



BASR

British Association for
the Study of Religions

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ABOUT THE BASR

The British Association for the Study of Religions, formerly the British Association for the History of Religions (founded in 1954), is affiliated to the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) and to the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) Its object is the promotion of the academic study of religions through international interdisciplinary collaboration. The BASR pursues these aims within the United Kingdom through the arrangement of conferences and symposia, the publication of a Bulletin and an Annual General Meeting. Membership of the BASR is open to scholars whose work has a bearing on the academic study of religions. Membership of the BASR confers membership of the IAHR and the EASR.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome,

The title of the 2007 conference held in New College, University of Edinburgh 'Religious Experience in Global Contexts' provided a theme for varied and engaging research papers (effectively reported by Dr Wendy Dossett et al *Bulletin* No 111). The conference was run in conjunction with The Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, whose contiguous interests in the phenomena of religious experience and a recent Templeton Foundation grant to examine the phenomena in China, provided a rich strand to the conference. One element of the event was lively debate about the category and construct of religious experience. The editors of the *Bulletin*, have invited colleagues involved in the discussion to elaborate some aspects of their thoughts for this issue: Professor Paul Badham to delineate the approaches of the Templeton funded China project; Professor Douglas Davies to provide a specific re-

sponse; and Professor Brian Bocking to add a further reflection on the use of the term 'religious experience'.

By happenstance, serendipitous or ironically synchronous, we include in this *Bulletin* Professor Robert Jackson's report on 'Experiencing Religious Diversity and Education in an International Context', a personal account of his recent engagements and activities at international ventures examining the relationship between religious studies and religious education.

Synchronous significant events is how Professor Paul Weller begins his positive account of something of a phoenix at the University of Derby – with his birthday and a new birth for a research group developing new undergraduate modules on religion. In fact the closure of Religious and Philosophical Studies in 2003 at Derby did not end

all teaching in the area and it is a pleasure to read the broad spectrum of postgraduate research topics that have continued through this period.

Positive news resonates through this edition of the *Bulletin*. Gwilym Beckerlegge's follow-up account (see *Bulletin* 109) of the development of a new Study of Religions department at University College Cork is an inspiring narrative of a well planned, entirely apt new academic programme in Ireland. We wish the programme every success and continued robust student enrolments.

Also positive and inspiring is Douglas Davies' account of the AHRC funded network, 'Emotion, Identity and Religious Communities'. In the contracted largesse of AHRC grants it is welcome to read about successful projects and, especially in this case, to see scholars of religion at the heart of new interdisciplinary networks.

The executive committee of the BASR require election of officers. We have a vibrant community of members and we are actively involved and linked with the European Association for the Study of Religion and affiliated to the International Association for the History of Religion. The post of President-elect requires nominations. This post is described in the constitution of the BASR under section 6 a (see <http://www.basr.ac.uk/constitution.htm>):

A President, who shall be elected for four years, serving as President-Elect in the first year concurrently

with the existing President. The Officer will be a non-voting member of the Association's Committee while President-Elect, and will chair the Committee from the second year of office.

Please consider who you would like to see in this post and send your nomination, signed appropriately, on the enclosed form.

The *Bulletin* also includes regular sections on developments in the field, including a report on the current status and future prospects for Islamic Studies by Dr David Herbert. There are book reviews by members of the BASR on texts, in some cases, written by members also. Two relevant conferences publicised in the *Bulletin*, are the organisation's own BASR Annual conference to be held at York St John University with the title 'Religion, Memory and Remembrance'. and 'Spoon Feeding or Critical Thinking' to be held at St Anne's College Oxford, organised by HEA-prs,. Registration forms for the former are inside this Bulletin and available online from the BASR website.

The editors welcome contributions from colleagues to be included in the Bulletin. We continue to accept appropriate notices of events linked to the study of religions from conference organisers and reports on events that will be of interest to the membership.

Dominic Corrywright
Helen Waterhouse

Announcement

Public Benefit and the Advancement of Religion

Further to the recent publication of the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit, *Charities and Public Benefit*, we are pleased to announce the launch of our consultation on draft supplementary guidance on Public Benefit and the Ad-

vancement of Religion.

This draft supplementary guidance explains how the principles of public benefit set out in *Charities and Public Benefit* apply to charities advancing religion and ex-

plains what the advancement of religion as a charitable aim means. It also has relevance for charities advancing non-religious belief systems. It should be read in conjunction with the full version of *Charities and Public Benefit*.

The consultation material is only available online and due to time and cost no copies have been produced. To access the material please see our website at: <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/news/pbnewsindex.asp> or contact Charity Commission Direct who will be able to arrange for a copy to be printed off and sent to you. Before we publish our draft supplementary guidance we want to give everyone the opportunity to find out about our proposed approach to public benefit and the advancement of religion and comment on any aspect of it. We would like this consultation to help us identify any improvements that we can make to the draft supplementary guidance and identify problems that charities may experience, either in understanding the draft supplementary guidance or in meeting the public benefit requirement.

We welcome comments on the consultation questions which are included throughout our draft supplementary guidance but we also welcome any other comments or observations on any aspect of it.

If you wish to respond to the consultation we would be grateful for all responses in writing. These should be headed 'Consultation on Draft Supplementary Guidance on Public Benefit and the Advancement of Religion' and sent by post to:

Charity Commission Direct, PO Box 1227, LIVERPOOL, L69 3UG. Or by e-mail to: publicbenefit@charitycommission.gov.uk

The closing date for responses is 30 June 2008. Please state clearly which consultation you are responding to and provide us with the following standard information, in the order requested, as part of the introduction to your response. This will allow us to manage the responses and use the information more effectively as well as enabling us to keep you up to date with any progress:

1. Organisation/Charity name (if applica-

ble)

2. Charity number (if applicable)

3. Contact name

4. Position within organisation (if applicable)

5. Contact number

6. Contact address

7. Contact e-mail

8. Confidentiality Statement (if applicable – see following sections)

Consultation response/answers to consultation questions

Where appropriate we encourage you to provide evidence in support of your response. If you are a representative group please provide a summary of the people and organisations you represent with your response. If you represent a charity, it would also be helpful if you could state your organisation's charitable aims.

All information contained within the responses (including personal information) may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily set out in the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want information given in response to the consultation to be kept confidential it will only be possible to do so if it is consistent with our legal obligations. There is a statutory Code of Practice under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which public authorities must comply with. This sets out how confidential information must be dealt with. We cannot give assurances that all information will be kept confidential but we will take into account any representations made by you.

All responses will be recorded and used by the Charity Commission to inform any amendment and further work that we do relating to charities and public benefit. We will review our draft supplementary guidance taking into account the comments that we have received by the end of the consultation period.

It is our aim to publish *Public Benefit and the Advancement of Religion* by the end of 2008.

Patrick Smidmore



British Association for
the Study of Religions

BASR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The next BASR conference will be held at York St John University
from 1-3 September 2008

The conference theme will be

RELIGION, MEMORY AND REMEMBRANCE

*The BASR Annual Lecture will be given by
Prof Douglas Davies (University of Durham).*

It will be entitled

"Memorable Relations and Paradigmatic Scenes"

Proposals of papers and panels are invited that consider and debate memory and remembrance in religion and the study of religions. For example, concepts and performances of commemoration in particular religions or in popular culture might include phenomena such as road side shrines and woodland burials. Theorisation of memory might address the ways in which religious people remember and represent memory, including in "invented traditions". All papers relevant to the theme will be considered.

Offers of panels, individual papers and reports of work in progress by 1 June

2008 to: Prof Ron Geaves,
Theology and Religious Studies,
Liverpool Hope University,
Hope Park, Liverpool, L16 9JD
geavesr@hope.ac.uk

RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN LOCATION

The Study of Religions at University College Cork – a retrospect on 2006/07 Gwilym Beckerlegge

In my previous report on the plan to develop a new department of Religious Studies at University College Cork (UCC) and a new degree in the study of religions (*Bulletin* 109, 2006), I referred largely to challenges that lay ahead. These included embedding this new initiative in a university with a strongly secular ethos, where discussion of this proposal had proved contentious in the past, and devising a style of degree suitable for the rapidly changing social context in Ireland with, for example, its own provision of religious education in schools. The study of religion already had a strong presence among the interests of a range of academic departments in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Ireland, and was already represented to a greater or lesser extent in various Irish departments of theology and joint departments of theology and religions (as at Trinity College Dublin). The department at UCC, however, was to be launched as a department of religious studies and not as a department of theology or a joint department of theology and religious studies.

One of the major uncertainties was anticipating how Irish school leavers (the major supply of potential students) might react to this new academic opportunity. Although the RE curriculum had recently been overhauled in Irish schools and broadened in the process, the increasing secularisation of Irish society and intense criticism of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland over recent years offered no guarantee that the different ethos of the new degree would prove attractive. When talking informally, I was told on several occasions that one hurdle would be to persuade parents of students considering the new degree that it would have any value as an educational experience, let alone as a gateway to a worthwhile career. One of the first outcomes of the consultation stage was my proposal that the designation 'Religious Studies' be abandoned, partly because in

Ireland this term has been used particularly for courses in Christian religious education for serving teachers of RE. Instead, the planned department would become a department of the Study of Religions (in tune with the use by university departments elsewhere). To make the character of the new degree as clear as possible to Irish school leavers, I recommended that it should be a degree in Religions and Global Diversity, at least until the new department and its degree had become established.

Working in advance of the appointment of permanent staff and thus continuity in the new department, I set out to devise a course framework that would be sufficiently detailed to pass the university's rigorous approval process, while not binding unduly those appointed to teach it. Following a common introductory course in Year 1, both Years 2 and 3 would comprise a core module (thematic), traditions modules (each a study of one religious tradition), optional modules, and an extended independent study.¹ The intention was to provide scope, as the department grew, to accommodate the special interests of staff as case studies within the thematic core modules, and similarly to add new options and modules in traditions. The modules initially offered for approval were sufficient to enable students to take Religions and Global Diversity as a major, joint or minor course of study.

The timetable for establishing a new department and introducing a new degree with one year's lead-in, including devising the course and securing university approval, was bound to be challenging. The degree successfully completed the approval process at the end of March 2007, and the challenge at that point was to recruit the staff and to put in place sufficient library resources to admit the first intake in September 2007. The temporary appointment of Gregory Shushan to take responsi-

bility for teaching the first year course, and the subsequent appointment of Brian Bocking as the department's first permanent chair and head of department, ensured that the course could be launched on schedule, and that the new department could begin its long-term development. It was gratifying, to say the least, that the first year course attracted approximately 100 students, which should augur well for future growth.

Inevitably at the end of my year at UCC I was aware of immediate challenges still to be faced and opportunities still to be explored. One of these will be securing recognition of the new degree (not in theology) as a route into Irish teacher education, and thus careers for students in RE. The College of Arts Celtic Studies and So-

cial Studies within which the new department is located in UCC provides a particularly rich environment for collaboration with other disciplines, which I imagine could lead to some fascinating outcomes for the department and UCC's students. Perhaps most intriguing is the prospect of developing the study of religions within Ireland, and discovering what distinctive flavour this might lend to the pursuit of this subject within UCC. I hope that it will not prove premature to suggest a rider to Michael Strausberg's recent account (p.296) of the study of religions in Western Europe, and to claim that the study of religion(s), in his sense, is now grounded in Ireland². I am sure I speak for many when I end by wishing the new department every success as it approaches its second year.

1. For further information, see <http://www.ucc.ie/en/ProspectiveStudents/Admissions/programmes/acss/ck101religion/>

² Michael Strausberg (2008) 'The study of religion(s) in Western Europe (I): Prehistory and history until World War II' in *Religion* 37, pp. 294-318.

Gwilym Beckerlegge was Programme co-ordinator, UCC 2006/07. He is Senior Lecturer and Staff Tutor in The Department of Religious Studies, The Open University.

A New "Birthday" at the University of Derby Paul Weller

My birthday is the 19th March. On the same day in 2008 another birth took place at the University of Derby, when the University's Research and Research Degrees Committee gave formal recognition to a new "Society, Religion and Belief Research Group", just over five years after the closure to new students of the University's Religious and Philosophical Studies subject area and the sad redundancy of its staff at the time.

In fact, the study of religion did not completely disappear from the University after 2003. Religious and Philosophical Studies in the University's Access and Foundation provision never closed and continues to be led by the University's Russian Orthodox Chaplain, Father Daniel Joseph. Most full-time undergraduate students continued until completion two or three years after

2003, while part-time postgraduates on the MA in Religion in a Plural Society, MA in Pastoral Studies and Doctor of Religious Care/Ministry continue until today. Completions in the innovative Doctor of Religious Care/Ministry have included dissertations about: "Sacred Space: Its Conception and Significance in Selected Jewish, Christian and Hindu Traditions"; "The English Parochial System and the Emergence of Chaplaincies"; "Ministry of the Third Age: The Basis and Practice of Ministry in Retirement"; and "British Unitarianism and its Relationship with World Religions."

Continuing PhD students were joined by others working at the interface between religion and other areas in the Faculty. Thus current PhD research topics include: "Collective Action and Social Movements' Theory and the Gülen Movement: A Case

Study of Collective Identity, Action and Mobilization in a Civil Society Movement in Turkey”; “An Exploration of ‘Killings in the Name of Honour’ and Honour Based Violence with Reference to the Experiences of South Asian Female Victims within the United Kingdom and their Successful Strategies for Identity Transformation”; “Maintaining Purity in an Impure World: A Comparative Study of Issues Relating to Purity and Impurity at the Time of Death in Two Gujarati Communities”; “Competing Realities, Diverse Needs: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Religious Contexts of HIV Prevention and Care in Leicester”; “Female Perceptions of the Annulment of Marriage in the Catholic Church”; “Evaluating the Teaching of Civics in Muslim Schools”; and “An Investigation and Analysis of the Historical Development of Hatha Yoga in Britain Since the 19th and 20th Century”; while successful PhD outcomes have been achieved on “Being Sikh: Constructions of Masculinity and Identity amongst Young British Sikh Men”; and on “Non-Realism and Contemporary Religious Belief”.

The Millennium Commission’s financial commitment to the University’s Multi-Faith Centre project survived the subject area closure. The Centre (building for which was completed in 2004 and formally opened in 2005, and of which the present author is Vice-Chair) inherited the *Religions in the UK* directory project and, through Home Office funding and collaboration with the Office for National Statistics’ Neighbourhood Statistics Services, a 2007 edition was published. The Centre has also been involved in a Socrates/Grundvig project to create a training programme for Non-Governmental Organisations on “Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination.”

As Faculty Head of Research and Professor of Inter-Religious Relations, the present author has continued to research aspects of religion, state and society with publications reflected in the “Recent Publications” list of the present *Bulletin*; while Marie Parker-Jenkins, as Professor of Education, continued her research on faith-based schools and is currently directing an

Economic and Social Research Council Project on “Terms of Engagement: Muslim and Jewish School Communities, Cultural Sustainability and Maintenance of Religious Identity.”

The new Research Group has drawn upon this inheritance. But pivotally important has been the Sociology subject area’s development of undergraduate modules relating to religion including: “Religion and Society”; “Supernatural Encounters”; “Apocalyptic and Paranoid Cultures”; and “The Bible in Culture and Society”. In due course, the Sociology subject area hopes to build upon these modules in order to offer a joint undergraduate degree pathway in Religion and Society.

Professor David Chalcraft, Professor of Classical Sociology, is the Head of the new Research Group. Professor Chalcraft is an international expert on Max Weber’s life and work, including on religion and sects. He also has specialisms in the use of the social sciences in Biblical studies and empirical analysis of the Bible in culture, politics and society. Dr. Kristin Aune, Lecturer in Sociology is also involved, whose research interests include Evangelical Christianity, gender and sexuality. Dr. Sue Jeffels and Phil Henry are Associate Lecturers who both continued to work with the students of the closing subject area. They are now also members of the new Research Group, having research interests (respectively) in the relations between religion, feminism, and domestic violence; and in Buddhist social activism.

The new Research Group will be launched at the Multi-Faith Centre on 23rd April 2008, at a 5.30-7.00pm event in which the author’s new textbook on *Religious Diversity in the UK: Contours and Issues* (Continuum) will also be launched. The current decade brought difficult times for Religious Studies in a number of Universities. Despite the events of only five years ago, the new Research Group’s formal recognition shows that engagement with the study of religion can survive even closure of a subject area. It also evidences that new futures can emerge even after end-

ings. And if it can happen in one place, it might also be possible elsewhere....

Paul Weller (p.g.weller@derby.ac.uk) was Director of the Religious Resource and Research Centre (1990-97) and Head of Religious Studies (1996-97) at the University of Derby, where he remains Professor of Inter-Religious Relations while employed as Head of Research and Commercial Development in the Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences. He is writing in a personal capacity.

Experiencing Religious Diversity and Education in an International Context

Robert Jackson

As I write this piece, media hysteria about what the Archbishop of Canterbury did or didn't say about Islamic law is but one story obscuring the fact that there is an unprecedented amount of serious discussion going on internationally about intercultural education, and education about religious diversity. Indeed, the European Union has designated 2008 as the year of intercultural dialogue (<http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/>).

I have had the privilege to be involved in some of the activity, and last year took study leave in order to take part in various international projects on religions and education. Some of these were in the Far East – in South Korea, Japan and Indonesia – and others in Europe, related to the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I also worked in Turkey with Turkish Muslim scholars on broadening religious education to include studies of religions other than Islam (Jackson 2007), in Norway (the keynote at the Nordic conference on religious education in Stavanger), in Australia, with religious education academics, and I gave the keynote lecture at the European Association for the Study of Religions conference in Bremen, which was dedicated to the interface between religious studies and religious education (Jackson 2008).

It is hard to imagine a more vibrant time for working on issues of religious diversity in relation to education on the international scene. Many of the issues confined to individual states are now transnational. Indonesia's debates about avoiding inter-religious conflict have international reverberations. Within Europe, states like

France, which have kept religion firmly in private space in the past, are now participating in the international discussion, and are looking for ways of increasing public understanding of religions through education. Other states, which have favoured one particular religion or denomination in their education systems, are being urged by inter-governmental agencies to broaden their policies and practice in order to increase understanding of religions and to increase tolerance.

Far Eastern and Australian Collaborations

My work in the Far East included developing discussions on teaching about religions in the public space and looking at the interface between learning about religious diversity in different societies in relation to various forms of values education – peace education, human rights education and education for democratic citizenship, for example. I took part in a conference on European Integration and Korean reunification (religion was a key theme – Tim Jensen from Denmark was another speaker), and in meetings with Buddhist scholars from Dongguk University and with members of the Korean Association for Religious Freedom. In Indonesia, I participated in a conference organised by the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Makassar, Sulawesi, on 'Teaching for tolerance in the Indonesian Context: The contribution of school education'. In Japan I contributed to an International Symposium on Religious Education Textbooks, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Taisho University, in Tokyo. I also gave a presentation on 'Living with difference through religious and citizenship education' at Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo, a

Methodist foundation. One of the outputs from the Japanese collaboration is a book co-edited with Satoko Fujiwara, Professor of Religious Studies at Taisho University, which includes contributions from Korea, Indonesia and Japan and from the regions of Europe, North America and the Middle East (Ursula King responds to the various pieces in the final chapter). Contributors are from different religious and philosophical backgrounds, including Buddhist, Christian, Humanist, Jewish and Muslim (Jackson & Fujiwara 2008). The book explores different facets of peace education in relation to the topic of religion and opens up the discussion about the relationship between religious education and peace education.

In June I visited the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane to give the keynote lecture at the national conference on religious education there, to lead some workshops and to take part in the launch of a two volume international handbook involving an editorial team from Australia, the USA and Europe (de Souza, Engebretson, Durka, Jackson & McGrady 2006). The handbook has nearly 90 contributions from scholars around the world. My own section focuses on religious education and culture and includes chapters from Geir Skeie and Sissel Østberg (Norway), Eleanor Nesbitt, Andrew Wright and Liam Gearon (UK), Fernand Ouellet (Canada), Mireille Estivalezes (France), Wilna Meijer (the Netherlands), Bruce Grelle and Mary Elizabeth Moore (USA), Terence Lovat, Philip Hughes and Richard Rymarz (Australia), John Wright (New Zealand), Recep Kaymakcan (Turkey) and David Chidester (South Africa), plus a couple of my own contributions.

The Council of Europe

Within Europe, work focused on three projects. I have been involved with the Council of Europe's work on religious diversity and intercultural education since 2002. The Council of Europe is an inter-governmental organisation, currently including 47 member states, plus various observer states from outside Europe, and is concerned with the promotion of human rights. It is

based in Strasbourg, and is home of the European Court of Human Rights as well as comprising various divisions dealing with matters such as education and social policy. Members of Parliament from the member states (including 18 British MPs) serve on the Parliamentary Assembly, while the Foreign Ministers of the member states serve on the Committee of Ministers. These bodies formulate policy recommendations, and the Committee of Ministers periodically issues joint policy statements that go to all the governments of member states. These aim to influence policy development in particular countries. The project I was involved in looked at how issues of religious diversity could be incorporated into intercultural education and citizenship education across Europe. The project brought together educators from many European countries and observer states, and there were various conferences, meetings and workshops. My role included being part of the writing team which produced the final project book (Keast 2007). This has now been translated into several languages (including French, Russian, Greek and Norwegian) and is being used as the basis for various follow-up conferences around Europe. Another role was to assist in the drafting of the Ministerial Declaration which will go to member states later this year. This recommendation provides a set of principles that can be used by all 47 member states. These include:

- agreement that religion is at least a "cultural fact" that contributes, along with other elements such as language and historical and cultural traditions, to social and individual life;
- information on and knowledge of religions and philosophies fall within the public sphere and should be taught in order to develop tolerance as well as mutual understanding and trust;
- religious or philosophical conceptions of the world and beliefs develop on the basis of individual learning and experience, and should not be entirely predefined by one's family or community;
- an integrated approach to religious, moral and civic values should be encouraged

in education; intercultural dialogue and its religious dimension are an essential precondition for the development of tolerance and a culture of “living together”.

One dissemination conference was held in Athens in October last year, and more are to follow. One of my other roles for the Council of Europe was to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a European Centre for Human Rights Education. My recommendation of an interdisciplinary centre, incorporating citizenship, intercultural, global and peace education, as well as studies of religious diversity, was adopted; the Centre will be based in Oslo and will be launched later this year. A further Council of Europe initiative is an interdisciplinary project on ‘intercultural autobiography’, to which Julia Ipgrave and I provide input from the perspective of religious education. Materials are currently being trialled in different parts of Europe and will be made available later this year.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The second project was for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which has 56 participant states, including most European states plus the USA and Canada. It is engaged in setting standards in fields including military security, economic and environmental cooperation, conflict resolution and human rights issues. In relation to human rights, the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) works in the areas of election observation, democratic development, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, and law. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights is therefore well placed to play a role in facilitating dialogue and understanding between different religions and beliefs and in making educational policy recommendations.

I was a member of the drafting team of the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*, and gave a speech at the launch in Madrid on 28th November 2007. The *Toledo Guiding Principles* were written in

response to requests from the UN and other inter-governmental bodies to facilitate teaching about religions and beliefs in order to promote tolerance and understanding. It was fascinating working with international human rights lawyers from countries such as Italy, Serbia, Spain, the USA and the UK (Professor Malcolm Evans, Dean of the Bristol Law School) on this project. The drafting team as a whole reflects a range of different religious and non-religious positions, helping to ensure that the perspective of different religious and belief communities is taken into account and that the guiding principles are balanced and inclusive. The *Toledo Guiding Principles* includes chapters on the human rights framework and teaching about religions and beliefs, preparing curricula, teacher education and respecting rights in the process of implementing courses in teaching about religions and beliefs.

The full text of the Toledo Guiding Principles (OSCE 2007) is available as a free download at: <http://www.osce.org/item/28314.html> I will be going to Washington in May to speak at the launch of the Toledo Guiding Principles in North America.

European Commission Framework 6 REDCo Project

The third European involvement is a research project funded by the European Commission Framework 6 programme, entitled ‘Religion in Education: A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries?’ (REDCo) (<http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html>).

This project involves collaborative research by teams from nine European universities – two from Germany, plus the Russian Federation, Estonia, the Netherlands, Norway, France, Spain and the UK. There are many strands to the research, including cross-European surveys of young people’s views about religions and education and a range of studies of teachers, pupils and public opinion, all using the interpretive approach developed at Warwick as a stimulus to theory and method (Jackson 2008). The project’s first two books are already out (Jackson, Miedema, Weisse and Willaime 2007;

Knauth, Bertram-Troost, Ipgrave and Jozsa 2008), as is a third from a closely related project on children's dialogue (McKenna, Ipgrave and Jackson 2008). The Warwick contribution to the REDCo Project includes school based research by teachers and lecturers working together as a 'community of practice', developing the interpretive approach to religious education in different contexts. Research conferences for the whole European REDCo Project have already been held in Hamburg, St. Petersburg, Tartu, Granada, Melilla and Amsterdam, with more to follow in Stavanger, Paris and Warwick. The Warwick meeting in November will be the last formal meeting of the project and will include an opportunity to present findings to the public.

Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit

The projects outlined above are just one aspect of the work of the newly expanded

Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, based in the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick. Current staff include myself, Professors Eleanor Nesbitt and Leslie Francis, Jim Beckford, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Associate Professor Judith Everington, Senior Research Fellows, Elisabeth Arweck and Mandy Robbins, and Research Fellows Ursula McKenna, Emyr Williams, Tania ap Siôn and David Lankshear. Julia Ipgrave, Kevin O'Grady and Andrew Village also contribute to the Unit's research as Associate Fellows. For details of current and recent research projects and further details of staff, our masters level courses by distance learning and our doctoral programme, please visit <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/go/WRERU> or <http://www.robertjackson.co.uk/>

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RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The Case for Studying Religious Experience across Cultures and Traditions **Paul Badham**

The main reason for studying religious experience is that it has so often been foundational for religion. Most people who believe in God do so because they have had experiences which make them think that God is real. That is certainly true of the founders, saints and heroes of faith in the main theistic traditions. But it is also true of people who may not wish to talk of 'God' but who have had experiences which matter to them, and which have led them to 'enlightenment' or to a new way of looking at the world or to a holistic 'spirituality'.¹

Religious experience also matters because it appears to exist across religious traditions. That is why A level exam boards suggest that the module on Religious Experience is particularly well suited for A2 study because of its potential for 'synoptic assessment' in drawing together what students have learnt about different religious traditions.

A third reason for focusing on religious experience is that it is an aspect of religion which still flourishes. One of the main findings of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre is that religious

experience is widespread in Western society. A variety of surveys show that between 31% and 49% of British people claimed to have been aware of 'a power or presence different from every day life.'² Similar surveys in Australia obtained a response rate of 44% and in the USA 43%.³ The accounts in the Hardy archive suggest that religious experiences today can be as significant to those who have them as those reported in previous centuries. David Hay even claims that 'For the majority of people in western society, religious interpretations of reality are not mere abstractions, but are rooted in personal experience.' This is quite opposite to what the widespread secularization thesis led people to expect.

However one problem with making any generalizations about religious experience on the basis of the Hardy archive and the research of scholars like David Hay is that their research and most comparable research elsewhere, has focused on religious experience in modern western societies (or from a more anthropological perspective on indigenous religions in what used to be called primal societies). But if any generalisations are appropriately to be

made about the religious experience of humankind it needs to be based on a truly cross-cultural foundation.

The importance of such a quest was spelt out by Robert Runcie, when as Archbishop of Canterbury he launched an appeal for the Alister Hardy Centre in 1990. He wrote:

If it can be shown that there is a 'common core' or 'ultimate sameness' to all religious experience, irrespective of creed, race or society, this could have profound implications for the evolution of common understanding across many of the current barriers which divide people in our world.

The project as defined by Runcie is impossible of fulfilment in a literal sense. From the very beginning of serious research we have learned of the need to speak of *The varieties of religious experience*. However if the same kind of variety were to be found across different cultures and traditions that would certainly be worth discovering.

However to treat the findings of research into religious experience as evidential or to build any theories upon it is very controversial. Most critics of the supposed 'evidential value of religious experience' suggest that the problem with studying religious experience is that we can never access 'raw human experience.' As Gordon Kaufman puts it: 'Religious experience', whatever this turns out to be, is never a raw, pre-conceptual, pre-linguistic experience ... on which theology can be built. It (like all the rest of experience) is always a construction or composite, heavily dependent for its form and qualities on the learned terms and concepts which give it particular flavour and shape'⁴.

At one level this must be true. We can only articulate any experience through the language we already possess. It is also true that part of the induction into any specific religious tradition will entail learning the language of that tradition. For example people who attend an 'Alpha Course' in Christianity, tend to describe their subsequent experience of 'being saved' in ways long familiar within the Christian tradition. However, this should not exclude the pos-

sibility that raw experience may challenge our linguistic preconceptions or that the study of experience may point to the need to expand our vocabulary in the way Otto did in coining the word 'numinous'.

To study religious experience across a variety of cultures, languages and traditions represents a way of testing the validity of Kaufman's objection. China was a useful place to start precisely because so many of the linguistic problems of discussing religion present themselves in the Chinese contexts. Christian Missionaries were so puzzled as to how to refer to 'God' in Chinese that Protestants and Catholics opted for different terms! A sophisticated scepticism towards talk of spiritual realities has long been characteristic of Chinese philosophy and whether Confucianism is, or is not, rightly regarded as a religion is intensively debated. Moreover on top of these historic puzzlements, China has been an officially atheist country since 1949.

One of the first things we found out was that neither of the Chinese phrases used to talk about 'religious experience' are known to ordinary Chinese people. Both expressions seem confined to Christian or academic circles. Pilot studies showed that this was also true of our initial questionnaire which was not intelligible to its intended audience. Only after nine revisions was the questionnaire sufficiently indigenised to be useful.

However the absence of a recognised terminology for religious experience does not imply the absence of religious experience. On the contrary, experiences of a religious nature have long been part of Chinese culture. Throughout Chinese history scholars and writers have referred to the effects and importance of 'seeing', 'feeling', 'knowing', 'hearing' or 'dreaming' of a power or thing that transcended themselves. It became clear to us that what we needed to do in our field work was to ask a wide variety of questions about experiences and beliefs that people may or may not have had in order to discover the extent to which religious experiences may have impinged upon their lives. We ended up with a vast questionnaire (fifty-one pages in the Eng-

lish translation) which took an interview of at least three-quarters of an hour to complete. With financial support from the John Templeton Foundation and the backing of academic colleagues across China, Xinzong Yao gathered together a team, who between them interviewed three thousand one hundred and ninety-six people from ten different sites across China.

What they discovered was that once one moved away from abstract concepts and asked about personal experience there was far more religiosity to be found among the Han Chinese than we had predicted.

The response to the abstract question 'are you a Buddhist' showed that only 4.4% of the Han Chinese would describe themselves as Buddhists, yet 27.4% had prayed to the Buddha or one of the Bodhisattvas in the past year, and 18.2% acknowledged the influence or control of the Buddha or one of the Bodhisattvas in their lives. Similarly while only 5.3% said they believed in reincarnation, 51.4% of them believe that their spouse, their relatives and their friends all resulted from what they had done in a previous life. Even more surprisingly 77.9% believed in the doctrine of causal retribution which only makes sense within a reincarnational framework. Similarly while only 2.8% describe themselves as Christian 11% believe they ought to follow the way of the Christian God.

The clearest difference between the abstract and the experiential comes in the different responses to questions about religious identity and religious experience. Only 8.7% of the Han Chinese describe themselves as religious. But when talking about their experience of life 28.6% of the Chinese feel comforted or empowered through prayer and worship; 41% believe that they should do their best to glorify God, the Lord of Heaven, the Buddha or their ancestors; and 44% think that life and death depend on the Will of Heaven.

The most fascinating response was to the Chinese equivalent of the Hardy question. This took the form: 'Some people have experienced that they were once and/or are frequently influenced by a kind of power that ordinary people cannot control and explain clearly. Have you ever had such an

experience?' The biggest surprise in the China Survey was that the overall response to this question was 56.7%. However, it was clear that this response was securely based, since when people were asked a further question about which spiritual power had influenced or controlled them they had no difficulty in spelling this out and indeed named a variety of 'spiritual powers' that they had encountered. If all these responses had been simply added together we would have arrived at the impossible total of 127% but a more realistic figure was reached by the further question asking which power had been experienced most frequently or deeply, which gave an overall result of 55.9%. The answers to these three questions taken together were sufficiently consistent to be taken as a reliable report of experiences people had had.

Concerning the nature of the spiritual power experienced; four of them, namely the God of Fortune (at 46.2%), the Will of Heaven (at 25.7%), Buddhas or bodhisattvas (at 18.2%) or the Christian God (at 6.1%) might be thought to approximate to some western concepts of deity. It is also interesting that 21.2% claimed experience of their deceased ancestors, 5% experienced spirits or ghosts and 4.2% spoke of forces of nature (*Dao* or *Qi*). The difficulty of naming the supposed spiritual reality is common across East and West. A survey by Hay and Heald in 1987 found that in Britain 27% claimed an awareness of God, 22% claimed an awareness of a guiding presence not called God, 18% had an awareness of the presence of the dead, 16% an awareness of a sacred presence in nature, 12% an awareness of an evil presence and 5% an awareness that all things were one.⁵ These findings overlap with several of the questions in our China survey and while the categorisation of that which was experienced does not precisely correspond to that used in our China study it is clear that in both cases the most common responses related to a believed awareness of some transcendental reality, the second category relates to encounters with the deceased, and in a few cases (7.1% in China and 5% in Britain) to a sense of oneness with the Universe.



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11. Approaches of academic study of religions in the study of archaic religions.
12. Reconsidering identities: religion, nation and politics.

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The similarities between these British and Chinese surveys about religious experience is echoed in what the survey found about religious belief and practice in the two countries once one probes below the surface. When it came to how they identified themselves 8.7% of Chinese describe themselves as 'religious.' This is remarkably like the figure for people in Britain who actually practice their religion. Similarly 26.1% of Chinese in our survey declared themselves to be 'atheist' which is extraordinarily close to the British Humanist Association's estimate of at least 25%⁶ for the number of atheists in Britain. In both China and Britain that leaves about 65% in the middle who are neither atheist nor religious but occasionally engage in religious practices and occasionally have religious experiences.

However our survey found two profound differences between the two countries. In Britain religion plays a significant role in public life and there is considerable intellectual interest in religion. Television programmes and newspapers frequently engage with religious matters, every year more children opt to study religion at GCSE and A level and University courses continue to expand. In the area of publishing the situation is that 'Every year the amount published in the area of theology and religious studies increases and diversifies.'⁷ By contrast in China religion plays no part in public life and the vast majority of religious believers never read a religious newspaper, visit a religious website or view a religious programme. The majority of believers never even listen to sermons or listen to sutra illustrations. Not surprisingly therefore our Survey found that many religious believers are extremely ill-informed about their religion. One reason for this is that for many years there has been little access to information about religion. However this situation is now changing. Publication of religious texts is increasingly permitted and a new intellectual interest in religion is emerging in Chinese Universities.

This highlights a second difference between Britain and China which is that all figures for religious practice and belief in Britain show a steady decline whereas in China the figures are all consistently upward. Our survey shows a significant increase in religious commitment over a comparable survey ten years ago and that the increases are generally higher among the younger age groups. A Government report also shows that in each of the past five years the main religions of China have increased their membership by about 5.9%. These findings are fascinating because it is so often assumed that religion declines as modernity advances. However this appears not to be the case in China where religion is growing in the most rapidly modernizing country of the twenty-first century. But this should not really surprise us because religion also revived in nineteenth century Britain, and in twentieth century America which were the two most rapidly modernizing countries in their respective centuries.

We hope that the comparative study of religious experience in Britain and China will be followed by comparable surveys elsewhere. Scholars from Taiwan India, Russia, Turkey, Brazil and the USA have all asked permission to adapt the Chinese questionnaire to their own countries. Most of our would-be partners attended the BASR conference and presented their initial findings. The advantage of them using the Chinese model is precisely because the concept of 'religious experience' is largely unknown among ordinary Chinese and hence can only be discussed indirectly. However the results show that the 'reality' of religious experiencing can be discerned through the answers given and this can increase our confidence that such experiences are not simply a learnt linguistic usage but reflect what people believe they have encountered in their lives.

¹ Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution* Blackwells 2004

² Michael Argyle, *The Psychological perspective of Religious Experience* (2nd. Series Occasional Paper 8 Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, University of Wales Lampeter 1997) p. 2,

³ David Hay, *Religious Experience Today*, Mowbray, 1990, p.79

⁴ Gordon Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, Missoula: Montana, 1975, p.6).

⁵ David Hay: *Religious Experience Today* Mowbray, 1990, p.83.

⁶ Hanne Stinson: 'Do faith groups exert too much influence?' *The Edge*, E.S.R.C, July 2006, p.20.

⁷ Editorial in *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, June 2006.

Xinzhong Yao and Paul Badham's book *Religious Experience in Contemporary China* is published by the University of Wales Press.

The Case for Studying Religious Experience across Cultures and Traditions: A Response: Douglas Davies

In practical terms, the effort involved in large scale studies is immense and Professors Paul Badham and Xinzhong Yao deserve both credit and support in their ventures. As someone currently engaged in two Europe wide projects, WaVe (Welfare and Values in Europe) and TRES (Teaching Religion in a European Setting), both funded by the European Commission, I can appreciate the even greater work involved in Badham's Project.

In theoretical terms I am deeply persuaded of the value of 'the comparative method', itself both foundational to the history of the study of religion and basic within contemporary research. Certainly, comparison is also important when seeking to define or even to abandon the very category of 'religion' when approaching the detailed life of a culture surrounding its self-understanding. We have known for some time that 'religion' is a contested term and that, while it is often a useful guide, it can sometimes turn on us as some undomesticated dog. We live with that caution.

When I say 'we' I am also aware that the corporate body of scholars of religion includes a wide variety of traditional academic disciplines, each with their own preferred methods and conventions. I am also aware of the potential dual role of personal religious belief that can, variously, inspire or haunt theological presuppositions both within theological methods and even the methods of the humanities, social, and life sciences. We need to be as self-

consciously aware of and as explicit as possible over these facts.

Only after those comments can I turn to Badham's project, to its foundational base in the Alister Hardy study of the 'different experience',¹ and to my key critical question. Is the search for statistical profiles of the 'different experience' a search for a proof for the existence of God? If it is, then it is an example of the centuries old theological venture in 'proofs' and deserves its place within - within what? Certainly within theology as a confessional activity and, given philosophy's part in those discussion, in certain kinds of philosophy, too. But not, I think, in that kind of academic study of religion whose perspectives are not confessional. This view, of course, is contentious, as Badham indicates. But it does assume that the proper study of ritual, of conceptual and sensory life within historical-cultural contexts lies in the social-sciences and humanities. I do not say this because I assume that God does not exist but because, on the basis of long experience of research and many research students, I cannot see how 'God' can be factored into any cultural aspect of social life. That is not, of course, to say that the effect of people's belief in a particular conception of God cannot be factored, that was the whole point of Max Weber's Protestant Ethic and has underlain my own extensive researches in Mormonism.

So, what of the 'different experience' question? Following my concern with the con-

fessional-drive my basic problem with it, and with Paul Badham's paper at the last BASR Conference, is one of interpretation and categorization. In particular of this experience as a singular phenomenon, or even as a 'kind of variety'. His paper reads as though there is 'no escape' from its driving hypothesis that 'religious experience' of something 'transcendent' is everywhere present. And this is why the basis of empirical research must be made clear in the survey preparation and in data the analysis. Here we need care, for statistical results may exert a certain charm over the mind, especially if one has not generally engaged in a great deal of empirical work. That human beings as embodied cultural animals have experiences is not news, even though it is only more recently that studies in emotion have begun to develop in serious ways. But an ease of slippage from reported experiences in response to intentionally formulated questions to a divine 'transcendent' source is dangerous. It would, for example, be equally possible to interpret 'different experiences' as moments when people experience that 'society' which has been internalized within them through socialization. Durkheim's society as God can be a powerful presence, not least when symbolized as ancestor. Indeed, the major failure of the Hardy-test lies in the sense of something being 'different from every day life'. The phenomenological fact of life lies precisely in the great variety of periodic experiences and in the creativity of individuals as they engage with their social and natural worlds and with their own sense-memory base. The 'evidential value' of 'religious experience' is that human beings sometimes conceive of 'powers' and, in terms of philosophical-theology, even of 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'. The meaning-making drive of human psychology and society often turns plausibility into what one might call 'super-plausibility': to assume it is the basis of theology involves some kind of an act of faith.

What I read from Badham's Chinese case is that the Chinese are human. Some issues of his interpretation, however, leave me amazed, unsure of how to proceed. For

example, are the 8.7% of Chinese who, today in a period of 'increase of religious commitment', are reckoned to be 'remarkably like' those 'in Britain who actually practise their religion', in what is, presumably, a period not of increase in religious commitment truly comparable? Why does the Chinese ascending graph happen to correspond with the British descending graph?

Let me, finally, raise three of the many more issues that could be pursued. First, I am not surprised that 77.9% of the Chinese had a sense of 'causal retribution' because, as one currently alive theoretical perspective would show, reciprocity or gift-theory underlies practically the whole of social life everywhere. Indeed, it is as close to a universal in the study of religion as one can get, as karma and merit studies indicate. What is more, Badham is incorrect when he says that it is only in a reincarnation framework that this 'makes sense'. The whole of Christianity, as the Reformation highlighted, operates on a causal retribution scheme, albeit set in a grace-atonement style framework. Much the same could be said for some ancestor-linked schemes. Second, the issue of secularization and sacralization really does need much firmer historical and social location than it is given here. Third, and finally, let me take a case from my own researches directly related to Badham's work to highlight the complexity of interpretation.

In what has been, perhaps, the most extensive study of attitudes to death in the UK, conducted in 1995, some 1,600 individuals were interviewed in their own homes, with English as the native language of practically all concerned. It was found in that study that approximately a third (35%) of a very carefully constituted random sample reckoned to have experienced the presence of a dead person.² Women had this experience practically twice as often as men. In a quite different interview survey of nearly 490 active members of the Church of England it was also found, for example, that some 36% of men and 38% of women who attended the Holy Communion service reckoned that it gave

them a 'sense of dead loved ones'. Here the gender differences between the two groups raise interesting questions in and of themselves and to this we could add regional differences between, for example, Lincolnshire where 56% mentioned the dead at the Eucharist compared with Gloucestershire's 28%. We could also show that even of those on church electoral rolls 10% did not believe in life after death with a further 21% not knowing. So what? It is at this point that interpretation becomes important and different methodological and motivational approaches become relevant. What sense can be made of these within a culture we think we know even before we seek to relate them to other societies? This is an important question. Take the dead, for example. Should we interpret the data to indicate that about a third of the departed decide to come and influence their living descendents whilst two thirds have no ongoing interest in the living? Personally, reject that interpretation in favour of a psycho-social explanation of memory and of triggers to memory both in domestic and liturgical contexts. Whether souls exist or not or, even if they do, whether they survive for more than a few

hours or days after the death of the body is, I think, a matter for religious-philosophical belief. However, I consider that we now know enough from sociological-anthropological studies about how humans conceive of their worlds to understand that 'souls' are constructs. Here I will take this argument no further, neither rehearsing those early comparative religionists who thought that 'the dead' had a major part to play in the evolution of the idea of God, nor pinpointing contemporary cognitive science on the role of belief in life-adaptation. I will simply say that ancestors are not always irrelevant, and that their work goes on.

In conclusion, then, I am deeply interested in the comparative evidence Badham's project may yield but am entirely sceptical over the motivation of the use of the Hardy 'different experience' question. I hope Paul Badham and his colleagues will be clear over whether or not they see their work as a theological exercise in providing an argument for the existence of God. Only by such clarity can we locate their work be sure we know what we are doing in the study of 'religion'.

¹ I first became familiar with this question in the mid 1970s when at Nottingham University, when I read many of the letters in the Hardy file as part of post-graduate supervision..

² Douglas Davies and Alastair Shaw (1995) *Reusing Old Graves, A Report on Popular British Attitudes*, Crayford, Shaw and Sons.

³ Douglas Davies, Charles Watkins and Michael Winter, (1991) *Church and Religion in Rural England*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh.

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A Reflection on 'religious experience' **Brian Bocking**

'Existence', as the Buddha might have said 'is an out-of-nirvana experience'. In this sense 'experience' is certainly foundational for religion, as it is for everything else in life. The English term 'experience' covers such a wide semantic field that there is hardly any activity or state of mind that it excludes. In some ways this is a helpful feature of the term; at A-level it makes possible, as Paul Badham observes, synoptic

approaches to quite disparate religions and cultures. At another level, that of critical evaluation of the discursive strategies employed in the modern study of religions, the liberal use of the term 'religious experience' presents a number of problems. The key issue is of course the genealogy of the term 'experience' and its (largely unconscious) deployment by successive scholars of religion to mark out an area of human

existence which is distinctively religious and quintessentially private, personal and thus beyond reductive explanation. Robert Sharf, in his article 'Experience' in Mark Taylor (ed.) *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Princeton, 1998, pp.94-116 has analysed with great lucidity the problems which arise when we use the term '[religious] experience' uncritically in this way. I attempted to review and refine Sharf's analysis in a DISKUS article 'Mysticism: No Experience Necessary?' (DISKUS Vol. 7 (2006) <http://www.basr.ac.uk/diskus/diskus7/bocking.htm>). For those who think that there is some kind of easily comprehensible relationship between 'religious experience' and 'religious activity', I kindly urge them to read at least Sharf's article on the subject, if not mine.

The BASR conference in Edinburgh in September 2007 was constructed largely round the theme of 'religious experience' and it provided a forum for a number of lively debates more or less related to this theme. A welcome development was that the theme, and accompanying financial support, brought to BASR for the first time a number of Chinese and other international scholars working on the study of religious experience in China and elsewhere. However, as Paul Badham's article in this issue makes clear, the English term 'religious experience' cannot readily be translated into non-Western languages, and the Chinese 'equivalent' of the Hardy question about religious experience necessarily became a series of different questions about uncontrollable influences. These new survey questions evoked answers in China which identified quite specific spiritual powers such as the God of Fortune, the Will of Heaven, the Christian God, ancestors, ghosts and Dao or qi. Unless one adopts the theological position that the Chinese God of Fortune and the Christian God are one and the same transcendental reality operating differently under different names (as well as the orientalist assumption that the Chinese themselves don't know this), such responses

indicate that religious ideas and practices in China are for the most part different from those in the West, not similar. In other observable respects too, Chinese religion is different. In China today public religious activity is increasing and diversifying year on year as society modernises and state restrictions on overtly religious behaviour diminish, while in the West public institutional religion is declining, often in favour of personal and private forms of religiosity. Both trends could be seen as 'secularisation in the sense of a disconnection between religious authority and state policy. However, these changes in style and quantity of religious activity seem to bear no relation to adventitious 'religious experiences' in the Jamesian sense; the figures for such experiences apparently remain static while observable religious activity rises and falls. In what sense, then, are such religious experiences 'foundational' for 'religion'? It seems to me (as to Sharf and many others) that this question still awaits a careful and convincing answer.

A story: there were three applicants for a post at my local dental surgery. One applicant had never done any dental work but asserted that God would help her when the time came. The second had full dental training and had been filling teeth eight hours a day for thirty years; she herself saw nothing special in the process but was widely admired and her waiting room was always crowded. The third explained that she had been resting by a tree at 4.17pm one September day in 1988 when she was summoned out of her body and into the presence of the King of the Tooth Fairies, who painlessly extracted one of her upper incisors, replacing it with a perfect copy. This experience had completely removed her fear of both receiving and offering dental work. Which one got the job? The one who had the experience.

My plea is that we use the almost infinitely malleable term 'experience' (and indeed all technical terms in the study of religions) with great care.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Science and Religious Experience: Are they Similar Forms of Knowledge?

Grahame Miles (2007) Sussex Academic Press. pp. 429. 9781845191177 p/b £16.95 p/b; £55 h/b.

An excellent lecture in Cambridge, followed by a generous invitation to lunch from Sir Alister Hardy, and to see his Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford in 1976, re-awakened Grahame Miles' interest in religious experience. He then began thirty years of exploration and reflection. This book is, in part, a personal odyssey, begun as a boy aged ten, developed through a career as a Religious Education teacher in secondary schools and Senior Lecturer at Homerton College in the University of Cambridge. Miles focuses on religious experience and its relationship with science, and on what kind of knowledge they are. The book is partly designed for 6th form (levels 12 & 13) 'A level' and General Studies work on religious experience. Undergraduates would also find the book useful in this area. The book would also be of interest to teachers and the general reader.

A guide as to how to use the book is given, with a clear overview of the contents of each chapter, which are divided into easily digestible sections, with the arguments summarised at the end. This is invaluable, particularly as the material becomes more complex. School students in particular often do not have library resources to study many of the authors quoted, so Grahame Miles summarizes their work and follows that with his own comments.

The book offers a user-friendly guide to the epistemology of science and the humanities, showing how both types of knowledge begin with sense impressions, which are then interpreted through reason and understanding and ultimately accepted through the support of a believing community. Miles' particular interest is in religious experience as a form of knowledge and he moves from a study of scientific knowledge to an overview of moral, personal and reli-

gious knowing. In all forms of knowledge there is room for interpretation, from very little in science, to more in the humanities and even more in the spiritual.

At the beginning is an encouraging disclaimer. Grahame Miles explains his own wariness of fearsome words such as 'hermeneutics' and admits to a distaste for footnotes but has to accept the use of both. He does, however, frequently explain difficult words and concepts. All this leads the student in gently, as does the first chapter, with a personal experience on Lake Windermere. Things get more complicated from then on, but Miles manages to summarise different kinds of knowledge in a lively and cogent manner. He traces the development of scientific thinking from Newtonian clarity to Relativity, Quantum Mechanics and Chaos Theory and Darwin's Theory of Evolution is also explained.

Miles then considers different ways of knowing which cross the boundaries of science and the humanities, showing that scientific discovery is not in fact objective, but subjective, led by scientists pursuing their own search for truth, formulating hypotheses which are subsequently rigorously tested. Miles then moves on to personal knowledge and emotional intelligence and brings the argument on to religious knowing. Various thinkers and approaches to religion are considered and then religious and mystical experiences. Research from Starbuck's study of conversion in 1899 onwards is summarised.

Miles describes the work of Sir Alister Hardy and the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales, Lampeter. To obtain data on the religious experiences of ordinary people, Hardy posed a question in the national press, 'Have you been aware of, or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?' The 3000 replies he received form the basis of the present day archive of over 6000 accounts of spiritual experiences. Miles discusses what can be learned from them, using the same process as for attaining scientific knowledge

and describes his own research project with sixth form pupils (aged 17-19 years), where he found that 56% answered the 'Hardy Question' in the affirmative.

The only caveat I have about the book is that in its broad scope, there are inevitably times when one wants to stop the author and take issue with what appear to be sweeping remarks and generalisations. There is the occasional slip (the omission of 'Noetic' before 'Quality' when citing William James' marks of mystical experience) and reference to Marete Jakobsen as 'he' although she is in fact a woman. One hopes that the second edition will deal with such minor matters.

This is a fascinating read as well as an invaluable resource for students and teachers, a comprehensive account of a vast and complex subject.

Marianne Rankin, Chair of the Alister Hardy Society

Bishops' Wives and Children: Spiritual Capital Across the Generations

Douglas J. Davies and Matthew Guest, 2007 Aldershot: Ashgate. pp. 207 ISBN 978-0-7546-5485-8£50h/b

Bishops' wives and children: spiritual capital across the generations disseminates the results of Douglas Davies' and Matthew Guest's empirical study of the social influence of the Church of England. The book covers a wide range: the transmission of religious ideas and values across generations; the ways in which intelligent, articulate, well educated, hard working men have formed and developed their identities, their ideas and their religious practices within the context of their Christian ministry; the impact on women of being married to senior members of the church of England and the ways in which bishops' children reassess in adulthood the experience of living in vicarage or palace. The aim of the book is to "examine the constellation of factors surrounding Anglican bishops and their families in advancing an exploration of the social expressions of

Christian identity." (p. 3) It is perhaps Davies and Guest's rejection of simple causal relationships in favour of a position which accepts complexity which ensures that the study has a significance beyond its immediate topic.

The aims of the study itself were threefold, "to: (a) chart the ministerial development of senior Anglican clergymen; (b) assess how the responsibilities of leadership shape the home life of clergy families, and (c) trace how each of these factors contributed to the developing identities of the sons and daughters of these clergy." (p. 2) The study was grounded primarily in sociological theory and method but it draws on history, anthropology, theology and psychology in a satisfactory rounded way so that, for example, the statistical tables and analysis add empirical weight and reveal meaning rather than merely prompting further frustrating questions.

The book has much to teach us about the formation, development, transmission and reception or rejection of religious ideas and values across generations. Its authors reject the kinds of postmodern discourse which dismiss the influence of families on values maintained into adulthood. Instead they bring together two theoretical perspectives which allow for such influence. The first is what they call, spiritual capital. This is an extension of the notion of cultural/social/religious capital which recognises not only that a resource (or capital) is transmitted between generations, but also that religious meaning and influence is more free-floating than Bourdieu's conceptualisation of religious capital allows for. The capital that is transmitted, while it is rooted in the Church of England, can include elements such as positive attitudes to education and wide social opportunities, but it is also fluid enough to be adapted to various interpretations. Bishops' children can be selective in what they retain, adapt and deploy from their upbringing and, significantly, the status of their fathers leave them with rich resources to select among.

The second, related, theoretical perspective of this study is symbolic exchange or

gift theory. It is largely in consideration of the idea that social and, especially, family relationships may be characterised by a cycle of giving, receiving and giving again that the sociological nature of the study is enriched by a theological perspective. The status and responsibilities of bishops mean not simply that they transmit capital; they also shape social/religious/spiritual capital and deal in it in distinctive ways which relate to their charismatic status.

The book explores the disintegration of continuity and the impact of secularisation on children from homes with foundations in tradition and establishment: "the children of these bishops may be viewed as caught between the traditions of the church and the conventions of late twentieth century British culture." (p. 169) It is this feature of the study that gives it significance beyond its immediate subject matter.

This is an engaging book in which theory is explored through vivid testimony. The ways in which the bishops themselves look back on their ministry and on the development of their lives is just as fascinating as the accounts of the impact of living with a bishop provided by wives and children. The range of responses Davies and Guest encountered is broad and encompasses what we might have expected but there are also some surprises, for example, the bishop's daughter who, though she attended church, could assert that in her home, "religion was just not spoken about...it was never there" and that she knows no Bible stories (p135). The richness of the data means that there are fascinating details to be pondered: statistical data on the churchmanship of the bishops (all of whom were retired when the study was undertaken) shows the extent to which they changed or maintained their position between ordination and retirement.

This is a book I shall return to for its theoretical literacy, its methodological rigour and its rare ability to integrate these elements in the presentation of individual lives.

Helen Waterhouse, Religious Studies, The Open University

Religious Studies: a Global View

Gregory D. Alles (editor), London: Routledge. pp. *xii*, 353 isbn 978 0 415 39743 8 £95

This accessible and timely collection is the fruit of considerable digestion and compression by an international group of scholars. It belongs to a growing genre of studies of the social and cultural location of the disciplinary formation called 'religious studies' (RS). Victorian pioneers like Müller and Tiele included consideration of the relationship of the new 'science of religion' to other disciplinary enterprises, particularly Theology. And the indefatigable Canadian scholar, Louis Jordan, included information about institutional arrangements for the new field of 'comparative religion' in his extensive bibliographical surveys *Comparative Religion: its genesis and growth* (1905) and *Comparative Religion: its adjuncts and allies* (1915). But like his Victorian predecessors, Jordan was largely preoccupied with methodological matters 'internal' to the field as an academic enterprise. The question of the 'external' relationship of the study of religion to its local environments would not be broached seriously until the development of sociology of knowledge and history and philosophy of science approaches to RS later in the twentieth century.

For example, Michael Pye's edited volume, *Marburg Revisited: institutions and strategies in the study of religion* (1989), discusses 'institutional and ideological constraints on the study of religion to be met with in various parts of the world' (p. 7); the volume includes early assessment of the development of the study of religion in China, and in Islamic contexts. Gerard Wiegers' and Jan Platvoet's edited volume, *Modern Societies and the Science of Religions* (2002), addresses similar questions: 'By which socio-political and cultural factors is the Science of Religions affected? Which factors stimulate it, or ... impede its flourishing?' (p. *vii*). Wiegers argues that 'students of religion pursue their research in a social, political, juridical, economic, and cultural field of force which is ... important to study' (p. 18). Both vol-

umes bring out a basic tension between theoretical debates 'internal' to the academic self-constitution of the field, and 'external' constraints derived from the location of the academic formation within a societal 'field of force'.

The dialectic between 'internal' and 'external' constraints can also be found in monographs such as Donald Wiebe's *The Politics of Religious Studies* (1999) and Timothy Fitzgerald's *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (2000). In these examples the dialectic is resolved in incommensurable ways. Wiebe's *Politics* defends a 'pure', research-led model of RS based in the social and natural sciences, answerable to no-one outside the academy; Fitzgerald's *Ideology* argues for collapsing RS into 'applied' (critical) cultural studies, on the grounds that RS *qua* RS remains bound to the agendas of liberal theology and governmental-imperial *pouvoir-savoir*.

The internal-external dialectic also runs through the present collection. The contributors leave it unresolved, although different emphases emerge between them. First off, the volume very usefully expands the geographical range of enquiry: many readers will find here fascinating 'new' regional historiographies of RS to digest. Only around one third of *Marburg Revisited* and two fifths of *Modern Societies and the Science of Religions* treats non-Euro-American affairs. In contrast more than three quarters of the present volume is devoted to other areas of the globe.

In his Introduction the editor, Gregory Alles, who is Professor of Religious Studies at McDaniel College in Westminster, Maryland, describes the collection as a 'map' (p. 3) of the 'global enterprise' (p. 2) of RS. It is based on a division of the world into ten regions: western Europe (Michael Stausberg); eastern Europe (Eugen Ciurtin); North Africa and West Asia (Patrice Brodeur); Sub-Saharan Africa (Ezra Chitando); South and Southeast Asia (Rowena Robinson and Vineeta Sinha); Continental east Asia (He Guanghu, Chung Chin-hong and Lee Chang-yick); Japan (Satoko Fujiwara); Australia, New

Zealand and the Pacific Islands (Majella Franzmann); North America (Gustavo Benavides); and Latin America (Steven Engler, Anatilde Idoyaga Molina, Renée de la Torre, Paulo Barrera Rivera and Sylvia Marcos).

The global scope indicates a 'view' rather than a 'vision' (p. 3), by which Alles implies a descriptive rather than a prescriptive project. Nevertheless the difference blurs. 'One may perhaps dream', he writes, 'that the volume will help change the way we think about the study of religions' (p. 3) and he entitles his Afterword 'Toward a global *vision* of Religious Studies' (emphasis added). He invokes a famous passage from Wilfred Cantwell Smith's 1959 article, 'Comparative religion – whither and why?', which represents the development of RS as a dialectic amongst pronouns: from study of an 'it', to 'they', to 'you' and finally (and reflexively) to 'us'. Alles is careful to separate out the position of his volume from Smith's theological prescription. The crucial question, of course, is '*in what register* are "we all" talking when we are talking as scholars of religion?' (p.4; emphasis added). He rejects former AAR president Margaret Miles' interpretation of 'religious studies' as a 'providentially ambiguous term' which can 'integrate the falsely polarized terms, "theological studies" and "the study of religion"' since this blurs 'a number of real differences', especially 'epistemological' (p. 5). Because 'definitional uncertainty and fuzzy boundaries would seem to be general characteristics of almost all human conceptualization', he writes, they are 'not reasons to abandon the distinction between knowledge and non-epistemic religious claims' (p. 6). For Alles, therefore, 'the study of religion requires a rigorous restraint, but one that is epistemological, not religious' (p.6).

Despite this crucial emphasis on epistemology, the criticism of European parochiality implied by the trope of the global introduces a cultural and political dimension into the enterprise. In simple terms, this reintroduces the tension between 'internal' (epistemological) and 'external' (sociology of knowledge) factors

variously identified and treated by Pye, Wieggers, Wiebe and Fitzgerald. I would like briefly to identify several issues connected with this internal-external dialectic as it manifests on Alles' expanded stage.

First up is the old chestnut: the difference between studying religion and practising religion. Despite Alles' critique of Miles, the evidence in this volume shows epistemic drift between description and prescription in many regions, whether this takes the form of Christian drift, as in New Zealand (p. 228) and Latin America (p. 276-7), or Buddhist drift as in Japan (p. 201), or in the form of the incursion into state education of privately endowed chairs, as in the USA (p. 247). Confessional drift may change its stripes over time, as in western Europe where anecdotal evidence suggests new religionist (and secularist-atheist) dispositions have replaced Christian amongst scholars in RS (p. 27). The related point of defining 'religion' periodically arises amongst contributors, as in the thoughtful comments on the 'strangeness of the concept' in Korea (pp. 175-7) and the deconstruction of western secular discourse in relation to Islam by Patrice Brodeur (pp. 87-90), but not as systematically as one might expect in a volume about the study of religion(s).

The second issue is the historical interaction of the nation state with teaching and research in religion through the linkage of educational policy to political and diplomatic strategy. This takes several forms. For example, the ideological conflicts of 'cold war' and 'post-9/11' saw increased priority and funding given in the USA and western Europe to understanding the (godless) Soviet or (too godly) Islamic 'other'. Conferences and research on British Muslims and the content of Islamic Studies in universities are a current highly visible result of the latter in the UK context. The end of the cold war in 1989 saw the emergence of a lively post-Communist study of religion, as shown by the example of EASR conferences in Bucharest in 2006 (described as 'payback time' by the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs; p. 305) and in Brno in 2008. RS has also played a

part in consolidating and legitimating the identities of new states, albeit to different ends (pluralizing in the case of Australia, p. 224; homogenizing in India, pp. 131-2). Colonialism and its aftermath is a significant legacy: thus, Japanese colonialism enabled ethnographic studies of religion to develop in a roughly similar way to social anthropology in the British Empire (p. 198) while, conversely, political and cultural decolonization has had some impact on RS methodology in sub-Saharan Africa (p. 112, 118) and in north Africa and west Asia (p. 87).

A closely related issue is the apparent elective affinity (in functional terms) between RS and modernization: that is, with industrialization, democracy and liberal economy. The obvious examples are China after 1976 (p. 163) and Japan after 1945 (chapter 7), but Mexico is also relevant here (p. 277), and the post-1989 eastern European experience is again instructive. This affinity suggests that the models of RS which emerged in these (and other) countries reproduce in their methodologies the characteristics of plurality, tolerance, and rationalization typical of modern liberal market economies. The economic conditions for the emergence of RS are particularly striking, as shown by the depressing correlation between colonial history, poverty and institutional underdevelopment of RS in a region such as sub-Saharan Africa. Here, as Chitando writes, 'low salaries, difficult working conditions, [and] oppressive regimes ... have meant that many scholars spend their time worrying about basic survival ... How does one write a brilliant article when one has not been paid for three months?' (p. 113).

However, despite these 'external' constraints on the historical development of RS, 'internal', epistemological criteria remain vital if RS is to defend and reproduce itself as a robust academic formation within the modern university. Hence in the Afterword, Alles rejects the trivialising rhetoric of 'epistemicide' and 'neo-liberal imperialism' evident in some culturalist approaches. 'Science is a global undertaking', he writes. 'It has to be' (p. 319). He

also points to the international growth of higher education which is likely to continue to bring students to universities to study religion especially – from trends in survey data - if RS aligns itself with the social sciences. But despite this healthy student demand, Alles is aware of enduring challenges to the scholarly study of religion which issue from a powerful combination of ‘neurobiological and social dynamics’. Robert McCauley’s argument that ‘the human brain finds religion easy but science considerably more difficult’ is reinforced, in Alles’s view, by default entry into RS of ‘people who find religious thinking personally attractive’. All regions of the world provide evidence on this score, going by the contributions to this volume. Ironically, constraints of cognition and socialisation may only be magnified by ring fencing the study of religion ‘in its own academic unit’ (p. 320). On this argument, those who argue for autonomous RS departments may be digging their own (scientific) graves.

Allles’s wry realism encapsulates the pragmatic approach of the volume: steering a course between universalism and cultural relativism, but listing to the former. Some will want it to list more firmly; many others, to list far less, or even to steer strongly in the other direction. All parties to the debate should attend more explicitly to the effects of tension between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ constraints on RS as an academic formation. Increasingly the challenge is to advance systematic analysis and explanation while acknowledging specificity and diversity. On this score the volume steers a generally steady, tactful course through increasingly choppy international waters. I urge all departments to order a copy and study it carefully.

**Steven J. Sutcliffe, School of Divinity,
University of Edinburgh**

From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions

James L. Cox. 2007, Aldershot: Ashgate. xii, 194, ISBN: 0754655695, £50

In this volume, Cox analyses critically the

history and assumptions underlying the use of the category ‘Indigenous Religions’. In fulfilling this aim, he reviews in depth the works of Geoffrey Parrinder and Andrew Walls, among others, who pioneered the study of ‘primal’ and ‘traditional’ (mainly African) forms of religion.

In defining ‘indigenous religions’ empirically, Cox adapts J.G. Platvoet’s earlier attempt and identifies three main characteristics: that they are local, based on kinship relations and transmit their traditions orally (page 61). Cox also supports Graham Harvey’s definition of indigenous as ‘belonging’ to a place, which can also include urbanised and ‘diaspora’ indigenous peoples who still maintain a connection to their ancestral home. However, I am not convinced that an emphasis on ancestor relationships is necessary for the definition, especially when applied to the North American context. Cox carefully avoids the general trend to employ the term ‘indigenous’ politically as defined against western colonialism.

For me, the standout parts of this book that would be of value to any reader are sections that critique the ‘World Religions’ paradigm. Cox argues convincingly that the World Religions paradigm is inherently theological and recommends replacing it with a ‘science of religion’. Indeed, an aim of the book ‘is to establish religion as a scientific category fully worthy of being included amongst academic disciplines’ (page 79). Cox proceeds by outlining the problem of grouping together a wide range of phenomena as ‘indigenous religion’ and classing it within a World Religions paradigm. In many cases, he shows, the category ‘indigenous religion’ has merely replaced ‘savage’, ‘primitive’ and ‘primal’, retaining their philosophical essentialisms that ‘cannot be supported empirically, and in many cases conceal theological assumptions (page 141). Cox tests his definition on case studies from two different continents and time-periods, the pre-1940s traditions of the Yupiit of Alaska (more about the recent attempts to recover Yupiit traditions could have offered a further dimension) and the traditions of

the Shona-speaking people of Zimbabwe.

In chapter seven, Cox assesses recent critiques of the category 'indigenous religion', particularly the charges of Armin Geertz – that it continues a romantic pre-occupation with the exotic and primitive and cannot be justified empirically – by rejecting advocacy and confessional approaches to the study of indigenous relig-

ions. Cox's empirical approach offers a solution to the methodological and theoretical problems that have beset the category since its early employment in religious studies as a substitute for theological categories such as 'primal' and makes a strong case for rejecting the World Religions paradigm altogether.

Suzanne Owen, University of Edinburgh



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Islamic Studies: the Way Forward in the UK

Report on Two Seminars run by HEFCE on 23 Nov 2007 and 17 April 2008

The context for these seminars was the Government's decision to add Islamic Studies to a list of 'strategic subjects' in May 2007, which followed Attaullah Siddiqui's report *Islam at Universities in England* (April 2007). It was held as part of a programme of work to open up discussion about the discipline and to examine what HEFCE and others might do to support it, especially in the light of Recommendations 1 and 3 of the Siddiqui report. These argue for more teaching of Islam beyond the Middle East and on aspects of the tradition relevant to contemporary practice, more collaboration between universities, more postgraduate funding, and more 'add-on' modules for students specialising in other areas. A report of the first seminar is available on the HEFCE website, including full-text versions of all the keynote presentations, and will be followed by materials from the second seminar. What follows therefore is a discussion of matters arising which might be of interest to Religious Studies scholars.

Much of the debate in the first seminar concerned the scope and identity of the subject, with strong reactions against Siddiqui's criticisms of the Middle Eastern and historical/textual focus of current provision articulated by scholars representing those specialisms. The summary of the discussion published on the HEFCE website identifies three main areas within the field: (i) 'language-based studies – this may mean the acquisition of languages needed to study Islamic texts, or the study of Islamic languages in their own right. (The high cost of *ab initio* language training was identified.); (ii) social sciences – approaches to the study of Islam and Muslims in the modern world through the methodology and discourse of the social sciences, which may be embedded throughout a range of academic disciplines'; (iii) core 'Islamic studies' – the classical traditions and texts, and how they relate to current context'.

Such boundaries take on new significance in light of the possibility that strategic subjects may be exempt from ELQ related funding cuts. Positively, the recognition of area (b) opens up the possibility that the scope of ELQ exemption might be extended to a large range of courses, including introductory, the-

matic or comparative courses in Religious Studies. However it is of some concern that these are not explicitly mentioned, in spite of representations arguing for their inclusion. Furthermore, the HESA definition of Islamic Studies remains largely restricted to areas (a) and (b), and by the April seminar no further steps had been taken to gather data to enable the effective extension of the field of ELQ exempted courses.

One other issue from the first seminar will be of concern to RS scholars. A conflation of the agenda for Islamic Studies with the needs of Muslim students/academics, and hence blurring of boundaries between confessional and non-confessional approaches, was apparent in discussion and is rooted in the terms on which the Siddiqui Report was commissioned, and evident in its title (*Islam at Universities in England*). Thus in spite of assurances from HEFCE that 'we have no constitutional remit or desire to determine what is studied' a strong sense that the government is seeking to use the sector to promote an anti-radicalisation or community cohesion agenda remains.

Arguments over the definition of the discipline were less in evidence at the second seminar, which had a more consensual and pragmatic feel; attention was focussed on how a research and teaching infrastructure in the field could be developed, given the relatively modest £1 million investment that the government is currently proposing. HEFCE proposals here include support for the development of 'flexible modules [available] to students outside the core field', possibly as 'open educational content for the whole sector', and plans for the development of a 'virtual network of centres' (HEFCE, April 2008). The latter proposal seemed to be generally well received, preferred to a single centre which might concentrate resources, and hence weaken distribution of expertise and resources across the sector. The issue of designation of curriculum remains outstanding and a key priority for clarification if provision is not to be damaged by ELQ related cuts.

David Herbert, The Open University

Twenty years and more: research into minority religions, new religious movements and 'the new spirituality.' INFORM/CESNUR/ISORECEA Conference. London School of Economics, 16-19th April 2008

As part of their twentieth anniversary celebrations, Inform (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements) and CESNUR (the Centre for Studies on New Religions) organised this conference with the aims of assessing the changes that have taken place over the past two decades, surveying the current situation, and considering the fate of religious and spiritual groups in an increasingly multi-cultural world. In the opening plenary Eileen Barker reminded us of the situation, twenty years ago, when there was a growing awareness of emerging new religious movements, but no coherent understanding of the subject. Her vision then was that objective information on these movements should be collected using comparative social science methodology, and made available for different audiences. Inform was founded in January 1988 as an information network, so that people from all walks of life could have an academic objective account of new religious movements, free of some of the connotations that came with the terminology and discourses of that time. CESNUR was established later that year by a group of European and North American scholars with similar aim. The third participating organisation, ISORECEA (The International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association), was founded five years later to study religion in post-communist eastern and central Europe.

Helen Cornish (Goldsmiths, U. of London) explored the role of historical narratives in the formation of the modern witchcraft and the Wicca movement. The impact of critical studies in the history of witchcraft and on the historical narratives of practitioners of modern witchcraft and Wicca was clear. The debunking of the mythical histories of practitioners led to a pragmatic move to accepting the history of the modern movement in order to maintain the overall credibility of the movement. Validity and authenticity was then based more on the personal experiences that religious practice provides, and the connections with place, and

with people who have practised in a similar way in the past, even if there is no direct historical link.

Maria Balfer (U. of Koblenz-Landau) reported the findings of her study among the Pagan groups in London. She described the three degrees of openness in these groups. In open groups commitment to the practices is minimal and people can simply walk in to the meetings, rituals, and events. In semi-open groups some form of acceptance by other members is required, and some level of shared knowledge is assumed. Closed groups require regular commitment by members, and can be highly exclusive. She also observed that the open rituals and other events are usually organised and run by members of closed groups, forming a sort of 'clergy' among the Pagans. The term 'clergy', however, is disliked because of the hierarchical connotations. The reason why members of closed groups organise and run the events is more practical and based on experience. Marion Bowman (The Open University) discussed the 'Glastonbury effect', and how that has led to interchange and borrowing between different religious groupings in Glastonbury. She also illustrated how the effect is increasingly seen outside of Glastonbury, as groups move or expand their area of operation. This has led to opening and mixing of boundaries, and increasing in understanding, acceptance, borrowing, and accommodation of different religious practices.

Angela Coco (Southern Cross University, Lismore) presented a paper about locating Pagan community online. She used the concept of *communities of practice* to illustrate how the online communities are based on mutually felt concerns and shared vision of goals to be achieved. These are communities defined by the participants, and the definition is a process that can lead to splintering and regrouping. As an example she described how an email mailing list was first formed by an individual as a networking tool, and how

that was then split when a number of participants were not happy with the way it was moderated. These went on to start a new list, with a clearly defined, more democratic way of moderation. This process of formation, splintering, and regrouping was based on participant action and discussion, and the end result was a community of practice, founded of shared vision of democratically moderated Pagan network.

In the final day of the conference a panel was dedicated to discussion on the use, usefulness, and definition of the term New Age. Under the rubric of "If not New Age, then what?" four panelists presented their different views. George Chryssides (U. of Wolverhampton) argued that while New Age is broad and multifaceted term, and even if the nature and meaning of the term may have changed, it is still useful, generally understood, and used by practitioners as well. His view of the term as 'good enough' was opposed by Steven Sutcliffe (U. of Edinburgh), who saw the term as highly problematic in the broader taxonomy of religions. Religions tend to be arranged in a three tier classification system, where world religions hold the top position, new religions the second, and other, unclassifiable movements the third. However, this taxonomy is not based on clear method or principle. The problem with 'New Age' is that such taxonomy can be used as 'strategically essentialist' definition, with a political agenda. He calls for the deconstruction of 'New Age' to develop a new taxonomy of religion based on elementary forms of cognition, emotion, behaviour, sociality, communication, and authorising practices.

Liselotte Frisk (Dalarna Uni., Falun) had a more traditional family resemblance approach in her defence of the classification. She sees New Age as a 'cultural current' rather than an entity. She also saw the term as mainly an *etic* term, denoting this cultural current of changing nature and covering a great variety of elements. According to Frisk New Age's main attributes

are its focus on the individual and personal experience, its unofficial and un-institutionalised nature, global cultural mixing, and this-worldliness.

Kennet Granholm (Åbo Akademi, Turku) suggested the use of 'mass-popularised esotericism' instead of New Age, referring to the disagreement on the latter term. He also saw New Age as usually too inclusive, if based on family resemblance. He argued for the distinction of the now largely dead term 'New Age Movement' and the post-New Age milieu. The latter is characterised by the breakthrough of esoteric discourse. Granholm sees this as a way out of family resemblance definitions, as a way to find a link with an overall social change and religious change, and defining a particular genre of religion without proposing the existence of a movement.

Panel: Twenty Years of Studies on Pagan and Entheogenic Movements

Graham Harvey (The Open University) examined the classification of Paganism as a nature religion or religion of nature as opposed to a revealed religion. He explored the modern understanding of nature, separated from culture, as well as the implications of this partition in other polarisations such as indigenisation, globalisation, personalism and esotericism. Asking the question 'Is this Nature?', he discussed the images of industrial farming, architectural landscape or non-human culture and also directed attention to those easier to discern hybrids, such as the ozone hole, that, as contended by Bruno Latour, fall outside the scope of the modern constitution with its implacable divisions. In conclusion Harvey asked whether our understanding of 'nature' can be achieved from outside, through the iconic image of our planet seen from space, or from a more interior, localised and intimate relationship with our surroundings.

Mika Lassander (The Open University) presented his recent findings in his research with Pagans in Britain, Finland and

Ireland. He started by explaining the hypothesis of his research whereby the contemporary religious revival in the West is not a consequence of the secularisation process but it is intricately connected with the post-materialist value change that has taken place as a result of economic growth and social developments. Lassander drew attention to the perceived disintegration of community and noted that Pagan communities have survived as more open and penetrable networks, in accordance to the internal values held by the individuals that form them: universalism and openness to change for example. Finally Lassander interpreted his recent data and spoke about the emerging patterns in his research, where religious change can be seen resulting from the more general value change, rather than directly from modernisation.

Melissa Harrington (King's College, London) reviewed the latest developments in Pagan studies, punctuating the changes of direction. She spoke of the growing academic interest in Paganism and referred to the way in which different scholars contributed to this field, integrating her own work. Hence she spoke of the experience of conversion, one of the thematic foci of the conference that was reverberated in many of the sessions I attended. Harrington showed that what was often described or experienced as 'coming home' by Pagan practitioners was related to the archetypal presence of the mother image in Paganism. Lastly she drew some conclusions on the type of guidelines academics can derive from past lessons for the future study of Paganism.

Mika Lassander and Maria Nita

Emotion, Identity and Religious Communities

AHRC Funded Network at The Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, directed by Prof. Douglas Davies.

Members of BASR may be interested to hear of this recently funded Network that will run from April 2008 for two years. It has a core group of some fourteen scholars and will include some open events for others who may be interested, these will be advertised in due course. Its goal is to create a new network of scholars from different countries, universities and disciplines representing arts-humanities, social science, medicine-psychiatry who are largely unknown to each other in terms of previous personal contact but whose work offers potential for development of theory on religion and society. It aims to engage in theoretical work in two ways. First by evaluating formal, established, definitions of religion in religious studies, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and identifying absent issues. Second, to explore new potential paradigms on the basis of interdisciplinary work focused on the dynamic interface of emotion in relation to identity, religious communities and relations between such communities.

Those involved at the outset include people whose intellectual perspectives cover anthropology, history, music, psychology and psychiatry, sociology, theology and religious studies. They include people with specialist knowledge of Greek Orthodoxy and early Christianity; Catholicism in Early Modern Europe; Christian sects; current Internet religions; Confucianism and Christianity in South-east Asia; religion, identity, suicide and death; identity and drug addiction.

Further information will be found in due course on the Durham University Department of Theology & Religion website and from Prof Douglas Davies Tel. 0191 3343943 douglas.davies@durham.ac.uk.

INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER IN MODERNITY AND POST-MODERNITY

The University of Winchester, UK: 9-11 September 2008

THE CONFERENCE

Today, when the cultures of the world are coming closer yet also seem to be drawing further apart, there is an increasing need for the representative faith traditions to engage in dialogue and encounter. However, questions are asked as to the basis and impact of Interfaith Dialogue and Encounter.

'Interfaith Encounter in Modernity and Post-modernity' will bring together a group of around ten leading international scholars from Judaism, Islam and Christianity to form a central colloquium of intensive discussion. Around this, a wider conference on Interfaith Encounter will occur. Attendees will be able to deliver papers, observe colloquium sessions, and engage in Q&A sessions with the scholars involved. Each day of the conference will be themed:

DAY 1: the implications of modernity/ post-modernity for interfaith encounter

DAY 2: how scholarly debate about dialogue impacts on religious institutions

DAY 3: dialogue and public life, the role of religion in peacemaking and conflict resolution, business ethics, and debates about 'multiculturalism'

REGISTRATION AND SUBMISSION OF PAPERS:

Papers are called for (40 minutes: 30 talk, 10 questions) that explore the issues of Interfaith Encounter from a variety of perspectives and traditions (these may explore the main conference themes or other areas of Interfaith Encounter, Inter-religious Dialogue, theologies of religions and related studies).

Both delegates and observers are welcome.

*ABSTRACTS of proposed papers to be submitted by 1ST JUNE 2008.
REGISTRATION and CONFERENCE FEES to be paid by 1ST JULY 2008.*

Those wishing to attend should submit a registration request with the following data: family and personal name(s), address, institutional affiliation (if any), email, abstract and paper title (if any), attendance pattern (i.e. whole conference or specific day).

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

Dr Paul Hedges, Department of Theology and Religious Studies,
University of Winchester, Winchester, SO22 4NR
Tel: 0044 (0)1962 827451
Email: paul.hedges@winchester.ac.uk

CONFERENCE COSTS:

£250 (developed countries), £175 (developing countries) to include two nights single accommodation (9th, 10th), the conference dinner, and meals during the conference (dinner 9th to lunch 11th). Daily rate: £50 (lunch only 10th & 11th).

THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS:

Dr Paul Hedges; Professor Leonard Swidler; Revd Dr Alan Race

ORGANIZED IN CONJUNCTION WITH:

The Journal of Ecumenical Studies; Interreligious Insight; The Centre for Global Ethics; St. Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement (Leicester); The Centre for Interfaith Encounter

MEMBERS' RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Douglas Davies

'Purity, Spirit and Reciprocity in the Acts of the Apostles', in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies*, (eds) L.J.Lawrence and M.I. Aguilar, Leiden: Deo Publishing. Pp. 259-280. 2004

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'Dignity and Identity in Life and death', *Pharos*, Vol. 71, No.1, pp.16-17, 2005

'Anglican Soteriology: Incarnation, Worship, and the Property of Mercy', in *Salvation in Christ : Comparative Christian Views*, (eds) R.Keller, and R.L.Millet, Provo:UT: Brigham Young University. Pp.53-67. 2005

'Welfare, Spirituality, and the Quality of Life and Place', *Welfare and Religion* (ed) Anders Backstrom, Diakonivetenskapliga institutets, skrifterie 10. Uppsala. Pp.88-96. 2005

Joint editor with Helen Cameron, Philip Richter and Frances Ward of *Studying Local Churches: A Handbook*, London: SCM Press. 2005

'Inner Speech and Religious Traditions'. *Theorizing Religion*. (eds) J.A.Beckford & J. Wallis. Ashgate. Pp.211-223. 2006

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'The Invisibles' *New Scientist* Vol.196. No. 2625. pp.48-49, 2007

Bishops, Wives and Children, Spiritual Capital Across the Generations, Aldershot: Ashgate. Pp. 207. 2007

Merv and Jeaneane Fowler

Chinese Religions: Beliefs and Practices Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007.

Eleanor Nesbitt

'Issues in Locating UK Hindus' Sacred Space', *Contemporary South Asia* (special diaspora issue) 15 (2) June, 147-64. 2006

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'The Contribution of Nurture in a Sampradaya to Young British Hindus' Understanding of their Tradition' in J.Hinnells (ed) *Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas: From One Generation to Another*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 51-73, 2007.

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'Sikhism' in P. Morgan and C. Lawton (eds) (2nd revised edition) *Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 118-67, 2007.

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'The Changing Face of Europe: The Nature and Role of Ethnic Minorities in European Societies', in P. Penner (ed.), *Ethnic Churches – A Baptist Response*, European Baptist Federation/International Baptist Theological Seminary, Neufeld Verlag, Schwarzenfeld, pp. 17-63, 2006.

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“Conspiracy Theories and the Incitement of Hatred: The Dynamics of Deception, Plausibility and Defamation”, in M. Fineberg, S. Samuels, and M. Weitzman, eds. (2007), *Antisemitism: The Generic Hatred. Essays in Memory of Simon Wiesenthal*, Vallentine Mitchell, London, , pp. 182-197, 2007.

“Fethullah Gülen, Religions, Globalisation and Dialogue”, in R. Hunt and Y. Aslandoğan, *Muslim Citizens of the Globalized World: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, The Light Inc. and IID Press, Somerset, NJ and Houston, Texas, pp. 85-100, 2007.

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“Robustness and Civility: Themes from Fethullah Gülen as Resource and Challenge for Government, Muslims and Civil Society in the United Kingdom”, in *The Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (Conference Proceedings of a conference of the same name, held at the House of Lords, the School of Oriental and African Studies and the London School of Economics, London, 25th-27th October 2007), Leeds Metropolitan University Press, London, pp. 268-284, 2007.

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‘Death, Rebirth and Personal Identity’, *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture*, Volume 10, (Dongguk University, Seoul, February 2008), pp. 19-39, 2008.

Taking Possession: Spirit, Self and Society in Contemporary Context

Call for contributions to a new collection.

This edited book deals with 'spirit possession' (sic) in its various forms as it appears in contemporary urban-industrial(ising) societies (e.g. channelling, incorporation, drawing down the moon, demonic possession, etc). The book is multidisciplinary in scope (e.g. sociology, anthropology, religious studies, cultural studies) and will engage a range of religious contexts (e.g. new religious, Judeo-Christian, Islamic, indigenous, afro-brazilian, Spiritist, etc).

In addition to an introduction, the book will comprise chapters of approximately 8,500 words, each dealing with contemporary forms of spirit possession in the following contexts: North America (2 chaps), UK & Europe (2 chaps), South America (2 chaps), Asia & Australasia (2 chaps), Africa (1 chap). If you're interested in contributing a chapter please contact Professor Andrew Dawson andrew.dawson@lancaster.ac.uk Andrew plans to receive completed chapters by September 2009, with a scheduled publication date of Spring 2010.

GUIDELINES FOR *BULLETIN* CONTRIBUTORS

The Editors welcome contributions on events and issues relating to the Study of Religion. The following guidelines on length should be observed.

Conference reports (short, one-day)	500-800 words
Reports on major conferences	1,000-1,500 words
Notices of forthcoming conferences	Not more than one page
Book reviews	500-800 words
Religious Studies in location	800 words
Changes and Movements	500-1000 words
Research in progress	800-1,000 words
Turning Point	800-1,000 words
Tributes	normally 500 words

We welcome, in particular, accounts of research in progress by post-graduate students, articles describing RS at a particular location and reports of changes and movements.

The *BASR Bulletin* will carry notices of relevant conferences and calls for papers (up to one page) free of charge. Preference is given to conferences where members may offer papers; other non-participatory conferences, which are more akin to courses, may be included if space permits. The deadline for the next edition is 15th October 2008.

Flyers may be sent out with the Bulletin, for a pre-paid charge of £50 each.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

£3.00 each inc. p&p. Write, enclosing payment (made out to BASR), to Helen Waterhouse, Arts Faculty, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or order from the BASR Web site.

- 1 Miranda Green, *Women and Goddesses in the Celtic World*, 1991
- 2 Christine Trevett, *The Quaker Margaret Fell: Religion and Gender in a C17th Dissenting Group*, 1991
- 3 Ann Bancroft, *Hildegard of Bingen to Meinrad Craighead*, 1991
- 4 Julia Leslie, *Religion, Gender and Dharma: The Case of the Widow Ascetic*, 1991
- 5 Peter Antes, *How to study religious experience in the traditions*, 1992
- 6 Marion Bowman, *Phenomenology, fieldwork and folk religion*, 1992
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