

## **The Secularisation Thesis Recast: Christianity in Modern China and South Korea - Jemima A.H. Baar**

### **Abstract**

Steve Bruce's and Karel Dobbelaere's secularisation theses – that industrialisation, urbanisation, societalisation, and rationalisation erode religion on macro-, meso and micro-levels – can be challenged by reference to the growth and vitality of Christianity in China and South Korea. Christianity propelled economic growth and political change in South Korea at the end of the twentieth century, and has recognised potential in China. Religious institutions play critical roles in contemporary South Korean and Chinese communities. Although in an economically dynamic age permeated by scientific thinking, Christianity thrives in the private sphere in China. The plateauing of the growth rate of South Korean Christianity in recent decades coincides with widespread stability and prosperity in the country, which may have reduced the psychological and practical needs for religion. Thus, the Secularisation Thesis ought to be recast: social stability and prosperity better explain religious decline than industrialisation, urbanisation, societalisation, and rationalisation.

### **Keywords**

Secularisation Thesis – Christianity – China – South Korea

## **Ethnic Diversity and the Nation-state in the 21st Century: Lessons from Malaysia and Myanmar - Francis Kok Wah Loh**

### **Abstract**

The cause of conflict in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies is not diversity in and of itself. Instead, it is one's attitude towards diversity. Do we *share political power* and *economic development* with the regions and minority communities? Do we *respect and recognise the cultural identities of minorities*? This requires that the nation-state

building process be imagined in more inclusive civic territorial lines rather than exclusive ethnic-genealogical lines. With the above as a backdrop, the article explores the status of the Christian minority in Malay-Islamic majority Malaysia and the plight of the Rohingyas in Bamar-Buddhist majority Myanmar.

### **Keywords**

Ethno-religious conflict in Southeast Asia – inclusive vs exclusive nations – Christians in Malaysia – Rohingyas in Myanmar – inter-ethnic inter-faith dialogue

## **'Onesimus to Philemon': Runaway Slaves and Religious Conversion in Colonial 'Kerala', India, 1816-1855 - Vinil Baby Paul**

### **Abstract**

Several theories emerged, based on the Christian conversion of lower caste communities in colonial India. The social and economic aspects predominate the study of religious conversion among the lower castes in Kerala. Most of these studies only explored the lower caste conversion after the legal abolition of slavery in Kerala (1855). The existing literature followed the mass movement phenomena. These studies ignore the slave lifeworld and conversion history before the abolition period, and they argued, through religious conversion, the former slave castes began breaking social and caste hierarchy with the help of Protestant Christianity. The dominant Dalit Christian historiography does not open the complexity of slave Christian past. Against this background, this paper explores the history of slave caste conversion before the abolition period. From the colonial period, the missionary writings bear out that the slaves were hostile to and suspicious of new religions. They accepted Christianity only cautiously. It was a conscious choice, even as many Dalits refused Christian teachings.

### **Keywords**

slavery – caste – runaway – Pulaya – Protestant Christians – missionary – faith

## **A Rational Choice? Explaining the Growth of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Philippines - Katja Richters**

### **Abstract**

This paper shines a light on the three Eastern Orthodox churches which are currently operating in the Philippines and asks why it is the Moscow Patriarchate rather than the Ecumenical or Antiochian Patriarchates which is displaying the most significant growth. Using rational choice theory, the paper argues that the Moscow Patriarchate is best placed to capitalise on the opening created by the lack of dynamism in the country's religious marketplace. This is so because it insists on the strict observance of Orthodox traditions and

therefore operates in the strict market niche which is underserved by the country's majority Catholic church. The paper, however, also finds that it is not only the Moscow Patriarchate's strictness, but also the financial resources provided by Russian businessmen, which are fuelling its growth.

### **Keywords**

Eastern Orthodoxy – missions – church growth – Philippines – rational choice theory

## **When Ghost (*Gwisin*) Becomes Demon: Mistranslation of Demon/Unclean Spirit to *Gwisin* in Mark - Sunhee Jun**

### **Abstract**

Most Korean Protestant Christians consider the traditional concept *gwisin* (ghost in English) as absolutely evil. This abhorrent attitude toward *gwisin*, I argue, has been influenced by the misuse of *gwisin* in Korean Protestant Bibles to identify demon/unclean spirit. Focusing on the Gospel of Mark, this paper will show *gwisin* cannot be conceptually equated with demon/unclean spirit, which are always evil in Mark. To substantiate the point, first, I will examine translation history of the Korean Protestant Bibles in terms of demon/unclean spirit in Mark to show that *gwisin* has been demonized in Korean Protestants' minds for a long time. Secondly, I will explore the concept *gwisin* in Korean culture and demon/unclean spirit in Mark. By comparing the two, I argue that the use of *gwisin* by translators, who were mostly missionaries, to identify demon/unclean spirit was a misrepresentation.

### **Keywords**

demon and unclean spirit – ghost – *gwisin* – the Gospel of Mark – The Translation History of Korean Bibles – the Watchers tradition

## **Being Othered, Embracing Others: Roots Migrants in “Multicultural” South Korea - Hanna Kang**

### **Abstract**

This essay spotlights the experiences of otherness and marginalization of ethnic roots migrants in today's South Korean society. It argues that their sense of liminality and rejection by both societies (diasporic and ethnic home), when examined through the concept of *mestizaje*, reflects their unique capacity to be bridge builders between the dominant majority and the excluded minority, including themselves. Also, using intercultural theology as a frame of theological reference to interpret the presence of roots migrants as both insiders and outsiders, the essay unmasks the overall fear of otherness and pride in homogeneity in Korean society that seldom problematizes the alienation of those labelled as the “others.” Finally, it discusses the importance of a genuine theological interpretation concerning the issue, so that it can construct spaces for an alternative understanding of identity and otherness that does not lead to exclusion but to embrace.

### **Keywords**

intercultural theology – *mestizaje* – otherness – roots migration – South Korea

## **Challenges of Duterteism for Philippine Christianity: Revisiting Populism and Religion - Jose Mario C. Francisco**

### **Abstract**

This paper concentrates on populism's functional relationship with religion during times of crisis and how religion is instrumentalized for populist causes. Critical analysis of Philippine populism under President Rodrigo Duterte highlights often-overlooked nuances regarding populism as both disruption and reinforcement of traditional politics and its inherent institutional and religious dimensions. Though Duterteism disrupts Manila-centric power, it reinforces traditional politics rooted in the Philippine political and cultural ethos. Moreover, because of populism's institutional and religious dimensions, Duterteism's challenges to Philippine Christianity involve both its social and evangelizing missions. As institutions, Christian churches are called to a social mission that helps dismantle traditional politics. Their response involves disentangling their institutions and communities from traditional political networks and providing all Christians with political education towards the good of all, especially those oppressed by traditional politics. Duterteism's implicit religious perspective challenges Christianity's evangelizing mission. Insufficiently discussed in many studies, this underlying Manichean perspective common to populists attracts many through an account of and a strategy against social suffering through the war between the good “we” versus the evil “others.” Christianity then must listen more attentively to the yearnings of the suffering people and accompany them more faithfully in the struggle for social transformation. These responses prepare Philippine Christianity to commemorate in 2021 its five-century presence.

**Keywords**

Philippine populism – Philippine Christianity – Rodrigo Duterte – politics and religion – church and state