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seeks to promote the integration
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by bringing theologians into conversation with scholars
across the spectrum of faculties
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Preview Response

CAN CONFUCIAN 'UPRIGHTNESS' AND BIBLICAL JUSTICE SPEAK TO EACH OTHER?

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The Preview evokes for me the significance that language (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English) plays in communication of shared, core ideas, such as the nuances of meaning in that English word and concept called “justice” or “righteousness”. I am intrigued by the OT meanings that associate justice with God’s character, God the judge in the context of cosmic court, and the ways an OT, Middle Eastern concept of justice may have affinities with oriental worldviews, most importantly for me with Confucian thought on “uprightness”, beginning with cultivation of one’s inner character and then extending from the family out into the public realm. The Preview provokes me to think more on the commensurability and/or incommensurability of cross-linguistic understanding of justice or rights, judgment or accountability.

I wonder about the differentiation between “orders” (first and second) of justice, whether they are prominent in the Bible or method of studying the Bible, and whether they are helpful to our society today. Does the difference between first and second imply a hierarchy, i.e., first-order principles are higher order and second-order are derivative? Or can there be a disjunction between the two such that second order institutions of justice can or should be appraised by first order principles? Are first-order theological principles equivalent to what biblical studies call “universals”, as different from “contextuals”? Are second-order theological structure equivalent to what biblical scholars name as “materiality” in institutions or one’s social location? Are first and second orders speak of “justice” in the language of “powers” and “practices” respectively?

I find the “application” discussion of the Preview insightful, thus affirming for me that biblical interpretation needs to be done that way.

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