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Editorial

All the articles in this edition of *South Asian Journal of Religion & Philosophy* spring from the desire to find fresh inspiration for a world that has been seriously affected by a pandemic, which is still threatening the global community. We are facing the seemingly impossible task of a return to the way of life that we once knew. The contributors to this edition draw on a variety of sources that can offer the reader new directions for thought, reflection and action.

Just as modern society experiences a process of continual decline and decay and yet discovers new ways of life and new structures, models and practices, so will we continue to understand our religious traditions in new ways and be engaged in the continual process of renewal, reform and rejuvenation. The articles in this edition draw on the vision and practice of several courageous personalities in history who found new spiritual treasures hidden within well-established religious traditions and were thereby able to find a way forward for humanity by adapting to ever-changing human exigencies. They found new ways of access to the inexhaustible source of wisdom and strength, which they articulated and hoped would benefit future generations.

After almost a complete year of restrictions, lockdowns and the loss of hundreds of thousands of precious lives caused by the current pandemic, human communities around the world are looking forward with hope to the arrival of effective vaccines that will permit greater freedom of movement even though this may not allow society to return fully to the way it was before. Besides their obvious need for physical relief, however, human beings also depend on values and attitudes in order to make a more adequate response to current circumstances. The articles in this edition suggest that the men and women of our time could benefit from the spiritual vision of personalities such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, Mohandas Gandhi and Karl Rahner. Although each of them belonged to a different religious and cultural background, yet each of these great personalities was able to develop a discourse, which had a social, cultural and political impact not only on their contemporaries but on subsequent generations as well. They encountered new opportunities and faced challenges that were perhaps even greater than the ones we are facing today.

Another common aspect of the articles in this edition is their focus on education in the broadest sense. The contributors argue that education is not a question of gaining information, which Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationist-philosopher, identified as 'banking knowledge' in order to acquire a respectable and lucrative source of income. Instead, true education aims at value formation, which Freire referred to as 'drawing out' the best in a person.

An education whose only aim is learn how to access scientific knowledge and technical know-how would stifle the human spirit and most possibly turn us into robots instead of creative human beings who can forge ahead collaboratively, using the skills and strategies necessary to meet the challenges of current world circumstances. Education that is unbalanced and sometimes even ideology-driven creates class divisions and leads to dissension in society, a social malady evident in many parts of the world. A holistic education, however, will provide the students of today with the spiritual, emotional and intellectual resources they need in all circumstances, including the present situation of crisis.

While individual human freedom is a value to be cherished, public order stands to gain from social behavior that shows awareness of rights and responsibilities. Communities that found the most effective means of coping with the current pandemic were those in which men and women obeyed social norms and regulations for the sake of the greater good of all. Individual freedom allows human beings to reach their full inner potential. But there is much evidence to suggest that the misuse of freedom creates the mayhem and the chaos that erupted on Capitol Hill in Washington DC just prior to the swearing-in ceremony of the 46th president of the United States. One of the articles in this edition discusses the nature and scope of true freedom.

Moreover, theological education can provide insight into the historical and cultural background of some of the customs, beliefs and practices of our religious traditions and even facilitate the discovery of new knowledge through cross-cultural communication. Deeper awareness of how religious traditions developed in human history, beginning from primordial times and leading up to modernity, can provide us with the tools we need to change patterns of customary behavior and find alternative ways of living that show greater respect for the equal dignity of both men and women. The insights and ideas expressed

by the contributors of this edition of our journal may encourage readers to make changes in their own life style and behavior.

The first article by Paul Hedges is a reflection on Jesus as a 'prophetic philosopher', who dared to speak truth to power. The author reflects on the event narrated in John's Gospel in which Jesus criticizes the Jewish religious leaders who were openly accusing a woman caught in adultery (John 7:53 - 8:11). In this critical encounter between Jesus and the authorities of his day, Hedges finds an example that is relevant for the context of the current pandemic. Instead of appealing to the intervention of a transcendent deity, Hedges finds that the focus should be on the way human beings relate with one another. The author writes that "Jesus the philosopher was certainly a critic of the powers that be, and in our story challenges us to rebel against prevailing social norms and hierarchies that may have a vested interest in pointing fingers at victims so we do not look at their own failings." The article presents readers with an invitation to examine their own behaviour instead of blaming others. The article is perhaps inviting readers to shun a 'culture of blame' and adopt a 'culture of solidarity' with victims of the current pandemic who are certainly not limited to one particular cultural, economic or religious tradition.

In the second article, Charles Ramsey credits Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the great pioneer of education in South Asia, with the attempt to integrate different approaches to education based on his discovery of the positive attitude to new knowledge that he found in both Muslim and Christian (Western) history. According to Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the foundations of the 'progressive' educational approach were as Eastern as they were Western and as Muslim as they were Christian and so the choice between Islamic and Western learning presents a false dichotomy.

Recognizing that the approach of modern Western education was not alien nor in opposition to the deep streams of Islamic tradition, Sayyid Ahmad Khan found a unique way of integrating these two streams in his famous university at Aligarh, India. Although these two diverse approaches to education are very evident in education institutions across South Asia today, namely, the stress on science and technology and, in contrast, the focus on the study of the humanities, there are signs that some universities and higher education institutes are searching for a

more integral approach in their curricula. The author concludes on a positive note with the hope that "perhaps the day is coming when bastions of traditional education in South Asia like Minhaj University Lahore, Jamia Binoria or even the *Dār'l 'ulūm* in Deoband, will be known for religious studies as well as for their successful graduates in diverse fields of the arts and sciences."

Emmanuel Asi is our third contributor. The author makes a persuasive argument for the 'empowerment of women' through theological education. This article, written from a Christian perspective, describes the way men have played and still play dominant roles in society in general and in the Christian church in particular. He argues that traditional, male-dominated cultures are still very powerful and can be oppressive, even in many ecclesiastical institutions that claim to respect the equality of men and women. The author focuses on theological education because, in his view, "Theological education produces insight into the historical contexts in which certain doctrines arose and were formulated. Such insight will reveal that these doctrines were responding to the concerns of a specific society. Hence, theological education can provide the tools to understand, expand and liberate oneself from certain forms of misunderstanding about one's own religious tradition." Through theological education, Asi argues that women will gain a renewed consciousness and be self-empowered to liberate themselves from their culturally defined and unfairly restricted status in society. He is of the view that the emancipation of women will also liberate men from the clutches of historical, religious and social forms of patriarchy. The unequal treatment of more than half of humanity demands that men join women in this process of mutual emancipation in order to create a more just society. There is certainly a need to make room for the voice of women in constructing a post-pandemic world community.

In the fourth article, Syed Sajjad Haidar analyzes the thought of Muhammad Iqbal who recognized the need every believer has to find a reconciliation between faith and reason. Iqbal felt that philosophy and religion belonged together and should complement each other in the effort to find solutions for the problems of the world. Hence, this article, like the earlier article by Hedges, examines the role of philosophy. Iqbal believed that, while reason was necessary, it had limited use in the search for knowledge. In his view, it was important to develop a capacity for intuition in order to reach a deeper level of knowledge.

Intuition for Iqbal was a sign of an enlightened heart ontologically attuned to the promptings of the infinite. Knowledge that did not lead to enlightenment was useless and futile. The human incapacity to deal with the pandemic has also exposed the limitations of reason and technology. The present circumstances of the world provide us with ample evidence of the need for a new level of awareness and sensitivity, a unique characteristic of human beings. This article is a useful reminder of the limitations of human reason and of the need to develop alternative approaches to improve human thinking and action by giving a greater role to intuition.

In the final article, Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi investigates the thought and writings of two contemporaries of the 20th century (Karl Rahner and Mohandas Gandhi), both men of erudition but from different spiritual traditions, one Catholic and the other Vaishnavite, who present fresh thinking on the notion and the practice of freedom. The author finds that these two visionary thinkers have provided an opportunity for an on-going discourse between the East and the West and have attempted to rejuvenate the 'spiritual quest' of both worlds as if reintroducing them to the contemporary world.

For Rahner and Gandhi, freedom is neither the ability to choose arbitrarily nor a series of independent actions but consists of a process of 'reorienting oneself to do good'. Freedom is an action definitively geared to the fundamental self-orientation of a person towards the infinite source of goodness and of love and reaches a certain completion by 'doing good here and now'. The author concludes his comparative study by describing four new religio-social movements that are promoting the freedom 'to do good'. He describes Fetuallah Gülen of Turkey as a transnational movement builder but A. T. Ariyaratne and Oscar Abyeratne of Sri Lanka and Tahir ul-Qadri of Minhaj ul-Qur'an International as originally pan-national founders of movements, which later spread throughout the world by means of each of their diasporas. Hettiarachchi poses a challenge for younger researchers and scholars to go with and beyond their own tradition and reflect on the social responsibility of 'doing good'.

In short, the articles of this third edition of our journal have focused on certain personalities who exhibited the human capacity to respond to any kind of challenge. Some of them are still with us and continue to generate positive

energy for those who meet them. They have introduced future generations to new learnings that cannot simply be disregarded. We must remain energetic and optimistic in our struggle to control the virus, choosing to live safe so that others may be safe – a service in the name of humanity.

Vision

Respectful and critical discussion of issues related to religion and philosophy will lead to a deeper appreciation and understanding of different religions in the world and promote peace among people.

Mission

To provide a forum for discussion of critical issues related to religion and philosophy with a special focus on South Asia.

Aims and Objectives

To encourage a profound and more regular exchange of ideas on the subject of religion and philosophy, particularly on South Asia and to publish original articles, selected through a peer review process.

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Emmanuel Asi is a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Lahore (Pakistan). He is a member of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and the founder of the Theological Institute for Laity and the chairperson of the People's Forum for Contextual Theologies in Pakistan. He is also the executive secretary of the Catholic Bible Commission Pakistan (CBCP).

Syed Sajjad Haidar lives in Pakistan and is a lecturer and a research fellow at the Islamic Studies Department of Minhaj University Lahore. His field of interest is Islamic spirituality and philosophy. He has a special interest in the thought of Syed Ali Hamdani and Allama Iqbal. The title of his M.Phil thesis was: "The scope of reason in the interpretation of Islamic text (with a special focus on Iqbal's thought)". He is also a blogger and a young writer.

Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi teaches History of Religious Thought and World Religions at the School of Religion and Philosophy, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan. He is also a visiting fellow at the Universities of Colombo, Kelaniya and the Theological College of Lanka

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HOW TO THINK THEOLOGICALLY AFTER COVID19:
Some Reflections and Pointers on Jesus as Philosopher

Paul Hedges

ABSTRACT

A number of religious and philosophical figures and traditions have arguably shown an inadequate response to the Coronavirus (Covid19) pandemic. Thinking through some problems and challenges, a basis in a broadly modernist, progressive, or liberal theology is outlined which it is argued may justify understanding Jesus as a philosopher. This is placed in the context of a Christian response that seeks to be in dialogue with a wider world, including those with no religious or different religious identities. The paper also explicitly speaks about a particular global communal theological discussion that prompted a number of its insights and responses.

Keywords: Atheism, Community, Coronavirus, Jesus, Illness, Interreligious, Modernist Theology, Philosophy, Post-colonialism, Religious Identity

INTRODUCTION

Theology, if it happens at all, does not happen in isolation. It happens in community. This may or may not be a church community. It may or may not be linked to intentional prayer.[1] It may or may not draw from what may be seen as traditional theological or ecclesial resources. I say this for two reasons. Firstly, the origins of this paper are communal, starting with a thought paper sent out by the Sri Lankan theologian Shanthikumar

1. Sweetman, Will, 'Sisyphus and I: Or, Theologians I Have Known in Three Decades as Religionswissenschaftler,' *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 32 (2020) 2-3, p.145-65.

Hettiarachchi[2] to a group of about seventy theologians and thinkers both in Asia and around the world. That, in these times of lockdown and social distancing, this community was entirely a virtual one is apt. My thoughts herein are inspired not just by my own inner voice, but responses and reactions from a range of thinkers to that initial impetus. Indeed, my first response was perhaps limited to asking how we speak, and it is the contributions of others who inspired my thoughts for what has become this paper. I draw both from their comments and some sources linked from them in what follows. As such, this online community is a key impetus in what I have written here. Secondly, against any notion of theology as relating to some higher transcendent power or deity, as 'god-talk', I would contend that what we actually see is simply the viewpoints of a particular social group within its own contextual setting (whether that be Roman Catholic theologians, Advaita Vedantin pandits, Pure Land Mahayana monks, or Calvinist pastors – recognizing that 'god-talk' may not apply to all of these). By social groups, I have in mind Rogers Brubaker's[3] notion of 'groups' as fluid, shifting, and contingent social endeavours for the borders of them are always negotiated in communities. The relevance of this latter point will be explicated in what follows.

In this paper, I will begin by setting out some thoughts about how we may begin thinking about responses to Covid19 and what place theology may have in this. This first section will be somewhat impressionistic as there are many potential lines that could be addressed in relation to this issue. It has an element of subjectivity in terms of what I will address but helps build a foundation for the following two sections. Next, I will

2. Hettiarachchi, Shanthikumar, 'Some Socio-political and theological areas to think through during the self- imposed Quarantine period.' Unpublished paper (20 March 2020). Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340077266_Some_Sociopolitical_and_theological_areas_to_think_through_during_the_self-_imposed_Quarantine_period.

3. Brubaker, Rogers, 'Ethnicity without Groups,' *Archives Européenes de Sociologie*, 43 (2002) 2, p. 171-73.

address some more specifically theological questions, from a largely modernist perspective, but also taking account of the need to address those who do not align with religion and thinking beyond specifically Christian confines. Finally, developing from what has been said, I will ask how thinking about Jesus as someone who developed a 'compassionate spiritual philosophy' may be useful; for this felicitous phrase and inspiring me to think about Jesus as a philosopher, I express my debt to Noel Fernando, one of those in the community of discussion mentioned above.

THOUGHTS THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL

Hettiarachchi's paper raised in my mind two initial questions: how to respond, and who to respond to? I address them together in what follows, though more implicitly than explicitly. It would be easy to make some glib or platitudinous theological responses: trust in a protecting biblical God that all shall be well, prayer and intercession as solutions to our predicament, or the community of the Church as providing a place of hope. However, for reasons to be outlined, none of these responses seemed to me to be adequate. Moreover, speaking from my own context of privilege - living as an academic in Singapore (with a British background), although being close to the outbreak and an early centre of the virus' spread - I struggled to think about how to respond knowing that many of those most affected were the poorest and most vulnerable.[4]

Moreover, having seen the abject failure of various religions (or, rather, particular teachers or traditions) in terms of denial, claiming that 'my deity' would protect me and my group in mass rallies or gatherings, or in suggesting that prayer and intercession would take the place of science in delivering us from this disease, it was my thought that a religious response, the words of theology, could hardly be credible. Of course, a

4. World Service, 'Can Africa Cope with Coronavirus?' *BBC World Service* 'The Inquiry' (9 April 2020). Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszl36.

modernist theological response is very different to such 'fundamentalist' (taking on board the problematics of that term) religious responses, but in a public theology speaking to the world at this time, an overtly theological response seems to me suspect. Certainly, there has not been much evidence of good leadership coming from the churches and other religious institutions at this time.

It is important to note the way that the virus has challenged, or raised to the surface, some of our attitudes and societal expectations. A very perceptive piece by Arundhati Roy[5] has challenged some of our perceptions of privilege and global inequality, for she has noted her disbelief at watching the USA's lack of preparedness and equipment as doctors in New York in particular make stark choices as to who lives and who dies. The 'First World' has certainly shown its crumbling corners and dark underside, and it should come as no surprise that, again in the U.S.A., African Americans are dying in the highest proportions. Meanwhile, racism and xenophobia have raised their ugly heads in references to the 'Chinese virus' being repeated by certain politicians and media outlets. But such virulence against China has not simply been the lot of populist politicians, with respected theorists and philosophers weighing in, such as Alain Badiou.[6] Europe, and the West's, sense of superiority to, and security against, the rest of the world has been shown to be much misplaced.

Nevertheless, the continued arrogance and failure to realise this is exposed. Again, when we have seen theorising on this, for example even from such an august thinker as Giorgio Agamben, it has been argued that

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5. Roy, Arundhati, 'The pandemic is a portal.' *The Financial Times* (4 April 2020). Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca.
6. Xiang, Zairong, 'COVID19: on the epistemic condition.' *Open Democracy* (6 April 2020). Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/covid-19-epistemic-condition/?fbclid=IwAR0Z6SzEAYFG3xZnozJ2MVOY3d3nD9gxtoEXRBi921BWKZEF67Ypj99yN6k.

we have seen philosophy and theory failing us, for Agamben tells us that coronavirus concerns are 'invented' and he arguably measures the effects of the epidemic only against a 'normal' life of privilege.[7] If even such illustrious figures as Badiou and Agamben fail to grasp what stands before us, then what to say? The failings of more secular thinkers are no excuse for theologians, often prey to the same prejudices and lack of insight, to pontificate. Although the work of hospital chaplains could be noted as exemplifying moral courage in the midst of despair,[8] could we not say the same about the (secular, atheist, non-religious?) doctors and nurses, not to mention countless other volunteers providing medical aid and supplies? This is not to decry such courageous pastoral care, or the comfort it can bring at such times, but today we also have Humanist chaplains on the front line, and any priority for religion's place is insecure.

Against the face of the virus, I do not hold out hope for theology to be at the frontline when it comes to many of the issues. For instance, medical staff may face moral injury and trauma, for they are being asked to 'play god' and decide who lives and who dies in a time when their usual supplies are pushed beyond their limits;[9] though for many in the world ventilators and masks were never plentiful, or even available, in normal times. Again, theology will not make us immune to the psychological changes and challenges faced at this time.[10]

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7. Shani, Giorgio, 'Securitizing "Bare Life"? Human Security and Coronavirus,' *E-International Relations* (3 April 2020). Available at: https://www.e-ir.info/2020/04/03/securitizing-bare-life-human-security-and-coronavirus/

8. Weiss, Bari, 'The Men and Women Who Run Toward the Dying,' *The New York Times* (3 April 2020). Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/opinion/coronavirus-hospitals-chaplains.html.

9. BBC, 'Coronavirus: Why healthcare workers are at risk of moral injury,' *BBC News* (6 April 2020). Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52144859.

10. Robson, David, 'The fear of coronavirus is changing our psychology,' *BBC Future* (2 April 2020). Available at: https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200401-covid-19-how-fear-of-coronavirus-is-changing-our-psychology.

Reflection on the virus may well be prompted not so much by theological resources, but sociological and theoretical ones. As the Malay historian Farish A. Noor has noted, we can speak about: 'The virus scare as a mirror to ourselves and our society'.[11] Since Susan Sontag's[12] classic work on illness as metaphor, there has been a reflection on the way that disease is a cipher for our prejudices. While the terms are used variously, we will follow here a clear distinction used by the British theologian Alan Race[13] in the communal discussion that inspired this paper (his response paper is also a blog for Modern Church): disease is the physical affliction; illness is the way that this is socially constructed and imagined, in Sontag's terms it is the way it becomes a metaphor. This very much reflects a number of points raised above. The notion of the 'Chinese virus' clearly epitomises xenophobia, which postcolonial analysis shows is often tied into imagination of a primitive Asia read in colonial or neo-colonial terms.[14]

Amongst all of this, does theology still have a role? I must thank the British sociologist Paul Weller for sharing a reflection by the Sri Lankan cognitive psychologist and theologian Sanjee Perera to the communal discussion, in which, as a Good Friday meditation, she shares how she turned from theology in the face of suffering but later found her secular sociological and psychological frames likewise inadequate.[15] She speaks about the need for a 'wounded healer', offering us, I believe, a soteriology of a *soter* rather different from those of the classical tradition in its

11. Noor, Farish, A., 'The virus scare as a mirror to ourselves and our society,' *The Straits Times* (10 February 2020). Available at: https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/cartoons/the-virus-scare-as-a-mirror-to-ourselves-and-our-society.

12. Sontag, Susan, *Illness as Metaphor, and AIDS and its Metaphors*. New York, NY: Picador, 1990 (1977, 1988).

13. Race, Alan, 'God is to be found in the virus,' *Modern Church* (4 April 2020). Available at: https://modernchurch.org.uk/god-is-to-be-found-in-the-virus.

14. Noor, op. cit.

15. Perera, Sanjee, 'Walking in Gethsemane,' *SCM Press blog* 'Walking in Isolation' 12 (10 April 2020). Available at: https://scmpress.hymnsam.co.uk/blog/theologyinisolation-12-waking-in-gethsemane.

mainstream formulations.[16] Perera certainly does not ask us to simply trust in protection from on high as a simple answer. She tells us that 'only a broken body mangled by death can speak to our anguish,' while suggesting that what we find 'in Gethsemane is a wounded healer on his knees'.[17] But, even with this, I would suggest that if theology will have a role it will be a down-the-line reflection. There may be a comfort in one who is broken or suffers alongside us, an idea found not only in Christianity,[18] but I think that while this may offer some pastoral comfort we need to revise how we speak going forward. We have seen bad leadership, we have seen countries closing in and looking out for their own,[19] and toxic forms of religion in denial about the virus and claiming that faith alone or that '*my god*' will keep *me/us* safe. These have been about the 'small' group of the 'I' or 'mine', and not about the 'inter'-connections. We may hope, for some good may come from the virus in certain ways,[20] that it will promote a wider reflection on how we live, what we believe, and how we behave. I am not a utopian and do not believe that, in the longer term, we will treat our planet or our fellow humans better as a result of this virus. Humans are fickle - sinful, proud, and full of the three fires - and we will soon forget. But, some people, in

16. This plays upon the dual connotations of *soter* (soteriology) as healer and saviour, prioritising the former over the later against mainstream theological soteriological tradition which have tended to shift focus to a transcendent/supernatural need for 'release' from our bodies, fallen selves, and state of being-in-the-world by a divine intervention, rather than to see how we may be mended/healed in our bodies, 'fallen' selves, and state of being-in-the-world. On some issues around thinking of "materiality" in religion see (Hedges, Paul, *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021a, p. 209-31).

17. Perera, op. cit.

18. Hedges, Paul, 'The Body (*Sattva*) on the Cross: A Comparative Theological Investigation of the Theology of the Cross in the Light of Chinese Mahayana Suffering Bodhisattvas,' *Journal of Buddhist-Christian Studies* 36 (2016) p. 133-48.

19. CNA, "Accused of 'piracy', U.S. denies diverting masks bound for Germany,' *Channel News Asia* (6 April 2020). Available at: https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/accused-of--piracy---us-denies-diverting-masks-bound-for-germany-12614422.

20. Harding, Andrew, 'How coronavirus inspired a gangland truce in South Africa,' *BBC News* (8 April 2020). Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-52205158/how-coronavirus-inspired-a-gangland-truce-in-south-africa.

some places, will want to think better about this. Theology may be one discipline that can offer some small inspiration to those seeking it. Not through a theology of triumph, or of 'my (small) god' but a theology that is interreligious, inter-communal, inter-being, intersectional, and interconnected.

A THEOLOGICAL BASIS

I will make a claim that will display, perhaps, my own theological inclinations, that we cannot believe in an intercessory deity, one heavily critiqued through the modernist tradition.[21] This is certainly in line with the critique I have raised above about problematic manifestations of religion that have asserted their 'faith' against the scientific evidence and the reality of the virus. But, very explicitly, I do not want to simply have a theological answer that speaks into the ecclesial space nor just to Christians. Theology must be in dialogue with increasing numbers who no longer believe in any deity, or even if they have spiritual beliefs do not adhere to a particular religious tradition.[22] I have also, above, stressed the need for an 'inter-' perspective, and would particularly emphasise the need for an interreligious conversation in this respect.[23] Such a theological response should steer clear of specific claims of faith, and speak to a wider constituency, though it may challenge us beyond our everyday conceptions. Race reports that when 'John Robinson, preached a final sermon before his death from cancer in 1983 he declared that "God is to be found in the cancer as in everything else"'.[24] We should not seek, as

[21]. Badham, Paul, *The Contemporary Challenge of Modernist Theology*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998.
[22]. Hedges, Paul, *Towards Better Disagreement: Religion and Atheism in Dialogue*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, 2017.
[23]. I would argue that this must also be an intersectional response, aware of the need to look at many marginalised voices and the way that oppression and discrimination often meets at many points of these (Kim, Grace Ji-Sun and Susan Shaw, *Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018).
[24]. Race, op. cit.

Perera[25] suggests, a deity of Arcadia, but one of Gethsemane. That is to say, whatever the divine or deity may be is in what we may term the horizontal, the person-to-person and everydayness of our lives, not the vertical, the transcendent and miraculous realm of 'faith' and 'belief'. In the terminology of the American theologian Carter Heyward, we find the religious realm in 'godding' where 'God' is not a noun but a verb. Invoking Dorothee Soelle, Heyward tells us that 'the role we are called to play, again and again, [is] to *go with* one another in the radically mutual, interdependent world and creation that we share'.[26] Mary Daly has also used this language, and stresses in particular the move towards doing in such a perspective when she says: 'Why indeed must "God" be a noun? Why not a verb - the most active and dynamic of all'?[27] It is a theological stance which emphasises activity in the world, indeed one in which human action as much - if not more - than contemplation of the divine or expectations of divine intervention takes precedence; this may bring to mind also Martin Buber's classic reflections on dialogue and the I - Thou[28] where the human to human interaction takes place as though only you may act for you stand before another in their human need. Such a theological outlook sees religion not as a privileged space of contemplation, but as only one voice amongst others in our common being together. Arguments have recently been made that Christian public theologians should stand alongside those of others religions and those of no religion in seeking the common good.[29]

Such a theological stance can offer its own insights, drawing from the

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25. Perera, op. cit.
26. Heyward, Carter, *Saving Jesus from Those who are Right: Rethinking what it Means to be Christian*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999, p. 131.
27. Daly, Mary, *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973, p. 33.
28. Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, (trans.) Walter Kaufmann. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970 (1923).
29. Pirner, Manfred, Johannes Lahnemann, Werner Haussmann, and Susanne Schwarz, (eds.), *Public Theology, Religious Diversity, and Interreligious Learning*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

perspectives of multiple traditions without resorting simply into insular imagined confessional boundaries. Certainly, following Brubaker and with an interreligious lens, we see that our groups are shifting. While some may see themselves both bounded and united (for our out-group shapes our in-group) by an intra-religious confessional identity vs. other confessions (e.g. Methodist vs. Coptic, etc.), by a singular religious identity (e.g. as Christian vs. Buddhist, etc.), by a religious versus non-religious identity (e.g. believer vs atheist, etc.), or any other permutation, we need to be aware of the provisional nature of these borders.[30] From this perspective, to use a well-worn phrase, we should not seek to preach about a Christ of Faith, but to speak of the Jesus of History. Yet, it will not be enough to talk about what we may with probability know about a particular Rabbi named Yeshua who probably lived in the early decades CE before being executed by the Romans for treason.[31] For an interreligious theology that speaks to a spiritual ground shared in our godding, it may be useful to speak of Jesus as a philosopher.

Before moving to reflecting on Jesus as philosopher, it is perhaps worth reflecting further on this paper as a work of theology and what is not included herein. In many ways, I eschew a high Christology and much doctrinal baggage, which will immediately make this work less appealing to certain - and indeed significant - demographic who may be a potential audience. My theology herein is modernist and draws from social scientific and philosophical resources, which from a Tillichian perspective draws it within a theology of correlation, and so may also be said to make

[30]. Brubaker, op. cit., See Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions*. London: SCM Press, 2010; Hedges, 2021a, pp. 140-62. and Hedges, *Religious Hatred: Prejudice, Islamophobia, and Anti-Semitism in Global Context*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021b.

[31]. Vermes, Geza, *The Passion*. London: Penguin, 2005. For some wider reflections on the Jesus of history and the problems of how Jesus has traditionally been presented, see Hedges, Paul, 'White Jesus and Antisemitism: Toward an Antiracist and Decolonial Christology', *Current Dialogue* 72 (2020) 5.

it quite traditional.[32] With this said, I address myself to a particular audience, which is not to deny that other readings of Jesus also have their place. For instance, perhaps some interreligious interlocutors may wonder what Jesus is presented here if it differs from that of the "traditional" Christian standpoint.[33] Importantly, much of what I say below about Jesus as a philosopher could also be developed by thinking of Jesus as a prophet. Noting this, I consider it imperative to view Jesus within his Jewish context, and my aim here is not to remove him from that (which it has been argued happens very much with traditional high Christology and traditional doctrinal formulations, which may even be anti-Semitic.[34] Rather, we are thinking Jesus today in alignment with him as a human teacher which draws from his first century Jewish context.[35]

JESUS AS PHILOSOPHER

I believe we will find wisdom in thinking of Jesus as a teacher of a 'compassionate spiritual philosophy'.[36] What I present here is not

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32. Paul Tillich develops what he termed a theology of correlation to justify his usage of existential philosophy and contemporary thought in his own theological work (Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vol. combined set. Welwyn: James Nisbet, 1968, p. 67-68). However, as Tillich noted while he had named his method it was not new, for theologians had always drawn from the thought world and contemporary concepts of their times, whether this had been – to use various examples – Justin Martyr in writing in the dialogue style, Augustine of Hippo in adopting Neo-Platonism, or Thomas Aquinas in utilizing Ibn Rushd's adaptation of Aristotelianism (often termed Averroism, noting that it was more Ibn Rushd [often known as Averroes] than Aristotle's thought). As such, I could argue that by eschewing much "high theology" my work here may even be quite traditional by remaking itself within a contemporary context as theology has always done, and in ways attuned to the knowledge of the modern world.

33. I would note Catherine Cornille's "Conditions of Dialogue" as a case in point, where she suggests that to be an acceptable dialogue partner one should, she argues, be seen to be placed and committed within one's own tradition (Cornille, Catherine, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Cornille, Catherine. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 20–33). However, there are critiques of the Western and Catholic framing from which she works. (Hedges, 2021a, p. 337-40).

34. Hedges, 2020.

35. Hedges, 2021a, p. 104-11.

36. Fernando, Noel, 'Email correspondence' (10 April 2020).

intended as a historical representation of Jesus' teachings; for the record, I would see him as a Galilean rabbi of the countryside speaking into a situation of economic and colonial oppression, one in which the metropolitan elites were complicit, speaking of a prophetic liberation with apocalyptic expectations centred around temple restoration. Rather, here, my aim is a constructive theological engagement with his recorded teachings and the narratives inspired by his memory in ways that speak to our current situation. I am reading him for today with insights which may exceed or even go against those he expressed.[37] Or, I should say, those the redactors of his biographies expressed. It is, I would posit, no more an imaginary construction than traditional Christology that blended Jesus' memory with a Hellenised worldview.[38] While I will consider Jesus in his context, which is important, my aim is not necessarily to read in a strictly historical way.[39] To clarify: I am offering an argument about how we may read Jesus today rather than how he thought about himself. Furthermore, here, I am simply exploring some seemingly relevant motifs and examples rather than sketching anything like a full picture of Jesus as philosopher. In this context, I suggest, that to remove what may seem theological "baggage" in speaking of him may appeal to a wider audience beyond Christian borders (to make it an inter- discussion). Hence, rather

37. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, trans. William Glen-Doepl. 2nd ed. London: Sheed and Ward, 1979, p. 162, 170, 357.

38. Ehrman, Bart, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2014, p. 85-128.

39. While a literature exists linking Jesus with Stoic philosophy, this seems both an untenable hypothesis and is not where I wish to take this discussion (Phillips, Thomas, 'Was Jesus a Bad Stoic?' *SBL Forum*, 2004. Available at: http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=334.) My stance also differs from Don Cupitt's argument that Jesus was primarily an ethical philosopher. (Cupitt, Don, *Jesus and Philosophy*. London: SCM, 2009). He was surely in the Israelite prophetic tradition. Again, linking in another part of the communal learning, Leonard Swidler has suggested that Jesus may be likened to a peripatetic teacher (Swidler, Leonard, 'Email correspondence', 10 April 2020). Certainly, I would argue that in Jesus' own context "rabbi" or "prophet" are both better epithets than "philosopher" but I do not use these as I am reading him for a particular contemporary audience.

than speaking of him as a prophet, I use what may seem the more neutral term of philosopher.[40]

Jesus was certainly not an erudite theorist, but a philosopher of homespun wisdom and parables. This is exemplified in this saying: "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18: 3-4 RSV). Speaking to his disciples, Jesus wanted us to disavow concerns about apparent spiritual righteousness or standing. The greatest in the kin-dom of heaven (to borrow from Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz) may not be those we expect. This, I argue, is a key issue when we think in interreligious, and beyond religious, terms. It reflects a spirituality that is not specifically theistic and so may resonate widely and, arguably, offers psychological advice to avoid excess stress about that we cannot change (cf. Matt. 6: 27).

It is, of course, not to suggest quietude and the Parable of the Good Samaritan must sit alongside it (Luke 10:25-37). This also suggests that righteousness is not indicated by religious garb, standing, piety, identity, or theological correctness but in the concern for our neighbour, in acts of godding. It is the relational and horizontal side-by-sidedness of the everyday where we show our compassionate spirituality. Our response is in action rather than words. Indeed, our acts of compassion must be to those outside our community and to the needy (cf. Matt. 25: 31-40). When we see those stigmatised, in Jesus' case often lepers, we must overcome

40. I noted above (my thanks to one of my anonymous reviewers for highlighting this) that removing some of the theological Christian baggage may make Jesus less appealing to some interreligious audiences, who may want to speak to what is seen as traditional Christian thought. Indeed, speaking of Jesus as a prophet would certainly make a direct link to dialogue with Muslims as it reflects their understanding (see Hedges, Paul 'Hospitality, Power and the Theology of Religions: Prophethood in the Abrahamic Context', in *Interreligious Engagement and Theological Reflection: Ecumenical Explorations*, (eds.), Pratt, Douglas, Angela Berlis, and Andreas Krebs. Bern: Peter Lang, p. 155-74.). Again, it would link Jesus to his Jewish origins, but many Jews would be wary of seeing him as a prophet, though it does at least remove the more problematic language of 'messiah'. But there is no reason that notions of philosopher may not also be appreciated by both these groups as one way of envisaging Jesus, as well as potentially speaking beyond religious borders and to other groups.

the prejudice associated with illness. In the story about the alleged adulteress (John 7:53 - 8:11), Jesus responds with compassion that breaks down stigma and prejudice. Like a child, perhaps, it is an act of not judging. As the narrative is related to us:

> Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again' (John 8: 6-11).

I quote this at some length because it is intriguing and powerful. Powerful in showing the compassion and non-judgemental attitude; intriguing because who is this philosopher who bends down to write with his finger on the ground? But, also, is it a direct challenge to us about what we think is righteousness and justice? In this sense, almost without words, it is Socratic in breaking apart what we think we know and asking us to build our ideas again from the ground up. It also offers a rebuke to the powers that be and to those who have (claim) authority. It is also a compassionate philosophy. I have offered here only a few thoughts on how we may read Jesus as a philosopher, but ones which I believe both speak directly to our current situation with Covid19, and also help show how Jesus' compassionate spiritual philosophy may be envisaged. I should note that my aim is not primarily apologetic, to show Jesus as a relevant teacher of wisdom for our times, to persuade others to follow him, or to speak to Christianity's unique path. Rather, it is to show potential resources for a joint search for the common good and to bring to it afresh resources from a thinker that many have found inspirational.

This, I argue, is the kind of theology which may be useful in the aftermath of Covid19 and in our contemporary times. Though it certainly does not deny those resources which call upon the broken Jesus, which Perera and others have spoken of, in as far as these give agency to the marginalised and provide a liberative vision.[41] Let me expand, though, on what I see the Jesus as philosopher perspective adding.

We may see the passage cited above from John as prophetic philosophy. Who do we point the finger at? Who do we blame? Let us think about, for instance, the racism that has abounded during the Covid19 crisis, and how the Western world has stood on its high horse. In response, our philosopher asked 'who is without sin' (failings)? Certainly few, if any, come out of this scenario well. Does this mean that we do not attribute blame for the spread of Covid19? No! Jesus the philosopher was certainly a critic of the powers that be, and in our story challenges us to rebel against prevailing social norms and hierarchies that may have a vested interest in pointing fingers at victims so we do not look at their own failings. I will leave it to readers to think of what may be the contextually relevant examples in their own situations. But to reiterate, a key part of the passage from John is a direct rebuke to the powers that be, and so we may draw directly from Jesus as a prophetic figure speaking truth to power as we contemplate him as a philosopher for our times. Here we do not see philosophy simply as contemplation on abstract ideas, but a prophetic philosophy that is ready to challenge authority and which is based in a deep compassion for the oppressed, the poor, the destitute, and those to whom blame is all too often affixed as we (our societies, our leaders, ourselves) ignore our own complicity in systems of oppression and find scapegoats for 'our' failings. The healing (soteriology) of such a philosopher does not rely upon seeking divine and transcendent answers, but in our interactions in this world at both the personal and the structural level.

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[41]. Rajkumar, Peniel Jesudason Rufus (2017), 'Asian Ecumenical Contributions to Theologies of Justice and Peace,' *The Ecumenical Review* 69 (2017) 4, p. 575.

THOUGHTS ON SAYYID AHMAD KHAN AND THE DILEMMAS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY

Charles Ramsey

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to imagine higher education among Muslims in South Asia apart from an internal shift in the thinking of someone like Sayyid Ahmad Khan. The shift I am referring to is that from seeing Western Civilization in general, and British education in particular, as an asset rather than a liability. Succinctly stated, Sayyid Ahmad gradually came to see the ideas that energized Western progress in the early modern era as ones shared by Muslims. Pure Islam as taught by the Qurʾān and lived by the Prophet, he argued, was not opposed to Western civilization, but rather it provided its ultimate source and inspiration.[1] It is taken for granted that he understood there to be divinely revealed continuities shared among Jews, Christians, and Muslims - and persons of other monotheistic communities as well - as heirs of one primordial religion (*dīn*), but this is not what I am referring to here.[2] In Sayyid Ahmad Khan's estimation, the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, with its manifold technological and philosophical advances, supplied the seeds of the European enlightenment, and consequently the intellectual flourishing in the modern era. Muslim intellectuals, in this view, provided the stimulus essential for the European scientific revolution.[3] One consequence of this is that Sir Sayyid regarded the foundations of European learning as ultimately affirming and carrying forward ideas that were intrinsic to

1. Troll, Christian, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 99.
2. Ramsey, Charles, 'Religion, Science, and the Coherence of Prophetic and Natural Revelation: Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Religious Writings', in Yasmin Saikia and M. Raisur Rahman, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan,* New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 138-158.
3. Starr, S. Frederick, *Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, p. 156-193.

Islam. In this light - placing pragmatic and political reasons aside - it made perfect sense to establish a college and eventually a university that blended the ideas, resources, and teaching methods of the 'East and the West'. In essence, this is the model perpetuated today in the institutions accredited by the respective Higher Education Commissions. In many Muslim contexts, the values undergirding this model are being challenged, particularly in the fields of theology and philosophy.

In light of the challenges faced in higher education today, it is helpful to recall the decision to start the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (MAO). Though a detailed description is beyond our scope here, it is well known that Sayyid Ahmad Khan was greatly inspired by the institutions of learning he visited in England in 1870. Aligarh, in his words, was to be the 'Oxford of the East'. However, it is important to recall that this was not a spurious decision. By the time he returned from London and proceeded with the drive to establish a new center of learning for Muslims similar in nature to a British college, he already had been involved in the field of education for thirty years. This involvement was primarily in the study and translation of European texts into Urdu and other vernacular languages.[4]

He had worked closely with the School-Book Society, which was founded in 1817 and had supported the early implementation of European-style learning in institutions like the Calcutta Madrasa, established by Maulana Aminullah, where Sayyid Ahmad Khan's polymath grandfather, Khwaja Farid, taught mathematics. The Book Society translated literally thousands of pages from English into Urdu creating resources for schools across the land. Education in the 'new sciences' required learning materials, and these materials were primarily in English, and here is where we find the first major roadblock to his educational vision. The decision to start Aligarh was made in full awareness of the difficulties

4. Wilder, John W., *Selected Essays by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan,* Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2006, p. 27.

imposed by culture and politics, but also of language.[5] It was a bold decision, and one made with confident assurance of success. But this was not a standalone decision, but rather it was one of a host of other steps to engage and to participate with the present political and social circumstances.

It is important to recall that Sayyid Ahmad Khan-like each of us today-was a man of his place and time. He inhabited a period of significant social and political change. The war of 1857, and the subsequent changes in government educational policy, caused serious disruptions to the patronage system that supported existing centers of learning. These changes encompassed both the curriculum and the pedagogy that is the content and methods of learning.[6] Not least of these changes was the shift from Persian instruction to English, and eventually Urdu/Hindi and English bi-lingual education. It also included the introduction of a host of co-curricular activities intended to promote health and character formation as can be readily evidenced in schools today.[7] These were changes which Sayyid Ahmad Khan sought to implement at Aligarh, a college that could develop an approach to learning that integrated the best of the East and the West.

Though frequently cited as an educationist, Sayyid Ahmad Khan is also highly esteemed as a religious thinker.[8] He was both a product and a contributor to broad sweeping reforms that encompassed practically all

5. For greater detail on this issue, and on the foundation of the college and university see Gail Minault and David Lelyveld, 'The Campaign for a Muslim University 1898-1920', *Modern Asian Studies,* 8, 2 (1974) p. 145-189.
6. Stephen Evans, 'Macaulay's Minute Revisited: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth-century India', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 23, 4 (2002) p. 260-281.
7. Moosa, Ebrahim, *What is a Madrasa?* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015, p. 77 - 107. For a lively description on the importance of co-curricular activities see Hugh Tyndale-Biscoe, *The Missionary and the Maharajas: Cecil Tyndale-Biscoe and the Making of Modern Kashmir,* London: Bloomsbury, 2019.
8. Fuchs, Simon Wolfgang, 'Casting Aside the Clutches of Conjecture: The Striving for Religious Certainty at Aligarh' in *Islamic Law and Society* 27, 4 (2020) p. 386 - 410.

facets of Muslim faith and practice in the 19th century. Muslim thinkers in this context were highly conscious of the hiatus between the practice of Islam in the time of the Prophet and the contemporary social reality. Indeed, Sayyid Ahmad Khan devoted the majority of his writing, particularly in journals like *Tadhīb al-akhlāq*, to practical issues of morality and character. By going back to the sources and principles of the various Islamic religious sciences, he attempted to evolve a new Muslim theology on the pattern of the Muslim response to Greek philosophy and science during the Abbasid renaissance.[9]

Even a brief survey of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's writings reveals the depth of his religious commitments and his desire to reconcile faith and reason, and this was at the heart of his vision for education. The biography (*sira*) and practice (*sunnah*) of the Prophet of Islam were of particularly concern, and these featured prominently in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's writings as he navigated the complex challenges of his context and of being a faithful Muslim in the British Raj. It is important to remember that in the 1850s, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was closely involved with the *Tariqah-i Muhammadi, a* movement for the empowerment and revitalization of the Muslim community through the clarification and practical reification of belief. These were Sayyid Ahman Khan's so-called 'Wahhabi days', and many leaders of the *Ahl-i Hadith* school of thought trace their intellectual heritage to these revivalists. Shah Isma'il and Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareli, regarded as seminal thinkers in these changes, sought to galvanize a mass reform movement according to prescribed and tangible practices derived from their readings of *Hadīth*.[10] Sayyid Ahmad Khan approached the issues of education as one who was both grounded and well informed of this tradition and confident that his nation (*qaum*), his community of

[9]. Troll, op. cit., p. 3 - 27.

[10]. Lawrence, Bruce B. 'Mystical and Rational Elements in the early Religious Writings of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan' in *The Rose and the Rock: Mystical and Rational Elements in the Intellectual History of South Asian Islam*, Bruce B. Lawrence ed., Durham: Duke University Programs in Comparative Study on Islamic and Arabian South Asia, 1979.

faith, was well equipped to flourish regardless of the difficulties experienced in the present circumstances.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan was also keenly aware of the fault lines within his community. This can be seen even in his early writings composed in Agra and nearby Fathpur-Sikri where he studied under the guidance of Maulna Nur al-Hassan (d. 1868), a leading *Naqshbandi 'ālim* and Professor of Arabic at the (East India Company) Agra College. In 1839, Sayyid Ahmad Khan penned a short biographical piece on the Prophet (*maulūd*) titled *Jilā' al-qulūb bi dhikr al-maḥbūb* (*Polishing of the Hearts by the Remembering of the Beloved)*, which is indicative of discussions pertaining to the possibility of intercession and of the miraculous, and the perennial questions associated with the Sufi mystical tradition.[11] In this year he translated into Urdu portions of *Tuḥfah-i ithnā''asharī*, Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's (son of Shah Wali Allah) generous response to recriminations levied by Shi'i scholars against Islam's first four caliphs (*rāshidūn*). 'Abd al-'Aziz penned this against the backdrop of intra-communal tensions in Lucknow that had resulted in the expulsion of the Sunni courtiers.[12] These writings reflect a stirring search for clarity in the pressing issues before him, and which continue to be of great consequence today. In these respective writings, it was the challenge between the Sufi, or those who advocate the mystical and spiritual authority, and the more textually driven legists who emphasized *shariah.* It was also the growing divide between the Sunni and Shia. His search for a central commonality and a means to unify the fractured Muslim community continued and intensified in the decades that followed as his educational vision took form.

11. For a more thorough treatment of this work and for an exhaustive list of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's writings see Troll, op. cit., p. 3-27.
12. Hali, Altaf Hussein, *Hayat-i Javed*, New Delhi: National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, 2013, p. 31.

The pace of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's personal study rapidly escalated during his time in Delhi from 1846 to 1856. This phase of his life was characterized by a focused study of the Islamic sciences. One can point to this intellectual progression to underscore the continuity shared between Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his fellow co-religionists, lest the reader dismiss him as too 'progressive' or as a 'Western lackey' as some have done before. Though not formally groomed to become a religious cleric, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was tutored as an adult by some of Delhi's most prestigious luminaries in the scholarly tradition of Shah Wali Allah. He studied with the same teachers who guided, for example, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1905) and Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi (d. 1880) who were the founders of *Dār'l 'ulūm* Deoband, a school synonymous with tradition.[13] Maulana Navazish 'Ali at Jamia Masjid instructed him in principles of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). He studied the Qur'ān and Hadith under Fa'id al-Hasan Saharanpuri. He also studied with Shah Makhsusullah, a son of Shah Rafi' al-Din (son of Shah Wali Allah), and who was one of the first to render into Urdu the meaning of the Qur'ān.[14] Here again the perennial questions surfaced concerning the challenges of diversity facing the *Ummah*. Sayyid Ahmad published several short treatises from Delhi, the most important being *Kalimāt al-haqq* and *Rāh-i sunnah dar radd-i bid'a* and his translations of Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) *Kīmiyā'-i sa'ādat* and *Namiqah dar bayān-i mas'alah-i taṣauwur-i shaykh.* In the writings, he attempted to balance the competing visions for religious fidelity held by his Mujaddidī Sufi family with the reforms of the *Ṭarīqa-i muḥammadi*. *Kalimat al Haqq* (The True Discourse), composed in 1849,

13. Malik, Jamal, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 252-255. The Deoband founders studied under Shāh 'Abd al-Ghani, who was the son of Shāh Walī Allāh and father of Shāh Ismā'īl. See also Ali Usman Qasmi, *Questioning the Authority of the Past: The Ahl al-Qur'ān Movement in the Punjab,* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 44-47.

14. Hussain, Shaikh Nazir, *Arabi zaban ke adīb wa shāhir*, Mū'ārif: Azamgarh, 1990, p. 199-208. Fa'id al-Hassan joined Sayyid Ahmad Khan in Ghazipur to assist in the work translation, writing and compilation (*tāsanif aur ta'ālīf*). Fa'id subsequently proceeded with Sayyid Ahmad Khan to Aligarh, where he remained an integral contributor to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's work until his departure to Lahore in 1870.

provides a glimpse of his thought at this stage of the journey. Therein he argued that the Prophet embodied the ideal of all *shariah* and was thus the one true *pīr* or guide of the faithful. Whatever the differences, Sayyid Ahmad Khan believed there was a reasonable way for the community to find a way forward for good.

In this time there were heated exchanges pertaining to the veneration of holy men and adherence to different schools of law. Reflecting the mood of the time, much later in 1879 Sayyid Ahmad Khan recounted one particularly heated exchange with the chief mufti of Delhi, Muhammad Sadr al-Din Azurdah. The topic concerned whether it was licit to eat mangoes - does the faithful application of *shariah* allow or forbid the eating of mangoes? 'I swear by God in whose hands rests my life', stated Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'if a person does not eat a mango for the reason that the Prophet did not eat it, then the angels will kiss his feet at his (death) bed'.[15] As with many of his contemporaries, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was concerned with the quest to restore the practice of Islam to the original purity displayed in accounts of the life and sayings of the Prophet, and this was taken to the literal extreme so as to prove a principle. Sayyid Ahmad Khan later arrived at a very different approach, but at this stage of his life he was prepared to challenge even the Sadr al-Sudar on the requirements of *sunnah*.

As his distinctive interpretative approach crystalized in the 1860s, ample references can be seen to the writings of Muslim theologians (*kalām*) and philosophers (*falsafa*). Sayyid Ahmad Khan repeatedly employed their ideas and principles to undergird his own. Ibn Sina's writings like *Shifa*, for example, provided a representative example of what Sayyid Ahmad Khan was seeking to achieve. His was a quest for methods and principles.

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15. Ingram, Brannon, 'Sufis, Scholars and Scapegoats: Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and the Deobandi Critique of Sufism', *The Muslim World* 99, 2 (2009) p. 478-501. See also Fazzur Rahman Siddiqui, *Political Islam and the Arab Uprising: Islamist Politics in Changing Times,* New Delhi: Sage, 2017, p. 115-116.

He sought to establish through induction (*istiqrā*) and experimentation (*tajriba*) a reasonable and structured way for scholars to disagree.[16] Without pre-determined and mutually agreeable rules then there can be no cricket. If Muslims in India were to respond to British ideas and to the 'new sciences' then they need a commonly accepted mechanism to order their discussions. Some agree with one part, but not with another, and in the confusion there was in-fighting and division. Ibn Sina's writings, which had also been foundational to earlier thinkers like Shah Wali Allah, undergirded Sayyid Ahmad Khan's rationale and quest for a synergistic response to post-Enlightenment ideas.

This was an expanded view of the universe, and an openness to new ideas and ways of education. He was not afraid to disagree with the British (or with anyone else!) but they should disagree in a productive manner so as to move forward for the common good. Throughout the writings from this period, we see that Sayyid Ahmad Khan proceeded in the assumption that he was being faithful and consistent with the philosophical tradition of his Muslim intellectual ancestors. He did not appeal to European thinkers to establish key religious and social ideas, but rather to stalwart thinkers in his own tradition. This shared continuity with Muslim intellectual discourse was of vital importance in his day, and it remains vital in this present generation. He was reintroducing many in the community to their intellectual predecessors. Proceeding in that historic channel, Sayyid Ahmad Khan championed a cosmological argument derived through the lens of contingency, namely that all existence proceeds from the original expression of divine will. As philosopher William Lane Craig quote:

> Probably no chapter in the history of the cosmological argument is as significant-or as universally ignored-as that of the Arabic

[16]. Mayer, Toby, 'Ibn Sina's "Burhan Al-Siddiqin"', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, 1 (2001) p. 18–39; Jon McGinnis, 'Scientific Methodologies in Medieval Islam', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41, 3 (2003) p. 307–327.

> theologians and philosophers. Although we find in them the origin and development of two of the most important versions of the cosmological argument … the contribution of these Islamic thinkers is virtually ignored in western anthologies and books on the subject.[17]

Writing nearly a full century prior to Craig, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was making a similar observation, namely that the foundations of the 'progressive' educational approach were as Eastern as they were Western, and as Muslim as Christian. By exploring these earlier thinkers, and having spent substantial time in intellectual exchanges in India and in England, Sayyid Ahmad Khan had become fully convinced that the best of 'Western' civilization was not the sole domain of Christians or Jews, but rather was the legacy of Muslims as well. He became energized by this confluence, and it brought about a sea change in his thinking. It was at this time, that Sayyid Ahmad Khan founded the Scientific Society to promote the translation and propagation of works of Western science and scholarship. These steps in the 1860s, only a few years after the terrible war, set him on a course that would lead to England in 1869, and then upon his return to the establishment of MAO and what became the first modern university created to integrate the best of traditional Muslim and modern learning.

THE POWER OF A SEED

There is a gradual appreciation of the significance of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's view. The interconnections between Ottoman and Arab Muslim and European Christian learning, which Sayyid Ahmad Khan so confidently affirmed, is becoming more clearly understood and documented. Namely, Arabic and Muslim sources were seminal in the European Enlightenment. Majid Fakhri summarized,

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17. Craig, William Lane, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument,* Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1979, p. 3.

> Thirteenth-century Europe was triggered by the Latin translations of the writings of al-Farabi and al-Ghazali (called Algazel), Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Abu Ma'shar and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), with the consequent revival of Aristotelianism, the cornerstone of Latin scholasticism.[18]

Spain (*al-Andalus*) served as the bridge to learning. Breakthroughs of discovery in philosophy, science, and medicine were 'triggered' by the discoveries in Baghdad and other centers of Muslim learning in Muslim lands. In ways similar to the work of the Book Society and its translators in India who rendered the 'new sciences' into Urdu, 'rational' ideas crossed into Western Europe thanks to the work of Arab translators who passed the seed of knowledge. That was the case in the 13th century, but it did not end there. As Marshall Hodgson from the University of Chicago surmised, 'If a visitor from Mars descended to earth during the 15th through 17th centuries, they would assume that the world was heading towards Islam. This was not merely due to military strength, but rather because of the 'vitality of the culture'.[19] Sayyid Ahmad Khan held fast to this idea, and believed that in time his community (*qaum*) would again rise to prominence. At the heart of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's shift in thinking, from antipathy to sympathy towards Western education, was the assurance that this approach to learning was neither alien nor in opposition to the deep streams of his own Muslim tradition.

There is ample scholarly support for the view that energy and ideas derived from Muslim philosophers and scientists were infused into what became European universities. This renewed access to (Aristotelian) philosophy, for example became a major influence on the development of scholasticism and some of the most important thinkers in medieval

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18. Fakhry, Majid, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: A Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oneworld, 1997, p. 7.
19. Hodgson, Marshall G. S., *The Venture of Islam,* Vol. 1: The Classical Age of Islam Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, p. 85.

Europe. At the forefront of medieval thought was the perennial struggle to reconcile theology (faith) and philosophy (reason). People were at odds as to how to unite the knowledge obtained through revelation with the information observed naturally through the mind and senses. In continuance with Ibn Rushd's 'theory of the double truth', as George Makdisi described, Thomas Aquinas asserted that both kinds of knowledge ultimately come from God and were therefore compatible.[20] Not only were they compatible, according to Thomist thought, they work in collaboration. Revelation guides reason and prevents it from making unseemly mistakes; and reason clarifies and demystifies the excesses of faith. This is a discursive tradition extended over time. It is a conversation, as Alisdair MacIntyre reflected, indicating agreement and disagreement over generations. The quest for learning was shared across languages, cultures, and religions.[21] Questions and answers, and the way questions were formulated and answers derived, were carried across boundaries, beyond zones of culture and religion, and could be integrated universally.

Let us take a closer look at this shared intellectual heritage, as this is pertinent to questions of learning today. In the classical Greek approach, the aim of learning was to reconcile what Aristotle termed as the transcendentals: the good, the true and the beautiful. Each transcended the limitations of place and time and were rooted in being. The transcendentals were not contingent upon cultural diversity, religious doctrine, or personal ideologies, but were the objective properties of all that exists. The *trivium* and *quadrivium*, which form the basic curricula of

20. Makdisi, George, 'Scholasticism and Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West', *Religion, Law and Learning in Classical Islam,* Hampshire: Variorum, 1991, p. 175.
21. MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*? Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989. See particularly the chapter entitled 'The Rationality of Traditions.' For additional detail see William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions*, London: Routledge, 1991; and F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian tradition in Islam*, New York: New York University Press, 1968.

this schooling, were disciplines that structured the study of all that was naturally present in the world. The genius of this so called 'classical' approach, was that it promoted a unified idea of observable reality and a dependence of creation upon a creator.

There is a growing sense that higher education today is out of balance. The headlong rush to push STEM (science, technology, economics, mathematics) and business placed an over emphasis upon technology apart from the foundational sources of knowledge. Even in saying this, I can imagine the question posed by Ghalib to Sayyid Ahmad Khan when he proposed to study the Mughal writings and the works of history: 'Is your imagination still coloured by the time of Akbar?' Yes, it was for Sayyid Ahmad Khan, and it is for me as well, and we are not alone. It is interesting to note that several others are coming to a similar conclusion. Shaykh Hamza Yousuf, for example, founder of Zaytuna in California, which is the first accredited Muslim institution of higher education in the United States, has set out to design a college that is no less revolutionary than Aligarh was at its inception. Shaykh Hamza Yousuf noted:

> The liberal arts (also) became the cornerstone of Islamic education, and the idea of the college as a training center for the arts in service of religion is arguably a Muslim one.[22]

Whereas some think of STEM as being faith-neutral, or unrelated to a particular religious view, and therefore more amenable to study by the religiously conservative, it is interesting now to think of the arts as having deeps roots in faith. If Shaykh Hamza Yousuf's view is correct, then it would be a supreme irony that when Sayyid Ahmad Khan proposed a college on the Oxbridge model, for which he was chastised by many conservative traditionalists, he was in actuality reinstating -whether he

[22]. Yusuf, Shaykh Hamza, 'The Liberal Arts in an Illiberal Age', accessed, December 2, 2020, https://renovatio.zaytuna.edu/article/the-liberal-arts-in-an-illiberal-age.

realized it or not-an orthodox and established Muslim structure of learning.

Consider the modern university. As George Makdisi has convincingly demonstrated, 'The cultured Christian layman is aware of his religious debt to Judaism and his intellectual debt to Graeco-Roman antiquity; but, generally speaking, he is not aware of any debt to classical Islam'.[23] In the modern university the highest degree is the Doctorate. Where did that come from, and what is its origin? The Scholastic movement in Western Europe, mentioned above, which dominated universities from 1100-1700 named the Doctorate, from the Latin *docere,* that is *licentias docendi* (license to teach) which is a direct translation of *ijāzat at-tadris.* The *fatwa-ijmā* standard, the Islamic system of accreditation, was almost identical to what later became the Western University system and that has come down to our day. In the Ottoman Muslim world, the progression was '*faqih*, *mufti*, and *mudaris*', and this became in Europe magister, professor, and doctor.[24] Credentials, like the Doctorate, attest initially to the mastery of a field of study, but they also attest to a scholarly method of arriving at truth, a method to be applied in continued inquiry and research across expanding horizons. Greater awareness of this history allows for the development of approaches to contemporary education that could result, as Muhammad Legenhausen noted, 'in the revival and vindication of its traditions of enquiry in the international marketplace of ideas and in Islamic centres of learning'.[25] This was a seed that once planted bore fruit.

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[23]. Makdisi, George, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West,* Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1981, p. 279-281; John Walbridge, *God and Logic: The Caliphate of Reason,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 107-119; Charles Thurot, *De l'organisation de l'enseignement dans l'Université de Paris au Moyes Age,* Paris: 1850, p. 160.

[24]. Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Pre-modern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. Also see Ebrahim Moosa, *What is a Madrasa,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.

[25]. *Muhammad Legenhausen*, '*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*' by Alasdair MacIntyre, accessed May 14, 2020, https://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol14-n2/book-review-whose-justice-which-rationality-alasdair-macintyre-dr-muhammad/book.

FROM SEED TO ORCHARD

Aligarh College, along with many similar institutions that reflect the vision of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and other so called 'modernists', allowed for the balance of the old and the new, the East and the West. In the section above, we have considered the vital importance of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's open perspective on learning in South Asia. A man of religion, he identified human development as a process ordained and ordered by divine will. A man of history, he identified the progression of knowledge across cultures, and identified the pivotal participation of Muslim thinkers in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. This was not, however, an obvious conclusion. His was the way of collaboration and assimilation, and many of his coreligionists regarded this as a slippery slope towards the dilution of the faith or of outright capitulation. Sayyid Ahmad Khan was constantly compelled to allay the fears of those who argue that to embrace modern education was to weaken faith and to somehow betray one's community. In disarming the dichotomy between progressive and traditional, or Eastern and Western, Sayyid Ahmad Khan opened a channel for many to seek knowledge, whether in China, Chennai, Chicago, or beyond.

Such a perspective is again required in South Asia today. Majid Daneshgar, in his recent monograph entitled *Studying the Qur'an in the Muslim Academy* has raised serious concerns about the state of education within the academic departments of theology and philosophy in the 'Muslim world'. Reflecting upon his experience and observations, Daneshgar has raised serious concerns about the 'weaponization' of academia and both the immediate and long-term dangers of departments becoming centers of 'apologetics' rather than learning. There is a tendency, he observed, to undermine or devalue the work of Western scholars, whether Muslim or not, and also to reject or ignore the contributions of other Muslim schools of thought in general, but along the

Sunni and Shia divine in particular.[26] There is pressure, he observed, within departments and administration to not only censor, but also to 'weaponize' scholarly research to foment not only inter-religious but also intra-religious animosity. In the present milieu, many academic departments, even at the post-graduate level, seek to elevate their respective theological position at the expense of another. Success in this light, is the preservation and promulgation of a predetermined position, rather than the exploration and expansion of knowledge.

Daneshgar not only underscored the symptoms of this ailment, he also pointed towards a remedy. The way forward he put forth is an approach that fuses theoretical and philological practice, regardless of its geographical roots. It is possible, in his estimation, to combine 'Western theoretical' and 'Eastern philological' approaches and that this should be pursued in the 'Muslim Academy' even as some are attempting to do so in the West. One believes this can be done and that South Asia, which is underrepresented in Daneshgar's study, can take a leading role. In fact, as indicated above, it could be that such an integrated approached is actually indigenous to the intellectual tradition undergirding many of the leading universities in post-colonial South Asia.

As introduced above, Sir Sayyid Khan was convinced that Indians and Europeans shared an intellectual continuity. This seed, as it were, could be planted at Aligarh. He understood that despite their cultural and religious differences, both shared a way of knowing and could flourish together. To borrow an analogy from Allama Iqbal, the seed mediated through the prophetic bears the fruit of 'inductive intellect'.[27] Consider the seed: the intricacy is naturally miraculous. Given the right growth conditions, the seed sprouts and its differentiated internal components

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26. Daneshgar, Majid, *Studying the Qur'an in the Muslim Academy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
27. Baljon, J. M. S., *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880-1960)*, Leiden: Brill, 1968, p. 65-66.

follow a set growth order producing root, stem, and leaf. The plant grows, produces, and the cycle is repeated infinitely according to the variables of the ecosphere. 'In its essential nature, then', again Iqbal, 'thought is not static; it is dynamic and unfolds its internal infinitude in time like the seed which, from the very beginning, carries within itself the organic unity of the tree as a present fact'.[28] The seed itself does not bear fruit, but upon maturation it will produce much fruit. Carrying this metaphor forward, one can see that the mature department, housed in the mature university, can confidently manage difference and healthy disagreement. The engagement with foreign ideas - even challenging and opposing views - can be assessed and addressed because listening does not equal agreement. By trusting the method of teaching that allows for a diversity of views to be expressed, all involved can grow and benefit.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan was on a journey from opposing the 'new sciences' to integrating them into an authentically Muslim approach to learning.[29] In this light, he saw the choice between Islamic and Western learning as a false dichotomy, and he established a school where others could embark on a journey of discovery similar to his own. As already noted, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's adaptation of Western mores caused great consternation for some, and yet his courageous exploration opened a pathway for others to access an impressive breadth of ideas, many of which were crafted by earlier generations of Muslim thinkers. Such education could be done, but this would not be easy, and as Daneshgar observed, there would be at least three areas of difficulty: language, curriculum, and accreditation. Language matters. It was determined, for example, that the language of education at Aligarh would be English. In the decades that followed, Aligarh and its many offshoots groomed students to become citizens of the British Empire, and in the post-colonial era, citizens of the

28. Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 6.
29. Chittick, William, C., *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 163.

'global world'. The goal was a sign of recognition and participation in the global economy.

This was the way to protect and promote the cause and values of the Muslim community in a globalized world where English was the *lingua franca*. But it also became a determinant of the elite. The principal and immediate beneficiaries of the school were from among the upper class (*ashraf*). English was not the only defining mark of inclusion in the highest levels of society but it steadily became a bridge to advancement, and a bridge that was too difficult for most to cross. From the 1870s onward, English was the language of governance, technology and advancement in the region. Arabic and Persian, while greatly valued among the Muslims of India, receded in importance, even as local vernaculars such as Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali and Tamil gained prominence as symbols of cultural and political identity. Some regional languages flourished at the local level but English became the gold standard and the ticket to success. The language itself became a resource and a boon, a form of social capital that distinguished the progressive from the traditionalist and the educated elite from the less fortunate.

The problem of language must not be underestimated. There are only so many hours in the day and only so much that can be covered in a syllabus. A greater emphasis upon English meant less time could be devoted to Arabic or Persian but it also meant less time could be devoted to any subject because of the habit and necessity of bilingualism. A new infrastructure of learning is required for a student or faculty member to competently engage with advanced ideas in a language that is not one's mother tongue. Many were aware of this problem even at the outset of the Aligarh movement. There was lively discussion on the merit of a similar college in which the syllabus would be given in Urdu. There were efforts in the Deccan, Hyderabad for example, to establish a counterpart that could offer a similar experience in Urdu. This vision later came to fruition in 1887 as Nizam College, now a constituent of Osmania

University. Though the institution thrived and is regarded as a success, it faced a similar difficulty, namely that the language of instruction was not the native tongue of its constituents. Urdu was not the common language in South India for the Muslims of Tamil Nadu and Kerala or of the Deccan. These students had to learn Urdu, just as students in the North, many of whom were native Urdu speakers, had to learn English. The point is that the language of instruction mattered at that time and it continues to be of central importance today.

There is no simple answer, yet institutions of higher education in South Asia today could benefit from reassessing the reasons for the choice of the language of instruction. Improvements in technology are developing rapidly and these may soon lessen the importance of an English curriculum, allowing for mother-tongue instruction at all levels and particularly at the University level. There will always be a value in learning another language and particularly the classical languages necessary for scriptural exegesis but the day may come when all secondary literature will be available in electronic translation. What could happen if the energy spent upon learning English were redirected towards critical thinking and research using regional languages in which students were already proficient?

Having noted the issue of language, we turn our attention to the related but substantially different matter of curriculum. Even if the same subject matter, with the same quality of resources, could be presented in any given language, or in this case say in English and Urdu, it should not be taken for granted that one pedagogical approach is the best for every institution. Aligarh, for example, was purpose built on the British model. Theodore Beck was recruited as the Principal and he succeeded in establishing a residential model similar in ways to Oxbridge.[30] Nizam College, however, was created by the amalgamation of the Hyderabad

[30]. Minault, Gail and David Lelyveld, "The Campaign for a Muslim University 1898-1920" *Modern Asian Studies*, 8, 2 (1974) p. 145-189.

School, which followed a Western model and the *Madrasa-i 'auliya*, which carried a traditional *Dars-i Nizami* curriculum. As the two streams melded, students from the respective schools experienced a convergence in educational philosophies. Students from the English medium Hyderabad School experienced a shift in language but also in teaching methodology and curriculum. If the student had not reached the same degree of Arabic or even Persian or Urdu proficiency as other counterparts, he would have experienced difficulty in dealing with the traditional books and resources of learning. Conversely, those from the Madrasa would likely have struggled with mathematics and sciences, or perhaps the strange rigor of playing football or other co-curricular activities. Yet in any new educational venture, books must be selected, teachers appointed, and best efforts made to prepare students for the challenges of life. In a similar way, academic institutions across South Asia not only determined the language of instruction but they also selected a curricula and pedagogical approach. Both of these case studies selected a progressive model and went on to become top tier universities within the national mainstream but other institutions selected a different path, which is now referred to as traditionalist methodology.

The rift between progressive and the traditionalist approaches to education has been well documented. The primary example of the traditionalist vision took form in the eponymous *Dār'l 'ulūm Deoband* and its many affiliates. These carried forward the curricula and method of teaching that was already well-established in the region prior to the British hegemony. The 1857 uprising brought about significant changes in the economy and in educational policy. There was an extensive and targeted discrimination against Muslims. Regardless of one's opinion as to the causes of the war, in the aftermath decisions were made among families and communities as how best to move forward with the education of their children under the present conditions. The path towards economic uplift and towards some degree of participation in civil society, was through 'Western' education. But others, whether by

necessity or conviction, carried forward the traditional curriculum in local schools, now generally known as 'madrasas'. Over time, these schools shifted away from the fundamentals of education, namely: grammar, logic and rhetoric, and moved towards the fundamentals of religious practice. In other words, education became synonymous with religious education. Left to fend for themselves with little or no government support or regulation, madrasas became seminaries and were charged with the preparation of religious clerics and the functionaries of local mosques.[31]

Madrasas preserved religious knowledge and that in itself is admirable but they also taught a specific curriculum. The shift away from a general education towards a religious education meant that they would not prepare leaders for the community in the important fields of industry, politics or law. Promising students were sent to the 'Western' schools to become engineers, doctors and lawyers, leaving mainly the poor and disenfranchised to attend the traditional (madrasa) schools. Over time, these madrasa graduates became leaders and influencers in their own right. A significant portion of the Muslim community remained separated from the colonial and now post-colonial government systems. Today many Muslims across South Asia live in a parallel society, with their own educational, judicial and economic systems, like a state within the state. They are not part of the mainstream. The modern nation state employs graduates from the progressive or 'Western' schools for the highest positions and its leaders are often at a loss about how to provide jobs for students educated in the traditional madrasas. This divide still endures within South Asia today and is readily visible. Though class divisions are complex and poverty also limits schooling options, these divisions have

31. Metcalf, Barbara Daly, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1984. Arshad Alam, 'Understanding Deoband Locally: Interrogating Madrasat diya' al- 'Ulum' in Jan-Peter Hartung and Helmut Reifeld, eds. *Islamic Education, Diversity, and National Identity: Dini Madaris in India Post 9/11,* New Delhi: Sage, 2006, p. 175-77.

been strengthened by the trajectories of language and curricula and this persists as a serious hindrance to national governance.[32]

In general, some 'progressive' schools have become successful, particularly in the scientific (STEM) fields but less so in the humanities in general and in theology or philosophy in particular. It is not surprising to meet a South Asian doctor, engineer or software engineer anywhere in the world. This is seen as the road to success and progress. But there is also a danger inherent in this headlong push towards the sciences. When sciences are promoted apart from the arts, there can be a lack of depth and an inability to integrate the parts into the whole. Though traditional schools are often seen as a liability and have even been associated with violent extremism, this is a myopic view of the circumstances. As Jamal Malik has convincingly argued, the perpetrators of great crime, corruption, and terrorism are more likely to be graduates of 'progressive' or Western academic institutions. One reason for this is that their trajectory of learning, which includes both language and curriculum, has allowed for only shallow roots. Students report feeling disconnected from traditional sources of authority and wisdom and becoming vulnerable to charismatic preachers who promote plausible but unsound doctrine.[33] Undoubtedly, some madrasas have been used to recruit and indoctrinate militant extremism but this is not representative of the vision or values of these institutions. According to Malik's assessment, traditional madrasas have borne the brunt of the blame for terrorism, when in fact they have

32. Jaffrelot, Christophe, *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience,* New Delhi: Random House, 2015, p. 544-6. Khalid Rahman and Syed Rashad Bukhari, 'Pakistan: Religious Education and Institutions', *The Muslim World,* 96, 2 (2006) p. 323-339. According to a 2002 report by Pakistan Human Rights Commission, over 250,000 of a total of 600,000 students in the Punjab are enrolled in *dini madaris* rather than private or public education. Other reports claim that this is grossly exaggerated.

33. Malik, Jamal (ed.), 'In lieu of a conclusion', *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?* Abingdom: Routledge, 2008, p. 165-167. See also Syed Wagas Ali Kausar and Abdul Wahid Sial, 'The Impact of Systematic Structure of Madrassahs on Student's Outcomes in Pakistan: Do They Need Structural Reform? *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 14 (2015) p. 127-147.

often been the voice of wisdom and forbearance and have issued a call against the use of violence. These institutions embody diverse patterns of resistance but if they were bent on violence then present conditions would be far different.

In light of the negative repercussions caused by the separation of traditional and modern approaches to education, many universities have integrated a madrasa (*din-i madaris*) program within their framework. This has allowed for greater exchange among the faculty and students. In Jamia Milia Islamia University in New Delhi, for example, the doctoral program contains students from diverse educational backgrounds. Some are stronger in English, others are stronger in Arabic, but this public institution has proactively integrated students from a variety of backgrounds-including persons who are of other faiths-within the Department of Islamic Studies and has shown considerable success. Aligarh, on the other hand, has opted to create both a Shia Department of Theology and a separate Sunni Department.[34] Similar to the Catholic and Protestant divide in Germany, this model allows for a greater focus and collegiality within a tradition. Though the temptation remains for these different traditions to become focused on apologetics, which promotes a sectarian view or school of thought, still the move towards greater depth of learning within each tradition has opened the way for a new generation of scholars, who are beginning to share space and resources. Many examples could be examined from across the region and doubtlessly this is the subject of ongoing research.

My concluding point is that there is great benefit in integrating these two streams. The parallel society is subversive of government policy and creates an expensive drag on the economy. The way forward for the diverse communities is through integration and this begins with language and curriculum. Whereas the differences between traditional and

[34]. Department of Shia Theology, Aligarh Muslim University, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.amu.ac.in/departmentpage.jsp?did=85

progressive education may endure, important examples of integration already exist. Much is at stake and it is understandable that change comes slowly. Few would have imagined that Al-Azhar in Cairo could represent a religious tradition as well as a progressive university. Perhaps the day is coming when bastions of traditional education in South Asia like Minhaj University Lahore, Jamia Binoria, or even the *Dār'l 'ulūm* in Deoband, will be known for religious studies as well as for their successful graduates in diverse fields of the arts and sciences. From the Calcutta Madrasa to Aligarh and Osmania and now to many successful centers of higher education across the region, Muslim centers of learning in South Asia are faring better than those in many other regions. These centers of learning are following the path opened up by pioneers like Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who was able to foresee a fruitful orchard emerging from a small seed.

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
(A Christian Perspective)

Emmanuel Asi

INTRODUCTION

Empowering women through theological education is a movement that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century but spread rapidly and vigorously throughout the world especially in the poor countries of the Third Word. The writer favors every thought, struggle and action that supports, propagates and fortifies this movement because empowering women respects the dignity of human life, recognizes the equality of men and women and promotes harmony among human persons.

Quite often the concept of empowering women through theological education is confused with other themes such as the discussion of women mentioned in sacred scriptures or in religious traditions. Empowering women can also be confused with another issue, namely, the rights of women. However, the approach adopted in these reflections goes a step further and speaks not 'about' women but 'from' the perspective of women.

The article challenges anything that is contrary to this approach and believes that once the 'status' of women has been clarified in the culture and religion of a particular society, the 'rights' of women will logically follow. In short, this article is a discussion from a woman's perspective of empowering women through theological education.

SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS:
Rights vs. Identity and Status

On women's day or during special programs conducted by the government, by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or by religious institutions, we often hear speakers talk about favors granted to women such as job opportunities, designations, certain quota representations in various departments of the government, etc. Furthermore, this is understood by men as the 'equality' endowed to women. The language of such speeches implies that women are being looked after, cared for and taken into consideration in society and in religion. I maintain that the real issue is not about the rights and authority of women in society and religion but rather about their *identity* as women and their *status* as human persons equal in dignity to men.

We should not deny, underestimate or close our eyes to the real issue, which concerns the identity and status of women. The rights of women should also demand our attention but our main concern in this article is the empowerment of women through theological education. In fact, theological education understood as the condition for obtaining a certain career or status in society may not be true theological education at all!

Focusing on Problems

A second preliminary remark is that the theological education of women should not only be concerned with problem solving. Yet the prevailing state of affairs both in society as well as in religious institutions is focused on problem solving. The reason for such an approach in seminars and meetings, which have no time for a discussion of ideologies or theological perspectives, could be the result of historical paradigms and gender patterns. Discussion about the struggles that women experience, the emancipation of women, human rights or their representation in administration or leadership roles, focuses on only one aspect of a much broader vision of the empowerment of women through theological education.

The focus on the rights of women seems to presuppose that women are only asking for favors and concessions in their struggle to obtain what they have so far been deprived of. This *ad hoc* approach is defensive and seeks to find short cuts and temporary solutions to profound problems. Examples of such short sighted approaches could be a concern for human rights, women's emancipation, liberation from male domination or women's efforts to obtain positions of power and authority.

Examples of the sort of grievances mentioned above arise out of deep experiences of deprivation and discrimination. Expressing the feelings associated with such experiences can be a sign of defensiveness but can also lead to offensive and even aggressive behavior resulting in the hatred and the alienation of women as a group. Though such grievances are serious, they actually point to a deeper issue.

Education as Empowerment

The third preliminary remark is that good education enables empowerment. In many religious institutions, theology is dominated by men and expressed in traditional terms and concepts. This type of male oriented thinking and speaking does not further the empowerment of women through theological education. Theology needs to be freed from male domination and from the use of traditional language that speaks the mind of women and uses their own forms of expression. The focus of the reflections in this article is the search for a theological basis for the theological education of women.

RECONSTRUCTION OF FEMININE IDENTITY:
Historical Phases of the Women's Liberation Movement

The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) started in the late 1960s and

has gone through three different phases.[1] Since women were considered incomplete, inferior, weak and imperfect human beings, the main focus and emphasis of this first phase was to emphasize the full and equal dignity of women. It had always been taken for granted that to be a full human being was to be male. The value of women was measured by men and in male terms. Eventually, women began to express their dissatisfaction with definitions of women produced only by men.

It was during this phase that women, through their growing awareness and intense efforts, began to understand that they were full and equal persons and that they did not require male leadership, protection, support and guidance in order to establish their identity as women. As a result of this phase, women reached the following conclusions that needed further attention:

1. Give attention to yourself, have trust and confidence in yourself and learn from the experience of women in other countries.
2. Critically analyze issues and problems as women and from a woman's perspective and beware of doing this from a male perspective.
3. Undertake research work on these and other similar issues.
4. Stop evaluating the worth of women according to a male perspective by adopting the vocabulary of men.

Another focus that was highlighted during this first phase was the political rights of women. In 1882, women had been in the forefront of the struggle to abolish slavery and to acquire the right to express their

1. The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) was a political alignment of women and feminist intellectuals that emerged in the late 1960s and continued into the 1980s primarily in the industrialized nations of the Western world. During this phase, women demanded equality with men and spoke out against institutional sexism. Their efforts resulted in significant political reforms throughout the world. Some of the most notable women active during this phase were Mary Wollstonecraft, Susan B. Anthony, Alice Stone Blackwell, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Emmeline Pankhurst and Sojourner Truth.

opinion through universal suffrage. In 1840, the movement for women's emancipation had been launched and women held a conference on the political rights and the political equality of women.[2]

The second phase of the WLM took place during the years 1960-1970. During these years, the movement developed the vision for the equal dignity for men and women and strove for the political equality of women so that they could participate in active politics and debate. The third phase of the WLM commenced in 1970. On 18 December 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an International Women's Conference, was held.[3] This period saw the strengthening of solidarity among women and greater awareness of racial and socio-economic discrimination. Besides, in 1975, the UN set up International Women's Year.[4] In all these events, the integrity and equality of women was emphasized. Women should have full and equal rights and the opportunity for participation and leadership in every field of life. Special attention was given to the following three values: equality, solidarity and participation.

Journeying in Solidarity

For the development of women's liberation, women need to journey in

[2]. The early Women's Rights Movement for the abolition of slavery started in 1840. The first attempt to organize a national movement for women's rights occurred in Seneca Falls, New York, in July 1848. At this time, women were also granted the right to vote.
[3]. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly. It became an international treaty on 3rd September 1981 after the twentieth country had ratified it. The Convention is composed of 23 experts, each of whom is nominated by their respective Governments. By the tenth anniversary of the Convention in 1989, almost one hundred nations had agreed to be bound by its provisions.
[4]. International Women's Year (IWY) was the name given in 1975 by the United Nations. Since that year, 8th March has been celebrated as International Women's Day. The United Nations Decade for Women, from 1976 to 1985, was also established. The first UN World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975. This Conference was attended by over a thousand delegates.

solidarity with women of other nations, countries, cultures and religions. There is no doubt that women of every cultural, political and economic background have to seek and enrich their own sense of identity and to develop their own way of doing theology. This needs to be done on a wider and broader ecumenical level. Women from Pakistan as well as from every other country, culture, race and religion need to journey together in the struggle for equality and justice. The purpose of this common journey is to learn about the struggles of women in other circumstances and in other areas of the world. However, it will always remain important to make a contribution to this global struggle from one's own context.

Re-interpreting the Scriptures

The holy scriptures of most religious traditions in the world give evidence of the powerful and animating presence of women. In the Christian scriptures, for example, there is hardly a page that does not refer to the presence of women. They are present as animators, leaders of nations, guides of families, showing direction and playing a vital role in historical decisions. Even though the followers of religious traditions may be aware of only a few significant women who have played a significant role in their own religious tradition, nevertheless these religious traditions do present women as key actors in the history of families, tribes and nations.

The sad reality is that sacred writers, exegetes, preachers, teachers and law makers have been solely and almost exclusively male. Accordingly, women were only mentioned, described and interpreted from a male perspective and with a male bias. In the Christian liturgical lectionary, which provides readings from the sacred scriptures for worship services, for example, texts and readings that mention women were often omitted. When such liturgies are celebrated today, women who are present at these worship services feel excluded. Theologians, priests and liturgists

can no longer escape the challenge expressed vocally by women who demand that they be heard and that their presence be duly recognized.

Most of the research and study of sacred scripture that is undertaken for or by women is also restricted either to the mention of great women in the history of the religious tradition or to the teaching about women in this religious tradition. Moreover, all this is presented and evaluated from the perspective of men. Studies of sacred scripture neglect the important role that women play in the life of their family, culture, society and nation. Theological students are informed about what these women have said and achieved. But very often, knowingly or unknowingly, all this is done with a view to the promotion and the defense of the male members of society. In the past, women often raised their voice in protest against this tendency, which was evident both in academic and in social circles.

No aspect of human or social freedom in history has been made available on a platter but has always been the result of persistent effort. What is urgently needed today is that women start re-reading and re-interpreting the sacred scripture from a woman's point of view and attempt to express its meaning in the language with which women are comfortable. New forms of expression will free sacred scripture from an exclusively male interpretation with the result that the deeper meaning of scripture, which recognizes the dignity of both men and women, will be restored.

Another point to be emphasized while speaking about sacred scripture is that the Word of God also exists outside the written scriptures. God speaks through the events of history and the universe as well as through the written text. Moreover, the Word of God already existed before it was expressed in book form. Most Christian theologians accept the view that God continues to reveal God-self to humanity in multiple and mysterious ways. Many Christian scholars suggest that Christians should not limit the Word of God to its written version alone because God is present

among human beings and God is not limited to the use of a particular text.

God continues to reveal God-self in different contexts and in various circumstances to the nations and the cultures of the world. The Bible indicates how God has already spoken in certain social, religious and historical situations. It is the same God who speaks to believers of different faiths and religions in their own context. Moreover, God is not prejudiced with regard to gender. God has spoken to and through the women of every nation, culture, history and religion.

Women should make the sacred scripture their own and re-interpret it according to their specific context and from their particular perspective as women. They should not shy away or remain passive onlookers but contribute their own perspectives and critique. The Christian scripture, for example, contains four important events and dogmas concerning the economy of salvation. These are the Creation, the Redemption (Exodus), the Incarnation and the Resurrection (of Jesus Christ). All the other truths and dogmas in the Holy Bible revolve around these four great events, each of which is focused on certain women whose role is duly recognized.[5] In all these events, women play an important role as the main agent, coordinator and animator. However, these women have been presented in history as non-persons and their presence and dignity has been underestimated and even undermined because of male dominance in ecclesiastical structures. During the past thirty years, however, women have begun to read sacred scripture themselves and to claim their own place in social and ecclesiastical settings. Their interventions have led to fresh insights, which have often been inspiring for their male counterparts.

5. Eve plays a leading role in the story of Creation (Genesis, Chapters 2-3), Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron, leads women to celebrate the Exodus when they sing, dance and praise God soon after Exodus (Exodus 15: 20-21), Mary of Nazareth, mother of Jesus, is proclaimed at the Incarnation (Gospel according to Luke 1: 26-38) and Mary Magdalene becomes the Apostle of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 20: 1-18).

Liberating Theology

As was the case with sacred scripture, theology has likewise been interpreted according to male biases. There is an urgent need to liberate theology from such male perspectives. Empowered through theological education, women will discover the feminine face of God and a feminine theology of God based on the truth that all human beings have been created in the image of God (*imago dei*). Since the Hebrew word *Adam* is not gender specific, it refers to all human beings and stands for the whole of humanity.[6] Moreover, to refer to God in a gender specific way is to use anthropomorphic language despite the obvious fact that God has no gender and is without gender prejudice. Failure to recognize that women are created in the image and likeness of God is to deny the blessing of God.

Women are making themselves heard in the world of theology. Their wish is to be partners with men in a shared responsibility for their 'common home', as Pope Francis has stressed in his second encyclical, *Laudato si*. A new theological anthropology is developing and it is unstoppable because of God's own command to both men and women in the Book of Genesis to care for their 'common home'. In Christian theology, all believers are children of God and are, therefore, of equal value in the sight of God. Faith in Jesus Christ liberates believers from all sorts of cultural, racial and gender biases (Gal. 3:26 ff.). In fact, such a liberation is a prerequisite, condition and credential for membership in the *ecclesia*, a word that refers to the community of believers.

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6. *Adamah*, a Hebrew word from which the word *Adam* has been derived, has a variety of meanings such as ground (as tilled and yielding sustenance), a piece of ground, a specific plot of land, earth substance (for building or constructing), ground as the earth's visible surface, land, territory, country, or the whole inhabited earth. The word Adam means man or mankind and is used as a collective word for all creatures, cf. Brown, Driver & Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press. This Hebrew word is estimated to have been used 210 times in the Old Testament, mainly in Genesis (37), Deuteronomy (35), Isaiah (14), Jeremiah (18), and Ezekiel (27).

Becoming a disciple of Christ in the Christian tradition is not based on human merit but is purely a grace and gift of God. By faith in Christ and by following (putting on) Christ, a person shares in the life of Christ and becomes a member of the community of his followers. In this community, there is no longer any room for national, ethnic, cultural, social or gender discrimination. In Christ, all are one and equal. Any form of inequality would be contrary to the view of life presented in the Gospel and opposed to the way of life of a believer in Jesus Christ.

It is God's desire and plan that all human beings should come to participate fully in the life of God by becoming members of the family of God. Any discriminatory ideology or divisive force works against such full membership. For example, any gender-based prejudice would result in the refusal to recognize others as full members of the family of God. To insist on an ideology of preference, expressed in such concepts as 'the elect' or 'the pure' would be theologically untenable in the Christian understanding of the human person.

Liturgical Silencing

The language adopted by practically every religion in its worship services uses male-oriented vocabulary. In the Christian community, for example, the language used in worship is largely gender biased and exclusivist. Even though women are excluded from the language of formal prayers and hymns, only a few women even notice that such is the case. It is strange that the women have to recite prayers and sing hymns using male oriented language. Although many women still attend worship services for the official prayers, their presence is not acknowledged and they are rarely addressed directly in this liturgical setting. Instead of remaining passive listeners and attendants during the liturgy, however, women should have the opportunity for equal, active and full participation in the worship of the community. If a woman can provide leadership for her family, act as the mother of her children and take lead roles in civil

activities linked to decision-making processes, why can women not lead the community in worship? Besides, what prevents them from preaching to the community of believers?

Women are also silenced from the memory of religious history. In the Catholic Sunday Lectionary, for example, narratives and descriptions of the role of women are infrequent.[7] It seems that silencing the witness of women has been done in a systematic way. In the readings taken from the Hebrew Scriptures, women are excluded, omitted or discarded as dangerous or scandalous. However, in the 1980s, women scholars became aware of gender specific language and they began to insist on inclusive language in worship services.[8] As a result, male specific language is gradually becoming less common. Changing the words of a text, however, is only a first step. The more significant challenge is to change men's attitudes towards women.

Categorization Based on Gender

Mahatma Gandhi, one of the great personalities of India, exposed the flawed attitude according to which men usually see women as delicate and weak because men want to make them feel dependent and in need of male support, protection and guidance for the benefit and privilege of men. Gandhi demonstrated a very different approach in his freedom struggle and involved women as active participants, who were encouraged to voice their plight alongside men. He also held the view

7. Many narratives of women have been omitted from the Sunday Lectionary, which is the assigned reading from the Holy Bible for Sunday worship service (Mass) in the Catholic Church. This was done through a document promulgated by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments on 25th May 1969. See Kathleen MacInnis Kichline, *Never On Sunday: A Look at the Women NOT in the Lectionary,* Sister in Scripture, Part 2. Also cf. Katharine Jefferts-Schori, *Created In God's Image, a Gender Never On Sunday*.

8. An effort was made in 1983 to introduce a Holy Bible presenting God as male and female, as both the mother and father of humankind. This Bible was prepared by 11 biblical scholars. Cf. the article by Charles Austin in the New York Times on 15th October 1983, section 1, p. 1.

that the education of a man would simply be the accomplishment of one individual but the education of a woman would lead to the education of a whole community.

Categorization based on gender has been the result of male prejudice and has been done in order to subdue women. It is based on an attitude of superiority and inferiority and a hierarchal way of thinking. As a result, women are not given pastoral, administrative and evangelical responsibilities. But all positions of leadership in religious traditions ought to be open to all believers because no profession (except parenting) is exclusively based on gender or biological considerations that are unique to women.

Empowerment and emancipation of women through theological education will also include the effort to change traditional male oriented and male dominant structures in the community of believers. No ministries, service or religious leadership should be assigned and entrusted to anyone merely on account of his or her gender. Both men and women reflect the divine attributes of God by being gifted with different God-given talents. Hence, to understand spiritual ministries as divinely ordained but, at the same time, to continue allocating certain ministries only to males is a lingering sign of bureaucratic interference, which needs to be dealt with by visionary thinking.

The Status of Women in Religious Traditions

One of the most urgent challenges facing religious traditions today is recognition of the human and religious status of women. It is not a question of granting concessions or favors to women but rather of re-defining and restoring their original role and giving back to women what they have been deprived of. Gender cannot be a determining factor of one's membership of a religious tradition.

No human, historical law is above God's law. No constitution, no matter how ancient or sacred it may be, has the right to consider women as less human on the grounds of gender. Every believer ought to speak out against anything and everything that is contrary to human dignity and life. One ought to oppose all that discriminates and divides humanity or makes human persons unequal, inferior or superior, oppressed or oppressor. Religion can act as a front runner in the claim for the equality of all persons. Sadly, however, not all religious traditions have spoken up to defend human dignity and justice.

Sanctifying Human Culture

Whenever we discuss the status of women in religion and society, we have to deal with cultural limitations and restrictions. It is to be hoped that greater awareness and empowerment brought to women through theological education will purify and sanctify human culture and transform it in accordance with the will of God. In this way, human culture will reflect a dimension of divine culture.

Religions exist in order to transform prevailing cultural patterns by providing alternative cultural perspectives that are enriched by the contribution of theology, the history of preaching and the experience of interreligious relations. Religious traditions can sometimes be critical of the accepted way of behavior of a given society. A person becomes a believer or remains part of a particular religious tradition because he or she agrees with the alternative culture presented by this religion despite the challenges it may present to the customs and behavior patterns of society. The alternative values of one's chosen religious tradition will take precedence over one's earlier beliefs and values while allowing for some degree of compromise as well.

Whenever social practices are under the sway of historical, traditional and organizational patterns of behavior or influenced by gender based

prejudices, the teaching of a religion should challenge these generally accepted patterns of behavior. Religions introduce different values, moral values and ethical paradigms such as those expressed in the 'Sermon on the Mount' in the Gospel of Matthew.

In many countries of the world women are not given equal opportunities and their achievements are not duly recognized. This means that a large section of humanity is still not being justly treated. The prophetic voice of religious traditions can be very effective in condemning oppressive structures and practices and in rejecting historical and cultural customs that dehumanize women. Religions have a duty to be actively involved in enabling women to become fully human and fully alive.

THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:
Education and Empowerment

Theological education awakens critical thinking and provides insight into religious truths that hitherto may have remained obscure. Theological education produces insight into the historical contexts in which certain doctrines arose and were formulated. Such insight will reveal that these doctrines were responding to the concerns of a specific society. Hence, theological education can provide the tools to understand expand and liberate oneself from certain forms of misunderstanding about one's religious tradition. Furthermore, such education does not only provide academic training but also opens access to new information, which leads to intellectual formation and to personal transformation.

Theological education and the empowerment of women ought to include a woman's perspective on crucial issues such as political theology and ecology, both of which are important subjects for theological reflection today. Those responsible for the theological education and empowerment of women should be aware that equipping women with the tools of theology may help uncover hidden sources of new knowledge, which

their male counterparts may not have thought ever existed. It is clear that the prevailing theology taught in all or most theological seminaries is dominated by males and also resourced from dominantly male scholarship. In such circumstances, the theological empowerment of women can take place only after the removal of such male dominance so as to create space for the acceptance of women's perspectives as a source of knowledge and skill.

The de-construction of male-dominant theology and the re-formulation of theology by the inclusion of women's language and perspectives is an urgent need of contemporary theology. This will require a new kind of theological leadership by women and men, who are ready to forge ahead collaboratively to adopt multi-disciplinary approaches to the social sciences. This, in turn, will lead to new areas of theological reflection. The success of such a project will require dedication to serious scholarship that uses new theological vocabulary.

Institutes of theological education need to reject all forms of discrimination in their thinking as well as in their practice. Women's studies is a branch of theology just as feminist theology is only one, though a very significant, area of theology. Not all women who study theology are engaged in feminist theology or are feminists in their thinking. In fact, there are male theologians who are not only sympathetic towards feminist theology but are actively involved in feminist theology themselves.

Theological education should enable women to contribute a feminine perspective to the understanding of revelation as well as to other areas of theological investigation. The feminine way of doing theology asks different questions and engages in different topics for discussion in order to discover new theological insights. We salute all those women, mothers and sisters, who have been courageous enough to set out on the feminine theological journey, thereby becoming pioneers in the field of feminine

theology, not in opposition to their male counterparts but in order to articulate a different perspective.

Construction of a Feminist Theology

Three phases can be identified in the process of constructing feminist theology. The first phase concentrated on doing theology as an academic practice. This was the concern of white women from the secular, first world whose interests were mainly economic and political. They produced books with titles such as: 'The Church and the Second Sex', 'Beyond God the Father', 'Meta Ethics of radical Feminism' and so on.[9]

The second phase was characterized by the rigorous efforts of women to dislodge the ideology of patriarchy and to dismantle the practice of male domination. A lot of material has been written in various books and periodicals about the issues that were highlighted during this period.[10]

Finally, a third phase came into existence when some white women theologians began to challenge patriarchal theology, which had developed over several centuries.[11] In patristic theology, which is the term used for the study of the theological teachings of the Church

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[9]. For example, books authored by Mary Daly (1928-2010): *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968); *Beyond God the Father; GYN/ Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism.*

[10]. To name a few: Hyun Kyung Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990); M. C. Elliot, *Freedom, Justice & Christian Counter-Culture* (London, SCM Press, 1990); Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Motherhood and God*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984); J. Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970); Joyce Hollyday, *Clothed with the Sun: Biblical Women, Social Justice and Us* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); also see Saiving, Valerie (1960), "The Human Situation: A Feminine View", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 28 (1) 1975; *vide* Moder, Ally, "Women, Personhood, and the Male God: A Feminist Critique of Patriarchal Concepts of God in View of Domestic Abuse", *Feminist Theology*, 28 (1) 2019.

[11]. Buckley, Cheryl, "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design Issues", *The MIT Press*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Autumn, 1986), p. 3-14; Veronica Beechey, "On Patriarchy", *Feminist Review*, No. 3 (1979), p. 66-82; Abeda Sultana, *Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis;* Jagger, M. A. and Rosenberg S. P. (eds.), 1984. Also see Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Frameworks*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989).

Fathers, and in the exegesis of the Hebrew scriptures, there was hardly any female voice that was acknowledged, not even the women who saved, nursed and protected the Prophet Moses, the leader of the Jewish slaves in Egypt who became the 'Exodus women'. The New Testament narratives relate that women, portrayed by men as weak, were the first to see Jesus Christ after his resurrection from the dead and were brave enough to announce that 'he is risen from the dead' to the fearful followers of Jesus. These women became the 'Easter women' of the good news.

A woman's role in society is not something that can be bestowed on women by those who belong to the patriarchal system. Rather, women have inherited this role by the will of God who created them in the image of God (*imago dei*). Theological education is an endowment by faith through which they are entitled to learn about their Creator in their own way. Religious traditions should find ways for women to make their own contribution to theological education and thereby to reach their full potential as women.

Opportunities for Theological Education

Feminine theology will not develop by simply pleading and begging for concessions and favors from men. Women must beware of being provoked by the traditional male-oriented language used by men, who praise women and promise them various favors and privileges. The traditional, male-dominated culture is still very powerful and persuasive. Unfortunately, many women from traditional backgrounds prefer to imitate the way their mothers were instructed by their brothers, husbands and uncles. Traditional social and cultural taboos are still strong and women are still compelled and bound by these social restrictions simply because they are females. Although not every man practices such discrimination against women, it is still the dominant behavior pattern of the prevalent patriarchy. Women must join hands with men to liberate

themselves from social and cultural bondage, which can be kept in place by religious bigotry. Men and women must work together to become aware of their unique identity.

Since every form of dependency leads to a lack of self-confidence as well to domination and enslavement, women must become free of their dependency on men in order to become well integrated persons. For this purpose, women need to develop a language that makes full use of feminine expressions, symbols and myths with which they can re-interpret history from a feminine perspective.

CONCLUSION

Instead of a narrow-minded and short-sighted outlook, which restricts women to predetermined roles within society, both women and men need to acquire a vision for new possibilities. Through theological education, women will gain the empowerment they need to liberate themselves from their culturally defined and unfairly restricted status in society. The liberation of women is not only a project by women for women but will also liberate men from their ignorance of the equal status of men and women. In fact, this is the mission of God (*missio dei*) to which men and women are invited to participate. This vision is part of the hope and aspiration of the liberating notion of 'a new heaven and a new earth' as explicated so well in the Hebrew-Jewish and the Greek-Christian scriptures. These scriptures offer men and women the possibility to collaborate in the fulfillment of God's purposes in the world.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN REASON AND INTUITION IN THE THOUGHT OF MUHAMMAD IQBAL

Syed Sajjad Haidar

ABSTRACT

Muhammad Iqbal was a poet and a Muslim philosopher. His poetic masterpiece *israre khudi* (secrets of the self) has been acknowledged worldwide and translated into many languages. Most of his work was written in Persian, Urdu and English. Although as a philosopher he dealt with many philosophical issues, he tried to figure out the distinctive connection between reason and intuition. Iqbal considered reason to be a "wayside lamp", which leads to the destination but is not the destination itself, because it lacks the power of finality. For this reason, he acknowledged the significant role of reason but challenged its ability to reach ultimate reality. Reason is considered the ultimate way to obtain knowledge in different modern philosophies. But Iqbal preferred 'intuition' to reason as the path towards understanding reality. In his philosophy, Iqbal was searching for the organic relationship between reason and intuition because he saw it as the means to reconcile religion and philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Intellect *('aql)* is a faculty, which has fascinated man since his first realization of being in possession of it. Together with *fitrah* and *tabiah,* the word '*aql* refers to an inherent and integral part of the soul.[1] In philosophy, reason is understood as the faculty or process of drawing logical inferences while in theology, reason is distinguished from

[1.] Riffat, Hussain, "The Meaning and Role of Intuition in Iqbal's Philosophy", *Iqbal Review*, 26, 1 (1985) p. 73-74.

revelation and refers to the application of human intelligence to understanding religious truth.

In addition to reason, intuition is another source of knowledge. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Intuition, in philosophy, the power of obtaining knowledge that cannot be acquired either by inference or observation, by reason or experience."[2] According to Stocks, the word 'intuition' is derived from a verb meaning 'to look at' and its extended use seems to have been derived from a metaphor referring to the power of sight. "It would stand, presumably, for a mental inspection in which a direct revelation is made to the mind, comparable to the direct revelation which accompanies the exposure of a physical object to the eye."[3] Reason is considered an ultimate source of knowledge in different modern philosophies. In Western philosophy, for example, reason is the chief source and test of knowledge.[4] In contrast, intuition is a more direct and immediate method for the acquisition of knowledge, which surpasses reason. Intuition is the power or faculty of attaining direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference.[5]

Iqbal's position on reason was very clear. He recognized its important role in the acquisition of knowledge. He saw reason as a "wayside lamp",

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[2]. 'Intuition', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Last modified 2012, https://www.britannica.com/topic/intuition.

[3]. Stocks, John Leofric and Dorothy Mary Emmet, *Reason & Intuition, And Other Essays,* edited with an introduction by Dorothy M. Emmitt, Oxford University Press: London, 1939, p. 3.

[4]. Brand, Blanchard, "Rationalism," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed 20 June 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/rationalism.

[5]. 'Intuition', Merriam-Webster. Accessed 20 June 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intuition.

which leads to the destination but he questioned its finality or supreme authority because "it is not the destination itself". He wrote:[6]

گزر جا عقل سے کہ یہ نور
چراغ راہ ہے منزل نہیں ہے

Pass beyond intellect because this light
Is the wayside lamp but not the destination

In addition to reason, he drew on intuition because he believed that intuition was much more credible than reason. He expressed it in these words:

عقل را سرمایہ از بیم و شک است
عشق را عزم و یقیں لاینفک است

Reason is rich in fear and doubt.
But love[7] has firm resolve, faith indissoluble.[8]

Now the question arises as to whether there is any contradiction in his thought. Sometimes he commends reason and, at other times, he seems to reject it. It is clear that Iqbal adopted neither empiricism, nor rationalism, nor intuitionism. In his epistemology, sense perception, reason and intuition form an organic unity. He fully accepts that light coming from one direction alone cannot fall on every aspect of reality. The problem of existence should be studied from every angle so that a clear and well established basis could be established. He presented his own theory of knowledge according to which human beings could perceive ultimate

[6]. Iqbal, Muhammad, *Bal-e-Jibreel Ma'a Farhang*, Lahore: Iqbal Cyber Academy, 2003, p. 159.

[7]. Iqbal used different terms as analogous to intuition such as love, passion, heart vision and revelation.

[8]. Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Mysteries of Selflessness*, (trans.) Arthur J. Arberry. London: John Murray, 1953, p. 26.

reality directly through the experience of intuition and indirectly through reason.

Religious and non-religious people alike habitually inquire about the connection between faith and reason, partly because it is a deceptively simple question and partly because, although it seems to be a vague question, it refers to something of vital, burning importance with which every believer, in every religious tradition, has to come to terms over the course of their religious life. Iqbal thought that philosophy and religion must be capable of mutual reconciliation.

Iqbal insists that philosophy and religion belong together and complement each other in the effort to find solutions for the problems of the world. Religion 'stands in need of a rational foundation' and philosophy 'must recognize the central position of religion.[9] Iqbal believed that both religion and philosophy seek a vision of the same reality that reveals itself to them in accordance with their function in life.[10]

Generally speaking, when we refer to the intellect ('*aql*), we appear to be referring to a rational means of attaining knowledge. There are many sources from which to obtain knowledge and each one makes a significant contribution.

SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

Iqbal agreed with Kant that "knowledge is sense-perception elaborated by understanding."[11] 'Understanding' here does not stand exclusively for

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[9]. Dams, Nicholas, "Iqbal and the Western Philosophers", *Iqbal Review,* 49, 4 (Oct. 2008) p. 88.

[10]. Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 1st ed., Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2011, p. 2.

'reason' but for all rational modes of knowledge. He also agreed with the epistemic model of Kant in so far as our knowledge of the external world was concerned. But, like Haman, Iqbal did not agree with Kant that reason was an absolute, self-subsistent, autonomous and impartial human faculty. Haman tried to demolish the main premise behind Kant's belief in the autonomy of reason. He opposed the 'purism of reason' and argued that reason depended on language, culture and experience.[11]

Kant, accordingly, titled his famous treatises *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1780) and *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). Iqbal, however, insisted on the need for a third level of thought beside these two, which he described as a deeper movement of thought. Iqbal regretted that both Ghazali and Kant had failed to discover this deeper movement of thought in the search for knowledge. Iqbal applied his critique of Kant's epistemic model to the sphere of religious knowledge as well.[12] In his view, thought played the same organizational role in religious knowledge as it did in sensory knowledge - a fact which Kant failed to realize due to his Western philosophical legacy, which presupposed that (i) the sensory kind of experience is the only genuine human experience and (ii) all human thought is discursive and cursory.[13]

According to Iqbal, on the other hand, religious knowledge, like any other form of knowledge, consists of data organized by human thought or by the capacity for the understanding, which is the fruit of intuition. He maintains that there are two main sources of knowledge: reason and intuition. In Islamic epistemology, the word *hikmat* (wisdom) and '*aql*

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11. Ejaz ul Haq Ejaz, "Is Iqbal against reason and science?" *The Nation*. Last modified: https://nation.com.pk/14-Dec-2018/is-iqbal-against-reason-and-science.

12. Maruf, Muhammad, "Iqbal's Epistemic Views", *Iqbal Review* 37, 3 (Oct. 1996) p. 68-69.

13. Kant, Emmanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (trans.) Norman Kemp Smith. London: Macmillan, 1963, p. 268.

(reason) are used interchangeably. Iqbal referred to a *hadith*, which established a link with *hikmat* and knowledge. Just as one *hadith* tells us travel great distances if necessary to find knowledge, another *hadith* uses the same expression for wisdom: "God characterized wisdom (*hikmat*) as abundant virtue, Go to wherever you can find this virtue.[14]

But Iqbal explained the limited role of reason in the following words:
For a while familiarize yourself with Aristotle,

> For another while sit in the company of Bacon.
> But you must pass beyond their attitude,
> Don't get lost in this stage; journey on
> With the aid of that intellect that knows more and less
> Probe the depths of mines and oceans;
> Master the world of how and why,
> Catch the moon and Pleiades from the sky.
> But then learn wisdom of another sort,
> Free yourself from the snares of night and day.[15]

Iqbal's advice was that one must learn from these great rationalist thinkers without blindly following their way of thinking. He states that reason is a starting point and that it acts as a first step in the human journey towards reality. Human beings are encouraged to probe the depths of mines and oceans and to catch the moon and stars with the aid of reason but human beings should not limit themselves to the darkness of night and the brightness of day. They should not depend solely on worldly sources of knowledge because they have access to other sources of knowledge as well.

Iqbal held that human beings have access to another source of

[14]. Tirmidi, Muhammad, *Jam'i Al-Tirmidi*, Beirut: Dar'ul Ilmiyyah, 2012, Vol. 4, *Hadith* no. 2696, p. 314.
[15]. Iqbal, Muhammad, *Persian Psalms*, (trans.) Arthur John Arberry. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2014, p. 269.

knowledge. An enlightened heart (intuition) can lead to knowledge, provided that it is in tune with the infinite and is connected to the spiritual basis of human life.

> If you get knowledge without the burning of heart
> Its light becomes a source of darkness all around.
> If the heart has connection with God, it becomes prophetic. If it is not, it is infidelity and *kufr*.[16]

In the above phrases, Iqbal is saying that knowledge has a direct connection with the inner condition of the heart and that knowledge makes an impact on the human personality. Without leading to enlightenment, knowledge is useless. On the other hand, if knowledge produces clarity in the heart and strengthens the connection between human beings and God, such knowledge is of immense benefit.

IQBAL AND THE STATUS OF REASON

Iqbal held the view that reason can know the outer side of things but cannot fathom their inner aspect.

> Reason makes the traveller sharp-sighted.
> What is reason? It is a lamp that lights up our path.
> The commotion raging inside the house-
> What does the traveller's lamp know of it?[17]

خرد سے راہر و روشن بصر ہے
خرد کیا ہے ؟ چراغ راہ گذر ہے
درونِ خانہ ہنگامے ہیں کیا کیا
چراغِ رہگذر کو کیا خبر ہے!

[16]. Iqbal, Muhammad, 'Falak Atard', *Javed Nama (Tehqeeq'o Tudeeh),* Muhammad Riaz, (ed.), Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1988, p. 130.

[17]. Iqbal, Muhammad, *Gabriel's Wing,* (trans.) D. J. Matthews, Siddiqui, Naim and Shah, Syed Akbar Ali. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2014, p. 276.

Iqbal had a very clear position on the status of reason as is clear from his declaration that reason is a major source of illumination on the journey towards the destination but that it is not itself the destination. He challenged the finality of reason, due to its very limited capacity to perceive only the exterior of things, not their interior dimension.

LIMITATION OF REASON

Iqbal describes the scope of reason and its limitations. He believes that reason does not differentiate between right and wrong because the person who depends on reason is thinking only about his or her own benefit and ignores the rights of others. Relying simply on the power of reason, a human being will not be able to perform acts oriented to the welfare of others. The following phrases shed light on his point of view.

> Intellect is not aware of good and evil.
> It is transcending its proper limits.
> Reason looks to one's self-benefit not to others;
> The self-seeking mind heeds not another's welfare.[18]
> Reason can yield only *Khabar* (information) and cannot lead to *Nazar* (vision).
> Though Reason from the House is not far off
> Yet vision it is not destined to have;
> Ask God also for a discerning heart,
> For eye's sight is not light of the heart.[19]

Iqbal suggested that if one wanted to have knowledge of ultimate reality, one must beg for an enlightened heart from God because "the eye's sight" cannot substitute for "the light of the heart". Lines such as these express the function of the heart in one's perception of God. According to Iqbal, passion also has a role to play in the perception of God. He did not

[18]. op. cit., Iqbal, Muhammad, 'Falak Atard', *Javed Nama* (*Tehqeeq'o Tudeeh*), p. 125.

[19]. op. cit., Iqbal, Muhammad, *Gabriel's Wing*, p. 263.

consider reason alone to be capable of knowing the ultimate reality but suggested that passion, which was another faculty of the mind, was also a source of such knowledge.

Iqbal pointed to the misunderstanding of people who think that reason is a wayside lamp which indicates the path to their destination without realizing that 'passion' (intuition) is another source of knowledge.

زمانہ عقل کو سمجھا ہے مشعل راہ
کسے خبر کہ جنوں ھی ہے صاحبِ ادراک

The world regards Reason as a wayside lamp.

But who knows that Reason is possessed by Passion too.[20] Love lives on, though Reason dies.

ہے ابد کے نسخۂ دیرینہ کی تمہیدعشق
عقلِ انسانی ہے فانی، زندہ جاوید عشق

Love is the introduction to Eternity's ancient book,

Mortal is human Intellect but immortal is Love.[21]

RECONCILIATION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Iqbal is not denying the capacity of science and reason to know reality. According to Iqbal,

> The truth is that religious and scientific processes, though involving different methods, are identical in their final aim. Both aim at reaching the most real. In fact, religion, for reasons that I have mentioned before, is far

[20]. ibid., p. 271.
[21]. Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Call of the Caravan Bell*, (trans.) M. A. K. Khalil, V. G. Kiernan and Mustansir Mir. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2014, p. 177.

> more anxious to reach the ultimately real than science. And to both, the way to pure objectivity lies through what may be called the purification of experience. In order to understand this we must make a distinction between experience as a natural fact, significant for the normally observable behavior of Reality, and experience as significant for the inner nature of reality.[22]

The ideas of Iqbal are closely related to those of Einstein in his essay "Science and Religion," which was published nearly fourteen years after Iqbal. In the words of Einstein:

> Science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration towards truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, but religion without science is blind.[23]

THE COMBINATION OF REASON AND INTUITION

According to Iqbal,

> Reason and intuition must combine to give a true picture of Reality. Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its

[22]. op. cit., Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* p. 155.
[23]. Isaacson, Walter, *Einstein: His Life and Universe*, London: Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2017, p. 390.

> wholeness. In fact, intuition, as Bergson rightly says, is only a higher kind of intellect.[24]

Iqbal disagreed with Ghazali that reason and intuition were opposed to each other. According to Ghazali, the revelation of the infinite in mystic experience convinced him of the need to draw a line of cleavage between thought and intuition. Ghazali failed to see that thought and intuition was organically related.

Both Kant and Ghazali did not understand that thought, in the very act of knowledge, passes beyond its own finitude.[25] Iqbal described the combination of intelligence and intuition in these words:

> Only through love intelligence gets to know God,
> Love's labour's find firm ground in intelligence;
> When love is accompanied by intelligence
> It has the power to design another world.[26]

The heart (*dil*) says to the mind ('*aql*):

> I interpret the book of life,
> And through me Divine Glory shines forth
> You deal with the outward aspect of things,
> I know what lies within.
> You understand the secret of existence
> And I perceive it with my naked eyes;
> You give knowledge and I the direct vision
> You are a seeker of God and I reveal God.[27]

[24]. op. cit., Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 2.
[25]. ibid., p. 5.
[26]. op. cit., Iqbal, Muhammad, 'Falak Atard' *Javed Nama* (*Tehqeeq'o Tudeeh*), p. 301.
[27]. ibid., p. 135.

The seat of intuition is the heart (*qalb)* where it enjoys direct participation in divine knowledge (*'ilm)* without the aid of rationality. Iqbal had derived the understanding of intuition from the Qur'an, from a word such as heart (*af'idah*, Arabic) mentioned in the verse below:

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

> Say: "[God Is] He who has brought you [all] into being, and has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and hearts: [yet] how seldom are you grateful" [28]

Bergson advises human beings to make use of an intellect that has drawn inspiration from the heart because only such an intellect can comprehend the mystery of life. Now this is another name for intuition, which is the kernel of Bergsonian philosophy. Intuition, according to Bergson, is a direct apprehension of reality, which is non-intellectual. In intuition, all reality is present. It does not admit of analysis because, in analysis, all is in the past or in the future. But what is the benefit of such intuition? According to H. Weldon Carr,[29] what intuition does for us is to give us another means of apprehension by a fluid and not a static category; in apprehending our life as true duration we grasp it in the living experience itself and instead of fixing the movement in a rigid frame follow it in its sinuosity; we have a form of knowledge which adopts the movement.[30]

Now the question arises as to why Bergson found it necessary to put such stress on intuition and to claim that the ultimate reality of the universe

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[28]. *Al-Qur'an* (Surah 67. 23), (trans.) Muhammad Asad.

[29]. Carr, H. Weldon, *The Philosophy of Change*, London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1914, p. 30-31

[30]. Iqbal, Muhammad, "Bedil in the light of Bergson", *Iqbal Review*, 27, no. 3 (Oct. 1988), p. 12-13.

was spiritual? The answer to this question is that, after deep observation and profound insight into the phenomena of life, Bergson had reached the conclusion that the intolerant and haughty cult of science, so prevalent in his day, claimed to be all-knowing. For Bergson, however, science was not able to fathom the depths of the universe but could only touch the surface of the human self.

Bergson considered it strange that metaphysics had been rejected as "fantasy." He was of the opinion that science was ill- suited to grasp reality in its entirety because reality could be grasped only with the help of intuition.[31]

CONCLUSION

Intuition and Reason may be visualized as a double edged sword. With one edge, a person uses one edge to enter the universe but with the other, a person enters ultimate reality. According to Iqbal, only a proper balance between the rational and technological advancement of the modern world and the moral and spiritual thinking of the East would generate a world of peace and salvation that he described as "the pattern of a different world". Humanity has ceased to live soulfully. In the domain of thought, modern people live in open conflict with themselves and in the domain of economics and politics, they live in open conflict with one another. This situation cannot be rectified without moral and spiritual changes.

In Iqbal's view, the most sublime form of reason is intuition and the most elevated form of reason is divine revelation by virtue of which reality can

[31]. Shagufta, Begum, "Iqbal's Epistemology", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3, 12 (June 2013), p. 147.

be understood as a whole.[32] The integration of the partial with the whole is the discovery of the organic link between reason and intuition. Iqbal thought that genuine metaphysics was the fruit of intuition rather than of intellectual activity. Iqbal praised Bergson, who considered intuition to be a powerful and effective means of apprehending reality, for his deep insight into the human mind. Iqbal was convinced that dry-as-dust rationalism could not fulfil this task. He also had an unshakable belief in the potentialities of man and was convinced that man could move mountains and conquer the forces of nature. In his view, man was capable of attaining unimaginable heights.

[32]. ibid., p. 147.

KARL RAHNER'S MEANING OF FREEDOM AND MOHANDAS GANDHI'S PARADIGM OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE: A Reading and an Insight into the 'Freedom to Do Good'

Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Karl Rahner, a systematic Christian theologian, attempted to understand his world in relation to the rest of the realities he encountered in the northern hemisphere. More specifically, he was interested in the theological and dialogical sense of the meaning of freedom in consultation with other streams of thinking and scholarship. Secondly, moving to a totally different world, the attempt is made to investigate how Mohandas Gandhi engaged with the religio-political discourse of his time and managed to combine this with the quest for freedom from the British raj (foreign rule) for his compatriots, who were seeking *Swaraj* (self-rule) in order to liberate both the ruler and the ruled. Both Rahner and Gandhi were profoundly rooted in their own traditions (Freiburg born Christian-Catholic and Gujarat born Hindu-Vaishnavite). This article attempts to meet these two great minds and to understand their different perspectives, which have been unique in the East-West worldview (*Weltanschauung*) and is concurrently significant for the meaning and the quest for freedom in light of the post Covid19 world with its challenging and compelling adjustments. However, in the concluding statement, the author deliberately introduces four other contemporary religio-social movements[1] that highlight the

[1]. I intentionally highlight Fetuallah Gülen (*Hizmet*/Service), A. T. Ariyarante (*Sarvodaya*/*Shramadana* Awakening of all/donating one's labour for the welfare of others), Tahir ul-Qadri (*Minhaj*/Path in the name of *zakat*) and Oscar Abeyratne (*Pubuduwa*/ Renewal/commitment to socio-political wellbeing as being spiritual) as the movement founders in this context of religio-social resurgence in each of their traditions. I have already researched and published on the first 2 movements, (Islamic and Buddhist). See. my *Paradigm of Service: The Narratives of the Transnational Hizmet Movement and the Pan-National Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka* in, *The Hizmet Movement and Peace building: Global Cases* (Abu-Nimer, M., and Seidal, T., (ed.), Lexington Books, Maryland, 2018), and the

'social responsibility' of each of their traditions in fostering modern movements that seek the freedom to 'do good' for the 'common good' because it is 'good to do good'.

PREAMBLE

Freedom quests in the history of humankind are as intuitively primeval as is humanity itself. The inventions of *fire*, the *wheel* and more recently the *chip* can be categorized as the 'three great leaps' that profoundly and radically changed the course of history. But in spite of these inventions, primordial humans, perhaps like modern human beings, could not find an answer for the puzzling events and apparent riddles of life and nature. Questions like:
Where were we before we were here?
Where might we be after we are here?
Is this all that there is?
Where are all the dead humans?
Have they gone or are they still around?
Are we to join them or is there nothing hereafter?
Or is there in fact a hereafter?

They perceived most of these questions in relation to the 'powers' beyond their control. This phenomenon led them to engage in a perennial search and articulation of the 'quest' in their own existential situations. Therefore, the quest for 'the unknown' remained a 'mystery' yet to be understood and the explanations were found in many different ways. These explanations were substantially plausible and still continue with certain variables as history moves in different directions especially during a pandemic like the current Covid19 during which beliefs systems are challenged unprecedentedly.

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two latter movements (Islamic/ Pakistan and Christian/ Sri Lanka) are being studied currently also as noted in the 'Wrapping up' (conclusion) of this study.

However, those who study their systems could not conclude that they found sufficient meaning in their daily struggles with the game in the jungle, harvest in the field, leisure in the precincts of the cave, company and identity in the tribe, finding harmony with the spirits and placating the gods in their pantheon. Those that began their migration from central Africa into the rest of the land mass indicate different behavioral patterns. Their settlements are a classic example of this perennial quest to know more than they already knew - this inner urge demanded freedom to attempt 'the new'. Freedom, therefore has been one of the most cherished experiences that humankind has grappled with and no doubt it is still the most sought-after yet seemingly unattainable experience despite the enhanced reasoning and the techno-scientific developments of the 21st century.

This article attempts to bring together the material of Rahner's (a systematic theologian and contemplative) *meaning of freedom* and Gandhi's (a Vaishanavite activist contemplative) paradigm of *freedom struggle* for a new insight into the quest for freedom and liberation in the post Covid19 world.

PHENOMENON OF FREEDOM

Freedom is one of the most celebrated notions of the modern world. All religions, political ideologies, pursuits and convictions demand freedom. Karamchand Mohandas Gandhi and Aurubindo Ghosh of the Indian Independence movement, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Louise Parks of the American Civil Rights movement, and Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela of the Anti-apartheid movement of South Africa come to mind as personalities in the history of freedom movements.

There is remarkable variety in what was understood as freedom by the

above litany and by the six individuals[2] and their movements mentioned in this article together with the hundreds of thousands of people with quite different ideological aspirations who were inspired by the freedom 'to do good' and who benefitted from the profound insights of these movements for the pursuit of freedom, each in their own circumstances. Clearly, the word freedom means many things to different people.

RAHNER'S ATTEMPT

A German born Jesuit systematic theologian (1904-1984) has a special value for this 'inter-textual cum praxis' piece of research into two epistemological and philosophical traditions. Rahner's major theological contribution could be described as that of the innovative contribution of an erudite and sharp interpreter of Christian doctrine articulated particularly by the church fathers.[3] Rahner draws mainly on Augustine and Aquinas (two major systematic thinkers in philosophical theology within the Christian tradition).[4] It is to his credit that his euro-centric theology was able to open its windows to engage in dialogue with the contemporary world, especially with other traditions and convictions, which were hitherto referred to as 'Orientalism' understood as 'a study of the *exotic other* in the colonial project'.[5] Rahner was aware of orientalism

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2. See my footnote 1 above for these six individuals.

3. This specific group which includes thousands of theologians from all over the Christian world from pre medieval to medieval times from all different cultural and philosophical backgrounds with sound theology but not without controversy over the history of the development Christian doctrine and practice. Their body of knowledge is called patristics *(pater* Lat. = father hence the study of the fathers is called patristics in Christian Studies). This body of knowledge also forms the part of the tradition (*traditione* Lat.) when combined with scripture (*scriptura* Lat.) indicate the two major pillars on which the traditional interpretation of the Christian doctrine relied its ecclesiastical authority.

4. Basically Rahner himself was a philosophical theologian moving between systematic and dogmatic theologies which was his forte, that which made him whom he came into be in the post Vatican II, open to changes and even willing to revise his theology as well.

5. vide E. W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (his *Magnum Opus*), for one of the finest literary critiques of the 20th century. See particularly pp. 1-92, a long description of his versatile but dense reading of history of 'representations', epistemological conflicts which later scholars like Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and

but admitted that he never travelled to the East during his lifetime. However, his awareness enabled him to expound areas that opened new avenues for his students and for the Vatican II prelates who wanted their church to respond to the challenges of modernity and secularity.

His major works are a classic example of his own philosophically based theological responses as a Christian to numerous issues raised in patristics, existentialism, linguistic analysis, philosophy, evolution, Marxism, atheism and other religious traditions (which he later recognized as important for Christian theology). He was able to respond to the latter even though with an axiom, namely, the concept of 'anonymous Christians' (he is to be credited for this even though it required further revision which he attempted later, though not substantially).

The unsustainable position that he held was to say that Buddhists, Hindus and others might be 'Christians' even though de facto they are unaware of it. I understand it as 'a Rahnerian philosophical assumption' based on Christo-centrism and certain fulfillment theories of doctrinaires such as J. N. Farquhar (Protestant), Jean Danielou, Henri de Lubac and Hans Ur von Balthasar (Catholic). Rahner attempted to rectify his position (unlike the fulfillment theorists), when he was challenged by a Hindu at a public discourse whether he would consider himself as 'an anonymous Hindu, Buddhist or a Taoist.' I am sure Rahner with deep humility found a way to research deeply into religious plurality although he was perhaps not as well informed as his fellow Jesuits such as Jacques Dupuis (1923-2004), a Belgian professor, who spent over three decades in India (*Vidyajyoti*) doing research into *Vedanta* or Aloysius Pieris of Sri

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Ranjit Guha joined by many others developed as postcolonial and subaltern studies. Said is considered the 'whistle blower' in this decisive epistemological revolution to a new generation of thinkers of alternative paradigms. See my *Faithing the Native Soil: dilemmas and aspirations of postcolonial Buddhists and Christians in Sri Lanka*, (author publication, Colombo, 2012) on ideas of Said as well as those of Spivak and Bhabha particularly in ch. 7, pp. 190-210.

Lanka (*Tulana*) with his Buddhological insights, each of whom had a deep understanding of their milieu and engaged in theological dialogue with their co-pilgrims.

Rahner commences his quest by considering himself as *rudes*[6] in the context of the evidence of pluralism in the world. He admits that theology too is fragmented into a whole gamut of particular disciplines, each discipline offering a vast amount of material that mobilizes its own unique and rigorous methodology. He accepts pluralism in theology as a discipline and considers it a healthy sign for "as theologians we must necessarily enter into dialogue with pluralism of historical, sociological and social science, a dialogue no longer mediated by philosophy"[7] as it may have been during his years as a student.

Through his exposure to plurality, it seems he understood that theology was a discipline and that articles of faith could be preached only to the extent that they succeeded in establishing contact with the total, secular self-understanding which a person has in a particular epoch and succeeds in engaging in conversation that allows itself to be enriched in its use of language and even more so in the very way it engages in theology.[8] His cautious openness are evident in the Peruvian bishops' attempt to protect Gustavo Gutierrez and liberation theology when Josef Ratzinger, the head of the Vatican's Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF,

6. What he means here (*rudes*) is that he is in a situation like the very first fill the child's tender and unrestricted mind, indicates his humble approach to new learning which meant he had an incomparably magnificent mind.

7. Rahner, K., *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Crossroad, NY, 1994, p. 8. Also see the Back flap of the book where a US based journal, *Theological Studies* produced by the American Jesuits where Rahner's erudition is described, "a brilliant synthesis flowing from an incomparable mastery of Scripture, the Church Fathers, the great medieval theologians, the theology of the Schools, and contemporary thought". I visited this 'theological compendium', which, in my view, is the best I have read by him.

8. ibid. The original of course in German translation sounds dense, but what it communicates is deeply theological and profoundly reflective indicating the clarity of mind to elucidate the core of Christian doctrine even though he had little knowledge on the plurality of religions which challenged the 'later Rahner'.

Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, Lat.), pressurized the Peruvian bishops to examine Gutierrez's writings.

This was an abortive attempt since the bishops were divided 50% to 50% in the final vote whether or not to issue an interdiction. This event is symbolic of Rahner as a theologian and of his attempt to articulate his conviction that "only by experiencing oneself as a free subject responsible before God and by accepting this responsibility can one understand the direct, not inverse, proportion between radical dependence on God and genuine human autonomy."[9] Rahner described the 'freedom to do good' in Gutierrez's case as a "faith which is under challenge and is by no means to be taken for granted, a faith which today must ever be won anew and is still in the process of being formed, and he (referring to anyone who engages in theology on freedom) need not to be ashamed of this."[10] He does this with a serenity that permeates his theology with mystagogical interventions[11] and that reveals his mysticism, particularly

[9]. ibid., p. 79.

[10]. ibid., p. 5.

[11]. Mystagogy is rooted in the Greek word *myéō*, which means 'to be led into 'the (pagan mystery cult) secrets' or 'to be initiated into the mysteries.' In Rahner's theology, this word *mystology* must be understood as closely connected with the word *mystḗrion* (mystery), which in turn appears to be derived from *muein*, meaning 'to close one's eyes or lips'. The Absolute Mystery reveals himself in self-communication. In Christian theology and for Rahner, Jesus is both the divine Mystery and the divine mystagogue - the one who initiates into the mysteries so that God's revelation becomes complete in the person of Jesus. However, it does not resolve the Mystery; it increases cognizance of God's incomprehensibility or the ineffability (the question of finality and the definitiveness of Jesus remains a theological issue). Experiences of the mystery of themselves point people to the Absolute Mystery, always indicating an ever greater Mystery. See. *A Mystagogy of Living Faith: An Analysis of Karl Rahner's Mystagogical Approach* in: *Karl Rahner, Culture and Evangelization*, Mellor, A., pp. 116–150. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004400313_005 retrieved on 10 Nov. 2020. In my view, Rahner's position is that, even in heaven, God will still be an incomprehensible mystery. The 'Godness' of God, if fully revealed, would result in God ceasing to be God. Hence, it seems to me that 'incomprehensibility is what makes God who God is'. If God is fully revealed, then God ceases to be God because there is nothing unknown about God anymore. Hence, some call the reality of God a mystery.

in his incredibly scholarly work: *Foundations of Christian Faith*, his *Magnum Opus*.[12]

RAHNER'S VIEW ON FREEDOM

Rahner links the freedom 'to do good' with the struggle for and the sense of responsibility. In a very assertive way he engages in a sort of definition, "in real freedom, a subject always intends himself, understands and posits himself and, ultimately, he does not do something, but does himself"[13] as well as engaging in 'good deeds'. This shows the irrevocable responsibility that is attached to freedom and Rahner further elaborates that freedom is the capacity of the individual to decide about himself or herself in his or her 'single totality'. Because of a person's position in the world, a single action in the depth of person's being is the fruit of many earlier decisions. Therefore, freedom is not the ability to choose arbitrarily and not just a series of independent actions. Freedom is an action definitively geared to the fundamental self-orientation of a person towards the infinite source of goodness and of love and becomes complete by 'doing good'.

Freedom is not simply freedom from some situation or from certain constrains but it is "freedom in and through history and in time and space, and precisely there and precisely in this way it is the freedom of the subject in relation to himself".[14] Freedom is the capacity to do something final and definitive, which is the only self-actualizing process whereby a person comes to be what that person will be forever. Having reached this level of freedom, a person acquires the capacity to change all pre- determined, existential and categorical situations. The strength of Rahner's anthropological and theological axiom is evident in the

12. See my explanation in footnote 7 above as per this text. Its recommended reading for any serious student of Christian theology as well as those who are engaged in classical Islamic Studies as the latter group might access a good systematized piece of work.
13. op. cit., Rahner (1994), p. 94.
14. ibid., p. 95.

statement that a person becomes part of transcendental freedom through a concrete theological experience, which he describes as the categorical decision of freedom in the here and now. In my view, Rahner is describing the 'here and now freedom to do good' and 'the way into' a profound mystagogical experience.

Rahner states that the world of categorical objectification is the world of transcendental freedom, which consists of the multiplicity of objective experience. He implicitly recognizes the viability and validity of freedom movements but the objectifying process may, understandably, lead the participants of such freedom movements into the same former constraints in new ways. Without doubt, there are examples of freedom movements that have turned out to be autocratic and even repressive which probably Rahner had in mind with his current analysis.

GHANDI AND HIS ATTEMPT

Gandhi, an illustrious son of mother India, was born as a Hindu Vaishnavite. He acquainted himself with the Bible, the Qur'an and the *Bhagavad Gita* and, as a London barrister (1869-1948), met with socialist humanitarians (such as Edward Carpenter), Fabians (such as Bernard Shaw) and Theosophists (such as Annie Beasant) during his several sojourns in London and South Africa. Some of them were rebels who denounced the evils of capitalism, rejected the prevailing values of Victorian institutions, preached a cult of simplicity and stressed the superiority of morals over material values and of cooperation over conflict. These common grounds made them like birds which flocked together in the free social life that London offered to them and to their contemporaries.

His deep spiritual insight into Hindu scriptures and his willingness to cross over to other religious faiths gave him a deeper appreciation of his own tradition. The spirituality of the *Bhagavad Gita* was for him a call to

perform one's own duty, permitting him to act without attachment within the Hindu epistemology. He considered the Gita as his spiritual lexicon. As a practicing barrister in South Africa, he pleaded for the rights of Indian minorities. Moreover, in his home county, the freedom struggle led to his struggle for the radicalization of the concept of *ahimsa* (non-injury to all living beings), which led his countrymen and women into a deeper awareness of freedom. In his autobiography, he writes poignantly, "I should narrate my experiment in my spiritual field which is known only to myself, and from which I have derived such power as I possess, for working in the political field – everything is directed to the same end."[15] His ardent spiritual quest to adopt the teaching of the *Gita* and his sublime aim of *swaraj* (home rule) from British rule appeared to him to be a divine oracle. In his view, he had to pursue truthfulness not only in word but also in thought in order to realize the Truth. One should not only seek the relative truth according to one's own understanding but the absolute truth, which emanates from the eternal principle we call God.[16] He acknowledged that he had not realized this absolute truth and that he was ready to sacrifice everything in the pursuit of it. But he also said: "I am duty bound to pursue and hold onto the relative truth,"[17] which for him was the possession of the land of India for his own people and the freedom in all things for everyone.

THE MEANING OF GANDHI'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Even though he was a British trained barrister who had adopted a modern and radical socialist way of thinking and who lived in London, the profound spiritual impact of Hinduism on his life and action made him stand out from others. Unlike many of his compatriots, he did not retire into a cave in the Himalayas or to the solitude of Rishikesh to

15. See Gandhi, K. M., *An Autobiography: The story of my Experiment with Truth*, (trans.) Mahdeve Devasi. NY, 1957, p. 8.
16. ibid., p. 8.
17. ibid., p. 9.

contemplate the promptings of the Divine. In fact, he carried the cave within himself during his daily meetings, walks, sittings and conversations with *brahmins* and with *harijans* (whom he called God's people but who were more commonly considered untouchables). For him, freedom was the way to the Truth (*sat*) and the strategy to seek Truth, a quest which could not be limited to the privacy of one's personal life for it had to be upheld in the challenging contexts of social and political life. He considered the creation of a free Indian *Swaraj* (Indian home rule) to be the highest achievement of Truth in the soul of mother India. He admitted without shame that it was not British rule but the imperfections of Indians themselves, which kept their country in bondage.[18] Essential in the quest for Truth was a self-critical agenda that led to self-purification. He strategized his spiritual quest for the freedom struggle by basing his life on the *Gita*. He found a new technique for redressing wrongs by insisting on the devotion to Truth (*Satyagraha*) instead of engaging in conflict. The British administration had no means of handling his willingness to suffer for resisting the adversary without rancor and fighting the enemy without violence.[19] What could the armed police and the so-called 'rule of law' do when thousands of people just stood there without weapons. The line of command froze in Delhi as no state-led rapid deployment was possible in the face of thousands of people on the streets. His contemplative non-action anchored himself in the loftiest Hindu spirit of non-possession (*Aparigraha*), which demanded the willingness to abandon any material things that could cramp the life of the spirit and to free oneself from the bonds of money and property.

Another pillar of his spirituality was equanimity (*Sambhava),* which enabled him to remain unruffled by pain or pleasure, victory or defeat and to work without the hope of success or the fear of failure. What was remarkable in his 'freedom struggle' was the presence of the core of Hindu thought that he brought to light in the practice of non-violence

[18]. Devanesan, D. S., *Making of Mahatma*, Bombay, 1969, p. 7.
[19]. ibid., p. 94.

(*Ahimsa*), the spirit of non-possession and the objectivity of equanimity (*Sambhav*a), which were all essential ingredients in his quest for Truth (*Satyaghraha*) and in his struggle for an Indian home rule (*Swaraj*).[20] Many people became involved in his expression of non-violence and non-cooperation, which led to the boycotting of legislatures, courts, offices and schools and resulted in the arrests of thousands of people willing to defy laws and cheerfully line up for prison. British rule was shaken to its foundations and London was in crisis because the loss of India meant that much economic profit made in Sri Lanka and Burma would also be lost. The African colonial project would also have to be abandoned because of 'maddening agitations led by a half-naked fakir,' as Churchill frustratingly once said. The real issue was that 'the nudity of the British raj's power game' through its economic gains and repression had finally become exposed to the world. The infamous British East India Company led by Robert Clive with its carefully crafted schemes for commercial gain, fiscal portals and earmarked routes to London were all crumbing before the eyes of the British in the face of robust expressions of freedom. Gandhi and his freedom movement were at the core of this wave of change.

Gandhi's bottom-up constructive program with its religious and political paradigm, which aimed at educating the rural masses (at that time making up 85% of the total population of 900 million in India) and which was intent on fighting untouchability (discrimination against low-caste people), promotion of hand spinning, weaving and other cottage industries to supplement the earning of the underemployed, made him a likable leader but a person who was unacceptable by the Raj. His freedom struggle offered a spirituality for combat and developed political awareness among the Indian masses by creating bonds that broke down traditional barriers of religion and caste. He remains an enigmatic powerful spiritual giant who demands our attention. His life and brutal

[20]. See *Encyclopaedia of Asian History*, NY, 1988, vs., Gandhi.

death pose persistent questions about the meaning of life and its relationship to the environment and still present challenges to the whole of humanity.

A COMMON SPIRITUALITY

Rahner and Gandhi on the issue of freedom, were on two different religious plateaus. But their responses to the fundamental question of freedom were based on an anthropological axiom to which each kept returning even though Rahner was rooted in Catholic theology and Gandhi was firmly planted in his Vaishnavite school of thought.

Both Rahner and Gandhi agree on the need to actualize freedom as one 'single totality'. Rahner's view is that freedom is a decision involving the whole person. From the depths of one's being, one's total orientation must be directed towards the fuller meaning of freedom (Rahner here is profoundly Kantian).[21] In my view, Gandhi understands this 'single totality' in his quest for freedom as the 'spiritually integrated core' that energizes political action, which for him is the self-realization of the Rahnerian "subjective freedom in the passage through the temporality which freedom itself establishes in order to be itself."[22] Gandhi derives his thought from the Hindu Vaishavite concept of self-realization in the divine, which is still unknown because of ignorance (*maya*). However, the divine Self (*Brahman*) is ontologically present in the soul (*Atman*) where this fuller realization of the eternal soul (*paramatman*) takes place. The

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21. Interestingly, Rahner names his text as *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1994) 'as if' to follow Kant's *Foundations of Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), because he argued that " we can have knowledge of things we can experience, what he calls as 'categorical experience' and Rahner fully absorbs the Kantian notion of 'experience' as a 'categorical experience', though subjective however, suggesting that moral law is a 'truth of reason' and hence the rational creatures are bound by the same moral law: that they should act rationally in accordance with universal moral law. It's basically suggesting that there is a universal moral truth and that governs but humans must act rationally. Hence, I argue that Rahner was Kantian in his exposition in this specific context.

22. op. cit., Rahner (1994), p. 94.

symbiosis of the 'eternal soul' with the 'self' in potency for the fuller realization (*tat vam asi*/that thou art you)[23] is similar to the notion of 'single totality' in Rahner. It is the final and total absorption that compels the individual soul to become eternal (*paramatman*).

Rahner understands freedom to be the capacity to do something final and definitive. He states clearly: "This freedom is not an individual, empirical datum which *a posteriori* anthropology could permit to exist alongside of other objects"[24] Gandhi neither accepted the British notion of freedom for himself nor for India and he basically rejected British rule (foreign rule) as home rule (*swaraj*). Rahner seems to interpret the Gandhian position, namely that people have already experienced what freedom really means when they can begin to ask reflexively about it in order 'to do good'. The Gandhian view is that one realizes the mystical aspect of oneself when one is able to maintain a deep sense of non-injury (*Ahimsa*) to all living beings, the spirit of non-possessiveness (*Aparigraha*) and equanimity (*Sambhava*), which for Rahner exists in the realm of one's present experience (*Sitz im Leben*). Gandhi gave these qualities a geopolitical expression in his devotion to Truth (the *Satyagraha* movement), which for Rahner is the objectification, in time, of transcendental freedom. Gandhi considered such freedom to be his capacity to act definitively for his country and for his people through his experience of life as a Vaishnavite. In my view, there is a profound philosophical compatibility between the thought of Rahner and Gandhi despite the divergence of their *Weltanchaunng* (worldviews) regarding many other aspects of life.

In this paper, I have investigated the meaning of freedom for these two intellectual giants, both of whom embraced simplicity as a value. Rather than a comparative study, I have initiated a hermeneutical inquiry, which may be further explored. There is a close affinity between Rahner and his

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[23]. See *Brahadranyaka Upanishad* for extensive philosophical discussion of this 'union' of the Vedantic tradition, which is part of the *Sruti* (revealed) collection of the Hindu Scriptures.
[24]. ibid., p. 96.

scholastic theology (although he later tried to free himself from certain aspects of it) and Gandhi's understanding of the philosophy of life as presented in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Their reflections on freedom were rooted in their spiritual traditions. Rahner painstakingly reinterpreted his training in scholastic metaphysics and epistemology while Gandhi carved out a new dimension of the *Gita* and freed it from its purely mythological contours so that it became a readable and practical text for his contemporaries. For Gandhi, it was neither formalism, nor manuals, nor dogmas, nor rituals, nor sectarianism that mattered since the source of life was in religion rather than in politics. So he formulated a most appealing, timely and necessary agenda and outlined an appealing strategy by challenging himself first[25] and also his friends and foes to free themselves in order to free the nation from foreign domination. In my view, Rahner explains the Gandhian perception of freedom in the form of metaphysical language as follows: "In the multiplicity of the temporal that we are performing in the event of freedom, we are forming the eternity which we ourselves are becoming,"[26] a perfect Gandhian dream of a free India – work now for a better future for all.

I wish that Rahner and Gandhi had met each other in real life. I am curious to know what they might have discussed. The encounter of two persons with such a level of erudition, insight and vision from an earlier period of history has given the present generation vision and direction. Such a meeting of minds would have helped the process of cross fertilization of perspectives for the on-going discourse between East and West and would have shown the way for a 'spiritual quest' in the contemporary world. This is the reason for my attempt to make a study of two great men, whose views some may consider to be incomparable. My purpose was to challenge the common view that such interdisciplinary studies are not possible.

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[25]. 'Experiment on himself'. Gandhi made a costly experiment on himself while seeking the Truth. This is an interesting life-time journey, which many would not dare to attempt.
[26]. ibid., p. 96.

In the concluding paragraphs I wish to expose the thought of both the Rahner and Gandhi to the light of four religious and social movements with which I have been connected and whose founders are still living.[27] I refer to their work in this paper so that younger researchers and scholars might take up the challenge of studying their combination of doctrine and practice in their own context. They appear to us as global nomads, integrating the wisdom of others with their own for the sake of the men and women of our time.

WRAPPING UP

In the past few decades, I have met four 20th century 'movement builders' who share something of the stature of Gandhi. I have had the privilege of studying, documenting and publishing their work substantially. Hence, I would describe Fetuallah Gülen of Turkey as a transnational movement builder while A. T. Ariyaratne and Oscar Abyeratne of Sri Lanka and Tahir ul-Qadri of Minhaj-ul-Quran International as originally pan-national founders of movements, which later spread throughout the world by means of each of their diasporas.

My research has been mostly on the Buddhist, Christian and Islamic 'social doctrine' (my research phraseology) that they have interpreted and initiated through their specific reading of each of their religious texts in the contexts of their environment. Each tried to inspire people with the core of their respective traditions 'to be good and to do good and to be of service to others'. They have crossed their national borders and the barriers of Turkey, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Their many and diverse readers and listeners are spread throughout the world. My intention in

27. I have met all four of them Fetullah Gülen (Turkey), A. T. Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka), Tahir ul-Qadri (Pakistan) and Oscar Abeyratne (Sri Lanka) and I am still connected now with several groups and individuals of all four movements. My learning has been enormously enriched and indeed my perspectives have been greatly expanded. I am most grateful to all four of them. Meeting all four them personally has been unique and extraordinary to me personally as a researcher on contemporary religio-social movements.

this hermeneutical inquiry has been to draw out some salient features from the thought of Rahner and Gandhi and to bring Gülen and Ariyaratne as well as Qadri and Abeyratne into my discussion on freedom.

Gülen and Ariyaratne, Qadri and Abyeratne were inspired by the 'freedom to do good' but the implementation of their vision was curtailed by 'political taboos' and 'traditional social totems', and sometimes jeopardized by political considerations and even by their own traditional religious establishments. Gülen is in self-exile, Ariyaratne and Abyeratne have retired from active work while Qadri travels between Canada and Pakistan. These men and their movements have global implications and, therefore, should be studied seriously so that their movements become known throughout the world. My specific interest is how each of these movements carved out the 'freedom to do good," and this is what each of them is most celebrated and remembered for by the ordinary people in their respective religious traditions.

Tahir ul-Qadri of Pakistan, a spiritual icon and an Islamic scholar has had both national and international appeal due to his philanthropy (*zakat*) and his serious scholarship. I am associated with his work through Minhaj University Lahore. Qadri himself experienced a severe threat to his life, which restricted his freedom. As founders of significant spiritual movements, Gülen, Ariyarante, Qadri and Abeyratne must be given serious attention because their focus is related to issues of the 21st century such as social responsibility, justice and the wellbeing of everyone, irrespective of denominational boundaries.

Just as Rahner and Gandhi devised their paradigm of 'freedom to do good' in their own century and in their own context, the *Hizmet* Movement of Gülen and the *Shramadana* movement of Ariyaratne[28] and

[28]. op. cit. See footnote 1 above; also pp. 285-313 of the text for a long analysis on the two movements, dissecting the social doctrine of both Buddhist and Islamic traditions.

Minhaj ul-Qur'an International of Qadri are significant models for our reflection. Likewise, Oscar Abeyratne, who is a Catholic priest from the conservative archdiocese of Colombo in Sri Lanka, has made a strong appeal for radical ecclesiastical renewal (*pubuduwa*) and his call has led to significant and effective reforms.

My final suggestion is that young scholars in South Asia look beyond the confines of their own borders to find out what these leading personalities have discovered during their lifetime. In this way, they could be inspired by what these men have presented as possible ways forward in the construction of an alternative society of human relationships based on the invitation 'to be good and to do good.' Let me leave you with the two initial personalities who initially inspired this discussion, namely, Rahner and Gandhi. I am confident that it was a useful exercise to explore the nuances of freedom that each of these pioneers has pursued. The orientation to serve the needs of others is what prompted each of the six personalities mentioned above (Gülen and Qadri, *Islamic*; Rahner and Abeyratne, *Christian*; Gandhi, *Hindu*; and Ariyaratne, *Buddhist*) to move beyond the limitations of the traditional social environments in which they grew up. Although theirs was a 'charisma' and a 'model' of 'unconditional service to humanity', inspired by their different religious traditions, they succeeded in finding the 'freedom to do good' within their respective environments. They searched for the inner core of each of their religious traditions and discovered the 'common social responsibility' present in all religious traditions, namely, the invitation *to be good and to do good simply because it is good to do good*. The founders of these new movements had the same goal but achieved it in different ways. Both Karl Rahner and Mohandas Gandhi are no longer with us but the other four personalities mentioned above continue to inspire and influence world communities. Their wisdom remains iconic to all who seek an opportunity 'to do good' in the current critical circumstances of a major pandemic.

Book Reviews

TAHIR ABBAS
Islamophobia and Radicalization: A Vicious Cycle.
C. Hurst & Co. Publishers Ltd., London, (2019).
ISBN: 9781787382015. pp. xxviii + 235. Publisher eBook/Kindle (GBP) 40.00.

The range of issues and influences that Tahir Abbas covers in *Islamophobia and Radicalization* makes it engaging, relevant and a very useful resource for anyone involved in community relations in a multicultural setting at this time of global crisis.

The reader can sense the author's empathy for both the colonized and the colonizer, the British, the Indian, the Pakistani and the believer in whatever faith they own. He draws on his personal experience in both the United States and Britain to describe the two parallel concepts of Islamophobia and radicalization and is very sensitive in explaining how a misunderstanding or abuse of religious beliefs may lead to either local tension or open warfare and that at some point between those extremes the response by people opposed to the Muslim position may be regarded as 'Islamophobia.' However, he is also very frank in his assessment of political leaders.

He notes that the concept, but not the name, originated with the founding of Islam in the seventh century CE and was based on fear as Muslim armies swept through East Asia and whole states adopted Islam en masse. It came into common use during the Arab-Israeli conflict post-WWII. The two parallel concepts of Islamophobia and radicalization and was formalized with a definition by the London-based Runnymede Trust in 1997. However, there is no common understanding of the term, and he explains a number of ways in which it has been used, almost always in a derogatory sense or implying some degree of xenophobia. Abbas explains

as well the confusion in the use of the two terms, racialism and Islamophobia, and between Islamic beliefs, traditions and racial identity. People of Jewish heritage and Judaic traditions have long been concerned with a similar confusion, and Abbas notes that it is only during the past two generations that it has been raised in relation to people of Muslim faith. In 1950, UNESCO debunked the idea of any scientific differences between the races that define character, nature or the potential for intelligence, but by then racism was embedded in all aspects of society, politics, the economy and culture.

In examining that development, Abbas takes as his starting point the Church's enmity towards Jews and rejection of them towards the end of the fifteenth century CE. Its enmity towards Muslims was based on antagonism towards their religion, not race or physiology, and its belief that Spanish Muslims could be civilized by being converted into good Christians. He then moves straight to the 1970s media panic about muggers, rapists and criminality associated with black groups that has since been superseded by notions of terrorism and Islamic radicalism among South Asian Muslims in Britain. Current fault lines of integration and assimilation, he says, are seen as the same as variations in culture, and "castigating of Muslim differences accelerated during this period (and) ever since 9/11 there has been a wide-ranging discourse that has stigmatized Islam and Muslims as a threat to a range of concerns that affect global society, in particular Western nations" (p. 10).

He examines Muslim migration into Britain and Europe; the influence of decolonization; invitations from Britain and Europe to fill job vacancies after WW II; stereotypes reinforced during times of mass movement, conflict and tension; and he maintains that while Muslim groups are properly "only visible through the lens of religion" (p. 60), they are characterized by "images of 'bearded mullahs', 'violent extremists' holding guns" (p. 48), political instability of their societies, and maltreatment of women being forced to wear hijabs in isolation, in 'echoes of the medieval polemic" (p. 48). The concentration of deprived

marginalized minorities in clusters was an opportunity to protect group norms and values but it was seen by the dominant 'other' as a threat and 'self-induced rejection of integration' (p. 100), and many minorities were vilified and discriminated against. The upward mobility of Indian workers led many to stay in the UK as remittance family supporters; some young men were radicalized and committed war crimes in the mistaken belief that they were doing so in God's name to bring forward the final days through the restoration of the divinely conceived Caliphate, and as a consequence Islamophobia, the growth of the radical right, and violence against Muslims all increased.

Abbas reviews the post 9/11 period, noting that the British prime minister, Tony Blair, joined forces with the US president, George W. Bush, to assure the world of the need to react swiftly against the global threat of Al-Qaeda. When Britain became "fully immersed in the war on terror" (p. xxii), multiculturalism was "reduced to a security agenda that isolates Muslims and immigrant groups, (and) the conundrum today is that Muslims are treated as a racial group, where anti-Islam hatred enhances the defining characteristic of racism" (p. 63).

According to the author, heinous crimes in a number of countries provide links between groups who each promote both anti-Muslim sentiment and opposition to other ideologies or concepts including Marxism, feminism, same-gender relationships and multiculturalism. He says that populism was taking hold in the United States in the Trump era with right-wing extremists empowered by triumphalism in the oft-repeated mantra of 'Make America Great Again' deriding democratic process, calling critical reporting 'fake news,' and pressing their aims, with an impact on minority communities of all backgrounds but especially Muslim and Jewish groups. That is clear in reports of rising anti-Semitism running together with growing Islamophobia. He writes that Islamophobia and far-right nationalism have also taken hold in countries that are increasingly divided between rich and poor; that President Tayyip

Erdoğan in Turkey regularly evokes religious and nationalistic sentiment where Islam is mobilized for authoritarian ends throughout the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region; and that, in India the prime minister Narendra Modi is actively pursuing *Hindutva* ideology.

Concerning other countries, Abbas says that active populism reflects Muslims having been "invariably 'radicalized' outside of their traditional modes of Islam" (p. 37). He traces three paths of Sunni Islamic radicalism and writes that in South Asia, many of the problems faced by Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh can be traced to politicized Muslims with limited political opportunities who regard terrorism and extremism as valid interpretations of Islamic texts. In all these cases, he says, the problem is less about the faith as a whole than about Muslim interpretations and actions that stem from aspirations that have political and sociological relevance. The South Asian Sufi orders of Islam took different routes after the 1857 Indian War of Independence; migration and religious transmission to Birmingham and similar cities in other countries then resulted in the divisions of the sending country being maintained in the diaspora. He notes quite specifically that such minorities in countries of the Global North, which includes Australia and Canada, became anxious over questions of citizenship, and led critics to argue that Muslims were demanding rights from the state that were beyond their abilities to reciprocate in kind.

In conclusion, regardless of religion, ethnicity or national boundaries, *Islamophobia and Radicalization* is a very useful resource for any reader of international affairs as well as clergy, lay people involved in interfaith dialogue and researchers.

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Primeval History, Patriarchs and Matriarchs: Essays on Genesis. *Krisansa* 5, Christian Culture Society, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2019. ISBN 9789557041186. pp. xiv + 157. US $10.

This book consists of a collection of fifteen articles on a few chapters of the Book of Genesis, previously published (mostly in the Jesuit journal *Vagdevi: Journal of Religious Reflection*). The book combines narrative-critical and historical-critical exegesis.

The author has borrowed extensively from research by professors Jean-Louis Ska, André Wénin and Luis Alonso Schökel. The first chapter on the Seventh Day narrative (called the first creation story) is studied in comparison with the modern theories of the evolution of the universe and humankind. According to the author, the rejection of the Bible on the basis of modern scientific findings or rejecting modern scientific views on evolution on the basis of the Bible as well as attempting to read modern science in the Bible are erroneous solutions. The first chapters of Genesis dealing with creation are meant to present a theological statement(s) about creation and not the manner in which the created world came to be. The 'how' of creation or the manner in which the world came to be has to be searched in the fields of astrophysics, paleontology, biology, and chemistry to name only a few fields of positive science.

The second chapter of the book deals with Gen. 2-3, called the Eden Narrative. According to him it is a late text presenting an evaluation of the History of Israel after the disaster of the Babylonian Exile.

Wijesinghe reads it as a social analysis of the Israelite monarchy. The third chapter of the book (Gen.) on 'Cain and Abel' is presented as a question of right worship, and the fourth on the flood narrative (Gen. 6-9) is seen as de-creation and recreation, purifying the universe from the grip of violent people.

In this study, the author does not refer to Ancient West Asian and Ancient Egyptian creation stories. The section on the primeval history could have been complete with an added chapter on the dependence of creation stories on the heritage of Ancient Egypt and Ancient West Asia. Neither is there a study on the Tower of Babel, the last but important episode found in the first section of the Book of Genesis.

Wijesinghe studies four episodes of the Abraham Cycle, namely Genesis 15, 1-21 (YHWH's unilateral covenant with Abraham): 16, 1-16 (Sarah-Hagar Story): 18, 1-15 (Visitors of Abraham and Sarah): 22, 1-19 (The test of Abraham; also called the sacrifice of Isaac). The author completes the study of the Abraham Cycle with a historical-critical analysis of the Abraham Cycle taken as a unit (Gen. 12-25).

In his study of the Jacob Cycle, he presents mainly a narrative-critical study on Gen. 15, 19-34 (The introduction to the Jacob Cycle); 26,34-28,9 (Isaac's blindness and Rebekah's vision); 28, 10-22 (Dream, Promise and Vow in Bethel) and 19, 1-30 (The Well and the Wedding). But the important episode of the struggle between God and Jacob (Gen. 33) has not been studied in the book.

Finally, in a prolonged study, Wijesinghe presents a hermeneutic of Gen. 37-45 by relating it to the problem of ethnic strife in Sri Lanka. It was first published in the Canadian *Theologique* 18 (2010) 217-240, and has been considered a fine example of the employment of contextual hermeneutic.

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TIM BAYNE
Philosophy of Religion: A Very Short Introduction.
Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, kindle edition.[1]
ISBN 978-0-19-875496-1. pp. 160 (pbk). US $ 10.32 (kindle $ 6.99).

The very short introductions. com website describes what has apparently become a very successful publishing enterprise by Oxford University Press (judging by the sheer number of published monographs—650 by 2018[2]) on such a "diverse range of subjects from *Climate of Consciousness, Game Theory* to *Ancient Warfare, Privacy* to *Islamic History, Economics* to *Literary Theory*."[3] Bayne himself, a professor of philosophy at the prestigious Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, is the author of the present volume at hand and a previous (2013) publication in the same series entitled: *Thought: A Very Short Introduction.*

The abstract for the work at hand describes it as one which:

> Introduces the field of philosophy of religion, and engages with some of the most burning questions that philosophers discuss. Considering how 'religion' should be defined, and whether we even need to be able to define it in order to engage in the philosophy of religion, it goes on to discuss whether the existence of God matters. Exploring the problem of evil, this VSI debates the connection between faith and reason, and the related question of what role reason should play in religious contexts. Shedding light

1. Page numbers given are those of the Kindle edition and may not necessarily coincide with the actual printed edition, for this reason, the percentage of the total work given by the Kindle edition is also included.
2. The website veryshortintroductions.com states 'more than 600 titles', but a perusal of the list at the beginning of Bayne's volume shows there are currently more than 660, so the number seems to be growing exponentially.
3. Veryshortintroductions.com

on the relationship between science and religion, it finishes by considering the topics of reincarnation and the afterlife.

Bayne concentrates on key questions, for example:

- What is meant by 'worshiping God', and should the very idea of worship be rejected because it would indicate "the abandonment of one's role as an autonomous moral agent?" (21-22, 33%)

- Does the concept of intelligent design, and in particular, the 'fine tuning' version of intelligent design (that the elements needed for life are 'fine-tuned' to such a degree that defy explanation other than that they are designed by a Creator) really prove God's existence? (33-42, 39-44%)

- In consideration of deism, what about the possibility (Hume) that our world was "the first rude essay of some infant deity, who afterwards abandoned it . . .? (41, 43%)

- If experiences of God's presence provide evidence for God's existence, then should experiences of God's absence (which are arguably no less common), by parity of reasoning, "provide evidence against God's existence?" (48, 47%)

- Or more seriously, given the fact that religious experiences of one group can be "seriously at odds" with those of another - who is to say which are valid? (Bayne does not belittle religious experiences; he simply questions whether they can prove the existence of God.)

These and many other questions which Bayne considers are much more than a summary of this field of thought; they provide a needed provocation to carefully consider the most basic need humankind has,

which is to know what it means to be 'human'[4], or put in another way, 'how should human beings think about themselves?'

Bayne's work should arguably also be included in a basic reading plan for undergraduate students especially in the Asian context, where religious adherence is part of personal identity in much more tangible ways than in the West. However, it does not seem to be quite clear what the author's reasons might be for excluding most of Buddhist or Hindu thought, as he tends to concentrate on ideas or use stories as examples which are common - albeit in somewhat different versions - to the adherents of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, such as Abraham's sacrifice of his son (21-22, 33-34%).

I would question some of Bayne's examples, for instance, that good parents "make their existence and intentions manifest to their children" as reason to conclude "wouldn't a good God do likewise?" The Exodus story infers that the manifest presence of God as shown 'in the twin pillars of cloud and fire'[5] did nothing to convince the people of Israel of God's authority—or perhaps, in the end, of his existence, or at the very least, of his relevance. Should one actually build a philosophy of religion without reference to the more evident teachings in the sacred scriptures that form the basic thought of some of those religions? Yes, varied and sometimes contradictory interpretations of those teachings make the effort more complex, but surely some are of such weight that they need more serious consideration. And perhaps their very intention is to give an answer to such objections as Bayne raises?

In addition, one might ask whether Bayne adequately defines the concept

4. Of course the study of the philosophy of religion entails much more than this, but it does lead to some understanding of what human beings are intended, or at least have become, to be.

5. See for example, biblical references such as Exodus 13: 21; 14: 24; 40: 38, as well as Numbers 14: 14 and further references in the Old Testament, such as Nehemiah 9: 19 or Psalm 105: 39.

of evil (64, 55%), and whether he really should not seriously consider the possibility that part of evil could be resistance to the idea of the existence of God by those who do not wish to be confronted by the implications of such belief.

Nevertheless, the short-comings (if that is what they are) of this brief study are by far overcome by its readable and engaging style. Other volumes will be needed alongside this one in order to round out the approaches to the questions, let alone determine the actual questions. But Bayne has done a great service in introducing the topic.

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DAVID W. BLIGHT
Frederick Douglass - Prophet of Freedom.
First Simon & Schuster (paperback edition, NY, 2020).
ISBN 978-1-4165-9031-6. pp. 892. US $20.

This book is a comprehensive presentation of one of the immortals of human history, Frederick Douglass. The title, 'Prophet of Freedom,' most fittingly portrays the image of this man born as a slave, who fought for his own freedom and for the freedom of his own people. He gave a much richer meaning to the notion of Liberty than that which America's founding fathers and their counterparts in Europe were able to envision. The meaning he gave rose from the experience of birth, living as a slave and a life-time, total commitment to the annihilation of slavery and race-based discrimination. David W. Blight presents the development of the

man, his thoughts, his strategies and tactics for the black liberation struggle, and the philosophical and spiritual outlook of Douglass.

This is a highly readable narrative. His use of vast amounts of researched sources, such as Douglass's own autobiographies and other writings include the newspaper Douglass himself produced for a long time. Among his speeches, the one recognized as one of his greatest was on what July 4th means to a slave. Affirmation came from writings of friends and opponents, notes of various persons, conversations and diaries together with a vast body of other references.

The author gives a vivid picture of the terror that underlies American political and social traditions expressed through the practice of slavery. He also describes the manner in which Douglass fought against them in collaboration with those who jointly fought for the ending of these evils. Douglass's mastery of the choice and use of language in his speeches as well as in his writings, reveals the dynamism of the mind and soul of this slave who was denied the opportunity to learn--even to read and write. Within a few years of escaping from slavery, he astonished audiences by his powerful and skillful use of oratory, which kept audiences spellbound. We see here the power of a truly original, unspoiled intellect and spirit. His was not just a voice for others, but spoke for himself and others by drawing on the horrible experiences they all directly suffered. When suffering finds expression through the words of the sufferers themselves, these words are not only explosive but also leave a non-deductible mark on the future. Winston Churchill was considered a great orator. But the voice of Douglass, the slave, reverberates even today. Since the death of George Floyd, people have been gathering together in large numbers to demand an end to racism. They can be seen pulling down the statues of slave masters and the rogues of colonial times, which remain a clear sign of past pain.

The book title *Prophet of Freedom* is fitting. The anti-slavery struggles, the

anti-caste struggles, the struggles for freedom (such as the struggle for women's liberty), have given a much richer meaning to the word liberty today. The French, British and American definitions of the past are being challenged. Douglass, in his condemnations of pro-slavery groups and slave owners, relies heavily on the Old Testament prophets and their admonitions. Moreover, the text is a good guide to understand what modern and future generations could demand in order to reshape their individual and social lives. It is evident that the voice of the hero of this book will remain relevant for long time to come for it is a voice that witnesses to the creative power of pain.

In contrast to the actual experience recounted in this book, modern consciousness is very much rooted in the reductionist materialistic habits of *proof*. But slaves knew slavery and all that went with it through an experiential process that affected their brain and the whole of their being. A slave or others facing slave-like conditions today will come to the conclusion that proof is not needed to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

They will understand what a slave catcher is: HOW slaves are trapped by means of extraordinary brutalities; HOW they are treated as children; HOW slave women are used by slave owners to produce children solely in order to use such children as slaves; HOW rules are enforced to punish those who resist or run away from slave masters; HOW social ethics, morality and the law itself is used to maintain and justify this system; HOW religion itself is distorted to make all this appear good; HOW hypocrisies develop in society to hide brutality with a veneer of decency and pretended piety; HOW the whole political system is created and activated to maintain this shame; HOW every legal principle is bent and adjusted to defend every aspect of slavery. Douglass gives expression to all these painful experiences that are imbedded in a slave's consciousness.

Kenzaburō Ōe, the Japanese Nobel Prize Laureate (1994: Literature), speaking of the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, stressed the potential of these victims to heal and humanize the world. Today, in the streets of most Western countries, we witness the power of huge crowds of protesters, who echo the demands of former slaves like Frederick Douglass. They demand the healing of past crimes by ending racism. This book is a very helpful guide for those who wish to understand the background to such struggles.

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JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN AND SARAH SEXTON CROSSAN
Resurrecting Easter - How the West Lost and the East Kept the Original Easter Vision.
Harper Collins (2018 New York).
ISBN 978-0-06-243418-0. pp. 213.

This is a beautiful and fascinating book, enhancing our understanding of one of the most elusive of religious claims: that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is both research project and detective journey to seek out the icons of the resurrection during a fourteen-year period of visits to sacred sites in the Mediterranean with tours conducted by the authors and the theologians Marcus Borg and Sarah Sexton Crossan.

We live in a world where images abound, and are essential for commerce and entertainment. But there is the *fiqh* prohibition of images. Where is the line which must not be crossed? Pictures of Isa and the Prophet of Islam are not allowed, yet I have seen beautiful Persian pictures of Gibreel dictating to Mohammed (on whom be peace), whose face is

usually obscured. This book contains the sacred images of Jesus Christ, Adam and Eve, and other significant figures from our shared history.

The text is based on two main concepts. 1) There is no description in the Second Testament of his resurrection (Gk. *Anastasis*). 2) The Christian Church encouraged artists to use their imagination and depict in pictorial form the events of Christ's life, death and resurrection, as well as significant scenes from the First Testament. Further, modern Christian theology sees Resurrection not only as an historic and a future event, but something which happens in the here and now. See Harry Williams' book *True Resurrection* (Mitchell Beazley, 1972)

The developed view of the Eastern churches is that icons are visual theology. Namely, that the sacred icons, created according to highly disciplined regulation and tradition, convey many truths about God, especially through God's Incarnation, Jesus Christ. Most Eastern Orthodox Churches have an Iconostasis screen between the main church and the sanctuary. Of course, this has liturgical, devotional and educational functions.

Christian imagination developed an image of Christ's Resurrection in two versions: firstly, the individual Anastasis, Jesus rising out of a sarcophagus holding a cross. The universal version, by 700 C.E., shows a more dynamic Christ reaching out a hand to Adam and Eve, leading them out of the grave, representing a prison and death. In the lower part of these icons there is a dark cavern, where Christ is trampling down the gates of hell.

The authors raise questions and attempt answers. Which image is truest to the Gospel conception of Easter? Is Christ's resurrection an historical event or theological interpretation? A myth or a parable? A symbol or a metaphor? How can this event influence the whole human race, not just

in the future, but back to its beginning? In what sense does it tell of liberation from death, past, present and future?

Chapter 2 reviews the earliest images of Christ's individual Resurrection. From 850-950 CE, 250 versions of this image in stone carvings have been found in Ireland. Chapter 3 shows the origins of the image of the 'cave' or tomb of the resurrection in the building unearthed in Jerusalem by Queen Helena, mother of Constantine. Here, and in the next two chapters (4 & 5), we discover images of Christ leading out the spirits of the dead, beginning with 'Adam, representing all of humanity, already in heaven in *Anastasis* as the universal resurrection, the communal divinization of all humanity' (p.64). The gospel source for the images of both Old Testament prophets and New Testament saints is Matthew 27: 51b-53.

Later illustrations of this are to be found in the margins of illuminated scrolls of 9th and 10th century Psalters in Europe (chapter 7) and Mount Athos (chapter 8). Many verses in the Psalms speak of God arising to rescue his people (Ps 10: 12 and Ps 31: 4-5). The Psalter (*zabur*), is especially honoured in the Qur'an: Surah 4: 163 – 'Surely We have inspired you as we inspired Noah and the prophets after him . . . . and we gave David the Psalms (*zabur*).' (*The Qur'an,* A. J. Droge, Equinox, 2013).

The authors in conclusion refer to their visit to Moscow in 2015, less than two weeks after the May Day military parade, commemorating 'the Russian victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 (known elsewhere as World War II, 1939-45)'. Included is a Reuters parade photo (p. 187) with tanks and the military. One of the entrances to this square is the Resurrection Gate, illustrated by a large wall mosaic. The authors describe this photo as 'the military image of salvation by death', and the mosaic as 'the *Anastasis* image of salvation *from* death.'

Icons have become increasingly important to churches in the West, and icon writers are busy. (Generally speaking, icons are 'written', not

painted.) Even Protestant churches, which are traditionally wary of anything which might be perceived as idolatrous, are introducing them. The Epilogue to former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams' excellent short book 'God with Us' (SPCK, 2017) is a sermon in a London Church, when a new icon of the resurrection was blessed.

Williams' interpretation of the *Anastasis* in contemporary terms, he declares 'What this icon says to us is that . . . the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the remaking of creation itself'. He observes that 'it is not the happy ending of the story of Jesus: it's the story of the word of God speaking . . . to bring life out of *nothing* and to bring the human race into existence as the carriers of his image . . .' (ibid. p. 101)

This profoundly theological emphasis must be a word for our Covid19-ridden times. Fear of infection stalks the whole earth, and Christ is inspiring us all to cast out fear, to take courage from the presence of the Risen Christ - God with us - Emmanuel, and live our lives to the full in his image despite the plague.

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