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Richard Fox Young - Was the Sanskrit Bible the 'English Bible-in-Disguise'?

Postcolonialism Meets Philology in William Carey's *Dharmapustaka* (1808)

Abstract

The essay explores Bible translation in early nineteenth-century India as a comprehensive and under-appreciated site for intercultural and interreligious interactions involving Christians and Hindus in a complex context of asymmetrical colonial relations. Postcolonial theorists are interrogated for theory-driven approaches that lopsidedly rely on English-language resources without taking into account the actual Indian-language artefacts of translation projects that came into being. Using a philological approach, the essay treats the *Dharmapustaka*, the Sanskrit Bible translated at the Serampore Baptist Mission, as a case study in 'transculturation'—a multidimensional process catalyzed by an English missionary, William Carey, on the edges between India and Europe.

David Emmanuel Singh – 'The Malicious Arya'? Pundit Lekhramji's Portrayal of Christianity in the 19th Century South Asia

Abstract

This paper focusses on the first two volumes of Pundit Lekhramji's collected works, *kulliyat*. Its main argument is that contrary to the position of Ahmadis and secondary scholarship, Lekhram did not deserve to be labelled 'malicious' or a 'radical' principally responsible for communalism. Jones is a fine scholar, but he may have allowed the perspective particularly rife among Ahmadis to colour his view of Lekhram. Besides, his view of Lekhram was only partial in that it relied largely on the material which forms part of volume 3 of *kulliyat*. What drove Lekhram was a need he saw for 'pastoral' support for the supposed 'insiders' - the protection of a reimagined Hindu community (which included local converts to Christianity) from what he saw as the sustained campaigns of proselytization and polemical tracts. The intent was not necessarily to dialogue with Christian missionaries or *padres* but to persuade Indian converts to Christianity to 'return home'. Lekhram's attempts at 'exposing' Christianity however remained equally superficial as the *padres*'. However, in so doing he was not blind to issues in his own scriptures/traditions, something that requires another paper to elaborate.

Albertus Bagus Laksana – The Pain of Being Hybrid: Catholic Writers and Political Islam in Postcolonial Indonesia

Abstract

Informed by postcolonial theories and approaches, and based on the works of three Indonesian Catholic writers, this essay looks at the ways in which these writers address the question of identity. They propose the notion of hybrid identity where the identity of the nation is built upon different layers of racial, ethnic, and religious belongings, and loyalties to local tradition and aspirations for modernity. While this notion of identity is inspired by the

framework of “catholicity”, it is also “postcolonial” for a number of reasons. First, its formation betrays traces of colonial conditions and negotiations of power. Second, it reflects the subject position of these writers as Indonesian natives who embraced a religion that has complex ties to European colonialism and problematic relations with Islam. Third, it criticizes the post-colonial state and society, which perpetuates many of the ills of the colonial political system, including racism and the abuse of power. Their discourse also reveals the pain of being hybrid, mainly in their inability to appropriately tackle the question of political Islam. The recent political upheaval reveals the need for more creative engagement with political Islam in order for this hybrid identity to work.

Jose Mario C. Francisco – **Hybridity in Asian Christian Discourse: Critical Issues from Asian Christian Experience**

Abstract

This study explores the crossing over of the concept of hybridity from cultural studies to theological discourse with particular reference to Asian Christianity. The first section focuses on the emergence and currency of the concept in relation to different historical waves of globalization, and the second, on the concept of hybridity itself and its conceptual characteristics. The third discusses how hybridity sheds light on Asian Christianity’s encounter with cultures and religious traditions. It further uncovers critical issues involving the inherent struggle for and within inculturation and the nature of Christianity’s borders. Asian Christian theological discourse on these issues underscores nuances in religious hybridity that support transformative praxis and which may be overlooked in other contexts.

Katherine C. Zubko – **Christian Themes and the Role of the *Nāyikā* in *Bharatanāṭyam***

Abstract

Within the Indian classical dance style of *bharatanāṭyam*, performers traditionally embody the stories of Hindu gods and goddesses. This paper discusses selected examples of how Christian themes have been incorporated into the art form by both Hindu and non-Hindu participants, including the adaptation of the aesthetics of the *nāyikā*, a female heroine yearning for her absent beloved. In an extended case study, I examine the presentation of one such unique *nāyikā*, a Christian Indian woman who contracts HIV from her husband, in particular demonstrating how various gesture sequences draw upon the recognizable, empathetic foundation of the suffering heroine to depict the realities of the illness of HIV. The despair and pain of the *nāyikā*, and the role of a *sakhī* as sympathetic doctor, invite audiences into a familiar aesthetic framework that also creates receptivity towards a significant social critique.

Verena Grüter – **The Art of Music in Asian Christianity**

Abstract

From the very beginning, music has played an important role in shaping the theological and spiritual identity of Christian churches in Asia. While the topic of music and spirituality has been addressed practically and in musical theory, the question of Christian identity through music has attracted seemingly very little attention in theological research. By way of example, this paper discusses six types of Christian music styles in Asia and analyses their connection with theological identities of the respective communities.

Rasika PIERIS – Widowhood And Religious Perception

Abstract

This article is based on the author's doctoral thesis, *Breaking the Barriers: A Reflection on Suffering in Buddhism and Christianity in the Perspectives of War-widows in Sri Lanka*. Using theoretical and empirical lines of investigation it attempts to discover the theological possibilities, challenges and relevance of the survival strategies of Buddhist and Christian war-widows by critically describing, analysing, interpreting and exploring an inter-relatedness in their situations, and relating these findings to existing systematic theological concepts. Since the research is also empirical, it includes fieldwork done with a selected group of Buddhist and Christian war-widows – Tamil Christian, Sinhala Christian and Sinhala Buddhist – in post-war Sri Lanka. These women are from different social, religious, political, cultural, economic and educational backgrounds in select provinces of Sri Lanka. The theological research is partly based on interviews, dialogues with unheard voices, and a critical analysis of the daily experiences of widows –'everydayness', which help to reflect both on the notion of suffering in Buddhist and Christian thinking that is different, and on their influence on the perception of widows and their suffering.

Peter W. Youngblood – The Problem of Global Interfaith Chaplaincy: The Case of Hong Kong

Abstract

In the U.S. and Europe, clinical spiritual care (hospital chaplaincy), is a non-sectarian ministry meant to provide support to all persons, regardless of faith. This model faces a challenge in religiously pluralistic settings like Hong Kong, where caregiving is provided by devout practitioners from conservative Christian traditions. Conflicts regarding ultimate Truth, salvation, and ethics—largely avoided by pastoral theology—are laid bare in such contexts. The theological approaches of academic fields like theology of religions and comparative/interreligious theology are useful for understanding the various perspectives involved, but do not resolve the tension between individual religious beliefs and the demands of a public interfaith ministry. The unique characteristics of Chinese spirituality and religion further complicate matters. Ultimately, what is needed is a theological paradigm of care that does not neglect the critical truth-claims of those religions involved, including the desire to evangelize.