

Editorial

Transforming Theology. What theology has a future?



Can theology retain “an awareness of what is missing” (Habermas) and offer its reflexive ability today and in future? This was the closing question we left you with at the end of our last issue, and it is the starting point for this issue of [LIMINA](#). The response to our call for papers under the title “Future(s) of Theology” was so numerous that we have decided to dedicate both issues of 2023 to this topic. Here you find a further nine articles that took up the mantle of (re)thinking theology in the face of current and future realities, proposing new ideas and approaches as we look at and to theology in the future. What emerges from these contributions is that theological discourse still offers important reflexive and symbolic resources for how we experience and explore present complexities and ambivalences. At the same time, they also demonstrate the willingness to critically reflect on one’s own theological thinking and acting.

This issue is the namesake to our conference celebrating the tenth issue of [LIMINA](#) at the University of Graz on 22 June, and which also served as a discursive bridge between this year’s spring and autumn publications. On the one hand, the conference highlighted the unabating radiance of the Bible’s and Christian message and its fundamentally existential importance. On the other hand, the talks and discussions also revealed tensions between our definition of theology and expectations of scientific, theological, societal and ecclesiastical norms. Theology exists and moves within different contexts and their respective and particular standards: academia and university, church and society. It strives to teach, research and communicate in ways that meet these expectations and regulations. Yet, at the same time, it is called upon to think beyond these expectations and regulations in order to not lose (sight of) its existential importance. Theology both wants

Translation:
Dagmar Astleitner MA
PRISM Translations, London

and needs to (re)root itself in the universal human experience and its own spirituality.

This issue of *LIMINA* on the topic of “Future(s) of Theology” opens with a very special text in our *Open Section*: Born in Teheran and raised in Germany, the writer *Nava Ebrahimi* delivered a poignant perspective on theology from an external viewpoint under the title “Why Theology” at the launch of the aforementioned conference. We believe that her observations will also resonate with or inspire our readers. It, thus, also very thoughtfully launches us into our second issue on this topic.

The conference as well as the following articles demonstrate once more that theology does not shy away from continuously questioning itself, to re-examine and re-define its role for and within humanity, society and the church. Our series of more specifically scientific contributions starts with *Roman A. Siebenrock*’s back-to-the-basis article “Theology as science – in Church and society. Theories and explanations”. Based on a traditional understanding of theology as a science of faith, he advocates for a relationship between theology and educational religion that enables learning *through, from and about* religion.

Two articles address and contextualise the denominational character of theology/theologies: *Sabine Pemsel-Maier* shines a light on the various pressures denominationally practiced theology at state universities faces to legitimise itself. In response, she proposes to position “ecumenism as an umbrella of theologies” to create the necessary space for plurality and to emphasise the unifying aspects of Christianity while also taking denominational differences into account. *Stefan Gärtner* and *Marcel Sarot* observe similar shifts in the Netherlands and offer different approaches in restructuring the relationship between denominational theology and religious studies and building strong collaborations between the two disciplines.

Mario Steinwender reflects on the intersection between philosophy and theology in his article “What is it – theology? τὶ ἐστὶν ἡ θεολογία. Finding answers from the philosophical outside looking theologically inwards”. He points to an increased distancing between theology and the “world” and the increasingly unstable position of theology as an academic discipline, and looks at theology from an existential point of view. In turn, *Johannes Thüne* presents hypotheses of a future theology based in mysticism and experience following Karl Rahner’s dictum “The devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic’, one who has ‘experienced’ something, or he will cease to be anything at all” and Dorothee Sölle’s works.

Ulrike Sallandt investigates the theological dimension of spatiality in her article “Outlines of a/my theology of reliance”: She argues for “spatially delimiting” theological thinking and speaking in light of cultural processes of transformation. *Gemma Serrano* also uses space as a metaphor and context within which she places theology: amidst “cultural ruins” as dis-integrating structures. She calls onto theology to “live amidst ruins” and to devote itself to the service of a Christian diaspora.

Last but not least, *Andreas Telsler* speaks to the experience of theologians who increasingly see themselves as *misfits*, i. e. as outsiders, in society and presents examples of theological future(s) that give space and attention to phenomena that occur outside the mainstream.

We – the editors and the whole editorial team – hope you find the articles in this issue of [LIMINA](#) to be interesting and enriching, and an inspiring resource for you.

Christian Feichtinger / Isabella Guanzini / Wolfgang Weirer
Issue Editors, on behalf of the editorial team