Editorial

On 22 August 2021 one of *Exchange*'s former managing editors, Karel Steenbrink, died. Therefore, the first pages of this issue are devoted to Karel Steenbrink (1942–2021), who was the managing editor of *Exchange* between 1994 and 2004. Under his inspiring guidance, the journal became a highly valued and internationally acknowledged academic platform for scholars from around the world working in the multidisciplinary field of Christianities worldwide. In an *In Memoriam*, Martha Frederiks honors Steenbrink and highlights the significance of his work for the study of Christianities and for interreligious dialogue. An article by Steenbrink, which was originally published in 2006, shows the enormous skills he possessed to move between Islam and Christianity fluently and naturally. We have decided to republish this creative and inspiring article in his memory.

The other contributions in this issue evidence how *Exchange* has become a multidisciplinary forum for studies of Christianities worldwide. The articles take the reader to several contexts, from Africa to the Moluccas and India, exploring topics from synodality and heritage-formation to transnational notions of belonging and different dimensions of secularism. The word 'exchange' becomes tangible in the many lines, references, and cross-connections that fashion the many faces of Christianity in today's world.

Stan Chu Ilo's article focuses on and contributes to the ongoing discussions on synodality in the Roman Catholic Church in preparation for the 2023 Synod on synodality. In his article, Ilo makes a case for a participatory synodal Church. To realise this, he proposes the African palaver tradition as a model for a participatory dialogue that can enrich current synodal processes and methods. The palaver-tradition entails an art of conversation that focuses on dialogue and consensus-building in traditional societies. To develop his argument, Ilo first explores theological developments in thinking about synodality within the Roman Catholic Church in which he focuses on the writings and thoughts of Pope Francis. Identifying several challenges that remain unresolved, like clericalism, polarization in the Church, and marginalization of the laity, the voices of women, minorities, and non-Western Christian voices, he then turns to the question how new models from the South could aid the Church to deal more constructively with these issues. The second part of Ilo's article is devoted to

this challenge. By critically assessing the possible contributions of the African palaver, Ilo argues that this and other possible models from the South could help the Church to pay closer attention to social processes, cultural traditions, hidden histories, and contribute to a deeper, more inclusive understanding of synodality.

In the next article Jip Lensink, in a case-study on Moluccan Protestantism, argues that the buzzword 'contextual theology' should not merely be understood in theological terms, as a postcolonial theological approach. She contends that this term can and should also be understood as part of political nation-building processes in post-independence societies. Focusing on the Moluccas, the article discusses two key political periods in which the interests of the Gereja Protestan Maluku (Moluccan Protestant Church) and of the Indonesian government merged. Lensink argues that the word 'heritage', which is central to Moluccan contextual discourses, serves a sense of identity-formation that relates to a controlled political process of careful selections of cultural forms. The construction of contextual theology/ies in the Moluccas shares in this development. Interestingly, Lensink argues that this partaking also hinders a free theological and truly contextual development. As such, the article shows how Moluccan contextual theology is both an exercise in contextuality and at the same time reflects Indonesia's heritage politics.

In the next article, Emma Wild-Wood discusses the reconceptualization of African Protestant workers as missionaries by using examples from Anglican missions in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Many African Christians understood themselves as missionaries, she contends. Wild-Wood demonstrates that those who called themselves missionaries were engaged in evangelizing activities *outside* their own ethnic group. African missionary activities, also within the region, were infused with transnational notions of belonging to a world religion and a worldwide missionary movement, she argues.

Roman Catholic theologians in India are the topic of the final article of this issue, written by Enrico Beltramini. Beltramini studies the so-called crisis of Indian secularism and argues that by blurring the lines between western and Indian concepts of secularism, a fresh new look can emerge on the historical character of secularity in India. Beltramini argues that by doing so, this could develop some fruitful perspectives on the challenges posed by the nationalist mooring of Hindutva philosophy in India.

As customary, a number of book reviews discussing new publications in the field of contemporary Christianities conclude this issue.

Lucien van Liere & Martha Frederiks