

Jaulung Wismar Saragih's Contextual Theology

Chammah Judex Kaunda

Abstract: This study explores the theological significance of Jaulung Wismar Saragih was the first-generation Christian, ordained pastor and theologian in Simalungun ethnic group. He was also the first local person to translate the Bible into his local language in the Indonesian context. Saragih's theological thinking foregrounded Indonesian postcolonial contextual theology regarding the identity and role of the church for social transformation in the context of religious pluralism and in the struggle for gender justice, human freedom and dignity. This study is an appreciative inquiry from a postcolonial theo-historical and biographical reconstruction of Saragih's contextual theology and its public theological implications for contemporary Indonesia.

Adoption of Caste by Christian and Jewish Communities in India: An Act of Cultural Integration or Religious Estrangement?

James Ponniah

Abstract: This essay investigates how caste, the most problematic cultural category of India, renders Indian versions of two Abrahamic religions, namely, Judaism and Christianity as a site of ambivalence and conflict. It explores how caste has played out differently in the lives of two Abrahamic religious communities, i.e., the Christians and the Jews at two different locales, Kerala and Andhra. In Kerala, both Syrian Christians and Cochin Jews adopted caste as the given social order of the host country and practiced it to their advantage as it not only made it possible for them to get integrated into the existing Hindu cultural universe of the host nation but also conferred upon them a respectable social status, resulting in the acquisition of social/cultural capital. But in Andhra, both the Christian and Jewish Madigas embraced their respective religions to eschew caste and to gain self-respect. In Kerala, while caste became an effective route for a harmonious integration into the cultural matrix of the host territory, it not only disrupted intra-communal amity both among the cochin Jews and the Kerala Christians but also became a source of defiance and alienation from the core teachings of each of these religions, resulting in the loss of 'spiritual capital'. On the contrary, the rejection of caste on the part of the Madiga Jews and Madiga Christians perhaps brought them closer to the central message of fraternity and equality found both in Judaism and in Christianity whereby they fared better in 'spiritual and religious capitals' than their counter parts in Kerala.

Catholic and Tamil Divine Mothers: Mary and the Village Goddess

Patrizia Granziera

Abstract: The cult of the Virgin Mary in southern India and especially in Tamil Nadu, is very popular and she certainly incarnates the emblematic figure of contemporary Indian Catholicism. After the arrival of the Portuguese in India, the task of evangelization was in the hands of the missionary orders who worked under the Portuguese rule. In the seventeenth century the center of interest in Christian missions in India moved southwards to the Tamil country. It was the Jesuits who ruled and administered over the area for the next century or so. They contributed to the assimilation of the Virgin Mary to the Tamil villagers' pantheon trying to translate Catholic conception of the divine into Tamil and locating the Catholic faith at "home" in the Tamil world. This study will try to explain how missionaries succeeded in spreading the cult of a new Catholic female deity among devotees of the *grama-devatas*.

The Attitudes of Asian Anglicans towards Women Bishops and the Gender Beliefs that Influence Them: A Pilot Study in Singapore

Teoh, Sofie Jia Ying

Low, Poi Kee

Abstract: Regarding the ordination of women to higher spiritual leadership positions in the Anglican Church, existing studies have tended to focus on attitudes and perceptions in non-Asian countries and regions, thereby affecting the generalisability of their results to Asian countries such as Singapore. Working to close this gap, a small exploratory study, using semi-structured interviews were conducted in Singapore. Eight Anglican parishioners were interviewed and the transcripts were treated with thematic analysis). Overall, findings suggest a seeming disconnect between attitudes towards gender equality in the secular and faith-based workplaces, implying a social contextual influence on the transferability of an individual's gender-equal attitudes across secular and religious spheres. Some participants sought to manage this disconnect through the conditional support of female bishops, hinged upon them remaining subject to higher male leadership.

The Role of Entrepreneurs in the Development of Protestant Christianity in East Java in the 19th Century

Amos Sukamto

Abstract: Christianity in Indonesia is often stigmatized as a colonial religion, the religion of the Dutch, and the religion of infidels. This was due to the general view prevailing in Indonesia that Christianity in the process of spreading received support from the Dutch East Indies government. I argued that the Dutch political religious policies were not favorable for the development of Christianity in Java. The development of Christianity, especially in East Java, was not driven by Dutch missionaries, on the contrary, by

entrepreneurs, independent people, and then continued by Javanese who had become Christians.

Protestant Christianity and Devotional Literature: Trajectory of Medieval *Vacana* Literature in Colonial Karnataka

Vijayakumar M. Boratti

Abstract: The present article studies the first ever publication of *vacanas* of the twelfth century in colonial Karnataka in which a native Christian convert (catechist) of Basel mission writes a treatise on the religious and philosophical tradition of Liṅgāyats. The intention is to study how a native catechist consciously thought through colonial categories and vernacular idioms in interpreting *vacanas* and employing them as touchstone to adjudicate Liṅgāyatism. Totally antithetical to Christian views of Liṅgāyatism, the native Liṅgāyat scholars' idea of *vacana* literature and what it represented for them will be examined in the second part. The article straddles on two registers: a) construction of Liṅgāyat religious/textual traditions with Christian categories and ethical framework by the catechist in a Christian tract *Liṅgāyata Mata Vicāra* (1874) and b) reception, subversion and re-constitution of such construction by the elite Liṅgāyat scholars in post-1874 scenario.