

## **Introduction to Comparative Theology in Australia and Asia - Francis X. Clooney S. J.**

### **Abstract**

Comparative theology is a form of theology, and as such, a matter of “faith seeking understanding.” Like other forms of Christian theology, it is indebted to scripture and tradition, attentive to texts, and also to images, ritual practice, piety, and experience. Like other forms of theological reflection, it also needs to be contextually nuanced, lest it be too much identified with the North American and Western European academic contexts. The growth of comparative theology in Asia and Australia over the last decade is one of the most exciting developments in the field. These essays, the majority of which were given at an international conference at the Australian Catholic University in July 2019, signal the ways in which comparative theology benefits from its clarification and adaptation in Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea.

### **Keywords**

comparative theology – contextualization – inculturation – Asian theology – Australian theology

## **Comparative Theology in the Contemporary Australian Context: Oral and Textual Cultures - Anita C. Ray**

### **Abstract**

This essay examines the practice of comparative theology within the culturally and religiously plural landscape of contemporary Australia. Tracing the early stages of the discipline in Australia to the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University (acu) in 2012, the paper tracks its subsequent progress in the vibrant Asia-Pacific region. For the sake of clarity, I investigate a specific example of comparative theology, testing the feasibility of an engagement between Anglo-Celtic Christians and Indigenous Australian peoples. Seeking greater theological depth, I isolate a precise theme—the creation of the universe—and position the Indigenous viewpoint within the oral ‘Dreaming’ myths of the central Australian desert. The Christian perspective derives from written Biblical sources.

### **Keywords**

Asia-Pacific – indigenous Australian peoples – orality and textuality – ‘Dreaming’ – immanence – ecology

## **Theorising a Decolonising Asian Hermeneutic for Comparative Theology: Some Perspectives from Global and Singaporean Eyes - Paul Hedges**

### **Abstract**

This paper advances some ways in which Asian perspectives challenge the regnant discourse of comparative theology. It sets out some key aspects of the postcolonial critique of comparative theology, and shows how conceptions of “religion” in the discipline are often based in problematic Western paradigms. However, it also challenges any reified distinction of “Orient” and “Occident”. It is argued that if Asian comparative theology is to fulfil its potential it must not operate within existing dominant Western frames. The author suggests that a hermeneutical basis for comparative theology may be rethought through Asian lenses, and draws on the philosophy of Nāgārjuna to provide an example of this.

### **Keywords**

postcolonial Critique – conceptions of “religion” – decolonial scholarship – Asian Hermeneutic – Nāgārjuna

## **Cognitive Metaphor Theory Integrated into Comparative Theology: Possibilities and Challenges in the Multireligious Context of India - Yesudasan Remias**

### **Abstract**

The emergence of the new comparative theology in the west has greatly benefitted from Indian Vedic texts and related ones. Despite their extensive use for western theological reflection, comparative theology, however, has not come to the limelight in India, since most of the western initiatives have been perceived to be camouflaged missionary efforts. This paper proposes the cognitive metaphor theory as a fitting supplement to comparative theology. I argue that combining both has much to offer to study, learn, and relate religions in the multi-religiously coexisting context of India. I explore its possibilities and challenges and address how new comparative theology stays distinct from its nineteenth-century efforts in terms of bridging religious traditions by learning from them. This paper draws much from my own experiences, insights, and studies as a native of Indian culture, brought up in Christian tradition. My studies and researches are focused on comparative theology developed through the lens of cognitive metaphor theory.

### **Keywords**

cognitive metaphor theory – comparative theology – interreligious learning – mapping traditions – Indian context – Hinduism – Francis X. Clooney

### **The Early Buddho-Daoist Encounter as Interreligious Learning in the Chinese Context: A Case in Comparative Theology - *Fu Yu***

#### **Abstract**

This paper contends that the methodological tool of comparative theology, arising from and developing in Euro American academia, resonates strongly with the historical interreligious learning praxis of China. Attention to comparative theology may indeed help us rethink the formation of a Chinese cultural identity vis-a-vis its religious others. A malleable way of doing comparative theology may offer nothing less than the mutual transformation of the interreligious interlocutors in a way consonant with Chinese history. A historical review of the interaction between Chinese Buddhism and Daoism shows that the adoption of Daoist terminology and concepts facilitated the Buddhist entry into the local milieu, while medieval Chinese Buddhism became paradigmatic for the elaboration of Daoist doctrine. The Buddho-Daoist interaction coheres with the enterprise of comparative theology with respect to the nature of interaction between religious traditions, the appropriative yet distinctive religious self-identification, and the transformation of the self and the other.

#### **Keywords**

comparative theology – early Buddho-Daoist interaction – translation – interreligious learning

### **Being Theological in a Comparative Manner in Today's Indonesia - *Albertus Bagus Laksana***

#### **Abstract**

In today's Indonesia, public theological discourse is messy, sectarian, superficial, and highly apologetic. While the state philosophy of *Pancasila* offers an inclusive theological vision of citizenship and nationhood, its inclusiveness and dialogical character suffer from the exclusive use of the combination of the modern world-religion paradigm, European Christian theology, and Islamic parameters. This essay argues that the new comparative theology can serve as a dialogical theological reasoning that is particularly helpful to foster theologically constructive encounters among different religions, and thus able to address public concern, especially identity politics. This essay presents some concrete examples of comparative theological works in the Indonesian context, drawn from the author's experiments. These highlight the dialogical, confessional, spiritual, and constructive characters of this theological reasoning, and pay attention to the hybrid identity and local cultures that form the richness of the Indonesian reality.

#### **Keywords**

comparative theology – citizenship – identity – nationalism – Indonesia

### **Salvation through Saving Others: Toward a Tenrikyo-Muslim Comparative Theology for Japan Today - *Makoto Sawai***

#### **Abstract**

Every year various disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, and floods hit Japan. In the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, approximately 16,000 people lost their lives due to the tsunami and the consequent collapse of buildings. Voluntary groups and religious institutions came to affected areas from every part of Japan to help the recovery of those struck by disasters. Drawing on the idea of "path" that is so prominent in Asia, including in Japan, Tenrikyo and Islam teach their adherents the importance of voluntary activities such as *hinokishin* in Tenrikyo and *ṣadaqah* in Islam, as the sure path to salvation. Various motivations are found in the activities and reverential attitudes to God by the adherents in both religious traditions. In this paper, by paying attention to the relationship between religious doctrines and voluntary activities in Tenrikyo and Islam, I try to compare the characteristics of both from the viewpoint of "salvation," according to the practice of comparative theology.

#### **Keywords**

path – *hinokishin* – *ṣadaqah* – voluntary activities – the Great East Japan Earthquake – salvation

### **Becoming a Christian and Practicing Comparative Theology for a Korean Theologian -**

*Yongho Francis Lee*

#### **Abstract**

Koreans live in a religiously pluralistic and tolerant society, and the idea of an exclusive membership of one religion is still foreign to many. In the first part of this paper, I will explore the development of the concept of "religion" and "religious belonging" or "religious identity" in the West, and its imposition on Asian people. Then I will reflect on the establishment of my own religious identity, that is, becoming a

Christian in a religiously pluralistic society. In the second part, I will discuss further how my studying comparative theology as an Asian convert to Christianity is distinguished from the work of western Christian comparative theologians.

**Keywords**

religious identity – Korean Christianity – Buddhism