



**BASR**

British Association for  
the Study of Religions

## **Bulletin**

Number 117  
November 2010



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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 117<sup>th</sup> edition of the BASR Bulletin.

This Bulletin was compiled after the publication of the Browne report “Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education in the UK” and after the Chancellor, George Osborne’s Comprehensive Spending Review. In spite of or because of all the reporting and reviewing there is much concerning the future of UK Higher Education that remains uncertain. We don’t yet know exactly how we will be funded, how much our students will have to pay for their education and exactly when they will pay it, which body or bodies will regulate and support our activities or whether the Research Excellence Framework will go ahead as planned.

Given this uncertainty it is a pleasure to be able to bring you some good news in this edition. You will find inside an upbeat report from Ron Geaves and Elizabeth Harris about the Department at Liverpool Hope University. Also news about members’ movements around the country. Don’t forget to tell us if you change institutions; many members tell us how much they appreciate being kept up to date via this medium. Also inside is a series of pieces on teaching in schools and in HE institutions. You may like to respond to any of these and we welcome ongoing discussion.

For the one-day BASR conference in Birmingham held in September this year we relied solely on our postgraduate bursary holders to

## ABOUT THE BASR

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

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**The deadline for contributions to the May 2011 edition is 15 April 2011**

report for us. Next year's BASR conference will be held in Durham on the 5<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> September. The precise title is yet to be determined but the focus will be on ritual knowing and/or knowledge. Please put the date in your diary and look out for more details on our website. If you would like to host a future BASR conference contact a member of the committee. Our names and email addresses are on the facing page.

If you scan the committee list you may notice

the absence of Dermot Tredget. Dermot has been an exceptionally hardworking treasurer. He leaves us to concentrate on pastoral work and is replaced by Stephen Gregg who will continue to ensure that our finances are in good shape.

We hope you will enjoy reading issue number 117 and encourage you to contribute yourself to future editions.

Helen Waterhouse  
Dominic Corrywright

## **BASR BUSINESS**

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

Held at 12 (noon) onwards on Monday 6 September 2010 at Birmingham University

**Welcome.** Douglas Davies opened the meeting by welcoming members and visitors (37 attending). He thanked George Chryssides for organising and looking after the conference.

**1. Apologies** received from Steven Sutcliffe, Dave Evans, Marion Bowman, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Terry Thomas, Dominic Corrywright, Denise Cush, and Kim Knott

**2. Minutes of the AGM, 8 September 2009** (published in the BASR Bulletin 115, November 2009: 4-9). Accepted and signed.

**3. Presidential address (Douglas Davies):** He started with stating that this conference has demonstrated very well the goal of the BASR to present the breath and depth of our discipline. In this sense it was decided to allow PG students time to pre-

sent the outcome of their research at this one-day conference. He also reported that during his first 12 months as president of the BASR he had the honour to welcome a delegation of 30 Chinese scholars at Durham who were in particular interested in learning how religion is taught in the UK. Recently he attended a meeting of the AUDTRS at Liverpool Hope in his role as president of the BASR. He ended with expressing thanks to the Secretary and the treasurer of the BASR.

### **4. Secretary's Report (Bettina Schmidt)**

i. The current membership list (including Honorary Life Members) lists two hundred and five (205) members, hence the same number as last year. However, the list has changed its content: members who did not pay their subscription and did not respond to emails and a letter posted to them in the last Bulletin were deleted while several

new members were added to the list.

ii. The committee has met twice since the last AGM: 5 November 2009 at Durham University and 6 July 2010, at Birmingham University. In addition we had a telephone conference call meeting on 6 October 2009. The conference has been the main issue of discussion and planning. This included consideration of bursary applications. Links with other organisations (including AUDTRS, British Academy, AHRC, EASR, IAHR and AAR) have also been on the agenda. The president attended a meeting at the RCUK and Graham Harvey meetings at the British Academy.

iii. During this first (virtual) meeting it was decided to establish a mailing list of members only. This was set up at Bangor University. Due to the relocation of the secretary to Trinity St David the mailing list will move in the next weeks to TSD. The mailing list has become the main way of the BASR to communicate with its members. The secretary asks therefore every member to send her updates about one's email account. The committee also discussed the creation of a newsletter sent out via email but due to heavy work load and the research leave of the secretary (and her being out of the country for 5 months) it was decided to postpone it.

iv. Two consultations were conducted during the last 12 months (via email): - The members were asked to express their views about the proposed merger of the TRS panel with the Philosophy panel during the REF. The opinions were collected and then communicated to the president who expressed the views of the members to HEFCE and other organisations involved in REF. The outcome is that the

merger was rejected. - Recently the members were asked to respond to the discussion paper about External examining.

v. Prof Robert Jackson approached the BASR about the outcome of the Warwick research project about resources in RE and as a follow-up BS attended a meeting in the Department for Education with publishers of RE textbooks and representatives of faith groups. The committee has invited the Warwick research group to present the outcome of its research in the next Bulletin as well as mentioned the BASR conference in 2011 as a possible venue for further discussions.

vi. Together with former president James Cox BS represented the BASR at the recent congress of the International Association for History of Religion and at the committee meetings of the IAHR and the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) (report later on the agenda).

vii. In autumn Matthew Guest resigned as editor of DISKUS and Graham Harvey became acting editor of DISKUS.

viii. In July Dermot Tredget resigned as treasurer and call for the nomination of a new treasurer was sent to the members (via email).

ix. At the recent meeting of the AUDTRS it was decided to approach QAA to initiate a benchmark exercise for taught Master level.

## **5. Treasurer's Report and Account (Dermot Tredget)**

Follows these minutes. AGM unanimously accepted them. The president expressed our gratitude to the outgoing treasurer and wished him well in his new position.

## **6. Bulletin Editors' Report (Helen Waterhouse)**

- i. Members were asked for contributions of articles, reviews, conference reports and announcements.
- ii. Members were asked whether they have suggestions for new topics for the Bulletin.
- iii. Members were encouraged to submit reports of movements or developments within the institutions.
- iv. Members who want to write a book review should contact Dominic Corrywright.
- v. Robert Segal asked for a list of members to be published in the Bulletin. However, it was mentioned that the Data Protection Act prevent the publication of names and addresses.

**7. Diskus Co-ordinating Editor Report (Graham Harvey)**

- i. The issues 2008 (York) and 2009 (Bangor) are now on-line, some of the articles in a new style (with footnotes and pictures).
- ii. Members were thanked for their contributions and for peer reviewing.
- iii. The delay of the publication was due to IT problems that have been solved now. The next issue should be made available much faster.

**8. Conference in Durham 2011 (Douglas Davies)**

The next conference will be at Durham, 5-September 2011. The location will be St Chad's College, next to the Cathedral (no parking available). The BASR will give out bursaries for PG students and will also encourage UG student to attend.

**9. IAHR and EASR (Bettina Schmidt and James Cox)**

The Secretary reported about that app. 12 members of the BASR attended the congress of the IAHR. The proceedings of the last two congresses (Durban and Kyoto) are now available on-line on the website of the IAHR and hard copies will be sent to all copy right libraries in the UK. And she handed out flyers about the Women Scholar network of the IAHR and encouraged females members to join the network. James Cox then reported about the committee meeting of the IAHR. The AAR was accepted as national member association of the IAHR after the general secretary of the IAHR Tim Jensen ensured members that the AAR will have the same votes as other national associations. The proposal of the African Association was discussed but further decision was postponed. Some constitutional changes were discussed and accepted. The secretary reported about the new treasurer of the IAHR, Brian Bocking, suggested that "richer" national association (such as the BASR) could offer to pay the annual subscription of "poorer" national association (such as the Cuban association).

The secretary then reported about the EASR committee meeting. After serving two terms Kim Knott will no longer be secretary of the EASR. James Cox was re-elected as deputy secretary (names and addresses of the new committee members will be made available on the new EASR website). The EASR has accepted the invitation of the BASR to hold the 2013 conference at Liverpool Hope, with Ron Geaves as conference chair. Flyers were presented for the next EASR conferences, in Budapest (in 2011) and in Stockholm (in 2012).

**10. Nominations for the REF Panel**

The BASR was approached to submit

nominations for the REF panel. The secretary has received several suggestions and it was decided that the committee will discuss the names and decide about the nominations.

#### **11. Election of Treasurer**

A single nomination for the post of Treasurer having been received, Stephen Gregg was elected to the post.

#### **12. Any Other Business**

Simon Smith of the Subject Centre informed the members that the handbook will be updated and encouraged all members to update their details. And he mentioned that the HE Academy is on the process of restructuring, more details will be announced in spring 2011.

Elisabeth Arweck reminded members of the discount for the Journal of Contemporary Religion for BASR members.

#### **13. Date and Venue of the next meeting**

The next AGM will be held during the 2011 conference at Durham University, 5-7 September 2011. Further details will be announced in the Bulletin and website.

Douglas Davies closed the AGM at 1.10 pm

### **University of Gloucestershire, Department of Humanities**

One Day Islam Conference, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011, 10.30 AM to 4PM on Islamic Philosophy

#### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Papers are invited for this annual event at the University of Gloucestershire, Department of Humanities. This time the theme of the conference is Islamic Philosophy. The conference is well-attended by academics, postgraduate students, Ministers of Religion and a few members of the public. The papers could be on any aspect of this broad theme and each speaker has 40 minutes for the presentation including questions and discussion.

Prospective speakers are requested to send the title and a short abstract (500 words ) of their paper to Dr. Theodore Gabriel, Honorary Research Fellow in Religious Studies, at the address given below by post or E mail. Speakers are invited to a special lunch attended by the Vice Chancellor and the Head of Humanities.

The conference will be held at Francis Close Campus situated at the town centre.

Dr. T. Gabriel

Tel: 01242 699070

E Mail: [tgabriel@glos.ac.uk](mailto:tgabriel@glos.ac.uk)



**BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS  
ACCOUNTS as at 15 AUGUST 2010**

<b>RECEIPTS</b>				<b>PAYMENTS</b>			
<b>General Fund</b>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2008-09</i>		<i>Notes</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2008-09</i>
		<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>				
<b>Balance at 16 August 2009</b>		<b>10490</b>	<i>8842</i>	Audit Fee	<i>iv</i>	<b>-240</b>	<b>-240</b>
Inland Revenue	<i>i</i>	561	<i>996</i>	Printing & Postage Bulletin	<i>v</i>	<b>-548</b>	<b>-639</b>
Subscriptions	<i>ii</i>	3186	<i>3188</i>	DISKUS & Occ. Papers		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Bulletin insert fees		15	<i>0</i>	Committee Expenses	<i>vi</i>	<b>-1549</b>	<b>-1536</b>
DISKUS & Occ. Papers		48	<i>37</i>	EASR/IAHR Membership	<i>vii</i>	<b>-401</b>	<b>-437</b>
Bank Interest	<i>iii</i>	33	<i>512</i>	Bank Charges		<b>-9</b>	<b>-8</b>
		<u>14333</u>	<u><i>13575</i></u>	Insurance	<i>viii</i>	<b>-321</b>	<b>-227</b>
				<b>Balance in hand 15 August 2010</b>		<u><b>11265</b></u>	
						14333	
<b>Conference Fund</b>		<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>			<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>
<b>Balance at 16 August 2009</b>		<b>12706</b>		2009 Conference Expenses		<b>-10300</b>	<b>-3781</b>
2009 Conference Receipts		2822	<i>10296</i>	2010 Conference Expenses		<b>0</b>	
2010 Conference Receipts		820		<b>Balance in hand 15 August 2010</b>		<u><b>6048</b></u>	
		<u>16348</u>				16348	

**BALANCE SHEET as at 15 August 2010**

<b>Cash Funds: Bank Accounts</b>				<b>Represented by:</b>			
Lloyds Current	112	<i>666</i>		General Fund	<i>ix</i>	11265	<i>10490</i>
CAF Cash	3833	<i>9301</i>		less transfer to Conference Fund		-1000	
CAF Gold	13196	<i>13169</i>		General Fund Balance		10265	
PayPal Holding	100	<i>26</i>		Conference Fund	<i>x</i>	7048	<i>12706</i>
Petty Cash	57	<i>34</i>					
Cheques not yet presented	16						
<b>Total</b>	<b>17313</b>	<i>23196</i>				<b>17313</b>	<i>23196</i>

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY UP TO 15 AUGUST 2010**

<b>Balance as at 16th August 2009</b>	<b>23196</b>	<b>Bangor Conference 2009</b>	
Total Receipts	7485	Total Receipts	13118
Total Payments	-13368	Total Payments	<b>-14081</b>
Net Receipts/Payments	-5883	Subsidy from General Fund	<i>xi</i> 1000
<b>Balance as at 15th August 2010</b>	<b>17313</b>	Deficit/Surplus	<i>xii</i> 37

**NOTES TO ACCOUNTS**

- i* Gift aid from 109 members
- ii* Subscriptions from 193 members (75 reduced rate). Does not include 10 life members Total 203 members
- iii* Significant drop in interest due to low rates
- iv* Last time we will have to pay audit fee as total income comes below new threshold for auditing requirement
- v* Printing costs reduced because printing fewer copies
- vi* Cost of sending BS and JC to Toronto £1,300
- vii* IAHR/EASR sub lower because of fewer members
- viii* Increased cost because of addition of Trustee Indemnity
- ix* General Fund increased by £700
- x* Conference Fund decreased by £5660 because it was holding receipts from 2009 Bangor Conference
- xi* £1,000 subsidy to cover postgraduate bursaries
- xii* Bangor Conference just broke even

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International Association for the History of Religions and  
the European Association for the Study of Religions*

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### **BASR Conference Birmingham 6<sup>th</sup> September**

#### **Religious Movements: Their Ageing and Emotions**

This year's BASR conference report is a collaborative report by post-graduate students.

The conference began with a warm welcome from Professor Douglas Davies. Panel 1, the morning session of this year's BASR conference, consisted of four presentations given by final year postgraduate research students. In this session, some of the PhD students who had participated at earlier BASR conferences had the opportunity to present the outcomes of their doctoral research. Amy Whitehead (Open University) gave a paper entitled 'Gift Giving and Power Perspectives: Testing the Roles of Statue Devotion in England and Spain'. Amy examined the role that materiality plays in Western religiosities. Relating the analysis of her findings, she offered a comparison of statue veneration in Britain and Spain by setting in contrast statue forms of Our Lady of Avalon (Glastonbury) and the Virgin of Alcala (Andalusia). She concluded that statue veneration may be considered a form of Western animism, whereby relational encounters between statues and devotees surpass the realm of mere representation.

Ann Casson (Warwick University) spoke about her study 'The perceptions of Catholicity in a plural society: an ethnographic case study of Catholic secondary schools in England'. Through looking at how identity is relationally constructed in a school environment, Ann described the methodological considerations involved in this study

and the research approaches used in gathering her ethnographic data. She then referred to ways in which children understood their Catholic identity in rapport to institutions, traditions, faith and community and concluded that the Catholic school does generate spiritual capital for its members. Lastly Ann suggested that parallel research in a more ethnically diverse community would offer further insight into this area.

In his paper 'Spiritualist Mediums and other Traditional Shamans: Towards an Apprenticeship Model of Shamanic Practice', David Gordon Wilson (University of Edinburgh) investigated the more speculative scholarly claim of Spiritualism being viewed as a traditional shamanic practice. David showed how previous frames of inquiry had been focused on the outcomes of mediumship and shamanism respectively, rather than the processes of developing the skills required to achieve these outcomes. David proposed instead that an apprenticeship model would promise to reveal new perspectives and allow for a more integrated exploration of shamanic practices.

Maria Nita Dennis-Jones (Open University) looked at 'The Climate and Transition Movements as New Religious Movements'. Maria profiled the Climate and Transition movements and argued that although some movements of personal and social transformation may be secular at their core, cross-sectioning these from a reli-

gious studies perspective can reveal new or neglected perspectives. She concluded that secularity may still be viewed as stagnant and monolithic and that new forms of secular religiosity could prove its due departure or distancing from Enlightenment rationalism.

Panel 2, the afternoon panel, titled 'Emotions, Identity and Religions' consisted of five speakers. It was chaired by Professor Douglas Davies who encouraged open discussions centred on the ten minute presentations given by each panel participant.

Professor Eleanor Nesbitt (University of Warwick) began this session with 'A Sikh Spectrum: emotion and identity in the Panth'. Nesbitt analyzed the creative tensions that exist within the Sikh community (Panth) in late modernity as a result of what she terms intersecting emotional regimes. She held that the challenge for many modern Sikhs is to hold different cultural identities in creative balance, itself a departure from older Sikh understandings of life as progressing through sequential phases of social and spiritual development. Professor Nesbitt identified the ways in which these tensions can be utilized productively as to create a functional balance.

Valerie DeMarinis (Uppsala University) provided the session with the paper 'Emotional responses and psychological consequences related to meaning-making rituals' function and/or dysfunction after refugee relocation: some examples from the Swedish context'. This presentation explored the effects of adapting diagnoses and treatment responses to the challenges faced by refugees relocated to Sweden in maintaining effective social functioning.

Her findings suggest that there is a developing awareness among health-care professionals of the need to respond effectively to expectations engendered in refugees by their perceptions of Western professionalism, as failure to appreciate and address those expectations can lead to stress, heightened feelings of abandonment and isolation. DeMarinis says that official administrative procedures can, of themselves, operate as a form of ritual that raises expectations in ways that officials themselves may be unaware of, or may not have been trained to respond to and manage effectively. In this way, supposedly neutral procedures can operate in ways akin to religious rituals, in heightening or even creating expectations that then go unmet.

Robert Segal (University of Aberdeen) gave a presentation titled 'The integration of belief emotion, and body in religion, as illustrated by the case of William James'. Segal addressed James' understanding of the relationship between intellect (which relates to belief and mind), and emotion and body (which relate to ritual and the physical). Using the example of how people hold the beliefs they do due to emotion rather than intellect, James emotionalises the intellect, arguing that emotion stems from the intellect and the mind, which ultimately come from the body. Segal concluded with James' argument that religious beliefs are 'real' and 'true' objectively because of the emotions that they yield.

Continuing with the role that emotions play in religion and identity, Barnabas Palfrey (University of Oxford), in his presentation titled 'Some theological reflections on emotions' argued that not all emotions are communicable. Religion, he said, appears

to orchestrate emotions, cultivating certain emotions while discouraging others. Thus, Palfrey argues that religious discourse symbolises power in discourse.

'The Role of Emotion in Mixed-Faith Families' by Elisabeth Arweck (University of Warwick) outlined the aims and methods of a research project she is currently involved with which aims to explore the religious identity formation of young people in 28 mixed-faith families, including Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. She placed the study in a robust theoretical framework, relating to Hervieu-Léger's study of religion as a chain of memory with its close links between memory and emotions, and to the developing sociology of emotions. A detailed overview of recent developments in the sociology of emotions emphasised the view that emotions should not be dismissed as irrational; rather they are seen to make a valuable contribution to an understanding of the social. With regard to religion, emotions are important, in processes and procedures, that is to say in rituals and festivals. In applying these concepts to the mixed faith families in the study, Arweck concluded, saying that there was some evidence of a wish to pass on the religion despite the parents' lack of emotional ties to their religion and that the transmission process often was involved the grandparents rather than the parents.

Finally, Professor James Beckford (University of Warwick) was kind enough to stand in for Eileen Barker, who could not be with us due to illhealth. He presented the keynote lecture on 'The return of Public Religion? A critical assessment of a popular claim'. Beckford questioned the idea that religion is re-appearing in the public sphere. He traces this view back to the

proposition put forward by Casanova, namely that public religion was undergoing resurgence and that secularisation was thus not a necessary part of modernisation. Beckford argues that Casanova's propositions are not relevant to the situation in the UK. The suggestion that religion was previously assigned to the private sphere was not true in the UK and thus the idea that religion became de-privatised was also not relevant to the UK. Beckford argued that the British government has taken the initiative to move religion into the public sphere and that this can be seen in the many government publications which focus on faith, faith-based, or the faith sector. In fact, Beckford maintained that the government seems to promote a generic faith, an all purpose faith, which serves its purpose of developing community cohesion. Beckford concludes with the proposition that on the one hand religion has never been absent from the public sphere in the UK, so the claim of its re-emergence is not justified, and on the other hand its place in the public sphere owes much to the fact that the British government has found it politically expedient to promote 'faith' and develop partnerships with faith-based organisations.

We would like to express our warm appreciation for having been given bursaries for attendance as well as further gratitude for the support that the BASR never fails in showing post-graduate students.

Ann Casson (Warwick Institute of Education), David Wilson (University of Edinburgh), Maria Nita Dennis-Jones (Open University), and Amy Whitehead (Open University).

## Cardiff University International Workshop on Genealogy and History in South Asia

The Cardiff 'Genealogy and History' workshop was held from the 26th to the 29th of May 2010, at St Michael's College, Llandaff. It was organised as part of a three-year research project entitled 'The History of Genealogy, the Genealogy of History: Family and the Narrative Construction of the Significant Past in Early South Asia'. The project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and is being conducted by James Hegarty and Simon Brodbeck within the School of Religious and Theological Studies, Cardiff University, in association with the Cardiff University Centre for the History of Religion in Asia.

Some workshop participants, arriving a few days early, were able to attend the first Sir William Jones lecture, a biennial public lecture instituted as part of the new Cardiff University Centre. The inaugural event was a double-header: Michael Franklin of Swansea University gave a learned biographical guide to the early experiences of William Jones in India in the eighteenth century, and Jonathan Silk of Leiden University spoke on J.J. Jones, who worked in the Classics Department at Aberystwyth University in the early twentieth century and produced an important translation of the Buddhist Sanskrit *Mahavastu*.

The workshop's call for papers invited 'abstracts on the topics of genealogy, historiography, and narrative approaches to the past in pre-modern South Asia, across any and all religious traditions, on the basis of textual and epigraphic sources'. As things turned out, the range of sources utilised by the participants was wider than this rubric might suggest, for the workshop included papers focusing on royal genealogi-

cal art in the Mughal court (Corinne Lefèvre), and on changing modes of genealogical awareness in the Himalayan land of Sirmur in the very recent past (Arik Moran). Several other papers mentioned materials from beyond South Asia by way of comparison; many of the themes and topics raised were not geographically specific, a fact underlined on the Friday evening in an after-dinner speech by Sioned Davies, based around readings from the *Mabinogion* and including a section of the list of names in 'How Culhwch won Olwen'.

In all, twenty papers were presented and discussed, including two by scholars who unfortunately could not attend. There were clusters of papers on late Vedic texts, on Buddhist texts, on Sanskrit 'epics' and Puranas, and on epigraphic sources. Four papers, each beginning a day of the workshop, were designated keynote papers, and will be summarised briefly below.

Alf Hildebeitel (George Washington University, USA): 'Between history and divine plan: the *Mahabharata*'s royal patriline in context'. This paper focused on the *Mahabharata* characters Ganga and Satyawati, the two successive wives of King Shantanu. Ganga is a river goddess come to earth from heaven for a specific purpose, and Satyawati is the product of a king's ejaculation whilst out hunting (it was swallowed and brought to term by a fish, then the infant was delivered and adopted by a fisherman). Though they never meet, these two women combine to set up the narrative leading to the great war at Kurukshetra, and in doing so they function within a mythic past that combines genealogical history with the story of a divine plan work-

ing through human affairs.

John Strong (Bates College, USA): 'The Buddha as a lineage terminator or transformer'. This paper sketched a typology of Buddhist lineage. The Buddha's royal line, traced from King Ikshvaku, ended when the Shakyas were massacred by King Vidudabha, but the Buddha had already led a defection from the royal function to the monastic, where descent is traced from teacher to pupil. Other series of succession are seen in the Buddha's past lives as narrated in the Jataka stories, and in the afterlife of the Buddha's body as a multitude of separate relics tracked through time and space. Further, the Buddha was one of a series of Buddhas, all of whom had karmic prehistories, some of which are said to have interacted in times past.

Richard Salomon (University of Washington, USA): 'Reading between the lines of inscriptional genealogies'. This paper introduced David Henige's notion of 'collateral suppression', and emphasised the distinction between a genealogy and a king-list. It discussed problems of royal succession in the kingdoms of the Guptas and of the Western Kshatras in the first millennium CE, as suggested by combining epigraphic, numismatic, and literary sources. The smooth succession described by Gupta inscriptions is belied by the coins and the stories of reigning brothers unmentioned in the inscriptional record. In the case of the Western Kshatras, the coins suggest that brothers reigned successively in each generation, but the inscriptions mention only one king per generation.

Greg Bailey (La Trobe University, Australia): 'Purana *panchalakshana* as genealogy

and *Jatipurana*'. This paper began by emphasising the extent to which the generic definition of a Purana (as a text containing five specific types of material) is oriented around different kinds of significant functional precursor (as Manu of the world, as great king of the world, or as king of a certain place or family). Attention then turned to the role played by Puranic narrative in explaining and smoothing over problems of succession, particularly in relation to class status. A narrative from the Markandeya Purana (chapters 66–70) was examined in detail, in which the apparent rise of a commoner to royal rank receives an elaborate explanation in terms of a past fall from that rank, and in terms of the protagonists' previous births.

The workshop brought together specialists on different periods, different types of source materials, and different religious traditions, uniting them under a common thematic focus. As exemplified in the foregoing summaries, the notion of genealogy was understood broadly, to include not only lines of familial descent, but also lines of pedagogical transmission, lines of ownership of any precious object (e.g. *Syamantaka* jewel, relic of the Buddha, royal sceptre), lines of karmic connection between one life and another, and series of holders of a cosmic role (e.g. Buddhas, Jinas, Manus, *avatars*). All of these lineage types are ways of conceiving the present in some specific relation to the extended past, and fulfil complex explanatory, legitimatory, and/or aesthetic functions in relation to the present.

Participants agreed that the workshop had been a fruitful opportunity to consider and discuss sections of the historical materials that are often passed over because, con-

sisting largely of lists of names, they may seem rather uninteresting at first glance. The consideration and discussion afforded by the workshop made it clear that these are present in the sources as important collections of human resources for building meaningful life-worlds.

The proceedings of the workshop will be

published in due course, as a special issue of the Equinox journal *Religions of South Asia*. For further details of the research project, and for abstracts of the papers presented at the workshop, see <http://blogs.cf.ac.uk/historyofgenealogy/>.

Simon Brodbeck  
Cardiff University

**AUDTRS (Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies) AGM  
2/3 September 2010.**

In spite of the summer sunshine and Liverpool Hope's very warm hospitality, there was a definite chill in the air at the AUDTRS (Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies) AGM on Thursday/Friday 2/3 September 2010. Those present at this year's meeting – addressed by representatives of BASR (British Association for the Study of Religion), the BPA (British Philosophical Association) AHUG (Arts and Humanities User Group) and two University Vice Chancellors – were left in no doubt that we have moved into an period of unprecedented challenge in the Humanities as a whole and TRS (Theology and Religious Studies) in particular. More than one person made reference to the idea of a 'wake up call'.

Professor Gerald Pillay, Vice Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University, reminded us of how far the idea of a University education as an end in itself – famously set out by Cardinal Newman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century - differs from the unapologetically utilitarian aims of the present Government. Professor Robin Osborne from AHUG pointed to the failure of the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) and RCUK (Research

Council UK) to resist pressure to tailor arts and humanities research to an impact agenda that has very little or nothing to do with concepts or concerns integral to the arts and the humanities themselves. Helen Beebee, Director of the BPA, reminded us of the recent closure of Middlesex University's highly acclaimed Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy; clearly, the much vaunted notion of 'excellence' alone will not save us either. The disappearance of many smaller departments of Religious Studies is old news of course but now there is talk of older Universities 'restructuring' humanities into larger units in which distinctive reference to TRS – and perhaps not just references - will disappear. There are on-going strategic relocations – most recently Bangor University's withdrawal from TRS - and there is no sign of the shrinkage halting. Even though the government may seemed concerned on a general level about finding ways to halt what it sees as the radicalisation of young British Muslims, this guarantees very little in terms of investment in TRS in Universities. And without the teaching of Sanskrit, biblical Hebrew, patristic theology, Asian cultural traditions, Arabic or a range of other fundamental dis-

ciplines in University contexts, how can we safeguard what Professor Douglas Davies suggested are some absolutely vital safe spaces for serious, informed engagement between different cultures? In fact it is clear that our subject area/s are set about with perils in the present situation: The government's need to be seen to be cutting expenditure whilst not alienating its relatively fragile power base leaves the humanities in the HE sector looking very vulnerable. The Universities are forced to respond, taking strategic decisions to increase investment in STEM subjects to keep their heads above water. And, after all, who actually cares if TRS disappears from University Curricula?

What sense can we make of this sometimes grim picture? Talking to a young marketing graduate, I asked her what she thought. Echoing a view heard at the AUDTRS meeting she said that there are so many competing interests and concerns available today that no one can assume that their particular area of expertise or their particular passion or product will recommend itself without assistance. We cannot assume, any longer, that the public will recognise our God-given right to teach about God, religion or the meaning of life. Professor Dianne Willcocks (formerly VC of York St John University) had much the same message though her mood was considerably more upbeat – and looking at what she had achieved in ten years at York St John, this was hardly surprising! Her message was that there are bad things about the present situation but there are also opportunities. If we value our subjects we need to raise our profile and change the culture within which they have started to languish. Of course, what happens in the future will be to some extent, down to

luck. Liverpool Hope and York St John Universities have benefitted from VCs who take a lively interest in TRS. If the VC of your university harbours prejudices against Christianity or religion, it will make it harder to keep a hold in the present climate. Some University departments of Theology may be well placed to develop partnerships with Church and Cathedral or to build imaginative connections with the local community that refer to its Christian heritage. Some may not. Critical approaches are probably harder to sell but, even so, Professor Willcocks reckoned it could be done, describing a public lecture series she had set up taking on controversial personalities and issues with some public profile, thereby drawing attention to the relevance of a University's concern with a variety of traditions we might call 'religious'.

This is not, of course, to suggest that the answers to our present dilemma are simple. If you devote your time and energy to establishing and maintaining partnerships in the community, do you have enough time and energy to support or encourage the range and levels of teaching and research that make sense and give context to such partnerships, not to speak of achieving success in the REF (Research Excellence Framework)? Does this all simply lead to the tail of public opinion or of political fashion wagging the dog of serious intellectual endeavour? Yet even if we know what it is we want to communicate, in today's climate we clearly cannot assume people will be prepared to pay for it. First of all, to be effective in safeguarding the subject areas, we need to try to find out about our potential students or other 'stake holders', their needs and expectations. If we frighten them off with theoretical overload or moral disapproval, for example,



they will simply go somewhere else and do something different. And we can be quite certain that the government will not waste any effort trying to pay for a service neither they nor their potential voters can see as relevant.

AUDTRS cannot turn the flood tide all by itself but it might be one place to begin planning what we're going to do in a worsening situation. The good news seems to me to be that in this organisation, there are people who do care and are prepared to take a lead. But there is a need for much wider awareness and effectiveness. First of all, of course, we do need to be proactive – being active in the defence of colleagues under threat is an obvious job for AUDTRS, but also taking the lead when it comes to the development of new policies. Developing new benchmarking standards for taught Masters' level degrees might not seem very sexy, but this kind of work could make us more visible amongst our academic colleagues and put us in a position to lead the way rather than simply trail along behind. Diane Willcocks suggested

that we might also try something as simple as working a little harder to explain what it is we do and why we think it's important to our colleagues in the interests of building solidarity. Helen Beebee told us that in Australia the association of professional philosophers had actively set about courting the interest of the press, arranging media events in which journalists were paired up with philosophers in order to engage with them and answer their questions.

It is clear that AUDTRS has some potential to coordinate and provide a focus for all the various interested associations – there were also representatives at the meeting from the Philosophy and Religious Studies Subject Centre. The bottom line however, is that more people need to get involved more actively and even more fundamentally, more people need to put pressure on their departments and schools to pay the yearly subscription. Without even this basic level of investment in our future, we might as well resign ourselves to being washed away in our sleep!

Alison Jasper  
University of Stirling

### **R3D: Understanding Religious Rights & Religious Discrimination**

A potential threat to the quality of multidisciplinary dialogue between legal scholarship and broader study of religion in the difficulty non-law students experience in conceptualizing key legal materials.

Key to understanding the 21st century developments in the field are the reported cases of the courts of England and Wales, in particular the appellate courts. Within the two most significant areas - religious rights and religious discrimination - the courts have considered issues such as the wearing of Christian religious symbols in the workplace (Ewajda), Hindu and Sikh cremation practices (Ghai), admission policies by Jewish schools (JFS), and accommodation of varieties of Muslim dress in school uniform codes (Begum).

The Religious Rights and Religious Discrimination project (R3D) is an online open access Commentary aimed at religious studies students and scholars. It aims to identify and contextualize key cases from the law of England and Wales in relation to Religious Rights and Religious Discrimination. The Commentary is specifically but not exclusively aimed at students of religion who do not have a legal background, enhancing their understanding of the key decisions. The Commentary therefore enhances student learning for researchers, reviewers and readers. To access the developing commentaries, go to: <https://wiki.brookes.ac.uk/display/r3d/Home>

Javad Gohari,, Editor R3D,

## TEACHING MATTERS

### **Warwick Research on Materials Used in English Schools to Teach about World Religions**

In April 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (now the Department for Education) requested bids from research teams for a study of materials used in schools to teach about world religions in schools of all types in England. Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU: [www.warwick.ac.uk/go/wreru](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/go/wreru)) received the contract for the study, which was published in January 2010 as part of the Action Plan for RE agreed by the DCSF and the RE Council. This interview includes the suggestion that BASR should join forces with the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education in order to improve the quality of resources for schools.

How did the research on materials used to teach about world religions come about?

The DCSF put out an invitation to tender for this research to which WRERU responded with a bid. The research was quite complex, since the DCSF wanted to cover all types of schools including independent and maintained, primary and secondary as well as faith-based and non faith-based schools in England. They also wanted the research done and the report written in just over a year.

#### **How was the research project organised?**

We needed to get a sense of what kind of material schools were using in a quantitative way, so we designed a survey using a questionnaire. In order to get much closer

detail of what schools are doing we chose to do twenty case studies, ten in primary schools and ten in secondary schools. In order to include the diversity of schools, we included some independent schools and ten faith-based schools - most maintained but some within the independent sector, and some primary and some secondary.

At the same time we needed to review the quality of materials used in schools. Thus we appointed a panel of academic referees, each a specialist in one of the six religions specified in the DCSF invitation to tender. These were leading academics from UK universities. We also appointed a panel of faith consultants, each an insider from one of the faiths specified in the invitation to tender. Each one was from one particular tradition, and each was selected because of his or her expertise in education (some of these were also university academics in Religious Studies). In the Buddhist case we actually used two faith consultants, since the first one went on retreat during phase two of the review process. We also appointed three classroom-based experts in RE, one to cover Key Stages 1 and 2, one to cover Key Stage 3 and the third to cover Key Stage 4 and post-16. NATRE helped us with the selection of these experts. Altogether we assembled a team of 29 researchers and reviewers.

For the organisation of the reviews of the material, we had two review coordinators

and a third person appointed because of his expertise in electronic and web-based resources for RE. A fourth person liaised with publishers and distributed materials to reviewers. There were three stages to the review. In the first, the reviewers looked at a selection of books and websites identified by the team, who had already engaged in a wide ranging audit of resources drawing on many sources. The review coordinators and ICT specialist in consultation with the DCSF designed templates for use by the reviewers and there were distinct versions of these for the professional experts and for the academic experts and faith consultants to use. Thus, for example, copies of a Key Stage 3 book on Islam would go to the academic expert on Islam, to the faith consultant on Islam and to the Key Stage 3 professional expert. Each would complete a template reviewing the quality of the resource and its illustrations or photographs, whether a book or a website. Phase 1 allowed us to get feedback on the use of the templates and provided a substantial amount of material for analysis.

In phase 2 of the review we had information both from the survey and case studies about which books, websites and other materials were being used in schools. Our second sample of materials was able to draw on this evidence and include some resources that had been omitted from phase 1, for example a limited selection of post-16 material and books drawing on more than one religion. These materials were acquired and sent out to the reviewers who then reviewed the material and completed their templates. We also discovered a good deal of further information about the use of materials – for example the large number of teachers who ‘pick and mix’ from a wide variety of resources in

putting material together.

In phase 3 of the review, an analytical review of all the completed templates from the panel of experts and consultants was undertaken by the review coordinators and IT specialist; the bank of completed templates provided the source material in writing their report.

The reviews at all key stages showed the importance of the teacher’s insight in making fullest use of available books and websites. There are strong implications for training and continuing professional development (CPD) here. Teachers in primary schools especially need a professional understanding of RE to guide their selection and their use, especially since advice on the use of books is not usually built into the texts. Key Stage 3 books reflect the shift to the traditional kind of textbook used in secondary schools. Very few of these books were helpful in promoting independent learning. Most Key Stage 4 books were examination texts. There were questions of quality and depth with some of these. Text was an area of concern across the key stages. Sometimes the text was too dense with too many long paragraphs. Sometimes the text was over-complex and the design and layout made it hard to follow. Sometimes a high level of literacy was demanded by the texts. Illustrations often were not used effectively as learning resources and were not integrated into the text. With illustrations there were occasionally issues of gender, ethnicity – for example, the failure to show Christianity as a global faith - stereotyping and the insensitive choice of visuals and captions. There is much scope to use visuals as learning resources.

At Key Stages 1 and 2, positive contributions to community cohesion were seen in the capacity of stories to explore shared values and to provide insight into the lives of communities. Books which allow children to engage with their peers on the page were also felt to help with community cohesion objectives. Reviewers felt that some Key Stage 3 and 4 materials imposed structures and issues upon the material rather than allowing the logic of each religion to determine how issues might be expressed. At Key Stages 3 and 4, for example, issues identified as controversial within religions were usually those commonly addressed in GCSE courses relating to ethical issues. On the whole, textbooks tend to consider issues from the perspective of different faiths rather than between or among religions. With regard to websites, only a minority, usually those produced by educators, introduced interactivity into the sites. Some sites produced by religious groups had a proselytising agenda of which teachers and students need to be aware.

The academic experts and faith community consultants submitted very similar reviews. While noting that many books and series give very positive messages about the religions, the number of the errors and points at which criticisms can be made in the coverage of religions is a concern. The lack of attention to detail and accuracy does not present a positive model of scholarship to young people. Many resources failed to convey a sense of the deeper significance of religion in the lives of the believer. Inaccuracies suggest a need for authors and publishers to consult with experts, scholars and knowledgeable practitioners. External influences such as exam requirements rather than the internal logic of the relig-

ions often structured the presentation of the religions in materials.

Taken together, the reviewers valued accurate, coherent, comprehensive and authentic books and websites. They hope that publishers, authors and web site designers will present religions as internally diverse, having spiritual depth, being transformative, living and contemporary, with contributions to make to present society. They felt that religions should be presented as intellectually challenging and that respect and fairness of the different religions should be shown and that there should be some emphasis on the relationship between religions.

I came away with the view that we need a mechanism for linking cutting edge scholars of religion with excellent teachers who could form partnerships for writing high quality, imaginatively constructed texts for students of different ages. Some kind of partnership between the British Association for the Study of Religions and the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education would be particularly beneficial.

#### **How did you organise the case studies?**

From our Warwick team, we appointed two co-ordinators, one to be the overall coordinator and to deal with primary schools, and the other to coordinate the secondary case studies. The other five members of the case study team were Associate Fellows in WRERU - all former or current doctoral students, and all experienced teachers or teacher educators - plus our ICT specialist who was also a skilled teacher educator. The case study team met in order to design interview schedules and a common approach. The team also met half way through the case study exercise to report

interim findings and to discuss issues concerned with the writing up the individual school reports. A massive amount of data emerged from the case studies which we hope to analyse and publish in a book next year. Much of this was in addition to data specifically on materials being used and how they were used.

**Give me several examples of the sort of information that came out of the case studies?**

The case study researchers found four main approaches to RE – often found in combination - in the schools visited. The team classified these approaches as ‘world religions’, ‘scriptural or textual’, ‘experiential’ and ‘philosophical and ethical’. Experiential approaches in primary schools might require a greater use of religious artefacts. Scriptural approaches require a choice of key texts and stories. More information-based material was characteristic of world religions approaches, while philosophical and ethical approaches tended to draw on current materials from television and newspapers. The team found that learning styles and literacy needs, thinking skills, creativity, and technological innovation, also influenced the way teachers taught and how they selected material.

With regard to community cohesion, principles were often not explicitly stated in materials or in policies and RE lessons. However, teachers and school leaders recognized social and citizenship reasons for learning about different faiths. Responses to the community cohesion agenda in schools included learning about differences, modelling community within the school, engaging in partnerships and so-

cial action in the community and also helping to transform the life chances of disadvantaged pupils.

**Could you pick out some findings from the survey?**

The survey emphasised the importance of non-print forms of materials. Outside visits to places of worship and visitors to the school from faith communities were particularly valued. Teachers drew heavily on the web to generate resources for teaching and tended to put their own materials together from a variety of sources. The promotion of community cohesion was not generally a top priority. The key factors determining which resources teachers decide to use were the individual teacher’s own personal and professional judgement and also the price of the materials. There is a clear need for more continuing professional development for those RE subject leaders in secondary and primary schools who have not had the benefit of professional training and qualifications in RE.

**Could you highlight a few of the key recommendations from the report?**

The general tenor of the recommendations is that we need more teamwork in the production of RE materials. We need the specialist knowledge and understanding of academics, the insight and experience of faith community members who are well acquainted with education, and we need the expertise of religious education professionals to work together to write print material or produce electronic resources for children and young people. (I have already mentioned how some kind of partnership between BASR and NATRE could be beneficial).

The team felt that schools should recog-

nise that an increase in knowledge about different religions itself constitutes an important part of education for community cohesion. School leaders and RE teachers should consider developing community partnerships between the school and local faith communities.

The development of teachers' subject knowledge is a real priority. Meetings between RE advisers, universities and scholars from faith traditions need to be facilitated in order to identify ways of working together to support this.

Initial teacher training and CPD opportunities need to be provided to enhance subject knowledge of specialist and non-specialist teachers. Training opportunities should also be extended to faith community members to visit schools or who host visits from pupils.

RE teachers and producers of RE resources should ensure pupils learn about the spirituality or theology of religions as well as their practice, history and moral teachings. Policy makers and curriculum developers need to investigate ways in which an interest in learning about religions at a deeper level might be renewed in upper secondary education.

The full DCSF report, together with an executive summary, appendices, a research brief (summary) and an audit of materials published since 2000, are available as free downloads from <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wie/research/wreru/research/completed/dcsf>

Professor Robert Jackson  
University of Warwick.

Bill Gent  
National Association of Teachers of Religious  
Education

## **When examination arrangements and religious festivals collide**

### **Discussion paper**

During some exams administration work that I did a short while ago at a UK university the issue arose of some students requiring alternative exam dates due to the demands of religious festivals interfering with their original exam dates. This document is a draft series of remarks around some issues in this area, to stimulate discussion.

It is probably important to identify early on in the process those religions which have some element of (a) a devotee can't work on particular days (or dates) due to religious constraints, and (b) religions where prayer, fasting etc practices on certain days (or dates) might have exam-

negative effects; such as if taking an exam during a long fast the thought processes would likely be less effective than in 'normal' conditions, and thus the candidate might be at some cognitive disadvantage compared to times/dates when they were not indulging in the religious practice.

There is not very much information to be found on policies and practices from purely UK universities, so I have looked worldwide to compare practices elsewhere: *Stockholm University* Regulations (website) state:

If a student cannot sit an examination at the stipulated time... for religious reasons *and has reported this to the department*

*well in advance*, the student shall be offered another time for the examination or an alternative task. The alternative examination shall, however, be as similar to the regular one as possible, both as concerns point in time and content

(emphasis added <http://www.su.se/pub/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=3925&a=13238>).

This raises the twin factors of advance notice to the university authority and the equality of treatment for students.

While issues such as student nationality, age and gender are fixed (ignoring for the moment the very small percentages of students who undergo gender reassignment while studying), it simply cannot be assumed that a student will arrive at university and still have the same religion at the end of their studies that they held at the beginning, since 'Freshers' induction events and University religious groups are well known for recruitment and conversions of students during time at University, in some cases keen-to-almost-aggressive recruitment policies are adopted.

As part of the university remit to promote intellectual and personal development in their students it should not be remotely surprising that the 'standard student' (if such an entity exists) will arrive at university at age 18 as a rather naive teenager perhaps with no religious beliefs, or simply holding those (if any) which were present in their upbringing, and leave at 21 as a hopefully intelligent young person bearing a degree and/or vocational skills, some more life experiences than they had before and a considerably more rounded view of the world, which may well include having acquired some form of religious faith.

For university administrators to be dogmatic and inflexible about religious conversion or uptake of a religion in students would be both negative and possibly illegal discrimination in the UK, since 'religion held' is not a quantitative or immovable measure, and a conversion in the week before an exam is probably the same as a lifelong-held faith, in the eyes of the Law. It would make for an interesting and potentially damaging (to the university) test case on discrimination issues.

not happen on the same date each year, for example Ramadan, so it is essential to have an up-to-date list with information predicting well into the future which d

It may be possible to set a deadline for religious observance matters to be submitted to Administration teams (and for the university to state their intention, not their promise to accommodate this, wherever possible), perhaps by week four of the autumn term, and for the university to indicate that religious conversions which are made after that date, and late conversions which require certain days and dates to be exam-free may not be possible to accommodate. It is likely that this announcement could flag up and thus catalyse a rash of conversions to any faith which has a particularly relevant "day off" in the exam period, of course.

There are many religions which have 'movable feasts' in that their festivals are related to a non-Western calendar, so dates may be problematic.

There is also a major problem in data-gathering (and issues under the Data Protection Act) in that many current university registration forms do not ask for 'religion held', and there are legal

implications in holding that data. It would also be (probably) contentious to hold student-specific information on their missing exams due to religious grounds, if that information (or even that memory of the event-s) is accessible to anyone later writing an employment reference, as stating it (or implying it) might be perceived as a negative reference.

There is also the question on whom the burden of proof rests, since most religions do not offer 'card-carrying' membership. *Sydney University of Technology* (website) allow alternative exam arrangements due to "observance of Significant religious events for which the student can demonstrate ongoing personal commitment" but require from the student a "letter (on letter-head) from your minister of religion, stating that you are a regular member of the congregation and the nature of the religious commitment" (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/quality-manual/forms/religious-observance-form.doc>) This form of document is of course easily forged, and if significant numbers of students were involved it may not be possible for an administration team to have the resources to adequately check on this by contacting the religious body involved in each case, in the time available. Note also the onus being put on the *student* to provide proof.

This also highlights the problems of defining 'significant'- since to a naïve non-believer a 'minor' or 'trivial' religious event might have considerable importance to a devotee; which is where the Chaplaincy or equivalent at the university should be involved, in order to avoid accusations of religious intolerance if an arbitrary exams administration decision is made by some-

one unqualified to make judgments in the area. The University of Nottingham (website) take a different tack, merely providing a student statement form which is countersigned by staff (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/quality-manual/forms/religious-observance-form.doc>).

There is also the problem of which religion (s) you count? Publicly-recognised religions are fewer than the actual total, and for areas like Paganism (an umbrella term) and other New Religious Movements and emerging religions there are many festivals, but none recognised officially. This identifies the problem of who chooses which festivals are allowed? The New Jersey State Board of Education (website) state:

the Commissioner of Education ... is charged with the responsibility .. (to).. prepare a list of religious holidays on which it shall be mandatory to excuse a pupil. The list, however, is to be a minimum list. Boards of education, at their discretion, may add other days to the list for the schools of their districts ([http://www.mtsd.k12.nj.us/645997228861/lib/645997228861/\\_files/holidays.pdf](http://www.mtsd.k12.nj.us/645997228861/lib/645997228861/_files/holidays.pdf))

The Macalester College in the USA has a policy (website) that

It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent... It is therefore desirable that faculty inform students of all examination dates and other significant assignments or activities at the start of the semester...Holidays of obligation



are holidays during which the observant person, according to religious practice, cannot work. (<http://www.macalester.edu/rovost/documents/ReligiousHolidayPolicy.doc>)

There is also a financial element to providing such a service. The University of Massachusetts constitution (website) includes:

any student in an educational or vocational training institution...who is unable, because of his religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with an opportunity to make up such examination, study, or work requirement... provided, however, that such makeup examination or work shall not create an unreasonable burden upon such school. *No fees of any kind* shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said student such opportunity... Instructors must accept a student's assertion of the need to be absent from class for religious reasons, but students are required to notify instructors in advance that they will miss class in order to observe a religious holiday (emphasis added <http://www.umass.edu/umhome/events/religious.php>).

Since examination resits and alternative arrangements are all costly to administer and organise (for example room re-booking, staff time to prepare- and printing costs for rewritten examination scripts, extra invigilator costs, extra time to write

marking templates, comparative moderation of papers with the original exam etc) there is also a budgetary issue to consider

It would be very useful to have a list of which religions include events or circumstances where work is not allowed or where cognitive capacity might be reduced (for example during long fasts). Should the BASR initially advise universities on this?

There is a major and potentially onerous administrative burden that could arise if numerous students made 'conversions of convenience' especially so if this was to occur at short notice when (or if) a major religious festival was to be an exam constraint, and this information became known to the student body. Forewarned is forearmed so far as the calendar goes; and perhaps a University Chaplaincy should be involved in collating such information, since individual university religious make-up will dictate which (if any) of these dates require administrative involvement. There will be additional Administration costs in accommodating such needs, of course; including room bookings, and possibly alternative exam papers being written and moderated, all of which need to be budgeted for in advance.

An advisory policy needs to be drawn up as regards the vector(s) for informing students of provisions for religious conflict with exam dates, and a deadline for those affected to inform their university. The burden of proof element needs to be decided upon- do they need a letter from a minister, for example, or is self-certification sufficient? This may be something that individual universities decide upon locally.

Data Protection angles need to be ad-

dressed. The 2001 National Census exercise for 'religion held' showed how cagey some people can be about stating their religion on official forms.

Legal and Clerical advice is required to avoid possible charges of discrimination. A bad case of this would undo a lot of the positive face of ongoing university diversity

and equality work. Should BASR, as a major research group in the area of religion and with so many members involved in teaching, be the lead on this issue?

Dr Dave Evans  
Independent scholar of fringe religious and cultural history

**Review of External Examining Arrangements in the UK  
Summary of feedback from Philosophical and Religious Studies (PRS) -  
based on consultation meeting with PRS subject associations and Universities UK,  
14 September 2010**

*Principles to Inform the Development of External Examining Arrangements*

*1. Are these principles acceptable and are there other principles that should be considered?*

**Role**

*2. Are these initial ideas and the distinction between judgement and advice a helpful starting point for developing minimum expectations? Where might these initial ideas be clarified or developed to ensure that it is relevant to all institutional practices?*

There was some discussion of the extent to which it would be practical or appropriate to develop a national 'job description' – the consensus was that the proposal to develop 'minimum expectations' would be helpful, but that this would need to allow scope for variation of role as appropriate to the disciplinary/institutional context. It was however noted that it would be important for institutions to provide clear information about the extent of the role expected of a particular examiner.

It would be helpful to clarify limits as well

as expectations of the role – for example, an external examiner can advise on the comparability of standards within the discipline across the UK, but should not be expected to judge comparability of standards across disciplines within the institution.

It would be helpful to include guidance on workloads, including the maximum amount of external examining duties any individual should undertake at a time, and advice to institutions on when/how external examining duties should be distributed between a team of examiners (this practice is not very common in PRS subjects, which have many small departments/programmes). It was noted that short assessment schedules within an institution add further to the examiner's workload burden, and such pressures should be minimised as far as possible.

**Selection of External Examiners**

*3. In order to increase transparency and public confidence there should there be clear expectations about the selection processes in institutions and the processes should be publicly accessible, do you agree?*

4. *There should be a national set of generic criteria established for the appointment of external examiners, do you agree? What should be included in the criteria?*

Whilst it was agreed that greater clarity and consistency would be beneficial, there were concerns that national generic criteria could have a disproportionately restricting effect, particularly on small or emerging subject areas (including many PRS subjects) where the national 'pool' of suitably qualified external examiners is already small. As with the external examiner's role, some flexibility to account for local context will be important in order to ensure the system is feasible and fit for purpose.

#### ***Induction and Training***

5. *Should all institutions provide induction for external examiners who are new to the institution, and training and development for first time external examiners? Should a common core programme and template for induction and training be developed?*

It was agreed that induction would be helpful, but that this is most effective at departmental level; and could be supplemented with more 'generic' support provided by the examiner's home institution. It was further noted that much of the additional support for examiners new to the role could be effectively delivered via written materials (perhaps online) rather than (resource-intensive) face-to-face training; supplemented perhaps with a peer support or mentoring network. It was recommended that all new external examiners should be provided with copies of previous examiners' reports.

#### ***Recognition***

6. *The importance of this role should be recognised by all Universities and institutions with degree awarding powers in promotion procedures, including clear and demonstrable recognition of the value to the institution, the subject and the sector, do you agree? How else should it be recognised?*

Lack of recognition for the role was agreed to be a difficulty with the current system – it was felt that whilst universities are keen to attract good external examiners (although it was noted that appointments were often made on the basis of research prestige rather than learning and teaching expertise – see also §3), they often do not support (and may even discourage) their own staff from taking on external examiner duties. The role of external examiner currently carries little weight with regard to promotions, for example – reflecting the wider dilemma that academics are 'paid to teach, but rewarded for research'. There is little incentive to become an external examiner beyond reliance on goodwill and commitment to one's discipline community – which can then be (mis)perceived as 'undue cosiness' of the system.

It was agreed that greater recognition for the role would therefore be valuable. It was also noted that an important element of recognition is that of proper acknowledgement and accommodation for the workload involved (see also §2).

#### ***Reporting***

7. *Should there be a national template for external examiners reports?*

8. *Should there be a specific section written for students and should this be made available to all students within*

**9<sup>th</sup> Conference of the  
European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies (ENCBS)**

**Hope: A Form of Delusion?  
Buddhist and Christian Perspectives**

**June 30<sup>th</sup> – July 4<sup>th</sup> 2011, Liverpool Hope University, U.K.**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

The theme of the 9th ENCBS conference is: Hope: A Form of Delusion? Buddhist and Christian Perspectives. Invited speakers will address five themes: Hope and the Critique of Hope; Hope in Pastoral Situations; Embodiments of Hope; Hope in Situations of Hopelessness; Eschatologies of Hope. Speakers include: Professor Sathi Clarke; Professor Mitsuya Dake, Professor Richard Gombrich; Professor Anthony Kelly; Dr Sallie King, Dr Hirosha Munehiro Niwano and Peggy Morgan. In addition, papers are invited for the following open sessions:

**Friday afternoon (1<sup>st</sup> August): Forum for Postgraduate Research Students and Recognised Researchers.** Proposals for academic papers from postgraduate research students and other recognised researchers are invited for this forum. These papers need not be on the theme of the conference but should relate to Buddhist-Christian Studies. Parallel sessions will be arranged if enough proposals are accepted.

**Friday evening (1<sup>st</sup> August): Forum for Practitioners and Activists.** Proposals for non-academic workshops or presentations are invited for this forum. These should relate to Buddhist-Christian encounter and could focus on activities such as: socially engaged initiatives; meditation programmes; artistic encounters. It is hoped that Buddhist and Christian communities/groups involved in Buddhist-Christian encounter will offer presentations on their work in this session.

**Sunday afternoon (3<sup>rd</sup> August): Hope and Buddhist-Christian Relations** Proposals are invited for academic papers on the theme of 'Hope and Buddhist-Christian Relations'. The title of the session is specific but sufficiently open to allow for diversity of theme. Parallel sessions will run if enough proposals are accepted.

It is expected that papers and presentations will not last longer than 20 minutes with 10 minutes for feedback and discussion.

Further details of the conference programme are published on the Network's website: <http://www.buddhist-christian-studies.org/>

Proposals should include: your name, address and academic position/ affiliation; session for which the paper/presentation is submitted; title of paper; a synopsis of the content of the paper that demonstrates its relevance to the theme of the session.

**Proposals for the consideration of the Network's Management Committee should be e-mailed to Dr Elizabeth Harris, President of the Network, by December 31<sup>st</sup> 2010: [harrise@hope.ac.uk](mailto:harrise@hope.ac.uk)**

*the institution, and made available to any external party on request?*

*9. Should all reports and all analysis of reports be shared with student representatives?*

Concerns were raised about sharing the full report with students, not least because this gives a misleading impression of the external examiner's comments as the 'final word' on the subject, rather than as one stage in an ongoing dialogue with the department (and one element of a wider quality assurance process). It was felt that a separate report prepared for students would be more appropriate.

It was however agreed that the system should include some commitment to informing and involving students – it was observed that currently students often know very little about the external examining process.

*10. Should all institutions publish names of all external examiners, their job titles and institutions? What would be the most effective way of ensuring that this information is easily accessible?*

There were mixed feelings about publishing examiners' details. On the one hand this was seen to be helpful to ensure transparency, and is already practised in many institutions. On the other hand there were concerns that this information would be misused by students wishing to contact the examiner directly (which would be an additional disincentive to undertake the role, cf. §6) – measures would need to be introduced in order to prevent this.

### **Raising Concerns**

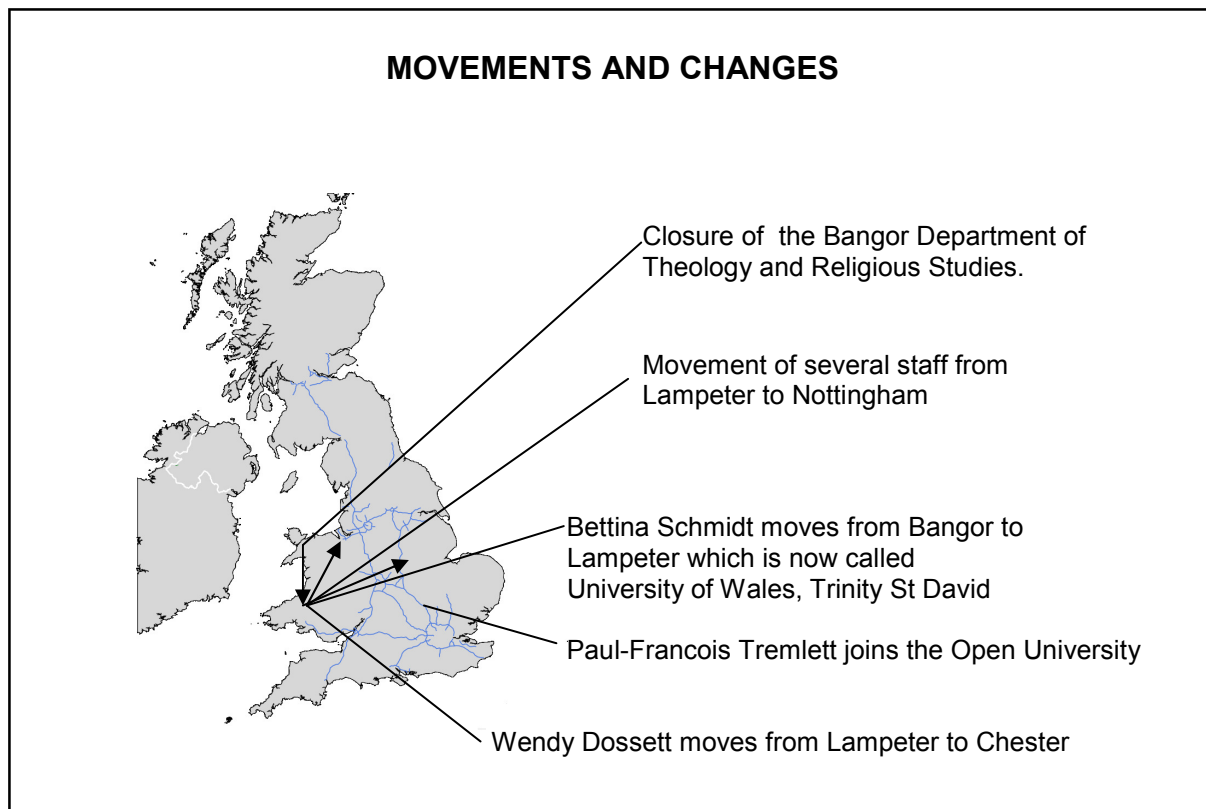
*11. Institutions should have in place transparent internal procedures for considering and dealing with robust discussion of issues and concerns which include the possibility of making a report direct to the head of the institution? Do you agree and what else might these procedures include?*

*12. Should there be a clear and independent mechanism for external examiners to use once they have exhausted internal procedures? Does the QAA Causes for Concern procedure represent an appropriate mechanism?*

In general, it was agreed that there is very little evidence of systematic problems with the current external examining system, nor of widespread public concern about it (from students, parents or employers), and that therefore any recommendations for improvement should be focused on improving transparency rather than any disproportionately radical overhaul of existing systems. It was also emphasised that the individual external examiner is only one part of the quality assurance process, and that the limits of the role in this regard should be made clear.

Whilst the move towards greater consistency and transparency was welcomed, it was also noted that this needs to be balanced with local flexibility in order to avoid becoming an inappropriate 'straitjacket' (e.g. national training / criteria that are not sensitive to disciplinary/ institutional context and thus not fit for purpose).

Clare Saunders  
Subject Centre for  
Philosophical and Religious Studies



### **Bangor to Trinity St David**

On September 1st four members of staff relocated from Bangor University to Lampeter, where we became part of the new University of Wales, Trinity St David. This new university was created out of the merger of Lampeter and Trinity Carmarthen and will become a predominately Humanities and Arts institution. When the VC of Trinity St David announced his intention to focus (among other subjects) on theology and religious studies, the executive of Bangor University was discussing proposals to close small units including the School of Theology and Religious Studies despite good recruitment (UG + PG) and good financial conditions. When it became known that a fight would just prolong the process but not overturn the decision, we

discussed several options and decided to contact the VC of Trinity St David. After some weeks of negotiations, HEFCW was presented with a proposal to include theology and religious studies at Bangor into the merger. In July the Council at Bangor University closed the School of Theology and Religious Studies (though students will be supported during the next three years to finish their degrees at Bangor).

The new unit at Trinity St David is called School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies. It will be the largest unit of this kind in Wales and will offer Welsh medium teaching in these subjects.

Bettina Schmidt

## DEPARTMENT REPORT

### **The Department of Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies at Liverpool Hope University**

Whilst Liverpool Hope University is one of the newest universities in the country, its history stretches back more than one hundred and fifty years, when the Church of England Diocese of Chester and the Roman Catholic Sisters of Notre Dame established separate teacher education Colleges for women. These Colleges, St. Katharine's (1844) and Notre Dame (1856) were supplemented on Merseyside when a second Catholic teacher education College, Christ's College, on a site adjacent to St. Katharine's, admitted its first students in 1965. In 1980 these three Colleges joined in an ecumenical federation that is unique in Europe.

Not surprisingly, Christian Theology has played a significant part in the University's history and it prides itself for being the location where the Jerusalem Bible was compiled. The values shaped by over 165 years by Christian principles remain important but the University embraces those of all faiths and none. As a consequence of this rich history the Department of Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies has a central place in the University, and those who attended the opening address to the AUDTRS seminar/AGM in September 2010 made by the Vice Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University would have realised the degree to which this is even a privileged and protected place. We are fortunate in these difficult times, to have a Vice Chancellor who is a Church Historian and considers Theology and the Liberal Arts to be central to the University's mission.

Situated in the Arts and Humanities Faculty we find ourselves flourishing against the tide of the Zeitgeist. A new Head of Department and Church Historian, Professor Eric Saak joined us this year and we look forward to his enthusiasm and energy taking us forward over the coming years. In addition the University has recruited Dr Jules Gomes who has recently joined us in his capacity as Dwelly-Raven Canon Theologian attached to the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool. He is an Old Testament scholar. We are promised that he will be joined by two new full-time appointments in Systematic Theology and New Testament Studies early next year. These new members of staff join an already vibrant team with diverse research profiles in the area of Christianity: Professor Camilla Burns (biblical and pastoral studies), Professor Daniel Jeyaraj (world Christianity). Dr Peter McGrail (Christian tradition, ministry and pastoral studies) and David Torevell (Christian tradition particularly liturgy, monasticism and aesthetics) are both Associate Professors. Dr Jenny Dagers teaches Christian traditions, specialising in gender and identity studies. Dr Andrew Cheatle teaches biblical studies with a specialism in Wesleyan studies.

Those of us who teach outside of Christianity recognise the University's traditional emphasis on Christian Theology and respect it. There is no conflict between the junior partner Religious Studies and Christian Theologians here. One strength of the Department is that the different academic

strands (philosophy/ethics; religious studies; theology) are held together fairly harmoniously. The Department has had at various times some luminaries in Religious Studies including John Hinnells and Ian Markham. The present team consists of Professor Ron Geaves (comparative study of religion, specialising in South Asian migrant religions, especially Islam); Professor Bernard Jackson (Jewish studies); Dr Elizabeth Harris (Buddhist Studies, religion and plurality, Buddhist-Christian relations); Professor Daniel Jeyaraj (Hinduism, World Christianity). Philosophy and Ethics are growing areas in the Department and taught by Dr Patrice Haynes and Dr Steven Shakespeare.

We are a busy team of colleagues. In addition to being research active, the Department's current BA Honours Degree in Theology and Religious Studies, was joined in September 2010, by a BA Honours Degree in Philosophy, Religion and Ethics. Students can opt either for Single Honours or Combined Honours. Next year a B.A Honours Degree in Theology will commence. In all these degrees Religious Studies will play a significant part. It is at MA level that there is a greater division between theology and religious studies. Currently the Department offers two modular MAs: Christian Theology and Religion and Society. They are interlinked in that they share common modules on critical thinking and research methods, and that students can opt to do one module from the other MA. The latter only rarely happens, in effect stratifying students into either theology or religious studies. A new and exciting venture in cross-disciplinary study, the MA in Contemporary Muslim Studies draws upon expertise in the Department, Business Studies and English. An MA in Pastoral

Theology is being developed and also one in Jewish Studies.

The Department has developed quite a vibrant Postgraduate Research profile. The University gained Research Degree Awarding Powers in June this year after many years of fruitful collaboration with the University of Liverpool. It currently has over 60 postgraduate research students, many of whom study within the four Research Centres located in the Department: The Andrew Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity; the Institute of Pastoral Theology, Centre for the Applied Study of Muslims and Islam in Britain, and the Centre for Augustinian Studies. We hope to expand these numbers, particularly in the area of religious studies.

The research strength of the religious studies side of the Department is in contemporary lived religion. Ethnographic study is encouraged. Last year a new course at third year undergraduate level was introduced, which involves each student undertaking fieldwork either in Liverpool or the area where he or she lives.

Overall, the overriding mood of the Department is one of optimism but with a realistic sense of the challenges we face over the coming years. We are buoyed by a vision that places Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies at the heart of the University's plans for the future but under no illusions concerning the demands upon us that will entail. We are a good Department now but we aspire to be among the best.

Ron Geaves and Elizabeth Harris



## TRIBUTE

### Raimon Panikkar (1918-2010)

Many prominent figures in interreligious dialogue have been either Indian or associated with India. One of these, of world-renown, was Raimon Panikkar, son of an Indian Hindu father and a Spanish Catholic mother. Educated in the West in the natural sciences, philosophy and theology, with doctorates in all three, he first discovered India during a visit at the age of 36 which reoriented his entire outlook and work. This is not the place to assess or even list the vast number of his writings, or speculate on Panikkar's lasting importance, but only to signal his death on August 26 at his home near Barcelona. Since then I have seen some American and German obituaries but not yet discovered any notice of his passing in an English publication.

Panikkar was a thinker bridging many different worlds that drew on his Indian and Spanish background, his education in different countries, his research in several disciplines, and his teaching, travels and life experience in Europe, India and America. He first attracted considerable attention through his book *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964) towards which he later took a critical, revisionist stance in its second edition (1981). Shortly after reading this book in its original version I met Panikkar in Delhi, at the Indian Philosophical Congress Meeting in 1965, and we had remained in contact ever since. For many years he moved between India and the USA where he taught first at Harvard University (1966-1971) and then at the University of California, Santa Barbara (1971-1987), before returning to live again in Spain, though travelling extensively until his very last years.

Some of his well-known books include *The Silence of God. The Answer of the Buddha* (1970), *Worship and Secular Man* (1973), *The Vedic Experience. Mantramajari. An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration* (1977), *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978), *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (1979), *The Cosmotheandric Experience. Emerging Religious Consciousness* (1993), *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom I* (1995) and, most recently, his long-awaited Gifford Lectures, *The Rhythm of Being* (2010), published twenty years after their delivery.

Panikkar's works cover such wide-ranging perspectives in theology, philosophy and the comparative study of religions that no single author could possibly do justice to them. Who could capture all the facets of the daring vision of this foremost intercultural and interreligious thinker who wrote in several European languages for over fifty years? Some good studies on particular aspects of Panikkar's thought exist, but are far too numerous to mention here. I only draw attention to the multifaceted discussions found in a volume edited by Joseph Prabhu (who knew Panikkar well), *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1996). For those interested in the theology of religions and interreligious dialogue, one of the most comprehensive studies comes from the Finnish theologian Jyri Komulainen (who only met Panikkar once), *An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar's Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Brill, Leiden/Boston: 2005). It also critically discusses many

other topics of Panikkar's large oeuvre within the larger context of a dialogue of cultures and civilizations and the challenges of pluralism. The publication of Panikkar's *Opera Omnia* in some 30 volumes is already under way in Italy, and Continuum Books is planning an English edition. For further information on Panikkar see the website [www.raimonpanikkar.org](http://www.raimonpanikkar.org).

For those who knew him, there is much more to be remembered than Panikkar's vast scholarship and signal contribu-

tion to several areas in the study of religions. Joseph Prabhu summed up well what many feel when he said that Panikkar "managed to combine the quiet dignity of a sage, the profundity of a scholar, the depth of a contemplative, and the warmth and charm of a friend in his sparkling personality". His extraordinary presence, brilliant intellect and abundant love of life will long be cherished and celebrated.

Ursula King

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM  
The Faculty of Humanities

Chair in Bahá'í Studies

## Conference Announcement

### THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON **Modern Religions and Religious Movements and the Bábí-Bahá'í Faiths**

**Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> March -  
Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular saw the birth of a number of modern religions and religious movements, a few of which became new world religions. The Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("Mormon"), the Seventh-Day Adventists, the German Templars, the Ahmadiyyah, the various shades of the *salafiyyah* in Sunni Islam, The HaBaD Hassidut in Judaism and a few other religious developments are all topics which were discussed at the previous conferences and are open to discussion in this conference. The book published following the 2000 conference – *Studies in Modern Religions and Religious Movements and the Bábí-Bahá'í Faiths* (ed. M. Sharon) was published by E.J.Brill, Leiden, 2004.

**For information please contact:**

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Chair in Bahá'í Studies,  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel.

Or by E-mail: [mrconference3@gmail.com](mailto:mrconference3@gmail.com)

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Margaret Gouin *Tibetan Rituals of Death: Buddhist Funerary Practices.* London/New York, Routledge (Critical Studies in Buddhism Series) 2010. 182 pp, index, bibliography, glossary, extensive endnotes. Hardback. £80 UK ISBN 0415566363**

The well-respected Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism series currently runs to several dozen titles, with a number more in progress. This latest book in the series is based on the doctoral thesis which Margaret Gouin recently undertook at Bristol University in the UK, and opens with the question "*what happens when a Buddhist Tibetan dies?*"

Direct and to the point! Margaret then takes us through a fascinating, convoluted and well-signposted journey involving Buddhist language and terminology, some vital background about Buddhism, how death itself is actually diagnosed in Tibetan culture, the practical and meditative preparations before death and what happens immediately after death, on spiritual, pragmatic and social levels both to the body and in the family and community. There are chapters on methods of disposal of the body, including an invaluable examination of the practice of sky burial and the many other means open to Tibetan Buddhists. As the author explains, the perception of sky burial in the West has very different connotations 'on the ground' in Tibet, and actual frequencies of use do not reflect the universality that most Europeans might expect. There is then a thorough and careful examination of the historical background of the various disposal means, the

methods, and how the various practices have evolved over time, and how they can vary geographically.

A further chapter deals with 'special deaths': those of infants, holy persons such as Lamas and Priests, the nobility, old people and those who met "bad deaths", following an inauspicious event of some kind- particularly murder/suicide, or death during pregnancy. There follows a lengthy discussion of what happens after corporeal disposal-the rituals performed on behalf of the deceased based on the Bardo being just one example. Many of these rituals, if they were shorn of the overt Tibetan terminology would sit comfortably with modern Western magical/esoteric practices.

The page count belies the truly heavyweight scholarship which underpins the text, and there are certain sections that, while they might only take a few minutes to read, are obviously the fruits of many weeks of scrupulous, methodical scholarship. Despite the dense subject matter (involving several thousand years' worth of Eastern and Western thought under examination, and often extremely complicated interwoven arguments and multiple theoretical trajectories being evoked) the writing style is both engaging and accessible. No small feat.

A very useful glossary will help many scholars overcome their initial, perhaps easily understood, reluctance to engage with 'foreign' terminology. This is one of several major triumphs of the book, in encouraging a wider audience to read such

material, which it truly deserves- to be spread beyond the boundaries of academic Buddhist studies. What is particularly attractive is that it is both a collection, analysis and synthesis of previous academic and more populist work, including the early European explorers' often problematic accounts of Tibetan Buddhism, combined with a distillation of decades of stringent scholarship in the related fields, with all of that translated through the keen eye of a meticulous scholar into a cohesive and coherent finished article.

If I have to find faults with this book, there are two, and neither is about the scholarship. The first issue is that it would have hugely benefited from some colour photographs-however this may well have been a production decision for reasons of economy, colour plates significantly adding to the cost. My second, possibly churlish complaint is that I would happily have read a book approaching twice the length, which is not so much a complaint as a symptom of having had my appetite whetted by some excellent material and wanting to hear more- but it is no way incomplete or 'thin'.

This fine book is obviously of relevance to death studies scholars, anybody interested in contemporary Buddhism, religious studies scholars, cultural analysts and, as I mention above, scholars of esoteric movements of any kind. The book opens with the question "*what happens when a Buddhist Tibetan dies?*" and closes with the expected recommendation that considerably more research is needed in the field, as no one book could answer such a complex question completely. However in the intervening pages the author has discovered much of intellectual value, packaged it in a

way that will appeal to scholars (from post-graduate to Professorial) and intelligent lay readers alike and in the process she has developed and propagated scholarship in the area. She has also most successfully built on the already thoroughbred reputation of this Routledge series *via* a means for which she will be thanked by many future grateful scholars.

Highly recommended for anyone researching in the general area, essential reading for students of Buddhist studies.

Dr Dave Evans  
University of the West of England

***Proselytization Revisited: Rights Talk, Free Markets and Culture Wars*, Rosalind I. J. Hackett (Ed.), 2008, London and Oakville: Equinox, xiv+ 479, pbk: 978-1-84553-228-4**

This excellent book arose from symposiums, convened by Rosalind Hackett, at the World Congress of the IAHR in 2005, and at the AAR and the American Anthropological Association in 2007. The book's focus is the process of proselytisation rather than the end product, the convert. It successfully seeks to map the changing profile of twenty first century proselytisation and to identify new 'actors/sources, areas, strategies, media, challenges, as well as new conflicts stemming from proselytizing activity in our globalizing world' (p. 13). Eighteen scholars in addition to Hackett contribute.

Hackett sets the context. Processes of proselytisation are 'a salient aspect of heightened forms of religious activism, competition and conflict' (p.3). International law prohibits the fomenting of religious hatred and forced conversion but is ambiguous on the subject of proselytizing. The

right to choose or change one's religion is enshrined but issues of cultural survival are overlooked. Within this situation, she argues, 'one size no longer fits all for the modern missionary. Missionary flows are increasingly multi-directional and multilateral'(p. 19). She is followed by Jean-Francois Mayer, who posits six theses: conflicts over missionary activities are likely to increase but could lead to an increased acceptance of pluralism; proselytism can reinforce images of a clash of civilizations; proselytism is not just seen as a way of spreading religious ideas but is often perceived as an attempt to extend ideological influence; where there are conflicts over proselytism, missionary activities can be seen as a threat to national interests; those critical of proselytism usually distinguish the issue from religious freedom; conflicts over proselytism foster change and new strategies among the groups targeted by missionaries. Jacob de Roover and Sarah Claerhout, in the next chapter, distinguish Christianity from Indic religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. They controversially argue that Christian discourse has dominated and twisted the discussion of proselytisation, marginalizing the Indic paradigm, where religious rivalry over truth claims cannot be applied. Their view is balanced and complemented by that of Grace Kao, a Taiwanese Christian, who, in the next chapter, examines five arguments against proselytism, whilst expressing thankfulness for the benign influence of British Presbyterian missionaries on her own family.

Regional studies follow. Each is worthy of comment. Each puts empirical flesh on the more theoretical initial chapters. Paul Freston, for instance, charts the changing face of Christian proselytisation – from the

poorer 'Global South' to the richer parts of the world, concentrating on Brazil. Steve Berkwitz, in a study of Buddhism and anti-conversion legislation in Sri Lanka, insightfully illustrates how questions concerning conversion can be linked with contests to define the state. Rachele Scott bravely uses the term proselytisation to describe the activities of the Dhammakāya Temple in Thailand and engages effectively with scholars who have contested that Buddhism has been a missionary religion. Bayram Balci offers a fascinating study of the community that has evolved from the work of Said Nursi (1879-1960) and Fethullah Gulen in Turkey (the *fethullahci*), which establishes schools to promote its vision - the re-islamization of Central Asia. Also significant are Patsy Rahn's study of Falun Gong and Julia Kovalchuk's examination of Korean Christian proselytisation of Russia's Asian minorities.

Closing thoughts on proselytization are given by the sociologist, James Richardson. Stressing that some religions engaged in proselytisation can 'best be described as multi-national religious firms', he defends the need for a sociological and social psychological approach to the issue (p. 456).

I strongly recommend this book. Each chapter is clearly-written and meticulously situated within contemporary scholarship. The study of religion is often guilty of ignoring how religions relate to each other. In our globalized world, however, this dimension cannot be overlooked. Proselytization is a most important factor within this and will increase in importance. Rosalind Hackett's collection, therefore, is timely and much needed.

Elizabeth J Harris  
Liverpool Hope University

The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions. Mark Juergensmeyer (ed), 2006, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 651 pages, 60 chapters. ISBN 9780195137989.

This handbook (considerably larger than its diminutive name) is divided into eight parts. Parts 1 – 6 cover the cultural regions of: Indic; Buddhist/Confucian; Jewish; Christian; Islamic; African influence whilst part 7 covers local religious societies and part 8 the theme of understanding global religion. Each part contains at least three essays, written by over sixty experts in various religious traditions and framed by an introductory essay by Mark Juergensmeyer and concluding essay by Ninian Smart.

The contributors were asked to address how religious communities have changed over time in relation to the pluralising context of globalisation. Each part leads with an essay introducing the 'cultural region' in a globalised context. Three concepts are considered within the idea of religious globalisation, that of: diasporas, transnational religion and the religion of plural societies.

This book should provide a useful aid to students interested in the debate about the interaction of religion and globalisation. However, as would be expected in any publication seeking such an ambitious aim there are limitations. For example, in the chapter on European Islam the author focuses on four countries – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Russia. Whilst not detracting from the quality of the material present, this focus does exclude discussion of Western European countries with a long history of interaction with Islamic ideas.

This caveat aside, the collection represents a laudable attempt to discuss this broad and developing area and will be a valuable addition to many libraries.

Matthew Francis Doctoral Researcher  
University of Leeds

**Scientology James R. Lewis (ed) OUP 2009 USA 512 pages | 2 halftones, 3 line illustrations, 978-0-19-533149-3 Hardback £22.50**

Although Scientology has been the focus of academic study since Roy Wallis' *The Road to Total Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), the major body of literature surrounding this fascinating and sometimes controversial movement remains polemic or anti-cultic – indeed, Lewis notes in his introduction that “when it comes to controversial new religions ... the normal standards for what constitute legitimate expertise are frequently tossed to the wind” (p.4). Whilst there are some notable exceptions to this rule, including Whitehead's *Renunciation and Reformulation* (Ithica & London: Cornell University Press, 1987) and Melton's *The Church of Scientology* (Torino: Signature Books, 2000), it is certainly the case that non-specialist perceptions of the Church of Scientology, both inside and outside the Academy, are underpinned by sensationalist journalism, apostate testimonies and a celebrity-driven media. Countering (and indeed analysing) these stances, Lewis' volume provides a much needed collection of systematic and wide-ranging academic approaches to Scientology.

Lewis has produced an excellent edited volume which brings together twenty-two articles, authored by twenty-seven academics, covering major themes of (1) con-

text, (2) theoretical and quantitative approaches, (3) community and practice, (4) sources and comparative approaches, (5) controversies, (6) international perspectives and (7) cultural dimensions. Crucially for a student audience, the volume contains two articles by Cowan (p. 53-79) and Christensen (p. 411-431) which deal with the problems of researching a movement which depends to a large degree on esoteric knowledge and which produces a bewildering quantity of pamphlets, lectures, books and web media. Christensen's bibliographical 'help-list' is to be particularly welcomed - simplifying, as it does, the voluminous key works of Hubbard for the scholar new to this movement.

Of particular interest in this volume is the fact that Scientology is understood within a global context. Despite the popular perception, repeated by two authors within this volume, that Scientology represents the quintessential American religion, it is certainly the case that the diverse legal and social dialogues which have occurred around the world in relation to Scientology have affected the ways in which the Church presents itself and in turn alters the experiences of individual Scientologists. The social role of Scientology in Germany, for instance, is at great variance to the situation in the USA. This volume addresses this key issue by exploring contextual understandings of Scientology in France, Sweden, Australia, the USA, Germany, Italy, the UK and Russia.

Whilst it is not possible to highlight every article within a multi-authored volume, the work of Rothstein (p. 365-387) is particularly noteworthy. Addressing the morally ambiguous role of academics in the use of esoteric knowledge which has been

'leaked' into the public domain by Apostates, Rothstein provides an excellent critical discussion of the origins, meanings and controversies surrounding the 'Xenu myth' which has become the primary anti-cultic target for opponents of Scientology. Engaging head-on with a topic which is seen by many Scientologists as 'off-limits', Rothstein argues that the story has a double-level mythological purpose which incorporates a qualifying narrative in support of the central narrative of the myth. In so doing, Rothstein critiques the anti-cultic descriptions of the Xenu story as lacking contextual understanding of the text which only becomes religiously meaningful when examined in the ritualized context of Scientology's grades of initiation. This critical analysis is particularly helpful in understanding the sometimes controversial narratives of New Religions in relation to the 'acceptable' narratives of 'mainstream' traditions. Indeed, Rothstein concludes that "as time goes on, the myth about Xenu and the thetans may become as respectable and uncontroversial as so many other fantastic accounts in the history of the world's religions." (p. 384)

Lewis' collation of material is highly useful; however there are two areas of interest that have not fully been explored. Firstly, the volume concentrates on the Church of Scientology in particular, rather than the existence of Scientological doctrine and practice in general. Scientology (and often, more specifically, Dianetics) have been practised outside the 'regulated' Church for decades - indeed, the California Association of Dianetic Auditors ([www.cada.org](http://www.cada.org)) predates the first incorporated

Church of Scientology by over three years. An article addressing the tensions between the Church and the 'squirrel' organisations such as the Freezone ([www.freezone.de](http://www.freezone.de)), whose members practice throughout Europe, would have provided a wider context of the application of Hubbard's teachings outside the structures of the established Churches and 'Orgs' linked to the Religious Technology Centre which retains ownership of Hubbard's copyrights and which is the ultimate ecclesiastical authority within the Church. Secondly, an article focusing upon the relationship between 'mainstream' media and the Church of Scientology, and also the role of the internet as both a forum for protest and a forum for

the dissemination of official Church information would have been of particular interest to students wishing to understand Scientology and popular culture.

These two reservations aside, Lewis' volume is by far the most useful and informative guide to Scientology yet written. This volume is highly recommended and will become an essential contribution to the reading list of New Religious Movements modules for second and third year undergraduates and Masters students.

Stephen E. Gregg  
University of Wales: Trinity St David

## MEMBERS' RECENT PUBLICATIONS

### **Berman, Michael**

*All God's Creatures: Stories Old and New* Pendraig Publishing 2010

### **King Ursula**

The Emergence of a New Humanity – Spirituality, the Zest for Life, and the Power of Love” in John van Praag and Ricardo Bernadino, eds, *Eranos Yearbook 69 (2006/2007/2008)* *Eranos Reborn*. Einsiedeln, Daimon Verlag, 2010: 239-250.

“Pneumatophores for Nurturing a Different Kind of Love” in Lisa Isherwood & Elaine Bell-chambers, eds, *Through Us, with Us, in Us. Relational Theologies in the Twenty-First Century*. London: SCM Press, 2010: 52-70.

“Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's 'New Mysticism' and the Fullness of Life” in Kala Acharya, Milena Carrara Pavan & William Parker, *Fullness of Life*, Mumbai & New Delhi: Somaya Publications (Proceedings of International Conference held in honour of Raimon Panikkar's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Venice, May 2008), 2010: 452-472.

“Reflections on spirituality and gender”, *Journal of Chaplaincy in Further Education*, Spring 2010, 6/1, 3-13.

“Searching a Feminine Mystical Way for the Twenty-First Century” in Elaine L. Graham, ed., *Grace Jantzen – Redeeming the Present*. Farnham, Surrey & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009: 111-128.

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## GUIDELINES FOR *BULLETIN* CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

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

The *BASR Bulletin* will carry notices of relevant conferences and calls for papers (up to one page) free of charge. Preference is given to conferences where members may offer papers; other non-participatory conferences, which are more akin to courses, may be included if space permits. The deadline for the next edition is 15th April 2011.

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**Spring Seminar**

**'African New Religions in the West'**

**Saturday 14 May 2011**  
**10.00 – 16.30**

London School of Economics  
New Academic Building  
Wolfson Theatre  
London WC2A 2AE

email: [inform@lse.ac.uk](mailto:inform@lse.ac.uk)  
call: 020 7955 7654

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