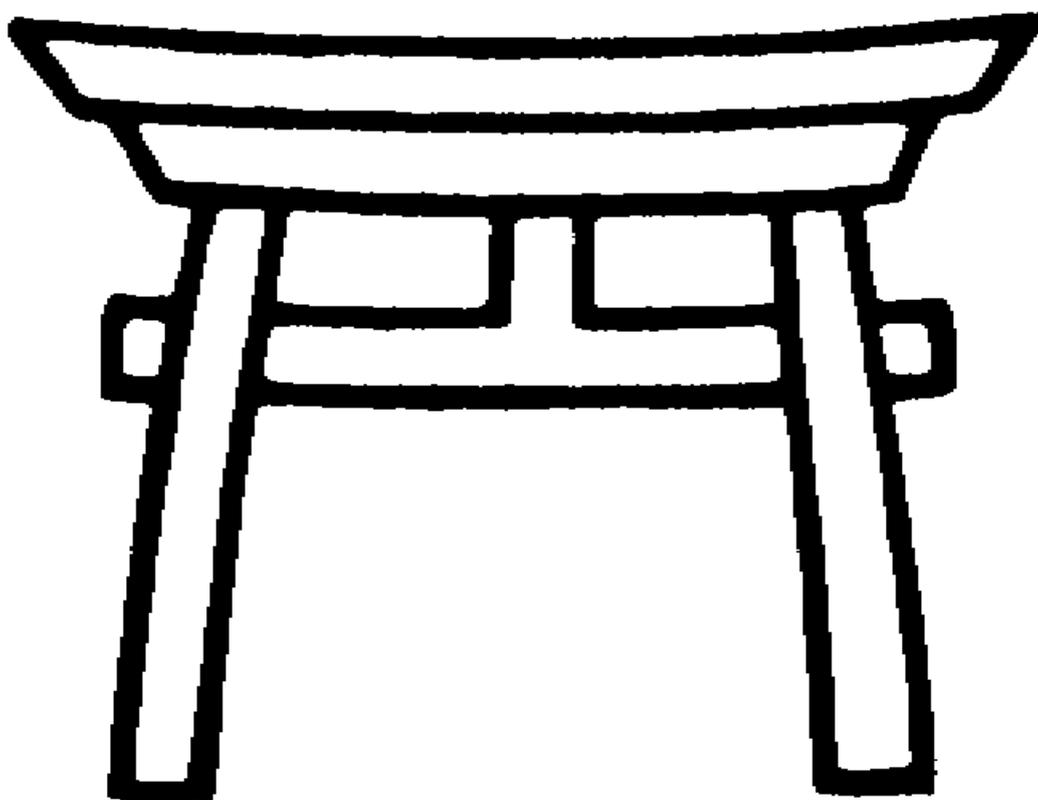


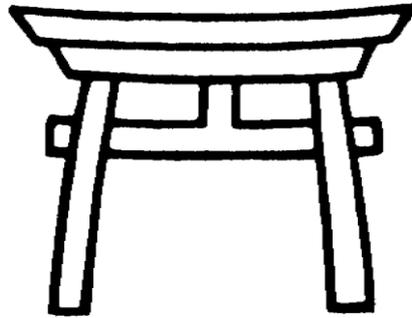
**BRITISH ASSOCIATION**  
for the  
**STUDY OF RELIGIONS**



**BASR BULLETIN**  
No 107 March 2006

# BASR BULLETIN

No 107 March 2006



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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 — The Ethical Dimension**

This year the theme of the 2006 BASR conference is ‘The Ethical Dimension’. After some discussion, the BASR Executive decided that the Association had somewhat over-used the phrase ‘Religion and ...’ in its conference titles, and that, in particular, the theme of ‘Religion and Violence’ continued to be a well-trodden one in various academic conferences. So it is time for a change.

‘The Ethical Dimension’ of course alludes to Ninian Smart’s six (sometimes seven) ‘dimensions’ of religion, which some of continue to use as a means of encouraging novice students to organise their approach to the world’s religions.

Looking at what selected religions have to say about ethics is the obvious way of approaching the topic, but by no means the only one. The interest in professional ethics continues to flourish, and many academic institutions, including the University of Wolverhampton, are making a considerable effort to ensure that staff and students adopt good ethical practice when it comes to teaching and research. Members will recall that in 2005 AUDTRS (Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies) produced its own code of practice by way of guidelines for colleagues in our subject area.

It is envisaged that potential papers might include discussions of professional ethics. These might entail discussions of codes of practice, discussing their appropriateness, effectiveness or implementation.

Ethics pervades other areas that face us as teachers, researchers and academics. This editorial is being written on 7 March, the day when British lecturers’ unions have called a strike. The industrial reaction not only raises questions about whether or not I should be writing the Bulletin, but much wider issues about rights and obligations in pedagogy and scholarly activity.

Ethical matters often impinge on religions rather than emerge from them. The recent controversy about the Islamic cartoons is a case in point. They are certainly offensive, and few — if any — Muslims would consider it morally permissible to portray Muhammad so disrespectfully. However, one might also argue that there is a right to free speech and a right to publish, and that the reaction by some Muslims is excessive.

Members will notice too the suggested sub-theme of ‘cash and commodification in relation to the religion’. To what extent is it legitimate to place a financial tag on religious goods and services? Religious organisations need finance to keep them in existence, but can one — or should one — set a price on spiritual goods that are often said to be priceless? This is no doubt only one of many questions that can be raised about the ways in which religion gets marketed.

We hope that the conference will take up some of these themes, as well as

others, and look forward to a successful gathering at Bath Spa University. Meanwhile, this edition of the Bulletin picks up a number of themes that impinge on the BASR conference. Russell Sandberg's 'Research in Progress' report raises important questions about rights about obligations; Jeremy Carrette and Richard King's *Selling Spirituality* — reviewed in this issue — addresses the 'commodification' theme, and T. Lobsang Rampa — Ron Geaves' 'Turning Point' — continues to be a commodified 'cult author'.

As always, I have included information on a wide variety of other conferences, to which their organisers have alerted me. Please continue to send such information, as well as reports on the events when they happen. And if anyone would like to send brief discussions on any of these (or other) themes that impinge on our teaching, research and scholarship, it is always good to receive copy.

**George D. Chryssides**

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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, *Hildegarde 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

### Corrections

The Bulletin Editor always aims to produce an edition that is free of misprints and errors, but never totally succeeds! The November 2005 edition seems to have included a record number of mistakes, for which apologies! Corrections are as follows.

#### *PRS Subject Centre*

In the November 2005 edition of the *BASR Bulletin*, Darlene Bird's Annual Report on the Subject Centre for PRS stated that the Subject Centre had visited over 8 per cent of all TRS departments. The Centre has been much busier than this statistic suggests: staff have visited over 80 per cent of departments. Apologies for this misprint.

#### *John Hinnells, The Zoroastrian Diaspora*

The Members' Publications list attributed John Hinnells' *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration* (2005) to the Open University Press. This is incorrect: the book was published by the Oxford University Press. The Editor apologises for this error.

#### *Margaret Gouin*

Margaret Gouin kindly contributed a report on the BASR 2005 Annual Conference. I apologise for the incorrect spelling of her name, which was also misspelt differently in the members' list.

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### Election of Officers

Once again it is time to consider the election of office-bearers. Formal election occurs at the BASR's Annual General Meeting, which forms part of the BASR Annual Conference.

This year the posts of Treasurer and Secretary need to be filled, and advance nominations are needed. Members should find nomination forms enclosed with this edition of the Bulletin, and completed nominations should be sent to Dr Graham Harvey, the current Secretary.

The posts of Conference Organiser and Bulletin Editor will also become vacant. According to the BASR's constitution, the procedure is not to elect them, but to co-opt them. Again, this is normally done at the AGM. Since these are not elected posts, no nomination forms are included. However, members should nonetheless give consideration to possible candidates, or even consider volunteering themselves for such tasks.

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## DISKUS

The journal DISKUS is now on-line. DISKUS is now the Journal of the BASR.

DISKUS began life as a pioneering electronic journal available on disk and publishing scholarly articles of a broadly phenomenological character. Principally interested in contemporary religions, it covered a wide range of different religious traditions, in articles written in a lucid and accessible manner so as to be useful to a wide readership of academics, students, teachers and others involved in the academic study of religions. In 1993 it became a web-based journal and part of the *Internet Journal of Religion* hosted at the University of Marburg. The Executive Committee of the British Association for the Study of Religions is grateful to Professors Brian Bocking, Gavin Flood and Michael Pye, for the establishment and success of DISKUS so far. We aim to further the discussions that DISKUS was created to enable and enrich.

Previous editions of DISKUS (volume 1, 1993, to volume 6, 2000) are available on the Marburg site:

<http://web.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/welcome.html>  
(There is a hyperlink from the BASR web site.)

Mathew Guest now assumes the role of Co-ordinating Editor, with the Executive Committee as the Editorial Panel. A wider international Editorial Board is currently being sought.

The journal will include the text of the BASR Annual Conference's keynote lecture, which until now has been published as an Occasional Paper. The two lectures from the 2005 conference will be the first to be published in this format. It is also envisaged that some contributors to BASR conferences will be invited to submit papers as articles to be peer-reviewed for possible publication.

At this stage, publication in DISKUS is by invitation, and colleagues should not send unsolicited material. Although cyberspace permits an unsurpassed quantity of writing to enter the public domain, the Association has to ensure that the editing process remains manageable, that quality is maintained, and that the journal has a definite and clear focus.

The BASR Bulletin will continue to provide updates on Diskus's progress.

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## **OTHER BASR MATTERS**

### **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>

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS**

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006**

**4-6 September**

**BATH SPA UNIVERSITY**

# **THE ETHICAL DIMENSION**

**KEYNOTE LECTURE:**

**The Ethical Dimension in Theories of Religion**

**Professor Robert Segal, University of Aberdeen**

The topic is intended to stimulate a wide range of papers. Panels and individual papers are invited on such subjects as the negotiation, promulgation and enforcement of ethical ideals within religion; the relationship of religious studies and ethics in higher education; encounters between different religions' ethical systems; cash and commodification in relation to religion; and other aspects of the ethical dimension in religion, from historical perspectives or in contemporary situations.

**Offers of papers and reports of work in progress, preferably by email, to [arts-basr@open.ac.uk](mailto:arts-basr@open.ac.uk) by 1 June 2006 or to Marion Bowman, BASR Conference Organiser, Religious Studies Department, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA**

Registration form and programme details (when available) on the BASR web site ([basr.org.uk](http://basr.org.uk)). Please register by 30 June to secure accommodation.

**Applications forms for bursaries must be submitted by 1 May 2006; forms available on BASR website.**

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# FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

*Under the high patronage of the President of Romania,*



The European Association for the Study of Religions,  
The International Association for the History of Religions,  
The Romanian Association for the History of Religions, and  
The Centre for the History of Religions, University of Bucharest

## Organise

### 6TH EASR CONFERENCE IAHR SPECIAL CONFERENCE **RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF EUROPE AND ASIA** **BUCHAREST, 20-23 SEPTEMBER 2006**

The 6<sup>th</sup> EASR Conference will be an IAHR Special Conference held in Bucharest (Romania), under the auspices of the Romanian Association for the History of Religions (RAHR), and in association with the Centre for the History of Religions at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest.

The Conference will be structured around ten keynote lectures and a cluster of panels. The RAHR organisers **call for papers** designated for the following six topics:

- Christianity in Late Antiquity
- Esotericism
- Greek and Roman Religions
- Indian Religions
- Iranian Religions
- Religions in the Middle Ages

EASR affiliated scholars can contribute individual PAPERS REFLECTING THE GENERAL THEME of the conference.

— The organisers will also run a NON-THEMED SESSION to welcome those PAPERS by the EASR affiliated scholars THAT DO NOT FIT INTO THE GENERAL THEME of the conference.

**DEADLINE: 15 March 2006:** submission of the conference title, abstract (300 words) and Curriculum Vitae.

For fuller details, please visit <http://basr.org.uk>

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*The Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions*

*Jesus College, the University of Oxford*

*March 31<sup>st</sup> — April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006*

*Annual Conference*

The Spalding Symposium is an annual conference bringing together scholars from many disciplines who are working in the general areas of Indic Studies.

Further details at:

[www.spaldingsymposium.com](http://www.spaldingsymposium.com)

**Annual One-Day Conference on Islamic Studies**

**Theme: Islam, the Nation-State and Democracy**

**School of Humanities  
University of Gloucestershire  
Tuesday 4 April 2006**

For further information, please contact:

Dr T. Gabriel, Honorary Research Fellow, School of Humanities, Francis Close Campus, Cheltenham, GL50 4AZ. E-mail: [tgabriel@glos.ac.uk](mailto:tgabriel@glos.ac.uk)

**Equinox Publishing**

**List of Conferences**

An extensive list of conferences in Religious Studies can be viewed at:

[www.equinoxpub.com/conf.asp](http://www.equinoxpub.com/conf.asp)

**FAITH, SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE CONFERENCE**  
**University of Winchester, Saturday 8th April 2006**

On 8 April 2006 the University of Winchester will be hosting an international conference entitled 'Faith, Spirituality & Social Change'.

The 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. Local, national and international delegates from Europe, Asia, Israel, Africa and the USA are presenting at the event.

Keynote speakers currently include Fazlun M. Khalid, Founder Director of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, and John Smith from The Alliance of Religions and Conservation. We have received an impressive range of papers and outlines for workshops on themes including gender and sexuality, ecology, non-violent communication, interfaith, young people, education, art and activism. Speakers will explore many faiths through these themes including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Neo-Paganism and New Age spirituality.

We look forward to your participation in this exciting event.

Registration forms and a selection of papers are available on our website <[www.fsscconference.org.uk](http://www.fsscconference.org.uk)> or on request from the convenors.

Dr Christina Welch and Adrian Harris  
Theology & Religious Studies  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Winchester  
Tel: 01962 827521  
E-mail: [Christina.Welch@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:Christina.Welch@winchester.ac.uk)  
or [Adrian.Harris@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:Adrian.Harris@winchester.ac.uk)

**Religious Approaches to Sacred Texts**  
**One-Day-Conference at the Faculty of Theology, Subgroup: Study of**  
**Religions**  
**24 May 2006, Oriel College, University of Oxford**

The group of lecturers on world religions and the study of religions organises a one-day symposium about Religious Approaches to Sacred Texts on Wednesday 24 May in Oriel College. The aim is to discuss hermeneutical differences in approaches texts within and between religious traditions; hence, the conference shall offer wide opportunity for discussions about the approaches. Every panel consists of a 20-minute presentation about one tradition and a ten-minute comment by someone working about another religious tradition. Speakers will include Gavin Flood, Miri Freud-Kandel, Richard Gombrich, Martin Goodman, and Yahya Michot.

People interested in this conference please contact the coordinator, Dr Bettina Schmidt. E-mail: Bettina.schmidt@theology.ox.ac.uk.

**Theology *and* Religious Studies**  
**or**  
**Theology *vs* Religious Studies?**

**6-7 July 2006**  
**University of Oxford**

This is a two-day conference offering participants the opportunity to explore the relationship between Theology and Religious Studies and to consider the challenges of, and strategies for, teaching both.

**Speakers**

Gavin D'Costa (Bristol), Kim Knott (Leeds), David Ford (Cambridge)

**For further details, see:**

[http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/events/t&rs\\_or\\_tvrs.html](http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/events/t&rs_or_tvrs.html)

Sponsored by the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies

For more information contact Dr D. L. Bird at  
[enquiries@prs.heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@prs.heacademy.ac.uk)

अनु प्रत्नास आयवः पदं नवीयो अक्रमुः

*The ancient bards have walked in a newer step—Rg-Veda 9, 23, 2*

# STIMW

**The Sanskrit Tradition in the Modern World**

## **23rd Annual STIMW Symposium**

Friday 26 May 2006 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

University of Manchester

**For further details, please contact**  
Dr Jacqueline Suthren Hirst

Religions and Theology, Humanities Lime Grove,  
University of Manchester,  
Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL  
[jacqueline.hirst@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:jacqueline.hirst@manchester.ac.uk)

For two decades the seminar, first convened by Dr Dermot Killingley, University of Newcastle, in 1984, has offered a forum for the discussion of papers on varied aspects of Indian religions. Papers have been presented by leading scholars in the field as well as by research students. Papers are sent to participants in advance, so that they can be read and discussed in detail. They are available to those who cannot attend for a small charge. We look forward to continuing this excellent, friendly seminar in Manchester.

For further details, see

<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/subjectareas/religionstheology/newsevents/stimw/>

To join the mailing list, please email [janet.meredith@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:janet.meredith@manchester.ac.uk)



## Conference 2006

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### The Religious Roots of Contemporary European Identity

- Cambridge, 10 — 12 July 2006
  - Organised by Centre for the study of Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR) and Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) of University of Cambridge
- 

The conference will examine current discussion on contemporary European identity, when religion tends to be seen as one of the obstacles to further European integration. It will also provide comparative assessment of critical thinking in this field. The event will attract 'real' and 'virtual' participants through CJCR's successful web-based technology.

The conference will address the following key issues:

- Components of contemporary European identity;
- Manifestation of religious roots in secular society;
- Role of religion in further European integration and social inclusion;
- Poland, Czech Republic and the United Kingdom as case studies;
- Assessing the current debate about the role of Islam and Russian Orthodoxy in shaping Europe's identity;
- Discussing the strengths and weaknesses of electronic communication in international scholarly debate in this field of study.

**Conference location:** Westminster College.

**Accommodation** at Westminster College and St Edmund's College.

**Full conference fee:** £60 (excl. meals); day rate £30.

Further details from

**Registration deadline: 1 May 2006**

**Further details:** Lucia Faltin, Director of International Programmes & Conference Coordinator. E-mail: [l.faltin@cjcr.am.ac.uk](mailto:l.faltin@cjcr.am.ac.uk)

or visit <http://www.cjcr.cam.ac.uk/conference2006/conference-home.html>

## Announcement and Final Call for Papers

### UKABS CONFERENCE — BUDDHISM AND POPULAR CULTURE

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY  
14-16 July 2006

*Speakers include:*

Prof. Anne Blackburn (Cornell)  
Prof. Gregory Schopen (UCLA)  
Prof. George Tanabe (Hawaii)

\*\*\*

Dr. Cathy Cantwell (Oxford)  
Dr. Kate Crosby (SOAS)  
Ven. Dr. Mahinda Deegalle (Bath Spa)  
Dr. Koko Kawanami (Lancaster)  
Dr. Rob Mayer (Oxford)  
Dr. Lawrence Normand (Middlesex)  
Dr. Gay Watson (SOAS)

+ *Postgraduate panel* — Naomi Appleton, Yui Kwan Chan, Georgios Halkias and Jothika Khur-Yearn

UKABS members are cordially invited to submit proposals for papers on the above theme, which can be taken in its broadest possible context.

Topics might include:

- Buddhist texts in popular ritual and other contexts
- Pilgrimage centres and practices
- Amulets, prayer and devotionism
- Cult of saints
- Healing practices
- Icons and iconography

We encourage proposals relating to all eras and geographical regions. A short outline of no more than 400 words can be sent to either of the co-organisers, Ian Harris <i.harris@ucsm.ac.uk> or Ian Reader <i.reader@lancaster.ac.uk>, by 1 April 2006.

#### **Booking Information**

Conference Fee: £30 [waged]; £15 [unwaged]

Accommodation: £37.50 per night — Bed and breakfast

To book: Contact Ian Harris (by email or telephone: 01524 384528)

**International Conference on Justin Martyr and His Worlds  
Centre for the Study of Christian Origins (CSCO)  
New College, University of Edinburgh  
20—22 July, 2006**

[www.div.ed.ac.uk/justinmartyr\\_conf.html](http://www.div.ed.ac.uk/justinmartyr_conf.html)

The conference will feature presentations by the following scholars: Prof. Michael Slusser, Dr Denis Minns, Dr Paul Parvis, Prof. Oskar Skarsaune, Dr Paul Foster, Prof. Larry Hurtado, Prof. Graham Stanton, Prof. Judith Lieu, Prof. Cristoph Marksches, Dr Sara Parvis, and Prof. J. Rebecca Lyman. Additionally, limited spaces are available for short papers (15—20 min. in length) on relevant topics. Please submit abstract proposals of no more than 400 words by e-mail or post to Mr Will Rutherford at the address below by 31 March.

The basic conference fee of £90 (for registrations made by 31 March, £110 for registrations thereafter) includes a buffet dinner on Thursday, lunch on Friday and Saturday, and coffee/tea breaks. A banquet dinner will be available on Friday evening for an additional fee of £25. A number of housing options are also available at the University of Edinburgh's Pollock Halls (see below). Those wishing to obtain accommodation on their own will find <[www.visitscotland.org](http://www.visitscotland.org)> helpful.

To register, please return the attached form by 31 March 2006, with the appropriate payment to:

Mr Will Rutherford, New College, Mound Place, Edinburgh, EH1 2LX  
Email: [w.c.rutherford@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:w.c.rutherford@sms.ed.ac.uk).

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**University of Wales, Lampeter**

**SEMINAR SERIES 2005-2006:** Research Institute for Contemporary Theology and Religious Studies, **Theology and Religious Studies: Methodological Convergence and/or Divergence?**

**MARCH - DECEMBER 2006:** The Alister Hardy Society, supporting the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales, Lampeter.

For further details, please visit:  
[www.lamp.ac.uk/trs/news\\_events/listings.htm](http://www.lamp.ac.uk/trs/news_events/listings.htm)

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# The European Society for the Philosophy of Religion

16th Biennial Conference in Tübingen (Germany)

1-4 September 2006

## Religion after Metaphysics

**Main Contributors:** Hermann Deuser (Frankfurt), William B. Drees (Leiden), Nils Grønkaer (Aarhus), Hans-Peter Grosshans (Tübingen), Eberhard Herrmann (Uppsala), Denis Turner (Yale), Saskia Wendel (Tilburg), Mark Wynn (Exeter).

The general theme of the conference *Religion after Metaphysics* is: do religions depend on (a particular form of) metaphysics; and if not, what are the implications for the philosophy of religion? In recent years there has been a widespread 'empirical' or 'practice-oriented' turn in the scientific and philosophical study of religion. Religion is seen as a cultural, social, or anthropological phenomenon: as a human form of life and orientation in the world rather than as a way of encountering a transcendent divine reality.

This has provoked a radical backlash within those philosophical and theological traditions that hold fast to an idea of transcendence as intrinsic to religion and religious life, and who insist that philosophy of religion is to be practised in the mode of metaphysics or transcendental philosophy. These modern and pre-modern forms of philosophy of religion clearly conflict with more recent descriptive, pluralist and naturalising approaches to religion and religions, and it is this particular conflict which the conference will address. Is philosophy of religion possible without some metaphysical orientation? Can it consistently exclude metaphysics in its critical reflections upon religious belief and practice? Is there anything left for philosophy of religion to reflect upon if religion is completely naturalized?

Those who are interested in presenting a paper should inform the organisers <lfrei@theol.unizh.ch> as early as possible and are asked to send in their contributions as e-mail attachments by 30 May 2006. Please indicate to which session the paper refers. There will be a selection of papers by the organising committee. Those invited to present their paper at the conference will be informed by 15 July 2006.

### Conference committee:

Ingolf U. Dalferth, Zürich: dalferth@theol.unizh.ch

Hans-Peter Grosshans, Tübingen: hans-peter.grosshans@uni-tuebingen.de

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## **JASANAS**

**(Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies)**

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## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

### **Russell Sandberg: 'Religion, Society and Law: An Analysis of the Interface between the Law on Religion and the Sociology of Religion'**

From debates concerning crime and terrorism to the clash between freedom of expression and freedom of religion exemplified in the broadcasting of allegedly blasphemous material such as *Jerry Springer the Opera* and cartoon depictions of the Prophet Mohammed, the interaction between religion and the law is never far from the headlines. Questions about family life, issues such as civil partnerships, marriage and divorce together with ethical issues such as medical ethics, abortion and euthanasia invariably include discussion of the law and religion as do debates surrounding the constitution and the role of the monarchy, in particular.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the last fifteen years has seen a renewed interest in law and religion issues, spearheaded by the Ecclesiastical Law Society and the Centre for Law and Religion at Cardiff University. However, despite the publication of a variety of seminal works by a number of scholars, this emerging legal discipline has paid little interest to the possible contribution of sociology and other social sciences. In contrast to academics in continental Europe, the reciprocal contribution of the sociology of religion to the law on religion has largely been ignored to date by UK academics with the exception of a publication of a rudimentary agenda set by Professor Norman Doe (2004) 152 *Law and Justice* 68) and Anthony Bradley (in O'Dair, R., and Lewis, A., (ed) *Law and Religion* (2001, Oxford University Press)).

My Ph.D. thesis, entitled 'Religion, Society and Law: An Analysis of the Interface between the Law on Religion and the Sociology of Religion', aims to redress this balance. Supervised by Professor Norman Doe, the thesis draws upon materials from both the sociology of religion and the law on religion, to examine the role of religion in the UK. This will allow practical conclusions to be made concerning the relationship between religion and society and the role of law. This innovative approach towards what may be called 'a sociology of law on religion' will enable scholars to develop a deeper understanding of both social science materials and the laws of religious organisations and state laws on religion.

The thesis contends that the study of law provides sociologists with a measurement against which to test sociological propositions: the study of law on religion, including both the law of states on religion and the internal laws and regulatory schemes of religious organisations, can be used to verify and validate the central theories and hypotheses of the sociology of religion.

The process is not one way: the thesis also submits that the study of sociology can benefit lawyers. Sociology provides a major theoretical framework which lawyers can use to understand patterns in the law: the empirical studies, propositions and theories of the sociology of religion together with the sociology of law, broader social theory, empirical data and anthropological studies can provide a framework for and an insight into the law on religion. Such an analysis may also reveal the probable direction of the law in the future or a divergence between the black letter of the law and social reality.

The thesis will focus upon five specific sociological themes and issues affecting religion that will be in turn examined by reference to the sociological and anthropological literature as well as the legal evidence. Although the focus is primarily upon the law of England and Wales, reference will be made to other jurisdictions and faith groups by means of contrast. The five proposed areas of study are definitions of 'religion', typologies of religion, the position of religion in England and Wales — modernity, postmodernity, secularisation, globalisation and risk, authority within religious organisations and religion and social change. In relation to each theme, the critical focus of the law upon the sociological propositions will allow practical conclusions to be made concerning the future direction of the relationship between religion and society and the role of law.

For example, in relation to the first theme, Definitions of 'Religion', the aim is not to suggest a watertight definition but rather to promote a multidisciplinary understanding of the nature of religion. This section seeks to understand the multiplicity of definitions and assumptions about 'religion' that can be found in law, including judicial decisions, UK legislation and international human rights documents, by reference to sociological and anthropological conceptions and definitions found in the work of classic social theorists such as Auguste Comte, Edward Tylor, Herbert Spencer, James Frazer, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and modern scholars such as Clifford Geertz, Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson, Steve Bruce and Grace Davie. The section also examines the sociological debate as to whether religion is a collective or individual phenomenon with regard to the legal evidence by studying how the law has treated religion and whether the law regards religion as an individual or a collective affair. This approach allows conclusions to be made as to whether the multidisciplinary evidence supports, refutes or suggests a different understanding of these ideas and what practical implications this has for law and society.

This juxtaposition of sociological claims and juridical evidence offers a new method by which lawyers and sociologists can better understand the place of the law within society. In addition to the benefits such an analysis offers in terms of broader socio-legal research and understanding, there are

also benefits in relation to practical areas of concern of religious bodies and the state. The research will provide a new methodology: unlocking the legal dimensions of the sociology of religion and the sociological dimensions of law on religion. This approach will allow religious, social and legal issues to be examined in a more sophisticated way that encapsulates both theory and practice. It is hoped that this multidisciplinary approach will allow a deeper and richer understanding of the issues that lie behind the provocative headlines and debates concerning religion, law and society.

**Russell Sandberg**

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### **Michael Berman: The Nature of Shamanism and the Shamanic Story**

The main hypothesis that will be proposed in this thesis is that a case can be made for the introduction of a new genre of tale, the shamanic story, which has either been based on or inspired by a shamanic journey, or contains a number of the elements that are typical of such a journey.

The first chapter will briefly explore what are regarded by the author as misconceptions about shamanism including, for example, the belief that no danger is involved in shamanic practices (the failure of the practitioners and proponents of neo-shamanism to fully acknowledge the eristic nature of indigenous shamanism).

A definition of shamanism will then be proposed, the intention of which is to encompass the different forms shamanism takes in different cultures. The question of whether shamanism is a religion, a way of life, or a methodology will then be considered. The opinions of various experts in the field are explored, including Emile Durkheim, Mircea Eliade, Joan Halifax, Michael Harner, Mihaly Hoppal, Ake Hultkrantz, Sandra Ingermann, Carl Jung, Roger Walsh, William James, Karl Marx, Max Muller, Paul Radin, Ninian Smart, and van der Leeuw. Many of the recent writers on the subject appear to skirt the issue of whether shamanism can be regarded as a religion or not. The intention in this study, however, is to tackle the question head-on, in the hope of contributing something new to the discussion.

The main focus of the research follows, which is to identify how the chief characteristics of the various types of journey the shaman undertakes can be found in what will be termed “shamanic stories” (citing biblical, traditional and contemporary examples of the genre). The stories are preceded by a brief description of the different types of shamanic journeys that can be

undertaken — to the Lower World, Middle World, Upper World, Land of the Dead, journeys for the purpose of divination and also for purposes of Soul Retrieval — as the extent to which these form the basis of the stories selected for analysis is one of the areas the work then goes on to consider.

The stories featured are the Book of Jonah from the Old Testament, two traditional stories from the Republic of Georgia( The Earth will take its Own, and Davit), a contemporary German folktale Bundles, and the Korean tale Shimchong, the Blindman's Daughter.

The textual analysis involves both biblical and mythical interpretation. The analysis is based on the assumption that the stories represent shamanic journeys and the parallels between the two will be highlighted. However, Bettelheim's psychoanalytical approach, among others, is also taken into account. Particular attention is paid to the use made of metaphor and the way in which the tales can be categorised. Attention is drawn to how the selected stories can be interpreted on a number of different levels and how all of these interpretations contribute to the richness and depth of the tales. By making use of textual material from a number of different cultures and times, the intention is to highlight the pervasive influence shamanism has had and to show how the 'new' genre being proposed is a universal one.

Finally, to bring the work to a close, the parallels between the shaman and the storyteller are explored — such as the way in which they both make use of a ritual framework, how they both produce the effects of the numinosum, and how they both have the power to heal.

The research questions addressed include: (1) defining what shamanism is, deciding whether it should be classified as a religion, a methodology or a way of life; (2) considering whether a case can be made out for the introduction of a new genre of tale and, if so, what its characteristics are.

What makes the work different from others in the field is that in it a case is made for the introduction of a new genre of tale to be termed 'shamanic stories' (as opposed to folktales, myths, sagas or fairytales). Although well-known stories such as Jack and the Beanstalk and Alice in Wonderland have been compared to shamanic journeys, this thesis will entail the study of Georgian folktales that have, as far as can be ascertained, never been considered in this light before.

As for the contribution to knowledge which may be expected, it is hoped the introduction of this new genre of tale will be of use to future researchers — not only those involved in the study of shamanism but also to those whose interest is in the study of literary texts too.

**Michael Berman**  
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## TURNING POINT

**Ron Geaves writes on T. Lobsang Rampa, *The Third Eye* and *Cave of the Ancients*.**

I recently re-read Lobsang Rampa's *The Third Eye* and *The Cave of the Ancients*, a slightly alarming experience when I consider how much these books influenced me in my teenage years back in the middle of the 1960s. *The Third Eye* introduced me to the Orient and an alternative possibility to express my spirituality at a time when I was critically reassessing my commitment to Christianity. With hindsight I can see the author's influences have far more to do with spiritualism than any real knowledge of Tibetan religion but at the time they triggered a period of intensive reading on Buddhism and Hinduism and a fascination with India which was to result in an extraordinary adventure in 1968.

*The Third Eye* also led me to read all of Rampa's books and in one of them I discovered a passage that was to have far-reaching consequences. The passage describes a journey undertaken by Rampa and his lama and their meeting with a solitary Tibetan ascetic who lived outside the confines of Tibetan society and its Buddhist religious orders, almost certainly a Tantric specialist. The passage describes the ascetic's spiritual condition as being able to experience equally the beauty within a piece of dung and a precious stone. However, I was attracted to the ascetic's iconoclasm and antinomian outlook based on his experience of a monist vision of creation and determined to seek for my own 'enlightenment'. I travelled to India overland at the end of the 1960s and when everyone else that I knew attended the free concerts at the Isle of Wight or Hyde Park, I ended up living as a sadhu in Varanasi.

After an extraordinary series of events, which is entirely another story, I departed from Varanasi riddled with amoebic dysentery and discovered the eleven year old 'child-guru' later to be known in the West as Guru Maharaj Ji. At the end of 1969 I brought the teachings I had learned from him back to London and helped start an ashram in West Kensington. I was to spend the next five years helping to establish further ashrams throughout Europe, completely missing the hedonistic years of the 1970s.

Many years later in 1984 at the age of 36 I began my academic journey. It did not begin with any intention to become an academic. I had no idea of the intellectual capabilities of my brain having left school at sixteen with four 'O' Levels and was testing myself to discover my own abilities. I began an Open University degree in Humanities and loved my English Literature courses as much as the Religious Studies but another turning point was about to emerge. Whilst studying Sikhism I was introduced to the post-

Weberian ideas of Thomas O’Dea and for the first time discovered the pleasure of a seamless continuity between academic theory and my own position on religion. It was exciting and on gaining my degree I applied to the University of Leeds to continue my studies as a postgraduate. I chose Leeds because I was attracted to their community religions project.

Not much remains of the young man who read Lobsang Rampa. I am no longer deluded by the romance of the East although I continue to be a lover of India. I have visited far too many times over the years for such naivety to have been retained. I do, however, remain the iconoclast and deeply antinomian in my spirituality, probably even more so than back then in 1968. I still tinker around with O’Dea, as you will see if you read my next monograph on Skanda worship in Britain.

**Ron Geaves**  
**University of Chester**

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## **BOOK REVIEW**

Carrette, Jeremy and Richard King (2005) *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*. London: Routledge. xii + 194 pp. £12.99. ISBN: 0 415 30209 9 (pbk); 0415302080 £50.00 (hbk).

Jeremy Carrette and Richard King’s *Selling Spirituality* is an all-out attack on the commoditisation of ‘spirituality’ within the New Age Movement. Following on from the Enlightenment and the rise of political liberalism, the authors argue, there has been a decline in allegiance to organised religion, and in recent times an upsurge in more privatised spirituality. This has been fuelled by the rise of corporate capitalism, which has had a two-fold effect. First, it has given rise to a ‘rebranding’ of religion into what can be bought and sold, in the form of books, New Age paraphernalia and spiritual services. Second, this new privatised religion is marketed as an antidote to the ills created by consumerist society: healing, relief of stress, and personal success in the workplace. Influenced by the Romantic Movement, and its emphasis on the feeling as a salient characteristic of religion, the New Age has come to emphasise feelings of personal wholeness and well-being as key aims. Religion thus loses its role as a critic of the status quo, and serves to reflect and support the ideals of the capitalist system.

The authors have three main lines of objection to commoditisation of ‘spirituality’. First, they object to the use of the word ‘spirituality’ itself, on the grounds that it lacks clear meaning. A chapter traces carefully the various uses to which the term has been put in the course of Christianity’s history, but argues that none of them are appropriate to the word’s use in

New Age circles, where it has become a ‘Humpty Dumpty’ concept — as Mick Brown puts it in *The Spiritual Tourist*, ‘a buzz-word of the age’.

Second, they argue that the eclecticism of the New Age has resulted in the debasing of profound religious traditions, most notably Buddhism, Hinduism and philosophical Taoism. The wisdom of these spiritual paths has become translated into banalities such as those of Stephen Russell, the ‘Barefoot Doctor’, whose ‘full prescription’ consists of ‘Taoist healing methods and philosophy, with an added pinch of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shamanism, Humanism and a heavy smattering of timeless Basic Commonsensism’ (cited on p.90). The philosophy of Taoism has given rise to a plethora of ‘Tao of ...’ books, ranging from ‘The Tao of Golf’ to ‘The Tao of Conversation’. From its traditional role as a range of Indian philosophical systems, yoga has become trivialised into a set of physical exercises for trimming away excess body fat.

Third, Carrette and King argue this ‘silent takeover of religion’ works in tandem with corporate capitalism. The remedies it offers are either for the effects of this system — for example the need to cope with stress — or else for advancement within the system, for example the appropriation of Taoism for the enhancement of leadership skills. Although the authors concede that some of the New Age techniques and remedies may have a palliative role, this capitalist appropriation of spirituality leaves it devoid of any power to challenge the status quo.

Carrette and King’s attack on the New Age is polemical and, I believe, needs rather more by way of cooler analysis. Their approach is certainly saner than that of the cult-bashing Christian evangelicals, but nonetheless it must be asked whether it is our role, as scholars of religion, to criticise rather than observe and analyse spiritual phenomena. Religion may develop in all sorts of ways that we dislike, but, even though we can no longer plausibly adopt a phenomenological stance of bracketing assumptions, is it not our task to bring to bear some measure of empathy and, as far as possible, objectivity on our subject-matter?

The polemical nature of *Selling Spirituality* at times causes the authors to exaggerate. Is this spiritual revolution really an ‘explosion’ or a ‘cultural addiction’, as they suggest (p.1)? The uptake of New Age spirituality is certainly not as widespread as, say, mobile phones or satellite television. The authors’ methodology is qualitative rather than quantitative, so we are not provided with comparative statistical information about New Age and (say) evangelical Christianity, but it would be interesting to ascertain whether there is a greater or lesser propensity to join Alpha courses or to buy Christian fish symbols than New Age paraphernalia. Although ‘spirituality’ might be a nebulous concept, the authors’ contention that it can mean *anything* at all is simply false: perhaps more analysis needs to be given

to present-day uses of the concept, and the authors could profitably have considered the role of the concept in attributing meaning to life, and exploring what lies beyond it, in terms of life after death and an awareness of the super-empirical.

There is certainly little that is revolutionary about the New Age Movement, although the authors might have considered its relationship to the 'green' movement, which is decidedly critical of society. However, one could argue that traditional religion has also tended to sustain the status quo; one might recall the words of the Victorian hymn that affirmed, 'The rich man in his castle, / The poor man at the gate, / God made them high and lowly / And ordered their estate', and, more generally, Durkheim's 'replication' thesis in which he contended that the supernatural was made to mirror affairs as they existed on earth.

In sum, *Selling Spirituality* offers a provocative thesis, but one which should stimulate debate rather than secure wider acceptance.

**George D. Chryssides**  
**University of Wolverhampton**

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### **TRIBUTE: Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi**

Although Dr Zaki Badawi did not have associations with the BASR, he was a well-known and well respected scholar, and we are pleased to include the following tribute by Alfred Aegius, from the *Westminster Interfaith Newsletter*, February 2006. The Editor is grateful for his permission to reproduce it.

The sudden and unexpected death of Dr Zaki Badawi in London in January 2006 has taken away from the national scene one of the most respected Muslims in the UK. He had finished speaking at a meeting of Muslim bankers when he collapsed and died soon after. The towering personality of Dr Badawi had dominated for decades Muslim relations with Government, with religious leaders, with interfaith bodies like the Three Faiths Forum of which he was a co-founder, and with the media in the UK. All of these are now at a loss as to who could fill the void left by him.

Born in 1922 in Cairo, Sheikh Badawi obtained a first degree in theology, then an M.A. in Arabic and later a doctorate from Al-Azhar University where he subsequently taught. Coming to London in 1951 he first obtained a

degree in psychology and eventually a doctorate in Modern Muslim thought. After teaching in several countries Dr Badawi founded the Muslim College in Creffield Road, Ealing in 1986 to train imams who could serve British Muslims. Earlier he had served as director of the Islamic Cultural Centre and was chief Imam at the London Central Mosque.

In a publication like this, we cannot leave unrecorded the close connection Dr Badawi had with Westminster Interfaith and with the Catholic Church. From the start, Dr Badawi cooperated with the activities of Westminster Interfaith. He was the representative for Islam in Westminster Cathedral at the gathering for peace in the Gulf in 1991. He again represented Islam at the tenth anniversary of the Assisi meeting in the autumn of 1996. Together with his wife Mavis, he used to spend a day every year speaking to future Catholic priests in training in an intensive week long programme held in Southall under the direction of Brother Daniel. We felt then that he went about this encounter with great gusto and personal interest. He not only recognized the importance of such an input but he, as a good Muslim, loved the opportunity to present the true face of Islam when his faith was so often misrepresented and misunderstood.

One of the pleasant things when engaging with Dr Badawi was that there was a give and take, a listening on both sides with a genuine wish to learn from others. At his invitation Fr Michael Barnes and myself were invited to run courses on Roman Catholicism for Muslim students at the Muslim College. We reciprocated by inviting him to talk to Catholic groups. Last year I spent a day with him running a workshop at a training day on inter-faith dialogue for staff at St Charles Sixth Form College in London. Dr Badawi who came with his wife endeared himself to the staff by his wisdom and his humour. His input always had a personal touch that betrayed the depth with which he knew and lived his faith. One felt totally unthreatened by his way of expressing his faith speaking to a mainly Catholic audience.

At the instigation of Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Dr Badawi and five senior Muslims who covered a wide spectrum of Muslim traditions met a delegation of an equal number of Catholics at Archbishop's House on 3rd November 2004. The cordial meeting co-chaired by the Cardinal and Dr Badawi reviewed a number of issues such as the experience of Catholics in Britain and the question of faith schools. A joint statement condemning violence was released to the press.

Dr Badawi was not immune to criticism especially from hard line Muslims. Some of his statements, such as his saying that the Qur'an allows Muslim women not to wear the *hijab* if by doing so they put their life in danger, was misconstrued by the media and possibly did not go down well with some coreligionists. After 9/11 in 2001 he appeared on TV with other religious leaders and unreservedly condemned the violence. He did the same

soon after the London bombings in July last year. But, to his credit, he did say that the West must look into the root causes of the atrocities being perpetrated.

In July last year the media reported that Dr Badawi was refused entry at JFK airport by US officials even though he had obtained an entry visa from the American embassy in London. I heard his response broadcast on BBC Radio 4: 'America is a lovely country. There is no reason why it should behave like this.' Like a true Muslim Dr Badawi was patient in adversity, always courteous but unafraid to speak his mind, he was deeply respected for this even if you did not always agree with him. This is why he was so much sought after as a spokesman for Islam by the media.

I attended Zaki's funeral at the Regent's Park Mosque on Friday 27th January. Crowds packed the mosque and courtyard for the Juma prayers. His coffin, draped in a black cloth with quotes from the Qur'an woven in green velvet was placed in the middle of the courtyard. There was an eerie but powerful silence as we walked round the coffin, praying and taking in the intensity of the moment. It was peaceful, even joyful in a deeply quiet way.

I moved away to pay my respects to Mavis and the family as they stood by all dressed in black. On such occasions, words fail me. It was then that Mavis came close to Michael Barnes and myself and whispered: 'We are all going the same way'. After a while she again said to us, 'I remember, many years ago in Egypt, Zaki praying alongside a Catholic priest.' It all seemed to bring us all so close together.

**Alfred Aegius**  
**Westminster Interfaith Group**

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## 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	800-1,000 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.