The first three articles in this issue discuss possible methods to gain a deeper understanding of our relationship to the Transcendent and the way we express our beliefs, emotions, and rituals. Daniel Jara opens this discussion with an article on using the anthropological method of case studies as a tool to research intercultural theology. His argument that “case studies become especially convenient for studying religious constructs and practices through rituals, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, performances, speeches, symbols, interactions within the group, etc.” resonates with Kevin Considine’s writing about the deeply human emotion of han. In Considine’s view, this emotion “should be received into the theology as an intercultural anthropology” and not just as a “theological accessory.” In the Korean context, he defines han as an “anthropology of deep and abiding woundedness that arises from a specific history and context.” While, Koreans have suffered over the course of history from oppression by foreign colonizers and tyrannical rulers, two groups especially embody the existence of han: women who were forced into strict subordination and peasants who clung “to life in the shadow of death” while suffering through an existence of hereditary slavery.

Jon Paul Sydnor’s article contributes to this discussion on how to study human experiences with the Transcendent with his theological analysis of how the theological metaphysic of Ramanuja integrates these experiences with the holy in four distinct ways. This article is based on Sydnor’s larger project of developing a systematic Christian theology based on agapic nondualism that will result in a book entitled The Great Open Dance: Faith in Relation. This project will combine social Trinitarian thought with two forms of nondualism: the Visistadvaita Vedanta of Ramanuja and the Sunyavada of Nagarjuna. Through this combination, Sydnor hopes to generate a radically pluralistic, dynamic theology in which all differences are united in Trinitarian love.

Jessica Spence Moss closes the section of individual articles with an article on interfaith dialogue as it is currently practiced by the Mormon Church of which she herself is a member. While critiquing the lack of interfaith initiatives on the part of her Church as an institution, she invites its individual members “to engage with religious others in ways that build authentic friendships that consist of ‘mutual trust and loyalty’.”
The writers of the roundtable discussion on issues related to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB) in Indonesia present four different essays on topics that are currently on the minds of many scholars of interfaith and human rights issues. The essays reflect a shift from writings and teachings on interfaith engagement to a focus on issues concerning religious freedom.

Some of the themes running through recently published volumes involve, for example, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and its relation to human rights, the rights of women, and the rights of children, especially girls.

Considering the general religious, political, and economic climate in Indonesia, the increase of books related to issues of human rights and the Freedom of Religion or Belief is not surprising. After the fall of Suharto and the beginning of the Reform Era (1998-1999), the democratic experiment has allowed greater freedoms for certain groups within society, including religious minorities.

Many books seek to educate the Muslim majority in Indonesia on issues pertaining to FORB and interfaith. For example, a multi-author volume published by the Graduate School of UIN Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta, called Defending the Rights of Vulnerable People: Human Rights, Religious Diversity and Family Issues (2022), is intended to challenge the high level of religious intolerance and intra- and interreligious conflict that Indonesia is still facing. In the preface to this book, Dr. Noorhaidi Hasan writes that within the Indonesian context, it is important to promote religious diversity and human rights by showing that they are part of Islamic teaching. By making these principles more accessible to the public; it will help Muslims understand how, for example, fiqh can provide a normative framework for daily life.

In the first essay of the roundtable, Zainal Abidin Bagir sets the stage by going over the emerging discourses on the topic of Freedom of Religion or Belief in Indonesia and explaining how this basic human right became part of Indonesian discourse after the fall of Suharto. When introducing the three topics discussed in the essays that follow—on religious moderation (Suhadi Cholil), the rights of indigenous religions (Samsul Maarif and Asfinawati), and mediating interreligious conflicts (Ihsan Ali-Fauzi and Raditya Darningtyas)—he stresses the reality that “FORB is not merely a theoretical issue. Rather, it is directly related to advocacy and state policies.”

Two book reviews close this issue. The first is by Paul Hedges on Catherine Cornille’s Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology (2020), and the second by Jessica Spenser Moss on Valarie Kaur’s See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Life (2020).