

a classification of encounters with the Hidden Imam as recorded in Twelver Shi'i sources and touching upon their soteriological implications. Lastly, Moezzi briefly looks at esoteric interpretations of the Occultation of the Hidden Imam within the writings of the Shaykhiyya school of Shi'i thought.

Although the majority of Shi'i primary sources consulted by the author were penned by figures in the Twelver tradition, many of the narrations quoted from these works are attributed to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, extending their significance to Zaydis, Ismailis and other Shi'i groups. Additionally, narrations from figures such as 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, Muhammad al-Baqir, and Jafar al-Sadiq within these sources, take on religious and spiritual significance within a broader conceptualization of the Shi'i faith than the author implies. Nevertheless, it is to Moezzi's credit that he states (albeit in a later footnote) that most of the traditions attributed to early Imams such as Muhammad al-Baqir and Jafar al-Sadiq are common to both Twelver and Isma'ili Shi'ism (245).

The strength of Moezzi's work lies in its ability to not only bring together a spectrum of secondary sources on Shi'i thought in various European languages, but also to critically engage with Arabic and Persian primary texts, many of which may be previously unknown to non-specialists. Further, discussion of the censorship of well-known beliefs and practices by non-Shi'i authors, such as pre-Islamic kinship rituals between Muhammad, 'Ali, and Muhammad's grandsons Hasan and Husayn, highlights the need to critically re-assess existing understandings of Shi'ism within the discourse of Islamic history. To this end, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Beliefs and Practices* is a perfect starting-point.

Religion and Human Rights: An Introduction.

John Witte, Jr. and M. Christian Green (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN: 9780199733446. Pp. 416.

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A downside to the present proliferation of edited collections, purportedly organized around single topics, is the loss of inter-textual coherence. But the reality of academic specialization seems to mean that no one author will any longer dare attempt to tackle the multiple problematics arising out of any given issue. This impressive volume, introducing historical, theoretical, and contemporary considerations of the relationship between religious beliefs and the legal rights accruing to human beings *qua* human being, compiled by John Witte, Jr. and M. Christian Green, manages to accomplish the sort of integral purpose that typically requires a single author. Guided by the considerations, more obviously, that human rights are indispensable

to democratic regimes and, less obviously, that human rights and religion need each other, the volume aims “to provide authoritative but accessible treatment of... [the] fundamentals of religion and human rights” (xv). Each essay responds to a secular undertow dragging rights discourse towards individualism, the libertarian privatization of religious beliefs, and the exaggeration of the role of the state *vis à vis* other forms of community. The result gleaned by an attentive reader is a thickly woven conception of human life that brings together personal and communal aspirations, is unafraid of traditional inheritances, and, perhaps most importantly, interrogates assumptions regarding the relationship between religious beliefs and secularity.

This volume extends the presentation of an earlier volume, *Religious Human Right in Global Perspective* (1996), edited by Witte and Johan D. van der Vyver, which focussed solely on the western revelatory monotheisms. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) is never far from the thoughts of the editors and essayists, the status of its supposedly secular pedigree subject to question. To combat simplistic accounts of secularity as the eventual displacement of religious belief, those articles of the *Declaration* that respond constructively to religious beliefs are analyzed. Representatives of many of the major religious traditions on the drafting committee, who shared in common a set of practical ideals, defended religious interests by promoting freedoms of association and conscience.

Divided into two parts, the volume tackles the problematic status of the concept religion from complementary vantages. The first half treats the possible relationships between different religious traditions and the international legal tradition stemming from the UDHR. Individual essays examine human rights discourse in the context of the three revelatory monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, three of the eastern wisdom traditions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism, as well as native (or indigenous) spiritualities. Whether human rights should be seen as a universal good or as a product of a particular culture context receives attention from the various contributors. David Novak, for example, negotiates a Jewish perspective which holds that all human beings were created in the image of God, but the people of Israel, for better or worse, were singled out by God as his chosen people. Exploring the potential contributions Hinduism makes to human rights discourse, in particular the altruism entailed by the essential oneness of all things, Werner Menski fights against Western conceptions of Hinduism as essentially contrary to human rights. Joseph Chan similarly works to place some distance between his readers and conceptions of Confucianism as inherently authoritarian, to develop a more nuanced account of human rights as a legal fallback position, required when and where virtuous relationships between persons no longer flourish.

The second half of the volume questions whether the right to freedom of religion is merely the sum of other rights, like the freedoms of association,

conscience, expression, self-determination, and thought, or whether, though it borrows heavily, it is more than simply the sum of other rights. In Articles 2 and 18 of the UDHR, freedom of religion is placed alongside the freedoms of thought and conscience, but leaves very little by way of clues to help distinguish the former from one or both of the latter. A tight conceptual definition is not forthcoming, but absent freedom of religion, a number of the contributors argue, claims to possess other freedoms tend to lose their potency. Steven Smith describes how the right to freedom of conscience, whereby one dissents from commonly held opinions, has been eclipsed by the strict religious neutrality of rights to equality. The intimate connection between the freedoms of association and religion, explored by Natan Lerner, is underscored when state law encroaches upon the autonomy of religious communities. Contra a tendency towards secular homogeneity, a number of the essayists call attention to the distinction drawn in the UDHR between the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom to manifest one's right or belief. The first may be termed an absolute right, but the second is only a derivative, and so a relative, right, subject to constraint from collective concerns like the common good.

What is perhaps most remarkable about this carefully compiled volume is that the individual voices of the authors, reflecting particular concerns and interests, are not suppressed by editorial intentions. Questions of cultural particularity and universality or individual and communal rights are left open-ended by the editors, allowing the authors to explore the problematics arising out of them. The editors nonetheless retain their conviction that religion and human rights discourse should inform each other, rather than be held at arms length from each other. Borrowing wisdom found in a famous turn of phrase offered by a Catholic philosopher sitting on the UDHR drafting committee, Jacques Maritain, human rights are universal in aspiration, even if not in acclamation or application, "as long as no one asks why" (20). Not the conclusion to the matter, this observation serves as the springboard for further questions. What will happen when increased globalization forces the "why" question? Is the normative content of particular religions to be set aside, or is it to be plumbed for further inspiration? Witte and Green suggest that contemporary human rights occupies a middle position, in Antique terminology, analogous to that of common law between natural and civil law, responsive to matters of both transcendent and immediate import.