

X Christian perspectives

In line with the illuminative mode (one of the two modes within Freiburger’s fourfold configuration of a comparative study), some highly selective Christian perspectives are offered.

A Giving charity without boasting

Quite similar to <105> in the *dānadharma* context, in the sermon on the mount, Jesus stresses the importance of fulfilling religious duties without the purpose of gaining praise:

<199> So when you give something to a needy person, do not make a big show of it, as the hypocrites do in the houses of worship and on the streets. They do it so that people will praise them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full.⁶⁰²

The payment that these “hypocrites” obtain is only thisworldly. Otherworldly merit will not be earned on top. Compare <10>, where the Mīmāṃsā understanding of *dharmā* similarly rests on the strict alternative of obtaining either this- or otherworldly fruit. Jesus further strengthens this idea of not making donations in a public manner, saying that “the left hand should not know what the right hand does”.⁶⁰³ Here, Jesus seems to favour pure altruism, without any warm glow (see subsection II.B(3)).

B Giving in line with one’s means

Giving everything during one’s lifetime (*sarvasva* (<92>)) and *sarvavedasadakṣiṇā* (<21>)) is discussed in Indian texts. As an aside, “everything” may refer to one’s very existence, as is indicated in the Buddhist context, where the *ātman* (Sanskrit) or the *attā* (Pali) is

602 Mt_E 6.2

603 Mt_L 6.3 has “nesciat sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua”, which is translated too mildly as “even your closest friend will not know about it” in Mt_E 6.3.

donated (see <156>). Similarly, Jesus requests of his disciples: “If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross, and follow me.”⁶⁰⁴ Of course, “everything” does not necessarily imply “a lot”, but is dependent on the giver’s means:

<200> As Jesus sat near the temple treasury, he watched the people as they dropped in their money. Many rich men dropped in a lot of money; then a poor widow came along and dropped in two copper coins, worth about a penny. He called his disciples together and said to them, “I tell you that this poor widow put more in the offering box than all the others. For the others put in what they had to spare of their riches—she gave all she had to live on.”⁶⁰⁵

C *Umbra excusatiunculae non excusans*

The early Church Father Saint Basil (4th c. CE) appeared very strict⁶⁰⁶ about “giving everything to the poor”. In particular, he does not accept family and children as a valid excuse:

<201> *Numne iis qui matrimonio junguntur, scripta sunt Evangelia: Si vis perfectus esse, vende quae habes, et da pauperibus?*⁶⁰⁷

You do not claim that the evangelium has not been written for married couples, the evangelium that requires: If you want to be perfect, sell everything you own and give it to the poor.⁶⁰⁸

And, furthermore:

<202> *Nonne cunctis liberis propinquior tibi est anima tua?*⁶⁰⁹

Is not your soul for you closer than all your children?⁶¹⁰

This position is echoed by the ascetic Salvianus, who was born in Trier and wrote “Ad Ecclesiam” after 435 CE and “De gubernatione Dei” around 439 CE.⁶¹¹ Salvianus also demanded that one give away everything during one’s lifetime, or at the latest after death:

<203> *nolite thesaurizare uobis thesauros in terra, thesaurizate autem uobis thesauros in caelo*⁶¹²

Do not amass riches for yourself on earth, instead, amass riches for yourself in heaven.

604 Mt_E 16.24

605 Mk_E 12.41–44

606 As Bruck (1956, pp. 6–7) explains, Saint Basil nevertheless sided with the less stringent requirements of “*Fac locus Christo cum filiis tuis*” (see the next section).

607 Basilus, *Homilia in divites*, chapter 7, in Migne (1857, col. 298). The original is in Greek.

608 After Bruck (1956, p. 6)

609 Basilus, *Homilia in divites*, chapter 7, in Migne (1857, col. 299)

610 After Bruck (1956, pp. 107–108)

611 Letsch-Brunner (2001)

612 Salvianus, *Ad ecclesiam*, Liber I, § 21, in Pauly (1883, p. 230)

and

⟨204⟩ *non quero, ut pro peccatis tuis totum deo tradas quod habes: hoc solum redde quod debes*⁶¹³

I do not require that, for your sins, you give God everything that you possess; return only what you owe.⁶¹⁴

According to Bruck (1956, p. 108), this means to bequeath everything. This quotation mirrors the triple-debt ethics explained in subsection VII.E(3).

In a similar fashion to Basil above, Salvianus does not consider the love for one's children to be a good excuse for not "giving God everything", but is rather just

⟨205⟩ *umbra excusatiunculae non excusans*⁶¹⁵

the shade of miserable excuse that does not excuse anything⁶¹⁶

After all, so Salvianus explains, the lord himself has decreed:

⟨206⟩ *qui amat filium aut filiam plus quam me, non est me dignus*⁶¹⁷

Whoever loves his son or daughter more than me is not fit to be my disciple.⁶¹⁸

Furthermore, the effects of not giving everything are grim:

⟨207⟩ *torquearis [...] tenebris exterioribus [...] eneceris et ardentibus sine fine flammis non decoquaris*⁶¹⁹

You are tormented, killed in utmost darkness, and boiled in flames that burn without end.

D Two-step donations

Salvianus makes use of equity reasons to explain why giving to monks is beneficial:

⟨208⟩ *dicitis, quid opus sit religiosis iusta patrimonii portione? respondeo: ut religionis fungantur officio, ut religiosorum rebus religio ditetur, ut donent ut largiantur ut illis habentibus cuncti habeant non habentes.*⁶²⁰

You say what work might be [effected] by the monks through the just portion of the inheritance? I answer: so that they are effective in the service of religion, so that religion is enriched by the monks' deeds, so that they give, so that they donate, so that, since those [monks] possess, all possess who do not possess.⁶²¹

613 Salvianus, Ad ecclesiam, Liber I, § 61, in Pauly (1883, p. 243)

614 After Bruck (1956, pp. 107–108)

615 Salvianus, Ad ecclesiam, Liber III, § 9, in Pauly (1883, p. 271)

616 After Bruck (1956, pp. 107–108)

617 Salvianus, Epistola VIII, § 6, in Pauly (1883, p. 218), quoting Mt_L 10.37 (*qui amat filium aut filiam super me, non est me dignus*) in Weber (1994, p. 1541)

618 Mt_E 10.37

619 Salvianus, Ad ecclesiam, Liber III, § 78, in Pauly (1883, p. 295)

620 Salvianus, Ad ecclesiam, Liber III, § 23, in Pauly (1883, pp. 275–276)

621 After Bruck (1956, p. 111)

Together with Bruck (1956, p. 117), one might worry whether *iusta portio* is an appropriate term when, according to Salvianus himself, the whole of one's wealth should be donated. Importantly, giving to monks amounts to a two-step donation. A generous donor gives to monks, who then donate to poor people.

E *Fac locus Christo cum filiis tuis*

In a more moderated manner, Saint Augustine and others championed the idea of considering Jesus Christ a son, obtaining his fair share of the inheritance.⁶²² Augustine expresses this idea in the following manner:

⟨209⟩ *Fac locus Christo cum filiis tuis, accedat familiae tuae Dominus tuus, accedat ad prolem Creator tuus, accedat ad numerum filiorum tuorum frater tuus. [...] Duos filios habes, tertium illum computa: tres habes, quartus numeretur ...*⁶²³

Make place for Christ together with your sons; your Lord should approach your family; your creator should approach your descendants; your brother should approach to the number of your sons. [...] You have two sons, consider him the third one. You have three, he should count as the fourth one.

Thus, if a Christian (man) has a wealth of W and has s sons as heirs, he should donate $\frac{1}{s+1}W$ to the church.

622 Bruck (1956, pp. 88–100) argues for Saint Jerome (Latin Hieronymus), rather than Saint Augustine, as the inventor.

623 Augustinus, Sermo 86, caput 11, in Migne (1845, col. 529)