

BRITISH ASSOCIATION
for the
STUDY OF RELIGIONS



BULLETIN
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The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR), formerly the British Association for the History of Religions (founded in 1954), is affiliated to the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) and to the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), whose object is the promotion of the academic study of religions through international interdisciplinary collaboration. The BASR pursues these aims within the United Kingdom through the arrangement of conferences and symposia, the publication of a Bulletin and an Annual General Meeting. Membership of the BASR is open to scholars whose work has a bearing on the academic study of religions and who are normally resident in the United Kingdom. Those interested in membership may apply directly by writing to the **Hon Secretary** to whom all general correspondence concerning the BASR should be sent: **Dr Graham Harvey, Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.**

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

Orders for the **Occasional Papers** should be addressed to: **Professor Kim Knott, Dept of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.**

Editorial: Too many Bulletins?

‘What’s all this about a postman?’ people have been asking me. The story goes back to the first *BASR Bulletins* I sent out as Editor in November 2002. Having decided against using the University of Wolverhampton mailing system, a colleague and I set out to the nearest pillar box. When it filled rather rapidly, we found a second one. Some time later, I received a letter from a firm of solicitors, acting on behalf of the postman, seeking compensation for a pulled muscle the unfortunate postman had allegedly sustained in attempting to carry the haul of *Bulletins* from the post box to his van.

The story, ‘Postie sues for too many letters’ was first taken up by the local press, and expanded out from there, attaining a front page spot in *The Telegraph*, which, evidently, many people saw, but everyone denies reading! Versions of the story have circulated internationally, appearing in The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Brazil and the U.S.A. I had hoped that the publicity might raise the BASR’s profile, and attract numerous membership enquiries, but, sadly, the Association’s name was changed at an early stage of the transmission to the British *Society* for the Study of Religion.

The small mailbag I received following this coverage was somewhat more varied. One or two complete strangers wrote supportively, and a few former acquaintances used the opportunity to get in back in touch. One man, however, perceiving that our organisation dealt with religious matters, wrote to seek my support in his project ‘to bring about the eradication of the evil that is so rampant in the world today’, offering payment for information on religions believing in a ‘personalised negative power (Lucifer, Satan, Devil, etc.)’, and requesting the addresses of prominent religious leaders like the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope.

No doubt my correspondent mistakenly believed that Religious Studies supports religious causes, rather than simply studies them. Fortunately, I was able to recommend Paul Weller’s *Religions in the UK*, which, I hope, provided him with the basic information he needs for his venture. His enquiry reassuringly highlights the fact that our scholarly efforts are not in vain: the public, as well as students, need information and discussion on religious matters, and hence we need to disseminate our research. One very good reason for publishing is that we can avoid dealing individually with every question people want to ask about religion.

Just before going to press, one member expressed reservations about the regular ‘Member’s Publications’ feature that the *Bulletin* runs. My counter-argument was that information about publications and conference contributions is not personal self-aggrandisement, but important dissemination of information of scholarship, which scholars have long recognised as a key obligation.

The BASR and its Bulletin continues its endeavour to further this goal, and, if the occasional postman strains under the weight of Bulletins, then he or she might reflect that it is for a very worthy cause!

George Chryssides

The annual subscription for the BASR and Bulletin is £15.00 (£8 for post-graduate students and researchers without full employment). Scholars residing abroad may subscribe to the Bulletin for £10.00 a year. Subscriptions are due in October. The BASR is a registered charity (No 801567), and members are encouraged to pay their subscriptions by Gift Aid (if in taxed employment), by direct debit or annual cheque. Cheques should be made out to the 'British Association for the Study of Religions' and sent to the Treasurer: **Dr Helen Waterhouse, Arts Faculty, The Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.**

—Visit our website at <<http://basr.org.uk>>—

BASR OCCASIONAL PAPERS (order from Kim Knott)

- 1 Miranda Green, *Women and Goddesses in the Celtic World*, 1991
- 2 Christine Trevett, *The Quaker Margaret Fell: Religion and Gender in a C17th Dissenting Group*, 1991
- 3 Ann Bancroft, *Hildegard of Bingen to Meinrad Craighead*, 1991
- 4 Julia Leslie, *Religion, Gender and Dharma: The Case of the Widow Ascetic*, 1991
- 5 Peter Antes, *How to study religious experience in the traditions*, 1992
- 6 Marion Bowman, *Phenomenology, fieldwork and folk religion*, 1992
- 7 George Chryssides, *Unificationism: A study in religious syncretism*, 1993
- 8 Michael Pye, *Syncretism versus synthesis*, 1993
- 9 Ria Kloppenberg, *A Buddhist-Christian encounter in Sri Lanka: Pandura Vada*, 1994
- 10 Peter Donovan, *Maori rituals add magic to contemporary civic life*, 1995
- 11 Ninian Smart, *Sacred nationalism*, 1995
- 12 W.S.F. Pickering, *Locating the sacred: Durkheim and Otto*, 1995
- 13 Terence Thomas, *'The sacred' as a viable concept in the contemporary study of religions*, 1995 (bound together with 12)
- 14 Margaret Chatterjee, *Do we need authority in religious life?*, 1996
- 15 Chris Arthur, *Media, meaning, and method in the study of religion*, 1996
- 16 Gerrie ter Haar, *Chosen people: The concept of diaspora in the modern world*, 1996
- 17 Richard Gombrich, *Religious experience in early Buddhism*, 1997
- 18 James Cox, *Alterity as identity: Innovation in the Academic Study of Religions*, 1998
- 19 Elizabeth Amoah, *African spirituality and religious innovation*, 1998
- 20 Ian Reader, *Religion, conflict and the sacred mission: On understanding the violence of Aum Shinrikyo*, 1999
- 21 Brian Bocking, *Religious Studies: The New Queen of the Sciences*, 2000
- 22 Kim Knott, *The Sense and Nonsense of 'Community': A Consideration of Contemporary Debates about Community and Culture by a Scholar of Religion*, 2002
- 23 Armin Geertz, *Religion and Community in Indigenous Contexts*, 2002
- 24 Guilia Sfamini Gasparro, *Religion and Community in the Ancient World*, 2002
- 25 Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism, Muslims and the British State*, 2002

Looking Forward to Looking Back

From Past Bulletins of BAHR / BASR (compiled by Peggy Morgan)

Looking Forward to Looking Back

From Past Bulletins of BAHR / BASR

(Introduced by Peggy Morgan)

At the AGM on 10 September 1987, members spent ‘considerable time ... discussing important points of future policies and student intake raised in a letter sent by Professor John Hinnells.’ It was agreed to ask Professor Hinnells to write a statement for the membership as a whole to be printed in the next Bulletin. What follows is his article.

John Hinnells started his career practising, studying and teaching art. He began his theological studies at King’s and SOAS, London University and lectured in Religious Studies at Newcastle before moving to Manchester in 1970. In 1984 he was made Professor of Comparative Religion (a chair dating back to 1904 when its first occupant was T. W. Rhys Davids). He was seconded to the Open University between 1975-1977 when their Religious Studies courses were beginning before returning to Manchester where he was Dean of the Faculty of Theology from 1987-1988. It was while shouldering this responsibility that he wrote the piece for BASR. In 1993 he moved to London to head the new Department of Religion at SOAS and since retirement has been a visiting professor at both Derby and Liverpool Hope Universities. He is the author and editor of many works on the study of religions and on Zoroastrians in particular.

As with many of the features we have reprinted, many of the issues in the following piece sound all too familiar. His title certainly embraces the present.

BAHR Bulletin 53 November 1987

Theology and Religious Studies into the Third Millennium

Introduction

This brief paper is written at the request of the AGM of the British Association for the History of Religions (BAHR) and copies have been requested by various groups, e.g. for the work of the committee of the Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies (AUDTRS) in their visits to departments to collect information prior to the Subject Com-

mittee of the University Grants Committee (UGC), or as it will then be, the Universities Funding Council (UFC). The deadlines of the BAHF and of AUDTRS are of two to four weeks, a time coinciding with registration week for students and the completion of a book-manuscript. In these circumstances it is not possible to provide exhaustive documentation. The paper grows out of discussions with colleagues in various institutions and expresses my growing concern that we are giving inadequate attention to the long term future of our subject. Too often we are concerned only with patching up local problems after the last round of cuts and not anticipating the future, a future which I fear could be far more damaging than anything we have faced thus far. At several points I have referred to Manchester's experience, not (I hope) because of bias but simply because it is the example I know best. Much of what follows is personal opinion, that has been emphasised in the interests of objectivity, not of egoism.

The Demographic Curve

The size of the 18 year old population in Britain peaked in 1982.¹ Estimates of the extent to which it will diminish vary (migration, death rates and contrasting patterns in different parts of the country are factors which can affect the figures). The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' *Monitor*, in projecting future population trends, estimates a 25% decrease in the 15-19 year age range by 1996.² If one looks at the figures of children attending Primary Schools the total fell from 4,516,110 in 1975 to 3,098,744 in 1985, that is by 31%.³ The recent Government White Paper (p.7) accepts there will be approximately a one third diminution in the 18 year old population by 1996. In broad terms spending on schools has decreased as the population trough has passed through the system, hence the merging and closing of schools. Will that pattern be followed with universities?

Numbers Attending University

These figures are more difficult to estimate than the overall size of the population. There are various reasons for believing that the university population will not diminish in the same proportion as the population does. The *White Paper* (WP) (p.7) comments 'There is no reason to suppose that employers requirements for graduates and diplomates will fall in parallel with the one-third fall in the size of the 18-19 year old age group by 1996'. The Government has indicated that it would like to see an increase in the proportion of young people having Higher Education from 16% to 18%. It is not clear where people will go however. The Polytechnics and Colleges of Higher Education have taken 75% of the increased numbers since 1979 (WP, p.5). How will their numbers, and proportion of 'the market', fare in the next ten years? There is an expressed intention to increase the proportion of women

and of mature students attending universities. It is sometimes commented that the decrease in the birth rate is highest among the 'lower' Social Classes and universities are not so dependent upon this section of the population. Hence the declining population will not affect numbers as dramatically as 'first sight seems likely.'⁴ The numbers applying to go to university will almost certainly be affected by the potential applicants' assessment of the career prospects of graduates and by employers' estimates of their own needs.

As a consequence of these incalculable variables the Government has issued two projections of the numbers of students in Higher Education in the next two decades. Both see a peak around 1990 and a trough in 1996. On the lower trajectory the numbers will fall from 700,000 full time equivalents (f.t.e.s) to 616,000 in 1996 which represents a 12% decrease. The 'optimistic' projection foresees a total of 726,000 in 1990 and a decrease of only 35,000 by 1996, i.e. a decrease of 5%. Both projections suggest a small increase in the numbers by the year 2000, though not back to present numbers.⁵ Again, it is impossible to foresee what proportions will be at Universities compared to Polytechnics, or what will be the role of the Open University and other institutions.

In my opinion the Government Paper neglects one important consideration, namely the number of employers who will be 'fishing' in the depleted 'pool' of 18 year olds. A recent item on the 'Today' programme on Radio 4 referred to the projected needs of the nursing profession in the 1990s if it is to maintain the present age structure of the profession and allow for the increasing age of the general population and its assumed medical needs. The speaker suggested something like 50% of 18 year olds from the equivalent of the present Upper Sixth would be needed. Even allowing for the exaggeration natural in such media reportage (and maybe the 'shroud waving' the medics are sometimes suspected of), there is a substantial point, namely that there will be increased competition for the best Sixth Form products. One might also add that the number of students in universities may well be affected by Government actions on grants and by the condition of the economy (e.g. the state of the oil market) and the level of the pound. Allowing for these various factors, even if one is relatively optimistic and sees a 10% drop in student numbers in the 1990s, and if that be coupled with an equivalent reduction in funding, then the cuts we will face will be far worse than those thus far experienced. At Manchester, for example, we currently face an annual savings target of 1.5%. The figure varies from university to university, but it is doubtful if any face the sort of savings targets the figures imply for the mid 1990s. .

Theology and Religious Studies at Universities

Given that the present undergraduate population is part of the 'baby boom', we should, I think, be troubled that the numbers applying for Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) at university has decreased in recent years, from 985 in 1985 to 936 in 1986, a drop of 5%. The number of acceptances has also dropped, from 646 in 1984 to 623 in 1986 (i.e. by 4%).⁶ Final figures for 1987 are not yet available, though I understand they have dropped marginally (by 0.23%) in contrast with the total numbers applying to universities which have increased in the last year by 2.47%.⁷ If these figures represent a mere 'blip' in a pattern they may be disregarded, but if they reflect an emerging pattern of our subject failing to increase applications even when the 18 year old population remains large, then we may have more future problems. Once again one must allow for local variations. Thus at Manchester, and I gather in some other universities also, we have experienced an increase in applications and entrants during the two years where the national application rate has dropped. In 1985 we admitted 44 students from a final number of applications (i.e. not the UCCA June figure) of 320. In 1987 we admitted (with university approval) 55 students from 364 applicants (i.e. we experienced a 25% increase in undergraduate intake and a 14% increase in applications). This suggests other universities have experienced a corresponding drop in applications. An obvious possibility is that applicants are voting with their feet and one danger is that their vote may determine the future or non-future of a department. Those who wish to apply the market economy, or law of supply and demand, may see this as a desirable process. Others may prefer the planning of the subject's future to be done by more informed persons. Personally I would want to associate myself with the latter group.

How will future trends affect Religious Studies? We are, again, in the realm of speculation. Increasing the proportion of mature students may not be as easy in TRS because the subject already has a higher proportion of mature students than most subjects. In the Statistical Supplement to the 1985-86 UCCA report (pp. 10 f) 27% of those accepted to study TRS at University were over the age of 24 compared with 9% in English, 3% in Mathematics, 2% in Chemistry and 1% in General Engineering. The breakdown of figures by gender is less easy to give on a subject basis. The figures are available, however, for those taking the 'A' level route where there are 31% more women than men entering TRS. It means that TRS is already very active in recruiting women and that we are unlikely to be able to benefit from this as a 'new market' in which to sell our wares, unlike, say, our colleagues in Engineering. In short, I am not optimistic about our chances of compensating for the declining population by the recruitment opportunities available to others in the university system.

Another alternative might be to accept lower 'A' level grades to increase numbers. In 1986 the average 'A' level score of students accepted for TRS (i.e. excluding figures for students who came via other routes) was 9.4. The only Subject Area with a lower average was 'Mass Communication and Documentation' with 8.9 TRS was not the lowest scorer among individual subjects. Of the 103 listed by UCCA 21 had lower average 'A' level scores among their intake, but that does leave TRS in the bottom quarter of this particular league. To balance the picture somewhat one should also add that TRS was second only to Medicine in the number of its entrants who already have a U.K. degree. In hard numbers 46 applicants had a degree (c.f. Medicine 193), or 7% of TRS students compared with 5% of medics. It would not, therefore, be correct to say that TRS has low entry requirements overall, but we do not have room for lowering the 'A' level entry requirement (or their future equivalent).

A further range of issues affecting the future numbers of TRS students, obviously, is government policy in Education. One evident point is the introduction of the National Curriculum. Although ministerial pronouncements have emphasised that RE will keep its status from the 1944 Education Act as a compulsory subject, its current rating among the subjects in which examinations are not required, i.e. among 'the others', could well lead to schools investing less resources both of manpower, materials and time into the subject. This could restrict yet further the numbers taking examinations in TRS. In one sense this may not be too serious in that few departments require 'A' level TRS for entrance, but my impression (figures are not readily available) is that a high proportion choose TRS at university level because they have enjoyed it as a subject at 'A' level. Over three-quarters of our intake this year at Manchester had taken TRS at 'A' level. I fear that our application rate will fall if the numbers taking 'A' level (or its replacement) drops. The White Paper states 'Planning of higher education will need to take account, *inter alia*, of regular monitoring of actual demand for places ...' (p.7). The obvious implication is that if demand for our subject diminishes, for whatever reason, we can expect a corresponding reduction in resources given to us.

Various recent Government pronouncements and discussion documents place emphasis on universities meeting the needs of industry, business and commerce. In the last 6 years there has been a change in the balance of resources from Arts to Sciences (White Paper pp. 2-4, 7, 9). A further potential danger, in my opinion, is the application to Humanities of guidelines produced for the Sciences. In the Discussion Document prepared in May 1987 by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils entitled *A Strategy for the Science Base* there are frequent references to 'exploitability' as a criterion for decisions on investment in university research, e.g. p.viii, 'In par-

ticular, judgements of potential utility should play a greater part in determining the relative level of effort to different fields of basic research'. Although there is a commitment to 'curiosity-orientated research' (p.18) the proportion of funding proposed for it is substantially less than in the past.

The Parker Report⁸ may perhaps be a guide for the way such government attitudes impinge on our field, indeed its concern with Asian and African language and area studies is immediately relevant for those of us in Comparative Religion. The initial impact of the report appears positive because additional posts have been given in various institutions and elsewhere posts, including chairs, have been saved from immanent threat. But not all is sweetness and light. The gift of a post comes with a requirement that the institution preserves the strength of that subject, say Arabic. However, the Department, or Faculty, may still be required to effect the overall level of cuts laid down before Parker so that the protection of one subject may increase the threat to another. Thus Hebrew is now at great risk in one of the most prestigious institutions in the South after the receipt of Parker posts in other languages.

Further, Parker's brief was explicitly to look at languages for diplomacy and commerce. History, culture and religion are not the concerns of these posts. Thus Japanese at Stirling may not preserve the study of Japanese religion at that university as it has been pursued in the past.⁹ The point is that the projected figures for university students in the White Paper should not be read as indicating that the whole spectrum of the university curriculum will be evenly protected from the declining birth rate. Subjects consistent with government's priorities may be so protected, but for us the question is whether TRS will be one of those subjects? Perhaps I should add that while I am evidently opposed to some of the Government's measures there is some sense in reassessing the work of universities. The system has to some extent, as Alice said, 'just growed'.

Many science subjects have been very successful in the last six years in raising substantial sums from outside sources, a step strongly encouraged by Government. To be precise there was an increase in real terms of 69% from 1981/2 to 1985/6.¹⁰ Although TRS has been able to raise some money, e.g. from oil-rich countries to facilitate the teaching of Islam, this has proved an unreliable source and one which appears to be contracting. The search for outside funds is a potentially hazardous step for TRS since funding bodies often want a significant voice in the use made of the funds. This is true in science also, but the danger of, say, sectarian, influences on university teaching seem to me especially dangerous. In my opinion the consequences of Church funding in the past have been detrimental, for example, tying professorial posts at certain institutions to ordained members of a particular denomination (lay-readers, devout laymen, and women, need not apply, re-

ardless of scholarly excellence!). The link with the churches is likely to increase the image of TRS centres as seminaries which in the long term is not likely to commend the subject to many of our academic colleagues. The strength of the link between Kirk and Divinity in Scottish universities is something viewed with grave unease by many south of the border (and some to the north). Similar difficulties can evidently arise from funding from non-Christian sources. Economic Cuts could drive departments into unthinking acceptance of funding from outside sources which in the long run may not be in the best interests of the subject.

The reference to churches raises another issue, though not one of Government policy. The churches have recently been reassessing training policy, not least for financial reasons since university fees can be higher than the costs of places at Theological colleges. Although some are concerned that universities should not be seen as seminaries, it would be foolish to deny the importance of ministerial candidates for TRS. The recent fall in application rates may, perhaps, be explained by this reassessment by the churches. Here lies a policy issue of some delicacy for the universities. A secular institution funded by public money, including taxes from Muslims, Hindus, Jews (and from people of no religious allegiance), cannot undertake denominational training. Yet, like Law or Medicine, we cannot ignore the needs of a profession related to our subject. In the past, in my opinion, Theology went too far in the closeness of its links with churches, but it would be equally wrong to go to the opposite extreme. If we are seen to do the churches' work we may well be told to let the churches pay. If we ignore them as one of our constituencies we will suffer further from the threat of declining numbers in the 1990s.

Many issues cannot be discussed in the small space available. Others which require far more consideration than they are currently given include what is the relationship between Religious Studies at polytechnics and universities? The common answer, that 'universities are concerned with research and polytechnics with applied studies', is meaningless in my opinion. Several staff in Manchester Poly, as elsewhere, are more active in pure research than many university colleagues. I am convinced my own studies of the impact of western culture on the preservation of the Asian heritage of migrant groups is very practical. Presumably other colleagues feel similarly about their work. Is there a difference between Religious Studies at a poly and at a university? What should be the long term relationship between departments in such institutions? The collaboration between universities in TRS is virtually nil, unlike a number of scientific projects. Can we really justify this given the difficulties which are ahead?

There are various steps I believe we can take to ensure the long term health of TRS. PICKUP and in-service courses are but one possibility, e.g.

at Manchester collaboration with the Medical Faculty for an M.A. on Medical Ethics and short courses on Asian Culture and Western Medicine, though in the early stages, are ventures which hold promise for the future of the subject in our university. Doubtless colleagues can produce a substantial list of their activities. But overall I fear that insufficient long term planning is being made to protect our subject. Even the most optimistic projections for the 1990s indicate deeper cuts than we have yet faced unless more can be done to obtain level funding, or innovative measures taken to preserve the subject over the next 13 years and into the third millennium. If there is seen to be a dramatic decline in the demand for the subject, or some criteria evolved for Science are deemed appropriate yardsticks for the Humanities (e.g. 'exploitability', the capacity to attract outside funding, the diminution of 'curiosity orientated' research) we could well see a dramatic cut in TRS in the next decade. It is a waste of time merely saying we object to cuts reflecting falling rolls, or to criteria or to other policies. Alternative proposals are needed which take serious account of the problems, yet preserve what we consider is important in our subject. But before those can be discussed a greater awareness of the long term dangers, and not merely of the short term threats, is essential. If we continue to think only of the immediate future then there is a real chance that TRS will enter the third millennium in Britain in a withered and wasted form.

Footnotes

¹ Government White Paper, Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge, 1987 (hereafter simply White Paper) p.3.

² O.P.C.S. *Monitor*, Reference PP2 86/1 issued 16 December, p.14.

³ House of Commons, Third Report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, Session 1985-86. *Achievement in Primary Schools*, vol. 1, p.liv.

⁴ UCCA *Statistical Supplement to the Twenty-fourth Report*, 1985-6, pp. 28 f

⁵ *White Paper*, p.6.

⁶ UCCA *Twenty-fourth Report*, 1985-86, p.⁷.

⁷ Information supplied by the Admissions Office at Manchester University.

⁸ *Speaking for the Future, a review of the requirements of Diplomacy and Commerce for Asian and African Languages and Area Studies*, 1986.

⁹ Some qualification is in order at this point in that there are suggestions of a second report dealing with the non-business dimensions of the subject.

¹⁰ *Strategy for the Science Base*, p.1.

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The British Association for The Study of Religions

affiliated to: The European Association for The Study of Religions
and The International Association for The History of Religions

50th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE (1954-2004)

SEPTEMBER 13th - 16th, 2004
Harris Manchester College, Oxford

THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS: MAPPING THE FIELD

This conference aims to consider past, current and future trends and research. Panels and papers may be focused on individual religions (e.g. Judaism, Sikhism, Jainism); typologies (e.g. new movements, indigenous traditions); geographical areas (e.g. Japanese religions, religions in Europe or Africa); key themes (e.g. identity, gender, science and religions, mysticism); key figures (e.g. Eliade, Schimmel, Smart) and methods which contribute to the field (e.g. psychology, anthropology, philosophy, phenomenology, sociology, history etc.).

**The BASR annual lecture will be given by
Professor Ursula King, Universities of London and Bristol**

Offers of panels, individual papers and reports of work in progress by June 1st 2004 to: Peggy Morgan, Mansfield College, Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TF
peggy.morgan@mansfield.ox.ac.uk

Conference registration form and BASR membership at
<http://basr.org.uk>

A limited number of full student bursaries are available for postgraduates presenting papers or work in progress reports.
Applications to Peggy Morgan as above.

II. RELIGIOUS STUDIES NEWS (U.K., Europe, International)

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Religious Studies — What's the Point? Conference, Lancaster University, 15-16 December 2003

The *Religious Studies - What's the Point?* Conference was hosted by Lancaster University, and supported by PRS-LTSN. It attracted over 50 participants, from the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. The conference started from a consideration of the impact of Ninian Smart on Religious Studies (RS), focusing on issues crucial to the field at the beginning of the 21st century. A central premise was that studying religion in comparative contexts is a worthwhile exercise, which can widen horizons and deepen understandings of the world around us. It continued into an exploration of contemporary arguments of whether 'religion' is a viable topic for analysis, and whether 'Religious Studies' should exist at all as a field of study. Between these perspectives were a host of questions relating to the ways we study, analyse and teach religion, from 'universalist' and 'comparativist', to 'particularist' positions. Linked to these broader areas of discussion were other basic questions: the language and the terms utilised (or avoided) in the research and teaching of Religious Studies, and especially, how those engaged in the study of religions deal with terms and words that have particularist orientations or value-laden meanings (e.g. fundamentalism, cult, millenarian) specific to certain cultural discourses, which can come to be applied to other cultures and areas.

The conference was divided into several consecutive sessions, and the following is a brief summary of speakers' contributions, with quotations drawn from abstracts. On the first day of the conference, Richard D. Hecht (Santa Barbara — read in his absence by Ian Reader) discussed 'how Smart utilized the comparative and phenomenological study of religions throughout his teaching, not only producing a "theory" of religion but a systematic pedagogy for how best to teach our subject matter.' Ron Geaves (Chester) discussed the pressures facing RS, with (some) departments closing and undergraduate numbers falling, and highlighted how RS can contribute to discussions on politics, conflict, equality and minority ethnic struggles within multicultural environments. John Achterkirchen (Santa Barbara) explored the question of '[H]ow can we interrogate religion? If we can regard religious studies, where in relation to the discipline are we then positioned?' James Cox (Edinburgh) discussed perspectives surrounding 'methodological agnosticism' in relation to Ninian Smart, and critics of the position such as Timothy Fitzgerald, suggesting that 'the field called Religious Studies does

not define itself with respect to the “sacred”, but instead employs scientific principles to study socio-historical manifestations of authoritative traditions.’ The theme of John Shepherd’s (St. Martin’s) paper was ‘Phenomenological Perspectivalism’, which took the theme that ‘Ninian Smart’s influential advocacy of the phenomenological approach to Religious Studies has been widely taken to imply that Religious Studies should be non-evaluative. This is a misunderstanding.’ Evan Berry (Santa Barbara) discussed Smart in relation to ecology, and suggested that ‘the interactions between religions and environments will be one of the most rich and provocative areas of study for religionists in the years to come.’ Gavin Hyman and Robert Segal (Lancaster University) engaged in a lively debate, in which Segal defended the comparative method, about which Hyman expressed reservations.

On the second day of the conference, L. Philip Barnes (Ulster) considered ‘the arguments recently adduced by Timothy Fitzgerald in *The Ideology of Religious Studies* to the effect that the concept of ‘religion’ is not a genuine analytical category in that it fails to denote any distinctive kind of experience or social institution.’ Philip Goodchild (Nottingham) sought to defend the usage of the term ‘religion’ ‘by launching a counter-offensive’, suggesting that ‘the study of religion remains a unique discipline where the modern West can encounter, critique and be modified by other cultural traditions, as well as continuing to discuss and develop its own response to the most significant limits of experience.’ Graham Harvey discussed how ‘more reciprocal engagements between scholars of religion and indigenous peoples (perhaps as hosts and guests) might contribute to some decisions about what academia, and Religious Studies within it, could be about.’ Tim Jensen (Southern University of Denmark) tracked and discussed ‘some of the major lines of the development, some of the most important reasons for the changes, and future challenged to the study of teaching of religion(s) in Denmark.’ David Smith (Lancaster) explored the place of Hinduism within religious studies, looking at the work of Müller, Eliade and Doniger. Steve Sutcliffe (Edinburgh) gave ‘a critique of the existing “world religions” typology,’ and a ‘proposal for a new, nominalistic model of category formation combined with anthropological reflexivity.’

Following the papers, there was an opportunity for discussion and consideration of the conference themes, chaired by Ian Reader. As will be seen from this summary, this was broad ranging in nature. Some of the key points were as follows: concerns were expressed about the (possible) loss of the historical and the linguistic issues in RS; language(s) in religion are neglected, and this can lead to category mistakes and misrepresentation. Teaching issues have frequently been neglected, or forgotten because of other pressures (e.g. Research Assessment Exercises). The profile of classroom agendas should be raised. Regarding Smart’s comments that senior

members of staff should be teaching introductory courses, it was suggested that seniority does not necessarily translate as competency in a subject!

A lack of historical and comparative analysis of religions in the media was noted, along with the point that RS academics should be better equipped to respond to the media. The question emerged of whether an academic should 'care' about a religion in order to teach it; the 'commitment' issue in RS needs to be addressed further. Do you need pre-existing beliefs to give a critique of religion(s)? A suggestion was made that there is also a place for those without 'commitment'. Cynicism can provide more insight than empathy!

In relation to marketing and recruitment issues, it was asked whether elements of these discussions can be translated to students, potential students, funding bodies, and institutions? One response was that the 'system' assumes a pre-determined 'marketable' student, which may not fit into the RS model. It was asked if conformity to this model suppress educational aspirations (and results)? External pressures, and the constant need to 'justify' activities, result in economic and intellectual crisis.

In the U.K. system, where many students do a cross-section of subjects, of which RS is a small component of a wider degree, the question was asked of what skills can be passed on in this exposure — and whether it influences the teaching of RS? It was noted that RS skills can also be passed through to other disciplinary areas, for example, psychodrama exercises applied in business studies contexts. RS can challenge the pre-programmed skills of some subject areas. There are opportunities for cross-disciplinary discussions and developments (for example, relating to pedagogy and training). The multicultural angle of RS can be significant in relation to employability and (specific) career development.

In conclusion, it was suggested that these themes should be picked up and explored in more detail in future events, for example, the BASR 2004 Conference.

A full report of this Conference will be made available on the PRS-LTSN website <www.prs-ltsn.ac.uk>.

Gary R. Bunt
Subject Co-ordinator, Theology & Religious Studies
PRS-LTSN, University of Wales, Lampeter

Conference on Bahá'í Studies
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 5-7 December 2003

A group of scholars interested in the study of the Bahá'í Faith have been getting together in Newcastle on an annual basis for 20 years. These conferences do not have a theme and are intended for scholars to present recent research findings and draft papers. This year's conference was one of the largest ever with 33 participants and the presentation of 10 papers. On the Friday evening there was an introductory session with the presentation of a translation of a short invocation by the Bab made by Dr Todd Lawson of the University of Toronto. On Saturday morning, Roger Prentice, who is completing a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Sunderland, presented a paper on 'Spiritual Inspiration in the Art of Bill Viola', looking at the religious inspiration behind the work of this artist who currently has an exhibition at the National Gallery. The second paper, 'State and Religion in the Era of Kemalist Reform: Persecutions of Bahá'ís in Turkey, 1928' was by Necati Alkan who is shortly presenting his Ph.D. thesis at Bochum University, Germany. This was followed by a paper presented by Dr David Palmer, who is Eileen Barker Fellow in Religion and Contemporary Society, at the Department of Sociology, London School of Economics, with the title 'The Institutional Economy of Knowledge and the Science-Religion Dichotomy: the Case of Modern China'. The paper compared and contrasted the Bahá'í Faith with the Chi Gong movement in modern China and its attempt to unify religious and scientific knowledge.

On Saturday afternoon, the conference heard a paper from Joan Barden of California State University, 'Discovering Faith in the Age of Modernity: A Journey from Islam to Bahá'í', which looked at feminine aspects of the Bahá'í scriptures. Oliver Scharbrodt, who is shortly to present his Ph.D. thesis at the School of Oriental and African Studies, presented a paper on the relationship between the Bahá'í leader 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the father of Islamic modernism Muhammad 'Abduh: 'Encounters in the Land of Bá: Muslim and Bahá'í Accounts on the Relationship between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Muhammad 'Abduh'. The last paper on the Saturday afternoon was 'The Conversion of Zoroastrians and Jews to the Bahá'í Faith in Iran' by Dr Moojan Momen. On Sunday morning, Dr Anne-Sophie Lamine, who is Professeur d'Université, Membre du Centre d'Etudes Interdisciplinaires des Faits Religieux (CNRS-EHESS), presented a paper on inter-religious dialogue: 'Religious Truth, Identities, and Recognition of Otherness'. Dr Cyrus Agahi of the University of Sheffield presented his preliminary findings on the attitude of Iranians in Iran to the Bahá'í Faith under the title 'Sociological Research in Contemporary Iran: A Case Study'. Lastly Dr Stephen Lambden, of Ohio University, presented a paper 'A New Jerusalem on

Mount Carmel?: An Overview of the Bab and Judaism, Scriptural Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh to Jews with Some Aspects of the Bahá'í Approach to Ancient Israelite Religion and Modern Judaisms'.

As has become traditional, the conference also had sessions where scholars discussed problems and issues relating to Bahá'í Studies and also such matters as the publishing of scholarly work and exchanging information on sources for research material. As is also traditional, most of the participants gathered together on the Saturday evening for a meal together.

Moojan Momen

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

IAHR TOKYO 2005

XIXth World Congress of the
International Association for
the History of Religions

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

General Theme of the Congress
Religion: Conflict and Peace

Important deadlines

31 December 2003. Proposals for individual papers, panels, symposia, and roundtable sessions.

April 2004. Notification of acceptance of proposals; mailing of a second circular.

30 September 2004. Payment of early registration fees by those whose proposals have been accepted, and submission of abstracts for the same to the Congress Secretariat.

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



ASANAS

Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies 2004

Following the success of last year's conference, a second international conference on Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies is to take place on **21 May 2004**, hosted by the **University of Wolverhampton**.

Please note that this is now rescheduled as a single-day conference.

Speakers include

J Gordon Melton, Graham Harvey and Marion Bowman.

The conference theme is 'ASANAS goes mainstream?' and aims to highlight areas where Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies are increasingly accepted in conventional society and academia.

Papers will be offered on the following themes:

- ASANAS and mainstream society
- ASANAS and world religions
- ASANAS and Paganism
- ASANAS and psychology
- ASANAS and science
- ASANAS and the workplace
- ASANAS and academia

Conference fee: £45 (£30 students/unwaged) includes refreshments and buffet lunch.

For further information and a booking form, please contact:

Ms Sofia Hidalgo-Davila, School of Humanities Languages and Social Sciences, MC Building, University of Wolverhampton, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SB.

or Dr George D. Chryssides, University of Wolverhampton (address as above).

THE 29TH SPALDING SYMPOSIUM ON INDIAN RELIGIONS

Regent's Park College
Pusey Street
OXFORD OX1 2LB

26-28 March 2004

Copies of the programme and booking forms can be obtained from:

Dr Anna King, Convenor of the Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions
Theology and Religious Studies, King Alfred's University College, Win-
chester, SO22 4NR

Tel.: 01962 827331 E-mail: <Anna.King@wkac.ac.uk>

Enquiries about accommodation and meals should be sent to:

Christopher Aslet, Treasurer of the Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions
56 Panton Road, Hoole, Chester, CH2 3HX

Tel: 01244 345511

Aesthetics as a Religious Factor in Eastern and Western Christianity Utrecht, 21-24 June 2004

A wide range of sub-themes includes: Theology of Aesthetics, Aesthetics of Theology, Iconography in the Orthodox Church, Non-figurative art and Christianity, Christian Themes in Modern Literature, Music and the Sacred, Church Architecture, Aesthetic Experience and Conversion, Aesthetics and Religious Identity.

Details from: Dr Jonathan Sutton <j.f.sutton@leeds.ac.uk> and Professor Wil van den Bercken <wvdbercken@theo.uu.nl>

A collection of thirty-three papers from our June 2001 conference on *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe* (Leuven, Peeters) is now in print. Our 2005 conference 'Religion and the Media in Russia and Central Europe' will be convened in Leeds in December 2005.

**Indic Health Conference II.
Ayurvedic Identities Past and Present:
The Case of Modern and Global Ayurveda
2-3 July 2004**

On Friday 2 and Saturday 3 July 2004 the Dharam Hinduja Institute of Indic Research (DHIIR), based at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, will host its Eighth International Conference. The conference will discuss the Case of Modern and Global Ayurveda as part of a larger project, the Indic Health and Medicine Research Programme (IHMRP), which has been the focus of DHIIR research since October 2000.

For up to date information on the conference please see

<http://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/CARTS/dhiir/indic/conf04.html>

For information on the IHMRP as well as the DHIIR's work in general, please see <http://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/CARTS/dhiir/>

Enquiries can also be made by post or by email. The contact address is:

DHIIR, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge
West Road, Cambridge CB3 9BS

Tel: 44 (0)1223 763013; Fax: 44 (0)1223 763014

E-mail: <dhiir@divinity.cam.ac.uk>

**Network for the Study of Implicit Religion, and
Centre for the Study of Implicit Religion & Contemporary Spirituality**

27th Weekend, Denton Hall, Ilkley: inter-disciplinary, international,
£125 all-inclusive: 6 p.m. Friday 7 May – 3 p.m. Sunday 9 May 2004

Contact: Edward Bailey, 95 High Street, Winterbourne, Bristol BS36
1RD: 01454 776518; eibailey@csircs.freemove.co.uk

**The God Experience — who has it and why?
Joint Annual Conference of the Modern Churchpeople's Union
and the Alister Hardy Society**

13-16 July 2004

High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts, U.K.

Conference Chair: Professor Paul Badham

Further details: Mrs E. Darlington, 1 The Woods, Grotton, Oldham,
OL4 4LP. Tel.: +44 (0) 161 633 3132 E-mail: <ebeth@fish.co.uk>

**A regional conference of the IAHR
organised by the
INDONESIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY AND RESEARCH
OF RELIGION**

Yogyakarta/Semarang 27 September – 3 October 2004

Concepts of religious coexistence and cooperation are current in many societies and cultures. They are based not only on custom and law but also on various political and religious presuppositions. The aim of this conference is to consider such concepts, to study what difficulties arise in their practical application, and to discuss how problems have been or may be resolved. This subject is of particular urgency in the contemporary world, which is marked by various tragic conflicts with both global and local characteristics. It is also of great significance within the borders of individual countries. In the Indonesian language the word 'harmony' (*harmoni*) has been used in public discourse on this subject, and that is why it was preferred by the organizers in the title of conference. The focus will be both theoretical and very practical. The theoretical approach is that of the general study of religions (*ilmu agama*), while special sections are planned on 'Religious harmony in grass-roots experience' and 'Muslim education in modern society' which are expected to be very informative and stimulating.

Up to fifty participants from outside Indonesia will be able to participate. The international aspect of the conference is being coordinated by Dr. Edith Franke (Hannover, Germany) and Prof. Michael Pye (Marburg, Germany). Please <efranke1@aol.com> or <pye@staff.uni-marburg.de>.



School of Humanities and Cultural Studies

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FAMILY IN THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

July 2005

CALL FOR PAPERS

Among thematic studies of the world's religions there has been relatively little research into the representation of the family in religious texts and images. This conference aims to explore the representation and symbolization of the family and familial roles within a broad range of religious traditions, sacred literature and mythology. By using a variety of disciplinary perspectives, such as theology, religious studies, scriptural and literary studies, anthropology, history, gender studies, critical theory, film studies, history of art, etc., the conference will aim to examine the representation of the family as a whole, or individual roles and relationships within the family, from both tradition-specific and comparative perspectives. It will also consider some of the social and ethical implications of these representations for contemporary culture.

Conference papers are invited under two main themes:

TEXTUAL HERMENEUTICS and CULTURAL SEMIOTICS

Those interested in contributing a paper should submit a brief abstract (approx. 500 words) to Dr. Lynn Thomas at the address below.

For further details, please contact:

Dr. Tina Beattie, t.beattie@roehampton.ac.uk, tel. +44(0)20 8392 3419

Dr. Simonetta Calderini, s.calderini@roehampton.ac.uk, tel. +44(0)20 8392 3422

Dr. Lynn Thomas, lynn.Thomas@roehampton.ac.uk tel. +44(0)20 8392 3249

Or write to one of the above at:

School of Humanities and Cultural Studies

Digby Stuart College

University of Surrey Roehampton

Roehampton Lane

London SW15 5PH

**DEPARTMENT OF THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

in conjunction with
The British School of Archaeology in Iraq and
The Anglican and Eastern Churches Association
presents

**CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ
A Seminar Day investigating the Christian heritage of Iraq
SATURDAY 3 APRIL 2004**

to be held at
The Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre
SCHOOL of ORIENTAL and AFRICAN STUDIES,
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG

Enquiries to: Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter,
Department of the Study of Religions, SOAS.
E-mail: <ecdh1@cus.cam.ac.uk> Fax: 01223-566493
For more details visit: <www.easternchristianity.com>

IV. RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Re-evaluating Islamophobia: the Runnymede Trust and beyond

The neologism of Islamophobia has found common currency over the past few years. It is not unusual nowadays to hear the word being used in the media, by political elites and in everyday conversation, from both Muslim and non-Muslim voices alike. What, though, is Islamophobia and what exactly does it mean? Having begun questioning the nature of Islamophobia as an undergraduate at the University of Wolverhampton, I am hoping that my doctoral research at the University of Birmingham — having been temporarily interrupted by co-authoring the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia's (EUMC), *Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU following 11 September 2001* (2002) — might begin to offer some clarity to these questions.

Coined in the mid-80s in British Muslim circles, the term gained credence in the fallout from the Satanic Verses affair in 1989. Shortly afterwards in 1991, the Oxford English Dictionary cites its first usage in print in an

American journal. The term however remained framed within a British context and was addressed a year later in a report entitled, *A Light Sleeper* (1992), that investigated anti-Semitism. Five years on and the Runnymede Trust, via the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, published what has since become the most influential piece of research into Islamophobia. Entitled, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*, the report proposed the first known definition of Islamophobia: the ‘dread or hatred of Islam — and, therefore, to fear or dislike all or most Muslims’, identifiable through ‘the recurring characteristic of closed views’ (1997, pp.1, .4).

In explanation, the report provided an eight-stage typology of ‘closed’ and ‘open’ views that sought to codify these recurring characteristics. Through the ‘closed’ views, it claimed Islamophobia was when Islam was interpreted as a single monolithic entity, static and unresponsive to new realities. In addition, when Islam was interpreted as violent, barbaric, threatening, supportive of terrorism, or engaged in a ‘clash of civilisations’, this too was deemed Islamophobic. Six other ‘closed’ views suggested similar negative and sometimes inaccurate traits about the Islamic faith in largely bi-polar terminology and with very little context. Yet whilst the report was distinctly non-academic, its definition and typology — the ‘Runnymede model’ — has since attained a somewhat authoritative status. Consequently, research that has since been undertaken into Islamophobia remains rooted, shaped and framed by this model. Those such as Elizabeth Poole (2002), Steven Vertovec (2002) and Malise Ruthven (2002) have all uncritically employed the model, with very few — Fred Halliday (1999, 2001), for example, being one — having seriously contested it.

My research therefore seeks critically to engage with the phenomenon of Islamophobia through an exposition of the highly influential Runnymede model. Considering both its theoretical and practical aspects, my research explores the model’s formulation, its influences and development, incorporating a thorough review of both pre- and post-publication responses from Muslim, other religious and non-religious sources. Through this engagement, as well as a comprehensive textual deconstruction of the rest of the report, my research has identified that the model would seem to reinforce some of its own ‘closed’ views, sometimes reducing, implicitly essentialising and inadvertently excluding Muslims in the process.

This analysis is further contextualised by a case study of the British press in the aftermath of 9/11. Distancing itself from the repetitive and accusatory tone of some ‘Muslims in the media’ research, it is a real attempt to put the findings and questions raised against the Runnymede model into a concretised framework, drawing upon methodological processes of discourse analysis and semiology to question rather than blame. In this framework, it is the report’s ‘views’, as well as the anomalies and issues highlighted previ-

ously that are rigorously tested, including similarities between the representation of Muslims in the press and Muslims in the report.

In conclusion, my research considers and evaluates a range of alternative theoretical and interpretative frameworks — alternative models — through which Islamophobia may be better contextualised. Such models include neo-Orientalism, ‘new’ racism theory and cultural ideology, focusing on the works of Edward Said, Martin Barker and John Thompson respectively. Whether an alternative can be located remains uncertain, although such a process is necessary if the discourse and narratives of an already under-researched and academically naïve topic are to be furthered. Whether it is mere models, the neologism of Islamophobia, or more contentiously, the very notion of Islamophobia itself that is challenged and questioned, research into Islamophobia has been for too long undervalued and overdue.

The EUMC report concluded in its observations that a greater receptivity towards anti-Muslim expression occurred, and may well continue to become more tolerated in a post-9/11 world. In addition to the post-9/11 contemporary issues at both the global and local levels, as well as the increasing newsworthiness of Muslims and Islam, it is easy to neglect that in the summer of 2001, disturbances on the streets of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham were being interpreted as a response to the Islamophobia being propagated by the far right. It is also easy to forget that only three days before 9/11 a UN conference in Durban declared its concern about the dramatic global rise in Islamophobia. So whilst Islamophobia is considered by some to be a mere post-9/11 response, it was as much a pre-9/11 phenomenon as it will be a future phenomenon too. 9/11 merely accentuated and intensified the need for research to be undertaken.

Therefore without clarity, and without developing an evolved theoretical model of Islamophobia — a means to understand, interpret and contextualise — it will remain a concept shrouded in ambiguity, obfuscation and a lack of meaning. Academically, Islamophobia demands research because of its social and cultural relevance, and not just for today’s period of ‘urgent history’ either. From the external interest in my research, including the House of Lord’s Select Committee on Religious Offences amongst others, I believe that this need is reflected elsewhere too, albeit more implicitly. I am hopeful therefore that my research will at least contribute something to this process of enhancing understanding, and explore exactly what Islamophobia is.

Christopher Allen
Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations
University of Birmingham

III. RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN THE U.K.

The Growth of Theology and Religious Studies at University College Chester

by Chris Partridge

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at University College Chester is healthy, growing, and vibrant (<http://www.chester.ac.uk/trs/>). Within the last decade it has seen a significant increase in research. Not only has the number of research-active staff risen significantly, but so has the number of research students attracted to the department. From 1 doctoral student in 1995, the department currently has 22 M.Phil/PhD students.

This maturation of the department has been accompanied by a very clear focus on contemporary religion, culture and society. This emphasis on the contemporary is reflected, not only in the research carried out in the department, but also in the courses and modules offered. As well as the usual key modules on, for example, methodology in theology and religious studies, philosophy of religion, Islam, Hinduism, Christian theology, Biblical Studies, Greek, and Hebrew, the department teaches undergraduate and postgraduate modules on The Bible and Film, Spirituality and Contemporary Popular Culture, Fundamentalisms and Religion, New Age Religion, Transformation in Contemporary British Religious Life, and Religion and Society. This teaching and research reflects a general commitment in the department to interdisciplinarity. Indeed, we have recently launched an undergraduate degree in 'Religion and Culture' which makes use of departmental expertise in Religious Studies, Cultural Studies, Sociology, and Film Studies. Similarly interdisciplinary is the new postgraduate degree in 'Contemporary Spirituality'.

Another important, recent, and enormously successful development within the department has been the establishment of a JNC Dip HE in Christian Youth Work with an optional 3rd year for those seeking a degree in Youth Work and Theological Reflection combining Christian theology, youth studies and practice-based youth work. Led by Dot Gosling and Richard Turner, who have both worked in youth and community projects for many years, this is the first Higher Education course in the country which specifically focuses on Christian Youth Work, offering training in youth work from a broad-based Christian perspective.

The department and institution have strong links with the Anglican Diocese of Chester. We are, for example, involved in 'Reader Specific Training' and have recently launched a new Programme for Pastoral Workers. Also, Ron Geaves has recently been appointed Interfaith Advisor to the

Bishop. Similarly, we are developing links with the Roman Catholic community and are now involved in Roman Catholic lay training.

The Department also boasts the internationally known 'Research Centre for Religion and the Biosciences'. Directed by Professor Celia Deane-Drummond, the Centre hosts regular public lectures from international experts in the field (most recently, Sir Arthur Peacocke and Professor Elaine Graham). It is also unique in offering a postgraduate programme in 'Science and Religion' that gives students the opportunity to opt for science as well as religious studies and theology modules.

In 2002, the international journal *Ecotheology: The Journal of Religion Nature and the Environment* moved to the department, its Editor being Celia Deane-Drummond and its Reviews Editor, Chris Partridge. (If you are interested in contributing to this journal, please contact c.deane-drummond@chester.ac.uk) Reflecting current research in the department, from 2005, another international peer-reviewed journal, *Fieldwork in Religion*, will be edited at Chester by Ron Geaves and Chris Partridge. (If you are interested contributing to this journal, Ron Geaves <r.geaves@chester.ac.uk> or Chris Partridge <c.partridge@chester.ac.uk> will be very happy to hear from you.)

Chris Partridge

IV. BOOK REVIEWS

Sutcliffe, Steven (2003). *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices* London: Routledge. x + 267 pp. ISBN 0-415-24299.

Steven Sutcliffe has provided us with a useful contribution to our knowledge of contemporary spiritualities in his monograph entitled *Children of the New Age*. His research attempts to deconstruct the title 'New Age', arguing that it is inaccurate to describe the phenomena associated with the term as comprising a movement. Perhaps the most valuable contribution in the book is the overview of the early period, the 1930s up until the 1950s, which are commonly categorised as the embryonic beginnings of the 'New Age'. In addition, the author provides an ethnographic account of Findhorn and demonstrates its links with this earlier period marked by millennialism and also its impact on later popular culture influences from the 1960s onwards. He argues that in this respect Findhorn functions as a bridge between the two periods.

The key question raised by the book, and not satisfactorily answered, is how the esotericism of a respectable white, middle-class penetrated the

youth counter-culture of the 1960s and went on to become the popular culture of 'New Age' from the 1980s onwards. The author appears to posit that Findhorn provided the connection between the different shifts in 'New Age' discourse and practice. The author cites evidence from his informants that the 'New Age' practitioners of the 1980s and 1990s were direct heirs of the counterculture, many of them using psychedelic substances in the 1960s (p.111). However, although this is yet to be firmly established by fieldwork, it is far more convincing than the argument that there are direct links with the earlier period's middle-class esotericism, even though some parallels may be found.

The main problem, I feel, with the author's contention is that he allows himself to place too much importance on the emic use of 'New Age' to demonstrate continuity, in spite of the evidence of his own informants who argue that the term is little used by insiders and even disparaged. The evidence that the term was used by Alice Bailey or the early pioneers of Findhorn is not proof of an early twentieth-century prototype of the alternative spirituality of the latter half of the twentieth century. It simply indicates that certain individuals and clusters of their followers believed in a millennial transformation of consciousness. Personally, I feel the term 'esotericism' more fully describes these early manifestations. The question can then be rephrased to, 'Is there a connection between Anglo-American esotericism of the early twentieth century and the alternative spiritualities of the later period.'

Sutcliffe writes: 'If they, for their part, were drawn to the spiritual portfolios and experiences of the 'New Age' veterans, the latter increasingly needed the physical energy and enthusiasm of the younger generation if their legacy was to be consolidated and transmitted' (p.119). However, I would argue there is little evidence of the counterculture spirituality of the 1960s and 1970s being influenced by the key figures of British esotericism. Aleister Crowley had a certain popularity amongst some seekers but few would have heard of Alice Bailey or even the Theosophists. Significant influences of the 1960s seeking generation were the books of Herman Hesse, Lobsang Rampa and the Beat generation poets especially the novels of Jack Kerouac — *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums* — and J.D. Salinger. Late in the 1960s, Muz Murray's *Gandalf's Garden* was far more significant than Findhorn and indicates the strong influence that Tolkien's Middle Earth trilogy held on the popular imagination, even lending its name to a psychedelic nightclub in Covent Garden that succeeded the UFO in Tottenham Court Road.

I would suggest that British esotericism with its hold on certain sections of the professional middle-classes in the Edwardian period existed as a small river of alternative British spirituality that was itself flooded by counterculture forms of spirituality from the 1960s onwards. It was not, I suggest, a

river that became an ocean, but rather it is submerged under the deluge, to re-emerge once again as the esoteric movements of the late twentieth century discovered by the author in his ethnographical explorations of Mind-Body-Spirit fairs. Even then, contemporary manifestations of British esotericism, the heirs of Alice Bailey and others, has an uneasy relationship with the popular culture manifestations of the 'New Age'.

This is certainly exemplified by the Findhorn settlement that demonstrates remarkable affinities with the earlier esotericism but has been swamped by the manifestations of the later cultural shift in popular spirituality. The author himself notes that the manifestations of spirituality between those evident in recent examples and the lifestyles of the early networks of 'drawing-room esotericism' (p.127) are notably dissimilar. He states that the latter manifestations are marked by 'sensuality, self-expression and relaxation rather than the demanding work schedules of the pioneers'. However, the demanding work schedules were located in the direct successors of Alice Bailey, the Units of Service. It is significant that the author notes the unease with which the leader of the group felt about their participation in Mind-Body-Spirit fairs and the relief when they no longer maintained a presence (p.123). I would suggest that this indicates the distance mentioned by British esotericists, the heirs of the pioneers and the manifestations of popular spirituality known in common parlance as 'New Age'.

I would agree that the author has succeeded in challenging our conceptions of the umbrella term 'New Age' and demonstrated that it is a false etic category. However, I am not fully convinced that the lack of usage of the term by practitioners indicates an absence of emic awareness of commonality in spite of the diversity of the phenomenon. Alternative Spirituality has several manifestations, all available to seekers but not all are recognisably 'New Age' neither by etic or emic definitions. The etymology or historiography of the term 'New Age' is a red herring in that it may have been used by the early twentieth-century esotericists but it is unlikely that they used it in the same way and with the same meaning as those involved with popular spirituality of the counterculture and their own 'Age of Aquarius'. A more fruitful approach would be to look for clusters of practice and belief that could be used to describe British manifestations of esotericism and popular expressions of late twentieth-century spiritualities. I remain unconvinced that they are directly linked to each other in spite of similarities in belief and practice.

Ron Geaves
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Cheetham, David (2003). *John Hick: A Critical Introduction and Reflection*, Aldershot: Ashgate. 194 pp. ISBN: 0754615995 (hbk) £45.

As one of the most prolific and influential philosophers of religion and religious theorists of recent years, there is already a plethora of works either devoted solely to John Hick or including considerable reference to his ideas. These include D'Costa (1987), Gillis (1989), Netland (1991), Badham (1992), Sinkinson (1995), and Rose (1996). This being so, it seems best in considering any new work to consider its relevance in relation to those that already exist.

Dr Cheetham is certainly very familiar with John Hick's work. A few years before me he had undertaken his Ph.D. thesis on Hick. He is personally familiar with the man himself; indeed, the photo of Hick on the front cover is attributed to him. We therefore cannot discount his credentials. However, this work, unlike that of D'Costa, is not simply a published version of his Ph.D. thesis. While that type of monograph is a valuable scholarly contribution, Cheetham's work is more accessible to a wider audience.

As to its scope, it covers all the main areas of Hick's thought (here it scores over Badham) in some detail (versus Sinkinson) the opening chapter is devoted to a biography of Hick, while subsequent chapters are devoted to various aspects of Hick's work, from his philosophy of religion, through his ideas on the afterlife to, and, perhaps most importantly, his famous version of the pluralistic hypothesis. However, while being more up to date than other introductions, it adds little new to the debate. For instance, no attempt is made to situate Hick in relation to post-modern ideas. Only one statement is made in this regard: "Questions might also be raised about the success of Hick's hypothesis in a postmodern intellectual climate. Hick's pluralism goes against the grain by seeking to be comprehensive rather than tradition specific" (p.168). Neither is much really said of what might come after Hick. Cheetham's own preference, for a traditional Christian option, might seem a good enough fall back position to some, but more reflection on this would have been valuable. Here, though, one does not sense the sectarianism with which Netland, for instance, writes.

Maybe, in the above criticisms, I am expecting too much from an introduction to Hick. However, the last two words of the title 'and reflection' might lead one to expect a little more (this is the virtue of Rose). Nevertheless, these points aside, while not adding considerably to the debate over Hick's ideas, this volume does make an excellent and up-to-date (here it scores over Gillis) introduction to anyone coming to Hick for the first time. One consideration, though, remains the cost. Only available in hardback, this volume weighs in with a hefty price tag, far too much for many individual, especially undergraduates to whom it would be most useful, to afford. It is,

however, a useful volume to add to any academic library that deals with the philosophy of religion or interfaith studies.

Paul Hedges
Queen's University, Canada
International Study Centre

V. TURNING POINT

Recent issues of the *BASR Bulletin* have included entries from scholars on texts that have been formative in their intellectual trajectories. This offering focuses on people, who have influenced and shaped my development as a scholar of religions. It is perhaps not surprising, given the circularity of causes and effects, that my interest in networks of relationships as the basic model for alternative spiritual practitioners is informed by the professional and friendship network that has inspired my scholarly practice.

There are two themes entwined in this narrative. The first is related to the Hindu notion of *parampara*. The guru lineage is essential in establishing the authenticity of Hindu spiritual teachers. Thus also teachers, in part, define the heritage of the scholar of religions. The second theme is that of motivation in the study of religions. For me, the impetus to engage with and describe religiosity has always been in observing the commitments and passions of others, and the corollary sense of awe and wonder this provokes. This holds true in the desire and drive both of religious believers and religious scholars. So, the paradigms of my practice as a scholar are constructed by these thematic structures.

One starting point for my approach to Religious Studies relates to a meeting I had in a Buddhist temple in Darjeeling with a young woman from London. Her hair was cut close-cropped because she had sold it in order to buy food. Likewise she had dispensed with all her clothes and was robed only in the blankets she had cut and sewed from the hostel where she had been staying. And now, having sold her passport, she was about to be instructed on taking postulancy at the temple. I took my instruction from her. I gave her my copy of the *I Ching* (Richard Wilhelm translation with a foreword by Carl Jung) and began to nurture those questions scholars relish: How had she come to this decision? Why was Buddhism so attractive to westerners (myself included; I had come to the temple looking for inspiration)? What processes are involved in the practice of religions such as Buddhism?

Years later I thought my decision to take a Masters in Religious Studies at the University of Bristol was especially to further my understanding of Buddhism. The interest was intrinsic: I already had a professional career in

teaching (history, as it happens), and I had a ‘seeker’s’ drive to learn. But it was theory and method in the study of religions itself that took my interest and that, in no small part, was due to Ursula King. I was aware of a very small part of her work from the publication of a talk she had given in the magazine *Resurgence*. (This magazine, and its role within the wider network of New Age Alternative spiritualities, later became the *subject* of my research in a paper published last year in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*). It was Professor King who supported my plea to take the M.A. part-time, though it was taught during the day and I worked full-time, against the advice of some colleagues at Bristol. And it was she who persuaded me to take my Ph.D. at Bristol. As an academic mentor she is unsurpassed: the rigour of her critiques and minutiae of her observations of my many-drafted texts is a skill I now pass on to my students.

But I began my research without Professor King’s guidance, for she was on a year-long sabbatical in the U.S.A. Three scholars, whose commitment to the study of religions is as inspiring as the religiosity of those they study, saved me from retreat into ivory-towered research. Helen Waterhouse introduced me to the verb ‘to conference’. She persuaded me right from the start of my research to attend conferences and network, and even drove me to my first conference at Wolverhampton. Marion Bowman introduced me to the blandishments of Bath Spa University College: at that time a spiritual home for those interested in researching contemporary spiritualities and especially the delights of phenomenological fieldwork. Peggy Morgan furnished me with an application form for BASR and a vision of the study of religions that has been matched in the U.K. only by Ninian Smart (who, unfortunately, I did not know personally, except fleetingly, but whose perceptions of our field I share with his ‘children’).

Thus my scholarly biography is defined by a series of meetings and friendships. From these ‘turning points’ I have made adjustments relevant to the project of many currently engaged with Religious Studies: careful suspicion of the historical hegemony of patriarchy; focus on the contemporary phenomena of religiosity; emphasis on human networks of relationship. It is a record of a path to scholarly maturity with perhaps something of a nod toward postmodern irony in the constructed nature of the narrative.

Dominic Corrywright
Oxford Brookes University

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations, Cambridge Sternberg Visiting Fellowship in Interfaith Relations

The Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations provides a range of innovative, multi-disciplinary educational programmes on the Jewish-Christian encounter throughout the ages.

Applications are invited for the 2004-5 Sternberg Visiting Fellowship in Interfaith Relations, tenable for a three-month period beginning January or April 2005. The successful candidate will be expected to undertake research in an area of relevance to the work of the Centre and may be asked to make a modest contribution to its postgraduate teaching. The Fellowship would be particularly suitable for someone with sabbatical leave from a University or similar position. Applications are not restricted, but preference may be given to candidates with a specialism in either the social and political sciences, cultural studies, or the study of inter-faith relations.

The Fellow will be entitled to free accommodation in Cambridge, plus a monthly stipend of £350. Applications (a letter, CV, and the contact details of a referee) should be submitted to the Electors of the Sternberg Visiting Fellowship, CJCR, Wesley House, Jesus Lane, Cambridge, CB5 8BJ by 15th May 2004. Applications may be submitted by email to <mjw48@cam.ac.uk>

Penguin Encyclopedia of Religion

The *Encyclopedia of Religion*, published by Penguin in February, is described as 'the ultimate reference resource for anyone interested in World Religions. It takes a detailed look at the six main religions: Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and explains their practices, teachings and ideals. The book also includes over 1,200 stunning photographs and illustrations, displaying the art and architecture associated with each faith.'

Peggy Morgan, BASR President, acted as consultant on the Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism sections of the book. A special reader offer (30% discount) may be available to BASR members. Please contact Natalie Trye <Natalie.Trye@penguin.co.uk> at Penguin Special Sales, who will arrange for delivery.

Shap Journal

Back and current issues of the annual Shap Journal are available price £2.60 including p&p (cheques payable to 'The Shap Working Party') from: The Shap Working Party, PO Box 38580, London SW1P 3XF.

Titles are:

Wealth and Poverty (2004)

Religion: the problem or the answer? (2003)

Living Community (2002)

Time (2001)

Can I Teach Your religion? (2000)

Exploring Conflict and Reconciliation (1997)

Exploring Loss, Grief and Change (1995).

***Religion: Empirical Studies*, edited by Steven J. Sutcliffe**

Religion: Empirical Studies is an edited collection of several BASR Occasional Papers, with an editor's introduction. It is sub-titled 'A Collection to mark the 50th Anniversary of the British Association for the Study of Religions', and will be launched at the Anniversary Conference in Oxford, in September. It is published by Ashgate.

VIII. TRIBUTE

John H. Chamberlayne

It is with regret that we record the death of John H. Chamberlayne in 2003. John Chamberlayne lectured on world religions and sociology at Natal University, South Africa, Atlanta University, U.S.A., and Central China University. He was known to several BASR members as a tutor in the Open University, where he taught 'Man's Religious Quest', later renamed 'The Religious Quest'.

His earlier work was in ancient Hebrew religion, but he became known for his work in eastern religions, with particular reference to China. His books include *Man in Society: The Old Testament Doctrine* (Epworth, 1966), *The Quest of Faith: An Introduction to Contemporary Religions* (Religious Education Press, 1969), and *China and Its Religious Inheritance* (Janus 1993).

George D. Chryssides

IX. RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY BASR MEMBERS

(Please send in your details by e-mail where possible.)

Adogame, Afe

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'Betwixt Identity and Security: African New Religious Movements and the Politics of Religious Networking in Europe'. *Nova Religio* 7:2, pp.24-41.

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(2002). 'Neue Religiöse Bewegungen und ihre Vernetzung in Europa', in *Afrikanisch Initiierte Kirchen in Europa*, 87. pp.9-32.

'Traversing Local-Global Religious Terrain: African New Religious Movements in Europe', in *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft*, 10, pp.33-49.

'Engaged in the task of "Cleansing" the World: Aladura Churches in 20th Century Europe' in Koschorke, Klaus (ed.) *Transcontinental Links in the History of Non-Western Christianity (Asia, Africa, Latin America)*, vol. 6. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 73-86.

'Tomorrow's leaders as leaders for today: youth empowerment and African new religious movements' in Trudell B. et al (eds.) *Africa's Young Majority*. Edinburgh, Centre for African Studies, pp. 207-227.

Entries on 'Religion in Nigeria'; 'Celestial Church of Christ', in Melton, J. G. & Baumann, M. (eds.) *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

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Chryssides, George D.

(2004). Entries on: The Anticult Movement (feature article); Church of Scientology; Communal Groups (feature article); The Company of Heaven; The Embassy of Heaven Church; Lifewave; The Raëlian Religion; The Unity School of Christianity. In Partridge, C. (2004). *Encyclopedia of New Religions*. Oxford: Lion.

Cox, James L.

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‘African Identities as the Projection of Western Alterity’, in Cox and Haar (eds.). *Uniquely African?* pp.25-38.

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'Sacred Chemicals: Psychedelic Drugs and Mystical Experience'; in C. Partridge and T. Gabriel (eds.), *Mysticisms East and West*, pp.96-131

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‘Pagan Fundamentalism?’; in C. H. Partridge (ed), *Fundamentalisms*.

Roebuck, Valerie

(2004). *The Upanisads*, translated and edited with an introduction by Valerie J Roebuck, London: Penguin Classics.

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(2003). ‘Widening the circle: Communities of color and Western Buddhist convert sanghas’. In Damien Keown, Christopher Queen and Charles Prebish (eds.) *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism*. London: Routledge, pp.220-236.

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(2004). ‘The Dynamics of Alternative Spirituality: Seekers, Networks and “New Age”’; in J. Lewis (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, New York: OUP, pp.466-490.

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X. GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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

Conference reports (short, one-day)	500-800 words
Reports on major conferences	1,000-1,500 words
Notices of forthcoming conferences	Not more than one page
Book reviews	500-800 words
Religious Studies in location	750-800 words
Research in progress	800-1,000 words
Turning Point	800-1000 words
Tributes	normally 500 words

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

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

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