
A Word from the Editor

Welcome to the fall issue of *Theological Librarianship* (TL). In this issue, TL had the privilege of partnering with Atla's Scholarly Communication and Digital Initiatives Committee (SCDIC) to publish a forum on the ethical imperative of Open Access (OA). The contributions to this forum provide perspective on the importance and value of OA.

I was excited to partner with Atla's SCADI to publish this because I regretfully see the barriers to information caused by numerous components. While I agree that OA can assist in remedying this, as I have explored this topic, I cannot help but see a spiritual piece. By stating this, I am not aiming to create tension and state that publishers are not spiritual or wrong, and those who advocate for OA are necessarily spiritual and good. As in many components of life, weighing value and assessing can be complicated.

Arguments for or against OA return to how we see knowledge or epistemology. It is safe to say that many librarians agree that knowledge needs to be available and accessible, and OA provides a venue for this. Can religion or religious studies add insight into how some might see knowledge and how they see OA? In his works, Dru Johnson aims to address one facet of this question. Johnson argues that in the biblical text, knowing involves "recognizing the docents through whom God speaks and listening to them alone, embodying the actions they prescribe, and looking at what they are showing us." (Johnson 2014, 3).

While I understand some of the challenges which Johnson's ideas may generate, humor my acceptance of this idea and bear with me as I consider what OA might look like if we accept a variation of Johnson's premise that God can speak through faculty (and other experts) who often communicate their knowledge through publication. The idea that God communicates through the written word does not intend to discredit any notion that God also speaks orally. Many religions argue that God's primary venue of communication is textual and that God speaks through texts, such as Scripture, the Torah, or the Qur'an. Could this possibly add any fervor behind OA?

If God speaks through texts, it becomes easy to assume that God speaks to humanity exclusively through certain texts. I do not want to discredit this idea completely because even Christianity, the faith of which I am a part, holds to the value of Scripture dearly. However, if we believe that God can speak through texts, can we assume that God can speak through almost any text, even something like a psychology textbook? Would an assumption that God can speak through numerous texts cause us to look at access to texts, such as a book about chemical compounds, differently?

Abraham Kuyper noted, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" (Kuyper 1988, 461). If I agree with Kuyper's premise that Christ has domain over all aspects of life, his premise has implications for all domains of life. Kuyper's statement would imply that information from a biology article (which is, to use Kuyper's language, "a domain of our human existence") belongs to God. If there are barriers to this (such as a paywall), does Kuyper's idea imply that this obstruction is an impediment to accessing God and, subsequently, should be removed?

While I do understand that this idea rests upon many theological premises which all readers of this editorial may not share, I hope it whets the appetite of those interested in aiming to look at developing a warrant for accessibility beyond ease and convenience. While some may sense a call for OA that aligns with religious fervor, I would like to ask: If all creation (including journal articles, books, dissertations, etc.) belongs to God, is it possible to build OA on a religious premise? Is it pos-

sible for such a premise to align with many religious components of sharing, equity, and justice? The submissions to the *TL*'s and SCDIC's forum ponder what OA might look like from a religious perspective.

Beyond *TL*'s OA forum, there is more excellent content to share in this issue. Every spring *TL* has a student essay contest. This fall issue has the winning essay from this contest: Chris Paige's "Theological Librarians and the Cultivation of Belonging." Paige's work is an excellent essay on the critical role of belonging and how librarians can cultivate this. There will be more information about *TL*'s student essay contest for 2024 coming out soon! Along with this are essays and reviews, which the editorial team hopes will assist you and the roles you fill as a librarian. Enjoy this issue!

Soli Deo gloria,

Garrett Trott
Editor-in-Chief

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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