



BASR

British Association for
the Study of Religions

Bulletin

Number 115
November 2009

ABOUT THE BASR

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

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CONTENTS

Editorial.....	3
Minutes of the 2009 AGM.....	4
2007-2008 Accounts.....	9
Conference Reports.....	13
Obituary.....	18
Book Reviews	20
Conference Announcements and Calls for papers.....	22
Members recent publications.....	25
Guidelines for Contributors.....	26
Occasional papers.....	27

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the November 2009 edition of the BASR *Bulletin*, number 115. As is usual for a November edition, much of the content relates to the annual BASR conference. 'Religions, landscapes and other uncertain boundaries' was held at the University of Bangor. We are indebted to Bettina Schmidt for hosting the event and for her hard work in organising it on behalf of the BASR committee. A record 12 students attended the conference with BASR bursaries this year. Bursary students pay no fees and have only to find their travel expenses. We benefit from this system because we hear about their research and fulfil part of our charitable mission. The students themselves, who are the future staff in our departments, benefit from the opportunity to network and to get feedback on their projects. In return for bed and board, every year we ask the students to collaborate in the writing of a conference report. You'll find the result of their efforts in this edition. In a break from recent tradition this is the only report of the conference this year.

A major item of business at the conference was the election and co-option of new officers. Professor Douglas Davies became the President elect in September 2008 and so took over as President, from Marion

Bowman, in Bangor. Congratulations are due to Douglas for having been made an Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences in September. We look forward to Douglas's time in the chair. Graham Harvey also finished his tenure as BASR secretary this year. Bettina Schmidt, who has already proven her efficiency as an organiser takes over from Graham. Graham is not leaving the committee however. In an age when electronic communication is increasingly significant, Graham takes a sidestep to take on a new role as web manager. All other post holders remain the same. Our thanks go to Marion the retiring president for her service to BASR over many years.

In this edition you will find the usual announcements and reports. Also included is an obituary for Hew McLeod who died earlier this year. Your editors are still keen to publish debate in the *Bulletin*. We received no response to Olaf Hammer's piece in the April edition. It is not too late to send a reply for publication in April 2010. Alternatively, you may like to set the ball rolling on another matter, for example the issues raised by the breadth of the Study of Religion(s) as a discipline area. Guidelines for word lengths are included in every edition. Things are moving fast in

the current climate and the Bulletin is not the place to debate all of the initiatives that affect our disciplinary identity. However, the BASR fulfils a representative role and you should feel free to contact the Association's officers about government and funding council initiatives that affect us all.

An example of how BASR can represent its membership is that in response to the Committee's request, a variety of opinion has been gathered from members regarding the potential merger of the Theology and Religious Studies Panel with the Philosophy Panel for the next REF. The overall view was more negative than positive even though in some institutions the two areas work well together. The Committee was impressed by those who argued that research on Eastern and/or minority religious traditions might be marginalized and disadvantaged. This balance of opinion will now be reported to the appropriate research councils and academies.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Held at 4pm on Tuesday 8 September 2009 at Bangor University

1. Welcome. Marion Bowman opened the meeting by welcoming members and visitors (31 attending). She thanked Bettina Schmidt, her colleagues and the student helpers for organising and looking after the conference so well. She welcomed Douglas Davies, incoming President, who participated by video-link from Durham University. Douglas Davies explained that the organisation of another conference (on death, dying and disposal) required his presence in Durham, and apologised for his physical absence from BASR conference.

2. Apologies received from Elisabeth Arweck, Brian Bocking, Mathew Guest, Ursula King, Kim Knott, Eleanor Nesbitt and Helen Waterhouse.

3. Minutes of the AGM, 3 September

BASR officers sometimes enjoy an opportunity to represent the discipline much more widely. On October 30th 2009 Professor Davies, as President, hosted at Durham a delegation of some thirty Chinese visitors who had requested a meeting to discuss the place of the teaching of religion in British higher education institutions. The party was headed by the deputy Director, State Administration for Religious Affairs of The Peoples Republic of China, along with the Deputy Divisional Directors for Personnel, of Policy and Legal Affairs, and of State Administration for Religious Affairs. We're told that an interesting and open discussion was enjoyed by all present.

We hope you will enjoy this edition of the Bulletin and look forward to receiving your contributions for the May 2010 edition.

Dominic Corrywright & Helen Waterhouse

2008 (published in the BASR Bulletin 113, November 2008: 4-9). Accepted and signed.

4. Presidential address—Full Text

We live in interesting but turbulent times, within and beyond academia. There is increased awareness and media coverage of religion as well as an apparent growth of interest in it. For the sixth year in a row, the number of students studying religion at A Level has risen (4.7% over 2008 figures). Religion is on the government's radar, resulting in the *hefce* initiative on Islamic Studies, while the Religion and Society research programme funded by the AHRC and ESRC was (according to its website) 'the first in the UK to foster collaborative endeavours across the arts and humanities and social sciences communities.' In a recent *Times* article Ruth Gledhill

declared that 'There is no understanding of the current world we live in without first having an understanding of religion.' (*Times Online*, 01/09/2009)

So, there is a growing awareness of religion, interest in religion, and even a willingness to invest in research into matters religious, but how does all this influence or have an impact on the study of religion in the UK, and by extension the BASR? Somewhat counter-intuitively, the non-confessional study of religion at higher education level does not appear to be flourishing uniformly - or at least that is the perception of those in Religious Studies/ Study of Religions whose departments have been absorbed within other units or whose staff numbers have been cut. While we should celebrate some aspects of the raised profile of religion and successes in research funding, we also have to be aware of the need for a range of departments, institutions and associations to act together to promote and protect the academic study of religion within higher education.

In the course of the past year, committee members have attended a number of events and briefings on behalf of the BASR, including my participation in the AHRC Subject Association's meeting in May 2009. This was interesting and valuable in a number of ways, not least the perception that while many colleagues in the study of religion have been extremely successful in bidding for funding, arts and humanities researchers applying to the Religion and Society programme did not generally fare as well as their social science counterparts, as they seemed less assured in communicating research methodologies. It was suggested, therefore, that more might need to be done to help researchers communicate their plans in language/terms more suited to cross-Council applications (this point was made by someone who sat on the Religion and Society panel as a representative of the ESRC). Of course it should still be possible for those studying religion in arts/humanities contexts to frame bids without compromising what they do and how they do it.

In addition, at this briefing the increased importance of public accountability in relation to research funding, 'impact' and knowledge transfer were flagged. These can raise particular issues for those studying religion, bearing in mind the potentially problematic role of the 'public academic' in relation to religion, practitioner engagement and insider / outsider considerations, what religious communities want to say and what they want said (or not said) by academics, and so on. (Some of these issues were raised also at the recent meeting of AUDTRS (Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies).)

I reported in the BASR bulletin on our involvement in A-HUG (The Arts & Humanities User Group). We will continue to act in concert with other groups and associations, as this sort of intervention can be useful in addition - or as an alternative - to institutional responses. Returning to the theme of working together, it is worth reiterating that one of the main functions of the EASR lists such as Dolmen is to share information about events, research initiatives, studentships, and so on and I would strongly urge BASR members to make use of this facility.

After three years as President of BASR, and before that six years as Conference Organiser, I am now retiring from the BASR executive. At various points over the past nine years I have asked myself - and you - what BASR is for. What I have observed, and what various members have reinforced by their comments, is that BASR provides a forum for those involved in teaching, researching and pursuing the non-confessional study of religion at higher education level; it stimulates and encourages debate; it promotes the subject and its distinctive nature and qualities within the broader HE sector; and it nurtures newer / younger scholars to the field. Many in BASR come from a Religious Studies background, but the breadth of our membership and conference attendees - from those involved in specific aspects of the study of religion (Buddhist Studies, Islamic Studies) to those operating within the

contexts of Sociology, Education and Theology departments (and many more besides) – ensures that BASR provides a varied, valuable social and intellectual meeting point, as this conference (like so many other BASR conferences) proves.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee not only for their hard work over the past year, but for their support and labours over the past three years. Heartfelt thanks to Dermot Tredget, our wonderful Treasurer, who not only looked after our finances splendidly but also worked immensely hard in relation to the conferences; Graham Harvey, Secretary, Web-master and general factotum who seems to have succeeded in the grail-like quest of taming our membership list; Helen Waterhouse and Dominic Corrywright for their editorial and production work in giving us our new-look Bulletin, and Dominic also for generously hosting so many BASR meetings; and Mathew Guest for taking on the valuable task of editing DISKUS. Bettina Schmidt has done a splendid job of organising the Bangor conference, for which we are all extremely grateful, proving that the Association is gaining an excellent Secretary. Finally, I would like to thank the membership of the BASR for their support and friendship. I have much pleasure now in welcoming Douglas Davies as the new President of BASR.

Douglas Davies thanked Marion for all she has done both as President and in previous roles in BASR.

5. Secretary's Report (Graham Harvey)

5.1 The current membership list (including Honorary Life Members) lists two hundred and five (205) members.

5.2 The committee has met twice since the last AGM: 5 Dec 08 and 8 May 09, at Oxford Brookes University. Regular email exchanges have also enabled the committee to advance the Association's work. The conference has been the main issue of discussion and planning. This included consideration of bursary applications. Links with other organisations (including AUDTRS, British Academy, AHRC, EASR,

IAHR and AAR) have also been on the agenda.

5.3 The Secretary has maintained the BASR website (www.basr.ac.uk).

5.4 The European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) annual conference will be held in Messina, Sicily, after BASR conference — Kim Knott (BASR member and EASR secretary) will represent BASR at EASR international committee meetings.

Postgraduate student recipients of conference bursaries expressed their gratitude for BASR's support enabling their participation. Marion Bowman (President) affirmed that money spent on bursaries not only fulfils our duty as a charity to offer benefit to society, but also enriches the conference and all delegates.

6. Treasurer's Report and Account (Dermot Tredget)

Follows these minutes.

Peggy Morgan proposed acceptance of the report and accounts; Steven Sutcliffe seconded the motion; AGM unanimously accepted them.

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7. Bulletin Editors' Report (Dominic Corrywright)

7.1 Members were thanked for their contributions of articles, reviews, conference reports and announcements.

7.2 Reported that there is general support for keeping to two issues a year — with interim news posted on the website under "members' announcements" and other relevant places. Deadlines for submitting material for inclusion in the Bulletin remain 15 Oct and 15 April.

7.3 Further articles, reviews, and reports on developments in departments were invited. As the Bulletin is intended to be a discussion venue, responses to articles and debates about issues were encouraged.

7.4 Details of members' publications were invited.

The Editors were thanked on behalf of the members by Peggy Morgan and the President.

8. Diskus Co-ordinating Editor Report

In the absence of Mathew Guest, the Secretary reported that work on the next issue of Diskus is underway and will include the 2008 annual lecture and selected papers from the 2008 conference. The editor's apology for unavoidable delays in producing the issue were conveyed.

An issue arising from the 2009 conference will follow.

Members asked why all conference papers are not published and were reminded that as a peer reviewed journal it was unlikely that all articles could be included.

The President thanked the editor.

9. Biosphere and related online networking possibilities

A presentation by Steve Herrick (Director of Communications and External Relations, American Academy of Religion).

10. IAHR and AAR

The President and Secretary reported on a debate initiated at the EASR conference, 2008, in Brno, concerned with the recommendation by IAHR executive committee that the American Academy of Religion (AAR) be accepted as a national member association. It was reported that representatives of various national member associations questioned the reasons for and appropriateness of this recommendation. A request for further information from Tim Jensen (General Secretary, IAHR) has resulted in a report. The AGM debated related issues. A variety of benefits (especially that AAR would then be signatory to the IAHR's non-religious study of religions project, and its relationship with UNESCO, and that its larger finances would enable IAHR to fulfil its mission more easily) and demerits (e.g. that some members are already more likely to participate in AAR than IAHR events, and that the nature of AAR in relation to other national and regional associations remains unclear) were considered. AGM agreed that further information and consideration is needed and delegated authority to BASR executive committee to act on the association's behalf.

11. Election of Secretary and Treasurer

11.1 A single nomination for the post of Secretary having been received, Dr Bettina Schmidt was elected to the post.

11.2 A single nomination for the post of Treasurer having been received, Fr Dermot Tredget was elected to a further term in the post.

12. Honorary Life Members

The president reported that George Chryssides had been nominated for Honorary Life Membership (under rules set out in the minutes of the committee meeting on 15 Dec 2004, namely that "honorary life members should be retired from a full time position and have made a significant contribution to BASR"). AGM unanimously accepted this nominated.

George Chryssides thanked BASR members and committee for the honour. He also announced that he has taken time to digitise the BASR Bulletins produced while he was Bulletin Editor so that these could be posted on the website. Graham Harvey received the CDs, with thanks, and promised to update the website promptly.

13. Presidents' Votes of Thanks (Marion Bowman and Douglas Davies)

13.1 The outgoing President formally thanked the committee for their work during the years of her office, and the members for their support. She wished the new President and Secretary well during their terms in office.

13.2 The new President formally thanked the outgoing President and executive committee for their work. He also thanked Dr Schmidt, colleagues and students at Bangor for their work in making the conference a success.

14. Any Other Business

The date and venue of the 2010 conference will be announced in the Bulletin and website. The 2010 AGM will be held during that conference.

Marion Bowman closed the AGM at 17.45pm

BASR ACCOUNTS
For the year 16 August 2008 to 15 August 2009

RECEIPTS				PAYMENTS			
	<i>Notes</i>	2008-09	2007-08		<i>Notes</i>	2008-09	2007-08
General Fund							
		<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>	Audit Fee	<i>v</i>	-240	-100
				Printing & Postage Bulletin	<i>vi</i>	-639	-569
				DISKUS & Occ. Papers		0	-100
							-
Balance at 16 August 2008		8842	7667	Committee Expenses	<i>vii</i>	-1536	1075
Inland Revenue	<i>i</i>	996	517	EASR/IAHR Membership		-437	-408
Subscriptions	<i>ii</i>	3188	2864	Bank Charges		-6	0
Bulletin insert fees		0	0	Insurance		-227	-227
							-
DISKUS & Occ. Papers	<i>iii</i>	37	391	Conference subsidy	<i>viii</i>	0	1000
Bank Interest	<i>iv</i>	512	782	Balance in hand 15 August 2009		10490	
		13575	12221			13575	
Conference Fund							
		<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>			<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>
Balance at 16 August 2008		10993		2008 Conference Expenses	<i>ix</i>	-7038	-161
2008 Conference Receipts		2235	7500	2009 Conference Expenses	<i>x</i>	-3781	
2009 Conference Receipts		10296		Balance in hand 15 August 2009		12706	
		23524				23524	

BALANCE SHEET as at 15 August 2009

		2008-09	2007-08			2008-09	2007-08
Cash Funds: Bank Accounts				Represented by:			
Lloyds Current		666	1016	General Fund	<i>xi</i>	10490	8842
CAF Cash		9301	5565	Conference Fund	<i>xii</i>	12706	1099
CAF Gold		13169	12814				3
PayPal Holding		26	410				
Petty Cash		34	29				
Cheques not yet presented							
Total		23196	19834			23196	19835

FINANCIAL SUMMARY UP TO 15 AUGUST 2009

		2008-09	2007-08			2008-09	2007-08
Balance as at 16th August 2008		19835		York Conference 2008			
Total Receipts		17264		Total Receipts		9735	
Total Payments		-		Total Payments	<i>xiii</i>	-7199	
Net Receipts/Payments		13904		Deficit/Surplus		2536	
Balance as at 15th August 2009		23196					

NOTES TO ACCOUNTS

- i* Includes claims for 2007-2008 & 2008-2009 from 104 gift aids
- ii* Represents 116 full, 9 life and 70 student/retired members includes 130 standing orders
- iii* Lower income due to reduced activity in DISKUS Copyright income
- iv* Lower interest rates (from 4.9% to 0.2%) reduced income considerably
Have had to engage auditor because income in excess of £10,000 - this will change to £25,000 in 2009/2010
- v* Includes only one batch of postage
- vi* Exceptional high because of travel & accommodation for EAHR Conference
- vii* Subsidy £2160 represents full conference bursaries
Large surplus because York SJ did not charge for budgeted items e.g. use of conference rooms
- ix* Includes £800 deposit paid in advance to Bangor University
- x* Total income for year £4713 Expenses £3080 Net surplus £1633
- xi* £2160 transferred from Conference Fund to Conference Receipts to subsidise 12 post-graduate bursaries
- xii* Total receipts £12,697 Total budgeted expenditure £12,657 Surplus £40
- xiii*

2012 BASR Conference

We are looking for a volunteer or volunteers to host the
2012 BASR Conference.

This is an opportunity to showcase your department and have an impact on
the discipline.

If you would like to discuss the possibility please contact Douglas Davies
(douglas.davies@durham.ac.uk) or Bettina Schmidt
(b.schmidt@bangor.ac.uk)

Call for Papers BASR 2010

The next BASR conference will be held
on Monday, September 6th 2010

at The University of Birmingham, Selly Oak Campus

The keynote lecturer will be Prof Eileen Barker.

We would like to invite postgraduate students in their final year to give presentations about their research. If you are interested, please send the title and abstract of your presentation to Dr Bettina Schmidt: b.schmidt@bangor.ac.uk.

Report of recent activities:

Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies



Events

We are running a couple of events over the next few months which may be of interest:

Teaching Spirituality (Jan 14 2010, Leeds)
Courting Controversy? Teaching Theology and Religious Studies in the 21st Century (exact date and venue tba; likely to be June/July 2010)

We also continue to hold biannual, subject-specific research skills training events for postgraduates as part of our successful *Aspiring Academics* programme. The most recent event in this series took place in London in May this year, was oversubscribed, and received excellent feedback.

Two Theology/Religious Studies-focused research projects on postgraduate research training have also recently reported (see **Research**).

Planning for our annual student focus groups is underway. The groups take place in Leeds each November, and give a range of Philosophy/HPS and Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) undergraduates the opportunity to discuss their learning experiences as students in higher education institutions in the UK, and to find out if there are ways of using the resources and expertise of the Subject Centre (SC) to help them to meet the challenges facing university students in our disciplines today.

We have also run a number of very successful national conferences and workshops in recent months. In June, we ran a workshop called *Beyond the Ordinary: Creative Approaches to Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religious Studies* at York St John University. The workshop was the culmination of a commis-

sioned project on creativity in TRS (see **Research**). A report from this project will be published shortly in *Discourse* and/or on the SC's website. In January, we organised a conference on *Teaching Black Theology*. The success of this event has led to the establishment of a Special Interest Group on teaching Black theology, which Anthony Reddie is coordinating. We also ran a panel session at the British Sociological Association's Religion Study Group's annual conference in March/April. We delivered two papers at the BASR annual conference in September, one on our work on Islamic Studies (see **Research**), and one on our 'PRS Beyond Boundaries' project (see **Research**), which explored PRS teaching in non-PRS departments.

Publications and resources

Our journal, *Discourse*, continues to receive excellent feedback and to attract submissions from some of the most respected names in our disciplines. The journal is available free of charge to those who work in higher education in the UK, in either print or electronic form. To receive print copies, please register on our website at: <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/registration/>

Our Faith Guides have proved hugely popular, such that we have sent out 2,400 individual Guides to date. The Guides are available online at <http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/publications/index.html#1> or in hard copy for a small fee by contacting enquiries@prs.heacademy.ac.uk. The Guides are designed to support academic staff in UK HE institutions as they engage with students from a variety of religious backgrounds. In light of the success of the Guides, a sixth Guide on Buddhism has

been written to complement the current suite, which comprises Guides on Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The Buddhism Guide will be published shortly.

Our Employability Guide for TRS has also proven popular with staff and students. The Guide is intended to help students appreciate the skills that they are gaining as part of their degree courses, and is full of useful tips and case studies of TRS careers. Free copies are available by contacting enquiries@prs.heacademy.ac.uk. We are currently updating and revising the Guide to incorporate material from relevant projects which have run since the publication of the first edition. When this process is complete, we will be contacting all UK TRS departments to ask if they would like free copies for their students.

A TRS workshop prospectus has recently been published, outlining the workshops we offer to academics and students on a range of discipline-specific learning and teaching issues. Workshops are free of charge, and can be tailored to the specific needs of departments. Free copies of the prospectus will be sent to all UK TRS departments in the near future.

A report on inquiry-based learning in TRS will be appearing on the SC website and in a forthcoming issue of *Discourse*, following on from the project commissioned by the SC in collaboration with CILASS CETL on inquiry pedagogies in the discipline.

We will be publishing information on knowledge transfer in the context of TRS on our website in the coming months, in response to requests from the TRS subject community.

SC staff have written a chapter for a book on education for sustainable development, *Sustainability Education: Perspectives and Practice across Higher Education*. The book is forthcoming in 2010.

Simon Smith and Darlene Bird's co-edited volume, *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*,

was published by Continuum in January 2009. The book grew from the 2006 SC conference, 'Theology and Religious Studies or Theology vs Religious Studies', and features papers from academics including Ursula King, Gavin D'Costa, Kim Knott and Denise Cush.

The SC and AUDTRS

The SC has now made the AUDTRS Handbook available online. Log in details were emailed to every individual member of AUDTRS earlier this year, but if anyone (who works in a member institution) did not receive them, they should email enquiries@prs.heacademy.ac.uk requesting these details.

Now that the online version is available, we are developing a function which will allow individual members to update their own records. This process will be completed within the next few months. In the meantime any staff changes should continue to be sent to us.

The AUDTRS website is now live, and includes a link to the online version of the AUDTRS Handbook: <http://audtrs.org/>

Research

We are funding a number of TRS research projects, including the following:

- Creativity in TRS (York St John University)
- The Use of Open University OpenLearn materials by RS teachers (Open University)
- Education for Sustainable Development in Theology (independent consultant)
- Living Religion: Fieldwork Placements in TRS (Bath Spa University)
- Supporting Student-led Academic Debate Across Diversities in TRS (Manchester University)

Specifically related to our work on post-graduate research training, the following projects have recently reported:

- Theological Texts Reading Group (University of Chester)
- Developing Advanced Research Methods Training in the Study of Religion: Building Capacity for a Postgraduate Training Network for London and the South-East (Birkbeck)

And, specifically related to our work on employability, the following project has also recently reported:

- Self-employability in TRS (Bath Spa University)

Reports from the completed projects have been, or will be, published shortly in *Discourse* and/or on the SC's website. More details are available at <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/>

We are also supervising one TRS PhD student.

We are also continuing to develop our work on Islamic Studies. The Higher Education Academy Islamic Studies project has now completed the activities set out by HEFCE for phase 1, which is essentially a bid for three years funding. More specifically to:

- set the boundaries and rationale for the project's operation;
- develop communication and dissemination strategies;
- establish an organisational framework to deliver the project's aims and objectives;
- identify priorities and requirements for phase 2 of the project.

This has been done through a survey of colleagues, and through a data collection project that has looked at the nature of current Islamic Studies provision. Based on the findings of these a stage two bid has now been submitted to HEFCE, and is due to be discussed at the HEFCE Board

meeting in September. As soon as this is agreed we will be contacting colleagues to let them know the outcome. The bid is essentially to develop interdisciplinary network in Islamic Studies with five Subject Centres currently involved:

- PRS
- Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
- Law
- Business, Accountancy, Management and Finance
- Sociology, Anthropology and Politics

Finally, in the academic year 2008-2009 the SC ran a scoping study of PRS provision in non-PRS departments. The point of this project was to improve our information and understanding regarding PRS provision beyond 'core' PRS departments; that is, to find out how much PRS teaching is being taught in UK HE and to ask what (if any) are the distinctive features, and challenges, of learning and teaching PRS 'beyond boundaries' (i.e. outside of PRS departments)? We wanted to do this so that we could increase this cohort's involvement with the work of the SC and provide them with more tailored support. We have produced a map of current provision, an analysis of key learning and teaching issues for this constituency, and a selection of case studies, all of which are available on our website. Work is ongoing to initiate special interest groups for PRS academics working outside PRS departments, and to facilitate practice-sharing and networking.

If you would like any further information on these or any other of our activities please get in touch at:

rebecca@prs.heacademy.ac.uk

Information about all of our activities is also available on our website at

<http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/index.html>

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Religions, Landscapes and other Uncertain Boundaries

The 2009 BASR conference, which took place at Bangor University from 7-9 September, was the final one under the Presidency of Marion Bowman. The event was most ably organised by Bettina Schmidt, who takes over as BASR Secretary this year. Thanks are due to Bettina and all committee members for a successful and stimulating event. A frequent comment made by delegates was how impressed they were that the organisers had provided vegan and gluten-free meal options for those who had requested them. Thus the 'diet' was in all ways suitable i.e. mind and body were equally satisfied!

The conference felt welcoming, well structured and full! In addition to the annual lecture, delivered by Carole Cusack (currently on exchange from Sydney, Australia to Edinburgh, Scotland), there were 55 presentations. By virtue of the conference theme the papers presented addressed the permeability and transference between a range of methods, approaches and cultural contexts in the study of religions. These presentations were organised into 16 groups, entitled:

- Religions and the Internet
- Boundaries between Religions
- Space and its impact on Religious Belonging
- Religion in Public Space
- New (Age) Religions and its new Boundaries
- Literary Encounters with Religious Sites
- Religious Landscapes
- Space and Religious Experience
- Symbols at the border between Tradition and Global, Sacred and Secular
- Religious Responses to Climate Change
- Postgraduate Work in Progress
- Memorials and other Sites of Memory
- Space and Identity
- Religious Space and Education x 2
- Social and Cultural negotiation of

Boundaries

- Muslims' Religious Landscapes and Uncertain Boundaries in Britain

Professor Cusack's keynote address – entitled 'The Church of All Worlds and Pagan Ecotheology: Uncertain Boundaries and Unlimited Possibilities' – was a cleverly developed presentation, with ideas well suited to the conference theme. It offered a nuanced tapestry of historical and socio-cultural threads woven together with and from aspects of literature and education. The identification of a transition from fiction to fact i.e. from the 1960's novel by Robert Heinlein, 'Stranger in a Strange Land', to the development of the Church of All Worlds, was a particularly fascinating and unusual opener.

The breadth and depth of presentations at the Conference was extraordinary, covering a diversity of contemporary issues. The presence of international representatives provided an exceptional synthesis of ideas on how to approach concerns such as interfaith dialogue, the ideology of terrorism and minority communities in the Diaspora. Since it is unwise to attempt to do justice to all 55 presentations, this report outlines broad sub-themes, which will offer a representative selection of interests shared by the delegates.

'Space and Identity' was a lively and well attended panel that offered a wealth of material from three distinct religious traditions. Martin Wood (University of Bristol) offered an insight into the often tense dynamic that exists between representative Gujurati Hindu groups in the U.K. and New Zealand. The paper was well-received and further issues were raised that illustrated how specific traditions have sought to maintain positions of representative authority in relation to their own specific understanding of sacred space, identity and the divine in a diasporic milieu. Iqbal Ak-

htar (University of Edinburgh) provided a fascinating window into the world of Indian Khoja Shias in Zanzibar. Akhtar guided the audience along the boundaries where orthodox Shia traditions collide with the Khojas' day to day lived experience. He provided an insight into how Khojas' most profound wishes and fears are addressed in shrines filled with sacred relics, images and mystical symbolism; echoing the times of the martyr Ali, these shrines equip the Khoja with the tools necessary to cope in an uncertain world of global politics and shifting cultural environments. Finally, Stephen D. Ricks (Brigham Young University) traced the extraordinary development of Mormon Temples in the U.S.A., detailing this sacred architectural tradition's journey from Jerusalem to Jackson city, Utah and recently to Eastern Europe. Moreover, we were given an insight into the hostility that Mormons faced when attempting to build temples and urban communities – a poignant and timely reminder of the ubiquitous threat of religious intolerance. In addition to the insights it offered into shifting sociopolitical and cultural concerns affecting religious faith and practice, this panel made reference to dynamic interactions, mystical symbolism and architectural tradition.

The topic 'Religious Landscapes' likewise offered intriguing views of differing regions and world traditions. Here, David Ball (University of Winchester) spoke on the Glastonbury area's St. Bride's Mound, Shenpen Hookham (Bangor University) addressed the Buddhist stupa and Kenneth Lymer (Wessex Archaeology) spoke on petroglyphs in Kazakhstan. All three approached the topic of time, both with differences and similarities. Ball spoke of the disputes around liminality in the area of Bride's Mound, and in relating the controversies back to the title of this year's conference itself, showed how establishing the historicity of folklore about the mound is "like life, inherently uncertain". Shenpen Hookham's paper was extemporised rather than read, evidence of her deep engagement with the material: Her talk offered a taste of the experiential, which enlivened even more clearly the symbolism and teaching imparted by the stupa. The con-

cept of *pathways to the sacred*, inner journeys which can arise out of our experience with the landscape came up here and then again in Marion Bowman's paper in Panel 15 ('Social and Cultural negotiations of Boundaries'). Dr. Hookham described the stupa as a gateway "to the world beyond conceptions". Lymer returned to a discussion of temporality with "the polychromic aspect of the landscape" as he related his work in two areas of Kazakhstan rich in Middle Bronze Age petroglyphs. Revered for centuries by local people, many of whom are Muslim, these areas are today protected by UNESCO. Dr. Lymer spoke of how sacred landscapes can offer "personal encounters with the intangible and create polychromic realities".

Notions of 'the world beyond conceptions' (Hookham), though not necessarily expressed elsewhere in these precise terms, was entirely apt within a conference on 'uncertain boundaries'. The friendly and warm atmosphere of the event allowed for open and receptive exchange between delegates but it was apparent that conceptual boundaries can be as hard-edged as any that are geographically defined or politically and economically maintained. The introduction of experiential considerations, as discussed in Panel 8, facilitated an opportunity to address different ways in which conceptual boundaries can seem to shift, i.e. through translation, or expand, i.e. through personal growth and understanding.

The fact, then, that the 'landscapes' under discussion included imaginal and actual, and inner and outer models added interestingly to the range of concerns addressed. The panel considering 'Space and religious experience' included a paper by Carole Hamby (University of Birmingham) who discussed 'Uncertain Boundaries' under the subheading 'A Quaker considers interiority'. Her concern was not only to revisit views of inwardness as transitory and stabilised experience, but also to delineate a new 'landscape' of inwardness in terms of degrees of knowing available to personal experience in different stages of inward growth. Hamby identified the possibility of

transitions from life known in multiplicity to experience of unity in living as interiority becomes stabilised. Further, she suggested that different theoretical perspectives may be explained with reference to developmental stages of experiential knowing. Daniel Sung (University of Edinburgh) gave a fascinating presentation on the demands of translation in relation to different terms for 'God'. He was particularly interesting in relating the difficulty of terminological issues in Christianity and Korean indigenous religions, pointing out that there is the possibility of comprehending, through the term *Hananim*, "the monotheistic God of Christianity as being distinctively Korean as well as universal, regardless of the *uncertain boundary* between Christianity and the indigenous religions of Korea". This suggestion underlines the importance of terminology, and indeed theological perspectives in their totality, as facilitators of understanding and echoes a point made by Rowan Williams in the preface to his book on Dostoevsky. Speaking of the discipline and thus the responsibility of language, Williams points out that "the language of a particular religious tradition allows its believers to see – that is, [to comprehend] what its imaginative resources are". At this conference, the languages of many traditions were employed, and through this means delegates were introduced to "the legacy of others who have engaged the world in the same ways, at various levels of sophistication" (Williams, 2008).

Jacob Waldenmaier (University of Oxford) addressed the issue of 'embodied theological space' considering the common polarities of 'transcendence' and 'immanence'. Clarifying his position on the "embodied aspect of space" because his "thesis is committed to developing a comparative theology from human perspectives", he suggested that, "'Space' reflects not only a practical concept involving three dimensions in the world, but also a conceptual metaphor, convenient for placing and relating thought as one reasons – including reasoning about God".

In Panel 9, entitled 'Symbols at the border

between tradition and global, sacred and secular', concepts of materiality and physical engagement with the sacred were illustrated beautifully by Amy Whitehead (Open University) and Aurogeeta Das (University of Westminster). Whitehead presented a comparative analysis of religious materiality in the veneration of the Glastonbury Goddess and Spanish women's worship of the Señora de los Santos, in Alcalá, Spain. She concluded that material relationality identifies areas between spirit and matter. Das's work brought to life the tradition of muggus, floor-drawings in southern India, using vivid slides. As the ritualized process of the muggus' creation was carried out, temporal, spatial and conceptual liminality was dealt with through sacralisation. However, Das questioned whether the practice was in fact transitioning from sacred to secular, as forms, materials and cultural contexts alter.

Finally, Francesca Howell (Open University) presented her research on festival culture in northern Italy, exploring festivals as forms of public ritual that enhance and promote a sense of place. Clarifying that in Italy a sense of space is not tied so much to natural spaces but rather to communities, towns and cities, she focused on how festival visitors learn through embodied sensual experiences from music, food, dance and performance. The paper went further by providing us with an insight into the continuity of pre-Christian festival activity, informing cultural and political issues as well as forging a strong sense of regional identity

Another example of the range of the conference was given in the panel entitled 'Space and its impact on Religious Belonging'. The first presenter, Theodore Gabriel (University of Gloucester) talked about the inhabitants of the Lakshadweep islands in India who, although historically Hindu, are now entirely Muslim. Because of their isolation, these Muslims have developed unique characteristics of Islamic practice. Dr Gabriel also showed that many Hindu traditions had been retained, as for example matrilineal practices and the caste system. Nicole Stirling (University of Queen-

sland) discussed the self reported change of religious identity among many of the Turkish and Iranian migrant women in Brisbane. (Her sample included 37 Iranian and 25 Turkish women). Changes in religious identity ranged from the women becoming more devout in their Islamic faith, practising Islam less, and converting to other religious faiths and ideologies such as Christianity, Buddhism and the New Age movement, or formulating their own unique religious worldview. Finally, in this group, Stephen Burge (Institute of Ismaili Studies) presented his findings about Angels and Sacred Space in Islam, drawn from a *hadith* collection of Jalal al-Din al-Suyati, a late medieval writer. Noting that a belief in angels has a doctrinal basis in Islam, Burge discussed – among other things – the intimate and fragile relationship between humans and angels, where angels aid and bless people in prayer, but can easily be repelled by humans. He emphasised that this is an under-researched area.

In Panel 18, entitled Boundaries between Religious Practice and Health, Pat Bennett (Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University) and Terence Palmer (Bangor University) presented their research on the boundaries and bridges between religion and science. Pointing out the methodological complexities of her research on cytokines (immune signalling systems) in psychoneuroimmunology, which looks at relationships between behavioural, endocrine and immune processes as components of an integrated defence mechanism, Bennett demonstrated how the scientific study of spirituality from a health perspective can involve strong trans-disciplinary approaches. Speaking on mental health and spirituality, Palmer looked at fear as the antithesis of love (a religious perspective), fear as emotional resonance, soul loss through fright, Neo-Shamanism and dissociation. His paper raised questions about the framework of knowledge construction and dissemination, or in other words how might one bridge the seemingly wide gap between the language and approach of scientific study, which operates on doubt, and spiritual and religious

approaches that operate on what is arguably the antithesis of doubt – faith.

It can be seen from the above-mentioned examples that the range of papers, though considerable, was broadly linked through the conference theme. Differences of opinion were expressed on the need for papers to be closely related to the theme and the degree of freedom allowed. In the main, however, it was agreed that the conference theme allowed for a meaningful range of interpretations and that it was a good thing not to seek a restrictive format. One delegate even admitted that often, even if not at this particular conference, she had found most interesting the paper she attended “in error”!

As Elizabeth Arweck pointed out in her paper, boundaries – which are subject to negotiation – are complex and dynamic. This was nowhere more evident than at the conference. The fact that fiction overlapped with fact; symbol could be regarded as transparent to different ‘seers’; and soul-retrievers and the internet all stood side by side here is credit not only to the committee that chose the theme of the conference but also to those who selected papers for presentation. Additionally, of course, the presenters displayed a range of creative and thorough analytical skills, some innovative modes of interpreting data and the perspicacity to evaluate their work carefully. That presenters could also remain open to new ideas, constructive criticism and peer group suggestion is a credit to the framework of friendly academic exchange that this conference facilitated.

It would be remiss to neglect comment on the educational issues raised within the conference. The opportunities presented by I.T., the innovative use of different models and modes of approach e.g. performing arts, the scope of workshops, outreach, site visits and fieldwork were all considered and ably presented. The presence of representatives of four publishing houses (Routledge, Continuum, Ashgate and Equinox) and the editor of the ‘Journal of Contemporary Religion’ – four of whom contributed to a panel discussion on ‘the Uncer-

tain Areas of Academic Publishing' – was especially significant for some delegates. Additionally, the 'bookshop' opportunity was much enjoyed – here, advice as well as cash was exchanged!

Finally, it should be noted that opportunities to attend this conference, given in the form of bursaries, was much appreciated by recipients. This allowed for work in progress, as well as work partially or fully completed, to be shared among academics at different stages of their career. The generosity of senior members of the profession was noted by those starting on the path of studies in religion and encouragement received will go a long way to inducing further participation within BASR. There is no better recommendation for a Society than a successful conference and this was one – it welcomed equally U.K. delegates, a Japanese speaker, Australian visitors, representatives of Korea and South Asia, some of whom had travelled around the world to be in Bangor.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to engage in this event enjoyed seascapes

and landscapes bounded, and *almost* unbounded, embracing concerns that were conceptual, imaginal, symbolic, sacred, ritual, factual, figurative and many more. These initially uncertain boundaries were 'fleshed out', embodied in words and savoured in full by 82 'satisfied customers'. The uncertainty of the boundaries were not necessarily delivered into certainty; they were however shared creatively, honestly and with considerable detail. Speakers illustrated how it is that humankind engages in processes of thinking in which the divide between the factual and the fictional can be a human construction with the potential to shift over time and, constantly, to fascinate.

Report compiled by Bursary holders of 2009: Iqbal Akhtar, Pat Bennett, Aurogeeta Das, Matthew Francis, Carole Hamby, Francesca Howell, Keiko Obuse, Elyse Rider, Amy Russell, Nicole Stirling and Martin Wood.

The 3rd Conference of the International Association of Translation & Intercultural Studies

The 3rd Conference of the International Association of Translation & Intercultural Studies was held at Monash University, Melbourne, in July 2009. A large conference, attracting over 250 speakers representing nearly 40 nations, the interdisciplinary nature of the event ensured valuable cross-fertilisation of ideas, concepts and initiatives between the diverse speakers and participants.

Specific to the study of religion was the 'Mediating Religion' panel organised by Hephzibah Israel of the University of Delhi. Consisting of eleven papers given by scholars from Germany, South Africa, India, Spain, Australia, UK, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Canada and China, the papers covered an extraordinary breadth of subject

matter.

The first session contained papers on Meta-Methodology, Christianity and Hinduism. Lothar Cerny from Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Germany spoke on 'Mediating or Blockading: The Translation of Religious Texts', which focused upon the interesting question of whether a claim to divine intervention or knowledge acts as a blockade or a mediation regarding translation of the claim to the divine. Jacobus A. Naude from the University of the Free State, South Africa, spoke on 'Metatext as a Mediating Tool of Religious Conflict in the Translation of Sacred Texts' which examined Robertson's four-stage process for preparing a reader for the context of a given text, which had interesting echoes in

Gnostic writings and reminded me, in a more contemporary example, of Hubbard's process of preparation for the Operating Thetan texts. Finally in the opening session of the panel, the Hephzibah Israel outlined a fascinating example of a fabricated holy text in 'Fake Translations, "False" Scriptures: The Strange Case of *L'Ezour Vedam* of 1778', challenging conceptions of authority, identity and relationship with religious texts.

The second session of the panel focused upon religions in an Indian context and contained three papers examining Buddhism, Neo-Hinduism and ISKCON. Enrique Galvan-Alvarez from University of Alcalá, Spain spoke on 'The Guru as Mediator: Chogyam Trungpa as Translating and Translated Subject' focusing upon the reversal of the inward trend of Indian translation into Tibet with the 1950's exportation of Tibetan religious teachings to the UK and the USA of Chogyam Trungpa. Second in this session was my own contribution, 'Religious Identity, Religious Censorship: Vivekananda's Cultural Translation of Ramakrishna' wherein I focused upon the importance of Vivekananda's projection of Ramakrishna to the West as a part of his construction of a Hindu-Christian dialoguous form of identity. I am grateful to the Spalding Trust and University of Wales, Lampeter for their generous sponsorship which made my attendance possible, Thirdly, Malcolm Haddon from Macquarie University, Australia presented 'The Nectar of Translation: Transcending Culture with the Hare Krishnas' which examined the fascinating links between divine calling, translation of scriptures and religious transmission, dialogue and identity. The paper usefully examined translation as a method of conversion as well as a method of religious self-transformation in ISKCON.

The third session of the panel saw papers focusing upon a Christian scriptural context. Gyung Hee Choi from Macquarie University, Australia presented 'A study on Logical Meaning Shifts in Korean Translations of the Book of John' which used a method of analysis based on Systematic Functional Linguistics, examining the so-

cial context to translation traditions in South Korea. Haslina Haroon, from Universiti Sains Malaysia, spoke on 'The Politics of Bible Translation into Malay in Malaysia' a subject that arouses fierce criticism in Malaysia where ownership of a Bible is forbidden for Muslim citizens. Risking her own detention because of her chosen subject area, Haroon's paper reminds us all of the potential problems in researching politically sensitive areas of religion. The paper was a highlight of the conference in all respects. Thirdly in this session, Yau-yuk Chong from Lingnan University, Hong Kong spoke on 'Mediating Religious Conflict: A Case Study of Framing English Catholic Narratives for Chinese Protestant Readers' which examined the work of Henry J.M. Nouwen, a Catholic priest whose writings have been widely appreciated by Protestant audiences in an act of harmonisation between traditions.

The final, and shorter, fourth session scheduled two papers also based upon Biblical translation studies. Marielle Godbout from University of Ottawa, Canada spoke on 'Bible Translation in Canada's Northwest Territories and Its Impact on the Preservation of Aboriginal Language and Culture' which examined the role of church communities in preserving the endangered aboriginal language of Dogrib. Finally, the schedule included Yuiechen Wang, from University of Macau, PR China, whose submission was 'Translation as a Catalyst of Subversion: Robert Morrison, Bible Translation and Tai-ping Rebellion'. Fascinatingly, this looked at the intentional repositioning of Morrison's translation of the Bible into Chinese by the Tai-ping Heavenly Kingdom, challenging perceptions of text as authoritative and alien.

The conference also saw several key note speakers discussing wider interdisciplinary issues surrounding translation, mediation and culture. Interestingly, three of the five speakers chose case studies regarding religion – Martha Cheung from Hong Kong Baptist University spoke on 'The Power and Dynamics of Translation in China during the Late Qing Period', analysing the importance of Bai Shangdi Hui's Associa-

tion of God Worshipers; Sehnaz Tahir-Gurcaglar from Bogazici University, Turkey spoke on 'A Secularizing Translation: the Call to Prayer in Turkish', focusing on the controversy over the use of Turkish translations of 'God' rather than the traditional Arabic 'Allah'; and Francis Jones of Newcastle University spoke on 'The Personal is Interpersonal is Political: Modelling Translation and Conflict', which focused on the Christian-Muslim violence concerning Bosnians, Croats, Serbs and other groups from the area labelled the Former Yugoslavia. This last paper was of particular interdisciplinary interest, as it exemplified excellent methods of textual analysis (concerning poetry in this instance) which will prove useful when discussing text, authority, authorship and tradition with under-

graduates in Religious Studies.

The conference was well organised, stimulating and friendly. A minor complaint would be the sheer size of the gathering, with up to ten parallel panels convening at any one time, which meant only a very small fraction of speakers could be heard by the delegates, although I understand that logistics of such events are never easy. Overall the conference was a success, and the 'Mediating Religion' panel papers are to be brought together by Hephzibah Israel in a special edition of 'The Translator' journal.

Stephen E. Gregg
Trinity University College, Carmarthen

OBITUARY

Hew McLeod 1932-2009

The historian, William Hewart McLeod (Hew McLeod), is one of those distinguished scholars whose work defines a field – in his case Sikh Studies. His colleagues in Sikh Studies now speak of a 'post-McLeod era'.

From 1968, when *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* appeared, Hew tackled every period of Sikh history in rigorously researched volumes. He exercised his impressive linguistic skills in producing annotated translations of early Sikh texts. These included not only passages of the Adi Granth (in, for example, his *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*) but also a rendering of the B40 *janamsakhi*, a hagiographical manuscript in the British Library) and also of the Chaupa Singh Rahit Nama (an eighteenth century code of discipline for the Khalsa). His 1989 publication *Who is a Sikh?* addressed the perennially controversial matter of attempting to define Sikh identity.

Hew was a New Zealander, reared in a North Island farming family of (he would explain) poor Scottish ancestry, so distinguishing his forbears from Sir David

McLeod, the Governor of Punjab after whom Dharamsala's McLeod Ganj is named. His own association with Punjab began with his appointment in 1958 to a post with the New Zealand Presbyterian Church's mission in Punjab, and this led to his immersion in the study of the Sikhs. He renounced any Christian allegiance and, as an agnostic, dedicated himself unremittingly to the pursuit of historical truth as a 'critical historian'. Doctoral research at the School of Oriental and African Studies and shorter periods in the universities of Cambridge and Sussex allowed him to develop his work. For many years Hew was Professor of History at the University of Otago until his retirement in 1997, after which he published his acclaimed *Sikhs of the Khalsa; A History of the Khalsa Rahit* (Oxford University Press 2003), which meticulously traces the historical antecedents of the present Sikh Rahit Maryada (code of discipline) and which he described as 'the second instalment' to *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama* (1987).

Hew felt called to explain and vindicate his professional stance in response to the hostility that his scholarship aroused among

some Sikhs. His tenacity in posing and addressing difficult questions – concerning, for example, the historicity of cherished accounts of Guru Nanak’s life, and the caste factor in the composition of the Sikh community - led to outcry from an increasingly vociferous band of Sikh traditionalists. The fact that his career encompassed – from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s - a period of political trauma for Sikhs in Punjab no doubt contributed to his being a convenient whipping boy. In his autobiography, *Discovering the Sikhs*, Hew provides a record of these challenges.

To his sorrow, the orchestrated obstructiveness not only debarred him from participating in conferences in Punjab but also quashed hopes for establishing a centre for Sikh Studies at the University of Toronto. Hew taught in Toronto for one term annually for five years, and his subsequently distinguished doctoral students there included Professors Pashaura Singh and Lou Fenech. Many Sikhs acknowl-

edged his stature in the unravelling of their community’s history, not least the New Zealand Sikh community whose story he set on record.

Hew’s challenges included, in 1987, a stroke which curtailed his capacity to lecture and discuss impromptu, and (for a number of years) multiple myeloma, a type of cancer. Neither setback diminished his humour or his scholarly output. Throughout, he was supported by his wife, Margaret, and he delighted in their three sons, and their adopted half-Punjabi daughter, and four grandchildren.

Scholars and enquirers around the world are missing an unstintingly generous mentor who promptly emailed carefully authoritative responses to their questions and read their manuscripts.

Eleanor Nesbitt

BOOK REVIEWS

Introducing World Religions
Urubshurow, V. K. 2008 New York:
Routledge, 388 pages, 14 chapters

This book attempts an immense undertaking. It sets out to survey twelve traditions of world religion (Expressive traditions of Oceania, America and Africa; Zoroastrian; Judaic; Christian; Islamic; Baha’i; Jain; Buddhist; Hindu; Sikh; Chinese; Shinto) from their earliest recorded information to the present day. The author’s suggestion, in relation to one of the many useful diagrams (14.1) is that ‘its schema – though imperfect – is offered simply as a starting point for inter-religious discussion.’ Some readers may consider this a wise dictum for the book as a whole. The vast amount of information identified here is bound to include material that is subject to debate which, if not actually disputed, lends itself to differences of interpretation and potential controversy; most suitable then for honing students’ analytical thinking and skills of evaluation.

Textbooks of this nature, aiming to provide introductory material, can sometimes fail the ‘whet the appetite’. Urubshurow, however, adopts an imaginative approach drawing on the model of performing arts. This has the possibility of engaging students in an interesting and creative mode of study.

Sections on various religions follow a consistent pattern in which each is introduced via its ‘players’, ‘texts’ and ‘performances’. By this means a range of dialogues is set in motion including those that represent insider/outside, actual/imaginal, mainstream/alternative, and religionist/reductive perspectives. Students, and their teachers, are warned of these perspectives as challenges to be acknowledged and, ultimately, as relevant to dealing creatively with both the ‘discomforts’ (exclusivity, prejudice and culturally opaque materials) and the positives of distinctive traditions. There is potential here for enlivening exchange and exciting learning.

Under the heading 'The Wheel of Faiths', the author suggests that 'our times call for special efforts at inter-religious conversation' and a need to acknowledge the unique strengths of each tradition. This is necessary, she maintains, to enrich our conversations on the world stage. *Intro-*

Numen, Old Men: Contemporary Masculine Spiritualities and the Problems of Patriarchy. Joseph Gelfer, 2009, London: Equinox. 223pages. ISBN 978 1 84553 419 6 p/b

This book is an insightful and useful work particularly suited to our emerging post-dualist times. In it Gelfer explores the spectrum of ideas related to male spirituality and concludes that most previous views and theories have, even if attempting to break free of what he called our 'heteronormative' attitudes, been stuck in patriarchy. His arguments for this are extensive and convincing, even suggesting (as per David Tacey) that Jungian archetypes have more to do with social conditioning into patriarchy than any underlying divine trait.

Chapters and themes includes 'The Mythopoetic Movement', 'The Evangelical Men's Movement', 'The Catholic Men's Movement', 'Integral or Muscular Spirituality' and 'Gay Spirituality'. From analysis of all these views of 'spirituality for men' (my phrase), only 'queer theology', he argues, offers any hope of breaking free of patriarchal influences: because it encourages its proponents to question what is normal.

Whilst extensively referenced (as one would expect, this book being based on Gelfer's PhD thesis), a few more 'real-life' examples of the theories and ideas discussed might have been useful: We can probably guess what is meant by 'heteronormative', but what is normal for each of us, particularly in areas concerned with spirituality or with sexuality, depends greatly on our personal upbringing. Likewise his widely used word 'mythopoetic'. But such a criticism merely highlights the key point of this book: much of what has been written on male/masculine spirituality is based on tired theory: it bears little rela-

ucing World Religions plays its part in this dialogue in a well structured and innovative manner.

Carole Hamby
Department of Theology and Religion,
University of Birmingham.

tion to what men think and feel, and even less in relation to what they need to think and feel in order to feel whole, spiritual and 'real men'.

On page 156 we read: "sexual difference charts the difference not between man and woman ... but *person* and *person*" (his italics). Far more, I would suggest, could have been made of this key point: is not being a spiritual being about allowing the divine to live in and through us as unique beings? Isn't spirituality about being true to the 'here and now' rather than any defined idea of sexuality? The author unfortunately fails to consider these questions. Likewise, both sexuality and spirituality, when 'unpacked', would seem to relate to a significant degree to love: to human and divine love respectively. Thus one would expect a discourse on spirituality in the context of sexuality to discuss love at some length; looking (for example) at the interrelationship and interplay between love of God and love of our 'significant other'. Other than a brief mention of 'agape', however, this topic receives little attention.

Dr Gelfer's key point is clear: despite many attempts to redefine 'man' in a spiritual sense, a predominant patriarchy continues to aggravate the expression and understanding of male spirituality. Minor criticisms aside, this book is eminently readable, well-structured and will provide food for thought to theologians, social scientists, therapist and counselors alike. Such interested parties may also be interested in the on-line journal that Gelfer has established and edits: *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* (www.jmmsweb.org).

Keith Beasley
Bangor University

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CALLS FOR PAPERS

The Non-Religion and Secularity Research Network

One-Day 'Launch' Conference

Friday 11 December 2009, Wolfson College, University of Oxford

Conference theme: 'Non-Religion and Secularity: New Empirical Perspectives'

NSRN was set up in late 2008 as an international and interdisciplinary network of researchers interested in the burgeoning fields of non-religion, secularity, and atheism. After a very encouraging first year, its conveners are delighted to announce this one-day conference, exhibiting much of the new and exciting empirical research now being undertaken in these areas. Confirmed keynote speakers include Prof. Colin Campbell (York, UK), Prof. David Voas (Manchester, UK) and Prof. Ryan T. Cragun (Tampa, US).

Information about the NSRN is available at <<http://www.nsrn.co.uk>>. Details on how to join the network may be found at <<http://nsrn.co.uk/NSRN/About.html>>.

Please direct all non-conference enquiries to: info@nsrn.co.uk

Lois Lee (Cambridge) and Stephen Bullivant (Oxford)

Religion, Finance & Ethics

Essays are being solicited for a special issue of the *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* on the theme of "religion, finance and ethics". Topics may include, but are certainly not limited to: the rise of Islamic finance; religion in the age of financial capitalism; economics and ethical debates within world religions; the 'prosperity gospel' in contemporary Christianity; the historical and comparative study of religion and finance; re-evaluating the Weberian thesis; the financial crisis and religious institutions; critical perspectives on teaching finance from faith-based perspectives; religion and alternatives to capitalism.

The *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* is committed to showcasing emerging scholarship and debates within the field of religion studies and related disciplines. Essays are expected to be short and sharp, making critical contributions to the development of the academic study of religion. Articles should be 3,000 to 3,500 words long, with a minimum of endnotes and bibliographic references, and composed in Microsoft Word following The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th Edition (2003).

SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE BY MARCH 31, 2010

Please e-mail any inquiries or submissions to:

Ibrahim Abraham, University of Bristol, UK
Ibrahim.Abraham@bristol.ac.uk

अनु प्रत्नास आयवः पदं नवीयो अक्रमुः

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

STIMW

The Sanskrit Tradition in the Modern World

26th Annual STIMW Symposium

Fri 28 May 2010 11am-5pm

University of Manchester

CALL FOR PAPERS

Offers of papers by **11 Dec 2009** please to
Dr Jacqueline Suthren Hirst

Religions and Theology, Samuel Alexander,
University of Manchester,
Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL
jacqueline.hirst@manchester.ac.uk

STIMW offers a forum for the discussion of papers on varied aspects of Indian religions. Papers have been presented by leading scholars in the field as well as by research students. Papers are sent to participants in advance, so that they can be read and discussed in detail. They are available to those who cannot attend for a small charge.

Please note that this year there will also be a seminar on Indo-European/Indo-Aryan matters in Manchester on Thurs 27 May, so you might like to consider coming to both.

For further details, see <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/stimw>

To join the mailing list, please email hazel.collinson@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Death Day

University of Winchester
Saturday May 15th 2010

Bringing together people with an interest in death

This day conference reflects on the aims of the MA: Religion (Rhetoric and Rituals of Death) and invites discussion about approaches to death, dying and bereavement from a wide range of perspectives.

Keynote Speakers include:
Eleanor Crook (anatomical sculptor),
& Charles Cowling (good funeral guide)

We invite proposals for posters, 20 minute papers, or 1 hour workshops in relations to death, dying and bereavement which broadly address any of the following themes:-

Religion and Death
Death and the Arts
Death in Culture
Politics and/of Death
Bereavement & Pastoral Care
Death in Education
The Business of Death
Death and Life/Health

Proposals in the form of a title, a short abstract (300 words max.) and a brief biographical statement including any affiliations, should be sent by Friday 29th January 2010 to christina.welch@winchester.ac.uk

Cost of event is £40 including tea, coffee and a 2 course buffet lunch

Teaching Spirituality in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges

Thursday 14th January 2010
Old School Board, Leeds

The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies is organising an interdisciplinary workshop to explore issues around teaching spirituality in higher education in the UK. The workshop is aimed at academics, chaplaincy workers, equality/diversity officers, staff developers and students. It will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss the approaches, issues and challenges involved in teaching spirituality, to showcase and share examples of good practice, and to network with colleagues teaching spirituality in different institutions, both within and outside of Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) departments. It will also help the Subject Centre to get a sense of the unique teaching and learning issues facing this group, in order to help us provide appropriate support.

The programme is not yet finalised, but topics covered are likely to include:

- Teaching spirituality in HE in the UK: achievements, developments, challenges, special problems/issues;
- Teaching spirituality outside TRS departments: unique issues;
- Teaching spirituality without a TRS background: unique issues;
- Methods for teaching spirituality in HE: what works and what doesn't?
- The role of assessment in teaching spirituality.

Deadline for registration: December 18th 2009

For information and online booking please visit

<http://ors.heacademy.ac.uk/view.html/orsevents/449>

The workshop will be provided at no charge to those involved in teaching or studying spirituality in UK HE. Lunch and refreshments are included. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. A £25 fee will be charged for non-attendance and for cancellations made after December 31st 2009.



MEMBERS' RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Berman, Michael

Shamanic Journeys Through Daghestan With a Foreword by Dr. Andrew Dawson Hampshire: O Books 2009

Shamanic Journeys Through the Caucasus Hampshire: O Books 2009

Moojan Momen

'Social and Economic Development in an Iranian Village: The Baha'i Community of Saysan' *Baha'i Studies Review*, Vol. 15, pp 67-81, 2009

Au-delà du monothéisme: La Religione bahá'íe (trans. Pierre Spierckel). Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009

Schmidt, Bettina E.

'The presence of St. Patrick in Haitian Vodou: The rebirth of a Catholic Saint in the Caribbean'. In: Rethinking the Sacred: Proceedings of the Ninth SIEF Conference in Derry 2008, ed. by Ulrika Wolf-Knuts and Kathleen Grant. Abo: Abo Akademi University, pp. 63-73. 2009

Caribbean Diaspora in the USA: Diversity of Caribbean Religions in New York City. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate.2008

Einführung in die Religionsethnologie: Ideen und Konzepte. [=An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion]. (Kulturwissenschaften) Berlin: Reimer Verlag. 2008

'Oshún visits the Bronx – Possessed Women in the Cuban Orisha Religion' Diskus, The Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions, vol. 9. <http://www.basr.ac.uk/diskus/diskus9/schmidt.htm> 2008

'Polyphonic Bricolage – Caribbean Religious Cultures in New York City'. In: Rituals in an Unstable World: Contingency – Hybridity - Embodiment, ed. by Alexander Henn and Klaus-Peter Koepping. Frankfurt/ New York: Peter Lang, pp. 185-203. 2008

'The Many Voices of Caribbean Culture in New York City'. In: Constructing Vernacular Culture in the Trans-Caribbean, edited by Holger Henke and Karl-Heinz Magister. Lanham: Lexington Books, pp. 23-42. 2008

GUIDELINES FOR *BULLETIN* CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

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

The *BASR Bulletin* will carry notices of relevant conferences and calls for papers (up to one page) free of charge. Preference is given to conferences where members may offer papers; other non-participatory conferences, which are more akin to courses, may be included if space permits. The deadline for the next edition is 15th April 2010.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

£3.00 each inc. p&p. Write, enclosing payment (cheques made out to BASR), to Helen Waterhouse, Arts Faculty, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or order from the BASR Web site.

1. Miranda Green, *Women and Goddesses in the Celtic World*, 1991
2. Christine Trevett, *The Quaker Margaret Fell: Religion and Gender in a C17th Dissenting Group*, 1991
3. Ann Bancroft, *Hildegard of Bingen to Meinrad Craighead*, 1991
4. Julia Leslie, *Religion, Gender and Dharma: The Case of the Widow Ascetic*, 1991
5. Peter Antes, *How to study religious experience in the traditions*, 1992
6. Marion Bowman, *Phenomenology, fieldwork and folk religion*, 1992
7. George Chryssides, *Unificationism: A study in religious syncretism*, 1993
8. Michael Pye, *Syncretism versus synthesis*, 1993
9. Ria Kloppenberg, *A Buddhist-Christian encounter in Sri Lanka: Pandura Vada*, 1994
10. Peter Donovan, *Maori rituals add magic to contemporary civic life*, 1995
11. Ninian Smart, *Sacred nationalism*, 1995
12. W. S. F. Pickering, *Locating the sacred: Durkheim and Otto*, 1995
13. Terence Thomas, *'The sacred' as a viable concept in the contemporary study of religions*, 1995 (bound together with 12)
14. Margaret Chatterjee, *Do we need authority in religious life?*, 1996
15. Chris Arthur, *Media, meaning, and method in the study of religion*, 1996
16. Gerrie ter Haar, *Chosen people: The concept of diaspora in the modern world*, 1996
17. Richard Gombrich, *Religious experience in early Buddhism*, 1997
18. James Cox, *Alterity as identity: Innovation in the Academic Study of Religions*, 1998
19. Elizabeth Amoah, *African spirituality and religious innovation*, 1998
20. Ian Reader, *Religion, conflict and the sacred mission: On understanding the violence of Aum Shinrikyo*, 1999
21. Brian Bocking, *Religious Studies: The New Queen of the Sciences*, 2000
22. Kim Knott, *The Sense and Nonsense of 'Community': A Consideration of Contemporary Debates about Community and Culture by a Scholar of Religion*, 2002
23. Armin Geertz, *Religion and Community in Indigenous Contexts*, 2002
24. Guilia Sfamini Gasparro, *Religion and Community in the Ancient World*, 2002
25. Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism, Muslims and the British State*, 2002
26. Rosalind Hackett, *The Response of Scholars of Religion to Global Religious Violence*, 2003
27. Ursula King, *Cherished Memories, Fractured Identities and New Subjectivities: Celebrating Fifty Years of British Scholarship in Religious Studies*, 2006.

Subsequent annual lectures are published in DISKUS <http://www.basr.ac.uk/diskus/>

