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Editorial

This third issue of *Religion and Gender* marks the first anniversary of the journal. When, after several years of preparations, the journal was launched in October last year, as editors we were full of expectation and excitement. We were convinced of the need for a new academic journal dedicated to the systematic study of gender and religion in an interdisciplinary perspective – a journal that, in the words of its profile statement, ‘explores the relation, confrontation and intersection of gender and religion, taking into account the multiple and changing manifestations of religion in diverse social and cultural contexts’ and ‘analyses and reflects critically on gender in its interpretative and imaginative dimensions and as a fundamental principle of social ordering.’ This conviction had motivated us to go through the complex and challenging process of establishing and launching a new academic, online and open access journal. We were excited when finally the first issue of the journal was published, and we were eagerly looking forward to the responses. Would the academic communities that make up the interdisciplinary audience targeted by *Religion and Gender*, confirm our idea that there is a need for a new journal for the systematic study of gender and religion, and would they confirm our belief that *Religion and Gender* is well designed and positioned to meet this need?

Of course, one year is too soon to evaluate the reception of the new journal we have so proudly presented. In the highly competitive field of academic publishing in which the reputation of a journal is no longer

determined primarily by its editorial and advisory boards and publisher but increasingly by impact factors and other journal ranking systems, it takes much longer for a new journal to achieve a recognized status in the field(s) to which it is devoted. However, the many positive responses to the launch of the journal and the publication of its first two issues, actually have confirmed our idea that there was a need for a journal like *Religion and Gender*, and our belief that the journal can and will soon achieve a recognized status in the field. The overwhelming response, from esteemed scholars to graduate students who are working in different academic disciplines and coming from many different regions in the world, was more than we could ever have expected and it validated all the efforts of establishing this journal.

The website statistics tell their own story, and indeed this story is telling. In one year time, the total number of downloads of full-text articles and book reviews published in the first two issues of *Religion and Gender* exceeds 4,800. So far, Paul Reid-Bowen's article, 'Vital New Matters: The Speculative Turn in the Study of Religion and Gender', is the most popular article: it has been downloaded over 470 times! The second place is for Burkhard Scherer's article, 'Macho Buddhism: Gender and Sexualities in the Diamond Way', which, a year after publication, has about 400 downloads. Both these articles were published in the first issue of the journal. The most downloaded article in the second issue, published four months later, is 'Deference or Interrogation? Contrasting Models for Reconciling Religion, Gender and Equality' by Moira Dustin, which has almost 370 downloads. Even the article with the lowest number of downloads has been accessed more than 90 times in the eight months after its publication. Even though the number of downloads cannot be taken as the number of readers, these statistics clearly show that publications in *Religion and Gender* find a wide readership – presumably a much wider readership than publications in many other academic journals in our fields, especially the traditional, non-open access journals.

For academic publications, not only the number of downloads or readers matters, but also – and perhaps even more – the number of citations. Again, it is too early to evaluate the citations of publications in *Religion and Gender*, especially in view of the long production time of academic publications. However, we are delighted that we have come across the first citations of *Religion and Gender* articles in some established academic journals – such as *Contemporary Buddhism*, *British Journal of Social Work*, and *Journal of Religion in Africa* – as well as in articles on websites such as the one of the Religious Studies Project. This indicates

that *Religion and Gender* quickly becomes part of the network of scholarly communication and discussion and that it is only a matter of time before *Religion and Gender* is a leading journal in the field.

According to the journal's profile statement, *Religion and Gender* 'seeks to investigate gender at the intersection of feminist, sexuality, queer, masculinity and diversity studies.' This third issue of the journal puts the focus on one specific category in the intersectional field of gender studies: the category of masculinity. In the introduction to her 1995 edited volume *Religion and Gender*, Ursula King critically mentioned that the notion of 'gender' is mostly debated with regard to women, and that gender studies are often taken as women's studies. She underlined the need 'to consider not only the construction of femininity but also that of masculinity, especially as far as it is grounded in specific religious teachings, and analyse it critically.'¹ Even though the second half of the 1990s saw the emergence of the study of men, masculinities and religion – a development that gave birth to the dynamic subfield of (critical) men's studies in religion² – even today 'gender' is still often studied and discussed as a women's issue. Many publications with 'gender' in the title in fact have only 'women' as object of study, and most students registering for religion and gender courses tend to be female. To make the third issue of *Religion and Gender* a special issue featuring research on men and masculinities in a variety of religious traditions and global contexts is, therefore, a statement that reflects our profile and the inclusive and diverse type of gender studies this journal seeks to promote. We are thankful to the guest editors, Björn Krondorfer and Stephen Hunt, for taking the initiative of compiling this special issue on 'Religion and Masculinities: Continuities and Change'. The contributions to this issue present examples of original research on men and masculinities in a variety of religious traditions and contexts, in different geographical regions and from various disciplinary perspectives.

Apart from the five articles in the thematic section, this volume features in its open section yet another article which is worth reading. In 'The Bible Student's Sacrifice: Gender Fluidity and Consecrated Identity in Evangelical America, 1879-1916', Timothy Robert Noddings engages

¹ Ursula King, 'Introduction: Gender and the Study of Religion', in *ibid.* (ed.), *Religion and Gender*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1995, 5.

² See Björn Krondorfer and Philip Culbertson, 'Men's Studies in Religion', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2 ed. (vol. 9), Detroit and New York: Macmillan, 5861-5865; Björn Krondorfer, 'Introduction', in *ibid.* (ed.), *Men and Masculinities in Christianity and Judaism: A Critical Reader*, London: SCM Press 2009, xi-xxi.

debates on gender in evangelical Protestantism in the United States from a historical perspective, offering a close reading of the gender politics and gender theology of the American Bible Student movement (known today as Jehovah's Witnesses). Making an original contribution to the study of gender and American religious history, Noddings demonstrates how men and women who participated in this millennialist movement put certain gendered metaphors into practice in ways that not only re-ordered the binary of masculine and feminine but also destabilized it. Noddings' article is the first published in the open section of our journal, and we like to make use of this opportunity to underline that *Religion and Gender* – even though each issue is designed as a special issue – welcomes the submission of scholarly work on any topic relevant to the field of religion and gender. This issue further presents nine reviews of recently published books on a wide variety of topics and written from a wide range of academic disciplines, which together reflect the dynamics and demonstrate the vitality of our field.