



## Editorial

**Júlio César Adam**

Alexander Deeg and I met at the Societas Homiletica conferences. As far as I remember, the first meeting was at the Wittenberg conference in 2012. We both work with practical theology, specifically with liturgy and homiletics in our respective contexts, Germany and Brazil. Furthermore, in our conversations we noted the links between the evangelical Lutheran churches in both countries, since the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil originated from the process of German immigration two hundred years ago and has always maintained a strong link with the church in Germany. Based on these common points and the many conversations, we became interested in jointly investigating something that connected the two contexts. Thus, we had the idea of thinking about what characterizes Lutheranism within the scope of evangelical worship in Brazil and Germany. More specifically, we considered approaching Lutheranism, its identities and its faces from a liturgical perspective and analyzing specific liturgical projects, their historical development and the perceptions that congregation members in both contexts had of them. Furthermore, we thought about combining a sociopolitical-cultural perspective with a specifically theological-ecclesiastical perspective in the research project. Our initial question was: “Is there” a Lutheran liturgical identity that can be determined as a factor in the interaction with other aspects of individual and collective identity formation?

Based on this idea, in 2020 we formed an international research group with researchers from the University of Leipzig, the Faculty of Theology, the Institute of Practical Theology and the Graduate Studies Program of Faculdades EST. The group in Germany is made up of the following researchers: Prof. Dr. Alexander Deeg, Dr. Kerstin Menzel, Dr. Uwe Steinmetz, Christian Boerger and Anna-Sophie Kern. The group in Brazil is made up of Prof. Dr. Júlio César Adam, Prof. Dr. Marcelo Saldanha, Associate Researcher Dr. Romeu Martini, Prof. Dr. Louis Marcelo Illenseer and doctoral student Fabiane Ebeling Luckow. Mag. Theol. Ketlin Schuchard was part of the group at



the beginning of our activities. Church History professor, Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Wachholz of Faculdades EST follows the research project as a guest researcher.

Still in 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, we organized a first online meeting, in which members from both countries addressed aspects related to the liturgy, such as the history and structure of their churches, liturgical developments in recent decades, music and liturgical space. At that meeting we also discussed the impacts of social isolation caused by the pandemic and the challenges of online worship services in both countries. This moment was fundamental for us to get to know each other and establish the direction of research on transformations in Lutheranism in and through worship.

In 2021, we organized an international conference called “The Changing Faces of Lutheran Worship: Brazilian and German Perspectives,” whose main papers make up this special issue of *Estudos Teológicos*, as presented below. At that conference, in addition to the members of the international research group, people from different contexts of Lutheranism who research and reflect on Lutheran worship were present, enriching the discussion. We had persons from Brazil, especially from the IECLB, and from Latin America, Germany and persons linked to the Lutheran World Federation.

After the 2021 conference, the group continued with its work, counting from 2022 onwards with funding from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (<https://www.dfg.de/>), which enabled, among other actions, the exchange of group members in Brazil and Germany, in 2023. One of the exchange activities was the development of field research using the Participatory Research methodology, the results of which will be published in the future.

The purpose of publishing this special issue of *Estudos Teológicos* is to publicize part of the reflection and results of this research project. Therefore, we organized this edition in three languages – Portuguese, German and English – to expand access to the content.

The first article, “Transformations of Lutheranism: The question of confessional liturgical identity and its current relevance in the German-Brazilian dialogue,” written by Alexander Deeg and Júlio César Adam, discusses the research issues, as well as their possible foci of investigation, paying attention especially to the German and Brazilian contexts. The article proposes a perspective that describes Lutheran liturgical identity in its dynamics of transformation and normatively identifies it with a dynamic of transformation.



Dirk G. Lange, in turn, in his text “Luther, Liturgy, Identities: A confessing tradition,” explores the transformative potential of the Lutheran liturgy through a discussion of the theological and practical dimensions of the sacrament of the altar. Focusing on the concept of real presence, the author claims that, although the Lutheran doctrine of the supper may be divisive, the experience lived in the liturgy can be reconciling, serving as a profound source and redefinition of identity and community practices.

The article written by Claudia Jahnelt, “‘The danger of a Single Story.’ Corporeality – Spiritual Polyphony – Epistemological Diversity as a Challenge to Lutheran Liturgical Identity,” examines the transformative potential of worship services in the face of epistemological tensions within the Lutheran liturgy and concludes that Lutheran worship needs to question its usual Western patterns of thought, considering epistemological diversity, the plurivocity of the Spirit and the embodied cognition of God.

A more sociocultural and ecclesiological perspective on the two countries is offered by Hörsch and Sobottka. Daniel Hörsch, in the article “On the transformation of Lutheran worship in Germany. Empirical perceptions – insights – perspectives,” analyzes the changes in Lutheran worship services in Germany based on empirical data, especially from the sixth survey of church members in 2023. He thus discusses the most recent developments in the practice of worship, as well as the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic on behavior related to worship services. Emil A. Sobottka, in turn, in the article “From the community of faith to politicized religiosity. Political instrumentalization of religion in Brazil,” addresses the transformations in religious experience in Brazil after Catholicism ceased to be the official religion in the country. According to him, there is a pluralization of religious forms, the sources from which they feed and the goals to be reached with them, including religiosity as a part of political activism.

We are grateful to the authors who participated in the 2021 conference and worked on reviewing the papers for publication. We thank Faculdades EST and the Faculty of Theology of the University of Leipzig for enabling the establishment and work of our research group. Likewise, we thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for funding our research in 2022 and 2023. We also thank the journal *Estudos Teológicos*, in the person of its director, Prof. Dr. Carolina Bezerra, for making the publication of this special issue possible, as well as the Publications Fund that



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Good reading!