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Dr. **Courtney Veasey**, Instructor/Research Fellow, BibleMesh Institute, US

A Classical Understanding of καταστολή and Implications Toward its Meaning and Function in Isaiah 61:3 LXX and 1 Timothy 2:9

Keywords: ethics, classics, virtue

This paper presents the findings of a comprehensive investigation of καταστολή, a term appearing as a hapax in Isa 61:3 LXX and 1 Timothy 2:9. These instances represent two of only eighteen occurrences of καταστολή among twelve primary sources through the mid-second century CE. English translations of Isa 61:3 LXX and 1 Tim 2:9 present καταστολή as a clothing item. Conversely, the ten remaining secular sources feature καταστολή as a virtue-related behavioral quality primarily of self-restraint with connotations related to countenance. This paper addresses this discrepancy using a critical mass of linguistic evidence to reveal the biblical usage of καταστολή as consistent in meaning and function with the ten non-biblical sources from various genres. Asserting alternative translations of καταστολή for Isa 61:3 LXX and 1 Tim 2:9, this study reveals this virtue quality as retaining value and relevancy for ongoing Christian emulation and as a means of evangelistic missional strategy.

Mr. **Matthew Arakaky**, PhD Candidate, Duke University, US

“A Man Devoid of Strength”: Psalm 88, Gerard Manley Hopkins’ Sonnet 65, and the Poetics of Depression

Keywords: depression, Gerard Manley Hopkins, poetics, Psalm 88, theology

Despite their temporal and geographic distance, the author of Psalm 88 and Gerard Manley Hopkins have something in common—they are both severely depressed. This paper examines the poetics of depression in Psalm 88 and Hopkins’ Sonnet 65 to analyze the relationship between suffering and theology in poetry. Both poems betray similar symptoms of depression: feelings of divine abandonment, unanswered prayer, isolation from human companions, exhaustion, and chronic hopelessness. Psalm 88 is notorious for its lack of “vow to praise” and Sonnet 65 also lacks any hint of comfort. Both poems end in darkness. Yet both poets speak to God in the shadows, showing that even depressed individuals can have spirituality.

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Ms. **Savanna Shiman**, Student Research Assistant, Brigham Young University, US;

Prof. **Joel Campbell**, Associate Professor, Brigham Young University, US

Latter-day Saint Women Missionaries: 125 Years of Remaking Identity, Image and Community in the United Kingdom

Keywords: media, identity, Mormon, Latter-day Saints, women missionaries

From their portrayal in the 2023 BBC documentary “The Mormons are Coming” back to 1898, women missionaries have broken down social barriers and negative perceptions about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the United Kingdom. Known institutionally in the late 1800s and early 1900s as “lady missionaries,” these women have been overlooked in secular and religious research. The research will use the Five-Factor Analysis of Media Representation of Latter-day Saint Identity (Baker and Campbell) to examine both religious and secular identity construction by sourcing personal narratives, church history, news media accounts, popular culture, non-LDS religion discourse, government records, and political discourse.

Prof. **Richard Sherlock**, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Utah State University, US

Two Dogmas of Religious Studies

Keywords: comprehensive neutral, Christianity, two dogmas

I have borrowed my title from a famous paper by Willard Quine in 1951 "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". I believe that there are two core parts or dogmas of religious studies. The first is reasonable comprehensiveness and the second is neutrality. These two are in conflict. At academically rigorous evangelical protestant colleges like Calvin or Wheaton College, you can be comprehensive but you are not neutral. The same is true of strongly Catholic colleges such as Ave Maria or the University of Dallas.

There are over 200 public colleges in the US where one can get a bachelor’s degree in religious studies. In these places, you cannot be both.

My example will be Christianity. In the Christian sacred text (Romans chap 1) Paul says that we can about God and some of His attributes by studying the created world. This is not a

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revealed claim, and it is not a neutral claim. The teacher can be comprehensive and covering this claim cannot be neutral. Or it can be neutral and avoid this claim.

Prof. **Finney Premkumar**, Research Scholar, University of Birmingham, UK

Are Exclusive Truth-Claims in Religion Possible? Epistemological Limit and the Problem of Privileged Access

Keywords: privileged-access, doxastic, exclusive

Most religions, in some sense, assert truth claims that can be regarded as exclusive in nature. I wish to explore the epistemological dimension of these claims in the context of cognitive limits that are often overlooked. I will propose that none of the religions exemplify privileged access to the truth because their respective claims seem to be communal doxastic practices that are internal-explanatory descriptions, constrained by terms and definitions that are systemic and therefore epistemologically limited in scope. Positively seen, the intrinsic limitations of the various religious affirmations seem to necessitate the epistemic interdependence of religions for an on-going and productive dialogue. I will conclude by discussing what revelation and faith contribute to making exclusive truth-claims while maintaining a position of humility as well as teachability.

Dr. **Juhi Gupta**, Senior Assistant Professor, Aligarh Muslim University, India;

Prof. **Andrew Davies**, Professor, University of Birmingham, UK

Sacred Synthesis: Exploring Parallels and Contrasts between Hindu Goddesses and Greek Goddesses in Comparative Religious Perspective

Keywords: culture, mythology, Greek, Hindu, goddess

This presentation offers a comparative reading of some of the key Hindu and Greek goddesses, seeking to identify shared and cultural motifs that highlight the empowering roles of these divine female figures. The study in this way seeks to identify and foreground central themes, ideas and concepts that these two ancient religious cultures (one distinctively 'Eastern' and the other typically 'Western' in terms of worldview and spirituality) have in common, highlighting details of their mythologies which promote deeper understanding of

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the archetypal representation of strong, influential women. The paper adopts a comparative approach, analysing sacred texts, scholarly interpretations, and cultural contexts to draw links and highlight similarities between the representations of some of the most prominent goddesses across the two traditions – particularly the warrior goddesses Athena and Durga – and some of the character traits, qualities and abilities attributed to them, considering how they still speak to today's women.

Dr. **Moshe Maoz**, Prof. Emeritus and Senior Fellow, Hebrew University, Israel

Israel, the Abraham Accords and War with Hamas

Keywords: Israel, Palestine, Abraham Accords, Hamas, USA

Almost four years after the signing of the Abraham Accords (Sept. 2020) between Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, Israeli regional and international standings have dwindled in recent years. In the first two years Israel, with U.S. help, normalized relations with these countries, except for Sudan, through strategic, diplomatic, economic, and cultural connections. Israel expected that the Abraham Accords would expand "from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia": and propel Gulf Arab signatories and Saudi Arabia to help block the Iranian aggression and would not insist on a solution to the Palestinian problem. neither of these expectations has been realized as of late April 2024, particularly in the wake of Israel's war with Hamas, which began on 7 Oct 2023. The Palestinian issue has risen to the top of the agendas of most Arab and Muslim states and the international community. This paper will analyze the development of the Abraham Accords and the impact of the Hamas-Israel war on them.

Dr. **Gerhard Stuebben**, Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, Baylor University, US

Reading Marx in the Cold War Catholic Church: A Revisionist Interpretation of Gustavo Gutiérrez

Keywords: Latin America; liberation theology; Marxist analysis; Catholic theology; global south

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Contemporary secondary literature on Gustavo Gutiérrez has attempted to distance him from Marxist analysis, arguing that it was never a significant element in his formulation of a liberative interpretation of Christianity. This mainstream perspective on the theologian, though, is based on a misunderstanding of his thought deriving from a lack of diachronic analysis of his extensive body of work. It seems, as well, to be founded on a desire to preserve the present usefulness of his thought for contemporary theological and ethical reflection, taking the inadmissibility of Marxist analysis as a given.

I argue that this trend in contemporary secondary literature is ill-founded, arising out of a failure to survey the entirety of Gutiérrez's work in a way that gives attention to the chronology of that work. When one includes Gutiérrez's minor articles and untranslated booklets in a study of the development of his thought, a clear pattern emerges. I will argue that Gutiérrez openly based his theological program on Marxist analysis, as a core feature of that program, until the "Puebla" conference of Latin American Catholic Bishops in 1979. At Puebla the episcopacy determined the contours of how Marxist analysis could be employed in theological reflection, offering the category of a "preferential option for the poor" as a non-ideological alternative to the Marxist version of Liberation Theology. Gutiérrez had significant agency in the conversation that arrived at that compromise position, leading him to frame his subsequent writings within the "preferential option."

Dr. **Charles R. Gallagher**, Professor, Boston College, US

Jesus & George Lincoln Rockwell: William F. Buckley, Jr., Catholic Conscience, & the American Nazi Party, 1961-1967

Keywords: American Nazi Party, William F. Buckley, Jr., Anti-Semitism, Catholicism

This paper will be the first scholarly examination of the correspondence between William F. Buckley, Jr., the founder of modern American Conservatism, and George Lincoln Rockwell, the founder of the American Nazi Party (1959-1967). The paper will argue that beginning in 1961, Buckley's Catholic conscience pushed him to pursue conversations with Rockwell with a view toward convincing the American Nazi Party founder to drop his movement's rabid anti-Semitism. Buckley prevailed on Rockwell out of respect for shared Christian principles. In many ways both in correspondence and conversations Buckley took a pastoral approach with Rockwell. While press and pundits were vilifying Rockwell for his anti-Semitism,

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Buckley relied on his Catholic conscience to appeal to Rockwell as a fellow Christian. The paper will conclude with an account of Rockwell's disclosures to Buckley about the fraught nature of his own soul-searching on the issue, and the final political consequences of the Buckley-Rockwell conversations.

Dr. **Bidi Broderick**, PhD, York St John University, UK

The Evolution of African Witchcraft as a Response to Misfortune: A Study of African Spirituality in Nairobi, Kenya and Black Diasporic Communities in London, United Kingdom

Keywords: religion, healing, witchcraft, diaspora

The objective of this research was to examine the persistence and adaptability of African spiritual beliefs in Africa and African/African Caribbean communities in Britain. It examines the poetics and specific religious and cultural beliefs such as witchcraft. The research methodology for data collection was a synthesis grounded in elements of two qualitative traditions: naturalist/phenomenological and Heuristic. The findings were analysed using a multi-disciplinary lens, encompassing religious studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology and literary sources. Key findings include the continued prominence of African spiritual beliefs in the lives of many people of African heritage, with a persistent belief in spiritual forces that can be manipulated for both positive and negative outcomes. Some individuals blend African spirituality with Christian beliefs and practices others transition toward African centred spirituality. The study concludes that witchcraft and African spirituality form part of a "spiritual suitcase" used to explain, predict and control misfortune in daily life.

Dr. **Carol Wayne White**, Professor, Philosophy of Religion, Bucknell University, US

An Eco-Spirituality of Wonder: The Anthropocene Paradox and New Ways of Being and Becoming Human

Keywords: Anthropocene, humanity, eco-spirituality, wonder, religious naturalism

The impact of anthropogenic disruptions brings us face to face with an intriguing Anthropocene paradox: ruptures to our conventional, established notions of humanity and assumptions about humanity's place in the matrix of life. In this paper, I address this paradox,

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exploring the possibility of an eco-spirituality that is grounded in the tenets of religious naturalism. With its distinctive conception of humanity's embeddedness in materiality and its constitutive relationality, this religious eco-spirituality generates distinctive aesthetical-ethical responses to current forms of ecological degradation and environmental injustices. These aesthetical-ethical responses are what I identify with the "turn to wonder." Emphasizing novel ways of seeing, knowing, and acting as humans in the current era, this eco-spirituality anticipates what possibilities and wonders may occur when human organisms enact our evolutionary capacities as relational organisms that can love and engage in multilayered processes of changing behaviors, values, and relationships that promote the betterment of myriad nature.

Miss. **Donna Matthews**, Doctoral Candidate, University of Glasgow, Scotland

Un/Doing Wor(l)ds

Keywords: aesthetic attitude, mystical experience, gifted states, attentiveness, eschatology

The essay film, "Un/doing Wor(l)ds," explores the intersection of aesthetic experience, spirituality, and eschatology within the context of a Music PhD at the University of Glasgow. Employing a methodology rooted in attentiveness, the research incorporates diverse practices that include musical improvisation, prayer, contemplation, stop-motion collaging, and speaking in tongues. Through the crafting of "poetic vignettes" and voiced-over excerpts, the study examines ways these practices might engender enhanced intuitivity or transcendent states. Implicitly drawing parallels between artistic gifted states and biblical charismatic gifts as delineated in 1 Corinthians 12, the research culminates by underscoring the eschatological significance of art. It offers insights into the transformative potential of improvisatory or contemplative states, hinting at their capacity to provide glimpses of a reality transcending the temporal realm.

Ms. **Komal Jamshid**, PhD Scholar, University of Gujrat, Pakistan

Navigating Norms and Law: An Empirical Study of Abortion Legislation in Pakistan

Keywords: abortion, legislation, new norms

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This study evaluates Pakistan's abortion legislation within its Islamic context, exploring the alignment between legal frameworks, religious teachings, and their socio-cultural impact on women's healthcare. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it integrates qualitative interviews with healthcare professionals, legal experts, and religious scholars, along with quantitative surveys from women across diverse demographics. The analysis, using thematic and statistical methods, unveils a complex landscape where legal provisions permit abortion under certain conditions, but restrictive interpretations often hinder awareness and accessibility for women. The findings reveal a significant gap between laws and their execution, compounded by cultural stigma and religious misinterpretations. The study advocates for legislative clarity and enhanced public awareness to bridge these gaps, proposing that legal practices should conform more closely to Islamic ethics and improve healthcare for women. It suggests reforms respect religious sensitivities while safeguarding women's health rights, advocating for a balanced approach to support women's reproductive decisions in Pakistan.

Kristof Szitar, PhD candidate, Université de Lausanne, Switzerland

Sinicized Heretics and the Color Symbolism of Infidelity in Pre-modern Persianate Literatures

Keywords: infidelity, Manicheism, heresy, Islam, Persian

This paper examines the representation of non-Muslims (e.g. Manichaeans) and the aestheticization and politicization of infidelity (kufr) in Central and South Asian Persian poetry (10-12th c.). The aim of the study is to show how infidelity was first linked to darkness and ignorance, then aestheticized in Persian and Urdu poems from Central and South Asia, and in Turkic poetry from the Caucasus. Simultaneously, court poets based in Ghazna (Afghanistan) associated religion and infidelity in their poems with financial and political semantic layers. In addition, the figure of Mani, the third-century founder of a world religion, once seen as a pre-Islamic arch-heretic, has been reconceptualized as a Sinicized and aestheticized figure in poetry. These case studies show that notions such as infidelity, religion and heresy were context-dependent and dynamic, and that these poems generated discourses on religious difference and played a vital role in the dialogic self-creation of medieval Islamic dynasties.

Ass.-Prof. Dr. **Mehmet H. Tuna**, Assistant Professor, Institute of Islamic Theology and Religious Education, University of Innsbruck, Austria;

Prof. Dr. **Zekirija Sejdini**, Professor, Department of Islamic Theology and Religious Education, University of Innsbruck, Austria

United and Divided: Young Voices on Being Muslim (in Austria)

Keywords: Muslim identity, Muslim religiosity, Muslim culture

While secularization is progressing in many European societies, Muslims in Europe are defying this trend. Studies reveal high religiosity among Muslim youth (see NatCen BSA Study 2019 and Shell Youth Study 2019).

This contribution focuses on Muslim youth in Austria, exploring their understandings, attitudes, and experiences through 12 qualitative interviews. These insights reflect the evolving perspectives of Muslim youth, offering opportunities for reflection on their education and upbringing (Tuna et al. 2023). The interviews delve into the reasons behind their attitudes, providing a deeper examination of their viewpoints.

The analysis reveals a trend where being Muslim is increasingly perceived not just as a religious identity but as a “racializing and ethnicizing” overarching cultural affiliation. This includes individuals who may not believe in God but are associated with Muslims due to their origin. Understanding these nuanced identities is essential for developing inclusive policies.

Dr. **C. Tim Chang**, Professor, Liberty University, US

The Progress of Christianity in North Korea Under Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un

Keywords: North Korea, Christianity, refugees, revival, Kim Jong Un

From 1945 to 2015, the progress of Christianity in North Korea varied among the three Kim leaders. To investigate this phenomenon, I examined the firsthand experiences I had while working with North Korean refugees in China and sorted through the primary and secondary resources and documents available on Christianity in North Korea. From my investigation, the most critical finding was that since the "Great Famine" (1995-1998), Christianity has

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steadily grown in North Korea, with about 300,000 Christians by 2015. After Korea's reunification, Christianity in Korea will expand more profoundly and powerfully, reviving Pyongyang as the "Jerusalem of the East."

Ms. **Yumi Kang**, Recent Graduate, Colby College, US

Decolonizing Korean Christian New Religious Movements: Unraveling and Revealing the Legacy of Protestant Missionaries in South Korea

Keywords: New Religious Movements, Korea, Christian missionaries, Korean New Religious Movements

There has been an ongoing effort across disciplines to decolonize dominating scholarly narratives. This paper contributes by challenging the depiction of new religious movements (NRMs) in Korea through an Orientalist lens that frames Asian NRMs as abhorrent outliers from mainstream Western religiosity. It delves into the colonial legacy shaping Korean Christian NRMs and the conflicts that arose when Western and indigenous conceptions of religion clashed. Utilizing archival research, incorporating historical, sociological, and religious comparison theories, this paper addresses a historiographic gap by unveiling connections between Western Protestant missionary activity in Korea and the emergence of Korean Christian NRMs. The analysis demonstrates how NRMs arose not as anomalies, but as products of the tensions between Western missionaries and indigenous Christian followers. This decolonial approach decenters and reimagines established narratives surrounding the origins of Korean Christian NRMs, reframing and positing the development of NRMs as a byproduct of Korea's complex colonial-religious encounter.

Dr. **Shahla Mehrgani**, Academic Tutor, University of Sheffield, UK

Beyond Religion: The Inclusive Way of Life of the Baha'i Faith in Modern Society

Keywords: Baha'i Faith, new religion, neo-religion, Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson

The Baha'i Faith is often misunderstood as simply another religion among the traditional spectrum of world religions. However, this research argues that the Baha'i Faith goes beyond conventional religious boundaries, representing a comprehensive way of life characterised by

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inclusivity and ongoing personal and communal development. Unlike traditional religions that set clear boundaries for membership and identity, the Baha'i Faith promotes an inclusive community where individuals from diverse ideological backgrounds—such as atheists, communists, or followers of other religions—can embrace the Baha'i lifestyle. This study explores the Baha'i Faith using Peter Berger's concepts of nomos and cosmos and Bryan Wilson's perspectives on New Religious Movements. The aim is to clarify how the Baha'i Faith integrates being and doing, emphasising a love for humanity rooted in love for Bahauallah and a commitment to the unity of humankind without resorting to exclusivity measures.

Mr. **Spencer Pennington**, Doctoral Candidate, Department of History, University of California, Los Angeles, US

Uncovering 'Islamicate Christianity': Examining the Faith and Culture of North India's Urduophone Protestant Christians, c. 1854-1914

Keywords: Islamicate, Protestant, Christianity, Indo-Islam, Urdu

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British Raj was a vibrant religious marketplace filled with a variety of reformist and revivalist movements that emerged from within Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, as well as new religions altogether, such as Baha'i Faith. One religious community that has been overlooked, however, is that of "Islamicate Christianity." These were Urdu-speaking Protestant Christians of Indo-Islamic and Hindu backgrounds in cities like Lucknow, Allahabad, and Kanpur who, rather than dispensing with the culture and spiritual trappings of Indo-Islam and Hinduism, merely repurposed them for use in a South Asian Protestant Christian context. This presentation will show how and why the poetic and lyrical forms of the ghazal, the qawwali, and the bhajan, as well as variations on the spiritual ideas of Islamic tawhid and Hindu bhakti became (and, in some cases, remain) vital parts of the faith of North India's Urduophone Islamicate Christians.
