

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

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This issue contains two sets of articles; the first set of four probes questions concerning the public, and possibly transformative, role that the work theologians and scholars of interreligious studies and intercultural theology should or could have. The second set discusses, analyses, reassesses, or reinterprets religious systems and concepts whose meaning we take for granted.

The articles discussing the public role of academia, especially theology, are based on the 2017 international conference of the European Society of Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ESITIS), held in Muenster, Germany. In following the theme of this meeting, "Religion & Politics in the Crisis of Engagement: Towards the Relevance of Intercultural Theologies and Interreligious Studies," several scholars reflected on the social and immediate relevance of interfaith engagement.

Considering the deep roots of many forms of religious violence, Perry Schmidt-Leukel argues for deep and serious forms of engagement free of ideological domination. Addressing issues in the field of Contextual Theology, Joerg Rieger reflects on the reality that academics often fail to see that the context is not what it appears to be on the surface but rather something deeper and often more broken or fractured than appears superficially. The failure to detect dominant power structures leads to an upholding of the status quo. There is thus an ongoing relevance of the fields of political and intercultural theologies for the academic study of theology and religion.

Through discussion regarding the influx of migrants and refugees into Europe, Jorge Castillo Guerra examines possible models of engagement that emerge from the fields of intercultural philosophy, Latin American liberation philosophy, and decolonial thought. He focuses on ways to overcome the theoretical barriers created between migrants and local populations that prevent modes of productive coexistence. In this context, shared liturgies and *Diakonia* offer fields where intercultural transformations can occur.

Stefan Silber suggests that theologians should address the plight of

refugees in Europe by looking to Latin American Liberation Theology for new models of teaching and engagement; for example, by focusing on local contexts and narratives rather than attempting to create meta-philosophies. This way of thinking challenges and opens up conventional western-oriented models and allows a “European Liberation Theology” to emerge.

Opening the second set of articles, David Moe presents Choan-Seng Song’s Third-eye Liberation Theology for the Oppressed. Placing this theology in conversation with his own hermeneutics and methodologies of a Myanmar intercontextual liberation theology of *Pyithu-dukkha*, Moe argues for a liberation theology grounded in a spiritual and social reflection on God’s orthopathy (heart) and orthopraxy (hand). This theology goes beyond Song’s vision of Asian liberation limited to the oppressed and, instead, proposes an inclusive and reciprocal liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Geoffrey Claussen’s article on *musar* (virtue-focused) tradition in Jewish ethics discusses various constructions of the virtue of humility in modern Jewish thought. He shows how this virtue, one that we tend to consider to be a positive force in human interaction, can also be interpreted in ways that encourage the use of violence and even the dehumanization of enemies.

Angus Slater examines the possibility of a re-appraisal of the place and significance of the religious other within the work of the Radical Orthodoxy movement. In that exercise he particularly focuses on the work of one of the movement’s central figures, John Milbank, and uses the notion of *plenitudo* to propose a new interpretation of the religious other.

After the two book reviews that close this volume you will find a reminder of the 2019 ESITIS conference in Serajevo, including a call for papers.