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*The Future of Religion as Means is Secure, God as an End is in Question*

KEYWORDS: God, Existence, Religion, Economy, Means & End, Proof, Spiritual Union

His existence being highly questionable, indeed the all perfect mythical God is dead. However, the practices & celebrations in all cultures for remembering God are alive and always will be. God will never be forgotten because if he is not remembered then powerful capitalists, politicians, god-men, intellectuals, artists and every other profession on this planet will not survive because of various reasons. The superpowers survive by producing weapons for the those fighting in the name of God, critical atheists survive by publicly criticising the idea of God and being paid, drug smokers & dealers in India survive in the name of lord Shiva, even the genuine environmentalists and social reformers survive eradicating the evil customs performed in the name of God, they all got means of living because the idea of God survives successfully. And therefore, the question of whether God exists or not becomes irrelevant for some as long as the global economy continues to function in His name, but how far should it go this way and treating religion as means to an end that is self-centred?

Therefore, keeping in mind the undeniable fact of religion's longevity until the end of this age and while the benefits of having the God as an end can be known through theological & ethical studies laying in abundance, the paper seeks to find a God with new reasonable & practical characteristics, without any mythical traits, least likely to get outdated and which are more compatible with the three pillars of successful mankind- science, philosophy & art. The paper would analyse the nine logical arguments in favour of God's existence in Udayanācārya's Nyāyakusumāñjali and would further evaluate Patañjali's Yoga Sūtrās, a system of disciplinary methods to achieve spiritual union with God, resolving the problem of means to an end.

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*United Methodist Church Policies and People Convicted of Sex Offenses: Stigma, Harm, and Exclusion*

KEYWORDS: Sex offender, United Methodist, Reentry, Stigma, Religion

In 2004, the General Conference United Methodist Church (UMC) first instructed local churches as well as US Annual Conferences to consider existing recommendations and put forth their own policies regarding the participation of people convicted of sex offenses. 19 of 54 US Annual Conferences and some General Conference websites have provided related public-facing statements, policies, and recommendations. This project asks how and why do the policies and outward-facing statements put forth by the UMC General Conference and other US Annual Conferences stigmatize and harm people convicted of sex offenses? Rooted in feminist

standpoint theory as well as postmodernism, this endeavor relies on deep inductive qualitative coding of 42 public-facing institutional policies and statements. Analysis reveals that policies and statements stigmatize and harm people convicted of sex offenses by using inaccurate and harmful language, making false and unfounded claims, failing to consider circumstances of individuals convicted, making the offense status public, and limiting leadership experiences in congregations. The documents are stigmatizing because they exclude the situated knowledges of those convicted of sex offenses. Furthermore, they rely on pervasive myths and harmful ideologies perpetuated by US society and policy, as well as by some theological literature and journalism. Understanding how and why certain claims and practices are stigmatizing enables leaders in the UMC and other religious traditions to craft better documents moving forward, and better contribute to the re-entry of those who have been convicted of a sex offenses. Ultimately, religious institutions can best move forward by using well-crafted policies as guidance, and by including those convicted of sex offenses in the decision-making process.

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*Joseph of Arimathea: the "hidden" disciple or the guardian of Marya*

KEYWORDS: Joseph of Arimathea, Gospels, Apocryphal, somerset

Joseph of Arimathea, scarcely present in the canonical Gospels, is the protagonist of the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, written in the fifth century, in which the events following the capture of Jesus. Here the "hidden disciple" Johann becomes the defender of the Christian faith even before the Sanhedrin, ending up being imprisoned by the Jewish authorities and finally freed by Jesus himself.

At Glastonbury the choice of Joseph was consequential to the mention of the follower of Arimathea within the corpus of Arthurian legends: the poet Norman Robert de Boron between the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century was the first to expand the events, making him land on the coasts of Britain with the chalice containing water and blood of the washing of the body of Jesus. He would also have founded the first Christian community of the Island, building a church in straw and mud, dedicating it to the Mother of God, who arrived in England with him and was buried there. In 1342 the *Cronica sive Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* was published. In this historical-literary work Joseph was mentioned as the "guardian" of the Virgin Mary, a spiritual leader of the mission that from the coasts of Marseille in 63 A.D. landed in Britain, where he built the first Christian sanctuary in the West and where he found eternal burial.

Its landing place and the antiquity of the Glastonian complex were called into question in the salient phases of the councils of Pisa in 1409 and of Costanza in 1417, when they were considered testimonies of the indisputable authority of the English Church in the presence of the continental one.

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*The 'Katanuxis' according to the Desert Fathers in Light of the COVID-19 Epidemic*

KEYWORDS: Desert Fathers, Desert Mothers, asceticism, compunction, 'katanuxis', grief, contrition, spiritual joy, Christianity, Egypt, Spirituality, Theology, COVID-19, spiritual direction, pastoral care, Ancient Christianity, motivation, depression, Mysticism, Practical Theology

Many people suffer from ill thoughts and depression, and they can be magnified under the conditions of confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many individuals have found it difficult to maintain a spiritual balance and sustain productivity levels during this uneasy time. In-person religious community services, which might have provided moral sustenance, present the danger of intensive spreading of COVID-19. In this this time of lockdowns and restrictions, it is appropriate to look again to to the experience and wisdom of Desert Fathers, and 'Katanuxis' in particular.

'Katanuxis' ('compunctio' in Latin, translated into English as compunction) is one of the most difficult phenomena in the theology of Christian Spirituality. It is generally lost in translation and therefore too often neglected by Western Christian scholars. My doctoral thesis on katanuxis (see: "'Katanuxis' as a Way of Healing..." Rome, 2014), was concept which was barely touched on by such scholars as Ir. Hausherr SJ ("Penthos..." (Rome, 2014), Cardinal Th. Spidlik (various homilies), and H. Hunt ("Joy-Bearing Grief" ('Brill', 2004). But I have not yet written on 'katanuxis' in the Desert Fathers, whom I believe are now useful in terms of practical theology and spiritual care, if to make a scrupulous translation directly from Greek and analyze it more carefully.

(The Latin translation from PL 65, which Benedicta Ward translated into English in 1975 also became incomplete after 'Aphthegmata Patrum' in Greek [SC 498, 387, 474] was published in 1991-2005.)

Exactly 'katanuxis' can help to transform grief into joy, overcome depression and increase stamina and productivity, which becomes very valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the vast majority of people around the world have experienced losses of their closest persons, loss of their businesses, financial crashes, and other kinds of stresses. Also 'Katanuxis' helps to sustain the negativities of loneliness.

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*Children of Abraham: Inter-religious Commonality in Small Town Iowa*

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*Is Jesus' Maleness Normative for Human Beings?*

How should we understand the claim that Jesus is normative for human beings in light of the fact that he is male? In this paper, I address the following critique among some feminist authors that if Jesus' maleness is normative for humanity then women are sub-image bearers, and cannot be recipients of salvation. In his *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, Marc Cortez wrote that a theological anthropology needs "a way of affirming the centrality of Jesus' embodied existence without implying that maleness is normative for humanity in general." My solution: to provide an account of how Jesus' maleness can be theologically significant without implying that Jesus' maleness is normative. To do so, I will argue that Jesus' maleness is not essential to his humanity qua humanity by providing a thomistic, or hylomorphic account of biological sex. On a Thomistic account of sex, Jesus is male in virtue of his body, not his human nature. Therefore, he can be normative for humanity via his human nature. While a thomistic account may be suspect in light of feminist objections, I believe a fair reading of Thomas offers a solution to the problem. I conclude with responding to a few objections, and argue that Jesus' maleness can be theologically significant without his maleness being normative for human beings.

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*The Simulation Argument For God's Existence*

KEYWORDS: Simulation, God, Deity, Revelation.

In 2001, Nick Bostrom published a paper proposing a trilemma suggesting that human life may be a computer simulation. This paper will draw and previous philosophical and theological works, as well as contemporary philosophical research, in an attempt to provide an alternative framework for theism by exploring the compatibility of Bostrom's argument with previous philosophical arguments for the existence of God.

First, the paper will examine whether a simulated universe is compatible with the empirical and logical arguments for the existence of God, primarily the argument from design, and the ontological argument. Second, it will discuss whether the simulation hypothesis leaves open the possibility for miracles, both as defined by David Hume as a violation of natural law, and by C.S. Lewis, as an interference with Nature by a supernatural power. Finally, the paper will attempt to reconcile belief in the simulation hypothesis is compatible with belief in the personal, incarnate God described in the Christian Bible.

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*Religion as Brand: an Analogy to Conceptualize Religion*

Conceptualizing social phenomena is the precondition for examining them. Many scholars previously have conceptualized religion in relationship with market. More specifically they investigated religion as brand in many contexts from religion sociology to marketing science and religion economy. This conceptual paper is going to review these studies critically in first phase and propose its own conceptual framework of analogical comparison between religion and brand in next phase. Analogy is a cognitive tool which its role in creating knowledge, developing theories, and revealing generic properties of phenomena has been approved by scholars. In the conceptual framework of present study, which is defined based on the cognitive model of Gentner on analogies, religion and brand as two social constructs will be compared based on their common characteristics according to definitions and theories on both phenomena to provide a holistic panorama in conceptualizing the religion. The attributes of this analogy or common aspects of these two phenomena include communication, competition, faith, symbolism, representing a promise, narrative, meaning, myth, ethics, ritual, community, and emotions. This analogic framework not only provides a holist approach on religion definition but also paves the way for discovering other attributes and expanding the theory in this field.

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*Navigating the Nova: The Clarity of Christ in a Confusing Culture*

KEYWORDS: Secularism, Authenticity, Psychology and Counseling, Christian Identity

Utilizing the work of Charles Taylor, this paper will examine what it feels like to not just live in a secular age but what it means to form and forge a Christian identity in a culture of confusion. Drawing from research in contemporary psychology and counseling, particularly the field of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Interpersonal Neurobiology, I will examine how the transition into a secular age has left many people searching for meaning with little to no foundation. In examining contemporary psychology and therapeutic approaches it will be shown that people are filling in the existential and spiritual gaps that have been left behind due to the swift transition into secularism in North America in particular. Following the overview of both Taylor's work and the survey of the relevant psychotherapeutic literature it is argued that Christ can provide clarity in a confusing culture for people who are struggling with identity issues. Understanding what it means to live and move and have our being in a secular age involves more than just the political separation of Church and State. It also involves, to a larger degree in terms of identity formation, the creation of new ways of experiencing and navigating the world. For people who are caught in the crossfire of competing and often conflicting ways of being in the world, this can lead to a state of anxiety and confusion that can contribute to depression, isolation, and further despair. Ultimately, Christ can provide not just ultimate salvation and security but identity and clarity.