

# Editorial Introduction

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Welcome to this second edition of the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* (JOGTS).

There was always a slight risk that JOGTS could fall foul of difficult-second-album syndrome, but I am absolutely delighted to say that the very opposite has been the case. At the start of the academic year, no fewer than thirty-six of the new graduate students at the Faculty of Theology and Religion here in Oxford applied to join our Editorial Board. It is their commitment and enthusiasm that has really helped the journal to flourish. This year, JOGTS received many more submissions—of both articles and reviews—than last. And it is particularly exciting that we are now attracting authors and peer-reviewers from across the UK, as well as internationally. We also hosted our first live events, established our social media presence, and acquired an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). At the same time, articles from our first issue have been gaining hundreds of downloads.

Back in autumn 2020, the Editorial Board decided on “Theology, Religion and Crisis” as the theme for this issue. From the distress of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic fallout of national lockdowns to the urgent cry of Black Lives Matter and the mounting seriousness of ecological collapse, we wanted to ask how theologians and scholars of religion have felt called to respond to the notion of crisis, both practically and conceptually. We were also aware that religions and religious institutions might be, or have been, in moments of crisis themselves. Over the course of the year, however, whilst engaging in our events and reflecting on our submitted articles, I have become increasingly aware of the dangers of the word “crisis”: of the states of exception that are legitimised by its invocation, as well as the persistent crises that go unnoticed if they do not touch those in positions of privilege. Yet, both realisations make it all the more important, I think, that theologians and scholars of religion participate in these discussions.



We are fortunate to be able to include two featured contributions in this issue that address the theme of crisis. First, Christopher Key Chapple, Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology at Loyola Marymount University, offers an introductory reflection on “The Role of Religions in Times of Ecological Crisis” and describes how his own practice of Patañjala Yoga can encourage simpler living. Meanwhile, in a special interview for JOGTS, Alan Macfarlane, Emeritus Professor of Anthropological Science and a Life Fellow of King's College Cambridge, unpacks his experience of the crisis of modernity.

Two of our published articles, as well as all of our book reviews, also address this issue's theme. Melissa Barciela Mandala proposes that Paul's political theology in Romans 13:1-7 be re-read through a cosmological lens, thus providing hope to Christian communities in times of crisis. Elizabeth Campbell addresses the crisis of the Anthropocene, arguing that the advent of this new geological age has revolutionised the treatment of discarded, “waste” objects in neo-Pagan witchcraft. And our reviews cover six works that treat a variety of crises through assorted theological lenses: historical, exegetical, devotional, and liberation theological.

This time round, our section of “General Articles” has a distinctly Kierkegaardian flavour. Daniel Bennett employs Kierkegaard's thought for an analysis of the impact of social media use on the self, and especially the self before God. Whilst Mimi Nicholson engages Kierkegaard's pseudonym Anti-Climacus in a discussion of how human artistry can faithfully imitate Christ by being simultaneously imaginative and spiritual. This edition is rounded out by Jackson Reinhardt's article, which proposes that the apparently prosperous audience of the letter of 1 Timothy should serve as a further reason to reject its Pauline authorship.

None of this would have been possible without the help and support of many groups and individuals. First and foremost, I am personally immensely grateful to all the members of the Editorial Board listed above, who have given freely of their time to attend meetings, propose ideas, organise events, publicise our work, review and copy-edit articles, and produce this publication. Our new Advisory Board of senior scholars have also been unstinting in showing their support for this venture, and we are very thankful for their encouragement—especially the faculty's Graduate Studies Coordinator, Dr Sarah Apetrei. We are much obliged to the Oxford Faculty of Theology and Religion, and its generous alumni, who have continued to provide financial backing for our endeavours. And we are grateful once again to the *Journal of Theological Studies* for providing us with books for review.

Over the course of the year, we have also been working in parallel on a special issue of JOGTS, publishing proceedings from the postgraduate conference of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics. I am indebted to James Hooks, our guest editor, for his tireless hard work on this initiative. Do look out for this publication.

Finally, I am very pleased to say that Natasha Chawla will be taking over as Editor of JOGTS for the 2021-2022 academic year. I wish her and the rest of the Editorial Board every success as the journal continues to grow.