



AUC: Asian Journal of
Religious Studies

September 2022

Vol 67/5



*Emmanuel Foro, SJ: Poverty and Riches in Africa:
A Closer Look with Solidarity*

*John Kennedy Philip, SDB: A Philosophical Look at
Transhumanism*

*Jismi Joseph, CSSE: Wellsprings of Human Dignity
and Fraternity in Other Religions*

*Emmanuel Akilan, SJ: Love Knows No Bounds:
An Existential Experience*



Contents

Editorial: The Need for Inter-Religious Dialogue	3
Poverty and Riches in Africa: A Closer Look with Solidarity <i>Emmanuel Foro, SJ</i>	8
A Philosophical Look at Transhumanism <i>John Kennedy Philip, SDB</i>	16
Wellsprings of Human Dignity and Fraternity in Other Religions <i>Jismi Joseph, CSSE</i>	33
Love Knows No Bounds: An Existential Experience <i>Emmanuel Akilan, SJ</i>	42



AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies (formerly *Apostolic Union for Clergy*) is a peer-reviewed pastoral journal for Christian leaders. It is a bimonthly published from the Papal Seminary, Pune 411014. Inspiring and brief pastoral and academic articles beneficial for Christian leaders are welcome.

Editor:	Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ
Ass Editor	T. Karimundackal SJ
Circulation:	Stephen Jayard
Book Review:	Biju Joseph SJ
<i>Section Editors:</i>	
Pastoral Theology:	Stephen Jayard
Christology:	Francis Gonsalves SJ
Scripture:	Mariapushpam Paulraj
Homiletics, Liturgy:	VM Jose SJ
Moral Theology:	Nishant Irudayadason
Counselling:	D. Braganza & V. Crasta
Religions:	Sebastian Vazhapilly SJ
Spirituality:	Patras Kujur SJ
Philosophy:	Nishant Irudayadason
Management:	Bhausahab Sansare SJ
Finance:	VM Jose SJ
Publisher:	Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ

For **all editorial members**, please see www.punejournal.co.in

Printed at: Kunal Offset, 412, Kakasaheb Gadgil Rd, Shaniwar Peth, Pune 411030: Mob 98230 48871

Typeset at: Papal Seminary Centenary Computer Centre

Donations are accepted. Cheques and DD to be drawn in favour of

Apostolic Union

Address all correspondence to:

The Editor, AUC, Papal Seminary, Pune 411014, India

Email: auc@papalseminary.in or Site: punejournal.co.in

ISSN: P-2249-1503 | E-2582-791X





Editorial

The Need for Inter-Religious Dialogue

Religious plurality is described as “a manifestation of the wisdom of God’s will in creation” in a proclamation made at the interreligious conference in Kazakhstan that Pope Francis attended in September 2022.

On September 15, 2022, in Nur-Sultan, the capital city, the 35-point proclamation was “approved by the majority of the participants” of the Seventh Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions (Brockhaus, 2022).

During his journey to the nation of Central Asia from September 13 to 15, Pope Francis took part in the opening and closing rituals of the interreligious summit.

The three-day meeting was attended by about 100 participants from across the globe, including Cardinal Pietro Parolin, secretary of state at the Vatican, and Cardinal Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, head of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

”We observe that diversity and variances in religion, skin colour, gender, ethnicity, and language are reflections of the wisdom of God’s will in creation,” the declaration’s tenth point said. Therefore,

Cite as: Pandikattu, Kuruvilla. (2022). The Need for Inter-Religious Dialogue (Version 1.0). *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, Sept-Oct 2022 (67/5, 3-7).
<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853230>

any instance of force to adhere to a certain religion and its teaching is inappropriate.

The proclamation also made reference to the Human Fraternity Document for World Peace and Coexistence, which was signed in February 2019 in Abu Dhabi by Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed Al Tayyeb, the grand imam of al-Azhar.

The document between the Holy See and Al-Azhar Al-Sharif calls for “peace, dialogue, mutual understanding, and mutual respect among believers for the common good,” the Kazakhstan declaration said, adding that “we recognise the importance and value of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.”

The document between the Holy See and Al-Azhar Al-Sharif calls for “peace, dialogue, mutual understanding, and mutual respect among believers for the common good.”

The proclamation also urged greater engagement of women in religion and society while denouncing terrorism and calling for an end to war “in all corners of our planet.”

The proclamation claimed that since tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding are the foundation of every religious teaching, “we proceed from the unchanging reality that the Almighty made all individuals equal, regardless of their racial, religious, ethnic, or other affiliation or social position.”

We place a lot of emphasis on the need of preserving the institution of the family, it said.

Francis went on to deliver a speech after showing up at the cathedral for his own meeting with the area’s clergy and lay leaders in which he indirectly dismissed some of Schneider’s concerns and reaffirmed his view that Catholics should continue actively collaborating with other faiths.

The pope said, “We also need others, all others: our Christian sisters and brothers of other confessions, those who practise other religions than we do, all men and women of good will. “May we learn, in a spirit of humility, that we can only genuinely accomplish anything good for the benefit of everyone together in discourse and mutual acceptance.”

The pope emphasised that Catholicism is neither an antiquated religion nor locked off to the outside world, urging those gathered in the cathedral to avoid “rigidity, dogmatism, and moralising” and to be receptive to fresh approaches of sharing the faith in the contemporary day.

Francis said that the goal of the church is to “be a community open...to the newness of the Spirit and to the signs of the times, not a group bogged down in the same old way of doing things, or withdrawn into its shell because it feels tiny.”

The pope pointed out that, despite the fact that just 1% of the country’s population is Catholic, Christianity has been practised in Central Asia since the earliest centuries, and there has long been active missionary activity there.

It “is not about looking back with nostalgia, becoming caught in the past, and allowing oneself be immobilised and inert,” the pope reminded them, in reference to spreading the faith today.

He cautioned, “When we do that, we are inclined to go backward.”

By stating that Catholic seminaries “should be ‘schools of honesty,’ not places of rigidity and formality, but training grounds in truth, openness, and sharing,” the pope also issued a direct challenge to the education of young priests (White, 2022).

Faith, he continued, “is an ever-present experience, an encounter with Christ that takes place in the here and now of our lives, not a gorgeous museum of relics from a distant past.” “Therefore, we cannot spread it by merely saying the same things over and over

again, but rather by sharing the Gospel's freshness. Faith continues to exist and has a future in this manner."

Long applause and shouts of "viva il Papa" ("Long live the pope!") greeted the pope's comments.

Inspired by Pope's call for dialogue, we have taken up some articles on dialogue and exchange among cultures, science and religion in this issue of *AUC: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*. May ours be a life of openness, curiosity and dialogue, so that we can enable an all-inclusive world!

That is truly the need of the hour. In spite of the tremendous technological and scientific marvels, we have not learnt to cherish our collective spiritual wisdom. In spite of our prosperity, we have not learnt to work for peace. In spite of our progress in knowledge, we have not learnt the wisdom of collective living. In spite of our religiosity, we have not learnt the moral and ethical art of living together as brothers and sisters.

As Martin Luther King reminds us, that is precisely the need of the hour! We need to learn to live as brothers and sisters or we will collectively perish together as fools. For this common living in brotherhood and sistershood, we need religious and spiritual wisdom that makes us embrace the other (belonging to different religions, traditions, cultures and identities). Without this acceptance of the other as other, we are doomed to perish!

Thus religions have to assert their own unique identities and at the same time reach out to other religions and traditions with respect and reverence. That is precisely what the Pope is trying to do. If we get lost in our own particular religion at the expense of the other, we will be too self-obsessed. If we are too much concerned of the other without belonging to our own tradition, we will be uprooted.

The Editor

References

- Brockhaus, H. (2022, September 15). *Final declaration of Kazakhstan conference condemns 'coercion to a particular religion'*. Catholic News Agency. [https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252298 /kazakhstan-interreligious-congress-adopts- declaration-calling-religious-pluralism- gods-will](https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252298/kazakhstan-interreligious-congress-adopts-declaration-calling-religious-pluralism-gods-will)
- White, C. (2022, September 15). *Kazakhstan bishop says Pope Francis' participation in interfaith summit potentially 'dangerous'*. National Catholic Reporter. [https://www .ncronline.org/news/vatican /kazakhstan-bishop-says-pope-francis- participation-interfaith-summit-potentially](https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican /kazakhstan-bishop-says-pope-francis- participation-interfaith-summit-potentially)



© by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies

67/5 Sept-Oct 2022, ISSN P-2249-1503 E-2582-791X | **8-15**

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6853224

Stable URL: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853224>

Poverty and Riches in Africa: A Closer Look with Solidarity

Emmanuel Foro, SJ

Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska

Abstract: The continent of Africa faces global challenges as the current food crisis following the health crisis of Covid-19. Africa is also facing the challenge of its portrayal and image in the world, that we summarize by the term ‘poverty’. Colonial heritage and designed data analysis explain confirming this interpretation. In the light of such characterization, any global affliction is expected to be multiple times higher in impact on Africa. Yet, on the other hand, life and joy are readily perceptible on the faces and in the behavior of African people, even in the poorest areas. The young population, women’s participation, various natural endowments, liveliness, joy and resilience are the main riches of Africa. Why then do most countries show low developmental performance? The main argument in this text is a deficiency of strategic organization and local solidarities. Deep awareness and the will to change is the task ahead of the concerned.

Keywords: Africa - Poverty - Riches - Solidarity - Strategy

Cite as: Foro, Emmanuel. (2022). Poverty and Riches in Africa: A Closer Look with Solidarity (Version 1.0). *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, Sept-Oct 2022 (67/5), **8-15**.
<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853224>

1. Preliminary Remarks

The question of poverty in Africa is so much political that its key content and statistics always provoke thoughts, comments and contradictions. Potentially, there is no doubt that the continent as large as 30 million km² is rich in minerals (40% of world reserve in gold), arable land (60% of the world's unexploitable piece), good weather and agricultural conditions in large sections of many countries. The main area of poverty is the precisely political organization and strategy. One important remark to keep in mind with any analysis any expert makes is the diversity within the same situation studied from one region to another, from one country to the next. No demonstration is needed to state that South Africa is significantly different from Nigeria even though these two countries stand at the head of all countries in terms of GDP. Poverty in South Africa is mostly racial and mostly urban in Nigeria with some regional differences as well. Post Mugabe Zimbabwe is a different story of the struggle for the restoration of hope by and for local African Zimbabweans together with Zimbabwean immigrants.

Despite limitations, the joint response to Covid-19 in Africa has been perceived as a success. One of the impacts of this pandemic is the rediscovery of traditional medical wisdom and the curative virtue of local plants!

2. Social Nature of Humanity

After saying this, poverty, like other indicators of well-being, fulfillment or human flourishing is relative. In his inaugural discourse in Addis Ababa on February 5, 2022, the newly elected President of the African Union and President of the Republic of Senegal Macky Sall review some of the most crucial issues facing the continent, from health to self-sustenance and development. It seems more accurate to capture this notion of poverty from those concrete angles of life. Despite limitations, the joint response to Covid-19 has been perceived as a success. One of the impacts of this

pandemic is the rediscovery of traditional medical wisdom and the curative virtue of local plants. Must we wait for calamities to discover endemic forms of strategic progress in other areas? As a West African and specifically a citizen of Burkina Faso, I tend to stress more the ‘anthropological poverty’ which I define as the *crisis of togetherness*. The human person is profoundly a social being. A good community is therefore a constitutive part of personal life. The insufficiency of real solidarity between nations and peoples, coupled with the earlier mentioned organizational weakness of our states represents *real poverty* in my view. In Burkina Faso as a tiny example, Covid-19 did not deter agricultural producers as much as terrorism does from holding to the demands of their sector. Although, I am no political scientist nor a security expert, the visible military poverty of my country against this terrorism that has taken tens of hundreds of lives, displaced an unknown figure of thousands and still preventing peasants from growing crops in some of their occupied areas. Without public strategy, the Mediterranean Sea has more Africans to kill, if those youth therein affected find the means to get there at all. If not, poverty will clothe itself in increased *general insecurity*.

Regarding the specific food crisis of this year 2022 and with the awareness that 12% of African importation of wheat is from Ukraine: Somalia, Tunisia and Lybia ranking first, we cannot affirm the same relativity. Food is part of human basic need. Its shortage is therefore a matter of life or death. Some other African countries import grain from Russia up to 32% of their total importations of this product. There is also corn and oil that our countries import from Ukraine. President Macky Sall of Senegal, in his capacity as President of the African Union, met President Vladimir Puttine on June 2, 2022 in Sochi, Russia, to discuss the freeing of a corridor at Odessa for transportation of food stock and agricultural inputs like fertilizers, in order to avoid starvation of large populations on the continent. In the

Sahelian region of West Africa, equally affected by food insecurity, we have already mentioned the general insecurity factor in those of their countries occupied by terrorist groups. The Food Security and Nutrition Work Group identified a total population of about 28 million affected by the current food crisis of 2022 in that area of Africa.

The Ukrainian FOOD ship finally set sail on August 16, 2022, from the Pivdenny port, and arrived into Djibouti (East Africa) on August 30, 2022 with 23.000 tons of cereals mainly destined to Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya where an estimated 22 million of population were in danger of food starvation. Since population is one of African riches, food crisis is a real threat to integrity.

To conclude this short and personal comment on today's news about Food Crisis, I simply insist on the social nature of humanity. More than any other ill, the failure to build global solidarities is the most crucial issue. I cannot agree enough with Pope Francis when he kept exhorting the world on the *globalization of indifference*, in the wake of Covid-19. What I mean is also that this solidarity must start among Africans themselves. The G 5 Sahel may wait another 50 years to get \$ 1,5 billion from the world's nations to deploy a combined Security Force over their territory while Ukraine alone could get more than 20 times the same amount within a month (all things considered); but what do Africans do to squelch the remotely designed and internally bought-in plight of terrorism? What do Africans do to become true actors of their own progress when other powers tend to reduce them to mere consumers of world's goods and mere disciples in global progress? We have had several wake-up calls, but the slumber seems quite deep.

3. Understanding Poverty in Africa

Poverty is defined as earning less than \$1.90 a day and this situation covers 9.2% of world population (nearing 700 million people). The main indicators are access to social capital, access to social services, vulnerability, social exclusion, health and education. In plain words

poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, illiteracy, sickness and morality rate, powerlessness and voicelessness. Through such prism, Africa looks the most miserable of places in the world. So true that 'Africa' is no longer a place but the very concept of poverty. For instance, Egypt that is among the three richest countries of the continent cannot fit in for many western minds. This country has, by all means, to be in the Middle East, because it has a history; it is the birthplace of world civilization: Writing, Science, Architecture, Politics and Religion. And since Africa is a kind of the John 1:46 'Nazareth' for the world, Egypt can therefore not be in Africa.

The land area (as already mentioned: nearing 12 million square miles) is nearly three times Europe or the United States and a little less than twice Russia. Raw materials or natural resources can easily be listed: diamond (about 50% of world production certain years), gold (about 20% of world production on average), coltan (40 to 70% worldwide), and others like copper, uranium (18% worldwide), high-grade woods, etc. In terms of agricultural production for export, cocoa (about 70% of world production in good years), and others like coffee, tea, and cotton. Oceans, rivers (like the Nile and the Congo) and lakes (mainly in the Great Lakes Region of Central, Eastern and Southern Africa) containing around 3000 species of fish, wildlife, cattle raising and more.

4. The Profound Richness of Africa

Africa has a young and dynamic population – for only about 6% of African population is above 60 of age - women and their participation in social construction, represent real power in the 1.2 billion of souls populating the continent. Liberia has known of a woman as head of State for two consecutive terms: in the person of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2006 – 2018). We have an incredible cultural diversity within each country: more than 300 languages spoken in Cameroon alone, for instance. It is only far

from Africa that many contemporaries take the continent itself to be a single country – so much colonialism has pounded on international opinion with falsified map scales. These African youth are full of the dream for a brighter future and free of colonial trauma. They constitute good dialogue partners with worldwide youth if unhindered by local governments and systems.

The main reality I wish to pinpoint as greatest richness of the continent is resilience. If we take the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as an epitome of the whole continent and if we observe the cultural expression of the people in their music, there is no doubt about the ‘joy of living’ that may readily open to Pope Francis’ “joy of the Gospel” of Christ. Considering this liveliness in the midst of countless past and unfinished tragedies, manifests a high level of resilience. Critics may argue for unconscious life-style. In reality this is not the case. Some so-called evolved cultures value more “the wrath of the avenger” when things don’t go right. If suicidal rates and outbreak of violence constitute sound indicators of human flourishing or happiness, mere statistics would place DRC ahead of most other countries in the First World.

Delving further more into world history, the reason for slave trade could be summed up in the fitting physical condition of the African negroes (around 12 million souls among the best) taken to sustain the plantations’ labor in the Americas, from 1526 to 1867. This human bleeding was followed closely by direct colonization and foreign rule, mainly by Belgium, Great Britain and France. Despite nefarious political and economic systems left in place by those foreign powers, the ‘joy of living’ remains the hallmark of Africans. This realization prompted our late Jesuit Superior General, Nicholas Adolfo to suggest a particular face of Christ in Africa: *Christ the Life*. In the same vein, he presented Asia as culturally representing the *Way* and Europe the *Truth* of Christ who once said (in Jn 14, 6), “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”. This reality was explored by the late Professor Laurenti Magesa alongside Gerald Hughes, S.J. and Michael Amalados, S.J. in a book edited and published in

2018 by Dr. Festo Mkenda, S.J., with the sub-title: *A Confluence of Asia, Europe and Africa in Jesus of Nazareth* (Mkenda et al, 2017). Besides the historical baggage of Africa, Magesa is highlighting contemporary challenges that he summarizes in the two head-plagues of war and corruption afflicting Africa (Irudayaraj, 2018).

Conclusion

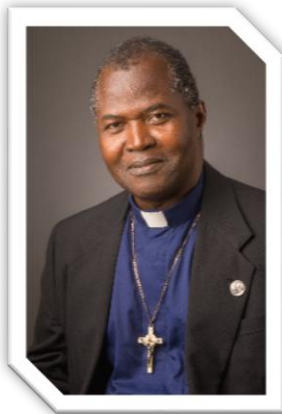
How do Africans remain vibrant with life? How do they very often fit in so well in Europe or North America as they contribute to the discovery and scientific progress? The answer is to be found in this ancestral tradition of abundant life drawing on the not-so-written African metaphysics of *life-force*. This metaphysics and deep worldview form the basis of African Religion as well. For reference, one may read the Philosophy of Alexis Kagame (1912 – 1981). People convert to Christianity in order to have an increase in their life-force (Bwanga, 2018). This is also the promise of Christ. Therefore, they are right on target. Now, for the deeper understanding and inclusion of the message of the Cross as paradoxical life-enhancing instrument, theologians, pastors and preachers still have much work to do. Their encouragement comes from the fruit already visible in this *cultural resilience* that has preceded the missionary proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. It seems that before nominally knowing Christ, in Him they “live and move and have their being” (Acts 17, 28), that is full of life and with deep joy, despite unlimited sorrows that have somehow affected the spirit of *togetherness*, that supreme value of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, life is worth living when shared in love.

References

Bwanga Wa Mbenga Nyoli Boko. (2018). *La philosophie du langage d'Alexis Kagame contribution a la problematique sur la philosophie africaine - nouvelle edition revue et augmentee*. Editions L'Harmattan.

Irudayaraj D. S. (2018). Book review: the way the truth and the life: a confluence of asia Europe and aJesusfrica in jesus of Nazareth. by Festo Mkenda sj, Michael Amaladoss sj Gerald J. Hughes sj Laurenti Magesa and Diane B. Stinton. *Theological Studies* 443–444.

Mkenda F. Amaladoss M. Hughes G. J. & Magesa L. Stinton D. B. (2017). *The way the truth and the life : a confluence of Asia, Europe and Africa in Jesus of Nazareth ; a souvenir publication in honour of Fr Adolfo Nicolás SJ*. Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa.



Dr. Emmanuel Foro, S.J. is a Jesuit priest from Burkina Faso in the West Africa Province since 1993 and ordained since 2004. He has worked as main chaplain of a University Parish, taught Systematic Theology at Hekima College (Nairobi) and ITCJ (Abidjan), directed retreats. He has also helped his Province administration between 2017 and 2021, consecutively as Formation delegate and Socius to the Provincial. He is currently holding the Waite Chair 2022-2023 at

Creighton University in Omaha. His academic formation includes Geography, Philosophy and Theology. Pastoral involvement and spiritual direction have always filled his life. Email: emmanuelforo@creighton.edu | ORCID: 0000-0002-8119-4024

Article received: Aug 16, 2022: Accepted: Sept 2, 2022. Word count: 2190



© by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies

67/5 Sept-Oct 2022, ISSN P-2249-1503 E-2582-791X | 16-32

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6853230

Stable URL: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853230>

A Philosophical Look at Transhumanism

John Kennedy Philip, SDB

Student of Theology, DBTC Chennai

Abstract: In the past few decades, technology has been transforming human life at a faster pace than ever before. Through technological developments, we are gifted with unlimited and unprecedented advancements as never before. Although humanity rejoices in being empowered by these technological developments, it is also worried about where they may be leading to. These technological advancements are supported by a movement which is known as Transhumanism. Transhumanism is considered to be both dehumanizing and superhumanising. It is super humanizing because there are many possibilities through which humankind can overcome many difficulties. On the other hand, it is considered to be dehumanizing because it also poses many threats and considerations to human nature and values.

Cite as: Philip, John Kennedy. (2022). A Philosophical Look at Transhumanism (Version 1.0). *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, Sept-Oct 2022 (67/5, 16-32).
<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853230>

Keywords: Transhumanism, H+, Technological Developments, Democratic Transhumanism, Singularitarianism, Extropianism, and Libertarian Transhumanism

In the past few decades, human beings have been trying to transform the human nature with a view of overcoming all the limitations. This discloses our yearning to become better than we are, better than human (*homo sapiens*), to become *homo superior*. There is a tendency in all, or at least in some individuals, always to search for a way around every obstacle and limitation, and to make one's life happier and better in this world (Hansell and Grassie, 2010: 13).

Transhumanism is a movement that has gradually evolved over the past decade. It can be defined as a movement which advocates the transformation of the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing technologies and making them widely available (Hays, 2019: 1). This movement promotes research into areas such as life-extension projects (becoming immortal), cryonics, molecular nanotechnology, Human Enhancement (HE) projects, Artificial Intelligence (AI), uploading human consciousness into computers and Designer Babies (DB) (Samuelson, 2010: 19). The chief objective of Transhumanism is to make our body live forever.

Transhumanism is considered to be both dehumanizing (Fukuyama, 2003: 6 & 8) as well as superhumanizing. These different views about this movement provoke us to question what exactly Transhumanism is. Before embarking on an investigation of such an ethically loaded issue, let us delineate the 'what', the 'division', the 'when,' and the 'how' of this phenomenon called Transhumanism.

1 What is Transhumanism?

Transhumanism is loosely defined as a movement which gradually evolved over the past two decades, promoting the cause of posthumanity. However, different thinkers and transhumanistic advocates have different ways of understanding—this particular movement. The term, Transhumanism, was coined in 1957 (Livingstone, 2015: 16) by Julian Huxley. For Huxley,

Transhumanism is considered to be both dehumanizing as well as superhumanizing. These different views about this movement provoke us to question what exactly Transhumanism is!

Transhumanism is another word for ‘evolutionary humanism’ in which a human being makes a deliberate effort to “[t]ranscend itself – not just sporadically...but in its entirety, as humanity” (Huxley, 1957: 17). Max More, another proponent of Transhumanism, defines it, “[a]s a class of philosophy of life that seeks the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and human limitations by means of science and technology, guided by the life-promoting principles and values” (Cohen & Hanson, 2009: 95). “Transhumanism,” writes Nick Bostrom “is ... an outgrowth of secular humanism and the enlightenment. It holds that the current human nature is improvable through the use of applied science and other rational methods, which make it possible to increase human health-span, extend our intellectual and physical capacities, and give us increased control over our mental states and moods” (Bostrom, 2010: 55).

The enhancement of human beings is seen as the regulative notion of Transhumanism. Science and technology occupy the central places in Transhumanism, and they are considered to be the two great assets of Transhumanism. Thus, the contemporary literature on Transhumanism encompasses not only science and

technology, but various discourses with distinct purposes; hence, we cannot consider Transhumanism as one movement, but as multiple movements (Transhumanisms), with distinct purposes. Some of the most discussed and debated Transhumanisms are: (i) Democratic Transhumanism, (ii) Libertarian Transhumanism, (iii) Extropianism and (iv) Singularitarianism. Without dealing with these movements and their purpose, it is difficult to formulate the working definition of Transhumanism.

a. Democratic Transhumanism

Democratic Transhumanism, which is chiefly propagated by James Hughes, encourages the state to embrace Transhumanistic projects and proposes that these kinds of technology and scientific enhancements should be accessible to everyone rather than only to the few rich people (Hughes, 2009). Along these lines, the proponents of this approach are critical of the way in which power is distributed unequally based on gender, race, class, religion, and so on. They also insist that people should not be discriminated from being enhanced on the basis of their class, economic powers, sex and gender, and everyone should have access to transhumanistic projects in a democratic way. Hughes also strongly emphasizes the importance of having strong guarantors of these things. This thought of Hughes can be seen in his writings, “Techno- progressives, like social democrat transhumanists in general, believe democracy requires strong guarantors of civil liberties and minority rights, a relatively egalitarian distribution of wealth and power, a strong state accountable and transparent to its citizens, and a process for deliberation and decision making open to all competent persons” (Hughes, 2009).

b. Libertarian Transhumanism

Zoltan Istvan, one of the world’s most influential transhumanists and the US presidential candidate in 2016, is an important proponent of this ideology. Libertarian Transhumanism is a political ideology and theory which is the synthesis of libertarianism and Transhumanism (Istvan, 2017). Libertarian Transhumanism

thinkers accept that all transhumanistic projects aim at the good of a person's life, that is, his 'well being'. Hence, the principles of self-ownership and the free market have to be the guarantors of the right to enhancement, and they believe that it will produce greater prosperity, development, and the best outcome in the society (Istvan, 2017). In addition, they strongly assert that any attempt to limit the right to go for transhumanistic projects is a violation of civil rights and civil liberties (Ferrando, 2013: 27). They also reject public policies and government regulated polices which are advocated by democratic transhumanists because they fear that the state will steer or limit the choices of individuals (Livingstone, 2015: 318).

c. Extropianism

Extropianism is directly concerned with the framework of values and standards for the improvement of the human condition. More, the main proponent of this approach, describes perpetual progress, self-transformation, practical optimism, intelligent technology, open society, self-direction and rational thinking as the principles of Extropianism (Ferrando, 2013: 27). 'Extropy' or 'Extropianism' is not a meticulously defined technical term in philosophy. Extropy is used metaphorically as an antonym to entropy (Science, Technology & the Future, 2013). Diane Duane was the first to use this term to declare that it is possible to obtain an optimistic future through technological and enhancement interventions (More, 2019). The main belief of extropians is that advances in science and technology will someday allow people to live indefinitely; an extropian shares in this belief by doing research and development or by voluntarily allowing testing the new technology on his/her body (More, 2010: 136). Extropist is considered to be a modern derivation of the transhumanist philosophy of Extropianism. The Extropist Manifesto sums up Extropianism in the following five phrases, "Endless

eXtension, Transcending Restriction, Overcoming Property, Intelligence, Smart Machines” (More, 2010: 137).

d. Singularitarianism

Singularitarianism is a movement which bases itself on the belief that the technological singularity and the creation of superintelligence will likely happen in the future (Livingstone, 2015: 334). Hence, this movement claims that deliberate action ought to be taken to ensure that the singularity benefits all human beings (Livingstone, 2015: 334).

The discussion of these movements makes it evident that to arrive at a consensus regarding the understanding of Transhumanism is not easy. Nevertheless, the studies on these movements have given us a general understanding of what Transhumanism is. The common thread that runs through these movements is developing humanity with the help of technology and science. Based on our expositions, the working definition of Transhumanism can be formulated as an “Intellectual, social, cultural, philosophical movement that affirms the possibility of improving the human condition through advancements in the field of applied sciences, such as neurosciences, genomics, robotics, nanotechnology, computer science, artificial intelligence, etc., especially by developing and promoting research in the aforementioned fields..”

2 The Distinction between Transhumanism and Posthumanity

The two terms that are inevitably associated with this research work are Transhumanism and posthumanity. Before arguing this distinction, it has to be acknowledged that the term ‘transhuman’ is distinct from Transhumanism. Transhumanism is a movement; while, ‘transhuman’ can be described as an intermediary form, somewhere between human and posthuman (Irudhayadhasan, 2017: 7). Transhumans are humans in transition who are striving to become posthuman (Irudhayadhasan, 2017: 8). Against this background, posthumanity can be understood as a category of

beings who radically and categorically transformed themselves from humans with the help of advanced technologies. Hence, it is clear that posthumans are beings who have reached a state that is beyond the conventional definitions and attributes of contemporary humans and transhumans are trying to achieve the state.

3 A Brief History of Transhumanism

In one sense, one can broadly say that the story of humanity is the history of Transhumanism (Harrison & Wolyniak, 2015: 465). Some even note that the use of the word Transhumanism has its roots in Dante's *Paradiso* and in the Pauline epistles (Harrison & Wolyniak, 2015: 466). However, as a movement, Transhumanism has its roots in rational humanism and in the Age of Enlightenment (Bostrom, 2005: 2). The Age of Enlightenment is often said to have started with the publication of Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*, (*The New Tool*) in the year 1620. In his *magnum opus*, Bacon proposes and stresses the importance of scientific methodology based on empirical investigation rather than on a priori reasoning (Bacon,

2000: 7). Bacon also advocated the project of 'effecting all things possible,' by which he meant using science to achieve mastery over nature in order to improve the living condition of human beings (Bostrom, 2005: 2). In the year 1784, Immanuel Kant in his famous essay "What is Enlightenment?" sums up enlightenment as follows:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. Dare to know! (*Sapere aude.*) "Have the courage to use your own understanding," is therefore the motto of the enlightenment! (Kant, 1784).

This heritage of Enlightenment in combination with the influences of Isaac Newton, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Kant, Marquis de Condorcet, and others form the basis for rational humanism (Bostrom, 2005: 2). Rational humanism emphasizes empirical science and critical reasoning rather than religious authority and revelation. This rational humanism serves as the intellectual basis for Transhumanism (Bostrom, 2005: 4). The second major inspiration for transhumanist thought is drawn from Fredrick Nietzsche (1844-1900) (Bostrom, 2005: 5). Nietzsche in his masterpiece *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* explains his famous doctrine of *der Übermensch* (the superman):

I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man. What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment (Nietzsche, 1972: 41-42).

Though the thought of Nietzsche does not refer directly to technological transformation, there are surface-level similarities with the Nietzschean vision and the transhumanistic vision. The very term ‘transhuman’ seems to have been used in 1957 by Huxley in his book *New Bottles for New Wine*. He used this word to describe the concept of ‘evolutionary humanism’. Huxley and his friends, John Burdon, Sanderson Haldane, and John Desmond Bernal have played important roles in the development of Transhumanism. In 1920, these three expressed their views which became prominent views in contemporary Transhumanism. They highlighted the evolving nature of human beings and encouraged the deliberate use of eugenics which now serves as the basis for designer babies. Hence, these three are considered to be the prophets of Transhumanism (Bostrom, 2005: 4). In the 1930s, these ideas were further developed by the Red scientists of Cambridge University

(Samuelson, 2010: 20-21). They had a deep faith in the capacity of science and technology to improve the human condition. However, the Nazis' malicious use of eugenics and the horrors of the Second World War invalidated the goal of these transhumanists and scientists (Livingstone, 2015: 113).

In the 1940s cybernetics and computer science were developed by English mathematicians and pioneering scientists. In the 1960s, new optimistic scenarios about humanity and AI were articulated by science fiction writers such as Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, etc., and their articulations can be seen as the starting points for all the science fictions in literature (Samuelson, 2010: 23). In the 1960s, various organizations began to advocate life extension, cryonics, space colonization and advances in biotechnology, neuroscience, and neurotechnology which are important projects in Transhumanism (Livingstone, 2015: 208). In the 1980s, More brought Transhumanism to the academic field and formalized it as a transhumanist thought by advocating the principle of extropy. More considers the human stage as “the transitional stage standing between our animal stage and our posthuman future, and these posthuman stages will be reached,” according to More, “through genetic engineering, life-extending biosciences, intelligence intensifiers, smarter interfaces to smart computers, neural-computer integration, worldwide data networks, virtual reality, intelligent agencies, swift electronics communication, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, neural networks, artificial life, off-planet migration and molecular nanotechnology” (More, 2009). In 1998, Nick Bostrom and David Pearce founded the World Transhumanist Association (WTA) (Samuelson, 2010: 24) and in the same year, a group of transhumanist activists including Bostrom, Pearce, More and others, authored the Transhumanist Declaration (Samuelson, 2010: 24). This Transhumanist Declaration expresses the various ethical stands that can be taken by transhumanists

especially when ethical dilemmas arise from technological advances.

Bostrom sums up his reasons for founding WTA in three points: (i) “To support discussion on transhumanist thought and to create a public awareness of technology advancements,” (ii) “To propose solutions for the potential consequences (threats) of emerging technologies,” and (iii) “To create a novel platform for transhumanist thought in the field of academic science” (Science, Technology & the Future, 2013). The Extropy Institute, the Foresight Institute, the Immortality Institute, the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technology and the Singularity Institute for AI are other contemporary organizations and associations which play vital roles in the promotion of Transhumanism and its projects. In 2004, Bostrom and Hughes established the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technology (Samuelson, 2010: 26). In the same year, the prominent bioconservative – Francis Fukuyama, after foreseeing the potential risks of transhumanistic projects, labeled Transhumanism as ‘the world’s most dangerous idea’. In the year 2005, Bostrom in association with Anders Sandberg and Eric Dressler established the Future of Life Institute to support and to promote Transhumanism. In 2008, the WTA changed its name to Humanity+ (Sandberg, 2010: 1). The Singularity University was also founded in the same year in America by Peter Diamand, Ray Kurzweil, along with Google, Nokia, eplanet Capital, NASA, the X Prize Foundation, and other leading companies. In 2013, Istvan published the dystopian science fiction novel ‘*The Transhumanist Wager*’ which explains a future war between transhumans and the US government. In 2014, on reading Bostrom’s *Superintelligence*, Elon Musk tweeted that AI could pose a threat to humanity, and he also joined the WTA in order to support responsible technological development (Amami, 2016). In 2015, Elon Musk donated \$10 million dollars to the Future Life Institute (FLI) for the creation of friendly AI. Istvan campaigned for the presidential election of the US with the agenda of promoting Transhumanism. From our reading of the history of

Transhumanism, it is clear that Transhumanism is not merely a utopian vision by techno optimists, but a movement that receives substantial funding from different organizations and different people, which is the factual truth of our time.

4 Categories of Transhumanism

Transhumanism, in general, is a broad umbrella movement which advocates the transformation of humanity by embracing technology. Transhumanistic thinkers opine that our normal state of life can, and should be, enhanced by all available emerging technologies. AI, bio-enhancements, life-span extension, cryonics, cybernetics, and designer children are some of the prominent projects of Transhumanism.

5 Salient Prudential and Ethical Concerns

From the common understanding of the notion of Transhumanism, it is evident that this movement is likely to raise several prudential and ethical apprehensions and dilemmas. Among these apprehensions, though some are common to many transhumanist categories, others are very specific and particular to some fields only. The advocates of transhumanist projects criticize these concerns as exaggerations of the hypothetical risks; these concerns also pay less attention to the potential benefits of the technological advancements. However, the fact has to be accepted that the potential advancements by technological development which were put forth by these advocates of Transhumanism are also hypothetical. Therefore, these ethical and prudential concerns have to be taken into consideration.

a. Precautionary Principle Based Concern

The most prominent science-based principle that influences international law today is the Precautionary Principle. In general, the proponents of the precautionary principle encourage promoting those policies which have relatively lesser harms in future for human beings. It can be compared to taking precaution before anything bad happens. The proponents of the precautionary principle hold the opinion that consequences of actions often result in unpredictable and irreversible dangers. Hence, they conclude that such actions should generally be opposed. We should be cautious before experimenting with any transhumanistic projects (Irudhayadhasan, 2017: 7). For example, tampering with the genetic structure through transhumanistic projects may result in severe genetic disorders. Hence, they argue that we should not encourage the transhumanistic projects. The proponents of Transhumanism, especially Bostrom and More are constantly answering the prudential concerns of the Precautionary Principle.

Libertarian Transhumanism thinkers accept that all transhumanistic projects aim at the good of a person's life, that is, his 'well being'.

b. Consequentialist Concerns

Consequentialism is an ethical theory that judges whether something is right or wrong by its consequences. For instance, most people in the world would agree that stealing is wrong. But if stealing would help to save a person's life, consequentialists argue that stealing is the right thing to do. These consequentialists have brought forth various ethically conflicting concerns surrounding Transhumanism in general (Ethical Issues in Transhumanism, 2019). Their concerns are mainly related to three major phenomenon: (i) safety, (ii) positional good, and (iii) diversity in society (Irudhayadhasan, 2017: 21). Since many transhumanist projects seem to harm the individuals, their safeties are doubted.

Many researchers also believe that there is a significant chance to create an AI that can outperform human beings in all relevant fields. If an AI machine is invented to automate all jobs, will it not be a threat to human beings who are working in those fields? In DB, the modification of an embryo harms the safety of the child. It can be seen in these individuals cases, the safety of transhumanistic projects is not always assured. Thus, there is a disquiet surrounding Transhumanism whether the benefits are always greater than the probable risks (Ethical Issues in Transhumanism, 2019).

c. Concern Related to Positional Good

Another prudential concern regarding transhumanist projects is related to positional good. A positional good is the good which is valued by the others because of a limited supply of a good in society. Some advocates of positional good express the idea that if everyone is enhanced, the competitive advantage might be erased, with the result that everyone will be performing at a higher level (Irudhayadhasan, 2017: 21). This is also known as the ‘looping effects’ which stresses the point that there won’t be any productivity and creativity in society.

d. Concerns Related to the Diversity in the Society

The main focus of the proponents of this concern is the importance of diversity in society (Bostrom and Sandberg, 2004: 329). For instance, the concept of designer babies possibly erodes the tolerance of inherent differences among human beings; (Sandel, 2004: 73) hence, there won’t be any diversity in society. These measures also generate a kind of disrespect for the uniqueness of the individual and there won’t be any difference in our uniqueness. ‘The diversity in society is at stake due to transhumanistic projects’ is another concern that is put forward by the consequentialists (Ethical Issues in Transhumanism, 2019).

e. Concerns Related to Human Nature

The prominent ethical concern of the majority is the concern that is related to our very nature. The main argument that is raised by the proponents of this concern holds the point that ageing, death, and delivery of a human baby with limitations are natural end results in the lives of multicellular organisms (Irudhayadhasan, 2017: 22). In a deeper sense, ageing, death, and children are the inevitable outcome of our very nature. They consider that thinking of death and ageing as symptoms of diseases is farfetched and absurd. This is the most fundamental concern of the campaigners of natural argument (Juengst, 2009: 328).

f. Concerns from Anti-Play-God Argument

Another most prominent concern can be named as ‘Playing-God’ argument. This concern is mainly raised by anti-play-God bioethicists, theologians and believers. This concern contends that transhumanistic projects such as gestating genetically modified children in artificial wombs, becoming immortal and living forever in a community of immortal, beings creating hyper-organic super beings or designer children interfere with the creational processes, which are presumed to be under the domain of God (Bostrom and Sandberg, 2004: 327). Hence, these things should not be encouraged by anyone and anti-play-God bioethicists fear that transhumans will play a god role and precipitate a backlash from nature which could be devastating (Irudhayadhasan, 2017: 19).

g. Concerns Related to Freedom and Autonomy

Transhumanism, the belief that technology can transcend the limitations of the human body and brain, generates ethical concerns related to freedom, autonomy, and identity. The proponents of the autonomy and freedom argument criticize Transhumanism, especially the project of designer babies, for compromising the child’s right to an open future (Sandel, 2004: 51). Freedom is one of the most important characteristics of human beings. Transhumanism, especially bio enhancement projects, involves the

modification and alteration of the individuals which entails the risk of depriving the individuals of their autonomy. For example, morally enhanced beings no longer have autonomy over their own person and actions since they are programmed to carry out only moral actions. Hence, transhumanist projects raise the question of the autonomy and freedom of the individual.

Conclusion

To conclude, Transhumanism is a movement supported by some scientists and philosophers who believe that there is a solution to the ‘problems’ (as they see it) of human imperfections and limitations such as death, ageing, etc. Transhumanism and its literature are quite extensive. This movement is heavily funded to promote some technological developments and some projects. Currently, this has become the intellectual interest of many scientists and philosophers. Transhumanism predicts an optimistic, unparalleled and a utopian vision of the future in the eyes of techno-optimists. However, there are some serious ethical concerns we need to address.

By addressing the ethical concerns, we are not rejecting all technological developments. All technological developments are not necessarily bad. Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* writes, “Technology is highly attractive because it draws us out of our physical limitations and broadens our horizon” (Benedict, 2009: 70). Through his writings, he encouraged the technological developments which are ethically responsible. This is confirmed in the same article, “Human freedom is authentic only when it responds to the fascination of technology with decisions that are the fruit of moral responsibility” (Benedict, 2009: 70) Here, by ethical and responsible we mean that technological developments should be, “[a]t the service of the human person, of his inalienable

right, and his true and integral good according to the design and will of God” (CCC, 2258) We must acknowledge that when science and technology are placed at the service of human beings, they are precious resources to promote the integral development of a person.

References

- Bacon, Francis. (2000). *The New Organon* (1620). Edited by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bostrom, Nick. (2005). “A History of Transhumanist Thought.” *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14, no. 1: 1-30.
- Bostrom, Nick. (2010). “In Defense of Posthuman Dignity.” In Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (eds.), *H+/-: Transhumanism and Its Critics*. Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 55-66.
- Bostrom, Nick. (2004) “The Future of Human Evolution.” In Charles Tandy (ed.), *Death and Anti-Death: Two Hundred Years After Kant, Fifty Years After Turing*. California: Ria University Press, 339-371.
- Bostrom, Nick. (2008). “Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up.” In Bert Gordijn and Ruth Chadwick (eds.), *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity*. London: Springer, , 107-137.
- Bostrom, Nick. (2014). *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bostrom, Nick. (2003). *The Transhumanist FAQ: A General Introduction*. N.P: The World Transhumanist Association, <https://nickbostrom.com/views/transhumanist.pdf>
- Fukuyama, Francis. (2003). *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*. New York: Picadox.
- Hansell, Gregory R., and William Grassie. (2010). “Humans Plus or Minus: An Introduction by Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie” In Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (eds.), *H+/-: Transhumanism and Its Critics*. Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 13-15.
- Huxley, Julian. (1957). *New Bottles for New Wine*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Irudhayadason, Arnald Mahesh. (2017). *The Ethics of Human Enhancement*. Chennai: Don Bosco Publications, 2017.

Livingstone, David. (2015) *Transhumanism: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. New York: Sabilillah Publications.

McCullum, Aaron E. (2013). *The Transhumanism Pandemic: Sub-Humanity's Messiah; Humanity's Annihilation*. Stanhope Gardens: Pisceanesque Publishing.

Nietzsche, Fredrick. (1972). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. Maryland: Penguin Books.

Tegmark, Max. (2017). *Life 3.0*. New York: Penguin Books.

Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava. (2010). "Engaging Transhumanism." In Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (eds.), *H+/-: Transhumanism and Its Critics*. Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 2010, 19-51.



John Kennedy Philip, a member of the Salesians of Don Bosco, belongs to the province of Chennai. He has completed his master's degree in philosophy in Divyadaan, Nashik. He is mainly interested in Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Technology, Artificial Intelligence, History of Philosophy and Cosmology. Currently, he is pursuing his theological studies at DBTC, Chennai. Email: johnkennedy842@gmail.com |

ORCID: 0000-0003-0891-7967

Article received: July 16, 2022; Accepted: Aug 27, 2022. Word count: 4270



© by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by>)



AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies

67/5 Sept-Oct 2022, ISSN P-2249-1503 E-2582-791X | 33-42

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6853236

Stable URL: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853236>

Wellsprings of Human Dignity and Fraternity in Other Religions

Jismi Joseph, CSSE

Institute Mater Dei, Old Goa

Abstract: The purpose of this essay is to build community and meaningful relationships with all the religions in Fraternity and Sorority in Life. In today's world we require people who have encountered Christ and translate His message into their day today life. The aim of this article is to show the essence of fraternity in the human dignity and fraternity in other religion, in the light of *Fratelli Tutti*. The Encyclical aims to promote a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship. Beginning with our common membership in the human family, from the acknowledgment that we are brothers and sisters because we are the children of one Creator, all in the same boat, and hence we need to be aware that in a globalized and interconnected world, only together can we be saved.

Cite as: Joseph, Jismi. (2022). Wellsprings of Human Dignity and Fraternity in Other Religions (Version 1.0). *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, Sept-Oct 2022 (67/5), 33-42.
<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853236>

Keywords: Human Dignity, Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, Fraternity, other religion, Confraternity, communitarian, fellowship, Solidarity, brotherhood.

“In the social and civil context as well, I appeal not to create walls but to build bridges” -Pope Francis

Introduction

As it is very well mentioned in the encyclical of Pope Francis on *Fratelli Tutti* the complete fact of Fraternity lies in the nature of each human person. From the gift of communion with one another arises the duty to build fraternity, in other words, to become brothers and sisters in a given community where all are called to live together. From accepting with wonder and gratitude the reality of divine communion shared with mere creatures, there also arises conviction of the need to make it always more visible by building communities with virtues. It helps us to grow in integral relation with one another as one family as we live in this planet with various communities and faith. Here the relations remain humanity of the existence of transcendence truth which is the source of human dignity in this earthly life. Every religion and tradition is committed to feel co-responsible for fraternal life in common so that it will manifest clearly their loyalty and belongingness to this planet and allow one another to live together under the shadow of one Umbrella of Mutual love and Fraternity.

Fraternity is, as Pope Francis said in his Message on the World Day of Peace that, it is an essential human quality, for we are all relational beings without fraternity, it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace. The various religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature, are called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and

defending justice in society. Today we are in the world of hiking with technologies and other many gadgets, but forgetting of, the worth of fraternal love with one another. Here I emphasize the value of Human dignity and Fraternity in other religions, based on the eighth chapter of *Fratelli Tutti*, the encyclical letter of Pope Francis.

1. Call for Universal Fraternity

Pope Francis, in his encyclical on *Fratelli Tutti*, mentioned about St. Francis of Assisi that “This saint of fraternal love, simplicity and joy prompts me to devote this new Encyclical to fraternity and social friendship. Francis felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh. Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters.” Here he wants to emphasise that the ground breaking encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* is to transcend every barrier and border, and rise above the dividing factors like races, colour, faith, cast and class. And to live as brothers and sisters in fraternity and peace and precisely in freedom and in maturity.

Genuine love of God flows into authentic fraternal love, as Pope Francis says, “Life without fraternal gratuitousness becomes a form of frenetic commerce, in which we are constantly weighing up what we give and what we get back in return. God, on the other hand, gives freely, to the point of helping even those who are unfaithful. As we live in this universe with different people with their own cultures and background, we ought to live as one family by forgetting ourselves and giving ourselves to God and to our fellow beings gratuitously.

At the time when the world confronts the unprecedented crisis caused by the Coronavirus disease the pandemic, where the

universe linked together to protect the lives of the people without requiring the cast and the race. But the global response was based on unity, solidarity and renewed multilateral cooperation. Here the encyclical letter was more applied and lived. In these times we could see and recognize the valuable contribution of people of all religions, or beliefs, to humanity. Moreover, the letter of the Holy Father really played a specific role and allowed the people to open the inner eyes to the Almighty.

2. Fraternity in Other Faiths

The ultimate foundation of fraternity is very well emphasized in *Fratelli Tutti*: “Only with this awareness that we are not orphans, but children, can we live in peace with one another (FT 272).” as we believers, we are convinced that, without an openness to the father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for the appeal to fraternity. As Indian Christians, we are called to move beyond our individual self to families, families to neighbourhoods, villages, cities, nations and the human race as a whole.

The following section explains fraternity in India, especially in other religions.

a. Communitarian Aspect in Christianity

As St. Augustine says, “The ear sees through the eye, and the eye hears through the ear.” It is also urgent to continue to bear witness to the journey of encounter with the different Christians. The Principle of Human Dignity is that every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Created in the image and likeness of God the Trinity or the Absolute Communion, all humans are communitarian by nature. In the light of Christianity fraternity is more valued and given

importance to carry out in our daily lives. All are built on this principle of communion.

b. Fellowship in Islam

According to Quran, “Every Muslim who removes the need of his Muslim brother is promised a reward by God, and I think no reward other than heaven is adequate for him.” One of the strongest and most deep-rooted links in human relations, is the tie of brotherhood. Brothers love each other, are benevolent towards each other, and share each other’s joys and sorrows. Sometimes differences may occur between brothers, causing anxieties, but very soon these acrimonies are replaced by affection and sincerity, and rifts completely forgotten. Islam makes use of this firm link in order to strengthen social order and ameliorate human relations, and considers all devout Muslims as true brothers.

c. Solidarity in Hinduism

In *Bagavat Gita* it is written that “men who are ever integrated and commune with me in Love I give that integration of the soul by which they may draw nigh unto me” (BG X. 9). It is only love and friendship that elevates us to God and God draws towards us. Also Hindu Solidarity speaks of “unity in diversity.” It is not a unity which levels or obscures the distinct and different beliefs and traditions. Indeed, some of the Hindu sects are more accurately viewed as complete religions in themselves. All of history proclaims this to be true. Hinduism is truly a divine family of religions. All Hindus encourage one another to follow his/her own sectarian path.

d. Brotherhood in Buddhism

In the words of John Hick, “Give the ones wings of Love to fly, roots to come back and reason to stay.” According to Buddhism, true fellowship begins in giving and sharing the great Virtue of Love. The Buddhist’s fellowship envisions a future in which people from all backgrounds come into a

heartfelt realization of our interconnection to each other and to the Earth. We believe that actions generated from this understanding will create societies guided by generosity, compassion, wisdom, and justice. The purpose is to help human beings to liberate themselves from the suffering that manifest in individuals, relationship, institutions, and socially.

e. Confraternity in Jainism

According to Jainism the confraternity rests in each individual. It is divinity which is present everywhere in the universe and that the individual soul can achieve Godhood through a self-realization. Jains believe that many of humanity's problems are rooted in the power of passions, particularly those of desire, violence and materialism; and these passions can only be overcome by a rigorous conquest of self. So, they try to be with the people and with one another in love and concern rather than keeping the enmity between the people. Their main motto is that living beings should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor driven away.

3. Biblical Concept of Fraternity

Pope Francis reminds us that for all “Christians the journey of fraternity has a Mother: Mary. Having received this universal motherhood at the foot of the cross, Mary cares not only for Jesus but also for “the rest of her children ART.274).” In the power of the risen Lord, Pope Francis says, Mary wants to give birth to a new world, a world where all of us are brothers and sisters, where there is room for all those whom our societies discard, and where justice and peace are resplendent.

a. Recognizing God and Neighbour (Mt 22:39)

“You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt 22:39) is the basic principle of Christianity to which Love follows

knowing one another. We cannot love someone unless we know that person. Often, we wish to love God and neighbour, but many a time our wish remains merely a wish. In today's era many individuals are unable to recognize who God is, and who their Neighbour is. But still today the Truth is in Light that Jesus is the best and first example of this great value, that is, Love. Loving one another is the ultimate principle of Humanity.

b. The Blessedness of Unity (Ps 133:1)

According to the Psalmist, “How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps 133:1). It signifies the importance of unity among the people of God. Not everything that is good is pleasant, and not everything that is pleasant is good. Here Unity among God's people is such a remarkable blessing because it is both good and pleasant – and both to a high degree, indicating to the fraternity in being with one another especially with our fellow beings.

c. Beacons of Love to the Humanity (1 Jn 4:11-12)

1Jn 4:11-12, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us,” is the backbone of John's letter. The primordial way Christians are to be recognized is by love. This is not merely what we feel, but what we do for others without any discrimination. True, godly love is the most powerful evidence of being “born again” as a child of God. This love comes from God, who loved us before we loved Him. When we live in obedience to God, according to love, we can be confident in our relationship with Him, and have no need to fear His judgment.

4. Building Fraternity from Me to Us

The prime pillar of me and you is constructed in Fraternity. Living in fraternal love is to remain in the love of God that is the oxygen that we breathe with one another. Dialogue

between the followers of different religions is to modify and strongly build up the fellowship with one another in peace and harmony. As we see in the context of today, specially, at the peak time of the pandemic, there was no barrier between the rich and poor, healthy and non-healthy, cast or divisions, but rushing together to the one hospital to breathe for a while. There we could see the real fellowship with one another without any botheration of religion. That was the real time where the foundation of fraternal love, understanding and respect for each other's identity, background and culture existed. Here it has come true is that "God does not see with his eye, God sees with Heart. And Gods love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion.

Conclusion

As I conclude basically on the *Fratelli Tutti*, it is a journey of peace which is possible between religions. Its point of departure must be God's way of seeing things. We, the believers, are challenged to return to our sources in order to concentrate on what is essential worship of God and love for our neighbour. At least some of our teachings, taken out of context, end up feeding forms of contempt, hatred, xenophobia or negation of others. The first and most important aim of religions is to believe in God, to honour Him and to invite all people to believe that this universe depends on a God who governs it.

References

- Arackal, Francis. *From the Upper Room to the Altar of the World*. Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2010.
- Ayakaraparampil, Francis. *Beloved Community: A Roycean Response to Globalization*, Bangaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2017.

- “*Fratelli Tutti Overview & Summary.*” <https://www.usccb.org/resources/fratelli-tutti-overvi> (accessed January 25, 2022).
- “*Fraternity in the Teaching of Pope Francis*”: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/> (accessed January 25, 2022).
- “*Fraternity: The Missing Link of India’s Democracy*” *Democracy* <https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/fraternity-missing-link-india-s-democracy> (accessed January 24, 2022).
- Hick, John and Brian Hebblethwaite. eds. *Christianity and Other Religions*. Great Britain: William Collins Sons, 1980.
- Losch, Richard R. *The Many Faces of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002.
- Pichalakattu, Binoy. “Building the Fuzzy Bridges of Life.” *Francis Effect*. eds. Kuruvilla Pandikattu and Vadappuram M Jose. Pune: D.K. Agencies, 2018.
- Pope Francis. *Fratelli Tutti*. Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship. Mumbai: St Pauls, 2020.
- Runzo, Joseph and Nancy M. Martin. eds. *The Meaning of Life in the World Religion*. New York: One World Publications, 2007.
- “*The Document on Human Fraternity*”: *Peace between...* [unipubhttps://unipub.uni-graz.at/download/pdf/](https://unipub.uni-graz.at/download/pdf/) (accessed January 24, 2022).

Jismi Joseph CSSE is a student of Theology, at Institute Mater Dei, Goa. She belongs to the Congregation of Sisters of St. Elizabeth, Indore, and Madhya Pradesh. She is pursuing Degree in BA Sociology. She is passionately interested in reading and in imparting knowledge. Email id: jismicsse@gmail.com | ORCID: 0000-0002-7099-9820

Article received: Jan 13, 2022: Accepted: May 15, 2022. Word count: 2390



© by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/>)



Love Knows No Bounds: An Existential Experience

Emmanuel Akilan SJ

De Nobili College, Pune 411014

Abstract: In this article, the author tries to expound how love surpasses everything that tries to bog it down. It transcends everything and attains and reaches the Ultimate One, the source and summit of this beautiful creation. Love is the topic on which millions and millions of books are written, yet no one could understand its fullness. In this article, the author also points out our incomplete understanding of love, how it is understood differently by different persons and how it is the mother of all other values and virtues.

Keywords: Love, boundaries, uniqueness of love, breaking barriers, uniting people, experience, transcendental.

Cite as: Akilan, Emmanuel. (2022). Love Knows No Bounds: An Existential Experience (Version 1.0). *AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies*, Sept-Oct 2022 (67/5), 43-49.
<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6853248>

“Love is shown more in deeds than in words” -St. Ignatius

Introduction

Love is something that can never be understood fully by anyone. It surpasses every understanding, transcends all the limitations it faces, encompasses all the goodness of this world and will ever remain unconditional. Love literally breaks down all the barriers and reaches even the hardest of hearts. Like flowing water, which cannot be stopped on its way of travel, love can never be contained. Love is not just a feeling but a value and virtue in and by itself. It needs no other to support it because it is the source and summit of everything else.

Love is not physical and can never be counted by any calculation, and there is no logic behind love. Love is the purest form of affection; it is a state of mind. It does not care about whether you are poor or rich, ugly or pretty, tall or short, atheist or religious, white or black, old or young, and who you are, basically. It transcends all the human constructs that try to place us within boundaries and comes out stronger than ever.

1. Uniqueness of Love

People still struggle to define this beautiful term ‘love’ and we are not able to settle for a single definition. Everyone’s definition of love varies. In fact, our life is a series of love. The way our mothers introduce us to the world and run when their ears ring with our infant cries, how our fathers introduce the world to us and give us those life’s important lectures at the dinner tables, how our friend loves us without any judgements whatsoever, and finally how we are loved by God as if we were only one in this entire universe to be filled with His love.

Falling in love is just a mystical and mesmerising experience which can never be explained in any words. People fall in love with the sunsets and sunrises, sound of rain, cold kiss of snow, the perfume of grass after a storm or scents from around the globe, tastes of

certain foods, newly coated fresh smell of paint, music being played, smell of printed book pages, video games of their favourite and even with the drop of petrol.

More than falling in love with the above-mentioned material things, we fall in love with people, which is one of the most beautiful, enriching experiences of our lives. They fill our life with episodes of love. With some, we share only a few months; with others, we share our whole lives. Love teaches us sacrifice, how to give something so precious as our time or efforts, our care and compassion to someone else. (Pandikattu, 2016).

“In fact, a perfect heart has holes with love we have given away, it has mismatched pieces of other people who gave us a broken piece of their heart, only to fill those very holes left by others”

Paulo Coelho writes, “a perfect heart is not one that lacks a mess of scars and tears. In fact, a perfect heart has holes with love we have given away, it has mismatched pieces of other people who gave us a broken piece of their heart, only to fill those very holes left by others”.

Love can never be compared with anything because of its uniqueness. It is so unique that our efforts for comparison will turn futile. It can never be fully grasped and explained because it is the way it is.

2. Love Breaks Barriers

Love is truly limitless. Limits are based on human assumptions, society’s structure, and thought processes of limited intelligence, whereas love is beyond all these that weigh us down and do not allow us to experience the beauty of it in its fullness.

When we are really touched, and experience love, our deepest core of being, our set of beliefs, our way of thinking, and the rules and regulations that we hold on to will automatically undergo transformation. We would evolve from that love as a new being. (Pandikattu, 2016).

Love never knows any boundary, whether it is body, mind, distance, time, or death. It transcends everything. When in love, each cell of our body vibrates in a way that we may not be able to see but really feel the power within.

Unless we allow love to possess, no words will satisfy the questioner unless it is experienced from within, unless it flowers your heart and we become love for which each and every one of us is really called for. We must never ever try to find a meaning for love as there is no meaning or logic behind it. It is just what it is, purest at its finest form.

Love gives us a perfect heart, a heart that is ever selfless, generous, compassionate, and perfect in its imperfection. Love has no bounds because love is not related or restricted to any particular thing or person. Love is so unique in its being as we all fall in love with different things, and persons and have our own unique way of loving and expressing it to our loved ones.

Love is something that can never be explained entirely by anyone. Love has been given so many explanations and versions but never the fullness of love itself. Love is beyond everything. Love is told by all who understand it in their own words in their own understanding. When there is love, there is everything but even there is everything but not love, there is nothing.

3. Love Unites Us

Love is just a four-letter word but it gives us one of the finest meanings for life. We understand love in different

Falling in love is just a mystical and mesmerising experience which can never be explained in any words

ways and means. I feel love as an action. God loved the world so much that He became a man in order to love us through His unfailing presence. St. Ignatius rightly pointed out in his spiritual exercises that love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than words. Sacrifice, Acceptance and Generosity are the basic principles of love. First and foremost, love is sacrificial. Parents silently sacrifice many things for the betterment and welfare of their children. If a pregnant woman gets a choice of saving her life or her child's life, surely, she would like to save her child's life. Many people have shown the path to love through their sacrificial lives, like St. Mother Teresa, Blessed Rani Maria, and Fr. Stan Swamy. Even they were ready to embrace death for the sake of love. Denying oneself for others is true love.

Acceptance, loyalty, faithfulness, generosity, trust and friendship are part of love. Love dilutes our sufferings and enhances our times of joy and celebration. Love always accepts us as we are without any reservations and judgements. Love does not only go with the emotion, but it is a character. Even unknown people love us. Their love in action cannot be compensated. It flows from their hearts. Relationship values love. This kind of relationship is quite interesting to experience it in our daily lives. Love is a special invitation for us to live an exemplary life. Love blossoms in humanity even amidst inhumanity. It unites us in spite of our differences.

I strongly feel that it was "to be love and become love", our Lord Jesus Christ came to the Earth. He emptied himself and became one with us to show the power of the four-letter word "LOVE". His love is everlasting, unconditional, personal, and unique. He lived his teaching and preaching on love and that made him stand out from the crowd and finally even made him to surrender himself for the humanity. Thus, I say with courage and pride that He is Love and Love is He.

Nurtures Understanding

Love surpasses everything. Jesus Christ was so engulfed and immersed in love that he spoke much about love. He really knew the “power” of love. St. Paul in his letter to the people of Corinth had said about love as “patient, kind, not jealous, not pompous, not inflated, not rude, not quick tempered, does not seek its own interests, does not brood over injury and does not rejoice over wrong doings but rejoices with the truth”. We accept others only when we accept ourselves. Love in itself is a quality but it has a lot of qualities within. Love is unconditional, inclusive, ever available and pure. The need to nurture love flows from our attitude. When we recognise and realise our incompleteness, we would begin to be more loving, kind, caring, considerate, and merciful towards all around us.

Our own incompleteness and the incompleteness of the other become one when we truly forget ourselves and try to be reconciled with one another (Pandikattu, 2015). Things and persons can become useless, but they will never become meaningless. Globalisation, modernisation, and consumerism have become very common these days and their effects are seen, felt and experienced even today. We have started using humans whom we have to love and started loving things which is meant only to be used.

At this juncture, the role of love is pivotal. It can never be side-lined and substituted. As said by the famous sage Rumi, “In every religion there is love, yet love has no religion”. Love nurtures everyone, and it is its nature too. Love accepts incompleteness, emptiness, shallowness, half-heartedness, and partialness (Pandikattu, 2016).

Only in accepting that we are limited, incomplete and empty do we become unlimited, complete and a part of fullness.

Conclusion

Love binds even what cannot be bound, finds even what cannot be found, sees what cannot be seen and feels what cannot be felt. It is

not what is said but what is done. Love leads you closer to yourself, nearer to Oneself and dearer to Thyself. Love is not what you see, what you think, what you give, what you receive. Love will always be a unique gift for shaping us and our life.

Alain de Botton has said, “Perhaps it is true that we do not really exist until there is someone there to see us existing, we cannot properly speak until there is someone who can understand what we are saying, in essence, we are not wholly alive until we are loved”.

References

Pandikattu, Kuruvilla. (2015). *Ever Approachable, Never Attainable*. New Delhi, D.K. Agencies (P) Ltd.

Pandikattu, Kuruvilla. (2016). *Insights from Love and Logic*. New Delhi, Christian World Imprints.

Francis, Pope. (2020). *Fratelli Tutti*. London, Catholic Truth Society.

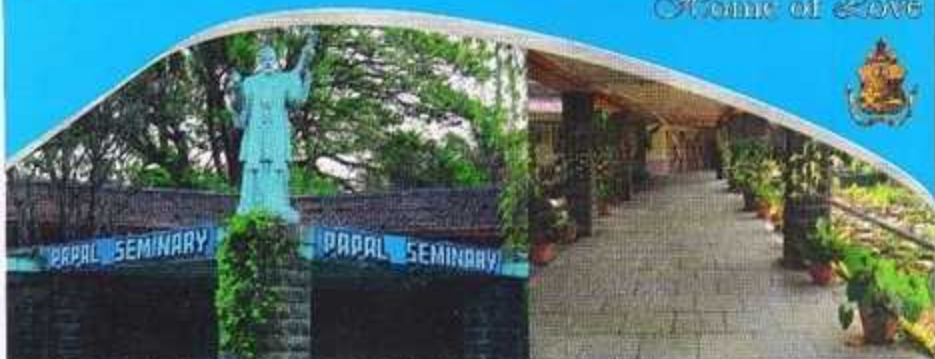


Emmanuel Akilan SJ has completed his philosophy studies at Jnana Deepa, Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Pune. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Hotel and Hospitality Administration. He has a particular interest in writing articles and poems. As a Jesuit priest, he aims to “serve the last, least and lost.”
Email: emmanuelakilan@gmail.com |
ORCID: 0000-0003-4732-8153

Article Received: Feb 28, 2021, Accepted: May 18, 2022; Word Count: 1810



© by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4>).



Source: Robert Macke <https://www.vofoundation.org/blog/asteroids-named-for-jesus/>

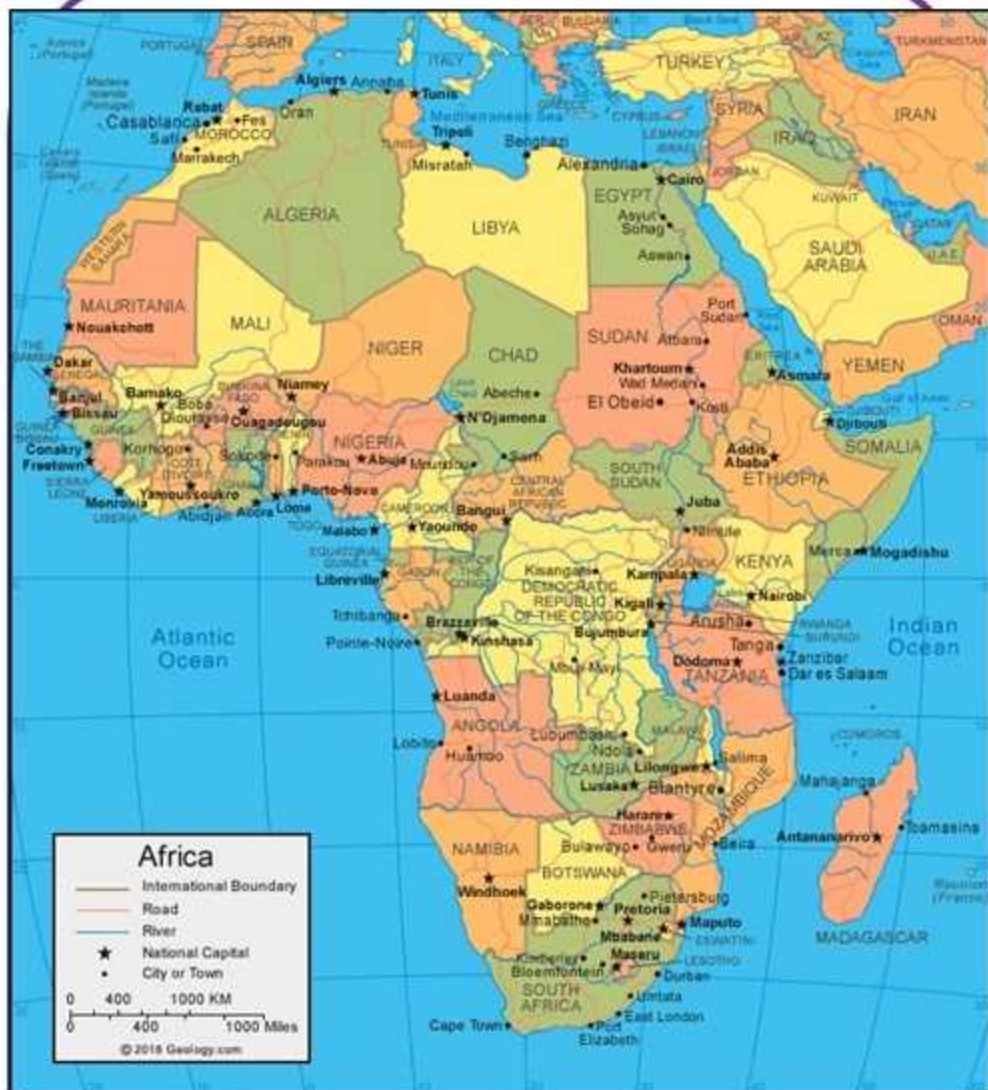


Printed and published by Papal Seminary,
Ramwadi, Pune 411014
Editor: Kuruvilla Pandikattu
(For Private Circulation Only)

ISSN 0224-9154



9 770224 915039 >



AUC



Love, having no
geography, knows
no boundaries.

Truman Capote



AUC: Asian Journal of Religious Studies

AUC : Asian j. religious stud.

Starting Year: 1955

ISSN P-2249-1503 : LCCN 2015307665

OCLC 908683560: CODEN: AJRSC2