



**BASR**

British Association for  
the Study of Religions

## **Bulletin**

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## ABOUT THE BASR

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

### The BASR Committee

***President and Chair***

m.i.bowman@open.ac.uk

Dr Marion Bowman

01908 659381

***Secretary***

g.harvey@open.ac.uk

Dr Graham Harvey

01908 654033

***Treasurer***

Dermot.tredget@st-benets.oxon.org

Dermot Tredget

***Bulletin Co-editors***

dcorrywright@brookes.ac.uk

h.j.waterhouse@open.ac.uk

Dr Dominic Corrywright &

Dr Helen Waterhouse

01865 488358

01908 659028

***Co-ordinating Editor of Diskus***

m.j.guest@durham.ac.uk

Dr Mathew Guest

01913 343944

***Conference Organiser***

geavesr@hope.ac.uk or ron.geaves@sky.com

Professor Ron Geaves

Membership enquiries and general correspondence should be sent to:

Dr Graham Harvey  
Religious Studies Department  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA

**BASR website address: [www.basr.ac.uk](http://www.basr.ac.uk)**

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## CONTENTS

Editorial.....	3
Annual General Meeting 2007.....	7
Treasurer's Report and Accounts.....	8
Conference Reports .....	12
Book Review.....	27
Changes and Movements.....	28
Members' Publications.....	34
Guidelines for Contributors.....	38
Occasional Papers .....	39

## EDITORIAL

Welcome,

The editors for the BASR *Bulletin* would like to celebrate the Guardian Award for Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School presented this year to BASR member Ian Jamison. Ian is an RE teacher at Kingsbridge Community college in South Devon. "He wears a ponytail, loves Motorhead and hopes he'll soon get a blackbelt in karate. Not your average RE teacher - but he achieves amazing results" (<http://education.guardian.co.uk/teachingawards/story/0,,2196686,00.html>). Ian is clearly a gifted and an inspired communicator, whose plaudits from his colleagues and pupils show the impact highly committed and energetic teachers have on their students. As most members of BASR are, or have been, lecturers, we can appreciate the frisson of a teaching session that has worked (lit up eyes and stirred debate) as we intended, and the longer term pleasures of seeing our

students excel.

For many scholars in the study of religions the necessary links between research and teaching in their professional careers mean significantly more than contractual requirements. Research and teaching are mutually dependent: research feeds teaching and teaching enables clarity and reflection leading to further research. Moreover, teaching feeds the community of researchers by inspiring new teachers and researchers. Ian Jamison is much like many of our undergraduate students, moving from a degree in Theology and Religious Studies to a postgraduate certificate in Education. And, like many of our students, he has returned to research and is currently engaged in PhD work on Pagan embodied ethics in the Religious Studies Department at the Open University. He is thus exemplary, worthy of

our highest commendation for his achievements, and an example of the continuation and growth of teaching and research in the study of religions.

This edition of the *Bulletin* resonates with the virtuous circle and progression of teaching and research in our subject area. Colleagues at HE institutions will be aware of the significant growth of students taking Religious Studies, and Philosophy and Ethics at AS and A2 levels in the UK (109% rise in RS A-level candidates from 1996-2005). This has resulted in increased interest in undergraduate courses on religion, theology and ethics. But there remains a gap between the intrinsic interests of students and recognition of the transferable skills undergraduate courses in study of religions offer in the job market. The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies (based at University of Leeds) has done much to develop wider awareness of these issues, including meeting with the Qualifications and Curriculum authority (see summary of the subject centre's activities *Bulletin* 110).

In this *Bulletin* HEA-prs is advertising a conference in July 2008 on the transition of students to HE, with the challenging title: "Spoon-Feeding or Critical Thinking? A Level / Higher to First Year Progression in Religious Studies and Theology". There is also notification of *ZJR*, a recent academic e-journal aimed at student-scholars in religious studies who have not (yet) received a PhD.

Outside RAE, research council and other funding bodies, the health of much research activity in the study of religions is dependent on the Hefce and student-derived income which makes religious studies departments viable. These, in turn feed budgets that support attendance at conferences and provide research time. The conference reports within this *Bulletin* represent a rich array of research supported and funded from these many streams. The highly successful 2007

BASR Annual conference, held in Edinburgh, is reported on by Dr Wendy Dossett and a further report by PhD students who obtained bursary support from the BASR is drawn together by Louise Müller, a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh.

There have been a number of recent significant institutional changes and movements of scholars in the study of religions. In this edition of the *Bulletin* we have included Dr Melanie Wright's change of role from Academic Director of the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR) with a Fellowship at Girton College, Cambridge to lecturer at the Open University. We hope to continue providing insider reports on these moves in future *Bulletins*. If you have moved recently please send in a report for inclusion next time.

At the other end of the student-lecturer/teacher-researcher career it is important to highlight colleagues who are recognised for their work outside our membership associations. In this *Bulletin* it is a pleasure to note the commendation to honorary life member of the BASR, Dr Bill Pickering, as Officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Academiques by a decree of the French Government. Professor John Hinnells has also been recognised by becoming an Honoured Friend of The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE). The ZTFE changed its constitution to allow it to honour non-Zoroastrians. Mary Boyce received the honour posthumously. We look forward to John's reflections on negotiating community relations in the next issue of the *Bulletin*.

There are also a number of members' publications listed at the end of this edition. While this represents only a sample listing of recent publications in the study of religions it indicates the rich range of research currently being undertaken by members of this association in the field.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting  
4pm Wednesday 5 September 2007  
The University of Edinburgh**

**1. Welcome.** Marion Bowman opened the meeting by welcoming members (27 attending). She thanked all involved in organising and running the conference, the student helpers, Lynn Robertson for her work before and during the conference, and in particular Jim Cox and Dermot Tredget.

**2. Apologies** received from Terry Thomas, Ian Jamison, Kim Knott, Douglas Davies, and Denise Cush.

**3. Minutes of the AGM, 5 Sept 2006** (published in BASR Bulletin 109, Nov 2006: 4-10): accepted.

**4. President's Report**

i. Marion Bowman commented that it had been very pleasant in her first year as President for the conference to be held in Scotland. She reported that Greg Hoyland had volunteered to be local conference organiser for the 2008 conference at York St John University, while Bettina Schmidt would be local conference organiser for the 2009 conference in Bangor, making a good geographic mix during this three year period. The President also invited comment on whether in 2010 (when the IAHR conference would be held in Toronto) we should break with 'tradition' by having a 'normal' conference as one day events tended not to be so well attended or satisfactory.

ii. The President reported that a considerable quantity of work had been undertaken by the executive committee in the past year. She thanked Mathew Guest for all his hard work on Diskus; Helen Waterhouse and Dominic Corrywright for their efforts on and innovations to the Bulletin; Graham Harvey for his labours on rationalising membership lists and working towards an emailing list so that we can contact members cheaply and efficiently in addition to Bulletin mailings, for his work on the website and many other tasks undertaken on

our behalf; and Dermot Tredget, not simply for his considerable work on the conference, but for his diligence year round in reorganising some of our accounts, setting up Paypal and overseeing our finances so efficiently and professionally. The President commented on the lack of a Conference Organiser on committee this year, which had thrown Dermot in at the deep end in his first year as Treasurer and put a lot more work on Jim as local organiser, and appealed for a volunteer. (Ron Geaves subsequently agreed to take on this role.)

iii. The President reminded members that in the April 2008 Bulletin there will be a call for nominations for President Elect to allow for a one year overlap in 2008-2009.

iv. The President reported that BASR continues to be very much involved in EASR and IAHR, and it is gratifying that BASR, as well as being praised for paying its dues so promptly and efficiently, is frequently cited as an exemplar in terms of its Bulletin and the friendliness and supportive nature of its conferences. She urged members to make fellow lecturers and graduate students aware of BASR, EASR and IAHR conferences, the EASR-hosted bulletins (such as Dolmen) and BASR and EASR student bursaries.

v. The President encouraged use of the Bulletin to stimulate and facilitate exchanges of ideas and opinions, and suggested some areas around which discussion might be generated. It would be useful and interesting if a variety of people in RS - graduate students and people at various stages of their careers and at different institutions - would contribute to a discussion of the state and nature of RS in Britain today. Further discussions might include whether and in what ways we should be seeking a higher profile for the subject (and BASR) in light of renewed interest in and awareness of religion in government

and media circles; whether BASR should be trying to position itself as an 'umbrella group' encouraging more formal ties with the many specialist groups with RS interests; whether we should be organising specialist graduate conferences or training events, and so on. She stressed that as these were all ideas and comments that had emerged in emails or during informal conversations at this and previous conferences, it might be useful to discuss and explore them more publicly.

The President concluded by thanking the committee and members for their support during her first year in this post.

### **5. Secretary's Report**

i. The current membership list (including Honorary Life Members) lists two hundred and twenty (220) members. However, the Secretary and Treasurer have been writing and/or emailing some members who have not paid subscriptions or increased their standing order mandates. While we hope this will lead to more renewals, it is also resulting in some names being removed from the list.

ii. The BASR website now has a new ac.uk domain name: [www.basr.ac.uk](http://www.basr.ac.uk). Registration has taken rather longer than anticipated but this has provided additional time to review improvements to the site. Significant housekeeping is planned for the autumn. As journals cannot have independent ac.uk registration, DISKUS will remain as a group of pages within the BASR website. Further improvements to DISKUS pages (including the addition of an archive of vols.1-6) will also be made in the autumn.

iii. The European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) will hold its annual conference in Bremen, Germany, 23-27 September 2007, several BASR members participating as speakers and panel chairs. The Secretary will represent BASR at the Executive Committee meeting. Among other business of the committee (to be reported fully on the EASR website <http://www.easr.de/>) will be the process for the election of new officers.

iv. The Secretary and several other members of BASR participated in the Fifth International Conference on Socio-Religious Studies in Havana, Cuba, July 2007. In a meeting with members of the Cuban Association for the Study of Religions (a national member association of the IAHR), the Secretary conveyed the greetings of the executive committee of BASR. The Cubans expressed the hope that our associations and members can work together in future projects.

### **6. Treasurer's Report**

The full text of the Treasurer's address follows these minutes.

### **7. Bulletin Editors' Report**

i. In 2007 the Bulletin gained a new look with the addition of the new BASR logo and a change from A5 to A4 size. It will now be published twice a year instead of three times. A pdf version of each Bulletin will be published on the BASR website in addition to being mailed in hardcopy to all members.

ii. The new look Bulletin costs more to produce but the Editors see it as an improvement matching the professionalism of the BASR. It is proposed to further increase these improvements by the use of a glossy cover.

iii. The contents of the Bulletin remain similar and members are invited to continue submitting material. The Editors would particularly welcome articles on members' moves to new departments/posts, developments within departments, reflections from senior colleagues, PhD student research short reports, book reviews (again, PhD students are encouraged to submit reviews).

iv. Discussion initiated by Ursula King encouraged the Editors to reconsider the move to A4, but Brian Bocking suggested that high quality but thinner paper could enable members to fold their Bulletins for easier transportability.

v. The previous Bulletin Editor, George Chryssides, endorsed the improvements

made by the Editors, and noted that it had always been difficult to get the financial reports into a format that would fit the A5 size Bulletins.

### **8. Diskus Co-ordinating Editor Report**

i. BASR continues to publish the BASR annual lecture and selected conference papers in DISKUS. The first BASR issue (volume 7, publishing papers from the 2005 conference) will be online in mid-September. The second issue (volume 8, publishing papers from the 2006 conference) will be online in the autumn. A flier was distributed with the contents of volume 8.

ii. Volume 9 will publish selected papers from the 2007 conference.

iii. We have taken an existing brand and are developing it. The Co-ordinating Editor co-ordinates the executive committee serving as an editorial board and peer review panel (sometimes drawing on experts from the wider membership). The establishment of an international editorial and peer-review board is underway.

iv. The Co-ordinating Editor thanked the committee for their support, and Graham Harvey for technical support with the website.

v. Mathew Guest was asked why the title "DISKUS" was chosen. Brian Bocking answered that the title puns on the original floppy disc publication of the journal and indicated the original (but failed) plan to include discussions of papers in the journal.

vi. In response to a suggestion that a fee could be charged for DISKUS that would make money for the BASR, Ursula King and Brian Bocking supported the idea that a charge could be made for republication of DISKUS articles elsewhere.

vii. Steve Sutcliffe congratulated the Co-ordinating Editor for carrying on the production of an excellent journal in the steps of Brian Bocking and Gavin Flood, acknowledged the journal's supportive role in

the discipline, and expressed concern about workload issues as the journal grows. The Co-ordinating Editor noted that at present (while DISKUS is not taking unsolicited papers) the workload is manageable, and is aware that a change in policy would be a major escalation of workload that would need an appropriate response.

viii. Brian Bocking noted that DISKUS is included in the European Reference Index for the Humanities thanks to Michael Pye's intervention on behalf of Religious Studies journals.

### **9. Conference Report**

i. Jim Cox thanked the executive committee, especially the Treasurer, for working with him in organising the conference. He also thanked the University of Edinburgh for their contribution, especially in that by not charging for conference rooms or VAT the University significantly lowered the financial costs. He also thanked Trish Cashen at the Open University for help in posting the developing drafts of the programme on the BASR website.

ii. Two new elements this year are the Book of Abstracts and the contribution of the Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC) of the Alister Hardy Trust who brought, presenters, papers and panels to the conference and enriched the debate.

iii. Ursula King requested more advanced notice of panels and AGM timing within the programme for those who might only be able to attend part of the conference.

iv. The 2008 conference will be hosted by York St John University. Greg Hoyland conveyed the thanks of colleagues there for this honour. He introduced the venue as the UK's newest University (2006), albeit with a well established academic foundation. He presented the department as having an expanding staff and research base. The initial suggestion for a conference theme was "Religion and Identities". The executive committee invited further suggestions by email and will discuss these at its next meeting in December.

v. There was discussion of the possibility of a free afternoon or excursion, with some objection that this would increase costs and/or make the programme more unwieldy or reduce the time allotted to papers at a time when many members could only gain funding to attend if they present papers.

vi. Following discussion of the inclusion of other groups within the conference, a consensus emerged that just as the RERC offered panels with this year's conference (following submission of proposals to the organisers like any other potential delegate), other groups could be encouraged to participate in next year's conference. UKABS has already expressed an interest. They may seek a time and venue before, after or within the conference period to hold their own AGM, but this would be separate from the organisation and programme of the BASR conference. Other groups which might be interested in similar arrangements were mentioned. Maintaining the distinctive role of BASR requires

that our conference themes are broad enough to attract scholars interested in particular (single) religions but capable of focussed critical debate.

#### **10. President's Vote of Thanks**

The President formally thanked Jim Cox and his colleagues and student helpers for their work on behalf of the conference and BASR.

#### **11. Any Other Business**

An announcement was made about a new journal produced by "young scholars", especially research students. ZjR Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft is now inviting submissions of papers <http://www.zjr-online.net/>

#### **12. Date and Venue of the Next Meeting**

The 2008 AGM will be held during the conference in York St John University in September 2008.

Marion Bowman closed the AGM at 5.43pm

### **Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts**

**1. Change in regulatory regime:** I need to alert the membership that the regulatory regime for the 'auditing' of these accounts has changed. First, our total income for the year 2006-2007 exceeded £10,000. This means that the accounts have to be inspected by an 'independent auditor.' The process is nowhere as stringent as a full audit but it does mean that the association has to engage a suitably qualified person. We were fortunate to obtain the services of Mr Frank Rowan FCA, a retired accountant, who was happy to act in this capacity. Second, the law relating to small charities such as ours has changed. From this year onwards, in addition to filing a summary of our accounts, we will have to submit also a written trustees report. This will be considered and approved, together with the accounts, at the next BASR executive meeting later in the year.

**2. Proposal to amend constitutions:** the independent auditor has asked me to point

out that our constitutions state, 'the treasurer shall present annually to a general meeting an audited statement of the accounts of the association.' Strictly speaking these accounts have not been 'audited', rather, they have been 'independently examined.' Although we are honouring the 'spirit' of the wording we are not complying exactly. Consequently he suggests that we amend the wording of our constitutions to 'the treasurer shall present annually a statement of accounts that have been (independently) examined in accordance with current charity legislation.' As we can only amend our constitutions at a full general meeting this amendment will be proposed and voted on in September 2008 at our next annual conference in St Johns York.

**General income for the year amounted to £3,312.**

**3. Membership income:** In terms of paid subscriptions there are as at 15 August



2007 118 full members and 73 student or retired members. In addition to these there are 7 life members who receive an honorary membership in recognition to their services to the BASR and the study of religions. In spite of frequent reminders, there are a number of people on the current membership list from whom I have not been able to elicit a response. The honorary secretary and I have been working closely to contact these elusive characters. The association simply cannot afford to continue producing and mailing the bulletin to people who are not paying a subscription. The executive proposes to let these memberships lapse if we do not hear anything from them soon. More than half the membership pay their subscription by standing order and also 'gift aid' their subscription. This is so much easier than dealing with cheques and having to send out constant reminders. If you do not have a standing order or 'gift aid' in place, please consider doing so. 'Gift aid' contributed a further £516 to our income this year although this had not been received from the Revenue and Customs by 15<sup>th</sup> August. Consequently, because we prepare these accounts on a receipts and payments basis, this rebate will appear as income in next year's accounts.

**4. Bulletin inserts and occasional papers income:** we received no income from bulletin inserts last year, however there was a small income of £45 from occasional papers. As you will remember, from now on, occasional papers are to be included in BASR's electronic journal DISKUS. Apart from income derived from the back numbers, I would not anticipate this income increasing in the future.

**5. Interest income:** £415. This has increased over last year mainly because interest rates have been slightly higher and we have had larger sums on deposit.

General expenditure for the year amounted to £2,805

**6. Internet charges:** £94 was spend on internet charges partly consisting in the cost of registering our new domain name basr.ac.uk.

**7. Printing & Postage of the Bulletin:** £408. thanks to the services of the Open University printing unit bulletins costs have

been lower than previous. However postage costs increased. These costs are set to increase next year as it is hoped to incorporate a colour printed cover.

**8. Printing and Postage of Occasional Papers:** As I mentioned earlier, occasional papers are no longer in production. However, in future years, even though it is an electronic journal, we can expect some costs associated with the production of DISKUS.

**9. Committee Expenses:** £379. Thanks to the hospitality of different members of the executive these have been significantly lower than last year. Also, committee expenses associated with the planning and running of the annual conference have been charged to the conference fund rather than the general fund.

**10. EASR/IAHR Membership:** £367. The BASR continue to support the European and International associations through the payment of an annual subscription calculated on the size of our membership. This year we made no additional donations.

**11. Bank Charges:** £42. These have increased slightly because of the introduction of PayPal, a facility to enable overseas members to pay by credit card. This has been particularly useful for receiving conference deposits and income.

**12. Insurance:** £198. This is for one year only. It is substantially lower than the previous year because the insurance payment for 2005-2006 also included 2004-2005.

**13. Conference Subsidy:** £1,317. It was anticipated that the conference at Bath Spa in 2006 would have to be subsidised.

**14. Conference Fund:** The current balance stands at £10,305. This may appear high but for the first time a great proportion of the 2007 conference fees have been collected in advance. There are several reasons for doing this. First the BASR is contractually committed to the host university to pay for the booked accommodation and catering services. Numbers have to be confirmed one month in advance of the conference. Secondly, it guards the association against 'non-attendance' after the booking has been confirmed. Thirdly, although it did not happen this year, host universities frequently ask for part or full payment one month in advance of the

booking. In this regard the BASR is very grateful to the Edinburgh Divinity School for providing our conference facilities not only at a discount, but also free of VAT. If it had not been for this special treatment the cost of the conference could have been 25% higher. This year the budget for the conference is £15,147.

**15. Bank Accounts:** As at 15 August our total bank accounts amounted to nearly £18,000. In note ix to the accounts I have explained that £8,115 of this is income for the current conference. Next month the BASR will need to pay conference invoices totalling nearly £13,000. From then, cash reserves, held as part of our conference fund, will be significantly lower. They will slowly build up again with subscription income, and then after that conference deposits in anticipation of our 2007 conference at St Johns York. The bulk of the association's reserves are held in Charity Aid Foundation Gold Account (£10,261) which is currently attracting 4.88% interest tax free. Interest of 4.29% is also derived from the CAF Cash account in which conference receipts and subscriptions are deposited. This account provides the cash needs of the BASR's various activities. The Lloyds account has been retained to receive membership subscriptions by stand-

ing order. PayPal receives credit card income. Transfers between all four accounts can be made electronically through the Internet.

**16. Summary of Financial Position:**

Overall, I am happy to report that the finances of the BASR are in a sound position. Thanks to the diligence of its executive the BASR has built up a healthy reserve. It is always difficult to establish, from year to year, what size the reserves should be. However, it seems prudent that the BASR should maintain, as far as possible, this level in order that it can operate effectively and achieve its objectives, firstly to organise and 'pump-prime' future conferences including, where possible, the provision of graduate bursaries (which this year amounted to over £1,000); secondly, to assist the BASR executive in the discharge of its duties though the provision of necessary services such as printing costs, travel to and from meetings, etc. Finally, to promote the dissemination of research and information about the study of religions through publications, the internet and international conferences for its members, the academy and the general public.

Dermot Tredget

**NOTES TO ACCOUNTS**

- i* Awaiting £516 tax rebate
- ii* Gross subs £3,242 less refunds of £214 and cost of reminder letters £176
- iii* Not as high as it might be because of low interest rates (see note x below)
- iv* Costs greatly reduced because production done by OU printing department
- v* Executive expenses associated with conference planning have been allocated to conference
- vi* Slightly higher because of PayPal & foreign exchange transaction charges
- vii* Insurance for one year only - last year for two years
- viii* 2006 Conference made a net loss of £1,317
- ix* Total budgeted expenses £15,147. Receipts at 15/8/2007 £8,115 with outstanding receipts £6,400
- x* CAF Cash Interest rate 4.29% p.a. CAF Gold Interest Rate 4.88% as at 30/7/2007
- xi* 2006-7 General income £3,312; Total conference income £11,448
- xii* 2006-7 General Expenses £1,488; Total conference expenses £2,860

RECEIPTS				PAYMENTS			
General Fund	Notes	2006-7	2005-6		Notes	2006-7	2005-6
				Internet Charges		-94	68
				Printing & Postage Bulletin	<i>iv</i>	-408	786
				Printing & Postage Occ. Papers		0	95
				Committee Expenses	<i>v</i>	-379	1070
<b>Balance at 16 August 2006</b>		<b>7161</b>	<b>6715</b>	EASR/IAHR Membership		-367	326
Inland Revenue	<i>i</i>	0	246	Donation to IAHR		0	0
Subscriptions	<i>ii</i>	2852	2494	Donation to EASR		0	0
Bulletin insert fees		0	150	Bank Charges	<i>vi</i>	-42	28
Occasional papers		45	37	Insurance	<i>vii</i>	-198	435
Bank Interest	<i>iii</i>	415	327	<b>Balance in hand 15 August 2007</b>		<b>8984</b>	<b>7161</b>
		10473	9969			10473	9969
<b>Conference Fund</b>							
<b>Balance at 16 August 2006</b>		<b>399</b>		2006 Conference Expenses	<i>viii</i>	-2002	-5681
2006 Conference Receipts		3719	2647	2007 Conference Expenses	<i>ix</i>	-858	
2007 Conference Receipts		<u>7729</u>		<b>Balance in hand 15 August 2007</b>		<b>8988</b>	
		11847				11847	
<b>BALANCE SHEET as at 15th August 2007</b>							
<b>Cash Funds: Bank Accounts</b>				<b>Represented by:</b>			
Lloyds Current		325	187	General Fund		8984	7160
CAF Cash	<i>x</i>	7081	7373	Conference Fund		8988	399
CAF Gold	<i>x</i>	10261	0				
PayPal Holding		344	0				
Cheques not yet presented		-40	0				
<b>Total</b>		<b>17972</b>	<b>7559</b>			<b>17972</b>	<b>7559</b>
<b>FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDING 15th AUGUST 2007</b>							
<b>Balance as at 16th August 2006</b>			<b>7560</b>				
Total Receipts	<i>xi</i>		14760				
Total Payments	<i>xii</i>		-4348				
Net Receipts/Payments			10412				
<b>Balance as at 15th August 2007</b>			<b>17972</b>				

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

**BASR September 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> 2007, New College, Edinburgh**

**Wendy Dossett**  
**University of Wales, Lampeter**

This beautiful turreted college designed by William Henry Playfair and founded in 1846 initially by the Free Church of Scotland is now the home of Edinburgh University's School of Divinity. The School played host to this year's BASR conference, run in conjunction with the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, and delegates enjoyed the distinguished setting.

The conference was as diverse as any other BASR conference, with papers from academics and postgraduates from every continent. Three main themes ran throughout, and a number of the panels enabled more detailed iteration and exploration of these. One theme, sponsored by the *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies* was an examination of various case studies of phenomena often described as 'New Age', with attempts to explore the scope and plausibility of theoretical frameworks for understanding this material. Another was the interpretation of spirit possession, taking its lead from a number of new studies in the field. The final key theme related to a progress report on the Templeton Foundation-funded Global Study of Religious Experience undertaken by the Religious Experience Research Centre. The extensive data gleaned from China, and smaller projects in Turkey and India were reported. Discussions revolved around fundamental questions regarding the usefulness of the category of religious experience, of possible historical and theological reasons for its privileged place in contemporary discourse about religions and spirituality, and of problems and issues arising from cross-cultural studies of a 'concept' arguably constructed in a Western intellectual environment.

Additional to the panels and formal lectures were the Routledge sponsored book launch of Jolyon Mitchell's *Religion and*

*Film Reader*, by Professor Larry Hurtado on behalf of the School of Divinity, and the opportunity to purchase reduced priced copies of Xinzhong Yao and Paul Badham's *Religion in China Today* published by the University of Wales Press.

The conference kicked off with a welcome from the BASR president Dr Marion Bowman and Professor Jim Cox as local organiser, and with a report from Darlene Bird from the subject centre at the Higher Education Academy. Darlene drew attention to numerous upcoming conferences and workshops hosted by the centre, which can be found at <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/trs/>. Shirley Egly and Lynn Foulston from Newport then show-cased the kind of project supported by the HEA, describing their field-trips with undergraduates in the UK and India, and their critical reflection on them with the use of Matthew Lipman's P4C (Philosophy for Children/Communities) pedagogy, designed to develop critical thinking, and to empower students to 'frame questions' in preference to rote learning.

The BASR Annual Lecture, given by Dr Maria Jaschok, Director of the International Gender Studies Centre at the University of Oxford, explored 'Chinese Muslim Women's Histories and other Globalisation Discourses.' A case study of minority Hui Muslim women exposed the consequences of local pressures and wider influences on both their lives and institutional hierarchies, and also the complex interactions of political, economic and Islamic forces in the context of apparently secular Chinese society. Amongst numerous interesting questions raised by the paper were whether these communities could best be understood as progressive or aberrant, and the complex contextual nature of instantiations of spiritual equality.

Across the next two and a half days the conference split into panels and choices had to be made.

In Panel 1 'Theorising new age in global contexts', Steven Sutcliffe (Edinburgh) explored issues of the changing socio-political significance of 'new age', which he argued might best be seen as a local variant of the wider category 'popular religion', the public salience of which is more significant than those studies which present it as entirely a individualistic and privatised phenomenon suggest. Marion Bowman (OU) gave a beautifully illustrated insight into the contemporary Glastonbury Goddess movement and issues of interest in its global exportation and re-negotiation, especially in Hungary. Daren Kemp (Co-editor of the *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies*) argued that new age studies may further exploit opportunities to align itself to parallel disciplines for the study of Global Justice or terrorist movements, such as Social Movement Theory, for intellectual and funding advantages.

In Panel 2 'Pentecostalism and Religious Revivals in Global Contexts,' Cheng-yang Kao (Lancaster) argued that the lack of religious authority in post-Cultural Revolution China played a part in the rise of Pentecostal-like Christianity. Afe Adogame (Edinburgh) focused on the speech 'acts' in immigrant African religious experience, drawing on examples from African Pentecostal prayer, as text, action and instrument of spiritual power. Chang-won Park (Durham) explored the Korean practice of bible-copying in terms of the interplay of Christian and Confucian values and religious experience.

In Panel 3 'Science, Religious Experience and Atheism,' Stephen Bullivant (Oxford) explored experiences of the absence of deity, and of conversions from faith to atheism, in terms of models traditionally applied to religious experience. Graham Miles explored epistemological similarities between religion and science, and Hilary Bagshaw (Sheffield) provided a critique of Gavin Flood's use of Mikhail Bakhtin as a solution to the problems of traditional

Husserl-derived phenomenology.

In Panel 4 'New Age and religious experience(s),' Miguel Farias (Oxford) presented research on the effect of personality and cognitive dispositions on attraction to the New Age. Monica Emerich (Colorado, Boulder) explored the American 'Mind Cure Tradition' and the success of media products, in particular *The Secret*, in the context of the contemporary American market place known as LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability). Roderick Main (Essex) explored a Jungian view of the relationship between the self, the ego, the divine and the social in relation to new age or holistic spirituality.

In Panel 5 'Methodological Perspectives in Global Contexts,' Graham Harvey (OU) highlighted the need for a new emphasis on social/participative rather than interiorised/psychologised dimensions of religious experiences, and used his guesthood-research amongst the Ojibwe to illustrate this. Louise F. Müller (Edinburgh) explored possible cause for the persistence of the traditional chiefs amongst the Asante of Ghana. Rose Mary Amenda-Etego (Edinburgh and University of Ghana, Legon) gave an insider perspective on the phenomenon of the 'Spirit Child' amongst the Nankani of Ghana and the social challenges it presents.

In Panel 6 'Religious Experience in Cross-cultural Contexts,' Helen Waterhouse (OU) drew analogies between learning the piano and the 'assiduous practice' of chanting the *daimoku* in Soka Gakkai. Lynn Bridgers (St Thomas University, Florida) charted the religious history of the US, and Masayuki Ito (Aichi Gakuin University, Nagoya) presented research amongst 18-22year old Japanese about their beliefs in an afterlife.

In Panel 7 'Islamic Contexts,' Hugh Goddard (Nottingham) discussed the current state-of-play in Christian-Muslim relations. Drawing on his empirical research, Ron Geaves (Chester) analysed the degree to which the training of British Imams is the product of colonial forces in 19<sup>th</sup> Century India, and how it might be set free from

that heritage. Christian Lange (Edinburgh) charted studies of Islamic afterlife, highlighting orientalist bias and the failure to consider the Muslim hell, before proposing a new model based on the notion of *imaginaire* and its various functions in the construction of Muslim identity.

In Panel 8 'Religious Experience and Globalisation,' Jan Geisbusch (UCL) explored the eBay trade in Roman Catholic relics, and the meaning of this for notions of 'field-work'. Richard Roberts (Stirling and Lancaster) explored Beckford's critique of globalisation theorists of religion and proposed an alternative model emphasising the significance of representations of religious experience as a form of social and cultural capital. Heonik Kwon (Edinburgh) focused on the rapidly changing political environment of South Korea and the role of ancestor veneration in a politically bifurcated context.

In Panel 9 'Religious Healing Authoritative Traditions and Psychology of Religious Experience,' Chris Johnson (Edinburgh) explored the globalisation of hesychasm. Erik Hauke Tonnesen of Bergen University explored the problem of confusion between Magoma (treatable by witch-doctors) and HIV/AIDS, and how the study of religion may help to overcome this. Roderick Main (Essex) illustrated ways in which depth psychological perspectives may illuminate the experiential and unconscious aspects of religious extremism.

In Panel 10 'Historical Reflections on Contemporary Religious Practices', Moojan Momen explored conversions to the Baha'i Faith from amongst Jews and Zoroastrians in Iran, and argued that these conversions cannot be accounted for by political and economic oppression alone. Michael Stausberg of Bergen University discussed findings from a survey on attitudes to fire amongst Parsi priests. George Chrystides of Wolverhampton University explored the epistemology of Jehovah's Witnesses belief, not proof-orientated but based on the experience of hearing the words of Jehovah.

In Panel 11 'Religious Experience in Global Contexts (1)' Alexander Gorbenko of the Open University of Moscow explored different understandings of the word 'Mysticism' in Russian and English, and transformations of meaning in the post-Soviet period. Yuli Liu's (Central School of the Chinese Communist Party) paper was read and commented on in her absence by Wendy Dossett (Lampeter). Liu argued for a Buddhist understanding of the diversity of religious experiences exposed in the Yao/Badham survey. Mantang Gan (Fuzhou University) focused on one of the questions in the Yao/Badham survey, regarding the outcome (blessings) of praying to gods, and described the practice in communitarian terms.

Panel 12 was the first of the two panels entitled The Interpretation of Spirit Possession and was introduced by Bettina Schimdt of Bangor University, who explored some of the new studies of the phenomenon. Louise Child of Cardiff charted spirit-possession in vast array of settings, and examined the approaches of Keller and Turner. Beatrix Hauser's (Free University of Berlin/University of Halle) paper explored the boundaries of religious and aesthetic experience and compared possession events in Orissa and the performance of Ramalila. David Wilson (Edinburgh) argued for seeing modern spiritualism as not so much a Christian sect as an indigenous western form of shamanism.

In Panel 13 'Religious Experience in Indian Contexts,' Peter Ravikumar (Tamil-nadu Theological Seminary Madurai) described the socio-political make-up of Tamil-nadu and Jonathan Robinson reported on the religious experience research there. Theodore Gabriel (Emeritus, Gloucestershire) described how the Lakshadweep islands are permeated by Hindu practices, especially caste observance, despite the islanders being devout Muslims. Stephen Gregg of Lampeter explored how Vivekananda sanitised Ramakrishna's religious experiences for his western audience.

In Panel 14 'Religious Experience in Global Contexts (2),' Francis Zhan Zhang

(Lampeter) explored the impact of religious experience and practices on commercial activity in China. Jun Wu (Qinghua University) charted the complex relationship between experience and affiliation demonstrated by the 2005 Yao/Badham survey. Liping Liu (Wuhan University) explored the sinoisation of Christianity in China in the light of the process of the sinoisation of Buddhism.

In Panel 15 'Interpretation of Spirit Possession (2),' Jim Cox (Edinburgh) explored how a medium's experience reflects the concerns and values of the wider community, with reference to the Shona speaking peoples of Zimbabwe, and Geoffrey Samuel (Cardiff) used Frederick Smith's recently published *The Self Possessed* to question common understandings of tantra which privilege 'enlightened consciousness' over ideas of entry, pervasion or possession.

In Panel 16 'Religious Experience in Global Contexts (3),' Shizeng Feng of Renmin University showed that according to the 2005 Yao/Badham survey, there was no correlation between political disciplining and levels of religious experience. Xinzhong Yao (Lampeter) explored the relationship between religious experience and gender, age and education. Huamei Han of Simon Fraser University reported her study of immigrant Chinese in Canada and their motivations for practicing evangelical Christianity.

In Panel 17 'Religious Experience, Tradition and Authority,' Suzanne Owen (Edinburgh) contrasted the visionary experience of the Lakota (Sioux) and of visions of Our Lady of Guadeloupe, showing how in the Lakota case visions are sources of authority in a de-centralised tradition, and in the catholic case, visions are de-personalised and made the property of the Church. Mika Lassander (OU) explored the potential of social psychological measures of individualism and collectivism to profile religious movements, and Arkotong Longkumer of Edinburgh University explored the religious experience of the Zeme Haraka of North Cachar Hills, As-

sam.

In Panel 18 'Religious Experience and Material Culture,' Amy Whitehead (OU) examined three different contexts for religious objects and the meanings afforded them by the context, and Victor Ezigbo (Edinburgh) explored tensions for Christian theology in contexts when congregations practice Christianity and indigenous religions.

In Panel 19 'Religious Experience in Global Context (4),' Cafer S. Yaran of Istanbul University presented the results of the survey, based on the China project, undertaken in Turkey, and analysed some of the results, showing, amongst other issues, the problem of relating religious practice to religious experience. Mikhail Rosschin (Russian Academy of Sciences) charted the religious beliefs and practices of peoples spanning seven autonomous republics of the Russian Federation, focusing on Sufi brotherhoods and Salafi Islam. Maria Amelia Schmidt Dickie (Universidade Federal de Sta Catarina, Brazil) raised some of the problems inherent in the cross-cultural study of religious experience based on five in depth interviews across different religious affiliations in Brazil.

In Panel 20 'Religious Experience and the Media,' Jolyon Mitchell of Edinburgh University explored how martyrdoms can be amplified by media, and how understanding media histories and cultural resonances of particular martyrdoms is crucial for peace-making efforts. Monica Emerich (Colorado, Boulder) presented research into the question of 'vocation' in the workplace amongst Americans 'on the right' and 'on the left', showing the complex relationship between religious/spiritual belief, political orientation and attitude to work in the US. Brian Bocking (SOAS) made observations regarding difficulties which can arise in religious studies virtual-learning environments.

In addition to the Panels, Professor Paul Badham, Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre and the Global Pro-

ject, gave a plenary lecture entitled 'The Case for studying religious experience across cultures and traditions' After highlighting the growth of the study of religious experience at A level, and the frequency of reports of such experience in a range of research projects including Alister Hardy's own, Paul argued that cross-cultural studies may help to answer the question of whether we can ever access raw pre-conceptual and pre-linguistic experience. He presented some of the most striking features of the China research, highlighting the absence of religion from public life, media and intellectual debate in China (as in contrast to the UK), and the therefore surprising growth rate of religious practice and adherence. This lecture, and the Global religious experience theme, was also the focus of the summing up of the conference, at which numerous questions were revisited. Amongst these were the degree to which cross-cultural research is possi-

ble, whether this approach privileges the individual and psychological over the community and social, the degree to which 'religious' and 'experience' are helpful categories, and to which they have emerged from a theological and Cartesian worldview.

A real high-point of the whole conference was the superb Ceilidh, at which Steven Sutcliffe transformed from 'serious academic' into 'jolly musician,' and with the help of friends and family provided the music for a truly enjoyable (if a little surreal!) jig-about. Marion Bowman had opened the conference with the flourish 'When BASR comes to Scotland, we dance!' And so we did. Never would I have imagined as an undergraduate that I would some years later witness mentors, inspirers and other senior RS academics flinging each other around with such gusto! In that respect the evening was the conference itself in



**ZjR - ISSN 1862 – 5886** ([www.zjr-online.net](http://www.zjr-online.net))

In May 2006, ZjR was launched as a student academic journal specifically devoted to the study of religions (Religionswissenschaft). ZjR, "Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft", literally means "Journal for the 'young' Study of Religions". It is an open-access journal, which offers both undergraduates and postgraduates the opportunity to share their ideas concerning religion(s) twice a year. It is called a 'young' journal not only because 'young' scholars of any age are encouraged to contribute, but also because ZjR aims to support new methods and theories.

The ZjR project considers analysis of concrete religious phenomena as well as material relating to methodological discourse. Book reviews, fieldwork accounts and conference reports are welcome as well. All articles submitted must be based upon a perspective grounded in the methodologies of the academic study of religions and are subject to review by the editorial board and two international advisory boards.

From December 2007, ZjR will be a truly bilingual (English/German) journal, which is why contributions from the UK are warmly welcome. Therefore, the ZjR team would like to ask professors, lecturers and tutors to encourage their students to share their thoughts with the wider community and to contribute original articles to ZjR. The ZjR project is also happy to receive submissions based upon outstanding university essays or conference papers.

For further information, please see [www.zjr-online.net](http://www.zjr-online.net) or send your message to [contact@zjr-online.net](mailto:contact@zjr-online.net).



## Student views of BASR 2007

### ***Truth claims in the empirical study of religious experiences?***

**Louise Müller-University of Edinburgh**

Many of the participants in this year's BASR conference were connected to the "Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre." Under the leadership of Professor Badham, this centre aims to empirically study religious experiences worldwide. In the several debates that transpired at the conference between the Badham team and other scholars, the major question was: *Should academicians propose truth claims from the empirical study of religious experiences?*

Most scholars outside the Badham team answered this question in the negative. Professors King, Cox, and Bocking remarked that we should make a distinction between the empirical and the metaphysical world. Although one can empirically study religious experiences, one can not deduce any truth claims beyond the empirical based on those experiences because the collection of statistical evidence on the existence of people's religious experiences does not provide us with evidence regarding the existence of phenomena in the metaphysical world. Prof Bocking made the same point by quoting from the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, which is the early work of the analytical philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. According to Wittgenstein, in an academic sense, the metaphysical world is a world one should not speak about, because one cannot say anything about it that makes sense. (the original text is: "wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen.").

Prof Badham's defense showed similarities with the position taken by one of Wittgenstein's colleagues, the philosopher G.E. Moore. Both Moore and Badham stated that truth claims exist in common sense knowledge. Badham argued that, as human beings, we share many experiences and that no reasonable doubt is presented to believe in the existence of those experiences. Then, in terms of religious experiences, why should we reason and

behave differently? Like Prof Badham, Moore also believed that our ordinary common-sense view of the world is largely correct. In many cases, a common knowledge is an assertion of truth, and, in these cases, to make an assertion and then doubt that same assertion is absurd. For instance, Moore believed in the absurdity of the assertion: "It is raining (p), but I do not believe it."

Wittgenstein opposed Moore and stated that the appearance of the absurdity in speech is not guaranteed by a mere utterance of a sentence in Moore's omissive form, as opposed to its assertion. For instance, in cases of delight by the imminent arrival of a friend, it is not absurd to say that: "He is coming (p), but I still can't believe it." According to Wittgenstein, one can not consequently conclude that the assertion "p" must be truth on the grounds that it would be absurd to doubt one's own assertion in the same utterance. Wittgenstein did not agree with Moore that the sentence "It is raining, but I do not believe it" was absurd but instead mentioned it as "a peculiar kind of nonsense." He stated that, in *many* cases, it is absurd to assert that "p" and then show disbelief in that same "p" in one utterance, but not in all cases. He believed that the weakness of "common sense" philosophy lies in these and other kinds of exceptions.

With the contributions of the Badham team, Moore's believe in common sense has not waned in Religious Studies, while, in circles of analytical philosophers, his legacy seems to have diminished. No doubt the Badham team confronts the great challenge to blow new life into "common sense" philosophy.

### ***Review of "Daughters of Glastonbury": Globalisation and the Glastonbury Goddess movement'***

**Stephen E. Gregg University of Wales, Lampeter**

Focusing on the recent development of the 'Goddess Movement' in Glastonbury, the

paper of Dr. M. Bowman revealed fascinating developments in the evolving spiritual landscape of the town, and in particular the emphasis currently placed on the matriarchal tradition, including the annual Goddess Conference (and its associated Parade, or Procession) and the newly opened Goddess Temple, which is now Britain's only registered centre of Goddess Worship. The paper sat excellently within the theme of the conference (Religious Experience in Global contexts) by examining the international aspect both of Glastonbury's own Goddess Movement, and also the 'spread' of this religious revival to other parts of Europe – indeed, if one were to follow Marion's research it would seem that Glastonbury can serve as an inverted Globalisation model, whereby the traditional and the eclectic, the indigenous and the imported, and the 'Processed and Possessed' sit side by side. What interested me primarily, as a follow-up to this paper, was how this manifests itself on a practical level with the different faith communities of Glastonbury, and their interaction and reaction (or lack thereof) with one another. Indeed, as someone with enormous interest in religious fusion and dialogue, I was particularly interested to hear of the Roman Catholic Nuns who had travelled from Kildare, legendary seat of St Brigit, declaring their support for the Goddess Movement due to the fact that it was now impossible to distinguish between the historical saint and the Goddess of the same root-name.

By listening to this paper I realised the opportunities there may be for further research into the area of religious inculturation and fusion. Too often, there is a tendency for us all to become isolated on our own academic islands – the BASR conference has proven to me the enormous opportunities for shared scholarship and learning that exist within our collective expertise and experience. That, for me, is the BASR conference's primary benefit.

***Chen-yang Kao, Lancaster University***

The 2007 BASR Annual Conference, with the theme "Religious experience in global

contexts", had truly cross-cultural perspectives. Research reports on religious experiences in India, China, Korea, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Turkey, and Russia as well as in North America and European countries allowed an exceptional opportunity for attendants to reflect the nature of religious experience with regard to specific cultural contexts. I was particularly interested in the ongoing debate on the philosophical and theological assumption of comparative study of religious experience conducted by the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, following the thought-provoking lecture given by Professor Paul Badham. The debate seemed revealing the tension between the empirical study of religion that views religious belief and practice as merely an integrated part of human culture and society and the understanding of religious experience with an aim to inquire about any possible sacred Other that has been claimed to be experienced by individuals, a tension itself an intriguing, however controversial, issue in the study of religion.

Professor Paul Badham's speech was a prologue for empirical reports on religious experience in global contexts. Among them, five papers were on the findings produced by the project of "Religious experience in contemporary China", together with other three individual papers on religions in China and Chinese Diaspora, making the Conference an unusual platform for exploring the Chinese religious life in contemporary societies. As a student of Protestantism in China, I have especially benefited from the presented papers and discussions. It was always enjoyable to hear insightful comments made by Dr Maria Jaschok on these papers, including mine. Generally speaking, I felt the findings of the religious experience survey in China served well to raise important questions rather than convincingly answer them. More in-depth ethnographical researches are still needed in the further exploration. I am very grateful for the bursary that allowed me to attend the Conference, present my work, and learn so much.

***The de-privatization of New Age Religion & Communicating with Ancestors***  
**Mika Lassander Open University**

I would like to thank the BASR for granting me the bursary which enabled me to attend this year's conference in Edinburgh. Also, I am delighted to present some of my thoughts from the conference by way of summarising three of the papers presented during the conference proceedings.

Steven Sutcliffe discussed *the de-privatization of New Age Religion*, with a question mark. He argued that while the New Age has become visible in the public arena, it still lacks social significance and operates somewhere between public and private spheres. Sutcliffe argued that although the New Age is visible and nearly omnipresent, it is denoted as a thing of personal preferences and individual choice. He further suggested that the New Age movement is a local example of a universal phenomenon of popular religion and should be considered as a particular manifestation of this broader phenomenon. To exemplify this last, he used a biological metaphor saying that the New Age is a species rather than a genus in the taxonomy of religions. It is tempting for me to push that metaphor a bit further and point out that *species* is usually defined as a group of organisms capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring. I think that in portraying New Age as a fertile and multiplying form of popular religion, Sutcliffe not only illuminates the historical continuity of this mode of religious expression, but also brought coherence into the discussion on the nature of our object of study.

In his paper *Communicating with Ancestors* James Cox pointed out a problem in the terminology of possession or shamanism in the description of African religious specialists. While possession implies loss of control of one's body to the possessing spirit, shamanism implies mastery of, or at least negotiation with, spirits that can be malevolent. Cox argued that the examples of spirit possession that he had observed are more like socially institutionalised performances rather than individual psycho-

logical events. They represent a shamanistic type of religious action where the community is the agent that has mastery over the spirit. The start and the end of the event are controlled according to socially negotiated and agreed criteria. Cox's paper pointed out the continued need for an anthropological approach to the study of religion by pointing out the ease with which religious practices are continuously misrepresented through the application of imported, or simplistic, labels on them.

The theme of the conference, *Religious Experience in Global Contexts*, sparked discussion on the applicability of any analytical terms in studies with a global scope, particularly cross-cultural surveys. The translation of such terms is always an extremely complex process, but it is not impossible to arrive at acceptable conclusions. Protocols for such translations exist and they are commonly used in cross-cultural psychology (for example the MAPI Research Institute protocol, <http://www.mapi-research.fr>). The problem with these protocols is their complexity and the subsequent problems created as a result thereof.

**Stephen Bullivant-University of Oxford**  
Edinburgh 2007 was my first BASR conference, and I am extremely grateful to have been awarded a bursary (without which, probably, I should have been unable to attend). As Stephen Gregg noted at the beginning of his paper – and I *ought* to have done at the beginning of mine – this is a very generous and valuable scheme of the Association's.

My experiences of the conference were wholly positive, both socially and academically. Since I am primarily a theologian, and one interested particularly in the theology of atheism, my ignorance on almost all topics within the study of religions could scarcely have been greater. Nevertheless, three days at BASR went some way to diminishing this – especially, but by no means only, with regard to religious experience(s). Indeed, I learned at least something about a large number of interesting subjects, thanks to the high quality of both

speakers and papers. Particular highlights for me were: Lynn Foulston on Newport fieldtrips; Grahame Miles on 'scientific experience'; Stephen Gregg on Vivekananda and Ramakrishna; James Cox on Zimbabwean spirit possession; and Jolyon Mitchell on media martyrdoms. As for my own minor contribution, I am very grateful for the insightful and kind comments and suggestions I received.

The conference venue, accommodation, food, drink, and Wednesday-night entertainment were all also first rate. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in making the conference (which will certainly not be my last with BASR) such an enjoyable and educative experience – and the Executive Committee again for their much-appreciated financial support.

**Sixth Conference of the European Society for Catholic Theology  
September 13-16  
Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium**

**Dermot Tredget**

Every three years, the European Society for Catholic Theology (ESCT) organises an international conference that brings together not only its own members but others, from all over the world, interested in theology and the study of religions. This year was no exception with over 230 academics gathering in the ancient Flemish town of Leuven to explore the role of Christianity and other religions in contemporary European culture and society. Interestingly, no Italians or Spanish were present. This 'English-language' conference focused on two main areas, first the relationship between the identity of Europe and its Christian heritage. Second, the contribution that Christianity, together with other religions, can make to the European project. More information about the conference programme can be found on the ESCT website <http://www.kuleuven.be/eurotheo/congressET.php>. For those without English instantaneous translation was provided. Immediately preceding the European conference, the Catholic Theological Association (CTA) of Great Britain, of which I am a member, held a shorter conference engaging with a related theme 'Children of Abraham.' <http://cta.heythrop.ac.uk/conference.htm>

Following the opening by Cardinal Godfried Danneels, Archbishop of Meeuwen-Brussels, the keynote address of the ESCT Conference was given by BASR life mem-

ber, Professor Ursula King (Bristol) speaking on 'Responding to the Multi-faith Realities of Contemporary Europe: A Venture of Risk and Promise for Christian Theologians.' In a wide ranging exposition Ursula reflected on five topics which were of significance. First, the European project in relation to the rest of the world. Europe, she said, is a dynamic reality with fluid borders. Focusing on 'nationalism' and 'group tribalisms' could only harm Europe's position in the global context. Then, moving to her second point, she added that neither could the multi faith landscape of Europe be ignored. Hence it was necessary to avoid a 'mono-cultural' reading of the European past and present. Theologians need to learn more about the complex realities of the different faiths that had become a permanent feature of European society. Religious pluralism ought to be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. Thirdly, drawing on Levinas', Ricoeur's and de Chardin's understanding of 'the other' Ursula stressed the need for a deeper appreciation of other faiths and worldviews through the use of dialogue. She also recognised the significant contribution that women, consistently seen as 'other', could make. That led to her fourth point about the nature of dialogue and it being a transformative process. In contrast to a pervasive and militant 'secularism' this dialogue required a safe and secure 'secular space' where religious and political issues could

be explored without threat to one's integrity, job, or life. Finally she stressed that taking interfaith dialogue seriously affects methodology and in a positive way opens up creative possibilities in both systematic theology and ethics. The European project, she concluded, is more than economic prosperity and political harmony. It must be grounded in a spiritual vision as well. It is the task of theologians to develop a religious and spiritual literacy that can influence public attitudes towards greater openness, flexibility and diversity.

Thanks to instantaneous translation a second memorable plenary lecture was given by Hans-Joachim Sander of Salzburg

**UK Association for Buddhist Studies  
Conference on 'The Teaching of Buddhism in Higher Education'  
6-8 July 2007  
edited from a report by Andrew Kennedy**

This year's UKABS conference focused on the place of Buddhist Studies in the academy. Hosted by the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies [OCBS], around 60 members enjoyed wide-ranging and productive debate prompted by formal presentations:

**Brian Bocking (SOAS)** argued that 'insider' and 'outsider' are in some ways vacuous terms which depend on each other for their meaning. While there is a debate to be had in Buddhist Studies, as in the wider field of the study of religions, about whether an 'insider' or 'outsider' is better placed to understand Buddhism and explain it to students, an effective teacher is one who understands the audience, not just the subject. Moreover, good teaching involves a dialogue with students who may themselves be 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to various forms of Buddhism. It is now *hybridity* that is the order of the day. Students come from all over the world, so that for the teacher to make any factual generalization about what adherents to a particular religion do or believe has become hazardous. Equal opportunities legislation and the imperatives of the academic marketplace mean that mainstream universities cannot

'Europas Heterotopien – die Zumutung von Gottes Orten in den Zeichen der Zeit' in which he drew on Foucault's notion of 'heterotopias' (cf. *Of Other Spaces* 1967) to illustrate negative and positive aspects of European religious identity. Other papers and streams focused on Islam in Europe, issues of identity, Daoism, Jewish Christian relations and anti-Semitism, Christianity and European culture, philosophy of religion, political theology, faith, inter-religious dialogue and human rights. Sadly there was nothing on Hinduism, Buddhism or other faiths.

One final point for researchers. The theology faculty at Leuven has a magnificent

discriminate on religious grounds when hiring staff or admitting students; decisions must be based on academic merit, not religious affiliation.

**Film on: 'Debate in the Tibetan Tradition' presented by Cathy Cantwell (Oxford)** The Tibetan style of epistemological debate originated in Indian medieval universities such as Nalanda, continued in the major Tibetan Gelug-pa monasteries and is preserved in their south-Indian re-foundations in exile. Although the style may appear formulaic from an outsider's perspective, as a way of fostering student participation it bears favourable comparison with the western seminar. It would be interesting to experiment with a variety of Gelug-pa techniques in the western classroom: emphasis on orality, dependence on memory, communality in discussion, minimal tutor intervention, and kinaesthetic accompaniment of mental movement by stylised physical movement at key points in debate.

**Panel discussion on *Buddhist Higher Education Worldwide*, chaired by Richard Gombrich (OCBS), involving formal**

## presentations by:

**Ven. Khammai Dhammasami (Oxford)** – reported on the recent establishment of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU) with an objective of encouraging Buddhist higher education institutions to achieve standards comparable to the western model. Debate continues on the expansion of the traditional curriculum of monastic education to include secular subjects in all cases, but the general aim is to foster a non-sectarian, research-oriented, collegiate approach, of the kind that already exists in Japan.

**Tamás Agócs (Dharma Gate College, Budapest, Hungary)** - Since 1991 the Buddhist community in Budapest has voluntarily developed a Buddhist College, described as 'a religious school of higher education'. It has 340 students and 33 teachers, awarding BA and MA degrees accredited in the Hungarian educational system. Agócs looks forward to the eventual establishment of a European Buddhist University that bridges the divide between western and eastern criteria of scholarship, knowledge and the uses of knowledge.

**Rev. Fausto Taiten Guareschi (Italian Sōtō Zen Institute, Fudenji, Bargone, Italy)** This Institute describes itself as 'a laboratory committed to researching adequate languages to enable contemporary man to access religious experience'. The course offered in Buddhist Theology (the use of the term 'Theology' reflects the context of Buddhist practice in a predominantly Catholic situation) aims at establishing 'contact between science, philosophy and religion'.

### **Curricular and Institutional Approaches to Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand** *Justin McDaniel (University of California at Riverside)*

McDaniel argued that legislation in 1902 and 1921, designed to bring the Thai Sangha under state control and to reform its education, has not been successful. Policies and social ranks have been created, but there has been little concrete ac-

tion. In Laos, by contrast, monastic education was unchanged and unreformed under French colonial rule up to 1954. Monastic schools had no secular curriculum. Monastic education did not significantly advance in the post-colonial period, partly as a consequence of communist revolution, partly as a result of American bombing. However, both Lao and Thai monastic education appears more substantial when assessed in terms of pastoral purpose, rather than in terms of external curricular standards or the status of educational institutions.

### **Teaching Buddhism at advanced level over the internet** *Peter Harvey (Sunderland)*

The University of Sunderland's online, three-year, part-time MA in Buddhist Studies has an intake of 20-25, mostly mature students, 40% of whom are resident in the UK and 60% overseas. The course requires commitment to 15 hours study per week, and is assessed by online examinations that require email answers within 3 hours, and by essays. Although there may be fewer building-related costs, online teaching imposes a significantly higher workload on staff, in terms of course material preparation, e-mail interaction, marking and administration. There are some significant advantages for both institutions and students: recruitment is worldwide, and there are no issues of travel and residency. Once the right tone for online communication is established, openness in group e-mail discussion is helpful to all students.

### **Short presentations on current research by Postgraduate Students**

What kind of free will did the Buddha teach? *Asaf Federman (Warwick)*

A justice theory for Buddhist rebellions *Jungnok Park (Oxford)*

Buddhist Mediation: a transformative approach to Buddhist Ethics *Helena Suk Yee Yuen (Hong Kong)*

**Panel discussion on *How can the teaching of Buddhism interact with other related subjects?*, chaired by Geoff Bamford (OCBS) and stimulated by the following presentations:**

**Philosophy Paul Williams (Bristol)**

Western Philosophy works from a list of cases and historical solutions. It is up to Buddhist Studies to initiate western philosophical interest in Buddhist cases, such as Śāntideva's rational arguments for kindness, by engagement in the kind of critical dialogue that some Buddhists might find uncomfortable. Common cause may be made with continental approaches that see the practice of philosophy as the choice of a way of life: as something more than analysis of the validity of isolated propositions.

**Psychology Caroline Brazier (Amida Trust)**

As a religion often associated with the study of mind, Buddhism has much to contribute to an understanding of western Psychology, either from textual evidence of the Buddha's own responses to psychological problems, analysis of Abhidharma material, or from modern Buddhist therapies. In understanding these materials, particular attention to language is important since interpretations which rely solely on western translation can be wide of the mark.

**Physiology Denis Noble (Oxford)**

The basic problem of the nature of life, as addressed by molecular biology, is not resolvable by identification of constitutive components alone, without some understanding of their inter-relatedness. Noble's research into computer simulation of heart cells is an example of a process or relatedness understanding of biological systems. This non-reductive approach reveals cases, such as the regulation of the heart and the functioning of the brain/mind, where the biological, cellular components are not prior to the global properties of the system. There are analogies between systems biology and Buddhist doctrines based on *anātman*, which remain to be fully explored in teaching and research in both disciplines.

**Psychology Mark Williams (Oxford)**

Depression is a major problem in contemporary society. In contemporary western society first onset typically occurs in the early 20s, creating the prospect of a lifetime of periodic recurrence, long-term medication, and risk of suicide. Williams' group is conducting a controlled trial of the effects of teaching mindfulness meditation over 8 weeks in a classroom situation, as a method of preventing recurrence in participants who have suffered depression but are currently well. Results of the trial are comparable to pharmacological intervention, with a 66% relapse rate in the control cohort in comparison to 37% in the trial cohort. Best response is seen in participants with a history of chronic recurrence; least response is seen in those prone to mental rumination.

**Buddhism: One or Many? David Gellner (Oxford)**

Newar Buddhism escapes easy classification, having a Sanskrit liturgy, a Theravada monasticism, a Mahayana lay family life, and a hereditary caste of Vajracaryas who follow an advanced soteriological path. Nepali's are enthusiastic religious consumers, and since the 1930's the social stratification of ancient traditions has been joined by 1) the importation of a modern form of 'protestant' Theravada Buddhism, which is hostile to the Vajrayana on the grounds of its evident incorporation of Hindu iconography, 2) some imitation of Tibetan Buddhist exiles, and 3) influence from Japanese new religious movements. Amidst this plethora of influences and practices the question arises of whether Buddhism is one or many, but it should be noted this question is an outsider reaction to the diversity of Buddhist religious phenomena. Whether Buddhism is one or many is significant with respect to the nun's ordination issue, for unification implies the common origin and the possible contemporary conflation of divergent ordination traditions. Beneath contentious issues of doctrine and discipline, anthropological investigation can highlight hints of commonality.

**Teaching the Anthropology of Bud-**

### **dhism Michael Carrithers (Durham)**

The forest monks of Sri Lanka represent a repository of practical everyday knowledge, of knowledge *how* rather than the knowledge *that* of doctrinal propositions. It is *participation* rather than *understanding* that generates the merit that accrues from the gift exchange. The concept of participation is universal in forest practice, in that forest monasticism not only involves compassionate action towards people but towards all the other beings in the forest, on the ground that animals also have an emotional life which is capable of magnifying suffering. This universal compassionate approach, to the tiger or elephant as much as to the lay donor, renders the practice of compassion inseparable from the practice of insight. Carrithers' perception that Buddhist forest monasticism represented an alternative mode of heroism convinced him that the world should hear about this way of life.

### **The Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies: a case study in promoting the study of Buddhism - *presentation and discussion led by Geoff Bamford and Richard Gombrich.***

The teaching of canonical languages such as Sanskrit and Pali is an essential component of a text-based, historical methodology in Buddhist Studies. Linguistic and historical research and teaching underpins other anthropological, sociological and cultural-studies methodologies, therefore the maintenance of language-based Buddhist Studies at Oxford is arguably crucial in the struggle to preserve Buddhist Studies within the United Kingdom as a whole. A teaching unit is required at Oxford that can support the long-term admittance of graduate students, can support collective research, and can maintain academic con-

nections with universities abroad. The strategy of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies is based on securing capital endowments for the establishment of a Chair, Lectureships and dedicated building space, mainly from corporate and foreign donors.

### **A General Discussion of the Conference Theme**

The theme of 'Teaching Buddhism in Higher Education' was a departure for the UKABS conference, which normally acts as a forum for the presentation of research. However, the final session generated vigorous debate and a number of suggestions for future initiatives emerged, notably:

- The possible utility of traditional Buddhist pedagogical techniques, which emphasise memorisation, facility in oral presentation, and encounter within teacher/pupil relationships embedded in strong social groups.
- The mentoring of western and eastern Buddhist institutions aspiring to achieve university-level standards of teaching, assessment and validation.
- Cooperative teaching and research relationships between Buddhist Studies and other disciplines.
- The advantages and disadvantages of teaching online.
- Strategies for maintaining Buddhist Studies in the United Kingdom.
- The possibility of matching future teaching and research to UK Government and European Union policies, eg. the "happiness" agenda associated with Richard Layard

The need to liaise more formally with eminent monk/scholars in Asia



**Towards Building a Peaceful Society – The Role of Religion.**  
**Punjabi University, Patiala, India,**  
**19-21 February 2007**

**Stephen E. Gregg**

Lecturer in Religious Studies, Trinity College Carmarthen  
Doctoral Candidate, University of Wales, Lampeter

This gathering, the second similarly themed conference at Patiala in recent years, brought together participants from India, Pakistan, USA, Germany, Canada, Israel and the UK. An interesting dimension was added by the breadth of background of the participants – which included academics, devotees, inter-faith practitioners, political scientists and even television and radio producers working on religious programming – which meant that the conference was a truly interdisciplinary event.

Organised jointly by Punjabi University and the Oxford International Interfaith Centre, with financial support from the India Heritage Research Foundation, the conference opened with the Keynote Address given by Joy Barrow representing Oxford IIC, where she highlighted the Islamic foundation of the Sikh practice of *kirtan*. Subsequently, speeches followed on the first day covering areas as diverse as the lessons to be learned from the mistakes of the Christian missionaries to South America (Javier Cevallos – Kutztown University), and a history of religious dialogue in India (James Massey – New Delhi). Anne Watkins, representing the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre based at University of Wales, Lampeter, then gave a fascinating overview of the work of the Global Project (currently active in Europe, China, Japan and India).

The second day of the conference saw scholars from Germany, India and Israel speak on interfaith issues within Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Secular Judaism, Christianity, and the Baha'i faith. Of particular interest was the charismatic speech by Fr. Dr. Albert Nambiaparambil, one of India's most respected Christian interfaith practitioners, organiser of the Indian Catholic Bishop's Conference and former interfaith adviser to John Paul II – whose speech crossed traditional dogmatic and doctrinal

boundaries of religious dialogue and centred on appropriate linguistic structures for use in religious dialogue.

The third day saw two sessions, including papers from Buddhist and Jain scholars, and also a paper that clearly stood out for me, given by Yong Huang of Kutztown University, who spoke on the links between cultural hermeneutics and interfaith dialogue. It was in this final session that I delivered my own paper, outlining what I believed to be Vivekananda's unique contribution to religious dialogue, for which I am grateful to University of Wales, Lampeter and the Spalding Trust for making my attendance possible.

The Valedictory session included a speech by the guest of honour, Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, the Prime-Minister-in-exile of Tibet.

For the duration of the conference Punjabi University proved admirable hosts, including the laying on of a specially arranged 'Cultural Evening' provided by the students of the University's large Dance and Music departments. The ability of the students left the conference attendees in awe, but it remains to be seen as to whether the Bhangra dancing attempts of several eminent Western scholars of religion made the same mark on the hundreds of undergraduates present....

Following the official conference, a small group of attendees from the UK and Germany were taken on a tour of the Punjab and further into Northern India. The sights visited included Amritsar, where the Golden Temple was seen for 4am prayers, and where the BBC World Service decided to film us standing at the top of the town's tallest tower, which we afterwards found out was not open to the public due to major health and safety concerns. On a more sobering note, the Jallianwalla Bagh was

visited – the site of Brigadier Dyer’s massacre of around 2,000 social protestors in 1919.

From Amritsar, the party moved on to Anandpur Sahib, the place of the institution of the Sikh *Khalsa* in 1699. From there, Rishikesh was the destination, and specifically on to the Parmarth Niketan and Gita Bhavan Ashram, situated on the banks of the Ganges, and home to His Holiness Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati. The Ashram is involved in many interesting projects, the largest of which is sponsorship of the Encyclopaedia of Hinduism project, which is ongoing under the editorship of Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao at the University of South Carolina. The stay in Rishikesh included meetings with the Swami to discuss

current Interfaith work in the area – sessions which brought together Christians, Sikhs and Hindus, and which was followed by the obligatory bathe in the Ganges.

The conference was deemed a success, and Punjabi University and Johann Wolfgang Goethe University (Frankfurt) have announced a strategic partnership to ensure that future symposia may be held at Patiala on the subject of religious dialogue.

The proceedings of the conference are currently being edited by Dr Joy Barrow (UK) and Dr Dharam Singh (India) to be published in book form by Punjabi University Press.

**UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCSTERSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES**

**ANNUAL ISLAM CONFERENCE, APRIL 2008**

**THEME: *Islam and the Veil***

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

Papers are invited for this conference on any aspect of the theme of ‘Islam and the veil’. This conference which has been going on for 10 years has proved popular in the past and attracts a mixed audience of academics, postgraduate and research students, Christian clergy, government officials and members of the public. The presentations are limited to 45 minutes each including 5 or 10 minutes for questions and discussion after each paper.

This one-day conference usually offers five papers. All expenses are paid to speakers and a special lunch provided.

Please send the title of your paper and a short abstract to Dr. Theodore Gabriel, by e mail to <tgabriel@glos.ac.uk> on or before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007

## BOOK REVIEW

Robert Segal (ed) *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. pp. xix, 471.

This is an excellent volume of papers about the study of religion both in conception and execution. The book is organised into two parts, approaches and topics and contains twenty four chapters. Part 1 covers the ways different disciplines have understood religion, from both reductionist and non-reductionist perspectives including Anthropology (Fiona Bowie), Psychology (Roderick Main), Sociology (Grace Davie), Phenomenology (Thomas Ryba), and Theology (Ian Markham). Part 2 contains important themes of contemporary relevance. The essays are lively and interesting, generally written in an engaging style. For example, Fiona Bowie's opening essay on the Anthropology of Religion offers a survey of the field from the 'intellectualists' (Tylor to Horton), to Malinowski's focus on the psychological function of religion, to the symbolists understanding of Durkheim who saw religion as the expression of a society's highest goals and ideals. The essay discusses the origins of religion, religious experience, and modes of thought and brings the reader up to date in these fields to include Talal Asad's critique of Clifford Geertz and Pascal Boyer's explanation of religion in terms of cognitive psychology. The reader will also learn of other recent thinkers in the Anthropology of Religion including Thomas Csordas, Roy Rappaport, Edith Turner, and Byron Good. Ian Markham's essay on Theology similarly surveys the field, examining ways in which the term 'theology' is used, describing the sources of theology in different religions in terms of revelation, the believing community, and reason. The article examines theology and modernity, particularly John Millbank's work, and looks at future directions ending on a reflection on

the distance between 'academics and ordinary believers' (p. 208) and observing that theology will need to take account of the historical truth that the Church is 'going south'.

Topics that one would expect are covered in the book such as magic (Gustavo Benavides), mysticism (Jeffrey Kripal), ritual (Catherine Bell), and secularisation (Steve Bruce), but we also have other topics such as death and afterlife (Douglas Davies), heaven and hell (Jeffrey Russell), holy men/holy women (Lawrence Cunningham), and nationalism and religion (Mark Juergensmeyer). Among the essays I particularly enjoyed Richard Roberts on the body which discusses the body as 'the locus of experience, object of desire, source of metaphor, and icon of self-representation' (p. 213) and found Thomas Ryba's 'Phenomenology of Religion' a clear and useful survey.

Robert Segal has done a marvellous job in editing the volume and providing bibliography and index. His opening essay raises the question of religious studies as a discipline, the issue of reductionism and asks questions about the nature and boundaries of an academic discipline. He makes the point that Religious Studies cannot be restricted to mere 'data gathering' but should venture into explanation, relating religion to society, history and psychology, as occurs in other disciplines. This is a very useful, well constructed and interesting book that should be widely read and used on courses.

Gavin Flood  
Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies

## CHANGES AND MOVEMENTS

Melanie J. Wright  
The Open University

I joined the Open University this summer. It is my first full time post, although I have just over a decade's experience of HE teaching and management, most recently combining work as Academic Director of the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR) with a Fellowship at Girton College, Cambridge. My predecessor at the OU, Susan Mumm, is a tough act to follow: she now holds a Dean-ship in Canada. Hopefully, the skills I've developed thus far will once more come into their own as I juggle research projects, administrative duties, contributions to undergraduate courses ('Introducing Religions' and 'Religions in History') and support for doctoral students. Having previously developed and directed two postgraduate programmes (at Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Cambridge) I'm excited by the prospect of working with colleagues on a new OU Master's degree in Religious Studies.

I grew up in a rural area, where rates of participation in post-16 education remain low. My own research is in the study of religion (especially Judaism) and culture (particularly film). (This year I published *Religion and Film* and (co-edited with Lucia Falton) *The Religious Roots of Contemporary European Identity*.) So the Open University has always occupied a special place in my affections. I like the fact that our courses are accessible in my home town and I must admit - after years of studying the history and significance of British Cultural Studies - to getting a 'kick' out of working on a campus where one of the buildings is named in honour of Stuart Hall.

Changing jobs is always daunting. In the small CJCR, it was easier to launch new initiatives, and colleagues rapidly became friends. But at the same time, reliance on private donors (a feature CJCR shares with many HE departments today) brought its own set of challenges to the academic project of studying religions critically and non-confessionally. It's refreshing to work in a setting where Religious Studies is the core concern, and not secondary (in terms of history and resourcing) to theology or other faith-based activities. Remote communication with students differs markedly from the teaching of Cambridge undergraduates, where the face-to-face conversation predominates. But like the supervision, on-line or telephone interaction is also an opportunity for a quite special one-to-one 'meeting' between teacher and learner. I value the discipline of approach that is mandated by such practices (casual, off-hand responses simply will not do) and the opportunity to benefit from the kind of specialist training and resources that only a large organisation like the OU can provide.

Admittedly, Autumn-Winter 2007 finds me somewhat depressed by the recent decision to withdraw Hefce funding for students working for a qualification equivalent to or lower than one they already hold: Religious Studies and its cognate disciplines may, perhaps, suffer more than most. But the enthusiasm, resourcefulness and creativity of fellow practitioners (at the OU and beyond) convince me that, challenges and all, the future can be a positive and stimulating one.

# **INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER IN MODERNITY AND POST-MODERNITY**

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

## **THE CONFERENCE**

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

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

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

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

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

## **REGISTRATION AND SUBMISSION OF PAPERS:**

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

Both delegates and observers are welcome.

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

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

### **ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:**

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

### **CONFERENCE COSTS:**

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

### **THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS:**

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

### **ORGANIZED IN CONJUNCTION WITH:**

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

## Inform Seminar XXXIX

# Adults who grew up in NRMs

**Date:** Saturday, 24 November 2007; 9.30am - 5pm

**Venue:** New Theatre at the London School of Economics and Political Science  
(Online clickable map available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/mapsAndDirections/howToGetToLSE.htm>.)

New religious movements display a wide variety of parenting styles and attitudes towards children. For example, movements may perceive children as inherently sinful and in need of a firm hand - or inherently special and in need of a pure environment free from polluting influences. Some children find themselves part of a nuclear family within an NRM, while others are raised separately from their biological parents (perhaps for scriptural reasons) and, in some cases, in special schools as part of spiritual 'training'. Regardless of the form of socialisation, young people often prove to be rebellious and stubborn, with the result that not all children in NRMs become perfect disciples. Among the speakers will be professionals who have studied those who have grown up in an NRM, and young adults who are themselves either current or former members of the group into which they were born.

### **Speakers include:**

#### **PROFESSOR EILEEN BARKER**

Professor Emeritus, London School of Economics; Chair and Honorary Director, Inform

*'Give Me a Child for the First Seven Years... ' Then What Really Happens?*

#### **DR HAMISH CAMERON**

Honorary Consultant Child Psychiatrist, St George's Hospital, London; Expert Witness in Child Custody Cases

#### **MR DOMINIC GRAHAM**

Former Member of The Family International

*Out of the Cult's Shadow*

#### **REVD DR ROY LONG**

Lutheran Church in Great Britain, formerly HM Inspector of Schools

*Education for Exclusivity?*

#### **MS MARIANNE ROWELL**

Third Generation Member of the Church of Scientology

#### **MS AMANDA VAN ECK DUYMAER VAN TWIST**

Information Officer, Inform; Doctoral Student, LSE

*'You just don't understand': sibling rivalry across the religious divide*

Doors will open for coffee and registration at 9.30am with the first talk starting at 10am.

### **Registration**

Tickets booked and paid in advance cost £35 each (£14 students/unwaged) and include buffet lunch, morning coffee and afternoon tea. Tickets booked after 16 November 2007 cost £40 each (£20 students/unwaged).

To register, contact Inform by: Email: [inform@lse.ac.uk](mailto:inform@lse.ac.uk) | Phone: 020 7955 7654 | Post: Inform, LSE, Houghton St, London WC2A 2AE

Call for Papers

# Twenty Years and More: Research into Minority Religions, New Religious Movements and 'the New Spirituality'

An International Conference organised by  
INFORM and CESNUR  
in association with ISORECEA  
at the London School of Economics, 16-19th April 2008

On 1st January 1988, Inform (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements, [www.inform.ac](http://www.inform.ac)) opened its doors to the public for the purpose of providing information that is as objective, reliable and up-to-date as possible about minority religions. Later that same year, CESNUR (the Center for Studies on New Religions, [www.cesnur.org](http://www.cesnur.org)) was established by a group of European and North American scholars with the similar aim of contributing to our knowledge and understanding of minority religions. Five years later, following the collapse of communism, scholars studying religion in post-socialist Europe founded ISORECEA (The International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association), which has held regular meetings resulting in a number of publications concerning religion in the region.

As part of their twentieth anniversary celebrations, these networks are jointly organising this conference in order to assess the changes that have taken place over the past two decades, survey the current situation, and consider the fate of religious and spiritual groups in an increasingly multi-cultural world.

Those who would like to offer a paper are invited to submit a 200-word abstract of their paper **and** a 200-word *curriculum vitae* **both** to [Inform@LSE.ac.uk](mailto:Inform@LSE.ac.uk) **and** to [Cesnur\\_to@virgilio.it](mailto:Cesnur_to@virgilio.it) before **Friday, 30 November 2007**. The selection panel will be looking for empirical and theoretical papers which contribute to the scholarly understanding of minority religions and the variety of societal and individual responses to them. Authors of papers that have been accepted will be notified before the end of January 2008.

The conference will begin in the late afternoon of Wednesday 16th April (a field visit will be arranged for those who wish to go on it earlier in the day) and it will officially end on the evening of Saturday 19th (with further visits being arranged for Sunday 20th). Participants will be responsible for arranging their own accommodation (to download a list of possible places, see website). Further details about the conference and how to register will be available on both the CESNUR ([www.cesnur.org](http://www.cesnur.org)) and the Inform ([www.inform.ac](http://www.inform.ac)) websites.

*Unfortunately no scholarship will be available for participants. Each participant, including speakers, will be expected both to pay his or her travel and accommodation expenses, and to register before being included in the final programme.*



## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

### ***Spoon Feeding or Critical Thinking?***

### ***A-Level (Higher) to First Year Progression in Religious Studies & Theology***

St Anne's College, University of Oxford  
3-4 July 2008

**Keynote Speaker: Dr Andrew Wright**, Senior Lecturer in Religious and Theological Education, King's College London

The purpose of this conference is to bring together academics, school teachers, exam boards and policy-makers to consider ways to improve the transition from Religious Studies A-Level and Scottish Highers to first year degree courses in Theology and Religious Studies in the UK.

Proposals are invited for papers / workshops / presentations (and other formats) related to the following:

- The transition from A-Level / Higher to first year
- The first year experience
- Student / teacher expectations
- New developments in A-Levels and Highers
- Foundation Degrees
- Assessment and feedback
- Policy and curriculum development
- Resources

**Please submit your proposal via email to Dr Simon Smith ([simon@prs.heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:simon@prs.heacademy.ac.uk)) and include your name, email address and institution along with a 150 – 200 word description of your proposal. Please mention your preferred format (e.g. workshop, PowerPoint presentation, etc).**

**The deadline for proposals is 31 January 2008.**

Sponsored by the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies of the Higher Education Academy.

Supported by the Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies (AUDTRS).



**Subject: First Call for Papers- eLearning in Dialogue: Innovative Teaching and Learning in Philosophy and Religious Studies- Leeds/York (exact venue tbc)- 14-15 March 2008.**

Dear Colleagues,

An early date for your diaries.

The Higher Education Academy, Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies (PRS), is organising an international two-day Conference on 'eLearning in Dialogue: Innovative Teaching and Learning in Philosophy and Religious Studies' to be held in Leeds/York (venue tbc) in 14th-15th of March. Academics in Philosophy and Religious Studies, who are interested in enriching their practice through innovations in technology-enabled teaching and learning in Philosophy and Religious Studies, will find this two day event a most creative and fruitful way to meet other academics with experience in this area and exchange views with them on ways to apply, embed and enhance elearning in their discipline.

The Conference will include presentations and lectures from leading figures in elearning in the Humanities (from UK and other European countries), who will present both traditional and pioneering approaches to elearning. There will also be specialised workshops for a hands-on approach to elearning and to confront the challenges of transferring a traditional approach to dialogue in the humanities to a VLE platform and other forms of e-learning.

Dialogue has been frequently discussed as a major challenge for e-learning in the humanities (and especially philosophy). The innovations presented at the Conference will attempt to challenge this myth and they will present creative and novel ways of applying dialogue in teaching and learning, building on the existing use of dialogue as a teaching and learning strategy in the humanities and religious studies (which has a history of more than 2000 years, starting primarily with Socrates in philosophy and Buddha in religious thought).

All philosophical and religious traditions are welcome and there will be co-operation with and contributions from other Higher Education Academy Subject Centres. We would also like to extend the invitation to attend this conference to teachers in primary and secondary education. Interested researchers and practitioners of e-learning in the humanities, who would like to present their work and provide a platform for exchange of ideas in avant-garde and state-of-the-art innovations, are most welcome to contact Dr. C. Athanasopoulos, 'Costas', at the PRS Subject Centre ([c.athanasopoulos@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:c.athanasopoulos@leeds.ac.uk), [costas@prs.heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:costas@prs.heacademy.ac.uk)) and send their proposals for papers/workshops (deadline: end of January 2008).

There will also be a prize study case competition for academics using innovative e-learning in PRS, the prize for which will be presented at the Conference.

More details about the Conference and the prize competition will be posted by the end of July 2007 on the Subject Centre website.

With best wishes,

Dr. Constantinos Athanasopoulos- 'Costas'

eLearning Project Officer  
Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies  
School of Theology and Religious Studies  
University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT

Phone: 0113 343 4184

Fax: 0113 343 3654

E-mail: [costas@prs.heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:costas@prs.heacademy.ac.uk)

Website: <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk>

## Members Recent Publications

### Michael Berman

*The Nature of Shamanism and the Shamanic Story* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press 2007

### Simon Brodbeck

'Myth and ideology of the imperial kshatriya: viewing the Mahabharata from here and now', *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 14.2, pp. 93-102. 2006

'Ekalavya and Mahabharata 1.121-28', *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10.1, pp. 1-34. 2006

'Cricket and the karmayoga: a comparative study of peak performance', *Sport in Society* 10.5, pp. 787-801. 2007

'Gendered soteriology: marriage and the karmayoga', in Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (eds), *Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata* London: Routledge, pp. 144-75. 2007

### George Chryssides

'The Raëlian Movement'; in Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft (eds.), *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*. Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, Vol. 5 (African Diaspora Traditions and Other American Innovations), pp. 231-252. 2006

'Sources of Doctrine in the Solar Temple'; in James R. Lewis (ed.), *The Order of the Solar Temple: The Temple of Death*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 117-132. 2006

and Geaves, Ron *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*. London: Continuum. 2007

'Jehovah's Multinational Organization: Globalization, Theocracy and Jehovah's Witnesses'. *CESNUR Library Texts and Documents* Cyber-proceedings of International Conference, 7-9 June 2007, University of Bordeaux. Located at URL: [http://www.cesnur.org/2007/bord\\_chryssides.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2007/bord_chryssides.htm) 2007

مقاله: تعریف معنویت گرایي جديد / جرج د. کریسایدز ؛ باقر طالبی دارابی. Centre for Religious Studies, Iran. Persian translation of Chryssides, G D (1994). 'New Religious Movements - Some Problems of Definition'. *Diskus*, Vol 2, no 2. URL: <http://www.uni-marburg.de/fb03/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/chryssides.html> ISSN0967-8948. Locatable at <http://www.religions.ir/mag/mag.php?magid=16&section=9> 2007

### Adrian Cunningham,

'Jung in Ravenna: The Vision Fades' in *Harvest International Journal for Jungian Studies*, 50:2, pp163-179, 2005

(with A. C. Lammers) eds. *The Jung-White Letters*, London: Routledge, 2007

### Theodore Gabriel

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