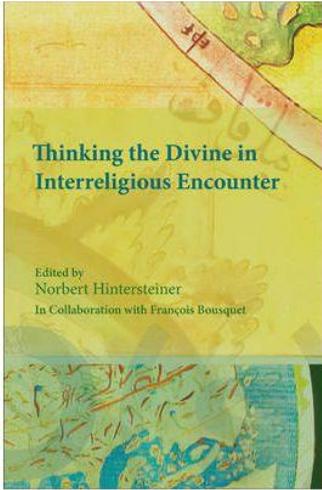


Norbert Hintersteiner (ed.)



Review

## Thinking the Divine in Interreligious Encounter

*Edited by Norbert Hintersteiner in  
Collaboration with François  
Bousquet*

*Currents of Encounter. Studies on  
the Contact between Christianity  
and other Religions, Beliefs and  
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Reviewed by Adrian Ignat

The volume of studies – *Thinking  
the Divine in Interreligious  
Encounter*, edited by Norbert

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Hintersteiner in collaboration with François Bousquet, elaborated by writers from 20 countries, is dedicated to the interreligious problems within Europe. It represents an important message for our society on the context of cultural, ethical and religious diversity. As the editor said: „*The volume seeks to take seriously our questions of cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue on God or the Divine: How can the Divine be named and thought as Europe finds itself in the midst of cross-cultural and inter-religious processes of global nature and as religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism come into the Western foreground?*” (pp. 9-10).

Together with "Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today" and "Post-colonial Europe in the Crucible of Cultures" (Rodopi, Amsterdam-New York 2007), this volume allows us to discover opportunities for a multivalenced reflection on God or the Divine that achieves mutual intelligibility without surrendering to a dogmatic untranslatability or a crude relativism.

Advanced graduate students of theology and religious studies at European universities, their professors, and other specialists explore challenges and practices of naming and thinking the Divine in Europe through the lenses of post-colonial culture and power struggles, and inter-religious encounter and global dialogue. Among the perspectives are Catholic tradition and transmission in crisis, Protestants and Jews after the Shoah, unity and trinity of God in early Christian-Muslim dialogue, exploring the Hindu universe and coming home, and God and the cult of nothingness in Buddhist-Christian dialogue. This is one of three volumes generated by the project.

Within a globalizing Europe the dialogue between different persons, people, and religions is required and necessary. Only through the dialogue can be create bridges between cultures, religions and people. As a result of this perspective, "*interreligious reconciliation and dialogue often dominate theological and missiological themes, without thereby sacrificing the integrity of Christian thought or identity, e.g. by watering*

*down the Christian message or subsuming it under a higher philosophical or mystical principle" (p. 15).*

The *culture of dialogue* in our society is based on our common understanding of values of life and relationship with God or divine and other people. Diminishing the importance of dialogue between cultures and religions can create the premises of conflicts. For that the culture of dialogue, the culture of love must characterized the relationship between people and religions.

Today, our society is focus on the daily jobs, duties, losing the spiritual sense of life. The immediate interests, the selfish wills, the egoism and pride brake the relationship between people, culture, religions and states. The cultural and theological pluralism, which is on our society, must be based on the mutual respect.

Even if the comparative theology made some important steps, it is necessary to play more attention on this field. Comparative theology requires the acceptance of the inter-religious character of theology. Even if the Christianity has an important history on the West, on opinion of Hintersteiner, theology need not remain limited to a Western or Christian context (p. 20).

In a multicultural and multiethnic world, Christian mission is called to have a dialogue with other religions (e.g. Muslim, Hinduism etc.) for a better understanding of our society, of our way of living in a pluralist world. *„The origins of intercultural theology in Europe are in fact to be found in the perception, communication, promotion and critical solidarity with non-European theologies" (p. 16).*

Even if the concept of interreligious dialogue has a benefic results in a pluralist society it can be ignored the great danger of losing an ethical or religious specificity (individuality) or cultural identity. Only through mutual respect and love can be realized a starting point of communion in every community. *„The Christian faith has been able to take root among almost all countries, cultures and peoples of the world. As different as cross-cultural processes are, depending on local contexts or epochal*

*circumstances, past and present, they all agree on the importance of inter-cultural dimensions of translation, exchange and encounter" (p. 21).*

Through all these studies, provided by majority traditions, the volume succeeds to create the image of common understanding of Divine in interreligious encounter. The volume shows to European and non-European society the way of common understanding and living. Hoping that this volume of studies will touch the hearth of our society, I strongly recommend be reading and presenting in the theological and non-theological meetings.