

# Introduction

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The 2017 IAPT conference took place in Oslo, which during that year celebrated the 500-year anniversary of the Lutheran reformation. With this Nordic story as a context, and with participants from all over the world, the conference asked how practical theology should be done now, in light of the reforming processes, whether spiritual, social or cultural that face us globally and locally. Are there reforming experiences and values to be learned or unlearned? Keynotes, roundtables, and paper and poster sessions discussed the conference theme “Reforming: Space, body, and politics” and presented practical theological contributions to major reforming processes going on in our world and assessed how practical theology as a discipline might be reformed.

Both in Catholic and Protestant theological traditions, the relationship between theology and politics has been a central question. Issues like social justice, climate change and citizenships are at the center of national and international politics. Correspondingly, these issues confront practical theology with the question of how politics reforms theology and how theology reforms politics. The classical ways of discussing this, for example via the concept of the two kingdoms or the Church’s social teachings, have been challenged by ways of thinking derived from contextual theology, prophetic theology, public theology and a theology of the people. At the conference, challenges from the intersections of politics and theology were explicitly tied to questions of body and space. Through their varied theoretical perspectives and the range of empirical material they present, the papers included in this volume express the diverse ways in which today’s practical theology is responding to these challenges. Our Brazilian colleagues, who will host the next conference, have written the very last paper in the book. It thus offers a bridge from the Oslo confer-

ence in 2017 to the conference that will be hosted in São Leopoldo in 2019.

## Body politics and the reforming of the church

The first section of the book deals with papers on the body and reforming the church. Embodiment is increasingly regarded as a source of theology. In bodily actions and interactions, theological as well as cultural concepts and norms are enacted and these enactments may be the primary point of access as to what a church, a congregation, a neighbourhood or a family is. The relationship between bodily actions and norms is expressed clearly by bodies that are somehow queer according to standard (and often implicit) norms and that may experience the encounter with these norms as devastating.

The reformation of bodily practices within and outside of churches are informed by cultural developments, such as the increased understanding of the need to recognize the great variety of bodies and bodily behaviours, by societal developments associated with migration and pluralisation, and by theological developments prompted by the voices of hitherto marginalised positions. The papers in this section of the volume discuss how this situation challenges a reformation of practical theology, but also spiritual practices and practices in churches.

The two first papers deal with the future of the discipline of practical theology. Swinton argues for an attentiveness in the sense of refounding as constitutive of practical theology, whereas Mager argues that practical theology should mirror faith in a dialectic of listening-responding and seek God beyond the limits of religious institutions.

The next eight papers in this section deal explicitly with the body as a theme for practical theology.





Demasure, in her keynote paper, investigates discourse on sexual abuse and points to shifts in the connected theoretical perspectives. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, Armin Kummer and Finley Lawson highlight gendered bodies as fuel for theological re-thinking. In creating a meeting between Susanna Wesley and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, Stevenson-Moessner points to both a theology of embodiment beginning in incarnation and to women's perspectives as a theological resource. Kummer argues for the necessity of specific male perspectives in a contemporary setting where masculine identity is under reconstruction. Criticizing Boolean accounts of gender, and theological dependency on such accounts, Lawson focuses on queer bodies, arguing that non-Boolean accounts of personhood must be incorporated into theological thinking.

Raymond Webb and Mary Moschella deal with structural violence, Webb via an example from El Salvador and Moschella through a discussion of the phenomenon of mass incarceration in the United States. Joyce Mercer, Auli Vähäkangas and Suvi-Maria Saarelainen deal with healing practices for threatened bodies performed by the church. Mercer studies "recovery memoirs" as a way of healing addicted and recovering bodies, while Vähäkangas and Saarelainen examine embodied experiences during life-threatening illness and point to the healing potential of relationality and ritualization. In the section's last paper, Júlio César Adam suggests that a hermeneutics of lived religion and the study of Brazilian pop culture and cinema might offer practical theology possibilities for rethinking the relationship between church and society.

## **The politics of space and church: Migration and the space of theological education**

Space is an important theoretical concept for research in practical theology, but it also points to urgent themes in today's society, the most prominent of them being migration, which sets the political agenda in many parts of the world. Migration challenges practical theology to reflect on space, since it is a case of demanding space, giving up space and reclaiming new spaces. At the same time, it constructs spaces that reform religion, theological education and churches. The papers in this section make varied contributions to a practical theological discussion on how migration reforms practice and

thinking and on the intersections of politics and theology in the discourse that takes place within contested spaces.

A theoretical paper by Johann Meylahn introduces the second section of the book. Here, Meylahn explores the relationship between bodies and space, when bodies are mixed in shared but contested spaces and categorized as belonging or not-belonging. He calls for a theologizing with excluded and marginalized bodies. A keynote paper by Federico Settler disputes the fact that focusing on migrants' beliefs and practices makes possible a greater appreciation of the agency of migrants in reforming religious spaces and their own mobile futures. In his paper, Settler gives two interesting examples of migration spaces, one from South Africa and the other one from France.

The papers by Ana Thea Filipović, Tibor Reimer and Vhumani Magezi discuss the role of churches within a political space in their respective contexts. Filipović and Reimer examine the denotations and metaphors of space used to interpret and understand the role of religion in Central and Eastern European societies after the fall of the communist regimes. Magezi discusses the Church's critical role in transforming leadership within the context of bad governance and gives interesting examples from the case of South Africa.

Theo Pleizier and Tone Stangeland Kaufman, Hans-Günter Heimbrock and Trygve Wyller as well as Constanze Thierfelder discuss migration in the European context. The focus of Pleizier and Kaufman is on reforming preaching, while Heimbrock and Wyller focus on how ecclesiology is challenged through migration. Thierfelder's approach is historical; she studies the French Protestant migration of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but additionally utilizes a psychoanalytical approach in her analysis.

The final six papers treat the question of theological education in societies with increased religious diversity. Even though Friedrich Schweitzer's focus is on religious education, he proposes a need for broadening the discipline beyond traditional paradigms to include a multi-faith approach. Edward Foley continues this discussion by incorporating plurality into liturgical education. Pamela Couture, Pamela McCarroll and Nevin Reda give an interesting example of their own institution, Emmanuel College of Victoria University at the University of Toronto, in highly multicultural Canada. They focus on the shifting realities that contribute to a pedagogy formatted for a multi-religious edu-



cational community. Marilyn Naidoo discusses the space of theological education in South Africa in the light of racial transformation. Eric Stoddart's chapter concludes that reforming bodies under surveillance is an additional task for theological education. The final paper, written by Valburga Schmiedt Streck, Júlio César Adam and Nilton Eliseu Herbes from Faculdades EST in São Leopoldo, Brazil, discusses the contribution of Faculdades EST to Latin American theological practices.

We are proud of this volume of reforming practical theology, which includes important openings in the field from thirty-one scholars of practical theology. The authors represent a wide range of denominational and cultural backgrounds as well as various sub-disciplines. Six of the chapters are co-authored, which adds an additional dialogue to the volume. We, the Nordic editors of this volume, wish you an enjoyable reading experience.

