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Ms. **Nisha Keshwani**, Independent Scholar, India

*The Ethical Emphasis on Religious Identity*

Keywords: religious identity, ethics, faith communities, Islam, Shi'ism.

There can be various ways through which individuals and communities can prefer to identify themselves. A practical study proved that individuals mostly look for historical milestones to define themselves. I want to extend this argument to establish that beside such key historical milestones, a religious community can choose to define themselves through ethics. Such identification not only enables the community to put forward a unique theorization of its ethical views but also helps them define what are their ideas of personhood, thus interacting with their notions of good, beliefs about the destiny of the human being and their religious worldview. As an insider to the Ismaili Muslim community, I believe that I am at a unique position to articulate how the long leadership of their two religious leaders, namely the Aga Khan III and IV have carefully helped the community define their ideals and ethics through various speeches and directives. I propose to analyse that within a span of more than a hundred years, what status has been given by these two leaders to human person in such a way that it not only fulfils their role as spiritual leaders of a Shi'a community in 20th and 21st centuries but also furthers their various humanitarian initiatives, including the Aga Khan Development Network? In analyzing the said aspects of a Muslim community, I will as well be drawing on some of the already established theories in this regard, for example Charles Taylor and Alasdair McIntyre to understand the ways, methods and implications of highlighting the ethical dimension of a religious identity and why in modern parlance, adding the ethical dimension to a community's self-definition can be a creative response to the challenges of modern life encountered by a faith group.

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Dr. **Omneya Ayad**, Assistant Professor, Uskudar University, The Institute of Sufi Studies, Turkey

*Abū Madyan al-Ghawth and Divine Unity in His Lāmiyya Ode*

Keywords: Abū Madyan al-Ghawth, divine unity, Moroccan spirituality, asceticism, unity of being

Abū Madyan (d. 589/1193 or 594/1189) is one of the greatest Andalusian Sufis who lived in the sixth/twelfth century and is seen as the epitome of synthesis between the Andalusian Moroccan spirituality and Eastern Gnosticism as he was called “mu'allim al-mu'allimīn (the Master of Masters” of the Maghrib. I aim to explore his concept of divine unity (tawhīd) in the Lāmiyya ode, which is considered one of the most famous poems chanted across the Islamic world. In our exploration of his poem, many references are made to his Sufi aphorisms (al-Ḥikam al-Ghawthiyya) to gain a deeper understanding of divine unity and other concepts related to it. Abū Madyan takes us into a celestial journey to reach spiritual union with God and places annihilation from self as a prerequisite for enjoying the divine companionship. Annihilation from self and immersion in God requires obliterating all egoistic tendencies and squashing all worldly attachments for the spirit to be freed from earthly bounds. Once the self is freed from its temporal selfish qualities, divine attributes come in place and reach a point where the Sufi only sees with divine eyes, listens with divine ears and moves with divine will. At this point, the Sufi becomes annihilated from his own existence and becomes subsistent only by God and that is when spiritual union takes place. Abū Madyan also draws our attention to the importance of the concept of the

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Unity of Being and how the world with all its multiple images and outer forms is nothing but a reflection of the unity of the Divine. In this context Abū Madyan warns us that ‘One who becomes intimate with created things becomes alienated from the Truth’. This means that the one who indulges in seeing sensual beings and fails to See God before, after, and with them is at great distance from God.

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**Ms. Harshika Mann**, Research Scholar, Maharishi Dayanand University, India

*Shaiva Imagery in the Paintings of Shri Ghulam Rasool Santosh*

Keywords: Ghulam Rasool Santosh, Shaiva Darshan, Neo-Tantrism, Seven Chakras, Purusha, Prakriti

This research proposes to examine the paintings of an important Indian artist Ghulam Rasool Santosh (1929-1997). Born and brought up in Kashmir in a Muslim milieu, G.R. Santosh encountered Shaiva icons and Sri Yantra forms during his visit to Amarnath cave in 1964. Eventually, the concept of his artworks became religious and imagery belonging to the Hindu Shaiva darshan began appearing in his paintings. Therefore, the major theme of this paper would be to study his artworks, which are categorized as neo-tantric, in order to understand a few of the major concepts from Shavisim. For instance, the artist has used basic shapes and levels of Sri yantra which is an emblem of worshipping God in Hinduism. He has used its triangles, circles, and squares to depict the levels of achieving Parma Satya, or the supreme bliss. His paintings are a visual blend of multiple hues combined with tantric shapes and symbolic themes, that create a spiritual experience. His figures symbolize the seven chakras of the body that ultimately starts from the root Muladhara chakra and rise towards Sahasrara or crown chakra where one experiences the Supreme. Another significant theme of his paintings is to represent the concept of the union of Shiva and Shakti or Purusha and Prakriti that symbolize cosmic creation. Divine radiating colours along with tantric shapes and levels with a form that floats in the transcendental background itself uplifts the viewer towards the unknown would be further explained in this paper.

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**Mr. Asger Trier Engberg**, Independent Scholar, Denmark

*Nature in Balance*

Keywords: nature, balance, Plato, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, forest, climate change

The research done is mainly related to my proof of g-d, that I presented at the first symposium at religious studies. This project is an attempt at making a practical use of the theory. The case is a project done by a colleague, that is a professor in forests. We try to see spirit in nature, and how a religious angle on nature can perhaps create a deeper understanding of BOTH spirit and nature. It is done in a platonic framework, using the principles of Plato and his companion philosophers to understand the plight of man in relation to nature.

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**Dr. Belinda Du Plooy**, Senior Manager of Academic Engagement, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa

*Female Christ Figures in Contemporary Film: Reading Disney's Moana as a Filmic Christ Figure*

Keywords: sacred subtexts, Christ figure, holy fool, monomyth, Moana, Whale Rider

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Christ figures and holy fools are two familiar examples of religious iconography and symbolism that are often repeated and adapted in secular film making. Such covert engagement with religious mythologies and themes can be intentional, or it can reflect what Joseph Campbell identified as monomyths, which cut across cultures and contexts. It also corresponds with the Jungian idea of archetypes as collective unconscious patterns and motifs. It is most common for such christ figures and holy fools to androcentrically be presented as male. However, examples of female christ figures are becoming more common across a variety of film genres. They are significant because representations of female christ figures often speak directly to liberatory and salvatory interpretations of biblical scripture and therefore usually challenge dominant representational practices. The most easily discernible filmic female christ figures are nearly always adult western/European white women. However, in this article I will consider two films in which young indigenous girls are the protagonists and clearly representative of the familiar christ figure and holy fool tropes. They are New Zealand director Niki Caro's 2002 film *Whale Rider*, based on the 1987 book of the same name by Maori author Witi Ihimaera, and the 2016 animated Disney film *Moana*. There is a clear intertextual bond between these two films as they deal with similar narrative and existential themes and have main characters that have much in common. In this paper I will specifically focus on the christological symbolism of the two female child figures, while also folding this back to the longstanding religious and literary tradition of the holy fool, with the aim to contribute to a growing body of critical and theoretical work about the representation and reading of women and religion in film.

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Dr. **William Jeynes**, Senior Fellow, Witherspoon Institute, Princeton University, and Professor, California State University at Long Beach, USA

*Revisiting the Importance of Faith and the Invisible*

Keywords: religion, faith, prayer, character education

The last two years of COVID have been difficult for the entire globe, but two realizations that have arisen as a result of COVID are: 1) a healthier respect for the invisible and 2) a fuller appreciation for the place of faith. Regarding the invisible realm, after several decades of the world dealing with visible threats from wars, it will likely be argued that complacency entered into the world regarding the invisible realm including viruses and yes, even God. Suddenly, the greatest physical threat to humanity is largely invisible and even fear has descended upon people. Now, many have turned to religion for comfort and direction. Within this context, I would like to share about the results of two meta-analyses, one on the effects of prayer and the other on the effects of character education in the schools. The character traits in the second study are especially consistent with Christian values, but also often reflect faith-based values overall. Both meta-analyses examined the outcome variables of student- academic achievement and school behavior. The prayer meta-analyses included 13 studies and the character education study examined 52 studies. For the prayer meta-analyses the effects were over .4 of a standard deviation, when there were no sophisticated controls included, and about .25 of a standard deviation unit, when they were included. For the character education meta-analysis there were a number of notable findings. First, the effects for character education were greater for secondary school students than they were for elementary school students. Second, the effects for character education were larger for both low-SES and racial minority groups than they were for other students. Third, the effects of character education had an especially notable effect on pupil self-control, respect, love, honesty, suspensions, and violence.

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**Dr. Claire Murphy**, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Music Education, Stephen F. Austin State University, USA

**Dr. Barbara Qualls**, Associate Professor/Program Director for M.Ed.-Leadership, Stephen F. Austin State University, USA

*Does Religious Expression Have a Price Tag?*

Keywords: religious expression, establishment of religion, school finance, private religious school, U.S. Supreme Court, law and religion

The inerrancy of both the King James Version (KJV) Bible and the United States Constitution is a position firmly held by many evangelical Americans. In early 21st century America, overlap exists between extreme conservatism and extreme evangelism. With the appointment of a supermajority of conservative justices to the United States Supreme Court, several religious issues have been welcomed and decided, where previous courts had declined to relitigate what appeared to be precedent. The separation of church and state is often mistakenly attributed to the Constitution. Thomas Jefferson's "wall of separation" is the product of the dual prongs of the First Amendment, in which a state-established religion is prohibited, and where state-regulated religious expression is likewise prohibited. Money, specifically public money, is an incubator for conflict between the Establishment and Expression clauses of the First Amendment. Two very recent Supreme Court decisions showcase that conflict, but also reveal the changes in the Supreme Court itself, changes that will likely survive several more election cycles. Those cases are *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* (2020) and *Trinity Lutheran v. Comer* (2017). In both cases, funding related to religious schools and education provided the backdrop for decisions that depended on a conservative interpretation of the First Amendment, while at the same time giving less significance to Jefferson's wall of separation. The *Espinoza* decision was predicated on recognition of the wall of separation but concluded that the best interest of children, as determined by the Court, outweighed Jefferson's intent. *Trinity Lutheran*, by contrast, merely determined that state-sponsored improvement grants could be awarded to religious schools without challenging the wall of separation. Both cases mark a turn away from precedent and may be based more on the personal politics and values of the new justices than on an interpretation of the First Amendment, strict or not.

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**Dr. Jorge Botelho Moniz**, Director of the B.A. in European Studies and International Relations & Assistant Professor, Lusófona University, Portugal

*Religious Populism: Between Modernophobia and Islamophobia*

Keywords: religion, populism, secularism, Islamophobia, modernophobia

This work investigates the origins of religious populism, examining it vis-à-vis the advent of secularism and the idea of the privatization of religion. Through a descriptive and analytical methodology, it will examine how, contrary to the theories of secularization, the deprivatization of religion has occurred and how, consequently, the politicization of this discourse has deepened. It is with the development and deepening of the politicization of religion that religious populism starts to penetrate and gain preponderance in the public space, assuming a gradually more relevant influence in the current political discourse and in the understanding that individuals

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make of themselves and of others. This research focuses geographically on the West (Europe and North America) and Islam (Middle East and North Africa) since this regional dichotomy allows us to isolate two subtypes of religious populism – modernophobia and Islamophobia – close to right-wing populism – culture and identity. We conclude that these types of religious populism derive from the deprivatization of religion, thus promoting a (negative) reaction to modernization, namely in the form of anti-secularism, and a deepening of populist-religious discourses and practices, respectively.

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**Dr. Nura Aliyu**, Senior Lecturer, Umaru Musa Yaradua University Katsina State, Nigeria

*Appraising Transformation, Fragmentation and Contestation among Ulama in Northern Nigeria Since the 20th Century, A Study of Urban Islam in Nigeria*

Keywords: transformation, fragmentation, contestation, urban Islam, Northern Nigeria

Northern Nigerian society had noticeably undergone massive transformations since the beginning of the 20th century. The changes and mutations had transcended to its normative social arrangements and structures where Islam and its institutions were part and parcel. The ulama, one of the key institutions in Islam, the degree at which it was affected deserves a special appraisal. For one reason, the history of the ulama in the century has been one of continuity and change. Besides, the society within this period has been identified as transitional characterized by one striking feature, which is the gradual entrenchment of modernity. This concept encapsulates some massive and unrelenting trends of transformation which have been mono-causal and very hard to resist. Also, in order to review urban Islam, the ulama need to be reexamined too, for they are the formulators, carries and disseminators of ideas and thoughts, as well as molders of opinions among the general public as it is obvious in the history of Islam in Nigeria. This paper therefore, has two intents. First, it reviews the aspects of continuity and change, fragmentation and contestation of religious authority which are very noticeable among the Ulama in northern Nigeria. Second, it assesses the manner in which the ulama responded to new and modern trends. Appraising these issues is very vital because of their relations with the changing role of the ulama in public life and space, the socio-religious changes that have been taking place in the society which in themselves shaped the ulama or shaped by them and generally, urban Islam in contemporary Nigeria.

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**Dr. Ian Binns**, Associate Professor, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA

**Dr. Mark Bloom**, Professor, Dallas Baptist University, USA

*The Influence of Religion on Elementary Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Science*

Keywords: evolution, religion, nature of science, education

This study explored the influence of religion on 76 elementary preservice teachers' (PSTs) decisions to include or exclude alternative explanations to evolution in the science curriculum while considering Nature of Science (NOS) within the PSTs decision making. The family resemblance approach (FRA) framework (Erduran & Dagher, 2014) provides several associations considering religion as an embedded feature of NOS. According to Erduran and Dagher (2014), the category of knowledge within the FRA looks at theories, laws and models and it is here one can consider the theory of evolution. From a values perspective, Erduran and Dagher (2014) refer to

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empirical adequacy which is the idea of basing claims on plausible data. This is particularly relevant when looking at creationism and intelligent design. Additionally, Erduran and Dagher (2014) write that students, who are potentially future scientists, should be aware that scientific endeavors can be stifled by imposed religious constraints. Data collection came from a proposed scenario and a demographics survey based on the 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study conducted by the Pew Research Center. The purpose of the scenario was to assess the PSTs conceptions of science and then to challenge them to use their definition of science to justify the inclusion or exclusion of creationism and/or intelligent design into the science curriculum. We independently read and coded the data using an inductive, constant comparative approach. These codes along with the responses on the demographics survey were used to characterize the PSTs rationales for including or excluding alternative explanations to evolution to the curriculum. Findings revealed that 32 would not add creationism or ID, 26 would add both, 9 would add creationism, 6 would add ID, and 3 would only mention them. Their diverse explanations for their decision as well as the role religion played will be addressed.

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**Mr. Ali Abubakar Sadiq**, Columnist, Leadership Newspaper Group, Nigeria

*Evolution in the Scriptures*

Keywords: atheism, creation, evolution, Darwinism, scriptures

The clash between evolution and creationism is perhaps the best-known example of the interaction between science and religion. With the publication of Darwin's "On the origin of species" in the 1850's, the polarity between the two widened as scientist's looked upon religion as something dogmatic and fatalistic, devoid of any hypothetical construction that can be verified by physical research. Religionist's on the other hand looked upon science as a materialist philosophy that advocates "Reductionism" and "Nothing buttery" thereby reducing faith (or God) as "...mere delusion." This paper will show that science and religion with regard to evolution are not demarcated as the agnostic advocated or as the Darwinist's and Creationist's polarized. Rather by invoking the Bible and Quran will show that science and religion are friends rather than foes. Are the six days of creation to be taken literally or does it signifies epoch of evolution? Is Adam a human created in Eden or the first living cell representing all created life? Does Darwinism mean Atheism? Do humans evolved along the evolutionary ladder or are they special creation, created de-novo? Five centuries before Darwin, Ibn Khaldun in his monumental book "Muqaddimah" proposes a theory of evolution starting from minerals arguing that the essence of creation (in modern terminology: genetic code) passes through various changes (mutations) generating one species after another (descent with modification). But Darwin's leading supporter, Huxley, gathered a band of vociferous contenders for the supremacy of science and foists an atheistic overtone on the theory in the name of Darwinism. Darwin himself has never been an atheist and according to his own words "Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason, and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight..."

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**Dr. Arzu Eylul Yalcinkaya**, Faculty Member, Institute for Sufi Studies, Uskudar University, Turkey

*Bridging Role of the Sufi Intellectuals between the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Republican Turkey*

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Keywords: Islam, Intellectual Sufism, Late Ottoman Empire, Turkish Republic, tradition, modernism

Turkish Republic was established in 1923 with a determined drive towards re-establishing the country in line with premises of positivism and modernity. This was an outcome of a traumatic transitional period that witnessed an immense effort to save the Ottoman Empire from collapse and disintegration. The period that span through late 19th-early 20th century was a stimulating intellectual stage of discussions on reform, change, modernity and tradition. There was overwhelming number of opinions from numerous parties such as Sufis, the Ulema and public intellectuals regarding how the new reform program of the Kemalist establishment could be in reconciliation with the Islamic traditional and religious lifestyles. In this milieu of hardening polarizations certain Sufi intellectuals navigated a delicate, non-dualistic third way between the new Republic's laïcité and the continuation of vital religious, spiritual and cultural traditions. In order to investigate the mentioned perspective, the writings, penned discourses and biographies of following Sufi intellectuals will be studied: Ken'ān Rifāi (1867-1950), Ahmet Avni Konuk (1868-1938) and Tāhir Olgun, also known as Tāhirülmevlī (1877-1951). These scholars were selected because of their role as leading figures of "intellectual Sufism", their understanding of Sufi tradition as dynamic and malleable, and their mutual confidence in the principal of ulu'l emre itaat which refers to an Ottoman state ideology equating obedience to the law with religious requirement. In other words, these Sufi intellectuals may be classified as bridging figures in a historiography dominated by intergroup political conflict. This paper thus intends to investigate how each intellectual preserved certain core elements of the Sufi tradition while adapting to modernization and argues that the work of these scholars should be understood as an important early attempt to address and overcome the polarizations between religion and secular reform.

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**Dr. Adrian Deese**, Assistant Professor, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

*The Spiritual Commonwealth: Southern Nigeria's Delegation to the Pan-Anglican Congress of 1908*

Keywords: World Christianity, African history, Nigeria

The Church of England played an important role in the mediation of indigenous systems of authority in British West Africa. The Church enjoyed a de facto status in the imperial protectorates that facilitated civic negotiation at the nexus of traditional and bureaucratic forms of governance. Ecclesiastical assemblies were an important forum bridging the churches of the early Anglican Communion, which was conceptualized as the reformed yet catholic communion of national churches heir to the apostolic Church. From 1867, the Lambeth Conference convened the bishops of that Communion. The Pan-Anglican Congress in 1908 marked a transition phase. The culmination of the nineteenth-century missionary movement, the Congress engaged the role of indigenous cultures and ecclesiological orthodoxy in the mediation of the churches in communion with Canterbury. This essay surveys the Western Equatorial Africa Diocese's delegation to the Pan-Anglican Congress, sent from the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. As in the early ecumenical councils, Anglican debates on Christological orthodoxy became central to the coherent articulation of the relationship of the Crown and commonwealth in an imperial context. In conjunction with the Congress, Nigerian clerics gave speeches across Britain, published apologetic treatises, and worked on a new authorized Yoruba translation of the Bible for the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Nigerian delegation to the Pan-Anglican Congress, this essay argues, worked to negotiate

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within the Southern Nigeria Protectorate a spiritual commonwealth that would make possible the participation of the African kingdoms in a future civil commonwealth of nations.

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**Mr. Graham Lee**, Elizabeth D. Rockwell Center Fellow, University of Houston, USA

*Moses, Plato's True Philosopher*

Keywords: Aristobulus, Crito, Hebrew philosophy, Moses, Plato, republic

In this paper I argue that it is plausible that Moses meets what Plato takes to be central criteria for being a true philosopher. I do not attempt to show that Moses subscribes to Platonic philosophy, as doing so would be tantamount to anachronization. Similarly, ascribing Mosaic philosophy (if such there be) to Plato presumably would be to be historically inaccurate. Yet certain ancient Jewish philosophers argued that Greek philosophy derived from Hebrew philosophy. An argument for such a thesis could be referred to as one regarding the 'history of cultural origins.' Prominent among these Jewish philosophers is Aristobulus, who offers such an argument (hereafter "HCO") in Fragments 3 and 4. A central sub-argument of HCO, call it the Hebrew-Plato argument, involves two premises, with the conclusion that Plato drew much philosophical insight from Hebrew legislation. Establishing the Hebrew-Plato thesis would go some way in showing that HCO is plausible. That Moses displays thought or behavior in the Pentateuch which exhibits Plato's criteria for being a true philosopher, in turn, would go some way in establishing the thesis. In the Pentateuch, Moses's teaching is largely not his own but God's, that is, God's teaching qua Moses's teaching. So, instead of trying to determine whether Moses's thought exhibits Plato's criteria, we would do better to examine whether and to what extent Moses's behavior exhibits it. Accordingly, I discuss points of similarity between Plato's criteria and Moses's behavior—that between a couple of the criteria given in Republic and Moses's pursuit of wisdom from God atop Mt. Sinai; and that between a third criterion set out in Crito and Moses's confrontation of the Israelites upon descent from the mountaintop. The points of similarity are developed in sections I, II, and III of the paper.

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**Ms. Nola Stewart**, Retired Science Teacher, Australia

*Charles Darwin: Man of Science and Man of God*

Keywords: evolution, faith

The objective of this Paper is to show that, throughout his life, naturalist Charles Darwin was true to his Christian faith. In his book 'Origin of Species' published in 1859, Darwin mentions his belief in God as Creator at least 6 times; however, I have yet to find an author, either supporter or opponent of Darwin's evolutionary theory, who has quoted him on this. The famous debate that took place in 1860 at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History was not attended by Darwin. This debate set up the subsequent course of history as one of division between Science and Religion, with evolution its focus and 'Science' as the 'winner.' This misrepresented Darwin's intentions. An examination of both sides in the conflict revealed a requisite scientific impartiality to be notably absent; yet, throughout subsequent debate, Darwin remained the well-mannered gentleman that he was, actively avoiding controversy. To appreciate Darwin we must see his work within the context of the development of scientific thought in the 1800s. It has been said that 'Science' is 'thinking God's thoughts after Him;' in our quest to find out about the natural world. In practice this means using scientific

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method, resulting in verifiable data which also depend on the truthfulness of the investigator. In Darwin we have an honest investigator; honesty which itself was born of his Christian faith. Two people Darwin counted as his friends spent much of their lives in Australia and had strong links to St Thomas' Anglican Church, North Sydney. They were William B Clarke, minister / geologist and Conrad Martens, artist and architect. This Paper includes references to both these friends including through Memorials at St Thomas'. Biblical prophets and apostles had opponents who found truth unpalatable and sought to alter it. The Bible witnesses held fast to the truth and Charles Darwin did the same.

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**Mr. Shashank Shukla**, Assistant Professor, C.M. College, India

*Analysing the Religious Pluralism and the Quality of Life in India*

Keywords: religious pluralism, authenticity, bad faith, sustainability, quality of life

India is not only a heavily populated nation but also a home to a number of religious sects. Though the majority of population is Hindu but the followers of other religions are also in millions. India is one of the seventeen mega diverse countries in the world, thereby providing ample opportunities to its citizens to survive and live an easy life. The country doesn't witness too many recurring natural disasters like that of some of the coastal nations and has highly habitable places unlike some colder places. But still it lags behind when it comes to the comparison of the quality of life with many of the other nations which are way less habitable than India. My paper focuses on analysing that whether the religious pluralism in India which is often cited as one of its peculiarities is hurting the chances of the transformation of its society. In my paper, I have tried to explain that how major religions in India have stuck to their dogmas and thus failed to evolve on ground level. Besides that I have also tried to unfurl the contradictory religious views and concepts shared and practiced by the majority of Indian masses which have resulted in significant depreciation in their efficacy and productivity as well as poor adaptation to the needs of changing times. The dogmas with which the Indian society is obsessed, when coupled with the population explosion that it has witnessed in the later half of the 20th century, leaves some malignant effects on its structure. The religious pluralism has failed to yield the hybrid and evolved ideas and manners in practice which it was supposed to do in the theories. This, in turn, has seriously affected the quality of life that a citizen lives and imagines about. Methodology: Comparative analysis and the analysis of reports by various reliable international organisational platforms.