



Editorial Note

2022 has not started as positively as was hoped. The unjustified war and unnecessary loss of life in Ukraine and the prolongation of the Covid-19 pandemic are darkly colouring the beginning of the year. Our thoughts are with all Ukrainians and our Ukrainian academic colleagues now struggling to survive – and later to rebuild their lives.

Current world events have again highlighted the importance of research and our ability to understand the role religion and religious and spiritual phenomena play in societies and as part of social and political processes. The present collection of articles in *Temenos* contributes to this end by exploring both historical and contemporary material. All the articles in their own way add to our knowledge of the co-constitution of people's religious and social worlds.

The issue begins with last year's *Temenos* lecture, 'Putting a Q into the Study of Religions: Observations from a Global Mixed Method Study of Religiosity with the Faith Q-set', delivered by Professor Peter Nynäs from Åbo Akademi University on 24 November 2021. In his lecture Nynäs discusses some of the key features of Åbo Akademi University's Centre of Excellence's Young Adults and Religion in a Global Perspective (YARG) project, which is truly unique in both its methods and scope.

The following two articles explore processes related to otherworldly and divine beings. James R. Lewis's and Margarethe Løøv's article focuses on processes of divinization. By exploring the case of Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falung Gong, the authors aim to show how contrary to many previous views, processes of divinization or deification are to be understood as versatile and unfolding over longer periods. The authors argue that in addition to being gradual, the interaction between the leader and their followers, which often takes place in social spaces set apart from the wider society, is central to processes of divinization. These processes are also often about coping with external threats. The authors further observe that processes of divinization always depend on their wider cultural and religious context.

In his article Simon Nygaard examines the types of otherworldly beings in pre-Christian Nordic religion from a cultural evolutionary perspective. Building on Robert N. Bellah's and Philippe Descola's views, the author shows how different types of beings can be arranged in different categories

of religiosity in an evolutionary typology. Adding a new category, chieftdom religion, to Bellah's categorization, Nygaard suggests that the different beings of Nordic pre-Christian religion can be understood as gradually evolving from collectives of beings with an anonymous identity associated with tribal religion to the somewhat more individualized beings associated with chieftdom religion, and the highly individualized and often anthropomorphic beings belonging to archaic religion. However, the author notes that despite the dependence of such evolution on social and cultural change, the different beings remain linguistically and functionally connected.

The final two articles in this issue focus on contemporary practices related to Christian churches in the Nordic countries. Laura Kokkonen's contribution focuses on branding in the Orthodox Church of Finland (OCF). In studying official church strategy documents and interviews, she examines how branding is discussed in the Orthodox Church. Kokkonen identifies two main parallel discourses, as well as occasionally contradictory branding-related hegemonic discourses. Although according to the first the church is considered not to engage in branding, in the second marketing is understood as appropriate and even recommendable for the OCF. Based on a study of these discourses, the author concludes that there is an uncertainty in the OCF's relationship with branding. On the one hand marketing and branding are considered incompatible with the idea of the church's authenticity; on the other marketing is considered useful for the church.

In their contribution Anne Agersnap, Kirstine Helboe Johansen, and Ross Deans Kristensen-McLachlan examine Christian cultural tradition and history through Danish Evangelical Lutheran sermons from 2011 to 2016. The examination is based on a study of nearly 12,000 sermons. The authors pay attention to the characters discussed in the sermons and the thematic narrative clusters they form to identify what their interrelations disclose about interpretations of the Bible and history. Taken together, the analysis of biblical figures, political characters, and a class of versatile characters shows that the Evangelical Lutheran pastors are simultaneously stable, reproductive, and experimental in their sermons. They employ well-known biblical stories in the sermons but tell them in contemporary ways. The authors thus conclude that the sermons are a way for the pastors to collectively engage in a dialogue between the Bible and history.

In addition to these articles, the issue includes four book reviews engaging with current publications in our field.

We hope you will enjoy this issue!

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