

**The Journal of Interreligious Studies**

*Published by Hebrew College, Boston University School of Theology, & Hartford Seminary*

**Issue 33**

**August 2021**

**From the Editor-in-Chief**

**1**

Axel Marc Oaks Takács

***Kebra Nagast* and *Al-Najāshī*: The Meaning and Use of Collective Memory in Christian-Muslim Political Discourse in Ethiopia**

**5**

David Chrisna

**Conversations with Jains about Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation**

**24**

Sherry Fohr

**Measuring the Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Method for Analyzing Interreligious Dialogues**

**40**

Linda Bredvik

**The Miracle of Compassion: An Essay on Multi-Religiosity by a Buddhist Muslim**

**50**

Som Pourfarzaneh

**Writing Difference, Reading the World: A Roundtable of Ecumenical and Interreligious Journal Editors on the History and Future of a Shifting Field**

**71**

Stephen G. Brown, Nelly van Doorn-Harder, Aaron T. Hollander, Terry Rey, and Axel Takács

**Book Reviews**

**94**

*A World of Inequalities: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, edited by Lucinda Mosher

Reviewed by Peter Admirand

*Faithful Interpretations: Truth and Islam in Catholic Theology of Religions*, edited by Philip Geister, SJ, and Gösta Hallonsten

Reviewed by Rita George Tvrtković

96

*Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*, by Rachael Wooten

Reviewed by Chava Bahle

98

*How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others*, by Tanya M. Luhrmann

Reviewed by Joseph Kimmel

100

*Religious Hatred: Prejudice, Islamophobia, and Antisemitism in Global Context*, by Paul Hedges

Review Essay by Axel Marc Oaks Takács

103

*Critical Perspectives on Interreligious Education: Experiments in Empathy*, edited by Najeeba Syeed and Heidi Hadsell

Reviewed by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

111

*Decolonial Futures: Intercultural and Interreligious Intelligence for Theological Education*, by Christine J. Hong

Reviewed by Axel Marc Oaks Takács

113

**The Journal of Interreligious Studies**

*Published by Hebrew College, Boston University School of Theology, & Hartford Seminary*

**Issue 33**

**August 2021**

**Editor-in-Chief**

Axel M. Oaks Takács, Th.D.

**Senior Editor**

Lucinda Mosher, Th.D.

**Administrative Director**

Tom Reid, M.Div.

**Research Fellow**

Taylor Thomas, Ph.D. Candidate at Boston University

**Research Fellow**

Server Koray Er, Ph.D. candidate at Hartford Seminary

**Publishers**

Filipe Maia, Boston University School of Theology  
Or Rose, Hebrew College  
Joel N. Lohr, Hartford Seminary

**Publisher Emerita**

Mary Elizabeth Moore

**The following are members of the Board of Advisors:**

Russ Arnold  
Whitney Bauman  
Thomas Cattoi  
Andrew Davis  
Adam Dyer  
Adam Gregerman  
Rachel Heath  
Paul Heck  
Soren Hessler

Won-Jae Hur  
Celene Ibrahim  
Khyati Y. Joshi  
Joel Kaminsky  
Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook  
Jeffery Long  
Kristin Johnston Largen  
Rachel Mikva  
Mary Elizabeth Moore  
Martin T. Nguyen

Jennifer Peace  
Monica Sanford  
Brahmachari Sharan  
Varyn Soni  
Najeeba Syeed  
Stephanie Varnon-Hughes  
Javier Viera  
Funlayo E. Wood  
Homayra Ziad

***We remain grateful to Dr. Stephanie Varnon-Hughes and Rabbi Joshua M. Z. Stanton for their vision and commitment to interreligious engagement by founding the Journal under its original title, the Journal of Interreligious Dialogue, in 2009.***

The views, opinions, and positions expressed in all articles published by the *Journal of Interreligious Studies (JIRS)* are the authors' own and do not reflect or represent those of the *JIRS* staff, the *JIRS* Board of Advisors, the *JIRS* Board of Reviewers, Boston University, Hebrew College, or Hartford Seminary.

### ***From the Editor-in-Chief***

I am pleased to have managed the editing and production of another collection of thought-provoking and illuminating articles and book reviews.

Our previous JIRS issue was published near the end of a full year of navigating the stress and hardship of the COVID-19 pandemic. With wider availability and access to vaccines, residents of North America enjoyed some social and recreational normalcy during late spring and this summer. However, I am mindful of three points that threaten our current progress. First, there remain vast global inequities regarding vaccine availability and access; this is an effect of our current neocolonial, racial capitalist system, to be sure.<sup>1</sup> Second, misinformation and histories of medical and healthcare mistrust among certain communities in the United States perpetuate vaccine hesitancy.<sup>2</sup> Third, the rise of the Delta variant poses a risk especially to the unvaccinated and those with weaker immune systems, even though the major vaccines appear to be effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.<sup>3</sup> Taken together, I encourage everyone to do their part personally, interpersonally, and structurally to work for healthy, safe, and equitable responses to these three issues.

### **Events and Updates**

Before introducing this issue, let me offer a few details regarding upcoming issues, events, and updates.

In addition to upcoming rolling submissions, there are four exciting special issues in the works for the coming year. The first is a special issue, guest edited by Bin Song of Washington College (Maryland), on the topic of Theology Without Walls and the Spiritual But Not Religious. This issue will discuss—constructively and critically—how the Theology Without Walls project may or may not be beneficial to the growing SBNR demographic.

Next, our editorial team has organized a roundtable response to an incredibly rich research article by Trina Janiec Jones of Wofford College (South Carolina) and Cassie Meyer of Sewanee: University of the South (Tennessee). The article seeks to understand what common pedagogical themes and practices appear across interreligious courses in different institutional contexts. Based on course observation, instructor interviews, and student focus groups at eight campuses, the authors outline seven pedagogical themes and practices observed within undergraduate courses and academic programming in interfaith and interreligious studies. It will be followed by ten

---

<sup>1</sup> Lori Hinnant, Maria Cheng, and Aniruddha Ghosal, “Vaccine inequity: Inside the cutthroat race to secure doses,” July 18, 2021, *AP News* (<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-vaccine-inequality-dac9c07b324e29d3597037b8dc1d908a>, accessed August 2, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Tammy Webber and Emily Swanson, “AP-NORC poll: Most unvaccinated Americans don’t want shots,” July 23, 2021, *AP News* (<https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-science-health-government-and-politics-coronavirus-pandemic-36ea18ee3a3397da7edd5b8249f0e477>, accessed August 2, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> “Q&A: What’s Different About The Delta Variant,” July 21, 2021, *NPR* (<https://www.npr.org/2021/07/31/1023243846/q-a-whats-different-about-the-delta-variant>, accessed August 2, 2021); “Dr. Anthony Fauci Talks About ‘Alarming’ New Data On Breakthrough Infections,” July 30, 2021, *NPR* (<https://www.npr.org/2021/07/30/1022909501/dr-anthony-fauci-talks-about-alarming-new-data-on-breakthrough-infections>, accessed August 2, 2021).

responses from scholars and educators in the field. The issue will prove to be a spectacular resource for educators and scholars of interreligious, interfaith, and intercultural studies.

There are two other special issues in the works. The first is a series of articles taken from the most recent Engaging Particularities conference at Boston College; the journal has partnered with this conference for the last several years now. The second is a special issue constructed from the comparative theology and music panel at last year's AAR conference.

Interreligious Studies Press, an imprint of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, seeks to produce and publish an edited collection of essays concerning curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular interreligious/interfaith engagement in secondary education and community youth organizations. The full CFP may be [viewed here](#). Our first print volume is entitled *Deep Understanding for Divisive Times: Essays Marking a Decade of the Journal of Interreligious Studies* and it may be [purchased here](#).

Finally, I am pleased to announce a new project: "Decoloniality and Interreligious Studies in the North American Context." Decoloniality challenges the disciplines of the study of religion and theology in terms of epistemologies, pedagogies, theories, and methods. It contests Eurocentric ways of knowing, teaching, analyzing, explaining, and researching by offering sharp decolonial critiques of concepts, systems, and ideologies that these disciplines have taken for granted both explicitly, such as modernity, secularity, and even "religion," and implicitly, such as coloniality, capitalism, cis heteronormativity, Euromerican exceptionalism, racial/religious hierarchies, and anti-indigeneity.

The *JIRS* seeks to make indigenous knowledges and practices, as well as decoloniality, a critical aspect of interreligious studies in the same way decoloniality makes a critical and constructive impact in the study of religion, philosophy of religion, and theology. The primary focus of this project will be the bodies of knowledge and practices coming from those indigenous to Turtle Island, i.e., Native Americans and First Nations of Canada. I have therefore dedicated a space on its website to address these questions and more. It will feature short book reviews and essays that seek to bring indigenous decoloniality into interreligious studies. The topics of these reviews and essays will prioritize Native American and First Nations writings, activism, artistry, and resistance, but it will occasionally connect to global permutations of decolonial theory from other contexts and their diasporas, such as the Latin America, Africa, and Asia. We are especially interested in sharing decolonial and indigenous pedagogies and course readings that have worked well in the classroom. We wish to share best practices for a larger reading public outside the peer-review venue of the *JIRS*. If you are interested in contributing to this project, please email me: [axel@irstudies.org](mailto:axel@irstudies.org). For more information, please [visit the page](#).

## **In This Issue**

This issue comprises five articles: four are part of our regular rolling submissions and one is the edited transcript of a discussion, held as part of the 2020 European Academy of Religion, among editors of five different journals whose purviews are ecumenical or interreligious studies. (I was one.) It is followed by seven book reviews, one of which is a longer, book review essay.

The first article, “*Kebra Nagast* and *Al-Najāshī*: The Meaning and Use of Collective Memory in Christian-Muslim Political Discourse in Ethiopia,” by David Chrisna, explores how Christian and Muslim collective memory functions in the Ethiopian context. Chrisna explains how collective memory may be employed to foster interreligious cooperation and collaboration as opposed to exclusionary religious identity (as it has been used historically). This is a great example of how the field of interreligious studies aims to connect historical legacies with contemporary issues in a local context.

In the second article, “Conversations with Jains about Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation,” Sherry Fohr draws on interviews conducted before and after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest of 2020. The article reviews some of the history of Jains involved in interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the United States and places their work in our contemporary context. It is particularly insightful by centering insider voices from the older and younger generation of Jains participating and organizing interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

The third article, “Measuring the Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Method for Analyzing Interreligious Dialogues,” by Linda Bredvik, applies sociolinguistic theories and discourse analysis to interfaith dialogue events. This article will be useful to both scholars studying interfaith dialogue and to the participants themselves. For the participants, it provides insights into their linguistic behavior and into the ways in which their interlocutors may be interpreting their expression and behavior. Organizers of interfaith dialogue events could use this research to create more communicatively effective dialogues.

The fourth article, “The Miracle of Compassion: An Essay on Multi-Religiosity by a Buddhist Muslim,” by Som Pourfarzaneh, is a scholarly reflection on a personal experience. The author challenges current conceptualizations of “multi-religiosity” or “multiple religious identity” and suggests that religious identity should be understood as non-binary. Pourfarzaneh offers the term “disposition of devotion” for understanding the embodied experience that occurs when the traditions meet in an individual’s multi-religious practice

Finally, the issue closes with “Writing Difference, Reading the World: A Roundtable of Ecumenical and Interreligious Journal Editors on the History and Future of a Shifting Field.” The article is a transcript of a discussion, held as part of the 2020 European Academy of Religion, among editors of five different journals whose purviews are ecumenical or interreligious studies: Stephen G. Brown (*Ecumenical Review*), Nelly van Doorn-Harder (*Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology*), Aaron T. Hollander (*Ecumenical Trends*), Terry Rey (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*), and Axel Takács (*JIRS*). While the record of this conversation has already been published as *Ecumenical Trends* 50.1 (2021): 8–24, its presentation here includes further light editing and a brief preface by me.

The issue closes with seven book reviews.

- *A World of Inequalities: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, edited by Lucinda Mosher (reviewed by Peter Admirand)
- *Faithful Interpretations: Truth and Islam in Catholic Theology of Religions*, edited by Philip Geister, SJ, and Gösta Hallonsten (reviewed by Rita George Tvrtković)

- *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*, by Rachael Wooten (reviewed by Chava Bahle)
- *How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others*, by Tanya M. Luhrmann (reviewed by Joseph Kimmel)
- *Religious Hatred: Prejudice, Islamophobia, and Antisemitism in Global Context*, by Paul Hedges (book review essay Axel Marc Oaks Takacs)
- *Critical Perspectives on Interreligious Education: Experiments in Empathy*, edited by Najeeba Syeed and Heidi Hadsell (reviewed by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook)
- *Decolonial Futures: Intercultural and Interreligious Intelligence for Theological Education*, by Christine J. Hong (reviewed by Axel Marc Oaks Takacs)

### **Gratitude**

This issue would not have come together without the exceptional work of Lucinda Mosher (Senior Editor).

Thank you for your continued support and interest in the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*. Enjoy this issue!

Axel M. Oaks Takacs, Th.D.  
Editor-in-Chief  
*Journal of Interreligious Studies*  
axel@irstudies.org