

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Axel M. Oaks Takacs

Interreligious Studies Media (ISM) and its many partners continue to lay down foundations for the important responsibility it is assuming in sustaining and growing not only this journal, but its other sibling media, such as Interreligious Studies Press, the Inter/Sections podcast, and more. ISM's new website is live; we encourage you to explore it at www.interreligiousstudies.org. The reboot of the Inter/Sections podcast is also forthcoming. We recorded our first episode of the relaunch last November and have two episodes in the works.

We will continue to share more in the coming months. However, for now, I introduce this current issue, which features five articles and five book reviews.

The five articles collectively and variously advance comparative theology, interfaith praxis, and the reimagining of religious engagement across traditions.

In “An Ecumenical Approach to Interreligious Dialogue in Asia: Volf’s Theology of Embrace in Conversation with *Ecclesia in Asia*,” Baltazar Acebedo Jr. critically engages Pope John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* through the lens of Miroslav Volf’s “Theology of Embrace.” Attending carefully to Asia’s colonial history, religious demography, and socio-political realities, Acebedo argues that Volf’s fourfold pattern of embrace offers a more dialogical and less triumphalist framework for Catholic interreligious engagement in the region. By retrieving an ecumenical theology centered on reciprocal communion rather than fulfillment paradigms, the article proposes a constructive path forward for Christian participation in Asia’s plural religious landscape.

Ana Petrache’s “Observing the Sabbath While the Body of Christ is Quarantined” turns to the lived religious experience of the COVID-19 lockdown in Rome and Bucharest. Drawing on interviews with Christians, Jews, and Muslims, Petrache analyzes how ritual structure shaped each community’s response to state-imposed restrictions. Particularly striking is her exploration of the Christian language of the “Body of Christ” and its

Eucharistic implications, set alongside Jewish and Muslim frameworks of ritual purity. By foregrounding embodiment, domestic ritual adaptation, and digital mediation, the article offers a rich interfaith reflection on ritual life under conditions of biopolitical constraint.

The Aqedah—the binding of Isaac—stands at the heart of Samantha Lin’s “Wood of Sacrifice and Wood of the Cross: The Aqedah in Judaism and Christianity.” Through a comparative study of Augustine and Rashi, and with attention to broader late antique developments, Lin traces how both traditions interpreted Genesis 22 in ways responsive to their evolving identities. Engaging the scholarship on the “parting of the ways,” she argues that Jewish and Christian readings developed in parallel and in porous interaction, even amid polemic. By highlighting shared motifs and creative hermeneutics, the article contributes to renewed Jewish–Christian scriptural dialogue.

In “Monotheism and its Religious Alternatives: Some Neo-Perennialist Perspectives on the Divine Reality,” Christopher C. Knight advances a contemplative, apophatic framework for religious pluralism. Building on Vladimir Lossky and extending arguments from his recent work on pluralism, Knight critiques what he terms “theistic personalism” and “monopolytheism” in modern monotheistic thought. He proposes instead a “neo-perennialist” vision in which diverse traditions function as contemplative signposts toward the Divine Reality. By retrieving classical metaphysics and apophatic sensibilities across traditions, the article reconfigures the relationship between monotheistic, polytheistic, and non-theistic faiths.

“Reimagining Interfaith Engagement: A Postfoundationalist Comparative Theology Paradigm,” by David Muthukumar Sivasubramanian, offers a constructive epistemological proposal for comparative theology. Surveying exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist, and postliberal approaches, Sivasubramanian argues that each is limited by its underlying epistemic commitments. Drawing on critical realism and postfoundationalist philosophy, he articulates a mediating framework that affirms both contextuality and the meaningful pursuit of truth. The result is a model of comparative theology that honors religious particularity while sustaining universal truth-seeking.

The issue closes with five book reviews:

- *Beyond Piety and Politics: Religion, Social Relations, and Public Preferences in the Middle East and North Africa*, by Sabri Ciftci, F. Michael Wuthrich, and Ammar Shamaileh; reviewed by Salwa Alinat-Abed
- *Dust on the Throne: The Search for Buddhism in Modern India*, by Douglas Ober; reviewed by Carlos Piccone-Camere
- *Shari'a and Life: Authority, Compromise, and Mission in European Mosques*, by Uriya Shavit and Fabian Spengler; reviewed by Okan Dogan
- *Gratitude, Injury, and Repair in a Pandemic Age: An Interreligious Dialogue*, by Michael Reid Trice and Patricia O'Connell Killen; reviewed by Fung Kei Cheng
- *Sacred Snaps: Photovoice for Interfaith Engagement*, by Roman R. Williams, Catherine Holtmann, and William L. Sachs; reviewed by Chad Meister

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