


Editorial

he recent experience of all humankind has made us realise how the world is becoming ever smaller; the “ends of the world” are no longer remote. All peoples are our “neighbours,” in a theological, sociological, and ecological sense. The triune God, the God of our fathers, our God of infinite love, is still working through the Holy Spirit for the salvation and liberation of the whole creation. We humans, and in particular people of faith, are labourers in the vineyard of our Lord.

The Church embraces the world in different contexts. As an act of love, solidarity, justice, and liberation, it shares with all humanity the salvific reality of the Resurrection and the Kingdom of God, already present and yet to come. A new awareness of mission has emerged gradually among the Orthodox over the past two centuries, and today mission

is a reality of the Church worldwide, shaping its very identity in the course of history.

Meeting in a global community is not always an easy task. The Church is catholic and universal, but we humans are subject to partiality. This is the antinomy we are striving to overcome when we think in an open and missional way, when we meet at the crossroads of religion and culture. If we wish to embrace the world in its richness and variety, we should also work for a plurality of aspects and viewpoints in our theological scholarship. One has to understand that mission is not a one way endeavour. Peoples and cultures welcomed into the Church have their own valuable background, and they should also have the possibility to make their voice heard, meet with the others, increase in self awareness, and enrich the Orthodox Church with the gift of their

civilisation, language, art, customs and culture which are their own particular offering to Christ our God.

A welcoming acceptance of the world in its complexity, along with the sense of our own smallness, is what *Salt* is about. If one is inspired to be “salt of the earth,” one is at the same time full of wonder and praise for the whole creation, immense, uncharted, and always exceeding our capacity to understand, to take up, to serve.

Accordingly, *Salt: Crossroads of Religion and Culture*, is a scholarly, peer-reviewed Orthodox journal of Cross-Cultural Theology, Dialogue and Mission.

It is a journal promoting cross-cultural theology, assisting in overcoming the short-sightedness of nationalism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia. A journal distinguishing between Tradition and traditions in a continuation of the patristic spirit. A journal breaking with complacency and an ‘establishment’ mind-set. A journal willing to raise vital questions, increase self awareness and study diversity. A journal open to dialogue—social, cultural and interfaith. A journal interested in human and environmental sciences, in Theology of Religions, Cultural Anthropology, and Religious Studies. A journal that hears cultures and civilisations, discusses problems of language and terminology, raises critical questions about mission theory and praxis today, learns from historical experience, and addresses life-threatening environmental and justice issues. A journal setting priori-

ties for mission, serving the self understanding of the Church in today’s complex society.

We have come together, as people of scholarly expertise and insight from practical experience, and formed an Editorial and an Advisory Board. The catalyst for our encounter has been the Inaugural Assembly of IOTA (international Orthodox Theological Association), Iasi, Romania, in 2019. After a long period of preparation, we are now in a position to release this first issue. And we are counting on your welcome, your prayers and your participation for this project to continue into the future.

This inaugural issue is structured into seven sections.

In the introductory section, Fr Michael Oleksa gives us a local myth of the indigenous people of Alaska which becomes an allegory for the incarnation of Christ. Metropolitan Gregory (Stergiou) of Cameroon provides a vision for the future of African Orthodoxy and the character of Orthodox mission. The Editorial and the Advisory Board of *Salt* come together to discuss the conversion of Agia Sophia into a mosque for a second time and its implications for peace and dialogue, and for the different levels of understanding and interpreting the Muslim tradition; and also with regard to the needs of a modern

pluralistic world and the balance required between religion and secularity.

The main section includes a series of research articles, all reviewed and discussed in depth by anonymous peer reviewers prominent in their field. First comes the article of Alison Kolosova which brings the Kazan 1910 Missionary Conference, held in Russia, into conversation with the world-famous Edinburgh 1910 Missionary Conference. It examines similarities and differences between the two conferences and explores the different attitudes of Russian Orthodox toward Islam, as well as different mission theologies within Orthodoxy in the region. Then, Fr Stephen Headley challenges the conventional “objectivity”, the so-called “neutrality” of anthropological methodology, and proposes a daring but serious way to look at diverse human expressions of prayer. Andrew Sharp discusses the formation of Global Ethics in Orthodoxy as the backdrop to interreligious engagement beyond dialogue. Fr Cristian Sonea explores the directions taken in missiological thinking by Romanian theology and Romanian communities at home and abroad. Christine Mangala Frost explores her own personal course, via inner inter-faith dialogue with the Hindu tradition into which she was born, which finally resulted in her converting to the Orthodox Christian faith. Apostolos Michailidis researches the history and the roots of the [Greek] Orthodox mission in India. Evi Voulgaraki-Pissina discusses the fascinating history

of the emergence of Orthodoxy in East Africa as well as its future prospects, beyond de-colonisation. Gregory Stournaras investigates historically the Dervish Orders and the network of Tekkes (dervish monastic centres) in Ottoman provinces, particularly in Thessaly, and the impact they had on the local communities, laying the groundwork for the Ottoman and Islamic character of the towns and countryside in the region. Eirini Afentoulidou studies annotations in Italo-Greek Prayerbook manuscripts and examines issues of rite, language, and cultural identity under the research question of acculturation.

The following section is dedicated to explorations in World Orthodoxy, where Graham McGeoch presents a small Orthodox community in Espirito Santo, Brazil.

An obituary section comes next, dedicated to the memory of Bishop Athanasius Akunda whose death was such an untimely loss to mission and the African community, in particular the diocese of Kisumu and all Western Kenya. His own selected writings are followed by a heartfelt and touching biographical note by his friend and collaborator, Joseph William Black. Another approach to his life and work by Deacon James Hargrave, scholarly in character, completes this section.

A discussion section follows, where *Salt* initiates debate on the hot topic of the African wedding and the broader issue of how to link ethics with faith across different cultures. In this first ap-

proach, we host two articles, combining the Church administrative with the grassroots level. Firstly, we have a rather technical article of a canonical nature, by Metropolitan Panteleimon (Arathymos) of Congo Brazzaville, which was used as a basis for further discussion at the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Then comes a more narrative and contemplative article by medical Doctor Andonis Liaskos, drawing on his long experience among the Buganda people. Liaskos introduces a practical and loving approach in an effort to link the traditional understanding of marriage to the ecclesial. The discussion continues and is open to new insights in the future.

Regarding current issues, the corona virus pandemic could not but take precedence. Rather than looking inwards and focusing primarily on liturgical life, *Salt* preferred to discuss the "liturgy after the Liturgy". The societal and environmental implications of various levels of choices in dealing with the spread of the virus have been our main concern. Thus, firstly, Mary Cunningham invokes the ecclesial experience of Byzantium and the early Church in dealing with contagious diseases, as expressed in the patristic literature. In contradistinction, Elizabeth Theokritoff raises the question of how the Church may meet concerns of the 'post-Christian' society and people's new outlook on life, exploring human fragility and a new kind of asceticism, considering also the natural world, God's creation.

In the last section we discuss scholarly literature, providing guides and reviews. One such guide is the essay by Phil Dorrol, "Toward an Orthodox Understanding of Islam." Dorrol discusses some of the most prominent academic literature available on the topic of Orthodox theological approaches to Islam. With a view to future research, he highlights the benefits of using the philosophical categories of patristic theological anthropology and suggests that one should draw insights from historical experience common to Orthodox Christians and Muslims, particularly in the East. The section is completed by a series of reviews of significant books in three languages: English (mostly), Greek and Italian. Ralph Lee, from the OCMS, discusses how African Christians fought for a place in the worldwide Church. Dionysios Skliris raises important issues regarding Anthropology and religion. Evi Voulgaraki discusses the History of World Christianity in the 20th Century. Alison Kolosova looks for significant convergences with Orthodox theology within recent missiological scholarship. Eirini Afentoulidou reads interfaith relations from the perspective of Byzantine studies. Christophe D'Aloisio presents research on Greek Orthodoxy within the European context. Finally, Alison Kolosova welcomes and discusses a new journal that looks to the future of the church within the framework of missiological studies.

Selected pieces of news and announcements complete the issue.

Salt is based in Athens and published by Maistros Publications. More on our vision on www.saltalas.com.

We will cross many borders before we reach home. We will endure times of

arduous toil. We will meet with many peoples and cultures. We will admire the view. We shall enjoy the journey. And ahead of us always, the Jerusalem above is radiant, warm, welcoming, open to us all!

The Editor in Chief

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e-mail: contact@saltalas.com

Maistros Publications | Maistros Academic
146 Hippokratous St.
114 72 Athens–GR
Tel. +30 210 8104262
Fax +30 8104261
e-mail: contact@maistros.info
www.maistros.info