From the Editors.

The meaning of ‘religious history’ is layered and complex. This dynamic and expansive field of study poses genuine challenges of definition. Since its inception in 1960, the *Journal of Religious History* has confronted this problem head-on, embracing in its remit an inclusive scope of original research on all religions and their relationship with the human experience. It has invited submissions and published across all time periods, from ancient to modern, exploring religion and its related subjects in a global context, as well as debates on comparative method and theory in religious history. The depth and breadth of this scholarship is borne out by forty-four volumes over the past six decades, in which – as the founding Editors aspired – ‘the history of religion mingles with the history of politics or society or culture that is its true home-ground.’[[1]](#footnote-1)

This year marks the *Journal of Religious History*’s sixtieth anniversary (1960-2020). From the very beginning, its Editors advocated for religious history’s complete integration into all historical study; they envisioned this journal as ‘a vehicle for continuing discussions of themes of common interest’[[2]](#footnote-2), whose approach was ultimately ‘intended to give some unity and sense of common purpose …’[[3]](#footnote-3) The proclaimed ‘*openness* of the journal’s field of interest’[[4]](#footnote-4) is a founding principle, which continues to guide our authors and readers in the conviction that ‘religious history is a proper and absorbing study and one illuminating for human history as a whole.’[[5]](#footnote-5)

The scholarship on religious history is ostensibly vast and evolving. For this reason, the current Editors feel that more time and place must be given to the critical conversations which define, challenge, and advance the field. Reflecting its ‘changing face’, and celebrating its sixtieth year, the *Journal of Religious History* – along with its peak body, the Religious History Association – has re-assessed and re-framed the journal’s ‘aims and scope’. The founding principle of ‘openness’ remains integral to formulating a clear and future direction. The journal will continue to ‘publish high quality, impactful scholarship and research that makes original and significant contribution to the field of religious history.’ Its scope remains ‘the history of all religions and their relationship with the human experience across all time periods’. It continues to invite and publish original research articles on subjects that ‘explore religion and its related subjects, along with debates on comparative method and theory in religious history.’ Special issues will remain a hallmark of the journal’s scholarly contribution. And its book reviews will continue to house critical appraisals of new literature in all fields of religious history.

But there are also some new directions for the journal, which the Editors wish to introduce here. The publication in [JRH Volume 44, Issue 3, Pages 376-379,](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14679809/2020/44/3)  of John D’Arcy’s ‘review article’ on interreligious theology signals the revival of an important scholarly format. We invite further submissions in this category, which aim to stimulate and provoke discussion on contemporary or even controversial issues in the field of religious history, as well as providing ‘state-of-the-field’ assessments.

The journal is also expanding its capacity to publish ‘fora’ on key issues of religious history. Distinguishing this section from our special issues, we envision articles that address topics, special features, theories, methods, significant problems or debates in the field of religious history writ large. Offering a new format for scholarly discourse, the journal’s ‘forum’ section will ideally present a collection of peer-reviewed articles (with a brief introduction) that is more expansive than original research articles, though no less rigorous or relevant in their approach and treatment.

And finally, a third element to the journal’s refreshed structure is the inclusion of ‘notes and documents’. This loosely-defined category aims to broaden the journal’s capacity for shorter pieces describing critical sources, discoveries, ongoing projects, announcements, or findings of interest and value to our scholarly community.

The Editors of the *Journal of Religious History* remain committed to publishing in all areas that promote and advance the field. We are excited by the journal’s new format and the possibilities that it introduces. To this end, we invite proposals for all categories, both established and new, encouraging prospective authors to contact us directly with their ideas.

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1. Bruce Mansfield, ‘Foreword’, *Journal of Religious History* 1:1 (1960), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. John Gascoigne, ‘The *Journal of Religious History* 1960-2010: The Changing Face of Religious History over Fifty Years’, *Journal of Religious History* 34:3 (2010), p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mansfield (1960), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)