

# THE OXFORD THEOLOGIAN



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OXFORD UNIVERSITY THEOLOGY & RELIGION FACULTY MAGAZINE

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE FACULTY BOARD CHAIR

## WILLIAM WOOD

**In last year's Theologian entry, I noted that I would be continuing as Faculty Board Chair for another year – a total of four years, and one year longer than customary.** That year has now come to a close, and writing this reflection is one of my very last acts as Chair. It has been an eventful year.

We successfully appointed three new Statutory Professors, including two Regius Professors, who will also serve as Canons in the Christ Church Cathedral. Professor Andrew Davison will be our next Regius Professor of Divinity, taking up one of Oxford's oldest and most distinguished posts. Prof. Davison joins us from Cambridge, where he has been the Starbridge Professor of Theology and Natural Sciences. He holds an MA in Chemistry, a DPhil in Biochemistry from the University of Oxford, and a second undergraduate degree and doctorate, in Divinity, from the University of Cambridge. His work ranges widely across philosophy, theology, and the natural sciences.

Professor Luke Bretherton will take up the Regius Professorship of Moral and Pastoral Theology. Prof. Bretherton joins us from Duke University. His latest book, *A Primer in Christian Ethics: Christ and the Struggle to Live Well* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), offers a fresh framework for what it means to live well amid everyday difficulties and global injustices. As Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology, Prof. Bretherton will also direct the McDonald Centre for Theology, Ethics & Public Life. I'm delighted by his appointment.

Professor Frank Griffel is our new Professor of Abrahamic Religions from Yale University. He is the third holder of this prestigious post, following Professors Anna Sapir Abulafia and Guy Stroumsa. Prof. Griffel works on Arabic philosophical and theological literature and teaches courses on pre-modern and modern Islamic thought, including the way that Islamic thinkers react to Western modernity. His interest in the intersection of philosophy and theology makes him a perfect fit for Oxford.

I am pleased to announce that in the 2024–25 academic year, the Faculty hopes to appoint a newly created Associate Professorship in Science and Religion. This new associate professorship will be

the Faculty's first new permanent academic post in fifteen years. Along with the recent appointment of Prof. Mark Harris to the Idreos Chair in Science and Religion, as well as the appointment of Prof. Andrew Davison to the Regius Professorship of Divinity, this new Associate Professorship will solidify Oxford's place as the world's top destination for the study of science and religion—by a considerable margin, in my view.

These appointments are tempered by the departure of treasured colleagues. Graham Ward, the outgoing Regius Professor of Divinity, has decided to embark on a very well-earned retirement. Across the worldwide theological scene, Graham has been one of the most important Christian theologians of the past 25 years. At home in our Faculty, he has been a workhorse, having served in several key Faculty offices, including Faculty Board Chair and Director of Graduate Studies. We will all miss him very much.

Retirements are, to some degree, expected. But three other beloved colleagues decided to pursue new opportunities in—of all places—the American Midwest. Dr Andrew Pinsent, who has served as the Research Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, has accepted a post at Mt. Saint Mary's Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. Professor Kirsten Macfarlane has accepted an associate professorship at the University of Chicago, and Professor Joel Rasmussen has accepted an associate professorship at the University of Notre Dame. We are sorry to lose them but wish them well and hope they'll return often.

With many exciting appointments over the past two years and more expected, the Faculty will look very different in a few years. In this time of change, I am especially relieved to be handing over the Chair to Prof. Mark Edwards. Mark is our most senior colleague, the longest-serving Faculty postholder, it's hard to imagine steadier hands to lead us forward.

For my part, I plan to spend the 2024–25 academic year in the United States—in, yes, the American Midwest—having earned a full year's sabbatical leave. It has been a privilege to serve as Chair for the past four years. ■

# New Horizons for Science and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe

**Andrew Pinsent**, *University of Oxford*

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Nicolaus Copernicus, the astronomer who revolutionised our understanding of the cosmos

Since November 2019 at the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, I have been leading a \$3.6 million project funded by the John Templeton Foundation across the twenty-four countries and regions of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). To the best of my belief and knowledge, this project is the largest single research grant ever awarded to the Faculty of Theology and Religion.

The area of this project encompasses Central Europe, the Balkans, the Baltic, the Dnieper Basin, and Transcaucasia, many of which are places of high religious vitality and distinctive approaches to science and religion. CEE is the birthplace of both Protestantism and Slavonic Orthodoxy, a major centre of European Catholicism, and home to the ancient Georgian and Armenian churches. There are also three Muslim-majority countries and large Jewish minorities. The region has made global contributions to science, from Copernicus to Marie Skłodowska-Curie, and religion from St Jerome to Pope St John Paul II. Communist governments suppressed academic work, in particular theology and non-Marxist philosophy, for the greater part of the twentieth century, but, since the fall of

Communism, this ancient heart of Europe has been coming alive in economic, intellectual, and religious ways.

A priority of this project has been to encourage young, early-career scholars across the region to engage with big questions in science and religion, especially the themes: Science and Religion in the CEE Context; Reason and Faith; and Persons, Mind, and Cosmos. To achieve this goal, the project has awarded fifty subgrants across the region ranging from \$5k to \$200k, together with visiting fellowships, essay competitions, and translations of key texts, especially into the priority languages of Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, and Ukrainian. There have also been study weeks, congresses, and a final project conference in Oxford, together with over two hundred scholarly and outreach videos across multiple languages. The project has also led to the establishment of new projects and research initiatives across the region, new intra- and extra-regional academic networks, and many project participants being appointed to leadership positions. Several participants have gained permanent academic positions and one subgrant leader has been made the Minister of Foreign Affairs in



Trogir's timeless beauty, as seen from its vibrant waterfront

Montenegro. One of the project advisors has also been elected as a Member of the Croatian Parliament, and is spoken of as a potential future president of the country. At the time of writing, this project has generated over three hundred publications, including many articles in influential journals, special editions of journals (including the world's highest ranked philosophy journal, *Synthese*), monographs, edited volumes, and contributions to popular venues, including the prestigious highest-circulation periodical, *The New York Times*.

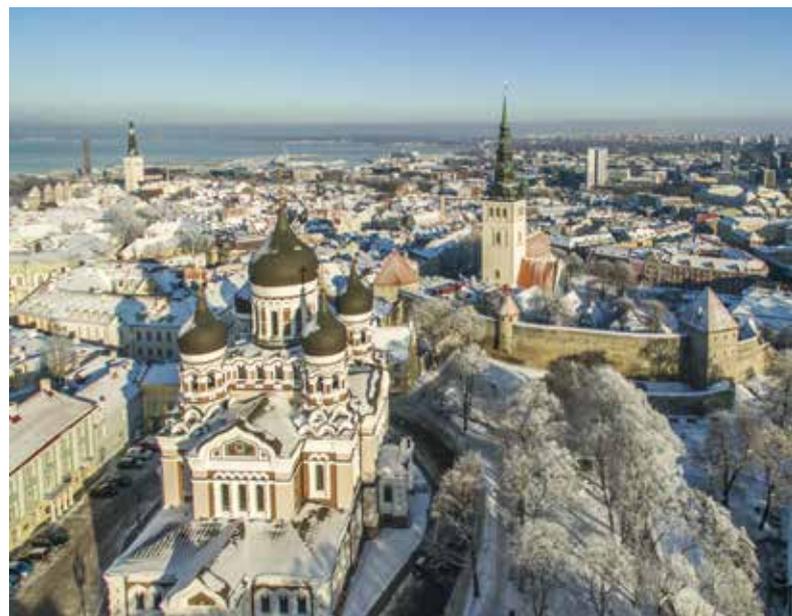
As is well recognised, the Faculty of Theology and Religion is one of the most important centres of theology in the world. Even in parts of the world in which theology has been neglected in recent decades, this project showcases how the Faculty of Theology and Religion continues to make an extraordinary international impact. As this project reaches its conclusion, I am preparing to leave Oxford to start a new job at a Catholic college in the USA, the Seminary of the West in Cincinnati, Ohio. I leave with gratitude for an immense range of experiences, including projects in Latin America, Australasia, and this current project in Central and Eastern Europe. Deo gratias. ■



Trogir – The historic coastal town of Trogir, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Croatia



The breathtaking Clementinum Library, a Baroque masterpiece in the heart of Prague



A winter wonderland in Tallinn's historic Old Town, Estonia's capital

# Quantum Leap

## Executive summary

**Mark Harris**, *Andreas Idreos Chair in Science and Religion; Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre in Science and Religion*

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*My inaugural lecture in Trinity Term 2024 as the new Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion was a deeply humbling experience, marking my return to the University where I earned my BA in Theology decades ago. But it was also the ideal opportunity to showcase a major new programme of research for the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion. Here is a (very) potted summary.*

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We know that science changes the world. What, in fundamental terms (by which I mean human aspirations and convictions about what is most real and most ultimate) is it that drives the world of science? Why does science work? The working sciences can't answer these questions; they need philosophers and theologians: the Science and Religion field. And what we in the Science and Religion field have learnt is that many scientists' working hunches and assumptions are deeply theological in origin if not in nature.

I've become fascinated with one particular hunch: quantum fundamentalism. I should come clean here. In my research career in physics, I was as much of a quantum fundamentalist as the next person, but I wasn't even aware of it until I started thinking about Quantum Mechanics (QM) theologically. What is quantum fundamentalism then, and why might theology take an interest? I'm sure you're thinking that theology has quite enough fundamentalisms of its own to be getting on with and doesn't need another. Perhaps, but humour me.

Quantum fundamentalism is the belief that QM captures what is most fundamental in our physical world, that the entire universe and its contents are fundamentally of a quantum nature, even though we might be blissfully unaware of this in our daily lives. Where does this belief come from?

QM is a theoretical framework – highly mathematical – originally developed about a century ago to predict what we might see when we make observations on light and on matter at the atomic and sub-atomic level. Note that it's a theory of measurement, not necessarily a theory of reality in itself. When we try to infer from QM what's really there *before* we make the measurement, the theory tells us strange things that make little sense. You will have heard of Schrödinger's cat, the infamous thought experiment where the cat is simultaneously both alive and dead until we open the box and look

A celestial dance of light and energy,  
echoing the mysteries of quantum mechanics

inside. The philosophical disputes about what's really the case before we make the measurement have been ongoing for a century now, but it is beyond dispute that QM works, and works phenomenally well.

Quantum physics is, arguably, the most successful collection of theory in the natural sciences, to date. It has transformed our view of molecular, atomic, and subatomic matter, and it forms a basic context to many scientific areas from physics through chemistry, materials, and earth science, to molecular biology and many other natural sciences. On larger scales, quantum physics explains why stars shine, and how they make the atoms that make people and planets. On still larger scales, cosmologists invoke quantum fluctuations as a mechanism for the Big Bang, and an explanation for the distribution of galaxies in space. Many modern technological innovations are entirely reliant on quantum science, not least the entire electronics and telecommunications industries. QM underpins what is perhaps the greatest of all scientific discoveries: the periodic table of elements. Despite countless tests, QM has always proved to be correct, and it provides the basis to some of the most precise predictions in the whole of science. It's no wonder that physicists widely assume that physical reality is altogether quantum when we get down to brass tacks.

Quantum fundamentalism has a lot going for it then. But there are some very serious downsides. Quantum fundamentalism can claim an impressive degree of empirical evidence in its favour, but it struggles to provide a clear guide to reality. If we want to know how things really are, we must apply a metaphysical interpretation to

the quantum physics, but there's a variety of such interpretations, and they're largely incompatible with each other. Presumably one of them is right, but we don't know which, nor how to tell. You will have heard of the Copenhagen Interpretation, which avoids making definitive pronouncements about what the quantum world looks like when we're not looking, or the Many-Worlds Interpretation, which says that there are many versions of reality co-existing, many worlds: the cat is alive in one world, dead in another. But there are still other interpretations. All of them are challenging and outlandish at the human level. They raise difficult questions about what we take for granted in our everyday experience, such as the distinction between cause and effect (past and future), or between subject and object (you and me).

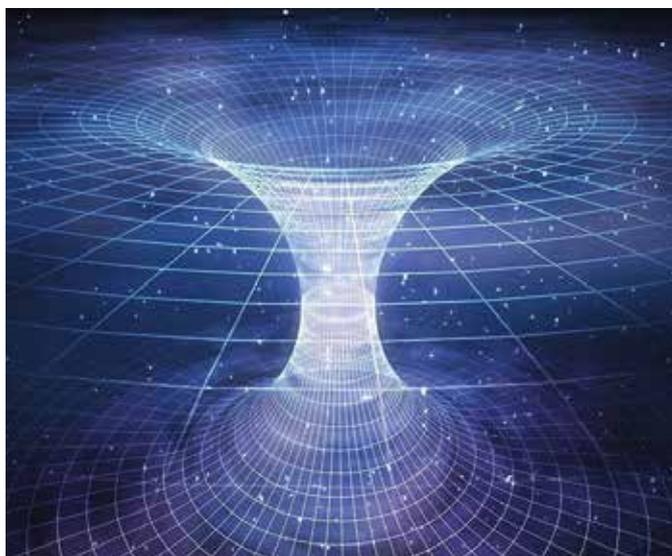
These are serious problems for quantum fundamentalism, and shouldn't be under-estimated. The science has bound us to a set of seemingly-absurd scenarios and abandoned us there. The science has given us freedom to choose between the metaphysical interpretations, but no liberty to make an informed decision. To put it bluntly, quantum fundamentalism may claim massive scientific support, but if it can't help us to make human sense of the science then what earthly good is it as a worldview?

The humanities subjects can help. What might quantum fundamentalism become for human being and human flourishing when seen through a humane perspective, illuminated by subjects like the creative arts, or literature, or even theology and ethics? This is the wider aim of our project in Oxford, what we are beginning to call the 'quantum humanities'. And among those perspectives,

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*“Quantum fundamentalism exerts a powerful pull on the modern religious imagination.”*

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A glimpse into the complex interactions of subatomic particles and energy waves



A visual representation of quantum connectivity

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*“The science has given us freedom to choose between the metaphysical interpretations, but no liberty to make an informed decision.”*

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theology is particularly far-sighted, which is why I want to speak of theological liberty.

There’s one obvious way that theology can help. If there are many competing quantum interpretations of reality which are empirically equivalent, then the only way to adjudicate between them is to bring our human suspicions and convictions about what lies beyond science to bear. Theology therefore represents a privileged vantage point, a liberty which is inaccessible to science.

But there’s more. Notice that when I was trying to describe quantum fundamentalism earlier, I was forced into using words like ‘aspire’, ‘hope’, ‘suspicion’, ‘hunch’, ‘conviction’. Quantum fundamentalism—for all its scientific support—is in the same conceptual space as theology when it draws conclusions about the world. Few physicists commit to one or other of the quantum interpretations—partly because we have the same misgivings as everyone else—while we believe firmly in the reality of a quantum world. In other words, we adopt a kind of vague but aspirational quantum realism which draws us into the same conceptual space, I suggest, as theology.

In case you don’t believe me, let me point out that the religious uptake of QM has been remarkable. Quantum fundamentalism has been an absolute gift to religious and spiritual commentators, as well as lifestyle gurus. Like the physicists, these people adopt a vague but aspirational quantum realism, but they’re already in the conceptual space of theology. Christian theologians, for instance, have found that QM is a rich source of metaphors for God’s activity in the world, for the mysteries of Christ’s incarnation, and even for God’s innermost Trinitarian being.

Not only Christian theologians, but many other religious thinkers have borrowed enthusiastically from QM to support ancient worldviews, especially from Hinduism, Buddhism and Daoism. This results in a synthesised ‘quantum mysticism’ which downplays the material world in favour of mind, consciousness, and the deep unity of all things. Quantum mysticism has been popular in New Age spirituality, for instance, and it has percolated far and wide into health and lifestyle consultancy, coaching, and alternative medicine.

However, the scientific backlash against religious appropriation of QM has been uncompromising. ‘Pseudoscience’ is one of the more polite accusations, but there are plenty more. Perhaps the sharpest insult—especially against use of the quantum brand to legitimise alternative medicine—is ‘quantum quackery’. These criticisms are

important, I feel. Like many other scientists, I object strongly to the wilful misrepresentation of science.

But I don’t think the quantum mystics can be dismissed too easily. Like I said earlier, quantum fundamentalism moves in the same conceptual space as theology. The ordinary non-physicist realises this. They may well find the technicalities of QM impenetrable, but they know full well that quantum physics is deeply strange and mysterious when we try to apprehend it on a human level. They can hardly be blamed when they conclude that the science confirms ancient religious wisdom about mysteries at the heart of reality, that consciousness and mind are not secondary by-products of the physical, especially when some of the great figures of twentieth-century quantum physics, like Bohr, Heisenberg and Schrödinger, made similar mystical connections in their popular-level writing. Quite simply, quantum fundamentalism exerts a powerful pull on the modern religious imagination. Another way of saying this is that ordinary human beings (by which I mean the vast majority who aren’t physicists or philosophers) need the mediation of religious and spiritual interpretations in order to apprehend quantum fundamentalism.

Let me express that as my two thesis statements. First, ordinary human beings invariably grasp for religious/spiritual/mystical mediation when they want to make sense of quantum fundamentalism. Second, quantum fundamentalism needs responsible (that is, respectful of the science) religious and spiritual enrichment in order to liberate human beings.

But don’t take my word for it. The great Erwin Schrödinger felt much the same, arguing that science is all very well, but we are mistaken if we believe it can tell us about what is most fundamental to human beings (what matters most to us). Science cannot say a single meaningful word about our passions and delights, about what is ‘beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity’, he said.

Taking Schrödinger’s lament on the scientific method to heart, I suggest that quantum fundamentalism needs to be liberated theologically. We need a supplementary method that recognises the human being and the human condition, not to mention our greatest passions and delights, God, and eternity. Theology is clearly in view here, but that should come as no surprise if you agree with me that quantum fundamentalism took us into that conceptual space to begin with.



A glimpse of the Northern Lights above the city of Oxford.



A night sky filled with quantum mysteries, from dark matter to entangled particles.

Therefore, to determine what quantum fundamentalism means for human being I suggest that we need to supplement the scientific method with a further methodology that's equipped to take religious, ethical, and aesthetic convictions about reality seriously, all the while treating the science respectfully and responsibly. Is there a methodology that can handle all these weighty demands? Happily, there is just such a methodology at hand. It's called Science and Religion.

Let me flag up where we want to go from here in the Ian Ramsey Centre. There are many avenues that our group in Oxford plans to take to investigate the human and theological dimensions of quantum fundamentalism. We've already begun to look at some of the quantum interpretations ethically and theologically, but we also want to bring a fresh pair of eyes to other implicitly theological issues in modern science, such as the status of quantum physics as a 'law of nature'. For instance, there's a venerable theological tradition which says the laws of nature are expressions of God's will as Creator. Our question is this: what on earth was God thinking when God invented QM and put it at the heart of creation? That's a serious theological question that has barely been addressed, and I hope we can provide some serious constructive answers. In the fullness of time, we are ambitious to get other humanities perspectives involved—art, film, literature, for instance—to help us investigate what quantum fundamentalism means for human flourishing.

Hopefully I've done enough to convince you that there's a viable research programme in view, and that this may have useful things to say to working scientists who might just possibly also be human beings. ■



Billions of galaxies, each governed by the strange rules of quantum physics.

# Uncovering Generation Z's religious and spiritual role models



**Edward David & Claire MacLeod**, *Co-Investigators on Gen Z Research Project*

Dr Edward David was the outgoing McDonald Centre Postdoctoral Research Fellow, and his project investigates the evolving religious role models of Generation Z amidst rapidly changing religious demographics. His research team have gathered narratives from young people worldwide to understand how they engage with religious and spiritual exemplars today.

**Claire: Could you tell us how this project began?**

**Edward:** It started with a simple observation: Generation Z is the first generation to have grown up with the smart phone. With the world at their fingertips, young people are exposed to ideas and people beyond their immediate communities. Such exposure has been associated with the disaffiliation of young people from traditional religions. But we don't know much about who young people look up to, and for what reasons, given this radical demographic shift. Are their new role models anything like the saints and sages of old? What do they expect from today's religious and spiritual exemplars?

**Claire: This project uses something called 'story completion' to explore this question. Could you tell us more about your methodology?**

Story completion is a qualitative method where participants are given the beginning of a fictional scenario and asked to finish the story. It's particularly useful for uncovering implicit beliefs, attitudes, and social narratives. Instead of directly asking, "Who is your religious role model?" we gave participants a scenario in which a character—Jesse—stumbles upon a religious or spiritual figure online and engages with their message. By analysing how participants completed Jesse's journey, we gained insight into their subconscious ideas about faith, authority, and moral exemplars.

*The story stem: 32 unread messages. Jesse put down the phone, frustrated. How would Jesse get through the next few days? Looking for answers—or distraction—Jesse picked up the phone and started watching videos.*

*One video caught Jesse's eye. A remarkable individual, talking about something religious or spiritual. Jesse couldn't quite make it out, but Jesse was interested and found something impressive, maybe admirable, about the person. So, Jesse continued watching and ...*

**Claire: Could you discuss how this data was gathered and analysed?**

In the past year, we have collected over 100 story submissions from Gen Z participants aged 18 to 27, representing a diverse range of religious, spiritual, and non-religious backgrounds. Alongside their stories, participants completed a demographic survey, which helped us analyse trends across different identities, political orientations, and levels of religious engagement.



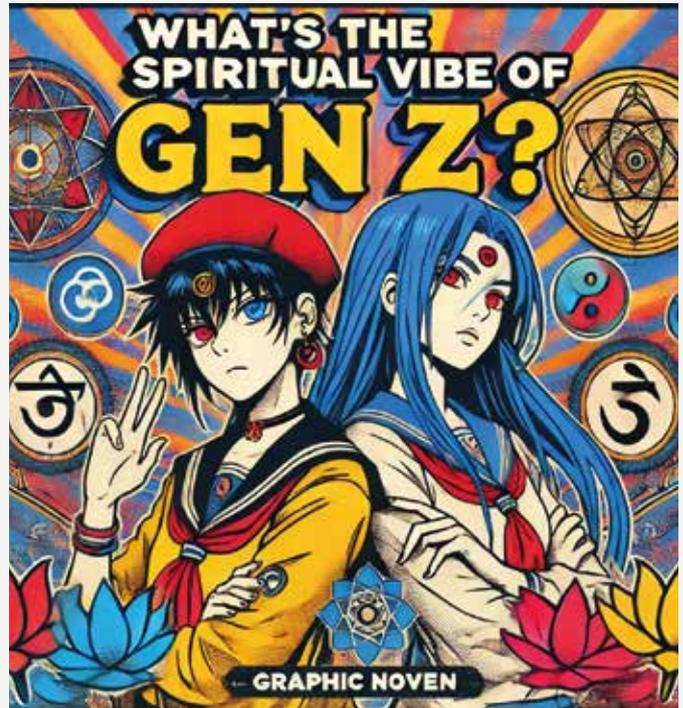
Once the data was gathered, our research team—comprising myself, Claire MacLeod, and several Gen Z scholars—conducted a *reflexive thematic analysis*, identifying five key narrative types. We then employed an *exemplarist narrative framework* to interpret these stories, examining how participants used religious and spiritual role models to make sense of their beliefs, moral outlooks, and personal identities.

A unique aspect of this project was its connection to the [UNIQ+ Graduate Access Programme](#), an initiative that provides research opportunities for students from underrepresented backgrounds. Through this programme, we were able to host three research interns who worked directly on the Gen Z project, gaining hands-on experience in interdisciplinary research at Oxford. Their contributions were invaluable in shaping our analysis, and the programme helped ensure that our study was not only about Gen Z but also meaningfully informed by their voices.

**Claire:** *That sounds fascinating. What kinds of patterns emerged from these narratives?*

**Edward:** We identified five major narrative types:

- 1. Divine Disillusionment** – Jesse initially admires a religious figure or institution but becomes disillusioned by hypocrisy, corruption, or exclusion. These stories often critique religious power structures while maintaining a reformist, rather than entirely rejecting, stance on faith. Many highlight a desire for authenticity and ethical consistency in religious institutions.
- 2. The Space Between** – Jesse wrestles with belief and doubt, searching for meaning in a fragmented world. Some stories embrace uncertainty as liberating, while others express existential unease. This narrative reflects Gen Z's openness to exploring spirituality without rigid commitments.
- 1. Self-Help Spirituality** – Jesse follows an influencer who promotes mindfulness, self-care, or holistic well-being rather than traditional religious teachings. These stories emphasize spirituality's practical benefits, such as coping with stress and personal growth. They reflect Gen Z's preference for individualized, flexible approaches to faith.
- 4. Lost-and-Found** – Jesse begins in a state of isolation or struggle before rediscovering faith or spirituality. Some stories depict a return to religious tradition, while others emphasize personal healing through nature, meditation, or human connection. This narrative highlights the role of spirituality as a source of resilience.
- 5. Simple Faith** – Jesse experiences a sudden, transformative religious awakening, either through an emotional revelation or a rational encounter with doctrine. These stories present faith as immediate and self-evident, often reflecting deep personal conviction. They illustrate the enduring presence of traditional belief, particularly in observant communities.



An AI generated image used to summarize the Gen Z research project



Faith in the digital age: Connecting with spirituality through technology

*"Some stories embrace uncertainty as liberating, while others express existential unease. This narrative reflects Gen Z's openness to exploring spirituality without rigid commitments."*

**Claire: It's interesting that many participants still engage with religious figures, even if they are skeptical of institutions. Does this suggest that Gen Z is more spiritually engaged than we might assume?**

**Edward:** Absolutely. While Gen Z may not engage with religion in traditional ways—such as regular church attendance—many still seek moral and existential guidance. What we see is not necessarily a decline in spirituality but a transformation in where and how it is practiced.

For example, the “Lost-and-Found” and “Simple Faith” narratives suggest that many young people are still drawn to religious traditions. Others, like the “Self-Help” narratives, reflect a shift toward spirituality as a means of self-improvement rather than a communal practice.

**Claire MacLeod: In August 2024, this project received a competitive grant of £14,000 from the John Fell Fund—the University's chief internal research fund that supports new research areas and preparatory work leading to major external bids. How will this support shape the next phase of your research?**

**Edward:** The funding allows us to bring young participants to Oxford for a workshop where they will engage directly with our findings, helping to shape the next stage of the research. Rather than simply analysing Gen Z's narratives from an academic distance, we want to involve them in the interpretation process, giving them space to challenge, refine, and add depth to our conclusions.

This aligns with our commitment to participatory research, which goes beyond the traditional model where researchers extract data, analyse it in isolation, and present their conclusions as definitive. Instead, it's a collaborative approach where participants actively contribute to shaping the research itself. That meant two key things in our study. First, we assembled a research team that included Gen Z scholars from diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds, ensuring that our analysis reflected their lived realities. Second, we didn't just collect and interpret the data—we returned our findings to participants and invited their feedback. After identifying five key narrative types, we asked them: Does this resonate with you? Are we understanding your perspectives accurately? Their responses directly influenced how we refined our interpretations. For example, one participant from an Islamic background challenged our assumption that immediate faith experiences are always emotional; for them, religious awakening was more rational and rooted in textual study. That kind of insight made our analysis more nuanced and representative.

Ultimately, participatory research is about recognizing that meaning is co-constructed. Gen Z isn't just the subject of this study—they are active contributors in shaping how their own generation's religious and spiritual landscape is understood. This grant enables us to deepen that engagement, ensuring that young people are not just studied but empowered to be part of the conversation. ■



The UNIQ+ Research Interns at Durham University, July 2024. (From left to right) Phoebe Kelly, Kalen Spatcher, Saaddaden Monajed, Claire MacLeod, Edward David



One of the recruitment graphics that was shared on social media to a global audience



# Oxford Collaboration on Theology and Artificial Intelligence

**Lyndon Drake**

*Research Fellow in Theological Ethics and Artificial Intelligence, University of Oxford*

The Oxford Collaboration on Theology and Artificial Intelligence is a new collaborative, interdisciplinary project hosted by the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion. OCTAI is led by Professor Mark Harris, Professor Joshua Hordern, and Dr Lyndon Drake, as part of a cross-institutional group which includes Dr Stan Rosenberg (Oxford), Associate Professor Michael Burdett (Nottingham), Patricia Shaw (Beyond Reach), and Professor Nigel Crook (Oxford Brookes).

The project will build a collaboration which includes robust participation by business leaders, AI engineers, and academics across several departments at Oxford and other UK universities. This work has already begun, as has the process of recruiting additional collaborators from within Oxford and externally. The project has an emphasis on global majority/global South contexts such as Africa, South-East Asia, and Oceania, and will draw a large proportion of contributors from outside the UK, continental Europe and the USA.

The goal of the OCTAI project is to develop a network of scientific, religious, and engineering experts on artificial intelligence, with the aim of addressing the vocational realities of AI engineers and corporate

leaders. This international network will prioritise the involvement of experts and corporate leaders who bring a religious intelligence to questions of vocation and values, contributing to the public debate on what it means to be human in an AI-permeated age.

AI ethics has become a significant field, often within professional, scientific, or commercial settings, or associated with philosophy. Since many people hold religious beliefs, placing this project within theology is a key development in Oxford's Faculty of Theology and Religion. AI is changing society unpredictably, and a compelling vision of human flourishing will aid adaptation. OCTAI aims to develop AI ethics discourse that resonates globally by acknowledging religion's role in ethical reasoning.

Theologians have long considered human life, work, and transcendence, making theological ethics relevant to AI practice. This could manifest in doctoral training, ethical analyses of AI developers, or identifying a common ethos for AI practitioners. Mark Graves highlights a ‘shared imagination’ as crucial in theologically-informed AI ethics (‘Theological Foundations for Moral Artificial Intelligence,’ *Journal of Moral Theology* 11.1 [2022], 182–211).

**Presenters at OCTAI workshops from around the world**



Top to bottom and left to right: Walter Scheirer (Notre Dame), Nunung Nurul Qomariyah (Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta), Megan Levis (Notre Dame), Emmanuel Klu (Google Research), Max Rimpel (General Catalyst), Kane Wu (ThinkCol, Hong Kong), Jakob Zeitler (University of Oxford), Jennifer George (Goldsmiths University), Daniel Wilson (xRI Global), Achuthsankar S. Nair (Kerala University), Louisa Conwill (Notre Dame), Nigel Crook (Oxford Brookes University), and Jianyang Lum (BotMD, Singapore).

A core aim is formulating the ‘Oxford Oath for AI Engineering,’ akin to the Physicians’ Covenant and Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness. Recognising AI’s vocational and ethical dimensions will prioritise virtues in its development and implementation. A challenge will be engaging scientists, engineers, and industry professionals while testing whether this professional commitment is viable. Technology typically lacks formal ethical commitments beyond specialised sectors like safety-critical systems.

Early project phases will involve consulting AI professionals to identify their ethical challenges, especially complex ones. AI work differs from other professions with ethical commitments; software developers often work in vast teams, making it hard to trace ethical consequences. Decisions leading to unintended AI harms are rarely direct or obvious. Many ethical choices are made at governance or senior management levels, not by engineers. State AI applications, such as in weapons or social credit systems, pose similar ethical dilemmas.

*A relevant AI ethos and Oxford Oath must apply to future AI work, its workforce, and the societies it shapes.*

AI development also relies on non-technical labour, like data tagging, often in the majority world (e.g., India). This labour is crucial but overlooked in AI ethics. OCTAI’s focus on the majority world can help develop an ethos addressing these contexts. A truly global ethos must include majority world voices, whose perspectives on AI risks and opportunities differ from the West’s.

The concentration of AI hardware access risks a new power imbalance, where a few firms dominate, reducing other nations to quasi-vassal status. AI systems can reinforce inequities, embedding human biases in machine learning models. Yet AI, like communications technology, can also enable developmental leaps, particularly in medical fields. Many majority world nations integrate religion into public life, making theological reflection essential in AI policymaking.

A relevant AI ethos and Oxford Oath must apply to future AI work, its workforce, and the societies it shapes. AI’s complexity, scale, and uncertainty coexist with opportunity, creativity, and brilliance. A successful Oxford Oath will address both dimensions.

The Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion is part of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford. The OCTAI project is funded by a generous donation from the John Templeton Foundation.

# COMINGS & GOINGS

We warmly welcome the Faculty's new members



## FRANK GRIFFEL

My CV looks a bit like that of an international academic nomad. I have been trained in Germany (with a one-year stint in Syria), held my first post-doc position in Lebanon, worked then in the US and now return to Europe, although not quite, as the UK has always been different from the continent. Buried within this list are, however, twenty-four years of academic work at Yale University in New Haven, USA, where I rose through the ranks from a young assistant professor to the Louis M. Rabinowitz Professor of Religious Studies and the Chair of the Department of Religious Studies. Last year, I decided to give up that position and come to Oxford University and take up the Professorship for the Study of Abrahamic Religions. I started here at Oxford in Michaelmas of 2024. What brought me here was a general curiosity about higher education and about knowledge formation. I had been familiar how things are done in Germany and at the US, but I had only a very superficial understanding of teaching at Oxford and about how research is done here. There have been few periods in my

life when I learned as much as within my first two terms here at Oxford. Tutorials, papers, prelims, FHS, collections, gobbets, all these were new words for me, or at least ones that acquired a new meaning here at Oxford. Thus far, my hunch that Oxford is worth giving up a tenured position at a well-heeled US university has been vindicated. I am grateful for the warm welcome I have received by my colleagues at the Faculty of Theology and Religion and the support they give to the Chair of the Study of Abrahamic Religions.

I regard myself as an intellectual historian. My field of study is both Islamic as well as Jewish theology and philosophy in Arabic. Here, I am particularly interested in conflicts between reason and revelation and how major thinkers in these two traditions have responded to them. My interests range from the early Islamic period to the contemporary. At Yale I regularly taught classes on modern Islamic thought, including fundamentalism and jihadism. My main field of research, however, is the pre-modern period, particularly the 11th and 12th centuries. I regard them as a transition period, when philosophical and theological methods that had their roots in the practices of Greek-speaking Late Antiquity became the subject of harsh criticism and of major revisions. Out came new practices of doing philosophy and theology that neither received a similar degree of attention from modern researchers than the earlier ones, nor the same kind of appreciation, at least not in Islam. In fact, many Western observers falsely claimed that with the older techniques inherited from Greek Late Antiquity, philosophy in Islam disappeared in the 12th century. The title of my latest book, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam*, expresses a research programme that delves into the new practices of a period ("post-classical Islam") that begins around 1150 and ends

probably as late as in the colonial period. I am particularly interested how this new kind of philosophy and theology emerges in the works of Avicenna (d. 1037), al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Averroes (d. 1198), Maimonides (d. 1204) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), as well as the receptions of these authors by later thinkers.

I could not pass up the chance to come to Oxford when the Chair for the Study of Abrahamic Religions became vacant with the retirement of my predecessor Anna Abulafia and when it was, to my great surprise, offered to me. Coming to Oxford fulfils a dream I had for a long time, a dream that is nourished both by the great traditions that this place has (and that it still practices) and its track-record as one of the most successful research universities of this world.



## ANDREW DAVISON

I took up my new Oxford post in September 2024, moving from Cambridge, where I was the Starbridge Professor of Theology and Natural Sciences. I joined that Faculty in 2014, after a couple of positions teaching Christian systematic theology, first at St Stephen's House in Oxford (so I am grateful to Oxford for my first teaching job), and then in Westcott House, Cambridge.

Earlier, I had been an undergraduate in Oxford (chemistry) and a DPhil student (biochemistry), then an ordinand studying theology at Cambridge, and then a curate in South East London. I came to Oxford from Cambridge, but also in a sense from Princeton in the USA. I had been a visiting fellow at the Center of Theological Inquiry there in the 2022–24 academic years.

My teaching and research in theology and natural sciences was always quite theological (and, I hope, quite scientific), so the move from my Cambridge position to the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford, with its focus on Christian doctrinal and systematic theology, isn't perhaps quite as much of a jump as it might seem. I will continue to work on some scientific themes, not least because of my continuing involvement with the Leverhulme Centre for Life in the Universe in Cambridge, which I had a hand in setting up. That is reflected in my recent book *Astrobiology and Christian Doctrine*. I hope to organise some workshops on origins of life themes between Oxford and the Cambridge and Princeton centres. My other scientific interest at the moment, like many other people, is in artificial intelligence, although I am pursuing the somewhat niche perspective (although I think a fruitful one) of approaching that in terms concepts from the scholastic philosophical tradition.

When it comes to more thoroughly theological research and writing, I am in the process of editing a manuscript on the relation of doctrines, which should be ready sometime this year. Since I first started studying Christian theology, I've been interested in how the parts join up: how what one thinks about creation bears upon what one thinks about sin, how what one thinks about revelation might line up with what one thinks about the sacraments, and so on. It was a particular joy, while in Princeton, to have the time to write about that. The next project after that will be a book on mediation as a theme in Christian theology. As I like to put it, if my book *Participation in God* was an exploration of how the prepositions

'from' and 'into' feature in theology, then the mediation book would be about how the prepositions 'through' and 'by' play out.

My appointment also involves being a residentiary canon in the cathedral at Christ Church. My hopes and intentions there are easy to describe. I simply want to take up the baton that has been passed to me, and play a faithful part in the life of prayer and preaching that has taken place in the cathedral for almost five hundred years, and in a church as a place of prayer on that site for many centuries more than that.



#### **EDWARD CHAN-STROUD**

I am joining the Faculty as a Research Fellow in Christian Ethics. I'll be researching Anglican clergy's experience of trauma related to ministry. I'm particularly interested in the way that traumatic experiences can disrupt meaning-making systems and the way in which liturgical practices might work to reform these meaning-making systems. In looking at these liturgical practices I'm keen to use the psychological literature to deepen reflection on the way these practices lead deeper into the Triune God, exploring how the psychological literature might inform both Christology and Pneumatology.

This project builds on my DPhil thesis which explored the way concepts in psychotherapy could inform a theology of participation in the Triune God. Drawing on the principle that grace perfects and does not destroy nature,

I suggested that the same psychological dynamics and processes involved in the infant-parent relationship might also be involved in deification. Attending especially to the way that parents play with and hold their children, I developed an account of what it might mean to be help by the Spirit and to play with the Word. Just as the infant-parent relationship provides a basic sense of what other people are like I suggested that as we are held by and play with the Living God, so our basic sense of self, others and God are reformed. My thesis was supervised by Mark Wynn, Joanna Collicutt and Matt Kirkpatrick. I am very grateful for all their guidance and encouragement, especially for their support throughout my discerning a call to ordination. I began training for ordination in the Church of England in September 2024.

Throughout my DPhil I have acted as a guest lecturer in Systemic Theology at Ripon College Cuddesdon, lectured in Applied Theology, and taken tutorials in the Analytic Philosophy and Christian Theology paper. Over the last six months I've acted as the Temporary Medical Ethics advisor for the Church of England, working especially on the assisted suicide bill. I've also acted as a theological advisor to the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG).



#### **LYNDON DRAKE**

I joined the Faculty of Theology and Religion as a research fellow in August 2024, although I have been in Oxford on and off since 2010. I

grew up in Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and did my first degrees in science and business there. In 2000, I moved to London, and began an investment banking career at Barclays Capital, for much of that time as a bond and interest-rate swap trader. During that time, I studied for a PhD in Artificial Intelligence at the University of York (2005).

In 2010 I started the process of leaving investment banking, and began reading for the BA in theology here at Oxford, with a view towards a vocation in the church. Since 2012 I have primarily served in the church in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with a break to study for the MSt here in 2016/17. For much of that time, I served as an Archdeacon in the Indigenous Māori Anglican church. I balanced that work with a part-time DPhil in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament on economics and writing in Jeremiah 32, supervised by Prof Hindy Najman (2023).

*My hope is to work more in the area of artificial intelligence, both on projects where we use AI techniques for biblical studies and theology more generally.*

In my new role, I am working on preparing my DPhil thesis for publication, and I have an ongoing interest in the Hebrew Bible, especially in connection with Indigenous and post-colonial theology, and issues relating to economics and writing. Secondly, I am helping with the Oxford Collaboration on Theology and Artificial Intelligence, a John-Templeton funded project in the Ian Ramsey Centre, led by Profs Joshua Hordern and Mark Harris. And alongside these, I am assisting at Oriel College Chapel. Looking ahead, my hope is to work more in the area of artificial intelligence, both on projects where we use AI techniques for biblical studies and theology more generally, and in bringing contributions from theology to bear on science and engineering, for example by reflecting on the relationship between authors and artefacts.

## We sadly say goodbye to the Faculty's long-serving members



### JOEL RASMUSSEN

I remember reading the 2023 edition of the Oxford Theologian and seeing that one of the leavers that year was a Faculty 'old-timer', having arrived in 2008. Well, I guess that makes me an 'old-timer' too. I was pleased to be invited in 2006 to join the Faculty of Theology and become a Tutorial Fellow of Mansfield College, and my family and I moved to the UK from Massachusetts on the 2nd of January in 2007. It was a welcome yet rather big change to move in the middle of the academic year from teaching at a small New England liberal arts college (that offered no theology courses at all) to begin teaching Oxford undergraduates and postgraduates who studied only theology (or, in the case of joint schoolers, philosophy and theology). And it wasn't just the teaching that stretched me – when at the beginning of that Hilary Term I attended my very first meeting of the Faculty Committee on Library Provision (as it was then called), I was asked to chair the meeting!

One needs to get the hang of things quickly in Oxford and – for the sake of students, colleagues, and administrative staff – I hope that I did. I would never claim academic leadership as a particular strength, but with the help of many others I somehow

discovered the resources to contribute to the mission of the Faculty in various supporting roles across seventeen years. During that time I managed to serve stints in such roles as member of Faculty Board (for all but three years), Director of Undergraduate Studies, chair of multiple boards of examiners, and Director of the Centre for Theology and Modern European Thought (now the Centre for Philosophical Theology), among others.

Of course, such roles are not ends in themselves but foster the university's core intellectual mission of teaching and research, and much as I recognize the importance of administrative work it is the latter that I found really gratifying during my years in Oxford. I very much enjoyed teaching undergraduates for such papers as Key Themes in Systematic Theology, Faith, Reason, and Religion from the Enlightenment to the Romantic Era, The Figure of Jesus through the Centuries, Themes in Nineteenth-Century Theology and Religion, Philosophy of Religion, a special option on Søren Kierkegaard, and more. MSt and MPhil students kept me on my toes reading to supervise projects ranging from ecclesiology in John Henry Newman and Yves Congar, to enchantment and secularization in Shaftesbury and Max Weber, to the theological imagination in Gerard Manley Hopkins and C. S. Lewis, to various aspects of the thought of Kierkegaard. And doctoral students (including the four still on course that I hope to supervise to completion) have challenged me to stay abreast of a wide array of historical and contemporary theologians, addressing such varied topics as Christian metaphysics, sacramental theology, theodicy, theological anthropology, justification and sanctification, theologies of hospitality, scriptural reasoning, the varieties of secularization, and spiritual exercise. And, of course, here too there has been a good deal of Kierkegaard!

In the summer of 2024, following a protracted period of discernment, I decided to accept an offer to move to the University of Notre Dame in the United States. The decision to move was a very bittersweet

one. I am now geographically closer to my family (and to a number of former Oxford colleagues who also now teach at Notre Dame), and I'm impressed by the quality of new students and colleagues. Yet I also keenly miss dear colleagues, students, and friends in Oxford. It has been my enormous privilege to work alongside you these many years, and I sincerely hope that we'll have many occasions to meet again in future.

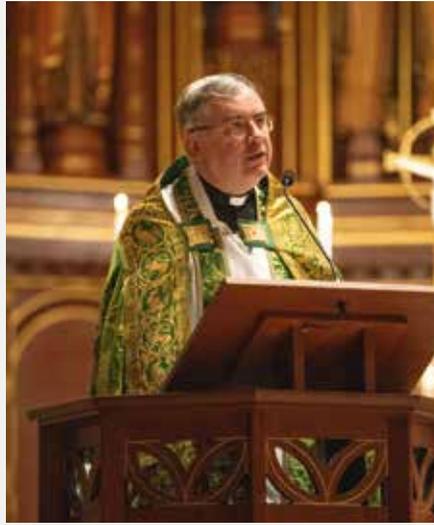


**KIRSTEN MACFARLANE**

In 2019, I joined the Faculty as Associate Professor in Early Modern Christianities, and in the summer of 2024 I departed to take up a post as Associate Professor of Early Modern Religious and Intellectual History at the University of Chicago.

Oxford has been the ideal place to start my academic career, and I am very grateful to the Faculty for giving me my first permanent job. The transition from research fellow to permanent postholder is often a challenging one, but it was made far easier for me thanks to the support and friendship of so many excellent and kind colleagues.

There are very few places that could have tempted me away, but the opportunity to experience the infamous -25°C cold of a Chicago winter was too good to turn down. However, an early modernist can never be away long from the Bodleian, and so I look forward to frequent trips back to visit archives and friends alike.



**ANDREW PINSENT**

I joined the Faculty of Theology and Religion in 2009 with the task of building up the work of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion and assisting the Andreas Idreos Chair, now Mark Harris. As a former particle physicist at CERN and a Roman Catholic priest with a doctorate in philosophy and seven years of experience in business, this work has been ideal and exciting for me for fifteen years.

During this time, I was able to raise over \$10M in grants for the Faculty and carried out major international projects in science and religion, including several years of work in Latin America and in Central and Eastern Europe as well as a digital humanities project. I have also been able to carry out many outreach events to schools and colleges worldwide, working in particular with Julie Arliss of Academy Conferences.

My principal personal research has been on the second-person perspective, a line of study inaugurated by Martin Buber and put onto an empirical basis in recent years by psychological research into joint attention. I have argued that the second-person perspective between a human person and God the Paraclete (“the one called alongside”) is the entire basis of Aquinas’s revolutionary virtue ethics. Several of my DPhil students have incorporated similar themes into their research and this insight will, I hope, revitalise Christian anthropology in the years to come.

*Here in the USA, I am helping to train nearly one hundred future Catholic priests while continuing to carry out research.*

Following the deaths of my parents in 2021 and 2023, I have been keen to make a fresh start. Following an invitation from the Rector of Mount St Mary’s Seminary of the West in Cincinnati, Ohio, I have recently joined their teaching Faculty. Here in the USA, I am helping to train nearly one hundred future Catholic priests while continuing to carry out research. I take pleasure in the continuing success of the Faculty, and the opportunities emerging from the re-location to the new Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre.



**EDWARD DAVID**

I arrived in Oxford in 2013, expecting to stay for a nine-month master’s. Twelve years later, I finally moved on, having completed an MSt and a DPhil in Christian Ethics under the supervision of Prof (now Lord) Nigel Biggar, as well as two postdoctoral research fellowships. Part of what allowed me to remain in Oxford for so long was the opportunity to work alongside my self-funded studies. I consulted—and continue to consult—for the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses UK programme, which supports high-growth entrepreneurs with networking and educational opportunities.

This work enriched my time in Oxford in many ways, bringing insights from the business world into my research and allowing me to engage with an extraordinary range of people.

After the DPhil, I held two postdoctoral fellowships in the Faculty: first with the Virtues and Vocations research group, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, where I explored leadership in finance from both qualitative and philosophical perspectives; then as the McDonald Postdoctoral Fellow in Christian Ethics and Public Life. During this time, I had the great privilege of being a non-stipendiary member of Christ Church, Oxford, and of participating in the McDonald Agape network—experiences that shaped me as a researcher and introduced me to a remarkable community of scholars, many of whom have become lifelong friends.

I am now the Director of the Associateship of King's College and Lecturer in Ethics and Values at King's College London, a permanent post in my field—something all too rare in today's job market, and for which I am deeply grateful. My links to Oxford remain: I am turning research from my project, 'Understanding Generation Z's Religious and Spiritual Role Models', into a book and a white paper. (Many thanks to UNIQ+, the John Fell Fund, Claire MacLeod, Ning Xu, and so many others for support in the endeavour.) I am also joining Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, as a non-stipendiary research fellow—which, for me, is quite an honour, as it was from this humble corner of the University that I earned my DPhil in 2019.

Over these twelve years, I have been shaped by the guidance and friendship of many—far too many to list here. But among them, I mention Lord and Lady Biggar, whose friendship has been unwavering; the fellows and students at Christ Church, who made my final years as a postholder especially intellectually stimulating; the Faculty of Theology and Religion, which provided crucial institutional support; and

the McDonald Agape Foundation, whose generosity and vision continue to sustain vital research in theology today.

Oxford has been home for over a decade, and leaving—even from a fixed-term research post—was not an easy decision.

The opportunity for a permanent position ultimately drew me away, but it was far from a straightforward choice. Thankfully, my connections to Oxford remain strong, and I look forward to continuing the friendships, collaborations, and conversations that have made these years so rich. ■



The entrance to Blackfriars Hall in St Giles.

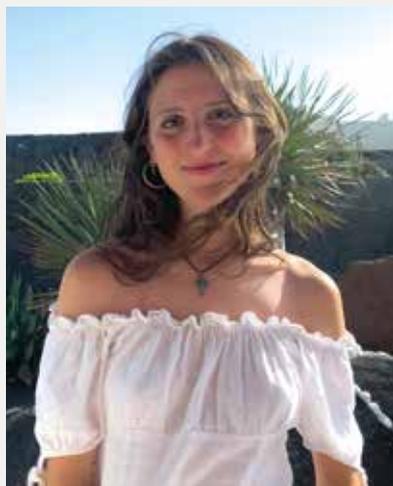
# STUDENT PRIZES

Prizes awarded annually in the Faculty of Theology and Religion

**Grace Reynolds**  
Regent's Park  
BA Theology  
and Religion

**FACULTY PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION PRIZE**

Awarded for the best performance in the Preliminary Examination in Theology and Religion.



**Oscar Fitzgerald**  
St John's  
BA Theology  
and Religion

**JUNIOR PUSEY AND  
ELLERTON PRIZE**

Awarded for the best performance in Biblical Hebrew in the Preliminary Examination.



**Joshua McGillivray**  
Oriental  
BA Philosophy  
and Theology

**FACULTY PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION PRIZE**

Awarded for the best performance in the Preliminary Examination in Philosophy and Theology.



**Richard Garrard**  
St John's  
BA Theology  
and Religion

**CANON HALL  
PRELIMINARY GREEK  
TESTAMENT PRIZE**

Awarded for outstanding performance in New Testament Greek in the Preliminary Examination.



**Kezia Chacko**  
Worcester  
BA Theology  
and Religion

**JUNIOR PUSEY AND  
ELLERTON PRIZE**

Awarded for the best performance in Biblical Hebrew in the Preliminary Examination.



**Joshua Treacy**  
Mansfield  
BA Theology  
and Religion

**GIBBS PRIZE** Awarded for the best performance in the Honour School of Theology and Religion Gibbs Essay Prize awarded for the best Theology and Religion Thesis submitted for the Honour School of Theology and Religion or Joint Schools





**Anna Mayer**  
Pembroke  
BA Philosophy  
and Theology

**GIBBS PRIZE** Awarded for the best performance in Theology papers in the Honour School of Philosophy and Theology



**Alexios Andriopoulos**  
Wycliffe  
BA Theology  
and Religion

**CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA PRIZE** Awarded for the best performance in the Honour School of Theology and Religion by a member of the Anglican Theological Colleges who intends to be ordained in the Church of England.



**Nikolai Ramage**  
Mansfield  
BA Philosophy  
and Theology

**GIBBS PRIZE** Awarded for the best performance in Philosophy papers in the Honour School of Philosophy and Theology



**Tobias Thornes**  
St Stephen's House  
BA Theology  
and Religion

**CANON HALL JUNIOR GREEK TESTAMENT PRIZE** Awarded for outstanding performance in New Testament Greek in the Final Honour School.



**Mary Whittingdale**  
Keble  
MPhil in Theology

**ELLERTON THEOLOGICAL ESSAY PRIZE** Awarded for the best dissertation submitted for MPhil examination.



**Felix Kirkby**  
Lady Margaret Hall  
MSt in Theology

**ELLERTON THEOLOGICAL ESSAY PRIZE** Awarded for the best dissertation submitted for MSt examination.



**Siobhan Eddie**  
Keble  
MPhil in Theology

**CANON HALL SENIOR GREEK TESTAMENT PRIZE** Awarded for outstanding performance in New Testament Greek in MSt and MPhil examinations.



**Pia Regensburger**  
Oriël  
MPhil in Theology

**HALL-HOUGHTON SEPTUAGINT PRIZE** Awarded for outstanding work on the Septuagint for the MSt or MPhil examinations.



**Maxwell Benster**  
Oriël  
BA Theology and Religion

**DENYER AND JOHNSON PRIZE** Awarded to the candidate whose performance in the Final Honour School of Theology and Religion is judged to be the best and of sufficient merit.

**SENIOR PUSEY AND ELLERTON PRIZE** Awarded for the best performance in Biblical Hebrew in the Final Honour School.



**Christine Rosa de Freitas**  
[in *The Theologian* magazine only]  
Oriël  
MPhil in Theology

**HALL-HOUGHTON SEPTUAGINT PRIZE** Awarded for outstanding work on the Septuagint for the MSt or MPhil examinations in 2023.

The details of this prize were not correctly represented in the 2023 edition of *The Theologian*, where it was mistakenly recorded as awarded to Oliver Wright (who, in fact, won



the Ellerton Theological Essay Prize in 2022).

We apologise to Christine and Oliver, and rectify that error in this edition.



*Right: On the Camino to Santiago de Compostela.*

# FACULTY NEWS



**PROFESSOR JENN STRAWBRIDGE  
AND DR ERIN HEIM**

Recognised at the Vice-Chancellor's Awards

The Faculty of Theology and Religion is delighted to celebrate the recognition of Professor Jenn Strawbridge and Dr Erin Heim at this year's Vice-Chancellor's Awards. At a ceremony held at the Sheldonian Theatre on 8 May, they were highly commended in the 'Inclusive Teaching and Assessment' category for their work on Diversifying the Curriculum in Biblical Studies at Oxford. The Vice-Chancellor's Awards are a celebration of excellence across the University, highlighting the most outstanding contributions with 250 entries across 11 categories and 1,500 individuals nominated this year alone.

Professor Strawbridge and Dr Heim's recognition stems from their innovative undergraduate paper, *'Why the Environment, Women, Colonisation, and Black Lives Matter to New Testament Interpretation'*. This course has quickly become one of the Faculty's most popular offerings, reflecting a growing commitment to inclusive and critical theological education. Their work not only broadens the scope of biblical studies but also fosters deeper engagement with pressing contemporary issues.



*"We are delighted to see New Testament studies at Oxford recognised at this level. It is a privilege to be part of a faculty that supports collaborative and inclusive teaching, and we remain committed to learning alongside our incredible students."*

Professor William Wood, Chair of the Faculty, also celebrated their achievement, stating: *"This is a real point of pride for the Faculty. That such a paper is both offered and so widely embraced speaks to the strength of our academic community and the importance of diverse theological inquiry."* The Faculty warmly congratulates Professor Strawbridge and Dr Heim on this well-deserved recognition and looks forward to the continued impact of their work in shaping the study of theology at Oxford.

Reflecting on their commendation, Professor Strawbridge and Dr Heim expressed their gratitude to the students and colleagues who have contributed to their work:



2024 Vice-Chancellor's Awards in the Sheldonian Theatre, where Prof. Jenn Strawbridge and Dr Erin Heim were recognised for their inclusive teaching and theological education.



**NEW REGIUS PROFESSORS APPOINTED BY APPROVAL BY HIS MAJESTY THE KING**

The Faculty of Theology and Religion is pleased to announce the appointment of two distinguished scholars to Regius Professorships, following approval from His Majesty The King.

Professor Luke Bretherton (above left) has been appointed as the new Canon and Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Christ Church College, succeeding The Reverend Canon Professor Nigel Biggar C.B.E. Established by an Act of Parliament in 1840, this professorship shapes theological education at Oxford. Professor Bretherton will also serve as Director of the McDonald Centre for Theology, Ethics, and Public Life. Professor Bretherton joins Oxford from Duke University, where he was the Robert E. Cushman Distinguished Professor of Moral and Political Theology. Reflecting on his appointment, he remarked: *'I am delighted and daunted in equal measure to be invited*

*to become the next Regius Professor in Moral and Pastoral Theology. The office integrates church and academy in a unique way and provides a platform to address the existentially urgent issues of the day. Alongside scholarly rigour and critical insight, I seek to bring to the demands of the post practical wisdom and an abiding commitment to forging just and generous forms of common life.'*

Professor Andrew Davison (above right) has been appointed as the new Canon and Regius Professor of Divinity also at Christ Church College following The Reverend Canon Professor Graham Ward. The Regius Professorship of Divinity, one of the oldest at the University, was established by Henry VIII. Professor Davison arrives from the University of Cambridge, where he held the Starbridge Professorship of Theology and Natural Sciences. His research bridges theology and the sciences, with a focus on biological

origins and artificial intelligence. On his return to Oxford, he stated: *"I am delighted to be returning to Oxford, as Regius Professor of Divinity, where my love of theology first blossomed, as an undergraduate in chemistry, and where I later began teaching. Oxford's interdisciplinary and multi-faith Faculty of Theology and Religion stands at the heart of a British tradition of exploring, developing, and applying the Christian tradition that is admired the world over. The location of this Chair at Christ Church, as a residential canon of the cathedral, offer the integration the worlds of the university and the church, of research and prayer, that I have sought over my over my years as a teacher, writer, and priest."*

Both professors will also serve as ordained Canons of Christ Church Cathedral, integrating their academic roles with pastoral responsibilities.

# PROJECTS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



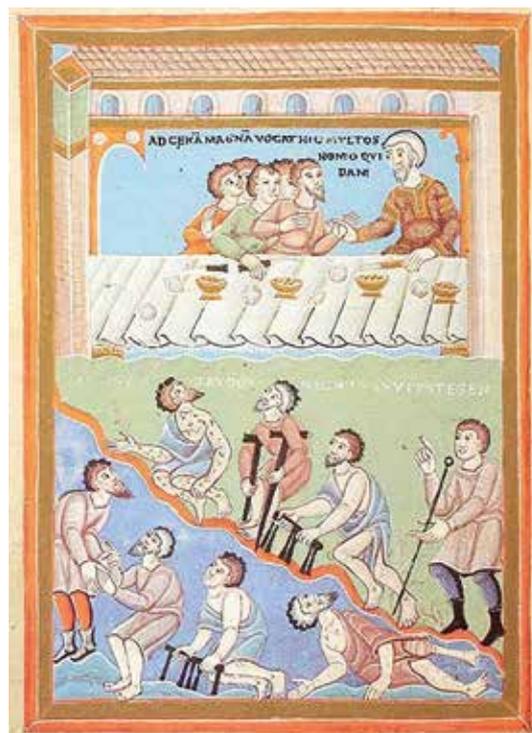
## RECONFIGURING BIBLICAL DISABILITY

### Chris Joynes

This event, co-hosted by the Centre for Reception History of the Bible, Oxford and ACU's *Inside Others* project, was organised by Dr Christine Joynes from the University of Oxford, and Associate Professor Kylie Crabbe from the Australian Catholic University. The pioneering workshop brought together for the first time those working in the fields of disability studies and reception history to engage with biblical texts about disability and their subsequent interpretations. We were keen to discern what this might tell us about diverse attitudes to physical, sensory, and mental differences in different times and places. Respondents Ellie McLaughlin and Sue-Ann Mak helped focus our discussions.

Throughout the workshop we had a live link up with the Disability and Embodiment in Namibia project, including a presentation from Helen John and Emma Nangolo on 'Disability in Oshiwambo and Biblical Literature: Comparisons and Contrasts'. We welcomed Ebenhard Ripunda, the

Director of the Association of Wheelchair Users in Namibia, to Oxford who presented on the narrative of the haemorrhaging woman from a Namibian perspective. Many of our presenters had lived experience of disability, which was sometimes explicitly engaged with. For example, in Grant MacAskill's presentation on 'Dehumanising Differences: Hidden Disabilities and Personhood'.



Some papers focused on particular biblical narratives. Examples include Kylie Crabbe's analysis of ability and disability in the New Testament Infancy Narratives, Dominika Kurek-Chomycz's analysis of Moses' speech impediment, Jenn Strawbridge's exploration of sight loss in early Christian writings and Christine Joynes' engagement with Mary Magdalene. Other papers examined recent interpretations of disability. For example, Joanna Collicutt analysed use of the Bible in health care with examples from the Oxford Centre for Enablement; Judith Maltby discussed Vassar Miller (1924-1998) who was keen not to be labelled as a disabled poet; and Louise Lawrence used the Barbie movie to discuss bodily prototypes in popular culture. Plans are now underway for publication.



## SOTS IN OXFORD

### Hywel Clifford

According to its website, “The Society for Old Testament Study (SOTS) is a learned society, based in the British Isles, of professional scholars and others committed to the study of the Old Testament.” In September 2024, SOTS had its annual summer meeting, ably hosted at Mansfield College, Oxford under the new yearlong presidency of Dr John Jarick from Regent’s Park College. On the first evening, John delivered his presidential paper: “Echoes of the Planetary Gods in the Primary Judean Creation Myth”.

Later in the week, Dr Debbie Rooke also from Regent’s Park College addressed the contribution to Old Testament scholarship of two former SOTS presidents from the same college where their portraits also hang: H. Wheeler Robinson (1872-1945) and G. Henton Davies (1906-1998). John Jarick also hosted there the customary “Presidential Tea” for the delegates, at which there was an exhibition of manuscripts and memorabilia associated with Wheeler Robinson and Henton Davies from the Angus Library and Archive.

Professor Katherine Southwood from St John’s College welcomed delegates on behalf of the Faculty of Theology and Religion and later spoke with other contributors about the new “state of the discipline” OUP publication edited by Professor John Barton from Campion Hall: *Understanding the Hebrew Bible: Essays by Members of SOTS*. Professor Hindy Najman from Oriel College delivered a paper and hosted a reception on behalf of the Centre for the Study of the Bible. At John Jarick’s invitation, scholars from elsewhere in the UK, Europe, and the USA presented papers on a range of topics.



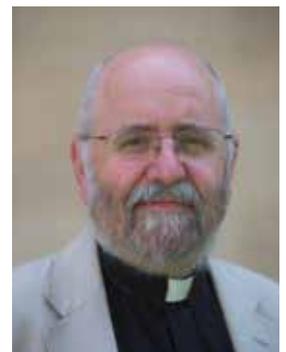
The delegates enjoyed a visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Natural History Museum, as well as the delights of town and gown: the city and the university. Today SOTS is very much a thriving and diverse learned society, with an increasingly outward-facing profile. It is a stimulating and friendly forum for established and emerging scholars. It was apt to hold this meeting in Oxford—as SOTS often has—given the strong and international tradition of biblical scholarship in the history of Oxford University.

Welcomed by the outgoing president, Professor Katharine Dell from Cambridge University, John Jarick signed the Presidential Hebrew “Bomberg Bible”—printed in Venice in the 1520s—before addressing the society.

## THE REVEREND CANON PROFESSOR MARK D CHAPMAN AWARDED THE LANFRANC AWARD FOR EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

**Prof. Mark D Chapman was awarded this for a lifetime contribution to the history and theology of Anglicanism, the education and formation of Christian ministers, and the ecumenical and synodical work of the Church of England.**

Mark Chapman is a scholar priest of outstanding significance and international recognition, to whom generations of students are profoundly indebted. He served as a tutor at Ripon College Cuddesdon for 32 years, and as Vice-Principal for 22 of them. Mark has been Canon Theologian of Truro since 2016 and has served on the Council for Christian Unity. In addition to his Oxford University chair, he has been a visiting professor at Oxford Brookes University and at the University of the Auvergne Clermont-Ferrand.



He is the sole author of 11 books—to date—, editor or co-editor of 18 more—both scholarly and popular—, and author of hundreds of journal articles and book chapters on doctrine, church history and ecumenism. He is widely recognised as one of the foremost scholars of Anglican ecclesiology, and his books on Anglicanism are standard texts for students. His profile across and beyond the Anglican world and the international respect accorded to his scholarly expertise are second to none. He has played a key part in ecumenical conversations, especially with the German Evangelical Church (EKD) and has been co-chair of the Meissen Theological Conference since 2019. He has also contributed significantly to working parties and forums of the Church of England, including Living in Love and Faith—the History working group—, serving on General Synod from 2010 to 2021. All the while, he has been held in affection and awe

by generations of trainee clergy of diverse academic and ecclesial backgrounds as a teacher who inspires, amuses, encourages and delights. He has also served, since being ordained, as honorary curate in the local parish and is as loved and esteemed by parishioners in the community as by students in the lecture hall.

Mark Chapman writes: “I am deeply honoured to have been given this award, which came as a complete surprise. I am one of those lucky people who has always found his job immensely rewarding and stimulating. Over the years I have taught well over a thousand clergy, and I have always found that I have learnt a huge amount from them as I have sought to inspire them with a love for learning and history and a love for God. I have also had the privilege of lecturing and teaching across the world and seeing how theology and church history relate to very different contexts. In my work as Professor of the History of Modern Theology, alongside supervising many doctorates, I have been particularly keen on forging links with Germany, especially the University of Bonn, through the Faculty exchange.”

## SUE GILLINGHAM

Emeritus Professor of the Hebrew Bible  
Emeritus Fellow of Worcester College

In last year’s entry for this magazine, I vowed I would ‘reflect more and travel less.’ I fulfilled the latter promise, attending only two key events. One was at San Antonio, Texas, for SBL (Society of Biblical Literature), where the Psalms Section devoted a two-and-a-half-hour session to my *Psalms through the Centuries*. The other, in April, was at Philipps Universität, in Marburg, Germany, where I delivered the *Gedenkfeier* for Dr. Erhard Gerstenberger, who had died a year before.



For various family reasons, I’m giving more international papers online. So instead of travelling again to the Bahamas I offered on Zoom a Lenten address on Psalm 119, demonstrating how the corporate pilgrimage theme in Psalms 120-134 is complemented here as an internalised journey. My problem was that I had agreed to a 7.30pm start, thinking this was UK time and so I began the address at 12.30am the next day. Another paper was for ‘Meetings with Psalms and Psalters’, a bi-monthly event sponsored by the University of Notre Dame and the Nanovic Institute for European Studies. I spoke on the Psalms and Visual Arts, illustrating some twelve centuries of Jewish and Christian images.

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ujrsptgp0MU&list=PLPWSLJ-3CEEJqlgxLxFDObLWqIOYtgDhhW>.



Colleagues have often asked why the TORCH Psalms Network has stopped functioning regularly. It ran out of funding, and we’ve been applying for a new interdisciplinary project, ‘Sacred Songs in Sacred Spaces’, intending to ‘perform’ psalms in different venues in Oxford. Watch this space! Another Oxbridge initiative is coming to an end: the monthly ‘Conversations on the Psalms’ with the Oxford artist Roger Wagner and the Cambridge poet Malcolm Guite, based on books we all wrote during Covid, will end with an in-person discussion in Michaelmas Term. See: <https://www.rogerwagner.co.uk/work/item/324/conversations-on-the-psalms>.

My research has recently explored inter-faith and universalist concerns. Along with Gulamabbas Lakha—now in the Department of Psychiatry—I’m investigating how the Biblical Psalms and Al-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyya’s *Psalms of Islam* can be used therapeutically to achieve both resilience and self-knowledge in cases of depression. I’m also co-writing a Jewish and Christian commentary with an American Psalms illustrator, Dr. Debra Band, based on calligraphical images of some twenty Hebrew and English psalms, for example, Psalm 114. Finally, my commentary for the Penguin Publishers Series focuses on the Psalter as a universal classic: I’m well past Psalm 119 and will submit the manuscript before the end of the year.

But have I had time to reflect? More than in pre-retirement, but less than I’d like. *Mea culpa*.

## DR TOBIAS TANTON AWARDED ESSSAT RESEARCH PRIZE

Dr Tobias Tanton, Early Career Fellow and Tutor in Theology at Harris Manchester College, has been awarded the prestigious ESSSAT Research Prize 2024 by the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology (ESSSAT). The award recognises his groundbreaking book, *Corporeal Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2023), which explores the relationship between the human body and theological concepts, offering a fresh perspective on corporeality in theological discourse.

Photo: Martin Lusser



Dr Tanton was honoured at the recent European Conference on Science and Theology in Split, Croatia, where he presented his research to an audience of scholars, theologians, and scientists. Dr Tanton’s research sits at the intersection of systematic theology and cognitive science, with a focus on embodied cognition, liturgical theology, and ecotheology. Prior to his current role, he held a postdoctoral fellowship at Cambridge and was a lecturer in theology at Ripon College Cuddesdon.

The Faculty warmly congratulates Dr Tanton on this well-deserved recognition and looks forward to the continued impact of his work in theology and science.

More information on the ESSSAT Prizes can be found [here](#).

## DR WILL LAMB DELIVERS CHENEY LECTURE AT YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL

Dr Will Lamb, Vicar of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin since 2017 and Honorary Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, delivered a Cheney Lecture on ‘*Conscience and Character*’ at Yale Divinity School in October 2024. Previously, he was Vice-Principal of Westcott House, Cambridge, and an Affiliated Lecturer at the University of Cambridge’s Faculty of Divinity.



His lecture marked the 200th anniversary of the beginning of St John Henry Newman’s public ministry.

The Cheney Lecture series brings together theologians and scholars to engage with pressing issues in theology, ethics, and religious thought. Dr Lamb’s lecture weaved together insights from New Testament studies, patristics, and the writings of Newman. His exploration of theological hermeneutics and historical interpretations offered a profound perspective on moral and spiritual formation.

The lecture was well received by faculty, students, and attendees, prompting thoughtful discussions on the role of conscience in shaping Christian identity and ethical decision-making.

You can watch Dr Will Lamb’s Cheney Lecture at Yale Divinity School [here](#).

CHENEY LECTURE, CONVOCATION 2024

# CONSCIENCE & CHARACTER

The Rev'd Dr. William Lamb  
Vicar of the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin  
University of Oxford

Berkeley the Episcopal Seminary at YALE

## FACULTY BOOKS



**Miri Freud-Kandel**

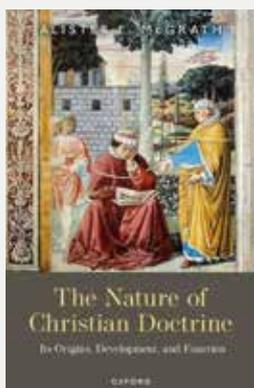
*Louis Jacobs and  
the Quest for a  
Contemporary  
Jewish Theology*

The Littman Library of Jewish  
Civilization  
2023  
ISBN: 978-1906764883

<https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/epub/10.3828/9781906764883>

For Louis Jacobs, the quest—the process of engaging with and reflecting on Jewish faith—was a lifelong pursuit. He offered a model in the 1960s—a period characterised by general religious crisis—of an observant, committed, but intellectually curious Judaism that empowered individual seekers to address challenges to faith. At the time, a battle was underway for religious control within Orthodox Judaism. Generating a widespread controversy in British Jewry known as the ‘Jacobs Affair’, his thought offers a lens for examining the trajectory of Orthodoxy. In a contemporary context marked by the changing cultural and intellectual concerns of a ‘post-secular’ age, the focus of some of these debates over religious control has shifted. Yet Jacobs’ emphasis on a personal quest is as relevant as ever, perhaps more so.

This first book-length analysis of his theology unpacks the building blocks of his thought. It argues that, despite its particularities and limitations, his approach can provide a powerful model for contemporary religious seekers in the context of a growing impetus away from established, denominationally bound forms of religion. Many orthodox believers across a range of faiths continue to favour the certainty of unquestionable religious truth claims rather than pursuing a subjective search for religious meaning. For those seeking alternative models for the contemporary Jewish quest, a reconsideration of Jacobs’ theology can offer valuable tools.



**Alister E. McGrath**

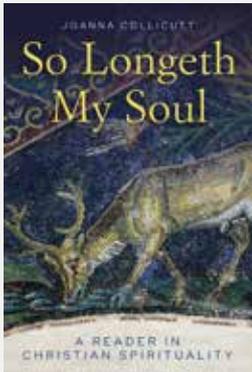
*The Nature of  
Christian Doctrine:  
Its Origins,  
Development, and  
Function*

Oxford University Press  
2024  
ISBN: 978-0198901440

Noting important parallels between the development of scientific theories and Christian doctrine, Alister E. McGrath examines the growing view of early Christianity as a ‘theological laboratory’. Doctrinal formulations can be considered proposals submitted for testing across the Christian world, rather than as static accounts of orthodoxy. This approach fits the available evidence much better than theories of suppressed early orthodoxies and reinforces the role of debate within the churches as a vital means of testing doctrinal formulations.

McGrath offers a robust critique of George Lindbeck’s still influential *Nature of Doctrine* (1984), raising significant concerns about its reductionist approach. Instead, he offers instead a more reliable account of the myriad functions of doctrine, utilising Mary Midgley’s concept of ‘mapping’ as a means of coordinating the multiple aspects of complex phenomena. McGrath’s approach also employs Karl Popper’s ‘Three Worlds’, allowing the theoretical, objective, and subjective aspects of doctrine to be seen as essential and interconnected.

Christian doctrine can be seen as offering an ontological disclosure about the nature of reality, while at the same time providing a coordinating framework which ensures that its various aspects are seen as parts of a greater whole. Doctrine provides a framework—a standpoint—that allows theological reality to be seen and experienced in a new manner; it safeguards and articulates the core vision of reality that is essential for the proper functioning and future flourishing of Christian communities.



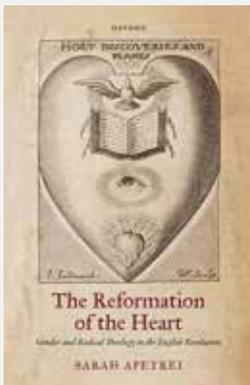
**Joanna Collicutt**

*So longeth my soul:  
A reader in Christian  
spirituality*

SCM Press  
2024  
ISBN: 978-0334063100

This book is a collection of readings from over 80 classic texts of Christian spirituality drawn from the early years after the close of the New Testament to the end of the nineteenth century. Its aim is to introduce the reader to primary sources as documents that are living and relevant for both personal spirituality and ministry.

The chapters are arranged according to a number of psychological themes, all based on the human experience of bereavement, rather than on the basis of historical epoch or spiritual tradition. The rather unusual thematic structure is aimed at helping readers engage with the texts in a way that is spiritually enriching and psychologically useful, and to encourage them to think about ways of drawing others in, perhaps by presenting the key ideas in more contemporary form. The rationale for the chosen themes—each connected in a different way with human bereavement—is presented in Part I, together with a consideration of the inherent challenges of engaging with historically distant texts, and some guidance on navigating these challenges and getting the most from them. Part II is devoted to the readings themselves with suggestions for further reading provided at the end of each chapter. A concluding chapter with a single reading returns to the theme of waiting well for the return of Christ, the foundational idea of the book.



**Sarah Apetrei**

*The Reformation  
of the Heart:  
Gender and Radical  
Theology in the  
English Revolution*

Oxford University Press  
2024  
ISBN: 978-0198836001

*The Reformation of the Heart: Gender and Radical Theology in the English Revolution* offers fresh insight into the relationship between radical theology and gender radicalism in the English Revolution. It addresses together two themes which have long fascinated historians of the period: the intellectual formation of religious radicalism, and the prominence of women as prophets and preachers in radical sects. Sarah Apetrei explores the remarkable ideas and reforming visions of a levelling and highly mystical network in the period of civil conflict, the regicide, and its aftermath—a network which linked military chaplains with inspired women and congregations across England.

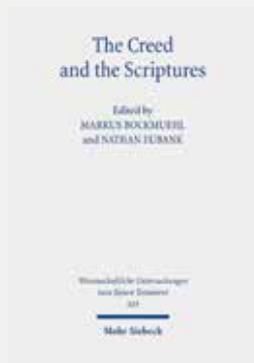


**Alex Muir**

*Paul and Seneca  
within the Ancient  
Consolation  
Tradition:  
A Comparison*

Brill  
2024  
ISBN: 978-9004695535

In this monograph, Alex Muir demonstrates how Paul and Seneca were significant contributors to an ancient philosophical and rhetorical tradition of consolation. Each writer's consolatory career is surveyed in turn through close readings of key primary texts: chiefly Seneca's three literary consolations and *Epistles*; and Paul's letters, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, and Philippians. A final comparative dialogue highlights the pair's adaptations and innovations within this tradition.

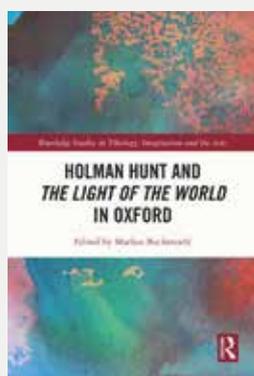


**Edited by Markus Bockmuehl and Nathan Eubank**

*The Creed and the Scriptures*

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck  
2024  
ISBN 978-361615986

Were ancient Christian creeds designed as summaries of Scripture, or, conversely, was the formation of Scripture itself subject to creedal as well as canonical considerations? To what extent were there non-Christian antecedents and analogies to the church's habit of making creeds? The essays in this volume are divided into four sections. The first asks whether the Christian creeds are *sui generis* as sometimes claimed, or whether there are close analogies in Jewish and Graeco-Roman antiquity. The second section investigates key critical issues in scholarly study of the creeds. The third turns to case studies illustrating how early Christian writers deploy the creeds in their engagement with scriptural topics. The fourth section turns to thematic studies in the Old Roman, Apostolic and Nicene Creeds.

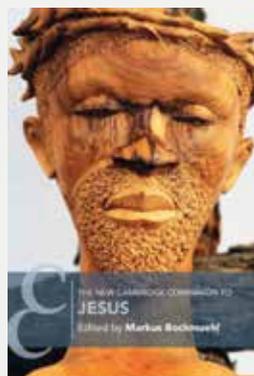


**Edited by Markus Bockmuehl**

*Holman Hunt and The Light of the World in Oxford*

London/New York: Routledge  
2025  
ISBN 978-1032533308

This book provides an up-to-date introduction to the religious and artistic story behind *The Light of the World* by William Holman Hunt. Created in the mid-nineteenth century, it is often said to be the most widely exhibited work of art in history and remains one of the most widely known Christian paintings to this day. The subject matter provides a rich wealth of resources, touching on the extraordinary artistic renewal associated with the Oxford Movement, as well as its religious and intellectual revolution in recovering early Christian tropes and motives of scriptural interpretation. The book also considers the painting's impact on the religious and cultural life of the British Empire as its tour served not just spiritual edification but also the promotion of imperial values. Contributors reflect on concerns of decolonisation while illustrating religious art's ability to engage relevantly with contemporary concerns. This fresh encounter with the painting is designed to be of interest to theologians, biblical scholars and historians alike.



**Edited by Markus Bockmuehl**

*The New Cambridge Companion to Jesus*

Cambridge University Press  
2025  
ISBN: 978-1009232999

The New Cambridge Companion to Jesus serves as the most up to date guide and resource for understanding Jesus' multifaceted legacy, enduring impact over time and space, and relevance in today's world. Integrating textual, historical, theological, and cultural perspectives, the essays—freshly commissioned for this volume—also offer a lively and diverse overview of Jesus' significance in contemporary global contexts. Key features include insights into Jesus' life and teachings, his role in different religious traditions, and his influence on art, music, and global cultures. The volume also addresses contemporary issues of poverty, race, and power dynamics, making it especially relevant for today's readers. The Companion offers a diversity of perspectives from which to approach the unique identity and importance of Jesus beyond the 2020s, whether in relation to Christianity's cultural and existential crises in the Americas, its precipitous decline in Western Europe, or its unprecedented growth and proliferation in Africa and Asia.



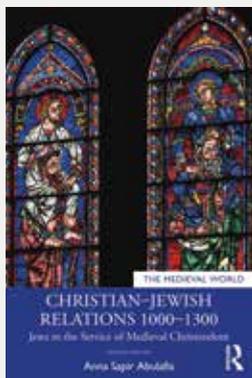
**Christopher M. Tuckett**

*Galatians: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*

ICC; London/New York:  
Bloomsbury T&T Clark  
2024

ISBN: 978-0567139191

The International Critical Commentary (ICC) series has been established for more than one hundred years. Many of the commentaries published when the series was established have become standard works, though in recent years the older volumes in the series have been steadily replaced. This new volume on Galatians replaces the older, and much respected commentary by E. de Witt Burton. It brings together a range of relevant aids to exegesis to seek to enable the reader to gain a fuller understanding of one of the most influential of Paul's letters. The approach is primarily historical-critical, seeking to untangle what Paul may be saying in relation to the original context in which the letter was written.



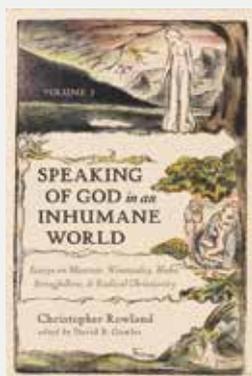
**Anna Sapir Abulafia**

*Christian-Jewish Relations 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom, 2nd edition*

London and New York:  
Routledge, 2024

ISBN: 978-0367552237

This new and revised edition of *Christian-Jewish Relations 1000-1300* expands its survey of medieval Christian-Jewish relations in England, Spain, France and Germany with new material on canon law, biblical exegesis and Christian-Jewish polemics, along with an updated Further Reading section. The book analyses the theological, socio-economic and political services Jews were required to render to medieval Christendom. The nature of Jewish service varied greatly as Christian rulers struggled to reconcile the desire to profit from the presence of Jewish men and women in their lands with conflicting theological notions about Judaism. Jews meanwhile had to deal with the many competing authorities and interests in the localities in which they lived; their continued presence hinged on a fine balance between theology and pragmatism. The book examines the impact of the Crusades on Christian-Jewish relations and analyses how anti-Jewish libels were used to define relations. The book draws on Latin and Hebrew liturgical and exegetical material, and narrative, polemical and legal sources, to give a sense of how Christians interacted with Jews, and Jews with Christians.



**Christopher Rowland  
Edited by David B.  
Gowler**

*Speaking of God in an Inhumane World, Volume 2*

Essays on Müntzer,  
Winstanley, Blake,  
Stringfellow, and Radical  
Christianity

Cascade Books  
2024

ISBN: 978-1666753882

This two-volume collection of essays on the Bible and social justice, liberation theology, and radical Christianity by Christopher Rowland addresses the question raised by Gustavo Gutierrez regarding how we can speak of God as a loving parent in a world that continues to be so inhumane. These essays by an esteemed New Testament scholar represent intellectual interests of a lifetime as he integrated exegesis of the New Testament texts in their first-century contexts and located their interpretations within the quests for meaning and significance that exist within contemporary society. These essays represent mostly the latter concern—exploring Christian Scripture, which has informed the lives of men and women down the centuries—as they interpret both contexts, and in doing so make a significant contribution to contextual theology that should be heard by the inhabitants of both contexts. The first volume of *Speaking of God in an Inhumane World* includes essays on liberation theology and radical Christianity; the second volume focuses primarily on radical Christianity and includes reflections on Gerrard Winstanley, William Blake, William Stringfellow, and others.



**M. Y. Ciftci**

*Vatican II on Church-State Relations: What Did the Council Teach, and What's Wrong with It?*

Cham: Springer International Publishing  
2024

ISBN: 978-3031567056

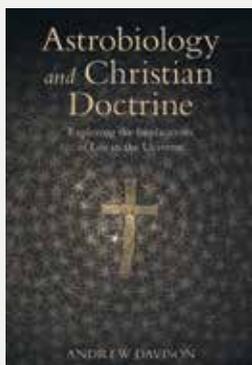
*'Vatican II on Church-State Relations: What Did the Council Teach, and What's Wrong With It?'*

Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan  
ISBN: 978-3031567056

Should religion and politics be kept apart? What should be the relationship between the church and the state? M.Y. Ciftci answers these questions by studying the most important event in the recent history of the Catholic Church: The Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

The book provides a new interpretation of the Council's teaching on church-state relations to better appreciate both its flaws, and its need for reform. By paying attention to the often-overlooked importance given by the Council to the lay apostolate, it reveals how the Council did not reform, as is often thought, but retained a flawed conception of the laity's role in politics.

It then goes on to propose a new framework for understanding church-state relations using the ressourcement method of returning to scripture and tradition, and by a critical dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan and various Protestant biblical scholars of the Powers in the New Testament. Ciftci shows how fruitful a self-consciously ecumenical approach can be for political theology. As most ressourcement theologians have overlooked political issues, and since ecumenical theology rarely touches on issues of church-state relations, this work makes an original contribution to the ressourcement project and to ecumenism.



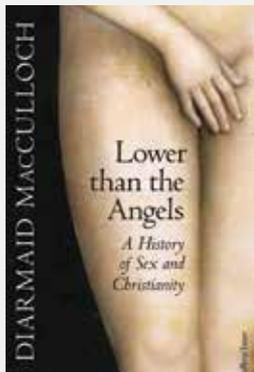
**A. Davison**

*Astrobiology and Christian Doctrine: Exploring the Implications of Life in the Universe*

Cambridge University Press  
(Current Issues in Theology)  
2024

ISBN: 978-1009303163

In 1995, the first planet—51 Pegasi b—was located orbiting a sun beyond our own. Since then, planets have been found to be common, with maybe 16 billion Earth-like planets around Sun-like stars in the observable universe. As a result, the question of life beyond earth has become one of the principal topics in discussions between science and religion. Attention to this topic has a long history in Christian theology, but it has rarely been pursued at any depth. This book treats the full range of topics in systematic theology from the perspective of asking what difference it would make if life were confirmed beyond Earth. It draws on a range of theological sources with a centre of gravity in the works of Thomas Aquinas. In part, it seeks to prepare the Christian community for responding to evidence of other life, if it is found. However, it also argues, we do not need to wait for that to have happened before attention to this topic will have shown its worth. Thinking about planets, creatures, and ecosystems beyond our planet can allow us to return to terrestrial theological questions with fresh eyes. Writing in Church Times, Keith Ward (before Andrew was announced as his successor but two as Regius Professor of Divinity) described *Astrobiology and Christian Doctrine* as 'a very readable, informative, and, indeed, theologically exciting book...a magnificently fair, informative, trustworthy, and mind-expanding work of theology, surely a modern classic in the field.'



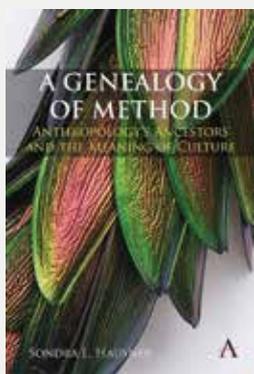
**Diarmaid MacCulloch**

*Lower than the Angels: A History of Sex and Christianity*

Allen Lane  
2024  
ISBN: 978-0241400937

The Bible observes that God made humanity ‘for a while a little lower than the angels’. If humans are that close to angels, does the difference lie in human sexuality and what we do with it? Much of the political contention and division in societies across the world centres on sexual topics, and one-third of the global population is Christian in background or outlook. In a single lifetime, Christianity or historically Christian societies have witnessed one of the most extraordinary about-turns in attitudes to sex and gender in human history. There have followed revolutions in the place of women in society, a new place for same-sex love amid the spectrum of human emotions and a public exploration of gender and trans identity. For many, this new situation has brought exciting liberation – for others, fury and fear.

This book seeks to calm fears and encourage understanding by telling a 3000-year-long tale of Christians encountering sex, gender and the family, with commentary from their sacred texts. The message of *Lower than the Angels* is simple, necessary and timely: to pay attention to the sheer glorious complexity and contradictions in the history of Christianity. The reader can decide from the story told here whether there is a single Christian theology of sex or many contending voices in an unfinished symphony. Oxford’s Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church introduces an epic of ordinary and extraordinary Christians trying to make sense of themselves and of humanity’s deepest desires, fears and hopes.



**Hausner, S. L. et al.**

*A Genealogy of Method: Anthropology's Ancestors and the Meaning of Culture*

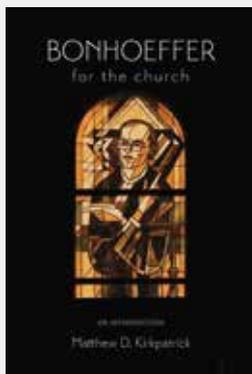
London: Anthem Press  
2024  
ISBN: 978-1839986482

This volume considers the meaning of culture and anthropology’s role in defining it. Taking up the history of the discipline and the method of ethnography in turn, the book asks if the concept of culture might be productively reclaimed within a context that acknowledges history, change, and diversity.

What is culture? The history of our discipline—whether we call it ethnology or social anthropology—shows that there is not a constant answer to this question or even a constant object of study. How can we search for a unifying answer to what makes us human, even as we observe how immensely varied we are? And how can we explain that such a difference is the very core of what makes us similarly human?

This book explores the idea of ethnography as a method for understanding cultural flow in particular contexts and suggests that anthropology can do its most important work by tracing the history of social formations. Nothing about culture is static, yet something best-called culture sustains itself over time. At the heart of anthropology is the attempt to understand the concept of culture, even as we continue to challenge its definition in our field.

This short volume presents the Jensen Memorial Lectures delivered at the Frobenius Institute for Research in Cultural Anthropology at Goethe University, Frankfurt, in 2019. The lectures reflect on the current moment in—and the capacity of—contemporary anthropology to consider the discipline’s basic premises, through the lens of its classical thinkers. Through a set of four lectures and an introduction, this book takes up anthropology’s most basic question—the meaning of culture—and asks how it is that our unique method can elicit both fine-grained particularities about specific social orders and speak to the definition of that which makes us human.

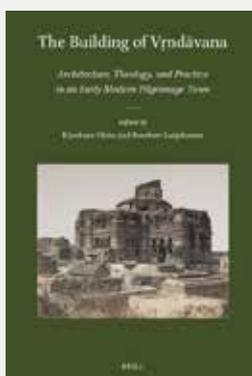


**Matthew D. Kirkpatrick**

*Bonhoeffer  
for the Church:  
An Introduction*

Fortress Press  
2024  
ISBN: 978-1506497822

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one of the most widely read Christian writers of the twentieth century. Despite his significant contribution to academic theology since his death, the central focus of both Bonhoeffer's life and writing remained centred on the church. Yet, no systematic introduction to Bonhoeffer exists for this audience. In *Bonhoeffer for the Church*, Matthew Kirkpatrick corrects this omission. Structured around topics such as preaching, worship, sacraments, prayer, pastoral care, confession, evangelism, and apologetics, *Bonhoeffer for the Church* offers an accessible but comprehensive introduction to Bonhoeffer's life and thought. In making Bonhoeffer accessible for the church, Kirkpatrick also reveals Bonhoeffer's astonishing message to the church. Despite his well-known conflicts with the churches and church leaders of his time, the church remained for Bonhoeffer the foundation for God's redeeming activity to the world and in individual lives. Drawing on the full range of his writings, including his less well-known sermons, diaries, and letters, *Bonhoeffer for the Church* brings this compelling vision to light.



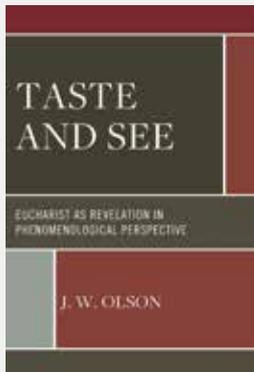
**Edited by Kiyokazu  
Okita and Rembert  
Lutjeharms**

*The Building  
of Vr̥ndāvana:  
Architecture,  
Theology, and  
Practice in an Early  
Modern Pilgrimage  
Town*

Brill  
2024  
ISBN: 978-9004680470

The small town of Vr̥ndāvana is today one of the most vibrant places of pilgrimage in northern India. Millions of pilgrims travel there each year to honour the sacred land of Kṛṣṇa's youth and to visit many of its temples. Though the neighbouring city of Mathurā has a much longer history—it was an influential Hindu and Buddhist cultural centre already in the first century—the development of Vr̥ndāvana as a place of pilgrimage for Kṛṣṇa devotees as we know it today occurred mostly in the sixteenth century. This period saw both the rise of the Mughal empire, whose court was established in nearby Fatehpur Sikri, and the development of a passionate devotion to Kṛṣṇa, and it is the confluence of these two strands that contributed greatly to the development of the Vr̥ndāvana area. The rise of Kṛṣṇa devotion resulted in a veritable library of poetry in praise of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā theology, as well as ritual practices that provided the vision for the new intellectual and devotional centre. Leading figures at the Mughal court—including the emperor Akbar and his general Mān Singh—provided patronage to several of the developing temples that allowed that vision to be spectacularly manifested.

*The Building of Vr̥ndāvana* explores the complex history of Vr̥ndāvana's early modern origins—from the late fifteenth century until the reign of Aurangzeb—when several of the traditions of Vr̥ndāvana moved further west due to political instability. This book brings together scholars from various disciplines to examine Vr̥ndāvana's history, architecture, art, ritual, theology, literature, and the performing arts in this pivotal period, and examines how these various disciplines were used to create, develop, and map Vr̥ndāvana as the most prominent place of pilgrimage for devotees of Kṛṣṇa.

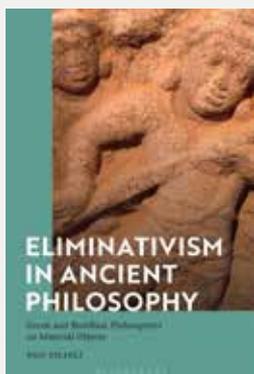


**J.W. Olson**

*Taste and See:  
Eucharist as  
Revelation in  
Phenomenological  
Perspective*

Lexington Books/Fortress  
Academic, 2023  
ISBN: 978-1978715783

J.W. Olson argues that recent Christian theologies of divine revelation, though often centered on the irreducibility of the incarnation, have not taken incarnality sufficiently into account as the mechanism for the knowledge of God in Christ. Addressing this problem within a secular context in which the viability of religious truth is under increased scrutiny, Olson engages with the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger to suggest that Christian language and belief are shaped at the precognitive level of embodied involvement long before they ever take mental, conceptual form. He then offers an original interpretation of the Eucharist as the material epicenter of Christian epistemology. In the sacrament, Christians are swept up into a dynamic world that reveals itself as the very person of Jesus Christ, so that Christians come to know Christ most fundamentally through the movements of the body. Recasting the parameters for identifying Christ's sacramental presence, Olson reiterates the Christian focus on the incarnation as not just the medium of God's self-revelation but as the very content of Christian faith. Christ is known in act, and so God is revealed where Christ lives in us.

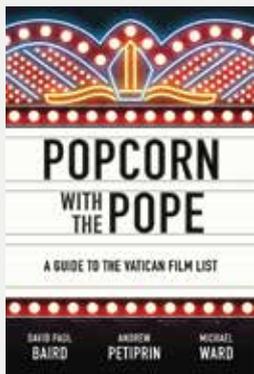


**Ugo Zilioli**

*Eliminativism in  
Ancient Philosophy:  
Greek and Buddhist  
Philosophers on  
Material Objects.  
1st ed.*

London: Bloomsbury  
Publishing Plc  
2024  
ISBN: 978-1350105164

Ugo Zilioli explicates the neglected tradition of philosophers who in different ways made material objects either redundant or ontologically dispensable in the ancient world. Chapters cover concepts such as nihilism, indeterminacy, solipsism and tropes, demonstrating how the philosophy of major thinkers Protagoras, Vasubandhu, Gorgias, Nagarjuna, Pyrrho, and the Cyrenaics advance our understanding of eliminativism. Zilioli's historical and philosophical reconstruction challenges traditional readings of key moments and figures in the history of thought, both Eastern and Western, as well as providing conceptual tools that are of interest not only to historians of philosophy but also to contemporary metaphysicians.



**David Paul Baird,  
Andrew Petiprin,  
Michael Ward**

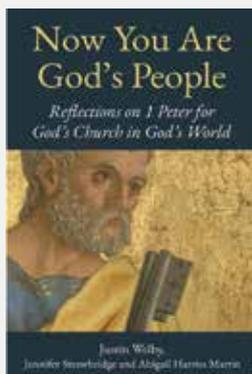
*Popcorn with the  
Pope: A Guide to the  
Vatican Film List*

Word on Fire  
2023  
ISBN: 978-1685789848

One hundred years after the Lumière brothers held the first paid public screening of a motion picture in Paris, the Vatican released a list of "some important films" to celebrate the first century of cinema, the most influential of modern art forms. In 1995, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and the Vatican Film Library appointed a commission of a dozen international experts to compile a roll of films deemed notable in various ways and deserving of attention. The result was a list of forty-five titles organised according to three categories: religious values, social values, and human and social values. They include *Andrei Rublev*, *Gandhi*, *Thérèse*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Schindler's List*, *The Mission*, *Chariots of Fire*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Ben-Hur*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Burmese Harp*, *The Gospel According to St Matthew*, and *Babette's Feast*. *Babette's Feast* is, as it happens, the favourite film of both Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, and the current pontiff, Pope Francis.

In *Popcorn with the Pope*, Michael Ward—Associate Member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion—examines the films on the list from a theological point of view, sharing the task with David Paul Baird and Andrew Petiprin, both Oxford-educated theologians. Each chapter offers a theologically informed reading of the movie at hand, situating it in its historical context and providing questions for further reflection. The volume is introduced by a survey of papal perspectives on the genre, from Leo XIII to Francis, outlining the rocky, back-and-forth relationship

with cinema that has characterised official Catholic responses to the medium. Handsomely illustrated with photographs from each title discussed, the book is designed to equip readers with a better understanding of the language of film and a deeper appreciation of the aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual qualities of the movies under consideration.

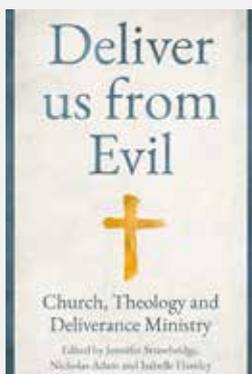


**Jennifer Strawbridge,  
Justin Welby and  
Abbie Martin Harries**

*Now You are God's  
People: Reflections  
on 1 Peter for God's  
Church in God's  
World*

London: SCM Press  
2024  
ISBN: 978-0334065647

This is a collection of theological reflections on the book of 1 Peter. Acknowledging that key words and phrases from 1 Peter are understood differently in different contexts—such as language of suffering, definitions of holiness, and how we describe hope—this volume innovatively draws in voices from more than 20 countries including; Kenya, Mozambique, the USA, Malaysia, DRC, Pakistan, Palestine, Ghana, and New Zealand.



**Edited by Jennifer  
Strawbridge, Nicholas  
Adams, and Isabelle  
Hamley**

*Deliver us from Evil:  
Church, Theology  
and Deliverance  
Ministry*

Brill  
2024  
ISBN: 978-0334063483

This volume draws on an array of disciplines including practical theology, biblical theology, psychology, and systematics, bringing together leading thinkers in their fields to consider the role of deliverance ministry today.

# OXFORD THEOLOGY & RELIGION MONOGRAPHS 2023-24

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**Tobias Tanton**

*Corporeal Theology: Accommodating Theological Understanding to Embodied Thinkers*

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**Thank you**

