region and around the world—uppermost the United States—for a variety of religious, cultural, and political reasons. Second, the US diplomatic foreign policy pursued *vis-à-vis* the Palestinian question has been solely motivated by national interest considerations. The latter has its own geostrategic, economic as well as cultural implications.

At the end of the study, it will be concluded that the shared imperial culture and the exceptionality of both American and Jewish races play a marginal role only in explaining the US bias to and extraordinary generosity with the Jewish. The real underlying forces behind, rather, are an intermingling of both the Jewish lobby's tremendous role in directing American politics merged with US hegemonic security needs and national interest considerations—both requiring a necessity for Israel. For these reasons, the argumentation and analysis set forth in this paper are based on the hegemony theories formulated by Antonio Gramsci and Robert Cox.