

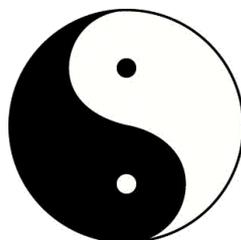
**BRITISH ASSOCIATION**  
for the  
**STUDY OF RELIGIONS**



**BULLETIN**  
No 104 March 2005

# BASR BULLETIN

## No 104 March 2005



### CONTENTS

<b>Editorial: RS or TRS?</b> .....	4
<b>BASR Matters</b> .....	5
<b>Message from the Treasurer</b> .....	6
<b>BASR Occasional Papers</b> .....	7
<b>Forthcoming conferences</b> .....	8
<b>‘Faith Literacy’</b> .....	15
<b>Research in Progress</b> .....	18
<b>Religious Studies in the U.K.</b>	
Theology and Religious Studies at Durham .....	21
<b>AUDTRS Framework of Professional Practice</b> .....	23
<b>Book Reviews</b>	
<i>Reviewers:</i> Timothy Fitzgerald, Alan Rogers.....	27
<b>Turning Point</b>	
George D. Chryssides .....	33
<b>Recent Publications by BASR Members</b> .....	35
<b>Guidelines for Contributors</b> .....	39

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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>>**

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### **Editorial: RS or TRS?**

Religious Studies remains a field that is still widely misunderstood. My own students at Wolverhampton still report being asked if they are training to be vicars, despite the fact that roughly a third of them are Muslim, Sikh or Hindu, and our work draws extensively on the surrounding religious organisations that represent many faiths.

The creation of 'Theology and Religious Studies' (TRS) as a category for the professional body AUDTRS (Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies) or — worse still, some might say — 'Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies' as a category for Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) continues to encourage the blurring of important distinctions that we are often at pains to point out to prospective students and to colleagues. Not so long ago I had to explain to the Vice-Chancellor the distinction between Theology and Religious Studies: apparently he had been unaware — although, in fairness, Vice-Chancellors have an unenviable task of conceptually mapping hundreds of academic subject areas.

This edition of the BASR Bulletin includes three significant topics relating to the 'T' and 'RS' divide. While there is an obvious career outlet for Theology students, a common question from prospective RS candidates relates to career prospects: apart from teaching RE, what else can they do? Since the Thatcher era, successive governments continue to lay stress on vocationalism and entrepreneurship. The article on 'Faith Literacy?' (p.14) shows how a number of Religious Studies graduates of the University of Wolverhampton have not only used the subject entrepreneurially, but promoted it as a means for enabling employers to understand and cater for their work force.

The second topic spans the T/RS divide, and concerns AUDTRS and the Framework of Professional Practice which was approved at its 2005 Annual General Meeting. When AUDTRS first met, delegates found that, far from having a great deal in common, they represented a range of widely different interests. Writing documents about learning outcomes and benchmarking proved an inordinately difficult task, although the leeway that the QAA Benchmarking document allows makes it relatively easy for any department, whether 'T' or 'RS' to claim that its minimum thresholds are exceeded.

This diversity of interests once again proved interestingly problematical when AUDTRS assumed the task of producing a Framework of Professional Practice for staff representing these disparate areas. For example, should it be a matter of professional practice that staff make no creedal demands on their students, allowing Christians, Sikhs, Muslims and atheists to be equally at home during their study? In RS it is a fairly common assumption that this

is the case, but not in Theology or Divinity, where theological seminaries are by their very nature partisan, and presuppose commitment. RS staff might wish to emphasise protocols relating to field work, while handling ancient manuscripts might be more relevant to some biblical scholars.

In the end, the AUDTRS Ethics Working Party decided to focus on raising awareness of issues, rather than imposing requirements on teachers and researchers. The text of the Code is published in full (p.23), since AUDTRS took the view, in common with many bodies that formulate codes, that such documents should be made public, and not simply stored among its archives.

Third, 'Religious Studies in the UK' (p.19) focuses in this edition on the University of Durham, where the Department of Theology has changed its name to the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, as the result of a merger with Newcastle University's Religious Studies Department.

Finally, I should apologise if members think there is an undue emphasis on Wolverhampton in this issue. It is not coincidental that this is the Editor's workplace, of course, but the Association welcomes contributions from all parts of Britain. Of particular interest are reports on innovative ventures, reports on research in progress, conference reports, insights into the way Religious Studies is taught in various British institutions, and offers of 'Turning Point' articles and book reviews.

**George D. Chrystides**

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## **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 year preceding the change-over, in order to allow continuity within the Committee, and to ensure that the new President is suitably acquainted with the demands of his or her new role.

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 is enclosed with this edition of the *BASR Bulletin*. 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.

## MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER

### Subscription Reminder

If you have not yet paid your subscription for 2004/2005 (due on 1 October 2004) please do so as soon as possible. We take a liberal view of late payment but we cannot continue to send Bulletins to members who do not pay their dues. In keeping with our policy you will not be posted a written reminder although, where we have an e-mail address, we do try to jog your memory electronically, if necessary. The membership rates are currently £15 for waged members, £8 for students and unwaged and £10 for overseas members. If we do not receive your subscription we will assume that you no longer wish to be a member of the Association and, in that case, this may be the last copy of the Bulletin you will be sent. We don't want to lose you so please send in your cheque without delay. If you would prefer to set up an annual standing order for your payment, you can download a bankers order form from our web page: <<http://basr.org.uk>>

### 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](mailto:h.j.waterhouse@open.ac.uk)>

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## **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 Guilia 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.

**Professor Frank Whaling**

will speak on

**Religious Studies: Past, Present and Future**

Another speaker is to be announced.

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.

**IAHR  
TOKYO 2005**



**19th World Congress of the  
International Association for  
the History of Religions**

The 19th World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) will be held in Tokyo, Japan, **24-30 March 2005**.

**General Theme of the Congress  
Religion: Conflict and Peace**

The academic programme is now on-line.  
Acceptance of proposals of papers has now closed.  
Late registration commenced on 1 November 2004.

**For fuller information, see the Congress website at:  
<http://www.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/iahr2005>**

**THE 30th OXFORD SPALDING SYMPOSIUM  
ON INDIAN RELIGIONS**

**Harris Manchester College  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**

15-17 April, 2005

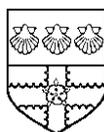
**Speakers include:** Dr Alleyn Diesel, Professor Pratap Kumar, Dr Valerie Roebuck Professor Ian Harris, David Azzopardi, Dr Matthew Clark, Dr Simon Brodbeck Dr Kathleen Taylor, Jameela Siddiqi, Dr Alex McKay, Professor Gavin Flood

*Copies of this programme and/or the booking form can be obtained from:*

Dr Anna King (Convenor), Theology and Religious Studies, University College Winchester, Winchester, SO22 4NR. Tel: 01962 827331 E-mail: <Anna.King@winchester.ac.uk>  
or Dr Lynn Foulston: <Lynn.Foulston1@newport.ac.uk>

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The University of Reading



Department of Philosophy

One-day Conference  
**THE MEANING OF THEISM**

**Saturday 23 April 2005**

Speakers include:

Sir Anthony Kenny, Alvin Plantinga, John Haldane and Richard Norman.

For further information and registration form, e-mail  
<c.e.wayne@Reading.ac.uk>

or write Ratio Conference, Dept of Philosophy, The University of Reading, Reading  
RG6 6AA.

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*Locating the Ancestors, 20 April 2005, Open University*

**A day conference examining the place of ‘ancestors’ in contemporary religions, cultures and societies.**

‘Ancestors’ will be taken to refer to persons who have died but remain engaged with and by their descendants. Some religious communities may prefer to speak of ‘saints’ or ‘souls’, while popular religious discourse and practice may indicate the continuing sociality of those who have died by offerings of road-side flowers and newspaper in memoriam columns.

The conference will be interested in ‘ancestors’ in a wide variety of communities and contexts. Speakers and papers so far accepted include Helen Cornish (Goldsmiths College, UK) “Cunning ancestors: competing authorities”; Ian Draper (University of Birmingham, UK), “Genealogy as Spirituality”; Leon Grandy (Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand), “From these Honoured Dead”; Dennis Klass (Webster University, USA), “Bereaved parents self-help groups”; Audrey Linkman (Open University, UK), “Taken from Life: Photographing the Dead”; Helen Waterhouse (Open University, UK) “Praying for the dead: continuity and reinterpretation in Soka Gakkai International”.

The conference is intended to initiate a larger, multi-disciplinary, multi-researcher debate about the use and value of the term in the Study of Religions and cognate disciplines.

Full details of the programme and a booking form can be found on the website: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/relstud/bbb/>

Cost: £20, including lunches.

**Please email** <Arts-Rel-Studies-Conferences@open.ac.uk> **with any enquiries.**

**Higher Education Academy  
Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies**

**Rowland Williams, from Heresy to Acceptance:**

8-11 April 2005, University of Wales, Lampeter.

**Women and the Divine:** A Conference for the Institute of Feminist Theory and Research, 17th – 19th June 2005, Liverpool

For details see: <<http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk>>

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

**6-8 May 2005**

**Implicit Religion: XXVIII Inter-Disciplinary Week-End.**

Denton Hall, Ilkley.

Church Study Days

2 June 2005

a.m. Stephen Rymer: 'Alternative futures for the Church'

p.m. Kay Millard: 'Secular and religious marriage rituals today'

15 September 2005

Edward Bailey: "'Implicit religion" and Christian ministry'

Full details can be found at <[www.implicitreligion.org](http://www.implicitreligion.org)> or from  
Canon Dr Edward Bailey, [eibailey@cscircs.freemove.co.uk](mailto:eibailey@cscircs.freemove.co.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](mailto:philip.taylor@anu.edu.au)>

## **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, thealogy, 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>

## **A World for All**

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

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

### **First Call for Papers**

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.

**Papers are invited in the following conference research streams: 1) Concept of Global Civil Society; 2) International Politics and Global Civil Society; 3) Religion and Global Civil Society.**

Abstracts (200 words) of proposed conference research papers should be submitted by **4 March 2005** to: Karoline McLean, Centre for Theology and Public Issues, University of Edinburgh, New College, Mound Place, Edinburgh EH1 2LX.

Tel. 0131 650 7991. E-mail: <K.McLean@ed.ac.uk>

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

## **‘FAITH LITERACY’ — ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

Religious studies graduates from the University of Wolverhampton have demonstrated their entrepreneurial spirit in the creation of a new religious consultancy to benefit business. The graduates set up ‘Faith Literacy’ as part of a DfES funded project to promote awareness of enterprise skills amongst students. Ten projects were each given £20,000 for 12 months. Every project was organised by a Higher Education Academy subject centre, the Philosophical and Religious Studies one being based at Leeds University.

‘Setting up this consultancy was a natural development from new legislation determining that individuals should not be discriminated against in the workplace. The three students concerned wanted to help firms cope with the implications of Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003,’ said Leeds subject centre manager Simon Smith. The consultancy advises businesses about matters arising from this legislation.

The consultancy has already advised West Midlands Police on creation of a multi faith prayer room, helped Wolverhampton City Council with cultural and religious diversity training and helped create a faith walk in the centre of Wolverhampton.

Vicky Rimer, a Wolverhampton graduate who undertook consultancy work for Wolverhampton City Council writes:

As religious needs have increasingly become an important issue, it has become necessary for Council employees to understand what religious needs are and the reasons behind the requirement for certain provisions in order to support and provide for people of different faiths. Equally, for the maintenance of close working relationships and productive working conditions, staff need to be comfortable and know that their religion is accepted and understood and any needs arising from these are provided for in a tolerant and mutually accepting environment. This is where faith literacy comes in, as knowledge helps to dispel prejudice and untruths, allowing for a better understanding between co-workers and enabling a greater level of service to be provided.

The report first looks at the concept of Faith Literacy and why it has become an increasingly necessary concern. It then focuses on the City of Wolverhampton, looking at the diversity found there, and how this can affect employees of the City Council. It considers recent Government legislation regarding faith issues, suggesting that as the move towards religious

identification has become more widely acknowledged, and the demand for religious and faith needs to be recognised by society has become more insistent, this, combined with more recent outbreaks of violence induced by religious discrimination, has meant that the Government has been required to make provisions in the law in order to respond to this shift in public need and expectation. Recent Government legislation has therefore made it necessary for employers to raise their awareness of religious issues that concern their employees and customers. The report examines Wolverhampton City Council's equality and diversity training scheme, called 'One City Many People', as an example of how this has been put into practice, and further analysis is then presented through considering how other local Councils in the West Midlands area have tackled similar issues and whether anything similar has been set up. The report finishes with suggestions for good practice, and recommendations as to how Faith Literacy may be most effectively promoted and disseminated to service providers.

Donna Hollingshead, another former student, undertook consultancy work for the West Midlands Police. She writes:

For my report, I had to research on how to set up a multi-faith prayer room for the Wolverhampton police force. To meet and work with the police was a pleasure and enriching experience. The issue of the project was about prayer, why it is important in today's religions, why prayer in the workplace has become an important issue and why the police have decided to set up a prayer room for their staff.

It was necessary to summarise the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, what the Wolverhampton police had done so far in this regard, and how other police stations in the UK had set up prayer rooms. I surveyed other organisations that had also set up prayer rooms for their staff and visitors, such as hospitals, airports and City Councils. One important issue was the provision or non-provision of religious symbols; another was the provision of washing facilities a third issue was about privacy or segregation. Many religions require men and women to be segregated during prayer, such as Islam.

Recommendations included the need to collect data on religions, provision of religious symbols for those who require them (but to be kept in separate cabinets), availability of washing facilities as close as possible to the proposed prayer room. Training on religion should be given to all staff and officers about the six main religions. Workshops and visits to local places of

worship should be used for training police officers and support staff about religions and the need for religious tolerance and understanding. The report provided guidance on the six main religions in Britain: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, with particular reference to festivals and to prayer.

Two other Religious Studies graduates from the University of Wolverhampton have set up RIBRO — Religions in Britain Research Organisation — which has been closely associated with these projects. Chris Allen, RIBRO's Managing Director, writes:

Our 'faith literacy' consultancy service was devised in collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton, to help your organisation develop an awareness and knowledge of the major world religions, as well as other minority faiths, whose adherents are becoming an increasingly significant and identifiable contingent in today's society. Increasing your knowledge base concerning the religious background of your staff and customers thus aids productivity and efficiency through being able to embrace and utilise diversity and difference rather than encounter difficulty and dilemma.

Val Butcher, senior advisor at the Higher Education Academy in York, has been involved in organising projects like the Wolverhampton one over the past year. Her expertise in Enterprise helped win the £200,000 funding from the DfES for the 10 subject centres involved.

On March 14 all ten subject centres involved are meeting at the Bio -city in Nottingham for a conference organised by the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship. Each centre will give a presentation about their project.

*For further information about RIBRO, please visit the web site at <[www.ribro.com](http://www.ribro.com)>*

*The Higher Education Academy's home page is located at <<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk>>*

(Text by: Chris Allen, Deirdre Burke, Donna Hollingshead, Vicky Rimer and the Higher Education Academy.)

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

*[The Editor is grateful to Canon Edward Bailey for collating the following reports on research into Implicit Religion.]*

### **Karen Pärna: ‘Implicit Religion and the pre-Millennial Internet Hype’.**

In February 2004 I started work on the PhD research “Implicit Religion and the Internet Hype” at the Faculty of Theology in Leiden, the Netherlands. My thesis follows the notion that, in its general definition, religion constitutes one of man’s basic needs (to give meaning to existence), and I observe that in our predominantly secular society it increasingly finds expression in one specific, seemingly non-religious phenomenon — consumerism. In this four-year project I study one particular instance of religious expression in the ‘consumer society’: the pre-millennial Internet hype. I consider the quest for sense and meaning in the information and communications technology (ICT) craze that ensued the popularisation of the Internet, and posit that it contained elements of implicit religiosity.

The dissertation serves as a historical review of an economic and cultural phenomenon from the perspective of the social construction of the miraculous. It considers the appeal of ICT as an object of charisma and looks at the specific characteristics of the Internet that allowed it to take on implicitly religious traits. This hype is regarded in terms of its functioning as a sense-making mechanism — in this dissertation I consider the processes involved and evaluate the relevance of the frame of reference provided by the implicit religion approach. I claim that hypes, such as the Internet craze take place in times of existential uncertainty when familiar symbolic universes are threatened. Thus the Internet hype typically happened at a time of great social insecurity, brought about by the conclusion of the Cold War and the approaching end of the second millennium. In this context, the Internet craze fulfilled a role comparable to traditional religious congregations. It functioned as a source of shared ethos and social cohesion. Only, in this case religiosity was implied, rather than explicitly articulated or organised.

*University of Leiden, Faculty of Theology*

E-mail: <k.parna@let.leidenuniv.nl>

## **Claudia May: Religious Dimensions Surrounding the Allure of Celebrity**

Dr May's scholarship explores the religious sensibilities underscoring the world of popular and consumer culture, sports, and film through the fiction of various contemporary British writers. This examination into the various expressions of religious beliefs centres on how the allure of celebrity shapes modern-day Britain within the arenas of communication, literature, sports and advertising.

The fascination with celebrity is reinforced in one recent study conducted by Dr Adrian North of the University of Leicester who polled 2,500 16- to 24-year-olds and asked them to identify their hero. David Beckham, Brad Pitt, Justine Timberlake, Michael Jackson and Jennifer Lopez topped the first coveted five slots. Although Jesus was the highest-ranked religious leader, he received an equal number of votes as George W. Bush Jr and was placed 123rd on a list of potential candidates that bottomed out at 132.

Comparatively, a conglomerate group in Luton made up of local business people and academics called 'Luton First' commissioned a survey aimed at identifying the values held by young children. Two thousand children between the ages of 5 to 10 from Britain, and around the world, were invited to comment on their feelings about 'the best and worst things in the world'. When asked what they considered to be 'the best things in the world', being famous topped the list, and God came in at number seven. Whether their understanding of God was linked to any particular religion is not revealed in the report, but the prominence of the culture of celebrity resounds loudly.

In light of these findings, Dr May's work investigates whether this culture of celebrity cultivates a set of religious belief systems that function outside the realm of organised and self-proclaimed religious institutions. At the same time, Dr May explores the influence this celebrity culture has on present depictions of church history. For instance, when describing the role Evan Roberts plays in the Welsh Revival, writer Kevin Adams maintains in a 25 February 2004 interview with the BBC that, 'in his day (Evan Roberts) was a spiritual David Beckham'. The convergence between the more implicit and explicit dimensions of worship and religious expression, although not new, is evident in the language utilised by mediums of contemporary spirituality. Religious terms that are canonised within the liturgical practices of numerous denominations are appropriated within the vernacular vocabulary of contemporary spirituality. In his recent documentary *Hallowed Be Thy Game* avid football supporter Mark Dowd's refashioning of the Lord's Prayer captures the fervent devotions practised by some fans of the 'beautiful game' of football. The almost spiritual reverence for this sport

causes Mark Dowd to probe whether football 'is now a mass religion'. Interestingly, in what can be described as a kind of mock confession, Dowd testifies that he has been a 'born-again believer since the age of eight'. In view of such comments, Dr May's work investigates whether such evangelical references merely reflect a playful use of analogy or evoke the language of a religious belief.

The transference of biblical scenes on to iconic figures further perpetuates this merger between the allure of celebrity and biblical narratives. As a result the significance of characters from the Bible is somewhat eclipsed by these modern-day symbols of contemporary worship. The recent installation of a nativity scene in Madame Tussaud's presents a visual Who's Who of celebrity. David and Victoria Beckham occupy the role of Joseph and Mary. Tony Blair, George Bush, and the Duke of Edinburgh emulate the three kings. Samuel L. Jackson, Hugh Grant and Graham Norton play the shepherds and Kylie Minogue depicts the angel Gabriel. Part tongue-in-cheek, and partly a marketing ploy that attracted reams of free publicity, these celebrities' star quality becomes the guiding star for many of their devotees to follow and emulate, but they also reflect the growing disenchantment with organised religion. In the autumn, 300 visitors to Madame Tussaud's nominated the personalities they wanted to see previewed in this mock nativity scene. The staff of Madame Tussaud's selected the shepherds. Whatever the view surrounding this popular cultural depiction of the Christmas nativity, the lines between explicit and implicit manifestations of religion are for some becoming more and more blurred and less distinguishable.

But the Christian faith is not the only religious institution that has been affected by the phenomenon of the allure of celebrity. The influence of British celebrities has proved far-reaching. A Buddhist fan of David Beckham placed a statue of the football star in an area of Bangkok's Pariwas temple that is customarily occupied by minor deities. While some Buddhists criticised the introduction of this Beckham effigy, Senior Monk, Chan Theerapunyo, insisted in an interview he gave to the BBC on 16 May 2000 that, 'Football has become a religion and has millions of followers.' Whether a theology of celebrity ought to be constructed will be featured in this scholarship. Dr May's research will conclude with an examination into the challenges facing the modern-day Church trying to live the gospel in a post-modern age where it appears to some that the culture of celebrity rules.

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## **RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN THE U.K.**

### **University of Durham, Department of Theology and Religion**

Theology has long held a prime position within the academic departments at the University of Durham. Its long-term commitment has been to Christian traditions of theology and this has developed in its scope over the years as intellectual horizons have embraced newly appropriate concerns. For much of the nineteenth century along with the earlier and mid-twentieth century, for example, biblical studies — embracing the relevant linguistic skills — were of paramount concern, complemented by doctrinal and historical theology. From the 1970s the philosophy of religion, systematic theology and historical theology significantly increased their presence allowing students, after a basic grounding in biblical and historical topics, to specialise either in a more biblical or a more philosophical direction to the final degree.

Still within Abbey House, its delightful location in the world heritage site of Palace Green, the department engages the new academic year 2004-2005 with a name-change, becoming The Department of Theology and Religion. This was, in direct terms, a response to the merger of the Religious Studies Department at Newcastle University with Durham's Department of Theology. This brought Drs Charlotte Hardman, Gerard Loughlin and William Telford from Newcastle to Durham. These will, however, be teaching at Newcastle during the sessions 2004-5 and 2005-6 until all Newcastle undergraduates have completed their course there. In addition, in October 2004, Dr Mathew Guest joined the Durham Department as the first occupant of a new post in Theology and Society. In indirect terms, the departmental name-change also reflects longer-standing department teaching and research in, for example, Judaism, aspects of ancient near-eastern religion, film and theology, and ethics. From 1997 aspects of the study of religion had also been introduced.

With this enlarged emphasis has gone a development in syllabus such that all single honours students now study five compulsory first year modules as a core foundation for the single honours degree (Old Testament, New Testament, Historical Theology, Doctrinal Theology, and the Study of Religion). They may also choose one additional module within or outside the department. Languages are optional but extensive availability includes Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and ancient Egyptian. The second and third years will allow students to specialise in any of the major areas of Biblical, Historical, Philosophical and Doctrinal Theology as well as in the Study of Religion.

As far as the specific study of religion is concerned the Department offers specialist interest in the anthropology and sociology of religion in the persons of Professor Douglas Davies, Dr Charlotte Hardman and Dr Mathew Guest. Their particular interests include symbolic anthropology, anthropological fieldwork, Mormonism, death studies, shamanism, children in religion, charismatic religion, and religious organisation and leadership in contemporary societies. Other colleagues (Drs Colin Crowder, Gerard Loughlin and Bill Telford) have a particular interest in film and religion. It is also important to note that other colleagues, too, possess a deep interest in the historical and cultural aspects of religious forms. Prof Robert Hayward, for his part, is much engaged in research on Judaism as a religious tradition while Professor David Brown engages extensively in artistic and other expressions of religious ideas. Dr Stuart Weeks' work on the literature, language and religion of Ancient Egypt has already been mentioned. Of a broader nature we should also mention work in the field of Spirituality, led by Prof Philip Sheldrake. In 2004-2005 our work is also enhanced by a special Wesley Research Lectureship filled by Dr David Wilkinson, who brings specialist knowledge from physics into our interest in Science and Religion. Together, these interests offer a major opportunity for engagement in the study of religion at Durham. Options from other departments are, of course, widely available, including those in the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, and in Anthropology.

While the Department admits large numbers of well-qualified undergraduates (some 80 in Oct 2004) a major part of its work lies in postgraduate study. The Department has approximately 120 or more postgraduates, with a large minority coming from overseas, especially the USA. Most postgraduates begin with our taught MATR (MA in Theological Research): there are 25 of these starting in 2004, for example, before progressing to doctoral work. An important part of the research culture at Durham lies in specific research seminars that meet regularly and cover all of these academic areas. In terms of research, the Department has held a rating of 5 in all assessment exercises, something that is valued, especially amongst staff who not only carry extensive undergraduate teaching loads but also significant postgraduate teaching and supervision.

Key research areas include Biblical Studies (with Profs John Barclay — The Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, and Loren Stuckenbruck — the Wescott Professor in New Testament Studies, Robert Hayward as Professor of Hebrew as well as Drs. Stephen Barton, Walter Moberly and Stuart Weeks), and Greek and Russian Orthodoxy with Prof. Andrew Louth. Historical Theology is pursued, for example, by Drs Carol Harrison, an expert on Augustine, Alison Forrestal, on the Reformation, especially French ecclesiastical responses, and Paul Murray, who is developing a special MA

in Modern Catholic Studies. Dr Clare Stancliffe, an honorary Reader in the Department, teaches Irish Church History. One of the most important areas of research, and indeed of undergraduate interest, lies in Ethics, focused in the department by Dr Robert Song but also reinforced, for example, by Prof Christopher Cook, himself a medically qualified psychiatrist with strong interests in ethics. The Department has regular visiting research fellows, including its Richardson Fellowship, and is in the process of seeking to develop its work further as new social demands prompt theological engagement and as new interests stimulate our collaborative study of religion.

**Douglas Davies**

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*On 25 January 2005, the AUDTRS Annual General Meeting was held at the University of Sheffield, and approved the 'Framework of Professional Practice', which had been the subject of two years' discussion. The full text of the Framework is printed below.*

## **ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

### **FRAMEWORK OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

#### **Introduction**

##### *1.0 The situation facing teachers and researchers.*

Various professional bodies, including academic associations have drawn up codes of professional practice. As concern for good standards of ethics is increasing, it is appropriate that AUDTRS, as a consultative body for Theology and Religious Studies (TRS), should be responsible for developing a framework for good practice within the subject area.

The formulation of a framework of professional practice should not be taken to imply that there exists significant malpractice within the subject area of Theology and Religious Studies (TRS), but rather to show that TRS is no less concerned about ethics than other subject areas that have already devised codes of practice. Increasingly, there are institutional pressures to demonstrate good ethical practice, evidenced by the presence of Ethics Committees, and many areas of TRS involve decisions bearing ethical implications.

##### **1.1 Aims**

This framework of professional practice aims:

(a) to demonstrate that those who work in the subject area have a concern for good ethical practice, which goes beyond mere risk management;

(b) to enable teachers and researchers to demonstrate that their teaching and research is being conducted in a responsible way, which is sensitive to ethical issues and questions;

(c) to comply with QAA benchmarking requirements.

Codes of practice should not hamper good research and good practice. Questions of ethics are often controversial, and hence any code should not impose prescribed courses of action in situations where conscience and moral choice should be legitimately exercised. TRS involves the teaching of ethics, which itself is a controversial activity, and in which there are often no agreed answers.

### 1.2 The context of TRS

TRS is a large and diverse area, ranging from textual analysis to ethnographical study. It is an inter-disciplinary field, crossing with other disciplines such as history, politics, anthropology and archaeology. Codes of practice already exist in other subject areas, and hence teachers and researchers in TRS can reasonably be expected to give serious attention to their guidelines.

### 1.3 The status of AUDTRS

AUDTRS is not a membership organisation, and hence does not have 'members' over whom to exercise jurisdiction. Therefore, any such 'policing' of a code of ethical practice would be unfeasible and undesirable. Many ethical decisions are inherently controversial, and are matters either for individual conscience or institutional policy. However, it is expected that teachers and researchers would give serious attention to the issues highlighted in this framework, and not simply act out of expediency or without regard for those affected by professional decisions.

## 2.0 *Framework of Professional Practice*

### 2.1 To whom is this framework of practice addressed?

Teachers, researchers and students are the principal categories of people who are faced with ethical decisions relating to TRS. Since AUDTRS is an association of teachers, it is envisaged that those who teach and supervise research would oversee good practice among students.

### 2.2 How does the TRS Framework of Practice relate to other professional codes?

This Framework of Practice addresses subject-specific issues, and not generic ones that apply to all teachers and researchers. Teachers and researchers in TRS are affected by (i) their own institutional codes of practice and regulations; (ii) codes of practice in related and overlapping areas, e.g.

sociology, psychology; (iii) human rights legislation. Teachers of TRS can be expected to pay due regard for such codes and relevant legislation.

### 2.3 How are matters of conscience to be regarded?

Teachers and researchers in TRS will feel constrained to exercise individual conscience, either because their own religious or ethical beliefs are incompatible with the demands of another faith that they are studying, or because of the complex and controversial nature of many ethical issues. Any framework for professional practice should not override the religious or ethical sensitivities of teachers, students or researchers.

### 2.4 What bearing do the religious convictions of teachers, researchers and students have on teaching and studying TRS?

A teacher's religious beliefs (or lack of them) potentially have a bearing on his or her teaching. There is no clear answer to the question of whether one declares one's own religious beliefs, or whether one asks students to declare theirs.

A distinction exists between teaching a religion and practising it. Requiring students to undergo religious activities in the classroom (e.g. prayer) is usually unacceptable in secular institutions. However, it must be recognised that some TRS staff are responsible for the training of religious leaders and workers, for example in theological seminaries, where commitment is an expectation and may at times be appropriately celebrated.

### 2.5 What people or bodies have an interest in one's work?

A variety of individuals and bodies — sometimes referred to as 'stakeholders' — are affected by teaching and research in TRS: teachers, researchers, students, academic institutions, religious communities, funding bodies.

Due regard for the interests of stakeholders is important. Teachers and researchers can be expected to show awareness of these interested parties. The use of informants and religious communities for study creates a situation where teachers, students and researchers clearly benefit from their relationship, but due consideration of 'empowerment' is important, ensuring that informants and communities 'get something back' from their work.

### 2.6 What are one's relationships with religious communities?

Religious communities are often subjects for research in Religious Studies, but they also provide the environments from which many students come. While secular institutions are normally committed to equal opportunities policies, including avoidance of discrimination on the grounds of religion, religious training colleges cannot readily implement such a policy, and would consider it undesirable.

Religious organisations themselves are not necessarily committed to equal opportunities in the sense normally defined by academic institutions, and may have strong views on sexual orientation, or the respective roles of men and women, which contrast with those of the dominant culture. Students and researchers may therefore expect segregation on the grounds of sex, and sometimes the exclusion of one sex (more commonly women) from certain activities or areas within a religious building. While it should be evident to students that the teacher does not necessarily condone such discriminatory ideas, effective field work may demand compliance, and teachers and students may at times need to consider the degree of participant-observation that is appropriate.

Teachers should consider the appropriateness of placing students in environments where adherents might seek to convert them. Equally, teachers and students should be aware of their role as empathetic enquirers, rather than critics.

Religious affiliation does not exempt teachers and researchers from complying with secular expectations about professional integrity and responsibility.

### 2.7 From whom is it appropriate to receive funding?

There is no agreed view among academics as to whether to accept funding or sponsorship from bodies that are at times judged to be controversial, and AUDTRS has no wish to impose an answer on this difficult area. Colleagues are encouraged to weigh up the issues involved, paying due regard to the notions of academic freedom, conscience, possible bias that can result from external funding, and the purposes for which one's research might be used.

### 3.0 How will AUDTRS maintain professional standards of practice?

AUDTRS exists as a consultative body. It is committed to integrity and responsibility within TRS, and encourages reflection and discussion on issues of ethics and professional practice. This framework of practice is formally endorsed by TRS, and is subject to periodic review.

*AUDTRS Ethics Working Party:* Dr George Chryssides (University of Wolverhampton — Chair), Dr Andrew Dawson (Chester University College), Dr Michael Higton (University of Exeter), Dr Hiroko Kawanami (University of Lancaster), Professor Stephen Pattison (Cardiff University), Dr Helen Waterhouse (Open University).

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Sutcliffe Steven J. (ed.). *Religion: Empirical Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 279 pp. ISBN 0-7546-4158-9 £50.00

This is an interesting collection of papers, previously published by the BASR individually as Occasional Papers over the past 10 years or so, having all been given initially as presentations at BASR conferences. The editor, Steven Sutcliffe, tells us that he first broached the idea of producing a book to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the BASR in 2001 (p.xxxvi), and this is the worthwhile result. The range of human interest, the theoretical sophistication, and the power of description suggest a thriving intellectual arena.

The book has a Foreword by Peggy Morgan, who was BASR President from 2000-2003, and who previously served as conference organiser and secretary.

Steve Sutcliffe has divided the papers between Part One: Category and Method, and Part Two: Case Studies, though as he reasonably points out no neat division is possible. He also points out that, though all the scholars represented here are British-based, nearly two thirds of them are African or European by origin, and this enhances the book by giving it a welcome cosmopolitanism. I have much to say about several of these papers but will be reduced to discussing aspects of only three or four, given the short length of a book review.

In section one there are seven thought-provoking papers slanted towards issues of method and theory by Marion Bowman, Chris Arthur, Peter Antes, Terence Thomas, Kim Knott, Gerrie ter Haar and Brian Bocking. In section two there are papers by Richard Gombrich, Miranda Aldhouse-Green, the late Julia Leslie, Ria Kloppenborg, Armin W. Geertz, Elizabeth Amoah, George D. Chryssides and Tariq Modood.

The former section includes papers which should be required reading both for their substantive contribution to our understanding and for the unpretentious lucidity of the writing. One good example of such lucidity is Terry Thomas, who skilfully exposes the historical and theological inter-connections between writers like Otto, Tillich and Eliade, and shows how their essentially theological constructions have permeated the discipline. Thomas pays less attention to Durkheim's sociological sacred, which seems to me to have significantly different implications in our search for generic but relatively non-ideological categories. Durkheim's concept is problematic too, but in different ways, and could perhaps be made consistent with Eade's and Sallnow's critique of the theological sacred of Eliade (though I

admit I have not read Eade and Sallnow.) Still, Thomas's article has made me less sure of this.

The latter section includes an interesting range of research on early Indian Buddhism, Indian widowhood, Celtic goddesses in Britain, Buddhism and Christianity in Sri Lanka, the Hopi of Colorado and Arizona, African Spirituality, the Unification Church (which originated in Korea), and Muslims in Britain. This breadth of interests is a strong point of religious studies, and strengthens the claims of the subject to be taken seriously as a creative space in the academy.

There is, however, another feature of the book alongside these previously published occasional papers, which is the presence of two quite different theoretical viewpoints written specially for this book. One is the Editor's own argument about the best way to imagine the field which takes up a significant portion of his own Introduction; the other is a very different viewpoint contributed by James Cox in his Afterword. While I as a reader welcomed both their contributions, some readers might think that a brief editorial explanation or acknowledgement of this quite substantive theoretical inclusion might have been appropriate.

The papers themselves are diverse and seem well-chosen (though I do not know the full range of papers from which the choices were made), and full of interesting material. They represent the professional accomplishments of many outstanding scholars. What stands out is the wide range of interests, the commitment to understanding the human world, and abundant skills of exploration, description and analysis. Whatever 'religion' might mean, and I do not think its meaning is at all clear from reading this diversity of voices, there is something important and even passionate that is motivating many scholars, and our collective attempts to find the common ground has (if this is not too grandiose a claim) implications for the humanities in a more general sense.

A more melancholy observation is how many of the people one knows personally who work in departments of Religious Studies in the UK are not members of BASR and/or do not attend BASR conferences. This raises an issue about how representative of Religious Studies in the UK the BASR is. True, it could be held that this book does not claim to represent the UK field of religious studies as a whole, but only the BASR over the last ten years, a claim which in that sense would diminish its significance to some extent.

But Steve Sutcliffe's methodological arguments in favour of what he calls a realist empiricism and 'a "realistic" study of religion' (p.xxiv) seem to be claiming more. Agreeing with Frank Whaling (p.xx) that Religious Studies tends to derive a negative self representation from its institutionally subservient relationship with Theology, he seems to be urging us to adopt a revised formulation of phenomenology, which has provided the main

paradigm for the subject in the UK since around 1970. Sutcliffe argues that a realist empiricism is what is required to reassert religious studies in its own autonomous space independent of theology.

Sutcliffe infers support for his revival of empiricism especially from three of the contributors, Kim Knott, Marion Bowman, and Brian Bocking, to argue for an inductive methodology ‘to counteract an entrenched tendency in studies of religion, both naturalistic and theological, to idealise or normativise religion: that is, to subject particular historical instances of practice to abstracted typologies of various kinds’ (p.xxvi). One quote from Kim Knott suggests a dialectical movement between the particular and the general, between induction and deduction, with which few people will disagree. Isn’t this how we build up experience in the normal course of events? Yet Sutcliffe, if I have understood him rightly, wants to emphasise the inductive as the methodological bedrock of an empiricist epistemology based first on observation of the realities ‘out there’, the description of these realities leading to general theories. And he quotes Knott’s caution (from a different article) that we should be careful

...not to import, deductively, general notions of how religions *ought* to operate, what religious people *should* believe or do...Our interest is in what they *actually* think and do, and, issuing from this, what the implications of such data might be for...challenging notions of what religions *are* and how they *operate* (Knott; quoted by Sutcliffe, p.xxvi).

But how are we to decide in the first place who are the religious people and which are the religions if we are not guided by some *a priori* notion of religion? Are we to be limited to those practitioners who say they are ‘religious’? Supposing someone tells you that they religiously brush their teeth every morning, which is an ordinary common usage. Is this sufficient? There is, of course, a good deal of sense in Knott’s (and Sutcliffe’s) desire to get as close as possible to accurate reporting of what people think and do. However, the idea that this can in the first place be an inductive process — that we should not import general notions of what a religion is to guide us in our selection of what does and what does not count — seems wrong. Without some learned general English language category (in this case ‘religion’) with some implicit or explicit notion of what religions are in the first place it would be impossible to find what we are looking for.

I do not mean by this that the strong presumption of referential meaning, which accompanies our apparently instinctual usages in conversations, academic writing, and other kinds of rhetorical declamation, is actually

matched by a stable or even coherent semantic content. Perhaps like the idea of 'community' analysed so effectively by Kim Knott, 'religion' acts as an ideological operator in a range of discourses while an analysis of actual contextualised usages indicates that its content is multivalent and unstable, picking out no clearly distinctive feature of the world. This points away from 'religions out there' back to the category itself. Knott's discussion of 'community' (and the research of people like Gerd Baumann who she cites) might be a model for what we should be doing for 'religion'. The 'empirical studies' should therefore not be formulated on the presumption that there is something 'out there' standing in a referential relationship to our category, but rather on the need to observe the actual usages in a range of different contexts.

Brian Bocking points out in his readable and thought-provoking piece that all disciplines have their own critical problems of self-representation, a point that suggests a more general crisis in the Enlightenment construction of the arts and humanities. Bocking shows us that methodological agnosticism was something he learnt at Lancaster where he studied, which helps us understand the institutional context in which his own agenda and subjectivity was formed. His defence of this method and the attitude to research that it requires seems to me to be convincing, except in the possibility of identifying a distinctively *religious* object of the research. How does this methodology for researching practices and institutions determine which are the 'religious worlds' and the 'religious believers' unless we already have in our minds an idea of religion derived from the general discourses in which we grow up as language learners?

According to his own argument, the 'Lancaster-style phenomenology of religion, understood both as a method of understanding religions and as an approach that takes seriously the perspective of religious subjects and communities' (p.108) is as validly applied by the QAA to the study of religious studies departments in so-called 'secular' universities as it is to anything else!

Thus one section of this witty and insightful paper does provide us with an unexpected application of the methodology:

As it happens, the approach and methodology adopted by QAA to research and review academic departments throughout the UK is virtually identical to the methodology and approach to the study of religions pioneered by Ninian Smart and his colleagues at Lancaster from the late 1960s (p.115).

Bocking can be highly persuasive and gives a convincing account of this bureaucratic procedure which almost makes one feel sympathetic to it. He

also makes the excellent point that the experience of being researched might make us understand better what ‘others’ feel when we drop in and research them and their beliefs and practices. But a question that he fails to ask is: if a government agency can research ‘secular’ university departments in the same way that religionists can research what they assume to be ‘religions’, why should we not think of university departments *as* religions? If the six or seven dimensions apply equally to, say, a Shinto shrine in Japan as to a university department, then on what criterion can we decide that one is a ‘religious’ institution and the other a ‘secular’ one?

The same point arises out of a reading of several of the other papers, for example Armin Geertz’s fine paper on the Hopi. The word ‘religion’ appears prominently in the title, but subsequently plays no clear role as a descriptive or analytical concept. The paper is in my view no worse for that. There is one ambiguous paragraph which begins with: ‘Religious communities, on the other hand, are more specifically focused. In many societies communities are both religious and secular, depending on the time and the context’ (p.194). What does it mean to say that a religious community is also secular? This suggests that we need to critically deconstruct the language of ‘secular’ and its relation to ‘religion’. There follows a list of attributes which might arguably fit a nation state, a capitalist corporation or the army. Later in the paper religion emerges, not as the opposite of the secular, but as the opposite of witchcraft and sorcery, as good is the opposite of bad (p.209). Arguably this difference of usage, which Geertz does not seem to notice, exemplifies ‘religion’ as an unstable operator, appearing in the same text in logically different applications. This suggests that it is not what exists ‘out there’ that is determining its use (how did ‘religion’ get translated into the Hopi language, one wonders?) but other unacknowledged and probably unconscious determinants embedded in the public English-language discourses which we all internalise.

This brings us back again to the paradox of the category ‘religion’, that on the one hand it provides the major categorial operator for this research industry, and yet none of us can apparently explain what special characteristic distinguishes religious practices from non-religious ones. Perhaps ‘religion’ is like paper money. I do not think this excellent book solves this problem, but it does suggest that we need to protect a vigorous and non-parochial space in the humanities.

**Timothy Fitzgerald**  
**University of Stirling**

Fenn, Richard K. (2001) *The Return of the Primitive*. Aldershot, Hants and Burlington VT: Ashgate. 131 pp. ISBN 0-7546-0420-99 (pbk) 0-7546-0419-5 (hbk). £43 (hbk), £15.99 (pbk).

The sub-title is 'A new sociological theory of religion'. This reviewer would prefer the adjective 'psychological'. Heavily reliant on Freud's 'Moses and Monotheism', Penn accepts his move from individual to group psychoanalysis almost without question. Strangely there is no mention of Jung, and the religion discussed is limited to the Judaeo-Christian tradition and, to some extent, its secular derivatives. Neither Otto nor Eliade get a look-in.

With his psychological presuppositions, Penn studies in detail classic descents into Hell, seen as returns to the primitive. There are useful discussions of Langland, Dante (at considerable length) and Goethe, together with less well-known literature: the writing is stimulating, and demands careful attention. Gnostic pronouncements pepper the book, and some of these are worth pondering. Here are two examples, selected almost at random:

Psychoanalysis is the end not only of romantic attempts to recover the primitive self but also of the monastic journey to spiritual perfection that relies wholly on divine assistance and final rescue (p.112).

Work remains to be done to expunge from the Christian tradition the vestiges of magical thinking and grandiose imagination, the remains of old grievances and the longing for ultimate triumph, that make that tradition toxic to the psyche and occasionally dangerous to social peace and justice (p.121).

The book would puzzle and perhaps defeat most students, but accomplished scholars of religion might profit from the challenges it presents. To have basic presuppositions challenged, and new ones offered is no bad experience.

**Alan Rogers**  
**Weymouth**

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## TURNING POINT

**Hyo Won Eu, *Divine Principle*** (based on the teachings of Sun Myung Moon).

More often than not, the scholars who have written this column in the past have selected a piece of academic writing. As the ‘book that changed my life’, however, I must select *Divine Principle*, the key text of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (formerly the Unification Church or the ‘Moonies’). I would probably not have read the book through choice; indeed, I remember the late Harold W. Turner confessing that he had not read it, on the grounds that it was ‘too boring’!

The occasion that prompted me to get to grips with it was in 1984, when I had been offered the opportunity to visit Athens to attend one of the Unification Church’s introductory seminars. At that time, my academic interests lacked a clear focus: my doctorate was in philosophy of religion, and my teaching commitments spanned philosophy, ethics, world religions, and religion for International Business students. I had no particular intention to specialise in new religious movements (NRMs), a subject about which I had only a rudimentary acquaintance. My motive in attending the seminar — which is not to my credit — was purely to see Athens, a city which I not yet visited, but the condition of attending was that participants had to read *Divine Principle* in its entirety. Despite my ulterior motives, I read the whole book.

For the benefit of readers who are unfamiliar with *Divine Principle*, the 536-page text begins with the ‘Principle of Creation’: God created Adam and Eve to achieve individual perfection, ideal families, and dominion over a perfect world. This plan was thwarted when Eve entered into a sexual relationship with Lucifer, and thus sin entered the world. Only a messiah is able to redeem humankind from the Fall, and God sent various messengers to herald this messiah’s coming, notably Noah, Abraham, Moses and finally John the Baptist, all of whom failed in various ways. Jesus, as messiah, was only able partially to accomplish his mission, and a new messiah is needed in the present age to complete Jesus’ work. These various messengers did not arrive randomly, but according to a time-scale determined by ‘providential time identity’. *Divine Principle* purports to demonstrate that the new messiah was to be born in Korea, between the years 1917 and 1930. His name is not explicitly mentioned, but it was obvious that Sun Myung Moon (b.1920) was intended.

At the time these ideas seemed very strange, but I was surprised to find that the seminar presenters were well-educated young men (no women

presenters, alas!) who had degrees in theology and who presented Unificationism as a coherent, if not convincing, worldview. What struck me about *Divine Principle* was that it combined in a remarkable way a number of disparate sources: the story of the Christian Bible was intertwined with elements of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Korean folk shamanism. Having studied mainstream biblical texts, I was accustomed to raising questions involving source criticism, and it seemed logical to ask how founder-leader Sun Myung Moon had encountered and assembled these various components. None of the participants seemed to know, but several people agreed that it was an interesting question. As far as Unificationists were concerned, of course, there was no problem, since they avowed that the book's contents came from Moon's revelations from the spirit world. An unanswered question is always a good cue for original research, and the seminar marked the beginning of my research on the Unification Church. After the seminar, I was allowed access to archival material at the Unification Church's London headquarters, and attended some of the more basic Unificationist seminars that were open to the public, as well as the more up-market conferences organised by the UC-sponsored New Ecumenical Research Association. The research culminated in *The Advent of Sun Myung Moon* (Macmillan, 1991), and marked the beginning of a continuing interest in new religious movements.

However one rates *Divine Principle* as a theological work, reading it in its entirety made me realise that new religions should not be treated merely as a social phenomenon. Although there is a great deal of good sociological study of NRMs, I believe that Religious Studies still needs to do more in exploring NRMs as worldviews, which merit as serious treatment as one would give to traditional world religions. The study of many Christian-related NRMs is also important in the study of Christian, since, as Harold W. Turner showed, such movements frequently derive from an interaction between Christian mission and indigenous folk religions.

My choice of a non-academic book as a turning point should not surprise colleagues. After all, Religious Studies as an academic subject would not exist if we all spent our time reading each other's writings, and acquainting ourselves the sacred texts of the communities we study is an important aspect of our work. From the Unificationists' perspective, however, the justification for selecting *Divine Principle* as a 'turning point' book is not academic but providential. They suggested that the book's impact highlighted a divine purpose for myself, transcendental academic interest — another manifestation of the familiar insider/outsider problem!

**George Chryssides**

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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.

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