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Editorial Note

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Editorial Note

When I wrote my last Temenos editorial, summer was just beginning, and all that Covid-19 madness seemed to be fading away. Finnish society had just emerged from lockdown, and people were looking forward to returning to a more normal life after a relaxing summer holiday. Alas, while the summer holidays were relaxing, life did not return to normal, and the future looks much less bright now than it did in May. While waiting for the vaccine to come and save us like a Maitreya in a syringe, all the long-term questions that already haunted us then remain. What will be the lasting impact of all this?

Nevertheless, when we look at the pandemic philosophically, we can see a silver lining. After the kneejerk reaction of cancelling everything last spring, we have become better at making things virtual instead. Yes, a virtual seminar is so much more boring than a live one, but it saves a lot of money and time. Since the spring, I have given several guest lectures in India, Sweden, and Great Britain and have also been able to engage guest lecturers to teach at my department. Science has always been international, but never as much as now. Personally, I very much look forward to being able to meet colleagues, friends, and family in other countries in real life again, but the pandemic will have taught me many new skills that I hope to be able to use in the future as well.

It is too early to draw any big conclusions from the pandemic, but some things seem clear. A time when many university libraries are closed underscores the need for open access publishing. Temenos is proud to have been an early proponent of this trend – thanks to the keen foresight of my esteemed predecessors, Dr Ruth Illman and Dr Tiina Mahlamäki, and the generous funding of the Nordic Board for Periodicals in the Humanities and Social Sciences. We are one of the only diamond open access periodicals in our field, and we are consciously strengthening our position, most recently by updating our Creative Commons attribution licence (to CC BY 4.0) and providing every article with a unique digital object identifier (DOI) that will always lead the person looking for it to the right page.

This issue of Temenos is rich in Finnish material. The first article, by Ruth Illman and Mercédesz Czimbalmos, presents a new way of researching ver-

naacular religion. The classic “World Religions” paradigm has already been criticized for some time, but at least to me much of that criticism has been more interested in pulling it down than in creating anything new and is often shockingly out of touch with the world that it purports to explain more clearly. Illman and Czibalmos take a constructive approach, presenting an analytical model that looks at vernacular religion as a dialogue between the three modalities of *knowing*, *being*, and *doing*. This model is then applied to rich ethnographic data collected among Jews in Finland, bringing out a variety of promising findings.

In our second article, Ringa Takanen takes a close look at the altarpieces of the Finnish artist Alexandra Frosterus-Sältin (1837–1916), whose hand is responsible for most such paintings in Finnish churches featuring essential women figures at the turn of the twentieth century. In her last altarpiece of ‘*Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene*’, Takanen considers Alexandra Frosterus-Sältin’s influence on developing the position of women’s agency in the Finnish altarpiece tradition. Takanen positions this altarpiece in relation to the cultural and political atmosphere of the first years of the twentieth century, especially with regard to changing gender roles and the rise of the women’s movement.

Third, Nella van den Brandt and Sandra Wallenius-Korkalo take half a step outside Finland with their examination of the ways in which gendered subjectivities are created in contemporary cultural representations of women and girls belonging to conservative protestant communities in Finland and the Netherlands. The authors start out with case studies of two Finnish and Dutch female novelists to see how their novels represent the negotiations of women and girls from conservative protestant faiths and traditions. Key notions are those of creativity, imagination, and gendered embodied experiences.

Finally, in our fourth article, Igor Mikeshin moves away from Finland altogether to discuss how the history of forced marginality and the isolation of Russian-speaking evangelical Christians has shaped their theology and social ministry. Russian evangelicalism is often accused of western influence, proselytism in the canonical land of the Russian Orthodox Church, and mistreating and misleading people. Taking a strong position, Mikeshin argues against such accusations by emphasizing the history, hermeneutics, and social ministries of Russian evangelicalism. Rather, Mikeshin argues that Russian evangelicalism is indeed very ‘Russian’ in many ways, not the least in how its very narrative is constructed through the language of the Russian Synodal Bible.

I ended my last editorial note with a hope for a successful transition to the unknown after the Covid-19 situation. I will continue doing so. Despite the doom and gloom surrounding us – particularly at this dark time of the year up here in the North – we will not give up the hope of a better year ahead. To cite Thomas Hardy's (1840–1928) Song of Hope:

O sweet To-morrow! –
 After to-day
 There will away
 This sense of sorrow.
 Then let us borrow
 Hope, for a gleaming
 Soon will be streaming,
 Dimmed by no gray –
 No gray!

While the winds wing us
 Sighs from The Gone,
 Nearer to dawn
 Minute-beats bring us;
 When there will sing us
 Larks of a glory
 Waiting our story
 Further anon –
 Anon!

Doff the black token,
 Don the red shoon,
 Right and retune
 Viol-strings broken;
 Null the words spoken
 In speeches of rueing,
 The night cloud is hueing,
 To-morrow shines soon –
 Shines soon!

Måns Broo

