

## EDITOR'S NOTE

### THE SELF AND THE OTHER IN TROUBLING TIMES

In recent times, the relationship between the *Self* and the *Other* has become an issue of great concern religiously, politically, socially, and economically. No longer 'I am' because 'you are' but 'I am' because 'you are not.' 'To be or become,' humans are destroying other human beings; because 'they are,' they are destroying non-human creation as well. Troubling times, indeed! This sad situation was echoed and denounced by the Holy Father, Pope Francis in his homily during the 2022 Christmas Mass:

While animals feed in their stalls, men and women in our world, in their hunger for wealth and power, consume even their neighbours, their brothers and sisters. How many wars have we seen? And in how many places, even today, are human dignity and freedom treated with contempt? As always, the principal victims of this human greed are the weak and vulnerable.

Therefore, more than ever, there is a need for critical reflection on the meaning of 'human existence' and 'being together.' It is in light of the above that I welcome you to read the articles in this issue of *GJRT* from the perspective of the *Self* and the *Other*. Each paper treats the theme from a unique standpoint.

The first two papers by **Luca Mazzinghi**, *The Word, Prophecy, Time: A Thematic Itinerary Through Genesis 1* and *The Language of Myth* discuss three key concepts in the book of Genesis to offer the significance of human existence and the image of the divine dream of a world governed by the gentleness of the Word. A world where humans do not exist for themselves but exist because 'others are' and all created in the image and likeness of God. Mazzinghi's analysis of the Genesis 1 account invites readers to halt and reflect on the *Self* and the *Other* with God as the giver of life.

**Nicoletta Gatti**, in her paper, *Social Justice and the Mourning of the Earth: Ecological reading of Prophetic Texts*, explores how ecological readings of prophetic texts can become educational tools to guide Christian communities, *especially* Ghanaians, towards an 'ecological

conversion' *in three thematic areas*: Care for natural resources; the economy of care and economy of enough; equity in the distribution of resources. Furthermore, the author notes that for the environmental crisis to become a moment of revelation and transformation, churches ought to have prophetic imagination and the courage to see new options for the future based on trust in the God of life.

Using Marshall B. Rosenberg's concept of "Non-Violent Communication" to interpret John 18:28–19:16a, **Beate Kowalski** established that violent language is a sign of human weakness, while non-violent communication (NVC) points to human strength. However, since NVC presupposes the goodwill of all those involved, the communication techniques of NVC remain fragile. The fragility results from the imbalance between the *Self* and the *Other*.

**Detlev Dormeyer** in his paper entitled, *Bernice: Jewess, Roman Citizen, Concubine, and Protector of Christians*, uses *feminist hermeneutics* to interpret the characterisation of Bernice in Acts 25:13–26:32. Feminist hermeneutics helps to understand the past and present readers in their social environment and to bring them into mutual dialogue with perfect models. Such an activity is intercultural communication. In his study, Dormeyer observed that Luke was the only New Testament author who mentioned Bernice and appreciated her advice on tolerance. Bernice together with Titus ensured in an exemplary manner that in Rome Paul and the Christians were tolerated and accepted. Both could be considered 'models for transcending limits' of what was permitted.

**Dirk Wördemann** uses *Intercultural Communication Theory* as a framework, in his paper, *Paul and the Philosophers: Intercultural Communication in Hellenistic Athens (Acts 17: 18)* to interpret the encounter of the apostle Paul with Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens during his second missionary journey. Based on this, he discusses the hermeneutics of cultural identities in the Hellenistic world and their significance for contemporary times. Because of globalization, encounters among various cultures of the world or ethnic groups have become common, making intercultural communication competence and skills necessary to foster a good relationship between the *Self* and the *Other*. A translation of the *Self* as well as the *Other* to the point of complete negation of either, is part of the potential of intercultural communication. Thus, the question remains: "Am I certain enough about myself to receive the Other?"

When the *Self* is unsure of itself and incapable of welcoming the *Other*, there is intolerance. The Other is no longer a brother or a sister, but an enemy to be eliminated; hence unrest and strife. **Haruna Zagoon-Sayeed** in his paper, *Tolerance and Peacebuilding: An Islamic Perspective*, examines the notion of tolerance from an Islamic perspective and its connection to communal peace and stability. He argues that, despite popular misperception, tolerance is an immutable value in Islam and a key factor in peacebuilding. He advises that Muslims should leverage the replete nuances of tolerance in their religion to promote intra-faith and inter-religious peacebuilding for the common good of humanity.

**Paul Gifford** compares Christianity in the West to that in Africa and notes a cognitive shift in recent centuries, a move from understanding and experiencing reality in terms of spiritual forces to the rationality of functional instrumentality. While in the West, this shift has largely peripheralised consciousness of spiritual forces, in Africa, by contrast, it is much less the case. Because this change seems an essential element of modernity, he argues that if Africa is to take its rightful place in the modern world and play its part in addressing the huge problems of modernity, then Africa necessarily has to embrace this transformation.

The last article of this issue by **Victor Usman Jamhh**, *Collaboration in Liturgical Ministries: A Synodal Church*, examines against the backdrop of the Synod on Synodality the practice of collaborative ministry in the Catholic diocese Minna, Nigeria. The study reveals that catholic dioceses in the northern ecclesiastical provinces of Kaduna, Abuja and Jos have all embraced collaborative ministry despite difficulties in implementing it. Perhaps this is the time for the Catholic Church in Africa to rethink its identity and praxis in the light of the Synod of Synodality.

To conclude, may I take the opportunity to remind our cherished readers and contributors that GJRT is indexed in AJOL and ATLA! I heartily thank all our collaborators for their hard work during the year 2022. And best wishes for 2023!

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