

Editorial Introduction

Natasha Chawla

St Cross College, University of Oxford

natasha.chawla@theology.ox.ac.uk

Welcome to this third edition of the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* (JOGTS), on the theme of “Hope and Time in Theology and Religion”.

I am delighted to say that, with the commitment and care of both continuing and new members of the Editorial Board (old and new graduate students at the Faculty of Theology and Religion here in Oxford) JOGTS's third year has brought with it: an increase in article submissions (many more than anticipated!) from across the UK as well as internationally; three special feature articles; the second series of *JOGTS Shorts* videos; and a growing digital presence, both on our own platform (jogts.com) and on social media. The seeds that were sown in JOGTS's first two years continue to grow and are reflected in: the hundreds of downloads of articles from previous issues; the many views of both *JOGTS Shorts* series; the quality of papers submitted and accepted this year; and the calibre of our featured authors and interviewees.

In Michaelmas term 2021, the Editorial Board decided on “Hope and Time in Theology and Religion” as a counterpoint to last year's theme of crisis. The issue explores how religious scholars and theologians engage (or will engage) with questions of hope *in* time and *of* time. It asks what we can learn from scriptural and religious texts regarding time, timelessness, temporality, and eternity. How do creation narratives, myths, and histories function—both symbolically and literally? And how do ideas of hope and time impact those working on more contemporary topics such as gender, ethics, racial and economic justice, and environmental and climate change?

The issue comprises (though not strictly in this order): three special feature pieces, six submissions that address the Hope/Time theme, three general articles, and two book reviews.



Celia Deane-Drummond—Director of the *Laudato Si'* Research Institute and Senior Research Fellow in theology at Campion Hall, University of Oxford—reflects, through the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, on the intimate relationship between theological hope and a temporal space that includes both the promise of change and unknowing. Hope, she posits, “is in time, not outside time, even when considering hope in eternity”. And just as time has a degenerative element, hope, too, has a shadow side in despair. Both hope and despair are important to recognise “if human communities are to develop resilience in the face of global social and ecological emergencies”.

Hope, time, discipline, and faith in action are some of the themes explored in an engaging, honest, and personal interview with Rowan Williams, Honorary Professor of Contemporary Christian Thought at the University of Cambridge and 104th archbishop of Canterbury (2002–12). It was a great privilege to be able to ask Professor Williams the questions we asked, and we were moved and enriched by his responses. I would like to thank him very much for his time and willingness to speak with us and contribute to this edition of the JOGTS.

The third of our special features is from Ryan Mullins, author of *God and Emotion* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), and host of *The Reluctant Theologian*, a podcast on God, time, and everything in between. His paper, “The Ontology of Time and Hope in the Resurrection”, provides an analysis of eschatological presentism in relation to The Problem of No Afterlife and puts forward certain conditions that are required for the Christian hope for resurrection and an everlasting friendship with God to be realised.

Our submitted articles that address the theme of Hope/Time were rich in content, looking to both ancient and contemporary figures and texts to explore these multifaceted concepts. Be it Douglas LeBlanc’s construct of the pain-patience continuum and the importance of patience as a necessity for bearing pain over time, or William B. Bowes’s analysis of Revelation as a text that gave first century Christian communities a basis for hope in the face of an increasingly hostile socio-political and religious situation, time, in both its temporary and eternal formulations, offers hope in the present moment. Meanwhile, C. M. Howell, Maikki Aakko, and Andrew Karpinski look at hope through the lenses of Eberhard Jüngel, T. S. Eliot, and Hegel respectively. For Jüngel, hope is the manifestation of freedom that lies beyond the limits and boundaries of the actuality of the world. In Eliot’s post-conversion poetry, Aakko finds links between hope and desire, and illustrates that ascetic and apophatic practices are key to helping us traverse the often-problematic terrain of hope in connection to transient desire. Hegel’s conception of eternity and its relation to time is brought into the conversation by Karpinski’s analysis of specific elements, namely Hegelian cataphatic and dialectical deductions and their relevance in contemporary philosophy of religion.

Our three general articles are wide ranging in theme, taking us from mythic sensibility to baptism to pornography. In Andrew Shamel’s “Mythic Sensibility and Mythopoeic Fantasy” the myth is said to structure the perception of the faithful (as per their account of what is true) and, in doing so,

can reveal a more meaningful, magical, and wonder-full world. Justin H. Lam, in “Purification through Baptism”, offers a fresh reading of Romans 6:1-11 and posits that using a ritualistic approach, rather than just a forensic and/or participatory approach, substantiates our understandings of baptism and ritual washing bringing us closer to the Divine through ethical living in the present. Lastly, Khegan M. Delpont delineates the “ontological tendencies of the pornographic imagination” and offers both an assessment and a remedy from a metaphysical perspective. Tracing the pornographic to the imbalances of modernity and the miseducation of desire through “digital capitalism and attention economies”, he proposes that an alternative, holistic, and expansive vision of divine pedagogy is required to overcome this contemporary issue.

The two books reviewed—John Lippitt’s *Love’s Forgiveness: Kierkegaard, Resentment, Humility* and Todd LeVasseur and Anna Peterson’s *Religion and the Ecological Crisis: The ‘Lynn White Thesis’ at Fifty*—although different in style and genre, also give us a sense of hope. In the first instance, an appreciation of Kierkegaardian hope can be found in the concept of forgiveness, and in the second, new hope can be found in taking a more interdisciplinary and holistic approach to Lynn White’s thesis about the religious roots of the contemporary ecological crisis.

Over the course of the year, we have also been working on the second series of *JOGTS Shorts*, entitled “God Talk: An Introduction to Theology and Religion”. This series comprised clips taken from seven interviews held with members of the University of Oxford’s Faculty of Theology and Religion. We asked the same seven questions to all seven interviewees, which were then compiled into seven separate episodes, with the aim of bringing some of the fascinating insights and research that takes place in Oxford’s Faculty of Theology and Religion to a wider online audience. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our interviewees: Jessica Frazier (Research Lecturer in the Study of Religion), Alister McGrath (Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion), Diarmaid MacCulloch (Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church), Katherine Southwood (Associate Professor in Old Testament), Anthony Reddie (Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture), Hindy Najman (Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture), and Anna Sapir Abulafia (Professor of the Study of the Abrahamic Religions) for their wonderful insights and for generously contributing to the project. A special thanks to Reverend Dr William Lamb of the University Church for providing a beautiful setting, the Old Library, where many of these interviews took place. And to Amelia Nicholson for her tireless efforts producing both *Shorts* series.

Indeed, all of this has been made possible with the contribution, support, and encouragement of many. First, the *JOGTS* Editorial Board who have given their time and commitment generously to plan, ideate, review, copyedit, record, video-edit, and manage social media. Second, because of the large number of submissions received, we had to seek the help of extra peer-reviewers. In the interest of keeping the review process anonymous, they will not be named here, but a huge thank

you to all of them for giving their time and expertise so generously. Throughout this process, the Advisory Board had been especially enthusiastic and encouraging, giving suggestions and advice whenever requested and supporting our application for funding for the next three years. Thank you to all of them and a special thank you to the faculty's Graduate Studies Coordinator, Dr Sarah Apetrei for her continuous support on all matters journal related.

All that remains is to offer hearty welcome and congratulations to the incoming JOGTS Editor, Dallas Callaway, and Reviews Editor, Thomas Topel, and wish them and all the Editorial Board every success in 2022-2023, the fourth year of the JOGTS!