

## Editorial

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My first public act as editor of this distinguished journal must be to pay tribute to my predecessor, Peter Byrne. Peter's association with *Religious Studies* goes back to 1987, when he became assistant editor to Stewart Sutherland, moving in 1990 to the position of co-editor with Keith Ward, and then running the journal as sole editor between 1998 and 2010. That length of service is matched only by Hywel Lewis's record as founding editor from 1965 to 1983, and then editorial board member until 1990. Peter's efficiency, good sense, and wise advice to authors down the years have been exemplary, and, to adapt one of Raymond Chandler's unforgettable phrases, I have needed a step-ladder to get into Peter's shoes. In his work as editor, he was ably assisted by Charlotte Byrne, who was responsible for the copy-editing and organization of each issue from 1997 to 2011. I would like to thank them both for the help and advice they gave me in the months leading up to the handover. They have generously allowed me to attach my name to the 2011 volume, which in truth is entirely theirs.

This also seems an opportune moment to reaffirm editorial policy, and to draw attention to certain modifications in the handling of submissions. As stated in each issue, the journal is 'devoted to the problems of the philosophy of religion as these arise out of classical and contemporary discussions and from varied religious traditions'. This breadth is reflected in the range of expertise of our expanded editorial board, and our hope is that the journal will represent the full range of approaches to the philosophy of religion, and of religious traditions, while also exhibiting the rigour of argument and clarity of expression that characterize the best of analytic philosophy. In an age in which academic writing in the humanities seems increasingly to mimic scientific reports, however, it is also to be hoped that the traditional virtues of elegant expression, apt example, and avoidance of needless technicality (not to mention profusion of acronyms) will be fully exemplified by *Religious Studies* articles.

The breadth of approach will also be reflected in our Book Reviews section, which happily exhibits continuity with Christopher Hamilton remaining at the helm. Indeed, we hope to widen somewhat the range of books reviewed, to include the occasional biography, or books which cross disciplinary boundaries. To allow for a build-up of commissioned reviews, there will be a temporary hiatus

in the publication of reviews for the remaining issues of the 2011 volume, until normal service resumes in March 2012.

Future innovations will include invited articles from outstanding leaders in the field, commissioned ‘state of the art’ pieces, and an essay prize. It is also not too early to look ahead to our 50th anniversary in a few years’ time, which we hope will be marked by a conference and special issue.

In November 2010, we moved from e-mail submission directly to the editor to submission through ManuscriptCentral. Although this introduced a slight increase in complexity to the process of submitting both articles and referees’ reports, the benefits are considerable for all concerned. Authors receive immediate acknowledgment of their submission, and can subsequently track its status. Reminders to referees (and to the editor!) on any outstanding reports (or decisions) are sent automatically once deadlines have passed. The result should be an efficient system for handling submissions, and should help to keep processing time from initial submission to decision short. Our aim, indeed, is to get decisions back to authors within two months.

Time from final acceptance to publication in hard copy has increased somewhat of late because of a corresponding increase in submissions. In November 2010, the earliest issue in which newly accepted articles could be placed was March 2012. Although this is close to the average for journals, I am keen to cut this down as far as possible. However, any delay is somewhat offset by the system of publishing online in ‘First View’, where newly accepted articles are in the public domain within a very short time.

Journals do not generally have mottos. But few words could be more apposite for all those involved in the work of this journal – authors, editorial board members, the team at Cambridge University Press, and the humble editor – than these from St Matthew’s Gospel: ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’