

Call for Papers

The Hope and Despair of Religions: Exploring the Nexus of Theory and Praxis

ESITIS Conference, 24-27 April 2019

Sarajevo

Our theme for our 2017 conference in Münster was *Religion and Politics in the Crisis of Engagement: Towards the Relevance of Intercultural Theologies and Interreligious Studies*. In Sarajevo, we want to explore this practical turn by scholars and scholar-practitioners in the fields of interreligious studies, religious studies and theology further, focusing on religiously plural societies, intercultural theology, peace and conflict studies, gender studies, and more. By holding the conference in Sarajevo, we seek to engage with the historical and current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans in our search for relevant practices and theories of community building and transitional justice. We also hope to establish a larger web of perspectives and insights from empirical as well as philosophical, textual, systematic, and legal studies beyond the Bosnian context. We will examine the influence that empirical studies have on theology and ask whether and how such studies challenge interreligious and transreligious lives, and invite us to pay more attention to the practical side of religiosity. From a critical perspective, we seek to address the peacebuilding mechanisms that religious traditions and communities may offer, as well as the obstacles religions and religious people may face in establishing peace. A decolonial/postcolonial gender perspective has been integrated into the programme throughout.

Programme and Registration: www.esitis.org

A significant part of ESITIS' vision is to establish possibilities for scholarly exchange, to provide room for new research, cutting-edge academic reflections, and to bring experienced and junior scholars as well as students together. For the parallel short paper sessions, we welcome papers by scholars and postgraduates working on the topics listed below.

If you want to submit a proposal, please send an abstract of max. 300 words to Jagbir Jhutti-Johal: j.jhuttijohal.1@bham.ac.uk before 20 February 2019. Please indicate the group to which your paper belongs.

1: Thinking Beyond Eurocentric and Traditional Paradigms of Religion. Convener: Wolfram Weisse, University of Hamburg

In her talk 'Understanding Religion in Modern Europe', Grace Davie examines the place of religion in modern Europe from two points of view. The first part outlines the factors that must be taken into account if we are to understand Europe from within. These include the cultural heritage, the historical churches, a shift from obligation to consumption, new arrivals, and secular reactions. The

second part places Europe in a global context, recognising that the relative secularity of Europe is an exceptional case in global terms. It asks not what Europe *is* but what it *is not*.

Davie's contribution provides a background for paper proposals to this session. We welcome papers introducing themes outside the mainstream of interreligious and intercultural academic work. These could include postcolonial approaches to analyses of religion, education, and society in Europe or elsewhere; innovative studies on the self-understandings and functions of religions; religion vs. secularity; interreligious and dialogical approaches to a comprehensive understanding of religions (going beyond Christianity to include other religions such as Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, or Alevism, and the dialogue between them) with both academic/disciplinary and lived religious references.

Group 2: Interreligious Teaching. Convener: Marianne Moyaert, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

In this group, we call for papers in the field of (critical) interfaith pedagogy with a specific focus on questions related to intersectionality, safe space, minority/majority relations. We also welcome papers from reflective practitioners sharing good practices connected to interfaith learning on campus. In addition we look forward to receiving papers on how to address and counter the problem of religious radicalisation and enable counter-radicalisation.

Group 3: The Apocalyptic Dimension of Religious Traditions: Inclusive and Exclusive Visions.

Convener: Anne Kull, University of Tartu

Apocalyptic encompasses a broad range of beliefs, actions, and social processes centred on cultural disjunctures concerned with 'the end of the world' and thereafter. In its original use, 'apocalypse' signified a radical change in consciousness, a disclosure that potentially facilitates action to transform the self and social relations. Apocalyptic texts may connote a future cataclysmic reckoning for humanity, the collapse of civilisation, and perhaps even annihilation of all life. However, apocalyptic texts are usually not so much about the End as they are about the Present Crisis. The religious imagination may provide hope and conviction that God is preparing a place for us with no tears and no brokenness— or it may promise a final battle between the powers of good and evil. Yet it is an open question as to who is and is not included in this vision, and there is little consensus regarding the nature and sequence of events that will occur prior to an apocalyptic unravelling of the present order of life.

Group 4: How to Research Religious Traditions: Moving beyond a Bifurcated Field. Convener:

Stanislaw Grodz, Anthropos Institute

For scholars of religions and theologians, the boundaries of religious traditions tend to conveniently demarcate their field of research. But who sets these boundaries and why? To what extent do these boundaries perpetuate divisions between people who tend to interact in daily life? What are the ways of researching religious traditions/issues that do not contribute to entrenching religious divisions? Is such research possible only within the scope of the social sciences, or can it also be done in theological inquiry? In what way can an interdisciplinary turn be helpful?

Group 5: Religious Leadership: Prophets and Protectors? Convener: Yaser Ellethy, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Religious leadership is crucial to understanding the religious dimension of both peace and conflict periods. Yet the shifting and contested character of religious leaders may lie in their protective role of caring for 'tradition' on the one hand while simultaneously claiming or re-claiming prophetic authority and envisioning the way into the future on the other. In times of social conflict, of increasing ethnoreligious nationalism, and hostile discourses of identity politics, religious leadership may be squeezed between different needs and expectations. Meticulous reflections on these aspects may produce very acute dilemmas. Can their shifting roles in dynamic contexts be analysed and critiqued? The panel poses the question: To what extent do religious leaders have/use their moral authority to contribute to conflict resolution, to counteract despair and to promote hope?

Group 6: Gender, Religion, and Violence: Seeking Transformative Practices. Convener: Jude Lal Fernando, Trinity College, Dublin

The bodies of women have become weapons of war, both as victims of sexual violence and 'mothers of war heroes.' War widows have become the most vulnerable segment of populations in conflict-ridden societies. Oppressive views and practices of religious traditions regarding women have played a key role in the ways in which gender relations are organised in wars and post-war contexts. 'War time' often reveals what goes unseen during 'peace time'. Patriarchal societies and religious institutions have practised systemic structural violence against women for centuries. This session will explore how religious traditions have been part of these oppressive social practices and, at the same time, have engaged in transformative and liberative gender practices.

Group 7: Embodied Narratives of Hope and Resilience. Convener: Lidia Rodriguez Fernandez, Deusto University

The focus of this group is to open up for papers exemplifying the healing potential of narratives, i.e., how life stories may offer insights and possibilities for treating individuals and communities that have been victims of extreme violence. As such, we place the emphasis on the 'hope' of religions within different conflict and post-war contexts, where peacebuilding actors, including those from a faith base, contribute to reconciling previously warring communities, achieve greater social cohesion, help people recover from traumatic experiences, foster post-traumatic growth, and build resilience.