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Editorial

Welcome to this new issue of *Religion and Gender*. Launched in 2011, *Religion and Gender* over the past eight years has established itself as the leading interdisciplinary journal for the study of gender and religion from inter- and trans-disciplinary perspectives. Since the very beginning, this journal has sought to bring together researchers, themes, and case studies from around the world. We are grateful to our guest editors, peer reviewers, authors, and editorial board for contributing to the quality and impact of the journal by gathering their networks, refereeing articles, and publishing their work. A first announcement to make is that we are happy to say that Jeanette Jouili, Assistant Professor in Religious Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, has accepted our invitation to join *Religion and Gender* as a senior editor. We warmly welcome Dr Jouili and look forward to our collaboration, and trust that the journal will benefit greatly from her expertise in the study of contemporary Islam, religious pluralism and secularism, and gender studies.

In this editorial introduction, we explain the changes the journal went through over the last years, and we outline the contributions to this issue.

1 Changes at Religion and Gender

Religion and Gender was originally launched as an open access (OA) journal. For reasons outlined in detail in the editorial of the opening issue of the journal, the founding editors were committed to the idea of ‘direct publishing’ and ‘free entrance’; in their words, open access ‘represents and materializes our stance on the accessibility and the social relevance of this journal, its visibility, its intermediary role in current and emerging debates, and its function in warranting the author’s ownership of intellectual work as much as possible’ (Korte 2011, 8). At that time, open access was a newly emerging development in academic publishing. We hoped that the journal could help setting a new, ground-breaking trend, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Supported with a grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the journal was able to cover its publishing and running costs for the first couple of years, and used this period to explore possibilities for developing a sustainable OA business model. However, as we reported in a subsequent

editorial, 'the field of Open Access publishing is complex ... and from an international perspective developments in this field are far from uniform' (Editors 2014, 92).

In 2015, *Religion and Gender* became the journal of the newly established International Association for the Study of Religion and Gender (IARG), which provided us with a relevant academic home and an organisational structure. Together with the Association and with our open access publisher, U-Open, we continued exploring our future publishing strategy. We have realised that for a variety of complex reasons, the field of open access publishing has not developed in the way we hoped for when launching the journal. It turns out to be very difficult to run a journal on the basis of OA principles, without sustainable alternative sources of income to cover the publishing costs. The route that many other OA journals have taken, of applying author-processing charges to replace income through subscription fees, appears to be problematic to us, as this would exclude many possible contributors who do not have access to funding covering such charges. We have reached the conclusion that for the long-term sustainable development of the journal, it is of key importance to work with an established academic publisher. Our first priority is publishing a high-quality interdisciplinary journal with original and innovative content that helps to enhance and transform our field of intellectual inquiry.

After conversations and negotiations with several publishers over the past years, we are pleased to announce that as from this issue on, *Religion and Gender* will be published by Brill, a leading international academic publisher with a strong reputation in the Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with the IARG. We believe that Brill's wealth of experience with high-quality academic publishing will allow the journal to further establish itself, find its way to new groups of readers and authors, and gain in academic credentials. Together with Brill, we continue to follow developments in the worlds of academic publishing and to explore opportunities to run on an open access basis; yet for the time being *Religion and Gender* will operate as a subscription-based journal. If you have benefitted from our work in the past, please encourage your libraries to register with Brill for access to future issues of the journal, which will help to make *Religion and Gender* sustainable.

2 Scope and Outreach

In spite of these changes, the scope of the journal remains the same. That is, the journal explores the relation, confrontation, and intersection of gender and religion, taking into account the multiple and changing manifestations of reli-

gion in diverse social and cultural contexts. It analyses and reflects critically on gender in its interpretative and imaginative dimensions and as a fundamental principle of social ordering. It seeks to investigate gender at the intersections of feminist, sexuality, queer, masculinity, and diversity studies. *Religion and Gender* targets an interdisciplinary academic audience but also aims to be accessible to those with a non-professional interest in the field. The journal publishes high level contributions from the Humanities and from qualitative and conceptual studies in the Social Sciences. It focusses in particular on contemporary debates and topics of emerging interest from postmodern, postcolonial, and post-secular perspectives.

As before, we will be publishing two issues per year, including special issues and independent full articles. If you are interested in submitting an article, please visit our new website: <https://brill.com/view/journals/rag/rag-overview.xml> and our new online submission system: <https://brill.com/view/journals/rag/rag-overview.xml>. If you would like to submit a proposal for a special issue, please send an email to the managing editor: Nella van den Brandt, h.p.vandenbrandt@uu.nl. We hope that *Religion and Gender* continues to attract and connect many researchers from a great variety of contexts, disciplines, generations, and interests.

3 Contributions to This Issue

From here, we would like to present our current issue, and the first one to be published with Brill. The five articles included in this volume make a relevant contribution to the field, and they complement the profile of *Religion and Gender* as an academic journal dedicated to the systematic study of gender and religion in an interdisciplinary perspective. Although the articles presented here are all independent submissions, it is interesting to observe a common methodological pattern: all articles in this issue draw on qualitative research or ethnography-based methods to explore the intersections of religion and gender in contemporary life experiences and formations of authority, activism, agency, and subjectivity.

The opening article focuses on the ways in which women in Croatia draw on faith resources to cope with homelessness. In ‘... if you can turn to God, you can turn to anyone!’ The Role of Faith among Homeless Women in Croatia’, Jadranka Rebeka Anić and Lynette Šikić-Mićanović examine women’s accounts of homelessness and homeless shelters in Croatia. Using qualitative methods to look at the meanings homeless women attribute to their experiences of faith, the authors discuss whether these experiences buffer stress and facilitate

coping with adversity. Anić and Šikić-Mićanović recommend future studies to further explore homeless people's expressions of faith to gain insight into the scope, depth, and diversity of these resources.

The second article presents an equally rich discussion, but relating to quite a different cultural, religious and gendered context. In 'A Female Shankaracharya? The Alternative Authority of a Feminist Hindu Guru in India', Antoinette E. DeNapoli examines the practices through which a female religious leader (guru) in India by the name of Trikal Bhavanta Saraswati ("Mataji") constructs women's alternative authority in a high powered lineage of male Hindu gurus called Shankaracharyas. Mataji's appropriation of the Shankaracharya leadership demonstrates, according to the author, an Indic example of "dharmic feminism," by virtue of which she advocates the female as normative. Through that radical notion, Mataji advances a dharmic platform for gender equality in institutions in which women rarely figure among the power elite.

The third article, by Teemu Ratinen, is entitled 'The Normalizing Power of the Therapeutic God: Subjectivity, Religious Agency, and Shame before God.' The author analyses autobiographical letters on (perceived) shameful sexuality and religiosity written by Finnish Lutheran women. Ratinen examines how the affect of shame constructs gendered, sexualized, and religious subjectivity and agency as an effect of normalizing power within an individual's relationship with God. The psychologization process of late 20th century Western culture works as a framework for the discussion. The author argues that examining the normalizing aspect of different affectual practices reframes the subordination/subversion paradox central to the discussion on women's religious agency.

The fourth article is written by Kaja Borchgrevink, 'Agents of change: Women's religious practice and development engagement in Pakistan.' The author examines the intersection of religion, gender, and development through an analysis of religious practice and development engagement among women activists in two religio-political aid organizations in contemporary Pakistan. Situated on the margins of the mainstream aid and development field, these women are rarely considered to be agents of development. Yet focusing on improving women's position and wellbeing, their activities are similar to those of many other development NGOs. On the basis of a close read of women's discourse and practice, Borchgrevink reveals how women interpret and appropriate Islamic teachings, local cultural practices, and global norms by balancing ideology and pragmatism.

And the last, but not least, contribution is by Lieke L. Schrijvers, 'Transition and Authority: Transwomen and Religious Leadership in the Netherlands.' The author presents two case studies of two women who were confronted with a loss of religious authority as they were asked to resign from their lay lead-

ing positions after their coming-out as transwomen in the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Schrijvers focuses particularly on the interactions between the women and their community and church authorities and examines the use of gender/sexuality terminology, the role of the body, and the individualization of faith. As such, the analysis provides further insight into queer lives in Europe starting from the intersections of gender, sexuality, and religion.

The breadth of the scope of *Religion and Gender* and the many intersections that the journal seeks to explore become further visible in the book review section that once again presents a long list of reviews of recently published books related to the field. You are encouraged not only to read these reviews but also to suggest titles of new books deserving review in the journal and/or to volunteer reviewing a book for the journal yourself. Please do not hesitate to contact the book review editors, Jelle Wiering (j.o.wiering@rug.nl) and An Van Raemdonck (an.vanraemdonck@gmail.com). We would like to conclude this editorial introduction with the wish that readers will enjoy this issue of *Religion and Gender*.

On behalf of our fellow editors,

Kristin Aune, Sarah Bracke, Anne-Marie Korte, Jeanette Jouili, Mariecke van den Berg, An Van Raemdonck, and Jelle Wiering,

Adriaan van Klinken
senior editor

Nella van den Brandt
managing editor

References

- Korte, Anne-Marie. 2011. 'Openings: A Genealogical Introduction to Religion and Gender', *Religion and Gender* 1:1, 1–17.
- Editors of Religion and Gender. 2014. 'Editorial', *Religion and Gender* 4:2, 91–92.