

EDITORIAL

I am delighted that this issue of *QUEST* has finally come out! Thanks to the Open Access Movement, anyone connected to the internet could read the articles prior to their official release. When I wrote this editorial, Hong Kong—a place where I live, work, and anchor myself—was just stepping up coronavirus efforts as a second wave of infections struck. The pandemic has taken place amid the anti-extradition protest movement here. This is a world-famous anti-government movement that has rocked Hong Kong for months, and coupled with the public discontent over the government's ineptitude at handling the coronavirus crisis, we are now in a deepening legitimacy crisis. My society has been experiencing one historic event after another. Hong Kong has become increasingly politicized, where people are fighting not just for health, for survival, but also for justice. Intractable conflicts rage over the city, and the situation shows no sign of dying down. Questions looming for me recently are: How are these conflicts to be resolved? Is hospitality still possible amid such hostility? What does hospitality have to do with resistance movements? It just so happens that this issue of *QUEST* is dedicated to the theme of "hospitality." It was in the atmosphere described above that, as an editor of the journal, I read all the contributions. I am deeply grateful.

Hospitality is about alterity. It is about a permanent tension between sameness (singularity) and difference (plurality), and how these two are theoretically intertwined and mutually implied. While hospitality encourages dialogue, acceptance, empathetic understanding, forgiveness, etc., it also admits the impossibility of being unconditional. Moreover, hospitality is not only a concept, but, more importantly and straightforwardly, a practice.

The modern notion and practice of hospitality has a tradition tracing back to the Greco-Roman world. Indeed, hospitality has strong roots in the history of Christianity, and in the Hebrew culture. In the Hebrew Bible, God is represented primarily as a host. Yet, God is also received as a guest. Israelites are also required to remember their history of sojourn in Egypt and the desert, and how God was hospitable to them in the midst of this. In the New Testament, Jesus is imagined as an ultimate stranger to this world, while at the same time he extends God's welcome to humanity. He also requests his followers practice a radical hospitality to their stranger-neighbors. Judaism regards hospitality to guests as a commandment from God, and through the centuries hospitality has been regarded as a great virtue by the Christian church.

Hospitality is also generally regarded as a moral virtue in many Asian cultures and religions. Although hospitality is variously interpreted as conditional, it is certainly a virtue in Chinese cultures, particularly in Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism. Hospitality, in the language of *dāna* (giving), is one of the central teachings of Buddha, as interpreted by Theravada Buddhism, a dominant form of the religion in many Asian countries, such as Sri Lanka, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and also practiced by many groups in China, Nepal, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. It is therefore worth the effort of capturing all the nuances of the spiritualities of Asian hospitality, especially when nowadays many Asian traditions are ideologically deployed for hostility rather than hospitality toward the "other," and when even hospitality can be deployed as a tool for social control.

In the passing decades, hospitality has received much scholarly attention across different disciplines and in various contexts. Its interpretation is spelt out anew every time a theorist or a practitioner attempts to relate it to a variety of human experiences. For example, we have a deconstructionist approach (Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle) which is classical in the field. We have a political theology of hospitality (Emmanuel Lévinas), linguistic hospitality (Paul

Ricoeur), intellectual hospitality (Eleanor Kaufman), inter-religious hospitality (Catherine Cornille; Marianne Moyaert; Amis Yong), ecological hospitality (Anne F. Elvey), and pastoral hospitality, to name but a few.

While Asian countries are heterogeneous, the perennial practical problems they are facing are not altogether different. The list could be long, but includes at least: social injustice, poverty, gender injustice, social exclusion of sexual minorities, caste-related violence, class antagonism, neocolonialism, Asia-West tension, racism, inter-religious conflict, intra-religious conflict, terrorism, urban vs. rural differences, ecological problems, political oppression, etc. These issues persistently appear in the research studies of Asian scholars. The discussion of these issues is not only of local and regional significance, but is also globally relevant. I suggest that hospitality is highly relevant to these polarizing issues.

Most of the present submissions were papers presented at the Academic Conference cum 15th Anniversary Celebration organized by the Institute for Advanced Study in Asian Cultures and Theologies held in July 2019. Our peer reviewers selected eight papers for this issue. I am sure you are going to learn a lot about hospitality across different cultures and social-political situations from the authors' theological reflections and practices. I hasten to add that I myself learned a great deal from those that were not selected as well.

We do hope you enjoy reading the articles in this issue. Let me repeat: *QUEST* welcomes submissions—research papers and book reviews—that span the full spectrum of religious, cultural, theological, and interdisciplinary studies on the cultures and religions of Asia. We hope to receive your manuscripts in 2020.

Simon Shui-Man KWAN (PhD)
Professor, Associate Director
Divinity School of Chung Chi College
The Chinese University of Hong Kong