Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society

Issue 1: Religious Life
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The Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society (JOGTS) is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes scholarly articles in the field of theology and religion.

Each issue divides contributions into two categories: i) responses to each edition’s thematic call for papers; ii) articles that fall under the general scope of the journal. As an affiliate of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford, the scope of the journal is defined by the breadth of research undertaken by the members of the faculty. It includes Biblical studies, historical and systematic theology, philosophical theology, Christian and religious ethics, history of Christianity, science and religion, and the study of religions. The journal also publishes critical book reviews, media reviews, and featured articles.

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Editorial Introduction

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It is a great privilege to be able to introduce this inaugural issue of the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*: I am immensely proud of my fellow graduate students in theology and religion at the University of Oxford, who could not have risen to the challenge of producing this first issue with greater dedication or ability. This issue, the first in what I am confident will be a long series, is a testament to the talent that resides within the Faculty of Theology and Religion’s graduate community as a whole.

Going forward, the JOGTS will publish peer-reviewed work of the highest quality, in the form of both articles and book reviews, related to the research areas in which the University of Oxford’s Faculty of Theology and Religion is active: Biblical studies, historical and systematic theology, philosophical theology, Christian and religious ethics, history of Christianity, science and religion, as well as the study of religions. Nevertheless, it belongs chiefly to the Oxford Graduate Theological Society, meaning that the journal is run entirely (from setting editorial policy to copyediting and typesetting) by the Faculty’s graduate students. In that sense, the journal certainly hopes to be an important platform for the unceasing theological and scholarly discussions going on in Oxford, particularly among its graduate students. However, as its founding editor, I should also note that the JOGTS’ intended scope extends far beyond that: we welcome all contributions of sufficient quality, whether they are submitted from Oxford or thousands of miles away from its dreaming spires, by a graduate student or a senior academic.

Each issue will host a special section of articles dedicated to a specific topic whilst also reserving space for contributions that fall within the journal’s scope generally. We chose the topic of religious life in the autumn of 2019, not knowing quite how urgent theological reflection on this issue would become in the face of the various measures governments around the world introduced to mitigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which often included closing houses of worship. As a result,
I’m proud that this inaugural issue of the JOGTS includes John Olson’s ‘Eucharist and Technology: A Heideggerian Critique of Virtual Communion’, which reflects on the meaning of the Eucharist when public health measures make it impossible to physically partake in that sacrament. The issue also includes an essay by the French philosopher Emmanuel Falque, entitled ‘For a Phenomenology of Religious Life’, delivered in Oxford as a lecture on the occasion of the centenary of Martin Heidegger’s lecture courses dedicated to the phenomenology of religious life. This text forms both a helpful synthesis of Falque’s work as well as a fascinating autobiographical exercise in which the author traces his own intellectual roots. The final contribution to this special section on religious life is Ghila Amati’s forceful defence of religious experience in her ‘Mystical and Religious Experiences as Superior Points of View: William James and Aldous Huxley’s Reflections on Mystical and Religious Experiences’. Sorrel Shamel-Wood’s ‘Midrashic Wishful Thinking: Constructions of Esther in Twenty-First Century Novels’, meanwhile, does not deal with religious life, but instead offers a thoughtful engagement with scripture in light of contemporary culture that is fascinating in its own right.

Finally, this issue includes reviews—respectively by Henry Shea, Harry Moore and Matthew Martin—of three recent books that deal with religious life in one way or another. These books were generously provided to us by the Journal of Theological Studies, for which we are grateful.

Indeed, the publication of this inaugural issue would not have been possible without the support we received from a great variety of individuals and institutions. First of all, we thank the Faculty of Theology and Religion for generously funding the journal until 2021. Personally, I am extremely grateful to Professor Graham Ward, chair of the Faculty during the 2019-2020 academic year, for kindly encouraging me to pursue this project in the summer of 2019, and Dr Sarah Apetrei, the Faculty’s Graduate Studies Coordinator, for her support in our endeavour to get it off the ground. Launching a journal and publishing its first issue has proved to be a task of significant managerial, technical and administrative complexity; it would undoubtedly have overwhelmed me if it were not for the constant assistance and great skill of the other members of the core editorial team: James Lorenz alongside Tim Middleton and Mark Aloysius as associate editors, Andrew Shamel as web editor, and Caleb Brown as reviews editor. Finally, I am grateful to the other members of the extended editorial board: James Hooks, Andrew Cowan, Taman Turbinton, Victoria Gross, Stevan Veljkovic, Ghila Amati, Liam McDonnell, Harry Lines, Elizabeth Li, John Olson, Henry Shea and Itzhak Berkman. They brought a wealth of different skills and perspectives to the project that would be beyond any single one of us, testifying to the unparalleled strength of the graduate community.

In publishing this first issue, I also hand the reigns of the journal over to Tim Middleton, who will succeed me as editor for the 2020-2021 academic year. I am delighted to see this project go on without me and wish Tim the best of luck in further developing and expanding the Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society.