

## **Theologians from around the world debate intercultural Christology, plan for an innovative foundation to promote justice and reconciliation**

[July 6-Mainz] The Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz hosted a groundbreaking international conference on “The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Contextual Christology in a New World Come of Age.” Meeting from July 4-6 on the university campus, the conference brought together twenty scholars from Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America to listen to and debate new developments in Christology from around the world. Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal and Reformed theologians made presentations on Christology, as reflected in theological writings, poetry, art, music and murals, and lived experience. Theology, culture and political-economics must be discussed together, and intercultural or cross-cultural conversation enhances, challenges and refines all Christological affirmations.

The point of departure for the conference was the now classic *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology* by Volker Küster, first published in German twenty years ago. “My book is in need of revision,” said Küster, “Christology is in need of revision. This conference will not only help to revisit and supplement my book, but more importantly imagine new directions in Christology for the contexts in which we live.” One presenter observed. “Lived christologies are changing, messy, diverse and compelling.” This statement summed up our overall discussion.

Among the questions debated at the conference: What are the cultural, political and gender presuppositions inherent in any Christology? Was the writing of Christian hymns using language from other religious traditions the path to a contextualized Christianity in China? How does religious art reflect the encounter between Christianity and Hinduism in India? Can the Easter 2019 bombings in Sri Lanka provide an opportunity to rethink Christology and enhance Muslim-Christian relations? Are African conceptions of Christ as chief, healer or liberator useful in deconstructing “white racist” Christology? How can a reformulation of traditional Christology in Europe or North America proceed in light of the challenges coming from Christianity in other parts of the world, and the general decline of Christianity in the West?

A book of collected essays, poetry and art will be published in a forthcoming volume of the ContactZone Series Intercultural Theology (Leipzig).

The conference also discussed and approved plans for the creation of a “ContactZone Foundation for Intercultural Understanding and World Peace.” Such a foundation is needed to sustain and develop the work of ContactZone over the next decades. The new foundation will seek innovative ways to think about peace and justice in situations of intercultural tension, racism and religious conflict. It will be led by religious and community leaders as well as theologians from Asia, Africa, Europe and North America, and will begin its work in late 2020.

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