

Editorial

Religious communities' public role and impact are to be under constant scrutiny. This provides the opportunity to learn from others and to grow, but also, to make a key impact in transforming societies in order to embody values like justice, fairness, and freedom. The role of scholarship, together with other spheres, is to create spaces for this kind of scrutiny. This edition, we hope, are one of those spaces.

Evangelicalism is a very vibrant and dynamic stream within World Christianity. Historically it has resonances with missionary movements, yet it continues to be a force within public life today. How are we to assess this presence in these days? While the article of Tony Balcomb narrows this question down to Africa, relating it to the socio-economic and the political influences, his contribution may also resonate with other contexts. Evangelicalism, while remaining powerful and popular indeed, is also in need of an ongoing critical self-reflection. Balcomb is providing timely and key pointers for this quest.

Our interpretation of the sacred texts within religious communities remains at the heart of this self-reflection. Three articles grapple with questions along this line. Christoph Stenschke, a New Testament scholar, with his one foot in Western Europe (the global North) and the other (sometimes) in South Africa, shows how the Bible can shed light on how faith communities discern their public witness in the context of migration. His reading of the book of Acts, in the light of migration and mission, is included as an example of how this illumination can be done. The article by Vhumani Magezi also wrestles with how to relate the contextual realities, i.e., African cultural categories, with the sacred text as well as systematic theological categories. A third article by Dustin W. Ellington, introduces Paul's interpretation of the gospel, in 2 Corinthians, in an attempt to discern how Christians can contribute "towards a better world".

We publish these three articles with the hope that it might generate some deep conversation and creative responses, in order to strengthen and sharpen the role of disciplines like Missiology and Religious Studies, but also, theology in general in the critical and public journey with various communities. Would you agree with the approaches and categories of how to relate the Bible to the public witness, whether it be in the socio-economic, political or cultural spheres? What would be insights, but perhaps also creative alternatives or even tensions, as we build upon the work of our colleagues here? This brings us to the contribution of John Corrie, who highlights precisely the notion of "creative tensions" as one of the abiding legacies of the first editor of *Missionalia*, Dawid Bosch. What are the tensions can we discern today, 25 years after the first publication of *Transforming Mission*?

This edition then closes with two very creative contributions on how religious communities can embody their public role and witness. The article by Fazel Freeks, focusses on one concrete intervention, namely the LIFEPLAN® programme. While remaining self-critical and open to the *Missio Dei*, Freeks goes beyond the confines of theoretical (academic) scholarship and reminds us all that it is really in risking obedience in practice that our scholarly work is tested, sharpened and validated. The same goes for the article by Jacques Beukes and Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel, which delve deeply into, and engages (scrutinizes) the concrete decisions and ministry of one church, the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, in addressing the scourge of chronic poverty. This engagement can contribute concretely to encouraging and assisting faith communities, like URCSA, towards the embodiment of its ideals as expressed through its confessions.

Hopefully, this edition will go a long way in supporting a vision of scholarship which ultimately provides opportunities to learn from others and grow in order to make a key impact in concretely transforming societies. For this vision to become a reality, however, we need to be open for constant, honest and compassionate scrutiny. We need to be open to again be confronted by our sacred sources, also by our community of scholars. We therefore invite you to study this edition with this openness at heart.

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