

Editorial Introduction

This is not a special issue of the *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*. However, the distinctive content of the articles warrants some explanatory editorial comment. Three of the articles in this issue (Said, Bouma, and Rajkumar) were originally presented at the conference 'A Century of Anglican Engagement with World Religions' held at Lambeth Palace in December 2011. These three articles are oriented to examining interfaith issues from an Anglican perspective. They develop a theme that emphasises the value of dialogue and respect. Yazeed Said argues that Edward Said needed to pay greater respect to the moral and theological significance of the 'world of Orientalism'. Gary Bouma describes the diversity in Australian Anglican's response to religious pluralism, noting that it is shaped by theological, social, and cultural factors. The preparedness to engage in respectful dialogue is a complex social and theological product. Peniel Rajkumar examines the extent of respectful dialogue between Christians and other faiths in India, with particular attention to the role of Anglicans.

The other two articles (Halafoff and Ezzy) continue this theme of the importance of dialogue and respect in inter-religious relationships. Halafoff argues for a more inclusive approach to education about religion and beliefs in schools in order to respect the needs of the increasingly diverse religious landscape of Australia. Finally, my own article argues that anti-discrimination legislation serves to redirect religious conflict into legal channels where the discomfort generated by the religious 'other' can be managed, reducing the potential for violent and harmful outcomes.

Some of these articles have a more theological focus, reflecting their original context of presentation. Nonetheless, they all engage in serious and careful academic reflection on the issue of religious diversity. As such, we are pleased to publish them in the *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*.

Faith communities, schools, and discrimination tribunals create or undermine cultures of respectful dialogue. These in turn feed and create broader cultural and societal discourses. Introducing her analysis of democracy and religious violence in India, Nussbaum (2007: x) argues:

India's democracy has remained healthy largely because it has so far managed to surmount the tendency to see its own nation in a simple Manichean way (good nonviolent Hindus against bad violent Muslims) and instead to accept both the more complicated reality of multiple tensions and the possibility of a shared political life among people who are different.

Each of the articles in this issue echoes this theme and suggests the social, cultural, and theological, resources that contribute to practices of respectful dialogue in increasingly diverse societies.

Reference

Nussbaum, Martha

2007 *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future*.
Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Douglas Ezzy
Co-editor