

The Journal of Interreligious Studies

A Collaboration Between Hebrew College and Boston University School of Theology

Issue 21

October 2017

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From the Managing Editor

I am once again delighted to see published this issue of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies (JIRS)*. The *JIRS* has continued to flourish in large part because of the partnership between Hebrew College and the Boston University School of Theology; their support enables open access to issues, the articles of which are of interest not only to the academic community but also to the larger public: ministers, community organizers, educators, non-profit leaders, and more. This issue and subsequent ones would not be possible without the support from the Henry Luce Foundation, which awarded the Boston University School of Theology and Hebrew College a two-year grant to support the *JIRS* and related projects jointly published and coordinated by the two schools.

This issue comprises five articles drawn from presentations made at the 2016 conference of the American Academy of Religion held in San Antonio, Texas, last November. In coordination with Jennifer Peace, I am excited to see these pieces transformed from presentations and into articles, thereby conveying their research, ideas, and conclusions from a small group at the AAR to the wide readership of the *JIRS*.

The topics of these articles vary in several ways. Cláudio Carvalhaes writes as a Christian, liberation theologian who challenges interreligious educators to speak from their own suffering in practicing ritual and discussing theories. Teresa Crist challenges theories of multiple religious belonging that are founded on Western conceptions of individualism and free choice. Rachel Heath turns to constructive, Christian theologies of multiplicity to offer a more coherent conception of multiple religious belonging that guards against the ineluctable logic of oneness and sameness that is at the root of dominant Christian theologies. Anne Hege Grung turns to the Saudi Arabian initiated KAICIID center in Vienna, Austria, to demonstrate how new language may be needed for interreligious dialogue that is more political and diplomatic than personal and theological. Matthew Taylor asks us to learn from the history of the field of comparative fundamentalism lest the field of interreligious studies make similar mistakes in excluding from the discourse those deemed uncooperative or unsympathetic to the shared assumptions of pluralism and humanism.

While these topics may at first appear disparate, they are connected in one crucial—and challenging—way: they remind scholars, practitioners, leaders, and students of interreligious studies that the field, like any field, is discourse, and as discourse it is not immune to the inevitable marginalization of non-dominant communities by the power, authority, and privilege of the dominant group. Determining who participates in and contributes to the field of interreligious studies is just as susceptible to hegemony as determining who is invited to the table of interfaith dialogue. These pieces challenge all of us, whether scholars of interreligious studies or academic theologians who speak and write interreligiously, to be ever cognizant of the times when we, as individuals or collectively as a discursive discipline, may begin to exclude or marginalize underrepresented or oppressed voices from the interreligious conversation. Once made aware of these incipient forces, there must be a subsequent movement to disrupt the process of hegemony and prevent it from ensconcing itself within the discipline.

Axel M. Oaks Takács
Managing Editor

From the Coordinating Editor

As the coordinating editor for this issue, it is a pleasure to introduce the October 2017 issue of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*. The articles are drawn from papers presented at the 2016 meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) held in San Antonio, Texas. Each was presented under the auspices of the Interreligious and Interfaith Studies program unit (IRIFS) as part of one of the three panels sponsored or co-sponsored by our unit: “The Politics of Interreligious Engagement: Structural Inequities and Power Dynamics” (Anne Hege Grung’s and Matthew Taylor’s papers); “Ritual in Interfaith Pedagogies” (Cláudio Carvalhaes’ paper); and “Exploring Multiple Religious Belonging” (Rachel Heath’s and Teresa Crist’s papers). We are grateful to these scholars for developing their papers into the published articles you see here as a way to extend the conversation beyond the halls of the Academy to a wider readership.

Each of these papers reflects one dimension of an emerging and dynamic conversation about the nature and contours of interreligious/interfaith studies as it is currently being constructed. As the founding co-chair of the IRIFS program unit (with Dr. Homayra Ziad), I have watched the interest in this conversation develop and grow since 2013 when the unit began. This year, which will mark the fifth year of the unit, in response to calls from the scholarly community for more time and space for this conversation than our allotted panels allow, I’ve proposed the founding of a new organization, the Association for Interreligious/Interfaith Studies (AIIS), to foster study and scholarly exchange in this field.

The AIIS will launch in conjunction with the upcoming meeting of the AAR in Boston. Events will be held on Friday, November 17th beginning with a working lunch at 11:30 am, followed by a half-day workshop for faculty and emerging scholars who want to share resources and ideas for teaching (in college, university, and seminary classrooms) using frameworks from interreligious/interfaith studies or intercultural theology. The lunch and workshop were developed through a collaboration between the AIIS and the European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ESITIS). The events are supported and co-sponsored by the Interfaith Youth Core, the Henry Luce Initiative on the Current State of Interfaith Learning in the US, and the Pluralism Project at Harvard; with additional support from the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies (ICJS), Hebrew College’s Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership, Boston University School of Theology, the *Journal of Interreligious Studies (JIRS)*, and the journal *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology (ISIT)*. Registration and additional details may be found [here: <http://www.cvent.com/events/association-of-interreligious-and-interfaith-studies-launch/event-summary-9e053e7b405045a48c1399653f12fadbd.aspx>](http://www.cvent.com/events/association-of-interreligious-and-interfaith-studies-launch/event-summary-9e053e7b405045a48c1399653f12fadbd.aspx)

In addition to sustained interest in the IRIFS program unit and the launch of the new Association for Interreligious/Interfaith Studies, another heartening trend for the prospects of this emerging field is the growing number of publications. I am part of an editorial team publishing a series for Palgrave, Macmillan called *Interreligious Studies in Theory and Practice* that now has five titles. This year alone I’ve been involved with several new publications including: *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, edited by Eleazar Fernandez (Pickwick Publications, 2017); *The Future of Interreligious Dialogue: A Multireligious Conversation on Nostra Aetate*, edited by Charles Cohen, Paul Knitter, and Ulrich Rosenhagen (Orbis, 2017); and a volume that will be available by next year’s AAR meeting, *Towards a Field of Interreligious/Interfaith Studies*, which I am co-editing with Eboo Patel and Noah Silverman (Beacon, forthcoming, 2018).

This issue of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies* both participates in, and helps fuel, a wider conversation that continues to gain momentum. Interreligious studies at its best draws on the collective insights of scholars, teachers, preachers, practitioners, and activists of all stripes and faiths, as we respond to the ever-pressing need for greater understanding and more abiding collaborations across lines of difference. I appreciate the role the *Journal* has played and continues to play in supporting the emergence of this new and much needed field.

Jennifer Peace
Coordinating Editor