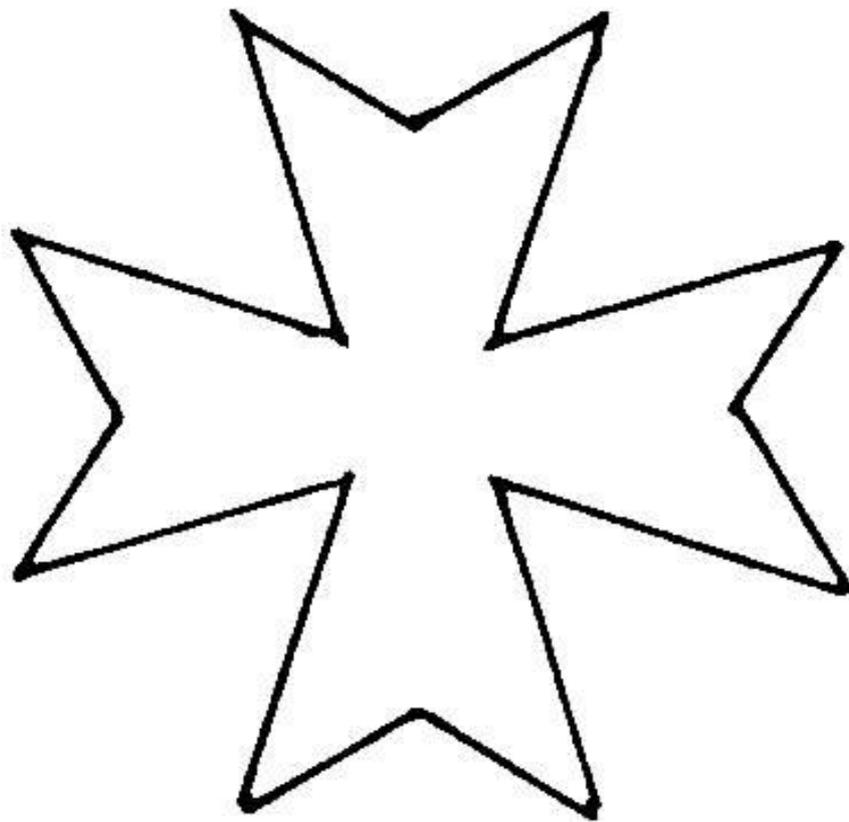
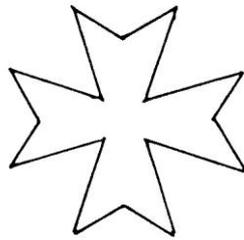


BRITISH ASSOCIATION
for the
STUDY OF RELIGIONS



BULLETIN
No 105 June 2005
BASR BULLETIN



CONTENTS

Editorial: Engaged scholarship?4
BASR Matters.....5
BASR Occasional Papers6
BASR Annual Conference7
Conference reports8
Honorary Life Members14
Forthcoming conferences.....15
Research in Progress20
Religious Studies in the U.K.
 Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations,
 Cambridge23
News items
 Ninian Smart Archive, RAE2008, Research training ..25
Book Reviews
 Reviewers: Peggy Morgan, John J. Shepherd27
Turning Point
 Chris Partridge37
Tribute: Julia Leslie39
Recent Publications by BASR Members42
Guidelines for Contributors49

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The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR), 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), whose 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 and who are normally resident in the United Kingdom. Those interested in membership may apply directly by writing to the **Hon Secretary** to whom all general correspondence concerning the BASR should be sent: **Dr Graham Harvey, Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.**

Correspondence concerning the Bulletin, including information and contributions, should be addressed to Dr George D. Chryssides at <G.D.Chryssides@wlv.ac.uk> or at School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science, University of Wolverhampton, Millennium City Building, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 3SB. Deadlines for submissions are: 15 October for November issue; 15 February for March issue; 15 May for June issue.

BASR Web site: <<http://basr.org.uk>>

Editorial: Engaged scholarship?

All of us who are involved in academic life recognise that the ‘ivory tower’ image of academia is pure myth. Religious Studies is about people, not simply about research in libraries, and much of our work involves using informants and being participant-observers in religious communities. Yet how involved can academics afford to be in the affairs of the communities they study?

Some time ago I was approached by a firm of solicitors who asked me if I would be an expert witness in a case involving Jehovah’s Witnesses. The case involved a Witness who had died as a result of a car crash; although the accident did not appear his fault, the other driver contended that his refusal of a blood transfusion was contributory negligence. The law firm did not mention a fee, and I decided to ask other colleagues about their own consultancy charges. Much to my surprise, two very well-known experts in similar fields told me that they would never undertake work of this kind. I set my own fee, only to meet a solicitor at a conference a couple of years later – apparently he was attending in order to tout for custom – who informed me that I should have charged double!

To engage or not to engage? We sometimes talk about the neutral scholar, but, having largely abandoned a phenomenological approach to the study of religion, we recognise that impartiality is impossible, and maybe undesirable. Academics have an obligation to contribute to public debate, and, having obtained the help and co-operation of religions, it is a point of professional ethics that we seek to ‘empower’ them, and not simply use them as a means of collecting research data. Moreover, it can be argued that if academics do not contribute to such controversies, opinions will be shaped by the self-styled ‘cult experts’, the media or evangelical Christian groups whose zeal far exceeds their expertise in such areas.

Karel Werner raises the topic of ‘engaged scholarship’ in this Bulletin, and the work of Julia Leslie, whose tribute appears in this edition, highlights such problems. It is an important over-arching issue in Religious Studies, and currently the AHRB is interested in receiving suggestions about over-arching issues that impinge on research. No doubt it is neither possible nor desirable for the BASR to prescribe solutions to questions of engagement and disengagement, but the Association can act as a forum for debate. The Editor would welcome brief contributions on this topic for future editions of the Bulletin, and indeed on other over-arching questions that impinge on our work. Subsequent conferences may well afford opportunities for further exploration of such issues.

George D. Chryssides

BASR MATTERS

BASR Committee: Nominations for President-Elect

The period of office for the current BASR President, James Cox, expires in 2006. The Association's practice is to appoint a President-Elect for the year preceding the change-over.

Nominations are now invited, and the appointment of the President-Elect will take place at the Annual General Meeting, which forms part of the BASR Annual Conference (6 September 2005). If there is more than one nomination, an election will take place at that meeting.

A nomination form was enclosed with the March edition of the *BASR Bulletin*. Further forms can be obtained from the Secretary or from the Bulletin Editor. Please return it to the Honorary Secretary (Dr Graham Harvey, Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA). Please ensure, of course, that any nominee is willing to take office before putting forward a name.

GIFT AID

It is no longer possible to claim Gift Aid on the basis of a signed covenant: all BASR covenants have now expired. Our Gift Aid income has reduced considerably this year because of that. If you pay UK taxes and have not yet made a Gift Aid declaration we would be grateful if you could do so. The tax refund that comes from Gift Aid is a valuable source of income which we want to maximise. A Gift Aid declaration is included with this month's Bulletin and can also be downloaded from the web site. You can either complete that and send it to me by post, or paste the following words into an e-mail for electronic submission:

Please treat my BASR subscriptions as Gift Aid donations with effect from 6 April 2004. I confirm that I pay income tax or capital gains tax equal to or exceeding the tax deducted from the subscription rate.

In the case of an e-mailed declaration no signature is necessary. I would rather receive duplicate forms from you than no form at all and it is quicker for me to deal with duplicates than with e-mail enquiries about whether you have a current declaration. Therefore, if you are not sure whether you have signed a declaration please send another! Thank you.

Helen Waterhouse

Dr Helen Waterhouse, Arts Faculty, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. E-mail: <h.j.waterhouse@open.ac.uk>

BASR OCCASIONAL PAPERS (order from 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
- 7 George Chryssides, *Unificationism: A study in religious syncretism*, 1993
- 8 Michael Pye, *Syncretism versus synthesis*, 1993
- 9 Ria Kloppenberg, *A Buddhist-Christian encounter in Sri Lanka: Pandura Vada*, 1994
- 10 Peter Donovan, *Maori rituals add magic to contemporary civic life*, 1995
- 11 Ninian Smart, *Sacred nationalism*, 1995
- 12 W. S. F. Pickering, *Locating the sacred: Durkheim and Otto*, 1995
- 13 Terence Thomas, 'The sacred' as a viable concept in the contemporary study of religions, 1995 (bound together with 12)
- 14 Margaret Chatterjee, *Do we need authority in religious life?*, 1996
- 15 Chris Arthur, *Media, meaning, and method in the study of religion*, 1996
- 16 Gerrie ter Haar, *Chosen people: The concept of diaspora in the modern world*, 1996
- 17 Richard Gombrich, *Religious experience in early Buddhism*, 1997
- 18 James Cox, *Alterity as identity: Innovation in the Academic Study of Religions*, 1998
- 19 Elizabeth Amoah, *African spirituality and religious innovation*, 1998
- 20 Ian Reader, *Religion, conflict and the sacred mission: On understanding the violence of Aum Shinrikyo*, 1999
- 21 Brian Bocking, *Religious Studies: The New Queen of the Sciences*, 2000
- 22 Kim Knott, *The Sense and Nonsense of 'Community': A Consideration of Contemporary Debates about Community and Culture by a Scholar of Religion*, 2002
- 23 Armin Geertz, *Religion and Community in Indigenous Contexts*, 2002
- 24 Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, *Religion and Community in the Ancient World*, 2002
- 25 Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism, Muslims and the British State*, 2002
- 26 Rosalind Hackett, *The Response of Scholars of Religion to Global Religious Violence*, 2003

Occasional Papers can be ordered from the BASR Web site at
<<http://basr.org.uk>>

BASR NEWS

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

BASR Annual Conference

Tuesday 6 September 2005

In accordance with BASR tradition, as it is the year of an IAHR congress, we will simply have a one day meeting, to include our AGM.

Keynote speakers:

Professor Frank Whaling

‘Religious Studies: Past, Present and Future’

Professor Seth Kunin

‘The dialectical relationship between theory and ethnography in the anthropological study of religion’

The meeting will take place at
The Warburg Institute, Woburn Square,
London WC1H 0AB

which is convenient for Euston,
King’s Cross and St Pancras,
and various Underground stations.

Registration forms and further details will be available on
the BASR website.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Nineteenth IAHR Congress in Tokyo (March 24-30, 2005)

The IAHR Congress was a great event, truly unforgettable. It was a privilege to be part of it and learn so much within one week. In fact, it was overwhelming, the largest IAHR Congress ever. I cannot vouch for the figures, but I noted down from a speech at the closing session that 1573 participants from 53 countries were mentioned and that about 350 papers were given. The large volume of people, papers and ideas is evident from the sheer size of the Programme and the Book of Abstracts. In due time the IAHR Committee will no doubt produce its own report and eventually publish some of the main papers and essential statistics from this Congress.

It is impossible for any single participant to give a comprehensive summary of this Congress, but I am happy to share some personal reflections on the salient features of this milestone event.

This Nineteenth IAHR World Congress was the second in East Asia, following the earlier Ninth Congress held in Tokyo in 1958, almost 50 years ago. There cannot be many participants who will have experienced both Congresses, but the Japanese Prince Mikasa, a highly respected scholar of religion, and Professor Werblowsky from Israel are probably the best known participants who participated in both.

This was in many ways a very different Congress from the earlier one when participation was much smaller. This time, already the organising Congress Committee was far more international and inclusive, reflecting the tremendous growth of national and regional associations around the world who now belong to the IAHR (an overview can be gained from the IAHR Bulletin no. 38, March 2005 – its ‘Tokyo Congress Edition’). It was not surprising that a very large number of participants came from Japan, but there were others from Korea and China, from India, Africa, Australia, North America and Europe. One of the round-table discussions was specially devoted to the IAHR and Japan.

The Congress site was the Takanawa Prince Hotel in Tokyo, with many surrounding hotels used for accommodation (of various degrees of satisfactoriness and frustration). As the Takanawa Prince Hotel could only accommodate a very small minority of the great number of participants, most people had to travel from other parts of the city or walk from nearby hotels to the conference lectures and events. This was fine on a good day; in fact it was delightful to pass through the beautiful gardens of the main hotel, but on one day we had heavy showers and little protection from the rain, which meant that several people caught colds. It had been the general expectation that we would have fine spring weather with great annual celebrations of the cherry trees blossoming. Alas, this year the blossoms were very late and

came only out in full a fortnight after we had gone. Personally, I enjoyed their riotous blooms and subtle colours not in Tokyo but in Washington (where I went for another conference a fortnight later), due to the many cherry trees presented as gifts by the Japanese to the Americans over the years.

The overall Congress theme 'Religion: Conflict and Peace' was as topical as the Japanese venue was alluring. Both certainly proved a major attraction in drawing so many religion scholars from around the world to Japan. Several additional themes relating to the overall one had been suggested in the earlier Congress publicity brochure calling for papers. These no doubt inspired the rich harvest of wide-ranging papers that were submitted by such a large number of international scholars. In the end five major sub-themes emerged for each of the five working days of the Congress. Each began with a Plenary Session and a couple of responses on the following themes: (1) The Religious Dimension of War and Peace; (2) Technology, Life, and Death; (3) Global Religions and Local Cultures; (4) Boundaries and Segregations; (5) Method and Theory in the Study of Religion. The academic programme included keynote addresses, numerous parallel panels, symposia and discussions throughout each day, followed by a rich cultural programme every evening.

It would be presumptuous to attempt giving even a summary of the vast variety of papers and lectures presented by so many distinguished international scholars at this Congress. The Academic Committee did a great job in putting such a rich, diverse and intellectually stimulating programme together. I can only be eclectically selective by mentioning just a few examples: the Opening Symposium on 'Religions and Dialogue among Civilizations'; the special joint session of the IAHR and UNU (United Nations University) on 'Religion and Education'; the Symposium on 'Proselytization Revisited' or that on 'Various Forms of Spirituality in the World'; a Panel on 'Religion and Contemporary Japanese Novelists', or others dealing with a wide variety of topics on religious pluralism, gender relations, forms of dialogue, religion and politics, secularism, human rights and social justice, not to forget the many papers on specific religious traditions or on the importance of methods and theories in the contemporary study of religions.

The Cultural Programme consisted of different kinds of Japanese dance, music and films, but also a wonderful solo performance of the Arabic lute played by a Syrian musician, traditional songs from Aleppo sung by two Japanese women, and yet more lectures, such as on the famous ox-herding pictures.

A fine exhibition of Japanese folk-play masks entitled 'Manifestation of Deities' was shown in the main conference hotel as also an exhibition of the

publications and services of the International Institute for the Study of Religions in Japan, and a book exhibition of scholarly publications on religion by various Japanese and western publishers. This proved to be rather small and disappointing, especially for those accustomed to the immense book displays at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion.

Especially memorable were the lavish opening and closing banquets which provided a wonderful example of Japanese hospitality and sumptuous food. They were a great occasion for meeting friends from around the world, although standing on one's feet for a whole evening or trying to move around a large crowd of over a thousand people in a huge ballroom also had its frustrating, physically exhausting aspects.

Greatly appreciated was the Sunday excursion in the middle of the Congress, a welcome relief in an otherwise over-busy schedule. Given the fine weather, it was a wonderful way of relaxing and making new friends. For many of the international visitors who were in Japan for the first time, this was an important opportunity to see something of Japanese temples, monasteries and cities beyond the modern Congress Hall and hotel. A wide choice of excursions was available. Like many others, I went to ancient Kamakura to see Daibutsu, the Great Buddha of Kamakura, a representation of Buddha Amitabha, the Lord of the Western Pure Land, constructed in 1252 C.E. as a seated bronze statue, 13.35 metres in height. What majesty and beauty! What an expression of deep religious devotion, but also what an artistic and technical achievement of human creative genius. We also experienced the serenity of some of the famous Zen monasteries from their meditation hall to their exquisite gardens, not to forget the delicious food offered to us. And we were lucky enough to observe the special atmosphere of an open air Shinto shrine where a traditional Japanese wedding was being held.

Other participants had gone to visit Kawasaki and Yokohama, or Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples in Tokyo, or visited Mount Takao and the Yakuo-in temple, whereas the International Committee members took an afternoon excursion around Tokyo.

I am pleased to report that quite a few BASR members took an active part in the Congress, and the BASR can be truly proud of this. There were of course also several British participants who are not members of the BASR. Although I do not know the overall number of scholars from Britain who attended and read papers at the Congress, there were enough people for the BASR to hold a joint reception with the publisher Equinox and NAASR (North American Association for the Study of Religion) – an evening much enjoyed by everyone. Several members from the BASR Committee were at the Congress, from our President, Dr James Cox, to our Secretary, Dr

Graham Harvey, and our Treasurer, Dr Helen Waterhouse. Also present were previous BASR Presidents Professor Brian Bocking, Professor Kim Knott, and myself. Equally gratifying was to see some of our longest standing members such as Professor Michael Pye and Dr Karel Werner, or well-known foreign friends of the BASR such as Professor Jacques Waardenburg from Lausanne, or former members now working abroad, such as Professor Rosalind Hackett, who was unanimously elected as the new IAHR President. Congratulations from all of us at the BASR.

It was most disappointing that several British scholars had to cancel their participation due to illness. As far as I am aware, these were Professors Denise Cush, Ron Geaves and Robert Jackson.

If I have forgotten to mention other names which should also figure here, I apologise (please send in amendments if you were at the Congress and feel I have overlooked something or someone important) – there was simply far too much to take in during this action-packed week and not enough time for leisure nor for enjoying the numerous cultural attractions of the Tokyo megapolis.

I think all participants were delighted to be part of this great historic Congress. If there was a criticism, it was that the programme was overloaded and far too diverse. Even though there were many excellently organised, high quality panels with first class papers, there were also others that were not sufficiently focused on the overall theme. A little more quality control would have been worthwhile.

Another criticism concerns the timing of the Congress. Quite a few Christian participants from western and eastern churches, including myself, felt upset that the Congress Committee with representatives from different countries, cultures and religions (and a Christian President from Germany) had not chosen a more suitable date so that the Congress would not have clashed with the Christian feast of Easter. It seems difficult to understand why scholars of religion of all people remain so insensitive to religious rites and practices. Perhaps more attention can be given to this in future. However, neither the venue nor the date of the next quinquennial IAHR Congress is known at present.

I liked the truly international character of this Congress, with its large African presence, so many people from different parts of Asia as well as Australia, the Americas and Europe. This was a genuinely pluralistic and inclusive History of Religions Congress of global dimensions not seen before. It proves the IAHR has come of age.

Ursula King
Professor Emerita, University of Bristol

IAHR and Japan: A Review Article

This was the title of an evening session on 27 March during the Nineteenth World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions in Tokyo (24-30 March 2005). It was characterised as a 'Round-table Discussion' meant to 'give scholars who are veterans of the Congress a chance to engage in a fruitful dialogue with their colleagues'. There were six panellists, three of them Japanese, one an outsider from the Notre Dame University and two 'Congress veterans': Zwi Werblowski and Michael Pye.

To prepare a general report on this truly mammoth and on the whole well organised congress would be a daunting task. I wish to put on record only this particular meeting, for a specific reason. Being myself a veteran of the congresses since 1975 I looked forward to an event taking place outside the time schedule of the simultaneously running specialised sessions to allow for maximum participation. Yet the huge hall was only sparsely populated. This did not seem to intimidate the panellists, who seemed happy to be able to indulge in personal reminiscences. The chairman, Professor Tamaru, himself took the best part of the time allowed for the session. Only Professor Werblowski was short, sharp and to the point. Professor Pye's contribution, although also personal and full of praise for the hosts, was not excessively long, but in the end there was very little time left for any discussion, nor was there anything in the panellists' contributions which would provoke one. But a few other points were raised from the floor.

My concern was a passage in the pamphlet advertising this session which reads:

'As Western, and (traditionally) Christian, society has been primarily responsible for developing modern academic studies, the Christian world view has had a profound influence on the study of religion. Today, without doubt, scholars are readily aware that the overcoming of this Western-centric world view is a vital issue for religious studies. We are now in an age when it will be fruitful for our field to develop so that it is multivalent and highly integrated in its ways of seeing, as to better reflect the multicultural world we live in.'

Having obtained the chance to speak, I took exception to this passage and expressed my surprise that such a misguided view of Western religious scholarship was held by some members of JARS. I pointed out that what the passage asserted had never been true of IAHR which had always stood for impartial academic study of religions to the exclusion of denominational bias. It was true that some scholars with the background of theological training allowed their Christian beliefs in some instances to influence their conclusions or interpretations, but this was always spotted and rectified in reviews, discussions and polemical and methodological writings. The works

of the vast majority of western scholars engaged in the study of the history of religions and comparative religion have been fully aware of the wider perspectives of religious outlooks and the profit derived from understanding different religious traditions for a scholarly approach to our subject. Even the work of Rudolf Otto, originally a Christian theologian, showed, already in the first decade of the twentieth century, this trend in developing terminology which goes beyond the framework of Christian monotheism. A little later, it was Mircea Eliade who coined the concept of 'multivalency' in our field and others developed further the methodology and conceptual framework for truly academic study of religions. The term 'western-centric' may have some use in politics, but certainly not in religious studies and cannot be made synonymous with Christianity; the West has also, after all, a more than two hundred years old tradition of secularism. The principles of scholarship adopted by universities around the globe and maintained by IAHR were indeed developed first in the western type centres of learning, but they are an achievement of humankind, not limited by geography.

There was no reply to my comment from the panel and it was not translated into Japanese, although all other contributions were. (Why?) Only Michael Pye said, as if privately to me: 'You are, of course, absolutely right!' He returned to the topic obliquely when answering the point raised about the Congress theme 'Religion: Conflict and Peace' (strongly supported by JARS). Several participants criticised it as inappropriate and leading on to a slippery slope towards 'engaged' scholarship and thereby to possible ideological conflicts. Michael admitted that this was something to be threshed out as was the relation of theology and the academic study of religion in the past. The argument against inclusion of theology had been, he maintained, won, although some newcomers into the Association tried from time to time to raise the question again. (Why, then, was it not pointed out to the Japanese organisers of the panel that the passage in the pamphlet was outdated and should be reformulated?)

Someone in the know should perhaps discuss in the Bulletin the problem of the theme of the congress and how it was arrived at in relation to the notion of 'engaged scholarship'. The vast majority of papers, unlike mine and those in one or two specialised panel discussion groups, were concerned with a variety of topics which did not correspond to the congress theme. However, what chance is there to correct the Japanese view of the prevalence of Christian, 'western-centric', bias in religious studies in western countries, if an objection to it is not, for them, worth responding to?

Karel Werner
SOAS, University of London

Honorary Life Members

At the BASR Fiftieth Anniversary Conference at Oxford in 2004, Honorary Life Membership was conferred on Ursula King, Peggy Morgan, Michael Pye, Terry Thomas, Andrew Walls and Frank Whaling. Ursula King and Andrew Walls sent the following responses.

Ursula King writes:

On my return from the AAR in late November I found your two letters in my mail. Thank you ever so much for confirming my election as Honorary Life Member in writing. I feel very honoured to be a member of this distinguished list and still hope to make some contribution to the Association, although during next year's conference I will be on a visiting appointment at the University of Louisville. I hope all is well with you – I feel rather busier than I should be, but I am enjoying most of it.

Andrew Walls writes:

One of the penalties of a peripatetic life is that mail piles up in various locations, and is not always opened before the next journey. I have just come on a letter from yourself that should have been acknowledged months ago: your very kind message indicating my election as a Honorary Life Member of the BASR. I am very moved at this action of the AGM and immensely honoured by it. The Association has been very important to me, and though I have been so inactive in recent years I have rejoiced in its increasing strength and significance. It was a great sorrow to me that I could not attend the 50th anniversary meeting; I hope I can be at the 51st. I trust my thanks can be conveyed to the Association for the great honour they have bestowed; and may the next fifty years see the Association flourishing and performing great feats for our discipline.

And for the record —

Dr Terry Thomas points out that, in the *November 2004* edition, it was mentioned that he joined the Open University in the late 1970s. This is incorrect: he joined the university in the early 1970s, and hence had a much longer association with the institution that the Editor implied. Apologies for this error.

<p>The BASR offers its congratulations to Professor Geoffrey Parrinder, who recently celebrated his 95th birthday. Geoffrey Parrinder is an Honorary Life Member of the Association.</p>
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FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Embodiment and Environment

Westminster Institute, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

5-8 July 2005

Call for Papers

This conference is designed to bring together people working in the areas of embodiment and environment. These two important topics of contemporary concern have considerable areas of overlap, yet there is a tendency for researchers to consider one with little reference to the other. This conference offers the opportunity for dialogue and creative exchange, and will initiate a new kind of reflection on these subjects.

We are seeking papers in:

Embodiment: gender, sex, ethnicity, consciousness, cognition, performance, sensuality, embodied knowledge, ritual, disability, body practice, feminist approaches to religion and philosophy, body theology, theology, therapy...

Ecology: paganism, goddess spirituality, ecotheology, personalism, deep ecology, scientific approaches to the environment, religious environmentalism, activism, cosmology, ethics, ecoeroticism...

Creative fusions and further suggestions welcome!

Contact: Beverly Clack <bclack@brookes.ac.uk> and Graham Harvey <g.harvey@open.ac.uk>

*EASR conference 2005
in Turku, Finland*

*Exercising Power: The Role of Religions in
Concord and Conflict*

The **Finnish Society for the Study of Religion** and the **Donner Institute** are organising together an **EASR**-conference entitled “Exercising Power: The Role of Religions in Concord and Conflict” to be held at the **Linnasmäki Conference Center, Turku**, in August 17–19, 2005.

Congress Secretariat, The Donner Institute,
POB 70 , FIN-20501 Åbo, Finland
E-mail: donner-symposium@abo.fi
Tel. +358 2 2154315. Fax +358 2 2311290

For further details see: <http://www.abo.fi/instut/di/Congress%202005.htm>
or follow EASR link from <http://basr.org.uk>

Vietnam Update 2005

**Not by Rice Alone: Making Sense of Spirituality in Reform Era
Vietnam**

Call for Papers

The 2005 Vietnam Update will be held on **11-12 August 2005** at the Australian National University, Canberra. Jointly organized by the Australian National University and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, the Vietnam Update is a series of annual conferences that focus on recent economic and political conditions in Vietnam and analyze a select theme of particular relevance to Vietnam’s socio-economic development. This year’s theme is titled: “Not by Rice Alone: Making sense of spirituality in reform era Vietnam”.

For further information, please contact:

Philip Taylor, Dept. of Anthropology, RSPAS, The Australian National University. E-mail: philip.taylor@anu.edu.au

**Centre of Theology and Philosophy (COTP)
University of Nottingham**

Annual conference: 1–2 September 2005

‘Transcendence and Phenomenology’

Guest speakers include: Jean-Yves Lacoste, Laszlo Tengelyi, Anthony Steinbock, Paul Audi, Natalie Depraz, Jeff Bloechl, Jean Greish, Richard Kearney, Rudi Visker, John Milbank, Emmanuel Falque, Ruud Welten, and Dermot Moran.

The COTP welcomes the submission of abstracts (100 words max.) to Conor Cunningham (organiser) at <conor.cunningham@nottingham.ac.uk>

For conference registration, accommodation and booking, please contact Janet Longley, Departmental Secretary, Department of Theology.
Tel.:+44 (0) 115 9515852; e-mail: janet.longley@nottingham.ac.uk

A World for All

**The ethics of global civil society: an international, disciplinary
conference**

**University of Edinburgh
4–7 September 2005**

Can we speak of an emerging global civil society. Does it promise ‘a world for all? The Centre for Theology and Public Issues, University of Edinburgh, and the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, are holding a conference for civil society researchers, policy-makers and NGO practitioners to explore these empirical and ethical questions. Keynote speakers include **John Keane**, Centre for the Study of Democracy, London; **Kimberley Hutchings**, London School of Economics; **Max Stackhouse**, Princeton Theological Seminary; and **Vandana Shiva**, Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology New Delhi.

**Further conference details can be found on the CTPI website:
<www.div.ed.ac.uk/aworldforall.html>**

Realism and Philosophy of Religion

A conference hosted by the

British Society for the Philosophy of Religion

Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford,
Tuesday 13 September – Thursday 15 September 2005

Details from: Dr Tim Mawson, St Peter's College,
New Inn Hall Street, Oxford, OX1 2DL
E-mail: tjmawson@rocketmail.com

<http://les.man.ac.uk/philosophy/BSPR/BSPR.htm>

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF IMPLICIT RELIGION AND CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY (CSIRCS)

15 September 2005

Edward Bailey: “Implicit religion” and Christian ministry’

Full details can be found at www.implicitreligion.org or from
Canon Dr Edward Bailey: eibailey@cscircs.freeserve.co.uk

Faith, Spirituality and Social Change

University College, Winchester

8 April 2006

A conference bringing together people whose action for social change is informed by their faith, organisations working with faith communities for social change, and academics exploring faith-based social change issues.

This conference invites discussion about the dynamic dimensions of inter-faith dialogue, and multi-faith action across a range of social change issues. Opening the debate to include academic perspectives and grass-roots voices will allow for broader conversations about the current state and future direction of faith-based social change.

We invite proposals for posters, 20 minute papers or 30 minutes workshops in the context of faith-based social change which broadly address any of the following themes:

Ecology and/or Environment
Gender and/or Sexuality
Education – formal and/or faith-based
Cultural dimensions – including music, art, literature
Social Protest
World Development and/or Social Regeneration
Lifestyle as Protest

Proposals in the form of a title, a short abstract (300 words max.) and a brief biographical statement including affiliation should be sent by

30 November 2005

to adrian.harris@winchester.ac.uk or christina.welch@winchester.ac.uk

It is expected that a selection of papers from the conference will be published.

Speakers, papers and a provisional programme will be posted on the conference web site as soon as they become available.

<<http://www.fsscconference.org.uk>>

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Buddhism, Diversity and 'Race': Multiculturalism in Western Buddhist movements in East London

In most Western Buddhist movements of converts to Buddhism, black people and people of colour (usually in the UK people of African, Asian and Caribbean descent) are very much a minority. The exception to this is the Nichiren Daishonin group Soka Gakkai International (SGI), which is markedly more diverse.

This research looks at this issue and explores the nature of people of colour's participation in Western Buddhist movements, asking, how they engage with these movements' presentations of Buddhism as 'techniques of the self' which enable them to fashion themselves as subjects and develop approaches to identity that lie outside dominant discourses (Foucault, 1997a, 1997b).

I am constructing ethnographic case studies of the two largest Western Buddhist movements in the highly multicultural area of East London. These are the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) and SGI-UK. As the issues of 'difference' and positionality in research have been of much concern to feminist epistemologists, I have found insights from them helpful (see for example Haraway, 1991), as in this project I am both an insider and outsider, as an African-Caribbean Buddhist and longstanding member of the FWBO.

At this stage it appears that for the FWBO people of colour find the meditation practices offered by this movement attractive as a means of furthering their own spiritualities and programmes of personal development. However, despite the longstanding outreach programme to people of colour, their participation in the movement is limited by a discourse of unmarked middle-class whiteness that positions black people as Other in a range of ways, defines racism as individual and intentional acts of ill-will, and places a 'burden of representation' on black members to encourage black people's participation. People of colour may be seen as exotic, undesirable, as 'bearers of difference' from the hegemonic norm and, most commonly, as 'bewildering' in the sense that some white people around them in mixed activities feel genuinely unsure about how best to relate to them. Some well-intentioned white members of the movement seek to prevent this Othering process by treating people of colour 'just the same' with the unfortunate result that difference, through being ignored, still remains a hidden 'Other'. Most people of colour attracted to this movement are like their white counterparts: highly educated and middle class.

It is, however, important to note that the founder of the FWBO,

Sangharakshita (who has often spoken of the dangers of ‘political correctness’) formally retired from his duties as its head five years ago. In this phase, the movement is developing new structures and reassessing many of its key principles. It has therefore been important to have a historical as well as a sociological approach to this case study, especially as members of this movement have expressed interest in further exploring implications of this research.

Unlike most Western Buddhist movements, for Soka Gakkai the principal practice is not meditation but chanting. This movement regards all one’s experiences for good or ill (or ‘life state’) as a result of the workings of karma that can be changed through chanting, studying the Lotus Sutra and propagating the practice because of each individual’s Buddha-nature. SGI members are encouraged to see themselves as ‘bodhisattvas of the earth’. Participants receive a sense of self-empowerment from these doctrines, which, although expressed in universalist terms, do not appear to preclude them from being open and sensitive to wider social and political questions about discrimination and identity for people of colour.

SGI also makes a specific point of reaching out to disadvantaged groups, but as one participant told me, this is not so much seen as evangelism as part of SGI’s work to promote world peace and human rights. It has specific groups for black people and people of colour, for example the African-Caribbean heritage group. In my observation these were generally appreciated by white members as spaces where African-Caribbeans could chant around the specific concerns they have and celebrate their culture. Such groups, however, are open to all, and a minority of white people attends ACHG meetings. SGI members are positively encouraged to address diversity issues at the local district level instead of making sole recourse to autonomous groups.

The leader of SGI, President Daisaku Ikeda, has developed a high profile as an activist for peace and human rights both within and outside SGI. Though he has stated that the concept of race is ‘pernicious’, ‘false’, and an ‘artificially constructed idea’, at the same time he has stated that ‘the most pressing problem facing the United States on the home front is that of racial discrimination.’ He has commended and met with key figures working for the civil rights of black people.

Another finding that I am following up lies at the interface of ethnic identities with gender/sexual identities in each movement. While both movements welcome lesbians, gays and bisexuals (LGB), and generally seek to appeal to a wide range of people, the membership of SGI-UK appears to be predominantly heterosexual with a more equal male/female population ratio than the FWBO. In contrast, the FWBO in East London appears to have a proportionately larger LGB and female membership. Both

movements appear to see gender as a male/female binary operating within a heterosexual economy (Butler, 1999) but in different ways. SGI's relative heteronormativity appeals more to black heterosexual people. SGI is now more tolerant of homosexuality, but this has not yet resulted in the level of positive action that the FWBO has taken to date with LGB communities. The FWBO's previous encouragement of single-sex activities and its tolerance of homosexuality has encouraged more LGB people to participate in it, while in the past its relatively negative attitude to the nuclear family and sexual relationships (particularly heterosexual ones) has led to some people from these groups feeling marginalised. However, this is changing as single-sex practice within the FWBO is de-emphasised and more family-focused activities take place within this movement.

I would welcome feedback on this work and am particularly interested in hearing more about factors in conversion; and class, ethnic/cultural, sexual and gender identities in relation to religious identity.

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- Haraway, D. J. (1991). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. In D. J. Haraway (ed.), *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association Books.

Sharon Smith

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Religious Studies in the U.K.

Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, Wesley House, Cambridge

The Centre for the study of Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR), based at Wesley House, Cambridge, is dedicated to the study and teaching of all aspects of the encounter between Christians and Jews throughout the ages. It is Associate Member of the Cambridge Theological Federation (CTF) and offers the only M.A. in the UK on Jewish-Christian Relations. Since its inception in 1998, nearly 50 students have received a postgraduate qualification in Jewish-Christian relations (Certificate, Diploma or M.A.) and over 800 have taken one or more of its courses.

65 students of all ages, backgrounds and religious (or non-religious) beliefs are presently enrolled in the M.A. programme, taught on-campus and also via distance learning. The courses typically attract educators, religious studies teachers, clergy, community and social workers, pastoral workers and other professionals (e.g. journalists), and those who are simply pursuing an interest in the field.

In addition to UK students, we have annual scholarships for Israeli and Polish students (partially funded by the British Council), as well as students from Czech Republic, Macedonia and Japan. Distance students join our learning network from Canada, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, Russia, and the USA as well as the UK.

CJCR graduates include Avital Erez from Israel who is now involved in interfaith dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims in Israel and Prof. Gordon Fisher from the USA, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at James Madison University in Virginia. Among the British graduates are Rev. Geoffrey Knee, who explained that, 'I am an Anglican priest, retired from full-time ministry, and have for some time been concerned for Jewish-Christian relations. When I retired I took as my motto T. S. Eliot's words, "Old men ought to be explorers," and there's no doubt that I have explored further than I thought possible. Where it will all take me, I just don't know, but I'm ready to keep looking and learning, and giving where I can.' Geoffrey recently ran a Continuing Ministerial Education course on Jewish-Christian Relations for clergy in the West Country.

One of the challenges in Jewish-Christian relations today: education in the pulpit and pew

In recent years, we have witnessed a massive change in Jewish-Christian relations. Christians have re-awakened to the Jewish origins of Christianity, and the efforts of Christians towards respect of Judaism are reflected in

documents which project attitudes that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago. Christian theology has been profoundly revised at the official level. It seems that many of the main divisive issues have been either eliminated or taken to the furthest point at which agreement is possible.

Jews have also engaged in dialogue and writers such as Martin Buber and Claude Montefiore have reminded Jews that Jesus was a fellow Jew (their 'great brother', as Martin Buber said). Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks speaks for many when he writes that, 'in a world still scarred by ethnic and religious conflict, the path to reconciliation still awaits us if we can find it, and the only way we can do so is together.'

If the changes in Jewish-Christian relations have been so far-reaching, how far have we really reached? In my view, Christian-Jewish dialogue has for too long been the exclusive preserve of theologians and religious leaders. If dialogue is to be more than a passing fashion it needs to be extended to include many more lay people. Consciousness of the changes have been largely confined to an elite and the object now is to get these changes into the everyday understanding of all the faithful – in other words into the pulpit, pew and into the *shul*.

Although Christian thinking has moved, we still have miles to go before we can sleep peacefully. There are risks, for example, that instability in one part of the world, such as the Middle East, will affect Jewish-Christian relations in another. Giant strides have been made but we are talking of a dynamic and relentless process. We will never be able to sit back and say, 'The work is done. The agenda is completed.'

We have come a long way, especially when one considers that Christians have had to overcome nearly two millennia of displacement theology regarding Jews. Most official Christian statements now affirm covenantal inclusion for the Jewish People after the Christ Event. But, regrettably, this view remains rather marginal to Christian theological thought.

Although there is no guarantee of progress, we must never forget how far we have come. The relationship between Jews and Christians is one of the few pieces of good news in interfaith relations today and offers hope that other conflicts that exist in our world can also be resolved.

Edward Kessler

[Dr Edward Kessler is Executive Director, Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations and Bye-Fellow, St Edmund's College. For further information on CJCR and its courses, see www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk and the flyer enclosed with this Bulletin.]

NEWS ITEMS

The Ninian Smart Archive

Following his untimely death in 2001, a substantial collection of publications by Smart, along with a number of his notebooks and papers, were kindly donated to the Lancaster Department of Religious Studies by his widow Libushka. I was subsequently invited to sort, classify and in the event enlarge this body of material in order to set up a Ninian Smart Archive, to be held in the Lancaster University Library. The project was supported by a research grant from the British Academy. The Archive has now been established, and has already begun to be used by researchers.

It contains, first, copies (sometimes photocopies) of all of Smart's extraordinarily wide range of publications that it has been possible to identify – books, pamphlets, papers in edited collections and academic journals, book reviews, and varied, numerous (and often humorous) contributions to the press. In this connection, a major task was to attempt as comprehensive a bibliography as possible – previous bibliographies turning out, on examination, to be both incomplete and in part inaccurate. The new bibliography will appear shortly in *Religion*.

In addition to publications, the Archive contains a variety of unpublished material (no hitherto hidden magnum opus, however), including a novel (*Get That Damned Cathedral Out of My Garden*), short plays, countless poems, public lectures, and fragments of autobiography, and also some typescripts of published material. In addition, there is some correspondence (e.g. with publishers), some material relating to Shap and the Schools Councils Projects, and numerous notebooks from the 1970s onwards. Of particular interest is a 'CV Book', covering the period from 1979 onwards, a kind of scrapbook covering publications, public engagements, conferences, and so forth. All of this material has now been sorted and catalogued, and the catalogue – a revised version, replacing one that had appeared there for a time previously – will shortly be placed online on the Lancaster departmental web site.

Inevitably there will be some publications, especially book reviews, which will have been overlooked, and I would welcome details of any which do not appear in the bibliography. There are currently two loose ends which someone may be able to help with:

- (1) There is a photocopy of a published review of P. A. Schilpp and M. Friedman (editors), *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* (Open Court, 1967), paginated 276-280, but with no indication of the journal. Enquiries so far (including to the publisher) have been unsuccessful.
- (2) There is a photocopy of a published paper, 'Distinctively Californian Spiritual Movements', paginated 163-167. Again, enquiries so far

(including via the Santa Barbara department) have been unsuccessful.

Any information relating to these, or to other items which turn out to have been overlooked when the bibliography appears, may be sent to me at the Department of Religion and Philosophy, St Martin's College, Lancaster, or via e-mail <j.shepherd@ucsm.ac.uk>.

John J. Shepherd

RAE2008

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008 panel in Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies will consist of the following members:

Professor George Newlands (University of Glasgow – Chair), Professor John Barton (University of Oxford), Professor Markus Bockmuehl (University of Cambridge), Professor Grace Davie (University of Exeter), Professor J. Cheryl Exum (University of Sheffield), Professor David Fergusson (University of Edinburgh), Professor Paul Gifford (School of Oriental and African Studies), Professor Paul Heelas (Lancaster University), Professor Hugh McLeod (University of Birmingham), Professor Martyn Percy (Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford), Professor Ronald Piper (University of St Andrews), Professor Paul Williams (University of Bristol). The Secretariat consists of Mr Matthew Andrews (University of Durham) and Dr Simone Clarke (Keele University).

Doctoral research training

Yorkshire and North East Collaborative Doctoral Research Training for Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies has been set up as a pilot scheme for first and second year doctoral candidates in Yorkshire and North East England. Particularly in smaller universities, researchers can feel isolated and lack subject-specific support for their work.

The programme has the formal support of the Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies (AUDTRS) and the British Philosophical Association (BPA), and the BASR Executive decided to lend this Association's support also. Philosophy, Theology and Religious staff at the universities of Leeds, Durham, Sheffield, Hull and York are piloting the programme, in association with a careers consultant, academic publishers and the HUMBUL Humanities Hub.

Initial activities will include establishing a network of PRS staff, producing course materials and organising workshops, seminars and conferences for post-graduate students. Initially, it is expected that the programme will attract some fifty students, and at a later stage be expanded to other regions.

BOOK REVIEWS

Coward, H. (2003) *Sin and Salvation in The World Religions: A Short Introduction*. Oxford: One World, ix + 197pp. £14.99. ISBN: 1 85168 319 4

The Introduction to this volume identifies the search for salvation within the world's religious traditions as the quest for 'the still point of the turning world' of T. S. Eliot's *Burnt Norton* and the author's experiences of a mountain top. The religions on which he chooses to focus are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, trying to follow a common approach for each. This approach starts from a consideration of the human condition, followed by an analysis of how the scriptures of each tradition view sin and salvation, and then takes some major thinkers or schools of thought who further develop scriptural ideas, including examples from recent scholars within traditions and ending with views of life after death in relation to sin and salvation.

Readers of this review will be aware of the potential for criticism in the very title of a book which deals with a variety of religions which takes categories (in this case sin and salvation) distinctive of one (Christianity) as a theme appropriate to all and whose Introduction seems to suggest a 'common core' theme. On page 3 of his Introduction the author (who has written other thematic books of this kind) shows that he is aware that the terms are distinctively Christian and asserts that 'Christianity offers perhaps the clearest example of a salvation religion' (p.162). But Coward claims that 'other religions have parallel concepts', Jews speaking of redemption and Muslims having a close parallel in the term *najat* which means 'escape or deliverance from the fires of hell to the pleasures of paradise following God's guidance' and that both of these, alongside Christianity, have a strong sense of disobedience to God as a core problem. He acknowledges that in Hinduism and Buddhism it is human ignorance rather than sin that causes the problems of suffering, death and rebirth from which release (*moksa* or nirvana) is sought. He later says (p.166) 'there sin and disobedience is replaced by ignorance', rather a misleading statement, since both Hinduism and Buddhism are older than Christianity! Having acknowledged something of the differences on one short paragraph, Coward returns to his assertion of what is common in a quotation from Maurice Friedman's *A Heart of Wisdom*, that 'there is a way, a path, that leads from darkness to light, from lostness to salvation' (p.4), and the text slips back into using inappropriate terms across the board. Nirvana appears in the index as the word for Buddhist salvation whereas one might contest that it is one of the many Buddhist terms for Ultimate Reality, and indeed at the beginning of the text on Buddhism 'salvation' is described as 'liberation from suffering and

rebirth' (p.124) but later (p.126) the mixture 'salvation or release' is used. On p.125 'Buddhist salvation is open to anyone willing to follow the Buddha's example and strive for it. ...what is the Buddha's analysis of sinfulness that is holding us back?' and 'The Buddha's role as saviour amounts to revealing the path and offering it to us' (p.130) continued with the use of the vocabulary basic to the book. There are other difficulties: for example the now out-of-date dating of the Buddha's life and statements such as 'Buddha adopted the same starting point that Hindus assumed' which here refers to the pre-eminence of ignorance, but is generally inaccurate when it is remembered that the Buddha taught *anatman* over against the Hindu idea that there is an eternal *atman* which can be released. It is not till much later (p.141) that the *anatman* teaching is brought introduced in other than passing reference to the denial of 'I', 'Me' and 'ego-selfishness. Phrases such as 'For Buddhism, as was the case for Hinduism, the truth taught by the scriptures is beginningless and eternal' (p.133) are rather misleading in the light of the very different attitudes in these traditions to the source and use of scriptures.

The style of the text is clear and accessible to a general reader new to the material and has an index which is intended to facilitate comparisons. For undergraduates, it provides a good basis for a critical discussion of types of approach. There are footnotes and references to the work of scholars, many of whom write from within the religious traditions being discussed. A bibliography in addition to these would have been helpful. For those interested in fieldwork it might be used to provide some background to the classical, textual traditions of faiths amongst whose living communities they work. It does describe some recent developments in the traditions, for example in relation to Protestant Buddhism in Sri Lanka. But it goes no further than generalities of belief with little on practice and will certainly be challenged by the lived reality of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian lives.

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Kunin, Seth. D. (2003). *Religion: The Modern Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. vii + 232 pp.£50.00 (hbk).; £15.99 (pbk). ISBN 0 7486 15210 (hbk); 0 7486 1522 9 (pbk).

This is a companion volume to James Thrower's 1999 volume *Religion: The Classical Theories*, which seeks to be an introductory guide which enables students to go on to read the primary/classical texts. The earlier volume deals thematically both with sympathetic, insiders' understanding of religion

(Part I: religious theories of religion: religion as revelation, experience and philosophy) and those which are reductionist, which he calls naturalistic theories of religion (religion as human construct, primitive error, psychological and social construct). Kunin's volume both complements, extends and overlaps the earlier work in its consideration of key figures such as Marx, Durkheim and Freud, for example, but his organisation is more diverse and his use of these and other key figures such as Weber and Otto are as thinkers whose work initiated and set an agenda and discussion which are continued in the emphases within a variety of disciplines such as sociology, psychology, phenomenology and anthropology and feminism and gender studies.

One considerable strength of the book is this movement from Part I on Setting The Agenda through a discussion of these key figures to Part II Continuing The Discussion – which focuses on methodologies or the disciplines as listed above. However, the consideration of these approaches in Part II has a strong sense of the diversity and critical conversations that have and continue to take place both within the disciplinary boundaries and between them. Examples of these are discussions of evolutionist and essentialist approaches in phenomenologies of religions and their relationship to histories and theologies (especially those which are comparative). There is also useful discussion of the terminology of primal and primitive in relationship to religions (both terms are indexed) and an introduction of the now more favoured term 'indigenous' (though this is not in the index). I should also have liked to read further discussion of the interaction and overlap of methods such as participant-observation as used by some sociologists, anthropologists and phenomenologists alike. Part III then takes the discussion in different directions with short thematic chapters on ritual, symbolism and myth, each viewed and defined differently by different scholars (especially anthropologists) and the definitions challenged by particular examples from their work.

This multi-perspectival way of approaching contemporary studies in religions is refreshing and lends much-needed sophistication to an introductory volume which has clarity alongside its presentation of complexity. The author's approach is lively in its challenge and problematising of all kinds of definitions, methods and disciplines. There is frequent argument for more relativistic approaches, by which the author means approaches contextualised in cultures seen as constantly in process, recreated by setting them against the empirical data' (p.184). In his last words (chapter 15) he concludes 'we should recognise that our definitions are socially constructed and authored, and thus cannot be seen as prescriptive, definitions can be used in an analogical sense, bringing together material without forcing identity upon it. Analogy suggests similarity, it also allows for difference and this retains the essential aspect of particularity.

Perhaps the term definition is too strong, other terms like characteristic might be better' (p.220).

The presentation of complex ideas is clear and full of helpful examples and should also take the reader to the original texts of scholars being discussed. I consider it a helpful text for undergraduate and masters' courses in the study of religions for both its breadth and critical edge. Those involved in fieldwork studies, though this term is not in the index, will find in it interesting discussion of both key figures and methodologies which have had and are having considerable impact on their approaches. If some of the critical points I have made above in relation to section II had been addressed the volume would have even more interest for those in this field. The text has a full bibliography and a combined index of authors and topics.

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Nesbitt, Eleanor. *Intercultural Education: Ethnographic and Religious Approaches*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. 2004. viii + 204pp. £25.00 (hbk), £13.95 (pbk). ISBN 1 84519 033 5 (hbk); 1-84519-034-3 (pbk).

As might be expected by all who have encountered Nesbitt's work previously, this is a book based on a fascinating and impressive body of research, whose findings are often striking and thought-provoking, and always presented clearly. About some of the implications drawn from the findings, though, I do have some reservations.

The book is written for teachers at all levels, although the case studies are drawn mainly from primary and secondary school level students in the UK (or indeed in Coventry and the Midlands). There are ten main chapters plus an introduction, a glossary, a bibliography, and an appendix setting out a wide range of practical guidelines for teachers on 'cultural diversity and the school'. Issues covered in the main chapters revolve primarily around children associated with the Hindu, Sikh and Christian traditions, with occasional mention of others, and deal, stated broadly, with conceptions of religion, culture and identity – a notoriously tangled area.

The opening chapter highlights possible pitfalls in tackling, at primary school level, the theme of birthdays. Sensitivity to religious and cultural variations is essential, for example in respect of reservations by Jehovah's Witnesses and others (including some Muslims) about the celebration of birthdays, or regarding the greater significance attached by some Catholic as well as Orthodox communities to name days rather than birthdays. Sensitivity needs to extend too to the differing norms that may govern what are acceptable forms of celebration. Teachers need to be alert to the risk of

making assumptions about commonalities of experience. The discussion here is straightforward and sensible.

The second chapter is an interesting analysis of the alleged links between Hinduism and vegetarianism. A whole gamut of views emerges, covering both whether or not vegetarianism is essential, and also if so, why. Undoubtedly, 'any easy correlation between being Hindu or being vegetarian is misleading' (p.32), and 'tendencies to equate "religion" or "faith tradition" with particular behaviour homogenise the way in which we perceive communities' (p.34). Indeed, but how common, I wonder, is such stereotyping? Certainly teacher trainers, one hopes, labour actively against it.

Still, it is a recurrent target here, as we move on to consider the diversity – denominational, ethnic, doctrinal – to be found amongst children drawn from the Christian tradition, challenging 'tendencies to regard Christians as more homogeneous than they are' (p.35), and advocating that this diversity be much better reflected in religious education. This is followed by a consideration of the role of festivals as a theme in schools, focussing on Christmas (where there is a danger, in primary schools, of overemphasising it in the Autumn term), Divali, and Vaisakhi, and noting some parental unease over including others' festivals (not least Hallowe'en, from some Christian perspectives).

More original, perhaps, is an exploration of young Sikhs' overlapping conceptualisations of 'God' and 'Guru', and of their experience of the role(s) of *amrit*, both of which call in question 'the text book image of their religious nurture' (p.80). The subsequent chapter, on 'what young Hindus believe', includes reflection on the extent to which 'choice' is an appropriate way of thinking of the decisions they variously have to reach. Mention is made of the popular belief in 'the evil eye', raising questions regarding 'religion' and 'culture'. The tendency to dismiss this kind of belief as culture rather than religion is said to be problematic, given their widespread prevalence (p.85).

The argument here seems to me to be far from convincing. The popularity of belief in the evil eye, which is found, for example, in all the Mediterranean countries, whether Muslim, Roman Catholic, or Greek Orthodox, as well as among, say, pre-war Polish Jewry (see the novels and stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer), combined with the fact that it has no connection with otherwise typical Catholic, Orthodox etc. belief, could be an argument for regarding it as, precisely, culture rather than religion. Of course, it is experienced as religious too – but so are other examples better regarded as primarily cultural, such as honour killings in Northwest Pakistan – or my grandmother's sensed duty to have a new hat to wear to chapel on Easter Sunday.

Chapter 7 tackles the tricky topic of caste, among both Hindus and Sikhs. I was dismayed to read that textbooks are still too often equating caste with *varna*, and failing to draw attention to *jati*. Certainly teachers who imitate them will benefit from the discussion here. Of still greater benefit, though, is the nuanced delineation of caste among Sikhs. A jarring note at the end, however, was the approving quotation from an ISCKON publication that *varnashramadharmā* ‘promotes spiritual equality’ (p.112): a striking claim for a notion that excludes all women, and all men of the fourth varna.

In chapter 8 issues connected with multiple identities are discussed, followed by a discussion of ‘spirituality’, which slippery notion is given more substance than one often finds. The warning that one should seek to go beyond externals (e.g. presenting Sikhism in terms of the five Ks) is still apt, even all these years after Ninian Smart’s injunction that we should ‘transcend the informative’.

The final chapter reverts to issues of theory (‘ethnography as reflective practice’) first raised in the introduction, and it is in this connection that I am left with certain reservations, as mentioned at the outset. They do not concern the value of ethnography – its value permeates the whole book. They are evoked, rather, by a methodological claim that is made, and reasons given in its support.

The ‘interpretative and dialogic’ approach advocated (p.138) and in good measure exemplified here is claimed to represent a fundamental calling into question of the ‘world religions approach’ to teaching, at *all* levels. Thus, for example, ‘the mounting data from the University of Warwick studies undermines any [*sic*] conceptualising of religions as bounded or discrete – a key assumption of religious education syllabuses’ (p.9). The world religions approach conduces to unwarranted essentialising and misleading stereotypes – for example about Hinduism and vegetarianism, Sikhism and caste, and so forth.

Well, it may do; but not if properly conducted – in the way in which, in effect, Nesbitt conducts it here. For all her discussions presuppose some working conception of ‘Hindu’, ‘Sikh’ etc., and indeed could not do otherwise. At issue, surely, is not the ‘world religions paradigm’, but its careless or superficial application – an application which many work hard to avoid. The ethnographic approach advocated and exemplified here, rather than calling into question the world religions approach, is an essential tool in its proper implementation. At its best, it is an approach that readily accommodates, indeed greedily absorbs, a determination to challenge stereotypes, to emphasise diversity, to subvert superficial generalisations, to engage with tricky questions concerning religion and culture, indeed all the concerns that Nesbitt highlights.

It is, of course, true that ‘essentialising’ boundaries between ‘religions’

may need to be queried, but how typical, for example, is the Sikh-Hindu case? There are surely major counter-examples – Muslim-Baha’i relations in Iran, Catholic-Protestant relations in Northern Ireland, Hindu-Muslim relations in much of India, Buddhist-Catholic relations in Vietnam, Jewish-Christian relations everywhere, and so on. Admittedly ‘Hindu’ is a ‘fuzzy’ notion – but then so is ‘Welsh’ (not to mention ‘English’) – and imprecision is a price one can but pay for otherwise irreplaceable concepts.

Re-reading this coarse-grained review of a set of fine-grained studies, I am conscious of having failed to do justice to what is most valuable in the book – the wealth of detail. At the same time, one final reservation! An ethnography of young people’s religious understandings can be helpful, as we have seen. On the other hand, young people’s understandings can be, simply, ill-informed and muddled. I wondered about this sometimes, for example when reading about Sikh children referring to the Gurus as Gods (chapter 5) (and recalled, embarrassingly, as a young Baptist, briefly opposing divorce on the ground that marriage was a sacrament!). So findings such as these do need to be placed in a wider context, one where notions such as ‘mainstream’, ‘typical’ (yea, even ‘orthodox’) may need to be invoked.

These, admittedly, may in turn imply notions of what people ‘should’ believe, a position deprecated by Nesbitt as fostering ‘a judgmental approach’ (p.141). Yet it is clearly not the case that just anything can be counted as being ‘Muslim’, ‘Buddhist’ etc., and thus inevitably boundaries are drawn. Some of these are drawn more plausibly than others – whether from an insider’s or an outsider’s perspective (terms on which Nesbitt also has some acute comments – p.6). The grounds of plausibility can then be explored (again, from a variety of perspectives) – they do not need to be accepted. The exploration may entail being ‘judgmental’ in the sense of forming judgments, but this is not remotely akin to being judgmental in the moralising sense. (And it does kindle some interesting discussions....)

I suspect, in conclusion, that this is a book which will resonate most for teachers in schools, teacher trainers (and textbook authors), and students, but it is certainly also of interest to a wider audience, which I hope it receives.

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Reply to Timothy Fitzgerald's review of *Religion: Empirical Studies* (BASR Bulletin 104)

I would like to thank Timothy Fitzgerald for his review of this volume in the previous *Bulletin*, and for his many positive comments. He makes pertinent critical points. In this short reply I would like to comment a little further on the editorial shaping of the collection and thereby – I hope – open up some wider debate on the question of methodological common ground within BASR.

First, I would like to re-emphasise the historiographical angle of the book. My underlying concern, as editor, was that the 50th anniversary of BASR could give a useful opportunity for critical reflection on our institutional construction of 'religious studies' through a presentation of some of the best recent material available bearing the *imprimatur* of BASR. In this sense, BASR itself, ourselves as its members, and me as editor on this particular occasion, all serve in the volume as a – dare I say it, 'empirical' – case study in the disciplinary formation of the study of religion in one particular European polity in recent years. A good deal of my introduction, with footnotes, is given over to presenting this historiographical approach. Despite his previous attention to historiography in *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (2000), Tim Fitzgerald does not fully address this aspect of the volume. Read more firmly as a historical contextualisation of the study of religion, I would suggest that the collection as a whole – both editorial and many individual chapters, particularly in Part One, 'Category and Method' – actually takes a more nuanced, critical and reflexive line on 'religion' and the disciplinary formation 'religious studies' than Tim Fitzgerald allows.

This leads on to the question, put by Fitzgerald, of whether 'religion' has any agreed definition in the volume and within BASR more generally. I can only agree with Fitzgerald's argument (*Bulletin* 104, pp.28-29) that the discourses of many groups, both popular and academic, can be dominated by 'instinctual usages' of the word 'religion', the category thereby functioning as an 'ideological operator'. As Fitzgerald says, and as his own work demonstrates, recognition of this discursive, ideological function of 'religion' should direct us 'back to the category itself' and to 'the need to observe ... actual usages [of the category] in a range of different contexts' (*ibid*).

So far, so good. But Fitzgerald makes a sharp contrast between this kind of approach, and what he calls a model of 'religions out there' (p.29) which he claims drives my representation of the methodological ground underpinning BASR. Here he goes awry, for nowhere do I argue that there are 'religions out there' (Fitzgerald, p.29) in the simple referential way he suggests. 'Religion' is problematised throughout my introduction: there are

three lengthy footnotes on the first two pages alone which discuss primary sources on issues of category formation. I also anticipated the kind of critique that this thorny phrase ‘out there’ might draw, by introducing my first reference to it quite carefully:

Careful contextualised description of what the scholar has selected for attention under the rubric ‘religion’ ... should be a basic methodological component in the study of religion/s insofar as this specialist field constructs ‘religion’ as a social and material arena of practice ‘done’ by embodied others (*Religion: Empirical Studies*, p.xxiii).

One could attempt to argue that (a) there is no such ‘social and material arena of practice’, or that (b) even if there were, we can’t properly know it, but I am happy to leave this to philosophical analysis. By contrast, the ‘out there’ argument was designed to flag up an agenda for studies of ‘religion’ constituted as empirical practices and discourses: that is, on ‘religion’ as a historical, material, social, political, etc, datum (including second-order discourses on ‘religion’ itself, particularly in popular and civic cultures). Since at least the Marburg conference of IAHR in 1960, ‘empirical’ has been a more-or-less useful tag for this kind of focus. Without qualification, of course, ‘empirical’ is not unproblematic: amongst other reasons, because of the problem of naively referential language use, as raised by Fitzgerald (p.29). This is precisely why I alluded to the dangers of ‘theoretically naive’ or ‘unbridled’ empiricism (*ibid.*, p.xxviii) and also attempted to rescue ‘empirical’ from a neo-positivist reading by emphasising a *qualitative* empirical approach, which can take account of both agency and structure in ‘religion’ (p.xxvi).

In any case these efforts were not designed to argue an original methodological position, but to *induce* what I took to be a broad methodological common ground underpinning BASR. That I was attempting to do this in the first place depends on the assumption that an academic disciplinary field, to be such, must be able to articulate and defend a common remit and set of criteria. The precise grounds for the disciplinary formation of the study of religion remain a key issue, since clearly ‘religion’ can also be (and frequently, even overwhelmingly, is) constructed *not* as a field of practice ‘out there’, etc., but as a philosophical, metaphysical, theological or soteriological datum ‘in here’ (meaning the object or practice of an interioristic, non-falsifiable consciousness or subjectivity, particularly in traditions influenced – as Tim Fitzgerald has shown – by liberal Protestant norms). In the volume I tried to offer a historical and inductive argument of why – warts and all – ‘religion’ has largely been constructed within BASR along the former lines; how this strategy might historically be bound up with attempting to demarcate and preserve a field for the ‘study of religions’ or ‘religious studies’ that is not just an expanded, pluralised ‘theology’ or

‘divinity’; and why – again, warts and all – this or something like it is a necessary endeavour, in order to maintain a space in universities for just this kind of critical debate.

Jonathan Z. Smith’s remark on ‘religion’ as a creation of the scholar’s study is well-known. But while this has had crucial value in problematising our central category, it would be an odd reading of Smith that would collapse referentiality *per se*. The elision of an empirical (historical, material, etc.) reality to ‘religion’ – and one could debate a spectrum of critical ‘realist’ arguments, from Marx and Weber, to Margaret Archer and others, why such an empirical ‘reality’ can be upheld – by some post-structuralist approaches, either intentionally or inadvertently, has the potential to return the field *qua* ‘study of religion’ to others more interested in faith, confession and consciousness. It follows that, precisely because what we and our students can say about ‘religion’ derives in large part from our institutional niche, the disciplinary formation of the field is a primary, not secondary matter. Categories bite deep, at different levels. If we are now acknowledging this with regard to ‘religion’, we are only just starting to entertain it with respect to the actual site of production of ‘religion’ discourses: the university departments of ‘religious studies’ and ‘study of religions’ in which most of us ply our trade, and which in turn exist in wider cultural-political contexts. For it’s not that we just happen to teach and research ‘religion’ in Higher Education departments; we are deeply constrained from the outset, through training and socialisation, by a nexus of forces – epistemological, cultural, political – which shape these institutional niches. As a result our departmental collectivities of ‘religious studies’ are not simple aggregates of free agents, but institutionalised groups locked into an ‘ideological state apparatus’, in Althusser’s phrase (as Fitzgerald has alerted us). That is, a disciplinary field in a state-funded university operating in a neo-liberal economy is not a site of pure intellectual agency; we can’t do just what we want. The institutional niche we inherit and shape will always constrain what we can and cannot say and do under the rubric of ‘religious studies’. This is precisely why we need to practice methodological reflection at least in part through collective historiography, in order to make transparent the site and context of our academic production.

It follows that the volume was primarily designed not to advance this or that ‘position’, but to try to tease out more fully what collective methodological norms drive BASR (and indeed other IAHR-affiliated associations), and under what kinds of disciplinary assumptions and institutional constraints, in what is now a very different world from Marburg in 1960. In this sense, identifying ‘qualitative empirical’ methodologies as a common ground is merely the start. Tim Fitzgerald’s thoughtful review and critique offers a welcome first response. I hope we can build on this and

develop a wider debate amongst BASR members and other parties interested in the empirical studies of religion.

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TURNING POINT

From Alan Garner to Religious Studies via the Bible

Chris Partridge

Many of the guests invited on to the Radio 4 programme *Desert Island Discs* clearly find it very difficult to choose eight records – and from those eight, one record – which they would take with them to a desert island. I too have found it rather difficult to identify a particular text that has been ‘a turning point’ for me. While there is one, to which I will turn in a moment, to some extent the choice feels a little artificial, in that my life has been a meandering path with numerous turning points, only some of which have been occasioned by books. That said, this is no doubt true for all of us. Wherever we are standing intellectually, spiritually, and personally is the result of a confluence of influences, accidents, and turning points. Moreover, although I could list several theological and philosophical texts that I have found intellectually provocative, the overall impact of many of them has been less than that of some more popular books. For example, as a child, Alan Garner’s *The Wierdstone of Brisinghamen* (Collins, 1960) enchanted the world for me and possibly set me on a path that I am still walking. Again, as a teenager I was enormously influenced by J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (George Allen and Unwin, 1968), one of the only books I took with me when I went travelling on my own for a year or so in my late teens. Also at this time, I read a book, which I have since re-read and, indeed, am about to read again, the late Hunter S Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Paladin, 1972). Hardly a spiritually uplifting text or, indeed, one I would recommend to my children, but its raw engagement with the world, the ‘gonzo’ emphasis on submerging yourself within the culture one is writing about, and the countercultural disregard for convention and respectability all greatly impressed me and left their mark upon me. Also, in my early twenties, I and some friends became fascinated with Carlos Castaneda’s *The Teachings of Don Juan* (Penguin, 1970) and Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* (Chatto and Windus, 1954). Although these texts were very much part of the time I was living through in my early twenties, they were nevertheless turning points in my development. The world, it seemed, really was larger than the physical environment in which I

lived out my day-to-day existence. It became, to use some of John Oman's words, a world 'big enough to breathe in'.

As those who have listened to *Desert Island Discs* will know, as well as choosing a book, a luxury item, and a record to take to one's desert island, the guest is given the complete works of Shakespeare and the Bible. I mention this because if there is one book I can identify as being especially pivotal, that book would have to be the Bible. I can honestly say that the Gospels in particular have made me the person I am today. While that may deter those who know me from reading the Bible, I would not have pursued the path which led to my study of theology and religion had it not been for my determination to follow the example of Jesus. (I certainly would not have taken this path had Huxley and Thompson been my principal influences.) As a result of a close and fascinated reading of the Bible, the path I was following at the time, which included a vague, unfocussed interest in spirituality, quickly became sharply focused. My reading of the Bible, my embryonic devotion to Jesus, and several profound religious experiences led to God becoming an ontological reality for me – a being with whom I could communicate. In other words, that which had once been nebulous, melting into the air as I pondered it, became solid. Although there was much in the Bible that confused me and that I found improbable, and although some of the Christians I met encouraged beliefs that I found difficult to accept, even unethical, my life had been changed. I had enthusiastically converted to Christian theism and wanted to know more. Hence, while numerous books have contributed to my personal and intellectual development (such as it is), the Bible and, more specifically, the Jesus I met in the Gospels twenty years or so ago have been of fundamental significance. Moreover, if I was pressed to highlight a specific text within the Bible that has meant more to me than any other, it would have to be Psalm 23: 'The Lord is my shepherd...' Even now I can turn to that text, read it devotionally, and literally feel the presence of the divine – so much so that it sometimes brings tears to my eyes. No doubt, some readers will be able to explain this impact in psychological and sociological terms (as perhaps I could). But that's not the point. This book, Jesus, and Psalm 23 have been so significant in my life that I find myself emotionally moved by reflection upon them at what feels like a deep level of my being.

Intellectually, the result of my encounter with the Bible is that, although I have travelled some distance over the last twenty years, and although I am aware of the issues and feel the force of scientific explanations for religious belief, whatever my reservations I cannot dismiss theism and individual testimonies to the reality of the spiritual world. This, of course, has had an impact on my work as a scholar of religion. Indeed, I would even go so far as to argue that the scholar who has had a religious experience and felt the

persuasive force of the sacred (even if they are no longer persuaded) is in a better position to empathise with and, therefore, understand some aspects of personal religious commitment within others than the scholar who has not.

Finally, as a result of reading the Bible, instead of embarking on a degree in art and graphic design, which I had intended, I studied theology. Although I eventually left theological study for religious studies, three theological texts were pivotal in shaping my current thinking: Emil Brunner's *Truth as Encounter* (SCM, 1964), John Oman's *The Natural and the Supernatural* (Cambridge University Press, 1931), and H. H. Farmer's *The World and God* (Nisbet, 1936). While, of course, I do not now (and did not then) agree with everything in these volumes, they helped to make sense of world that the Bible had opened up for me. In particular, their emphasis on the divine as personal and their articulation of the significance of individual divine-human encounters struck me as enormously powerful and cogent.

While the path I walk continues to meander, the person walking it will always be one who is thankful for his encounter with the Bible.

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TRIBUTE: Julia Leslie (1948-2004)

In a life cut untimely short, Julia Leslie made a major contribution to Sanskrit studies and the study of religion, inflecting both with a characteristic concern for gender issues and a demand for total engagement. That her contribution went well beyond her not inconsiderable list of publications has been borne out by the tributes of colleagues, students and members of religious traditions which she studied, by the response to the fund set up in her name at SOAS and by the dedication of academic gatherings to her in the months following her death in September 2004. It is fitting, therefore, that there will be an entry on Julia as a scholar in the forthcoming second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* on-line.

Julia came late to the study of South Asian religious traditions. After a first degree in Philosophy with French and German from the University of Sussex, her interest was kindled by travel to and several years spent in South Asia. On her return she studied for an M.Phil. in Classical Indian Religions with Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit at the University of Oxford, then pursued doctoral work there. This included a period of study in Wai, Maharashtra, under the scholar whom Mary McGee describes as 'the late and legendary Tarkatirtha Laxmanshastri Joshi', with whom she too later worked. From

this came the publication of *The Perfect Wife: the orthodox Hindu woman according to the Stridharmapaddhati of Tryambakajvan* (OUP, 1989, republished by Penguin Classic, Delhi in 1995), which Julia completed while she was Visiting Fellow at Harvard Divinity School's Research on Women and Religion program. Her study of this eighteenth century brahmanical work was groundbreaking and indeed remains one of the few serious studies of gender in Sanskrit texts of its kind.

In her moving tribute spoken to Julia at her funeral, Mary McGee of Columbia University, New York, referred to their first meeting at the 6th World Sanskrit Conference in Philadelphia in 1986. On a ragbag panel where everything to do with women was thrown together, they vowed they would 'lead the way for integrating studies on women and gender...within our academic disciplines'. To this end, Julia convened an ESRC-funded workshop on 'Women in Indian Religions' in 1987, organised bi-annual research workshops on 'Dharma and Gender' through the Dharam Hinduja Institute for Indic Studies, Cambridge from 1995, inspired and supervised undergraduate and doctoral students at SOAS, where she was appointed Lecturer in 1990 and Senior Lecturer only three years later, and made gender issues central in her publications. With Sian Hawthorne who continues as its director, she co-founded the Centre for Gender and Religion, now the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Gender and Religion, which will be one of Julia's important legacies to the study of religion. Under its auspices, an AHRB-funded research project on Epic Constructions: Gender, Myth and Society in the Mahabharata, is being continued by Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black. Julia might, though, smile ironically to note that at AAR in Philadelphia this November 2005, Women and Religion remains a separate panel.

Julia was an active member of many academic and professional associations and a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society. In particular, she was an active member of BASR, serving as Bulletin editor from 1992-94. Her BASR occasional paper no.4 on 'Religion, gender and *dharma*: the case of the widow-ascetic' has just been included in the collection edited by Steven Sutcliffe, *Religion: Empirical Studies* (Ashgate, 2004).

While a painstaking scholar, Julia was not just interested in the intellectual study of religion for its own sake. She believed intently that such study mattered in terms of people's lives. She showed this in every aspect of her work. As a founder member of the International Society against Dowry and Bride-Burning in India, she spoke at its First International Conference, held at Harvard in 1995, and was actively engaged with practical measures thereafter. She was currently working on a project on Suicide and Self-Harm in India, bringing together 'early Sanskrit narratives and urgent contemporary issues in an attempt to illuminate both'. Her most recent book,

Authority and Meaning in Indian Religions: Hinduism and the Case of Valmiki (Ashgate, 2003) stemmed from a furore caused by a radio broadcast in Birmingham and the question of an M.A. student. It turned on four issues, the first: How much longer must supposedly 'low-caste' communities put up with an identity constructed for them by others? (p.1), the fourth: What should the role of the scholar be in relation to the religious community involved? (cf. p.2). Julia knew that such questions were fraught with difficulty, but she did not eschew facing them. Valmikis with whom she had worked garlanded her casket expressing not only their respect and affection but that of all those who had gathered to say goodbye.

Those of us who knew Julia well know that there was a third component to her study of religion, in which her ability to integrate intellectual acuity and compassionate engagement was grounded. It was her constant reflection as a mother, colleague, teacher, wife, about what mattered in the way we relate to one another. This gave her an ability to talk of things at a level normally unapproached between academics. They are not therefore the usual subject matter of academic tributes. But it would be impossible to write this tribute to Julia without mentioning it, not least because I spent the day I had set aside to get this tribute into the November 2004 issue in *Accident and Emergency* with one of my own children – and know that Julia would have joined me in a rueful laugh. For many of us, it is the memories of deeply shared conversations with her which will live on, along with the work that Julia has inspired.

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CONFERENCE SURVEY

Readers' attention is drawn to the 'Conference Survey' enclosed with this Bulletin. The Executive would like to know members' preferences for conference arrangements. Obviously, we cannot get a valid sample of opinion at annual conferences, since non-attendees would be automatically excluded.

A high response rate would be invaluable for future planning.

Editor's note: The *BASR Bulletin* publishes a list of members annually, in its November edition. The Editor welcomes updates, and reminds members to submit any changes of details, as well as publications, using the enclosed form, or by e-mail.

While every effort has been made to keep records accurate and up-to-date, the Editor apologises for any omissions, and will willingly send back numbers on request, if Bulletins have not been received. Please write or e-mail.

Members are encouraged to send in details of their research interests. It is helpful to know the fields in which others are working.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor welcomes 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	750-800 words
Research in progress	800-1,000 words
Turning Point	800-1000 words
Tributes	normally 500 words

The Editor is pleased to advise, where necessary. The BASR Executive Committee particularly welcomes accounts of research in progress by post-graduate students, and articles describing RS at a particular location.

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.

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