

BASR Bulletin



BASR

British Association for
the Study of Religions

No 124 - May 2014



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WWW.BASR.AC.UK

ABOUT THE BASR

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 International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), whose object is the promotion of the academic study of religions through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject. 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. Membership of the BASR confers membership of the IAHR and EASR.

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Cover image: Aztec Mask, dated 1400-1521. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland. Reused through Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License, via Wikimedia Commons.



EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 124th issue of the BASR Bulletin. We hope that as you are reading this—with a glass of something strong or a lump of something sweet—that you have finished the inevitable and interminable pile of marking and are looking forward to a break. Or as we are academics, catching up on the various things we over-committed to during the past two semesters.

We decided to hold this issue back a few weeks, in order to report to you from the EASR conference in Groningen. We then realised that this meant the issue would come at the end of the academic year, which allows us to wrap things up, as it were. Hence, the "News, Etc." section, which you will find on the following page. We intend this to be a regular feature, so please do send any items you think would be of interest or use to the membership and we will include them.

This is not the only new feature. The eagle-eyed among you may have noticed a few design changes last time, but we have taken things further in this issue—which will have been obvious from the cover. And while you will find everything you've come to expect from the Bulletin inside, we will continue to try new features, and to broaden our coverage.

George Chrysidides offers further advice for our more junior members, this time on the subject on publication. For those of us already dealing with the realities of teaching, Dominic Corryright addresses the important issue of A-Level and GCSE reform, which serves to remind us that the BASR has an important role in how

the subject of religion is handled in education—and that if we don't fill that role, others will.

This issue's column from the Religious Studies Project aims to start a discussion about how the podcasts and other resources being produced may be used in our professional teaching practice. This approach to RS is in its infancy, so this piece aims to suggest how the RSP can be utilised, but also to learn what it still needs to do.

As always, the book and conference reviews aim to keep you informed about developments in the field, and this issue includes a personal, playful but pertinent piece from Beth Singler on the recent INFORM anniversary conference. We welcome further such pieces in the future. While we as editors will do what we can to solicit material, the Bulletin stands or falls on the submissions of the BASR members. We welcome any submissions and suggestions—from senior as well as junior members.

Although it was included as an insert last issue, we have chosen to reprint Peggy Morgan's warm obituary for Dr Owen Cole this issue, to make sure that it is preserved in the BASR archive.

ADVICE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

News Items	Up to 150 words
Conference Reports	500-1500 words
Conference Announcements	Not more than a single page
Book Reviews	500-00 words
Features	Around 1000 words
Members' Recent Publications	Maximum 5 items

DEADLINE FOR THE NOVEMBER 2014 ISSUE IS 15 OCTOBER 2014



NEWS, ETC

CONFERENCE SUCCESS

The 2013 joint BASR/EASR conference was an enormous success—in every respect—despite considerable issues. Congratulations are due to everyone who took part, but particularly to Stephen Gregg and Sara Fretheim. This result not only ensures the continuation of the work of the BASR, but means that we can consider funding new initiatives.

SUCCESS WITH AHRC PRC NOMINATIONS

In November 2013, Bettina Schmidt circulated a call sent by the Arts and Humanities Research Council for new members of the Peer Review College. Happily, these have been quite successful: 50% of our nominations were recently invited to the PRC. This is a good success rate as the usual process has always been to seek nomination by the university. We would hope, of course, that more members were nominated by their universities, as at the last round. But by bringing in more members into the PRC, nominated by the BASR, we also widen the recognition of the BASR as an important academic association in the field of the study of religions. Thank you to all nominees (and we hope that the unsuccessful ones see election the next time), and congratulations to the elected new members of the PRC.

INFORM BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPOINTED

Since January 2013 three new Governors have been appointed to Inform's Board. They are Jim McManus, Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire County Council and nominee of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster; Dr Graham Harvey, Reader in Religious Studies and Head of Department at Open University; and Dr George Chryssides, Honorary Research Fellow in Contemporary Religion at the University of Birmingham.

In August 2013, Nick Parke was appointed as Inform's new Director. Nick was formerly a police officer employed in the gathering, analysis and dissemination of intelligence around major public order and security events in London and the rest of the UK, and responsible for the overall assessment of the threat to the event. He was a point of contact for Inform in the police service over a number of years.

NEW BASR PRESIDENT

The time has come once again (and it seems so quick!) to elect a new President of the BASR. Although Graham Harvey has a year in office remaining, it is tradition for the next President Elect to be announced at the annual conference. Therefore, we seek nominations. A form is included on the right - please send your nominations to the Honorary Secretary by the 1st of August.

QAA BENCHMARKING

Consultation on the QAA Benchmarking in Theology and Religious Studies continues, and the consultation document can be found online on the QAA web site at <http://ow.ly/xagEv>.

We encourage comments, and members should do their best to ensure that as many people in their institutions are aware of it. Comments on the undergraduate guidelines should go to Marion Bowman (marion.bowman@open.ac.uk) and comments on the MA/PG Appendix A should be sent to George Chryssides (GDChryssides@religion21.com)

ROUTLEDGE BUYS EQUINOX

Many of our readers will already be aware that Routledge has taken over Equinox publishing. As a much larger publishing house, there are potentially advantages and pitfalls for authors. It is believed that existing Equinox titles will remain available, but if reprinted will be repackaged as Routledge titles. For some books, this will be a third publisher, after the merging of Acumen and Equinox in 2013. It is unclear at present whether Acumen and Equinox's

subsequent "divorce" is related to the Routledge buy-out.

EASR CONFERENCE 2014

This year's annual conference of the EASR was held in Groningen, the Netherlands, 11-15 May, organised and hosted by our colleagues in the Dutch Association for the Study of Religion. BASR is proud to be a national association of the EASR—making each BASR member a member of EASR and of the larger International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR). BASR sends representatives to the executive committee and general assembly of the EASR, in addition to providing elected officers to the Association. This year's conference theme was "religion and the pluralities of knowledge" and this attracted nearly 400 delegates from across Europe and beyond. Panels addressed a wide range of issues, from Sumerian figurines to Pastafarian institutionalisation, and from reflections on fieldwork

or archival research to reflections on theoretical issues. As ever, terms like "theologian" and "scientist" were occasionally wielded as if they were precision instruments rather than pantomime props. Mostly, however, the conference was a fine example of academia at its best: providing plenty of opportunity for debate and conversation across all kinds of putative boundaries. Three keynote speakers (Jörg Rüpke, Birgit Meyer and Carlo Ginzburg) plus one public lecturer (Bruno Latour) engaged large and responsive audiences in considering a range of cutting-edge topics. In addition, the EASR welcomed the new Belgian Association for the Study of Religions (BABEL) who will host the 2016 EASR conference. There won't be an EASR conference in 2015 because the IAHR quinquennial congress will be held in Erfurt, Germany (hosted by the German Association). BASR members are strongly encouraged to offer panels and papers. Further information can be found on the conference website.

See page 21 for our full review.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

I propose for election as
President of the British Association for the Study of Religions to serve from
2015-2018.

Signed Dated

I second the above nomination:

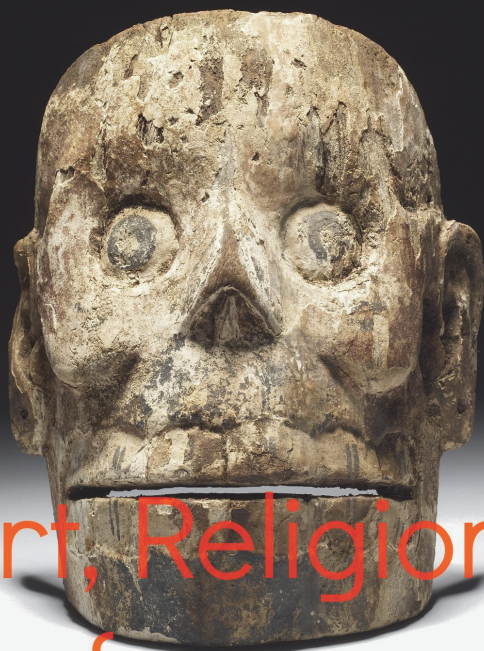
Signed Dated

I agree to be nominated

Signed Dated

Please send the completed form by 1 August 2014 to Dr Bettina Schmidt, Hon. Secretary, BASR, School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Ceredigion SA48 7ED.

BASR Annual Conference 2014
The Open University, Milton Keynes
basr.ac.uk #basr14



Art, Religion, Performance, & "The Cutting Edge"

BASR
British Association for
the Study of Religions

BASR annual conference, 2014

www.basr.ac.uk/conference
#BASR14

Submitting proposals

The programme committee particularly invites panels but will gladly consider offers of individual papers on the conference themes. Papers should take 20 minutes (followed by 10 minutes discussion). Paper proposals should provide a title, abstract of no more than 250 words and the presenter's name and institutional affiliation. Panel proposals should group papers together (to comprise a 90 minute session) and also provide a panel title, short abstract and the name of the panel convener / chair. Proposals for open roundtable and discussion sessions will be considered.

Proposals should be sent to arts-basr@open.ac.uk
by 1 July 2014.

All Registration and Accommodation details are available on the Registration Form that needs to be completed and returned by 1 August 2014 to the address provided on the form

BASR's 2014 conference (3-5 September, 2014, hosted by The Open University, Milton Keynes) has two themes: "religion, art and performance" and "the cutting edge". Both can be interpreted broadly. Panels and papers are invited.

Religion, art and performance

Religion is at least represented in artistic and dramatic ways. It has been argued that theatre began in religious rituals, that visual arts began as demonstrations of religious knowledges, and that literature arose from religious myth-telling. Perhaps pre-modern arts of all kinds were fundamentally religious. Contemporary religion has interesting relationships with art and performance: from the use of ritual-like acts on stage to the staging of religious rites to impact a wide public; from the portrayal of religious themes in art to the emerging emphasis on "religion as act" or "religioning" in recent scholarly theorising. Perhaps religion is a performative art. Is it still valid to distinguish ritual from drama on the grounds that the former involves only participants while the latter invites audiences? What difference does the display of religious acts or things in museums, galleries, theatres, heritage and tourist venues make? Ideas and questions like these (and there are many more) seem likely to enhance the value of the study of religions to interdisciplinary scholarship. Perhaps the study of religion could be improved by dialogue with scholars of art or performance, and/or vice versa. The BASR 2014 conference provides an opportunity to explore these and other questions and debates. Therefore, we invite panels and papers about religion, art and performance (all defined broadly).

The cutting edge

Many BASR members also belong to scholarly associations for the study of specific religions or for the advancement of specific approaches to religion(s) (e.g. anthropology, philosophy, sociology and more). We invite panels on the cutting edge of debates that focus on specific religions or apply specific approaches. In doing so we hope various forms of cross-fertilisation will enrich the field of studies of religion.



FEATURES

DISKUS: JOURNEY OF A DISEMBODIED JOURNAL



DISKUS, the peer-reviewed Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions, began life as the UK's first electronic Religious Studies journal, which was sent out to subscribers on a disk (yes, one of those flat round things inserted into computers), which sought 'among other things to provoke DISKUSsion' (Editorial, Vol. 1.2). The first volume went out in Spring 1993 as DISKUS: A Disembodied Journal of International Religious Studies, jointly edited by Brian Bocking and Gavin Flood, publishing articles with 'an emphasis on contemporary religions, and contemporary issues in Religious Studies,' taking a 'broadly phenomenological approach'. Ninian Smart wrote the first article, on 'The formation rather than the origin of religion', and the others were by Klaus-Dieter Stoll on the electronic church, Peter Woodward on the ethnographic study of Jewish children in Britain, Kim Knott on Hare Krishna theology and Andrew Rawlinson on Western Sufism

There were ten editions between 1993 and 2000, now archived on the BASR website (<http://www.basr.ac.uk/diskus/diskus1-6/index.html>). Volumes 3.2 and 4.1 published papers

presented at the 1995 BASR conference in Wolverhampton on the theme of 'Authority and Religious Traditions'. This mixture of conference and themed editions became a feature of the journal.

Volume 5 appeared after DISKUS became incorporated into a web-based consortium called the Internet Journal of Religion, hosted at the University of Marburg under Michael Pye's direction, and included papers presented at an IAHR conference in Hildesheim in 1998. Volume 6, edited by Marion Bowman and Graham Harvey, was on the theme of Pagan Identities; then followed a five-year gap.

It was natural for the BASR to eventually take on the journal, since the founding editors and many of the contributors were (or still are) members of the association. Volume 7 was published in 2006 and included the annual lecture by Seth Kunin and papers by Frank Whaling and Brian Bocking presented at the BASR day conference the year before. Previously, annual lectures were available to order as Occasional Papers from the BASR. Many of these papers were later published in *Religion: Empirical*

Suzanne Owen,
Coordinating
Editor

Studies (Ashgate, 2004), edited by Steven Sutcliffe.

Matthew Guest became 'coordinating editor' (the Executive Committee of the BASR is the Editorial Board), continuing the pattern of publishing the annual lecture and a selection of other papers from the BASR conference. Graham Harvey became coordinating editor for volumes 10-13 and, in September 2012, Suzanne Owen took on the role. The next volume in 2013 was a themed edition focussed on Teaching and Learning, guest edited by Dominic Corrywright and Stephen Gregg.

Last year, the BASR hosted the European Association for the Study of Religions conference at Liverpool Hope University. Thus, along with the 'main' edition, two further editions of DISKUS are in preparation, one on 'music and religion' and the other on 'numbers and figures'. If you would like to guest edit a themed edition in the future, especially if linked to papers at the annual conference, contact the coordinating editor or come along to the AGM to discuss ideas for DISKUS more generally.

OPINION: WORSHIPPING AT THE ALTAR OF EILEEN BARKER...

Beth Singler, PhD student at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. This piece first appeared at Beth's blog - <http://bvlsingler.wordpress.com/>.

At the end of Inform's 25th Anniversary conference in London (31 January–2 February 2014), a member of the Church of Scientology stood up during the very last Q&A and told the audience that he'd been watching us sociologists of NRMs for a while now. And he'd come to the conclusion that we were a cult. We have rituals, meetings, doctrines, and a charismatic leader in Eileen Barker, founder of Inform and a guiding light in NRM studies (see, I've drunk the Koolaid too, according to him).

I'm not actually going to disagree with him all that much... But that's because I want to flip what he's saying on its head. He wanted to point out all the things about Inform that make it an NRM. In my work I want to point out all the things that make NRMs pretty ordinary social organisational focuses of pretty ordinary human beings (sorry Inform, you do a very good job, but you are ordinary too!).

There was also much debate during the conference about the future of NRM studies and admittedly some were more pessimistic about this than others. In part because NRM is an artificial term and as these 'normal social organisations' (not to create yet another term) progress they seem to become more mainstream. We've lost a lot of Hindu NRMs to Hindu Studies because in terms of their founders and texts they

weren't really new, but only new to the West. Pagan Studies is a flourishing field on its own. Ditto Esoteric Studies. Likewise I write about aspects of the New Age Movement, which according to some is long over, or not really included in the term NRM (both of which are debates for another time).

The tendency of speakers to avoid the word religion was also commented upon. Instead the words faith or belief were used instead, sometimes with metaphorical scare quotes around them as the speakers seemed hesitant to commit to them. We can also point out that the term NRM, new religious movement, itself avoids mentioning religion but



"The vogue for wearing fancy dress threatens to invade ordinary social life." Punch Magazine, July 8, 1914

perhaps can give a sense of something being religion-y. As one person put it to me, this emphasis on belief, or faith, is an aspect of a lingering Western, Christian, Protestant, attitude to defining religion. Instead of focusing on the lived experiences of religion we talk

about what believers believe. In part perhaps because once we move onto the field of belief as sociologists we can leave that to one side and not get enmeshed in the troublesome definition of what religion is. This emphasis is however changing, and my informant also mentioned the work of BASR president, Graham Harvey, amongst others, as an example of this move.

The title for the conference was "Minority Religions: Contemplating the Past and Anticipating the Future".

Prognostication in sociology is a difficult affair, but many of the speakers made attempts at logical predictions of various religious group's futures based on their pasts and more recent events (including myself as I discussed the move of particular NRMs to an online presence, and for some, a solely online existence). But what of the future of organizations like

Inform which provide information about NRMs? Inform speakers pointed out the change in emphasis in the conference title itself as it refers to Minority religions... Which at least uses the R word in full meaning even if it throws up the question of what happens if a

minority becomes a majority, or where we draw the line between NRMs/Minority religions and mainstream religions that are in the minority in the UK such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc.

This is not to be too picky about their choice of term—any term would come with its limitations (see also: cults, emergent religions, invented religions, hyper-real religions etc etc). Inform's future will be certainly dependent on still carving out a niche by citing a focus and providing a service. Their requests for information now come in the main from legal and governmental organisations rather than from concerned parents as in the 70s and 80s, prior to and during the Cult Wars. They have very detailed information on these changes and are very aware of needing to remain a relevant source of legitimate information, especially in the age of the Internet where Wikipedia is a behemoth of information of varying quality but easy access.

So, where I do disagree with the gentleman from the Church of Scientology is that if the sociological study of religion is a cult (his term and not mine), it is not one that is happily skipping into what is presumed to be a utopian future. Nor is it a doomsday cult awaiting the sound of trumpets and the opening of the first seal on the day of judgement (although such voices of doom are present). Instead, sociologists of religion are involved in an ongoing, self-reflexive discussion about their discipline, and not merely kowtowing at the altar of the High Priestess Eileen. She'd probably give them a right telling off if they tried to...

TEACHING & LEARNING MATTERS:

On Writing and Reading and Advisory Boards: GCSE and A level Reform and the RS Curriculum

On Friday 4th April colleagues from Religion and Theology departments, subject leaders of awarding bodies, the chair of the RE council and government representatives met to discuss and propose changes to the subject criteria and specification of the Religious Studies A level curriculum. The lively discussion focused primarily on content and skills (rather than, for example, assessment, or mechanisms for delivery) in relation to both theology and RS. It was quite a pleasure to see that academic colleagues' comments have been quickly inserted into the draft document that will inform the final subject criteria drawn up by Ofqual (from which the awarding bodies draw up their final specifications) A primary player in advising Ofqual on a range of specific subjects, and, it seems, on general levels and expectations for A levels, is a new arm within the Russell Group, ALCAB (see note below).

Developing skills in effective reading and writing is a matter of significant interest not only for Russell group universities but all higher education institutions, and quite probably in all subject areas. I recently took part in a debate with colleagues, from a range of departments, on the necessary entry level skills for undergraduates. One colleague noted that he begins a teaching session with the question 'what is a sentence'? Is this risible or realistic? It seems extraordinary that undergraduates do not know what a sentence is. Yet it is a common complaint from

Dominic Corrywright,
Principal Lecturer for
quality enhancement
and validations,
Subject lead Religion
and Theology, Oxford
Brookes University

academics that the standards of reading critically and writing with clarity have declined to such an extent that even basic level skills – such as forming a sentence – are absent among some undergraduates. Examples of woeful undergraduate writing abound on the internet and in passing chat between academics at marking time. In my own experience, examples of sound and satisfactory, good and really splendid pieces of writing outweigh hopeless examples.

I explain to my students that becoming an academic is both an art and a craft. The art is included in the joys of discovery, imagination, and creative engagement with the field of study, while the craft is the set of skills necessary to elicit the data of discovery and express that data and the creative connections one has uncovered to others. It is akin to being a potter – the art of a beautiful vase is underpinned by the skill of throwing pots and understanding the practices of glazing and firing. Equally, the inspirational art of the teacher is underpinned by the craft of the pedagogue. It is important to design curricula that explicitly focus upon and include tasks that develop

reading and writing skills. Have we pedagogues, taken sufficient time to design our own undergraduate curricula with these elements in explicit and constructive alignment? Are our expectations commensurate with the level and ability we really should require from level 3 entry students? Do we pay sufficient attention to the differentiated abilities, skill sets and maturities of our undergraduates to recognise that at least some within all our classes do not have a developed 'voice' in writing or critical acuity in reading, and will need our help? Understanding these elements of teaching and learning are the practical craft skills of pedagogy.

The skills suggested by the collaborative consultation group on Friday 4th April are in accord with the traditional and modern requirements of an undergraduate. The list presented below seems to me indubitably necessary for undergraduates. But on reflection, they seem challenging for all A level students of RS, and I also note that they are asking so much more than the perhaps traditional writing and reading objectives. Collaborative, oral, technical and technological skills are as vital as interpreting texts and writing coherent prose.

Skills

Attendees were asked what skills they wanted RS A level students to develop. Skills suggested included:

- Analytical and critical thinking skills including reflective analysis, integrated and lateral thinking, critical evaluation
- Ability to construct a coherent and logical argument
- Ability to articulate, substantiate and critically evaluate arguments and opinions.

- Breadth of knowledge and understanding
 - Independent research skills – including the ability to use database, reference source material and coherently structure an evidence based essay/ project
 - Collaborative working skills
 - Oral presentation skills
 - Ability to interpret and understand texts (which can include visual/ pictorial and oral texts as well as written texts)
 - Write good quality coherent prose (one attendee suggested this needed to be in the assessment objectives)
- (From 'Note of the Religious Studies HE Workshop', 9.4.2014)

The process for decision upon both content and skills within RS A levels is moving quickly, and I would advise colleagues to take a part in any further consultations. On 9th April Education Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, released a written statement to Parliament, a section of which is copied below:

Based on the advice of the A level content advisory board established by the Russell Group of leading universities, I have also already announced that A levels in mathematics, languages and geography will be reformed for first teaching from September 2016.

I can announce today that GCSEs and A levels in religious studies, design & technology, drama, dance, music and PE - and GCSEs in art & design, computer science and citizenship - will also be reformed and brought up to these new, higher standards for first teaching at the same time, in September 2016.

Awarding organisations and subject experts will draft content for these new A levels and GCSEs over the coming months, and we will consult

on their recommendations for content - while Ofqual consults on its recommendations for assessment - later in the year.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/sp/eeches/gcse-and-a-level-reform>

Note: The A Level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB) was established by the Russell Group and proposed to the secretary of state for education on 31st May 2013. It is led by Professor Nigel Thrift, VC University of Warwick. It was approved by the secretary of state on 10th June 2013. The stated focus of this group 'is to provide advice to the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) on the core content requirements considered desirable in A level facilitating subjects for adequate preparation for leading universities. We are funded by a grant from the Department for Education'.

<http://alcab.org.uk/about/>

It has been noted by colleagues in BASR and TRS-UK that the list of 'facilitating subjects', as defined by the Russell Group, does not include Religious Studies or Theology, rather to the detriment of the status of our subject areas.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

SOCREL - Wed 2 - Fri 4/7/14, Brighton

SSSR - Fri 31/10 - Sun 2/11/14, Indianapolis, IN

AAR - Thurs 20 - Mon 24/11/2014, San Diego, CA

AASR - Wed 3 - Fri 5/12/2014, Melbourne

ADVICE FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS: How To Get Your Book Published

George D.
Chryssides,
Honorary Research
Fellow, University of
Birmingham

When I first started my academic career, publishers often stipulated 'No Ph.D. theses' – presumably believing that doctoral theses were abstruse and of limited interest. Times have changed, however, and one important hallmark of a successful Ph.D. is that it is publishable.

Whether to publish one's thesis as a book or to divide it into journal articles can be a difficult decision, involving imponderables such as possible ratings in job applications and REF exercises, likely time-lag between submission and publication, and potential readership. A book has the advantage of enabling the author to develop an extended line of argument, while converting chapters into articles involves adaptation and ingenuity.

For those who are unfamiliar with the publishing process, it may be helpful to identify the various steps that are involved. The commissioning editor is usually the first to see a proposal. A series editor may also be consulted. If the initial response is favourable, the proposal then goes out to independent referees, who report back. If the reports are favourable, the commissioning editor takes the proposal to an editorial board, who considers whether the proposed publication is marketable. If all goes well, the much-coveted contract follows.

An author's obvious first step is to identify likely publishers and ascertain their interests and preferences. Identifying a series into which your proposal might fit is a

good strategy: publishers often prefer a series to an array of free-standing volumes. Talking to publishers' reps at conferences is invariably useful: they are there to ascertain future trends in scholarship, and not merely to sell their wares. If your book does not fit their plans, this can save much waiting time.

The usual ground for rejection is not lack of competence (I have rarely seen proposals or manuscripts that were not fit for purpose) but a lack of congruence with the publisher's focus, or – very occasionally – manuscripts that were in such a narrow area that it was difficult to envisage much of a readership. (If one's thesis is on a virtually unknown Japanese new religion, for example, perhaps one could expand the focus and write about several, or perhaps it could serve as a case study to discuss wider methodological issues.)

Most publishers' web sites have a section for prospective authors, giving clear guidance on the components of a proposal. These normally include a brief CV, the book's aims, its length, a rationale, a chapter-by-chapter outline, the target readership, and competing publications.

One of two of these merit some comment. The aims should be a couple of sentences indicating what the book sets out to do, while the rationale explains why it is important, and what is distinctive about it. Identifying the target readership is paramount. This needs to be realistic: "the general reader" is not a plausible target: we may want everyone to read

what we have written, but this is not going to happen. Undergraduates will not rush out to buy copies, especially if the likely cost is £60 or more! It is much more realistic to suggest that the book will appeal to scholars in the field, and that libraries will purchase copies – although, if you can define likely ancillary markets (maybe clergy, or researchers in related disciplines), so much the better.

Identifying competing works shows that the author has researched the market, and that there is a plausible gap to fill. Existing writings may have become dated, have a different focus or methodology, or be limited to journal articles rather than monographs.

You may be asked for referees to vouch for your competence, but it is also a good idea to suggest a short list of readers whom the commissioning editor might approach for an opinion. (You do not need to seek their permission.) Sometimes editors either do not know who to consult, or make worryingly wrong choices.

One should be prepared for disappointments. I have had my share too, and it can be particularly infuriatingly to wait months before one arrives. One should nonetheless avoid trying to speed things up by submitting to two or more publishers simultaneously: a double success is embarrassing. Even more important is to avoid being lured into deals with

(Continues on page 20)

THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROJECT

In Teaching & Learning

“The RSP has put together a remarkable series of articles, [over 100] podcasts, and now book reviews that are easily transferred into teaching materials for classes and resources for students.” Emeritus Professor James L. Cox, University of Edinburgh.

The RSP has been building solidly for over 2 years now, and we are extremely proud of what we have been able to achieve in this time. Anecdotally we know that ‘the Project’ has been valuable for a wide range of people, including undergraduates, postgraduates, and professional academics. But in order to grow more effectively, we needed concrete feedback on how the RSP was actually being used on the ground. To that end, we recently put out a call for feedback amongst our audience. Pleasingly, this feedback reveals what we had hoped: that the RSP is an extremely valuable resource which not only allows people to stay up to date with a wide range of topics, but which also allows those new to Religious Studies to get a handle on the complex terrain of the field in a convenient and digestible way. Most excitingly, we also got a snapshot of how the RSP has started to be used as a teaching resource. This is where we feel we have the greatest potential for growth, and where the BASR community can play its most direct role in assisting the Project. Below we offer a sample of the kind of feedback that we received.

A number of people commented on the “convenience” – Professor Bron Taylor (University of Florida, USA) –

and usability of the podcast format, with Anna (an undergraduate student at the University of Edinburgh) saying that she listens to the podcasts around her flat and while in transit, while Professor Michel Desjardins (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada) has listened “at the airport, in my office as a break, [when] preparing a meal” etc.

A number of students gave their insights into how the RSP has helped them in their studies—everything from acting “like a surrogate year-long class for me”, to helping in the discovery of conference opportunities (Ian Blair, undergraduate Student, Lewis & Clark, USA). And Professor Carole Cusack (University of Sydney, Australia) articulated what we believe is one of the greatest strengths of the RSP:

“I have recommended individual podcasts to undergraduates, but have particularly found [...] recommending the whole site ('work through all the podcasts at your own speed') to new postgraduates who are transferring from backgrounds other than Religious Studies to be a useful and productive exercise...”

The greatest untapped potential of the RSP, however, lies in its teaching applications. Understanding the issues within Religious Studies requires a lot of knowledge that is not easily picked up by students encountering the field for the first time. The podcasts on the RSP represent a valuable resource that we believe could be effectively integrated into all levels of university teaching. Pleasingly, this has already started to

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happen. At universities from Chester to Sydney, and Turku to Alabama, podcasts have been utilized by lecturers as additional course readings, prompts for discussion, weekly assessments etc. For example, Professor Russell McCutcheon at the University of Alabama suggests that

“...some of the interviews have proved really useful in classes, either modelling an approach we're discussing or-to be honest-committing a few scholarly sins we're critiquing.”

However the most direct experiment with the RSP that we know of has been conducted by Michel Desjardins, who built it into his (required) MA Method and Theory course. In groups, students selected “the podcasts that attracted them the most” and then, along with other activities and short papers, facilitated class discussion on them. The result? A “method and theory course that reflected student interest and instructor knowledge”. In this particular instance, the students seemed to enjoy “having choice, they found it easy to listen to the podcasts, and it was impossible for people not to have opinions about what they'd heard”. As might be expected with such experiments, Michel would like to tweak the format for future years –

perhaps reducing podcast sessions to fortnightly frequency, and using alternate weeks to “build in more breadth and depth, knowing what had come and what was coming in regards to their choices” – however, he claims that he “will certainly do this again”. While we would not expect the RSP to be utilized so extensively in every teaching context, this provides a tantalizing taste of the possibilities the RSP has to offer to teaching and learning.

All of that being said, we did receive our fair share of constructive criticism! A common theme was that there could be greater consistency in our audio quality – a symptom, perhaps, of our somewhat laid back style – and that this can prove a particular issue for users who are not native English speakers. It was also

suggested that “listening to a 20 or 30 min podcast in a class can be demanding”, making for a “pedagogical challenge” in a contemporary atmosphere of “engaging media” (Russell McCutcheon). Users offered suggestions for improvement – including the transcription of (certain sections of) podcasts, the addition of (shorter) video content, and the production of bullet-pointed summaries and further reading lists – and we are actively engaged in seeking to address each of these, and more.

These perspectives are exactly what we are looking for in order to be able to improve the useability of the RSP as a pedagogical resource. So what began as a report ends with an invitation: we want to start a

continuing dialogue with the BASR and the wider Religious Studies community about how the RSP can be enhanced as an educational resource. It has already carved out solid space as a background resource to help individually motivated students and scholars, but we are convinced that with collaboration and consultation, the RSP can grow into an integral part of RS curricula worldwide. With that in mind, we close with a question: how do you think the RSP could be improved to enhance its utility as an educational resource?

Any feedback will be greatly welcomed, and we look forward to a continuing conversation.

Thanks to everyone who provided feedback, and thanks for listening!



Inform Seminar “Minority Religions and Schooling”

Saturday 6th December 2014

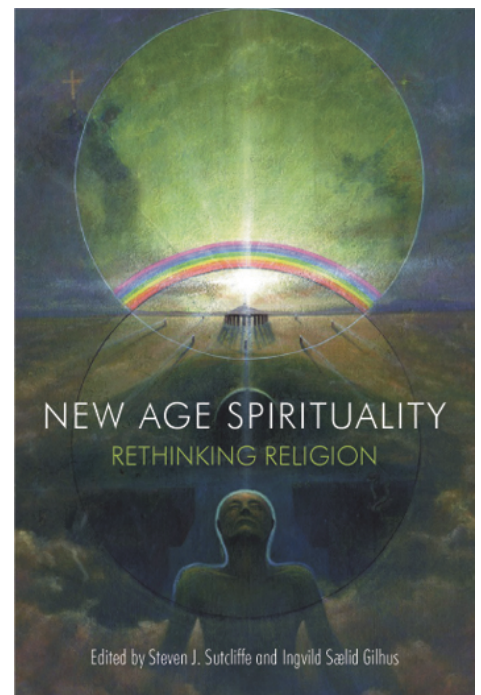
New Academic Building, London School of Economics

“State multiculturalism has failed’, declared David Cameron in 2011. Yet there is a continued expansion in state-funded religious schooling in Britain. This expansion has gone hand-in-hand with legal rulings that have placed minority religions on stronger footing next to the more established faiths. After exponential growth of Academies operating outside of local authority control since 2000, and three years after the first Free Schools opened their doors (a programme which has assisted the expansion of a diversity of faith-based schools), it is a good opportunity to take stock and reflect on the nature of minority faith schooling in Britain.

Registration and a full speaker list will be available through the Inform website www.inform.ac in the coming months.

REVIEW FEATURE - NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY: RETHINKING RELIGION, EDITED BY STEVEN SUTCLIFFE & INGVID GILHUS. ACUMEN 2014.

*The following three papers were presented at the launch of **New Age Spirituality: Rethinking Religion**, edited by Steven J. Sutcliffe & Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, at the University of Edinburgh on 26/03/2014. Marion Bowman (Open University), Bettina Schmidt (University of Wales, Trinity St David) and David G. Robertson (University of Edinburgh) offered critical responses to the book, the first major academic publication in the field for several years. The Bulletin editors reproduce the texts here for the members who were unable to travel, and an audio recording of the event is available at the Religious Studies Project - <http://ow.ly/wOwmz>*



Marion Bowman The Open University

Back in 2000, Steve and I worked on another co-edited volume – *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* – and I have to say that back then I think we would both have been rather surprised, possibly even shocked, that 13 years on, we don't appear to have moved beyond New Age at all! New Age appears to be stubbornly resilient, a term that is immensely problematic, ambiguous, contested – but that we apparently can't do without. It is still much loved by publishers, for example, and broadly used as convenient shorthand for something that we haven't altogether got to grips with or entirely tamed conceptually. So this new volume, *New Age Spirituality*, is another assault on the term from a somewhat different angle. It's a really interesting collection, demonstrating the delights and advantages of bringing together different European contexts and perspectives, as well as thought provoking contributions from Japan and Taiwan.

In the introduction, I think setting out the field in terms of three 'waves' of

New Age studies is helpful. There is 'the' first wave" of macro-level analyses of contents and boundaries of the so-called new age movement' (6) (including authors such as Paul Heelas and Michael York) and a 'second wave' of 'more variegated and contextualised studies of particular beliefs and practices', producing 'rich micro-level ethnographies and histories' (6). However, despite producing some fabulous empirical, context-rich studies, the risk identified by the editors in relation to this second wave is that 'the disconnect with general theories of religion... may become even wider' (7). In response to this risk, the editors set out to highlight some new avenues of interlinked enquiry, to draw out the full theoretical potential of new age for general studies of religion. This endeavour will constitute the 'third wave' in New Age studies.

It is good to be reminded of the highly eclectic and partial evidence bases from which some earlier and highly influential theories of religion were formed; to be reminded of what many thought they were looking for, or hoping to achieve, as scholars of religion; and to highlight the flaws in

and problems of 'fixing' terms, models and definitions arbitrarily at particular points in time and space. The idea of examining religion per se through the lens of New Age, so that instead of manipulating it to look like religion (for example construing it as a movement) or rejecting aspects, or indeed all, of it as narcissistic, inauthentic, transitory or whatever because it doesn't look like religion, is undoubtedly one with a lot of mileage. Ingvild quotes Peter Beyer's remark that New Age tends to 'look like a duck and quack like a duck but avoid identification as a duck' (Beyer 2006: 8). It is indeed time to redesign the binoculars we're spotting the duck through, or the taxonomy of what constitutes 'duckness', or perhaps both.

For me, there is a certain familiarity about this agenda. Just as this volume urges examining religion per se through New Age, I am involved in the parallel / complementary project of rethinking religion through vernacular religion, where bringing certain worldviews, beliefs, practices, ways of being in the world in from the margins and saying 'it's all religion' inevitably raises the question of what we mean by or conceptualise as

religion.

Four decades ago American folklorist Don Yoder, drawing heavily upon the German tradition of scholarship, succinctly described folk religion as 'the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion' (1974: 14), recognising the huge and frequently under-studied area of religious life that should be taken into account to provide a rounded picture of religion as it is lived.

American scholar Leonard Primiano (with an academic background in both Religious Studies and Folklore) describes vernacular religion as 'an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the religious lives of individuals with special attention to the process of religious belief, the verbal, behavioral, and material expressions of religious belief, and the ultimate object of religious belief' (Primiano 1995: 44). Whereas, as Yoder and others have shown, there have been many debates over and conceptualisations of folk religion, Leonard Primiano problematizes the category of official religion, rightly stating the obvious, namely that institutional religion 'is itself conflicted and not monolithic' (2012: 384). He feels that any two-tiered model of 'folk' and 'official' religion 'residualizes the religious lives of believers and at the same time reifies the authenticity of religious institutions as the exemplar of human religiosity' (1995: 39). Claiming that 'Religious belief takes as many forms in a tradition as there are individual believers' (Primiano 1995: 51), he asserts that no one, including members of institutional hierarchies, 'lives an "officially" religious life in a pure unadulterated form' (Primiano 1995: 46). Thus he calls for scholars

to stop perpetuating 'the value judgement that people's ideas and practices, because they do not represent the refined statements of a religious institution, are indeed unofficial and fringe' (Primiano 1995: 46).

Primiano claims that vernacular religion's conceptual value lies in the fact that it 'highlights the power of the individual and communities of individuals to create and re-create their own religion' (Primiano 2012: 383). This was splendidly demonstrated by Judit Kis-Halas (2012), in her research on the practices and narrative autobiography of a Hungarian healer and diviner, who uses magical formulae and wax pouring drawing on the traditions of folk healers in that region, but also employs techniques for conjuring angels and the preparation of angelic amulets which appear to have been influenced by American New Age 'angel expert' Doreen Virtue. Additionally, she calls upon particular saints 'to work for her' in line with vernacular tradition, and her healing activity is at least tacitly acknowledged by the local Catholic priest. This woman's praxis and self-image are thus constructed in the context of folk medicine and praxis, commodified contemporary spirituality and vernacular Christianity. It is probably safe to assume that she is not kept awake at night by concerns over category conflicts and definitional difficulties. The vernacular religious approach anticipates heterogeneity and individual creativity and therefore does not dismiss or ignore it as methodologically inconvenient or deviant.

Some chapters in this book fit the 'third wave', remit better than others, perhaps inevitably. I was most interested in those which come up

with models, and those which have attempted to factor in, to a greater or lesser extent, folk religion and vernacular religion. (The banality of banal religion as a descriptor, used by Stig Hjarvard, I must confess I can't quite handle.)

In "All over the place": the contribution of New Age to a spatial model of religion' (35-49), Ingvild Gilhus proposes a quadripartite model of religion by expanding Jonathan Z Smith's model of religion in ancient society (here, there, anywhere) to religion here, there, anywhere, and everywhere. In Ingvild's formulation, the quadripartite model situates religion here (largely encompassing domestic religiosity), there (civic, national, vicarious religion), anywhere (characterised by small-scale entrepreneurs, client and audience cults), and everywhere (mediatised religion).

Norichika Horie's chapter 'Narrow New Age and broad spirituality :a comprehensive schema and a comparative analysis' (99-116) combines fieldwork and analysis based largely in Japan, with some forays into the UK (including Glastonbury, the Beltane Fire Festival in Edinburgh) and America, to propose a model of 'four types of spirituality, new spirituality and New Age'. This model could prove a useful teaching tool for stimulating discussion and looking at phenomena through slightly different lenses.

Inevitably, I am drawn to Dorothea Hall's chapter 'The holistic milieu in context: between traditional Christianity and folk religiosity' (146-159), which highlights the importance of context, culture and vernacular religiosity in relation to the holistic milieu in Poland. She stresses the 'miraculous sensibility' (very much

derived from Polish vernacular Catholicism) and to some extent the conservatism of Polish new spirituality. Her chapter ends with the exhortation to 'shift our focus from situating the holistic worldview and practices within the tradition of studies on "New Age" towards placing them within the ethnographic tradition, which underscores the symbolic dimension of the researched phenomena and their local grounding' (158).

This observation is relevant in relation to Paul Heelas' characterisation of Estonia as 'something very close to a tabula rasa' as a result of the soviet era. That Estonian scholar Lea Althnurme reports 'a noticeable tendency toward church-free spirituality' (2011: 80) is at least in part testament to the continuation of forms of vernacular, non-institutional religiosity and beliefs that persisted throughout the soviet era, when Christianity was 'alternative' - as recorded by folklorists such as Ulo Valk.

Similarly, I find much food for thought in Finnish scholar Terhi Utriainen's chapter 'Doing things with angels: agency, alterity and practices of enchantment' (242-255). The stress here is on people 'finding their own path', with individuals drawing on a range of resources (whether provided culturally, commercially or virtually) to find what 'works' for them - a hallmark of vernacular religion. I also enjoyed her rather tart reprimand (255) of Luckmann for his 'unnecessary (and patronizing) moral assessment' of parts of new age as 'egoistic and hedonistic' (Luckmann 1990: 138).

This will be a useful, thought-provoking, stimulating volume for a variety of audiences, in and beyond academia, and a great textbook for

moving the field on; in that respect, practically speaking, it's great that it's appearing in paperback from the start!

Like New Age itself, this book is 'good to think' with. I have been saying for years that the trick is not to keep defining and redefining 'alternative' - it's to realistically define what now counts as mainstream. I think this volume is part of that movement away from the myth of pure religion to reality testing of religion per se.

David G. Robertson University of Edinburgh

New Age is a particularly interesting case-study in the dynamics and problems of category formation in the study of religions. The data doesn't seem comfortably to fit our typologies anywhere. In fact, New Age spiritualities - or whatever we choose to call this particular group of practises and discourses in this particular context - are doubly marginal. On the one hand, they do not fit the category of "world religion", lacking the formal structure and institutionalised authority, propositional beliefs and canonical texts which we are told signifies these more venerable "faiths". However, neither is New Age a comfortable fit with the inevitable "catch-all" extra categories which the World Religions Paradigm has incorporated to deal with exceptions; it lacks the charismatic founder, dogmatism and exclusivism of most New Religious Movements, and the historical and geographical heritage of the Indigenous Religion. In short, it is neither church, nor cult, nor sect, which as Ann Taves and Michael Kinsela write in this volume has tended to hide this data from sociological view.

But data which troubles the margins of classificatory schemas, such as the popularity and social pervasiveness of New Age beliefs and practises, can be particularly enlightening, not only because they reveal the weaknesses of the schema, but because they remind us that our classificatory systems are based on implicit assumptions, which in turn may illuminate the unspoken interests behind them. In this case, the assumption is that "religion" combines some sort of institutionalised power structure with a formalised set of beliefs concerning postulated non-human beings, which, clearly, favours certain forms of religion over others, and moreover, those forms that were hegemonic in the societies from which the academic study of religion emerged. It is in this way that solidly empirical study of New Age practices and beliefs may fulfil the bold claim of the subtitle of this book, and force us to "rethink religion". The aim of the book is, then, as the editors suggest, that "New Age" is useful to "think with" in regards to the meta-category, "religion".

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. The first part of the title is "New Age Spiritualities". Given that it combines two emic terms (at least, in origin) which have moreover proven resistant to substantive definition, this may seem an odd choice for a volume with such a firm theoretical purview. This is further complicated by the fact that New Age has had a post-emic life as an etic taxon with multiple and sometimes contradictory constructions. In their introduction, the editors make it clear that they have not corralled the contributors into a particular terminology, but allowed them to employ terms like "New Age" (with quotes), new age (no quotes or capital letters), new age spiritualities, new age religiosity,

spirituality and others, as they themselves see fit. This is in keeping with the fact that the editors are not interested in defending any particular definition or constructing an alternative one, and this is underlined by the volume's absence of contributions from many of those earlier theorists, (Heelas and Sutcliffe himself being the exceptions). This means that the theoretical impetus of the volume is kept in tighter focus than in potentially competing volumes such as the 2007 Brill *Handbook of New Age*.

That being said, many of the chapters in *New Age Spirituality* challenge the popular (and often academic) conception of "New Age" as simply a "spiritual supermarket" without social or historical context. The chapters problematise many of the assumptions about the category: Gilhus' contribution suggests that there is nothing inherently novel about New Age in comparison to "official forms of religion"; likewise, Rothstein makes a similar argument in reference to identification with animals in ethnography of "indigenous religions"; Taves and Kinsella argue that New Age is less amorphous and unorganised as often portrayed, and in fact shows forms of organisation which have a distinct, if often ignored, heritage; Mikaelsson, and Aupers & Houtmann argue that it is less "unambiguously individualistic and less privatised" than it is typically described; finally, case studies from Norway, Japan, Taiwan and Poland suggest that the somewhat anti-Christian (or anti-"official religion") position of UK New Age may not be typical. Here, I was reminded of the role of Edgar Cayce in "christianising" much New Age discourse for the US context.

This last point is particularly important. The construction of New

Age and Christianity as distinct categories is contingent on an implicit prioritising of elite narratives, and of the more reasoned theological positions of official functionaries. A refocusing of the discussion to prioritise (or at least equally represent) popular narratives and constructions may yet reveal what is now terminologically marginalised as "vernacular", "folk" or "popular religion" offers a more accurate understanding of the function of human relationships with supernatural agencies. Furthermore, it may help remove the discussion from the hands of those with something to gain from the status quo.

Yet the problem of data remains. The data that the book draws from has, at some level, been selected. Without a formal definition being presented by the editors, we must ask if it has been chosen according to a preconceived or intuitive idea of what New Age "is". In other words, the book seems to reify even as it challenges the category. In his chapter, Sutcliffe notes that

"to bring the study of new age to fresh maturity... will likely be at the expense of a continuing academic sub-discipline of "new age studies" since it implies that there is nothing inherently special or peculiar, after all, about new age data."

Yet he and Gilhus have selected what is New Age data, and presented it as "special", if only from the point of view of scholarly categorisation. To extend this, if Reiki and discourses on healing energy are viewed in a Christian context in Poland, should we discuss them as Christian rather than New Age discourse? Or neither? And does it belong in the same category as more anti-Christian UK New Age? It

seems somewhat circular to argue that the presence of New Age practices in a Christian context problematises the category, when it is we as scholars who have labeled these practices as New Age in the first place.

So to return again to the title. Books need titles, and for this book to get into the hands of those it needs to, it really needed to have the term New Age on the front. Like New Age itself, and scholarship, publishing is embedded in a free-market economic system. We scholars, however we may dislike categories like "New Age", also find ourselves embedded in a system in which "religions" - and the exceptions to that category - are embedded in a particular discourse. This is to say that the critique I have presented here is not meant as criticism of the editors work, but to bring to light issues which underlie the theoretical complexity of a volume such as this, and a "doubly marginal" field such as this. Sutcliffe and Gilhus have I think, offered the most theoretically reflexive volume on "New Age studies" to date; but in order to do so, may have had to capitulated somewhat to practical concerns.

New Age Spirituality is, I think, a timely contribution to an emerging consensus in the field that a theoretical approach to "religion" - and the "World Religions Paradigm" in particular - which constructs it as a sui generis, eternal ineffable, and which ranks "religions" according to their similarity to Christianity (or at least, particular forms thereof), as inaccurate, elitist, possibly colonial and certainly theological. However, while this volume may help to "rethink religion", it may at the same time, actually reinforce and contribute to the continuation of the problematic construct, "New Age".

Bettina Schmidt
University of Wales,
Trinity Saint David

As an anthropologist, I am interested first and foremost in empirical data. Yet the theoretical grounding of our research is equally important. A book full of ethnographic data might be interesting to read but will have little relevance for the academic debate. This is also true the other way round – a book presenting complex theoretical discourse might be of scholarly significance, but not particularly pleasant to read. New Age Spiritualities combines both aspects – theory and empirical data.

As a topic of study, New Age shows many similarities with the topic of popular culture in anthropology. Both are often ignored by scholars – anthropologists tend to study indigenous cultures, for instance, in my case in Brazil, and later also Afro-Brazilian traditions. But until recently, they overlooked that these indigenous people also participate in the popular culture of mainstream Brazil, and are often addicted to soap operas on TV, for instance. By ignoring popular culture, anthropologists ignore the culture of the vast majority of Brazilians, the “povo brasileiro”. This also had the consequence that Brazilian Spiritism was overlooked for a long time, even after Candomblé and Umbanda were being studied by anthropologists.

Similarly, in the study of religion, for a long time the focus of scholarship was exclusively on the “big” religions, those often labelled “World Religions”. Even when some scholars studied indigenous religions, they tended to look at these traditions through a Christian and often colonialist perspective. Scholars overlooked what people in these

societies, whether at home or abroad, practised on a daily basis: what we might call “Spirituality” and New Age.

The focus was usually on systems of belief, rather than practice, and the aim was the creation of neat systems. A former colleague of mine called this custom ‘antropología de bronce’ which indicates the need of anthropologists to create ‘coherent images in order to domesticate cultures’ and to demonstrate these cultures in a neat manner in glass boxes in museums.

New Age does not fit in a glass box. It is not one coherent system but a bricolage of ideas and practices. It is wild, savage, perhaps even the ultimate Other. Even the label New Age is difficult to define. It is, as the editors write in their introduction, “impure and reactive and [will] potentially mix with everything else, just like magnesium” (12).

The book contains 15 chapters, each with a case study from a range of countries, from Europe, US and East Asia. I just want to highlight a few of them to give you an idea of the width range of topics. Steven Sutcliffe discusses the Durkheimian approach of looking at the elementary forms of religions. He challenges in particular the “strategic essentialism” and argues that a model of religion which is based on elementary forms, rather than on rationalized religious entities, challenges the authority of the “world religion” taxonomy.

Ingvild Saelid Gilhus discusses the spatial model of religion. She proposes to add a fourth category (religion everywhere) to Jonathan Z. Smith’s model of “religion here, there and everywhere” which would look at how society communicates about religion.

Ann Taves and Michael Kinsella discuss in their chapter the term “unorganised religion” and show that unorganised religions such as spiritualism do have a certain degree of organisational structure. By the way, I had a similar problem when I proposed the term “undogmatic religion” in my Ph.D. for Spiritism and the Afro-American religions I work with. On one hand, these religions have developed organisations such as the Federation of Spiritists, and on the other hand, even Christianity has a lot of undogmatic, unorganised or vernacular elements. This chapter by Taves and Kinsella shows once again the problem with finding the exact terminology when working with religions.

On the whole, the book shows indeed that New Age is “good to think” as the editors write in their conclusion, perhaps the most stimulating “food for thought” in the modern field [though I would personally include Afro-American traditions here]. It shows that religion as a mobile social phenomenon is not owned by anyone, not by an institution or by a handful of charismatic leaders. It is everywhere, within all sections of society. It further shows that the old essentialist division between the religious and the secular is not suitable for modern society, if it was ever fit at all.

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CONFERENCES

'WESTERN ESOTERICISM AND HEALTH'. THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF WESTERN ESOTERICISM (ESSWE), 4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG, 26-29 JUNE 2013.

The European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism's fourth conference since its foundation in 2005 took place at University of Gothenburg, and was focused on esotericism and health, though there were many papers that did not directly address this theme. There were three keynote lectures. 1) Peter Forsberg (Assistant Professor of the History of Early Modern Western Esotericism, Centre for the History of Hermeneutics, University of Amsterdam) spoke about " 'Medicina Hermetica': The Early Modern Promotion of a Hermetic Way to Health". 2) Carole M. Cusack (Professor of Religious Studies, University of Sydney) spoke on "The Enneagram: An Esoteric Model of Psychological Health". 3) Mark Sedgewick (Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies, Aarhus University) spoke about "Western Esotericism and Islamic Studies".

There were also two plenary panels. On Friday 28 June the Contemporary Esotericism Research Network (ContERN), represented by Kennet Granholm (University of Stockholm) and Egil Asprem (University of Amsterdam), organized a panel on the topic of "Problems and Potentials in the Study of Contemporary Esotericism. Speakers included

Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR), Marco Pasi (University of Amsterdam), Wouter J. Hanegraaff (University of Amsterdam), and Henrik Bogdan (University of Gothenburg). The second panel was a discussion of music and esotericism between Genesis P. Orridge, the seminal Pagan esotericist, musician and artist, co-founder of bands Throbbing Gristle and Psychick TV, and Carl Abrahamsson, of White Stains. These two performers presented a tremendously powerful and compelling concert, of ambient music and spoken word at the Nefertiti Jazz Club, which was the final event of the conference. The conference dinner at Gothenburg's Masonic Hall was another very appropriate event for the conference that was greatly enjoyed by participants.

The papers presented were highly eclectic and covered a wide range of subjects that might be deemed 'esoteric' or related to 'health'. One highlight was the well-attended session on Carl Jung's *The Red Book* (2009). The three speakers were George Sieg (University of New Mexico), on "Descent to the Depths and the Healing of the Soul;" Punita Miranda (University of Amsterdam), on "Madness and Creativity: Carl Jung and his *Red Book*;" and Hereward Tilton (University of Exeter), speaking on "The Spiral Serpent: Jung, the *Red Book* and the Historiography of the Unconsciousness." The legacy of Aleister Crowley was represented by Damon Lycourinos (University of Edinburgh), who spoke on "Sex Magick and the 'Occult' Body of the

Mega Therion: A Study of Ritual Body Techniques, Applied Occultism, and Aleister Crowley's *Sex Magick*," as was technological modernity, in Egil Asprem's "The Magus of Silicon Valley: Ray Kurzweil's Transhumanism as Contemporary Esoteric Discourse," which was possibly the most interesting paper of the entire conference. The presenters in the session on Occultist Women, Allison Coudert (University of California, Davis), Jimmy Elwing (University of Amsterdam), and Elizabeth Lowry (Arizona State University) presented fascinating papers on Frances Swiney, Ida Craddock, and Dion Fortune. There were many more speakers who deserve mention; overall ESSWE 2014 was a richly complex, intellectually interesting gathering of scholars. The presence of Brill, the Leiden publishers, was another positive factor, as the range of books and journals that Maarten Frieswijk had on sale was an eloquent testimony to the current high level of research activity in the fields of Western Esotericism and new religions and spiritualities.

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

SOCIETY FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION (SSSR), BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS, NOV 8TH-10TH 2013

The 2013 SSSR took place in Boston Massachusetts from November 8th - 10th a few blocks away from the

Boston Harbor. Luckily, the overall tone of the conference and the attending scholars, were much warmer than the brisk weather outside the doors of the lovely Westin Waterfront Hotel. This conference report seeks to capture the unadulterated energy and excitement of a young scholar new to the social scientific study of religion and invite more established scholars to reflect on their early days in the field.

Eight AM bright and early the first day of the conference drew my attention to a session on “New Religious Movements” that featured a presentation by a former RSP podcast respondent Dusty Hoesly assessing the possibility of the Universal Life Church (ULC) as a new religious movement. I was surprised to learn that Hoesly’s presentation was, as far as he could tell, one of the first scholarly looks at the ULC group from academia. He provided some interesting data on Kirby J. Hensley, the founder of the ULC. According to Dusty, one of Hensley’s central concerns in founding the ULC was to demonstrate the ‘absurdity’ of governments giving religious organizations tax-exempt status in the United States. Thus by becoming ordained as a ULC Minister, one could start their own ‘church’ from home and at least in theory be tax-exempt. In the latter part of the morning, Dr. Carissa Sharp spoke about ‘the relationship between religious complexity and pro-sociality’. Dr. Sharp sought to challenge current psychological priming methods in examining the prosociality of religion by introducing the concept of integrative complexity (IC) calling for the need of a deeper level of understanding in the connection between religion and prosociality.

Every seat was full and a row of people stood along the back wall to

hear scholars presenting their disciplinary and research perspectives in the social scientific study of religion. Dr. Laurence Iannaccone spoke about looking at religion through an economic lens taking into account the idiosyncrasies that research on religion demands and that economists often ignore arguing for a study of religion and economics in which both contribute to the other. Dr. Gerardo Marti addressed the study of religion from a sociological perspective followed by Dr. Doug Oman (a scholar in the Public Health field) arguing that the boundaries between disciplinary fields are often blurred and can even overlap at times. Dr. Ann Taves was the final panelist. In words that embody her ‘Religious Experience Reconsidered’ approach to religion, she tied together the multiple disciplines represented on the panel and spoke about a careful balancing of what she termed the ‘interdisciplinary hat’, with the ‘discipline hat’ in the study religion from multiple academic perspectives.

Dr. R. Stephen Warner delivered the annual H. Paul Douglass Lecture (sponsored by the Religious Research Association) titled “In Defense of Religion”. If looked upon with a more critical eye, a more befitting title might have been “In Defense of an Ecumenical, Universal, Positive Religion”. This particular lecture however, reminded me of a previous RSP podcast by Douglas Pratt that shared a similar ‘tone’. In Warner’s lecture and Pratt’s podcast, both scholars appear to be parsing what can and can not be included in the category of ‘religion’ making them appear as a stable monolith of fixed positive traits, discounting variation among individuals and assigning negative traits to secularity. Warner’s SSSR lecture and Pratt’s podcast problematically essentialise religious

identities and appear as a dangerous call for scholars to offer protection for religion in the public sphere instead of simply researching religion (for a further critical response see Beaman, 2013).

The second day of the conference it was time to attend my first ‘author meets critics’ with a review of former RSP podcast scholar Dr. Ryan T. Cragun’s What You Don’t Know About Religion (but should). Cragun had pen and paper out taking notes while the invited critics, Dr. Michael Nielsen, Dr. Christopher Chiappari and Dr. Rick Phillips, spoke – as good critics do – with both praise and careful critique. Dr. Cragun announced that a follow up book titled “More Of What You Don’t Know About Religion” is currently in the works and it was refreshing to hear him advocate for conducting science that was not just for other academics in a specific field, but also for the public as a whole. Later that day, I attended an organized panel on the “Biological and Evolutionary Aspects of Religion” that featured an informative talk by Dr. Stewart Guthrie outlining “A Biological, Evolutionary, and Cognitive Approach” to religion. Upon conclusion of the panel, I was fortunate to have Dr. Guthrie spend several minutes that day, at two separate times no less, discussing both the cognitive and psychological study of belief and non-belief with me. Dr. Guthrie clearly understands what it means to a young student such as me when they get to not only ask questions from a top scholar, but also get asked questions back! This teaching style certainly builds bridges and seems to be indicative of the commitment the SSSR has towards fostering relationships between students and scholars. In fact, the theme according to the CFP for next year’s SSSR conference will be just that – building bridges. With the RSP

Assistant Editor, Dr. Christopher F. Silver, as the Graduate Student Representative for 2014, and RSP podcast interviewee Dr. Ralph W. Hood Jr. as the Program Chair, this theme of mentorship and collaboration seems to be a something that we can expect to continue into the next year.

The final day of the conference I attended a session on teaching psychology of religion titled "Psychological Approaches to Understanding Religion". One of the panelist, Dr. Kevin Ladd (RSP podcast on the psychology of prayer with Dr. Ladd coming soon), shared a hands on approach he uses to both demonstrate the problems scholars have defining religion, and to give undergraduates practical experience dealing with real problems researchers encounter. He has each student come up with an operational definition of religion to use for research and then to compare with each other student – obviously they can and do vary greatly. This way, students also gain practical experience navigating the discourse in the study of religion as well.

The final session, titled 'Atheist Worldviews and Communities' was the culmination of the conference and resulted in dialectic between the scholars and those attending for the final twenty-five minutes. If the seat count on the last day of an academic conference – at the very last panel no less (which people commonly skip out on attempting to get a head start to the airport) – is any indication of the burgeoning interest in a topic then I dare not say what is and there was a quite an audience for this panel! Scholars from sociology, religious studies and psychology brought together multiple perspectives on current atheism research around the United States.

An important quote that has guided my studies comes from psychologist of religion Antoine Vergote on the importance of looking at not only studying belief but also un-belief for "one cannot be understood without the other" (1997). What a way to end a conference – with an engaging conversation on the importance of new directions in research!

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SPALDING SYMPOSIUM ON INDIAN RELIGIONS. 25TH-27TH APRIL 2014, LUTHER KING HOUSE, MANCHESTER

This was the 39th meeting of the Spalding Symposium, generously funded by the Spalding Trust, and in a break from tradition we met in Manchester rather than the usual Oxford, which had been getting prohibitively expensive. The symposium consisted of fifteen papers, providing a rich programme with everything from Caribbean Hindu temples in New York, to issues of identity and diet amongst British Sikhs, to discussions of early Indian texts and epigraphy. The full programme can be seen at <http://spaldingsymposium.org/>

Two particular highlights deserve special mention. To mark the anniversary of the First World War, Catherine Robinson (Bath Spa University) presented 'One hundred years on: Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims on the Western Front'. This was a fascinating paper that explored the extent to which British colonial powers tried to understand and allow for the practical aspects of Indian religious adherence during the service of Indian troops in the war.

The second half of the paper painted a lively picture of the Indian Military Hospital that was set up in Brighton Pavilion, complete with multiple kitchens (to provide appropriate food for the different religious groups), caste cooks and attendants, and special burial and cremation arrangements for the (mercifully few) soldiers who did not recover. It was a moving, and at times amusing, portrait of an important period in British-Indian relations.

The other highlight of the weekend was Valerie Roebuck's paper 'Missing cat: In search of the feline in Indian traditions', in which she presented a far-reaching and visually stimulating survey of the (very limited) presence of the cat in early Indian literature and art. This paper filled the after dinner slot on the Saturday, which is traditionally given over to a visual presentation, and it stimulated much discussion!

Four excellent papers were presented by international guests, including two doctoral students (Catherine St-Hilaire, Milan, and Rupa Pillai, Oregon) and two visiting scholars from India (Dhrubajyoti Sarkar, Kalyani, West Bengal, and Lalan Jha, Nalanda, Bihar) who kept up the long-standing Spalding tradition of promoting dialogue between British scholars of Indian religions and scholars working within South Asia.

The symposium was convened by Dermot Killingley, whose hard work (along with other members of the committee, most notably Lynn Foulston and Nick Swann) ensured that a wonderful time was had by all. This year marked the transition between the outgoing convener Anna King, who ensured the success of the symposium between 1998 and 2013, and the incoming convener, myself. Our warm and sincere gratitude for

all of Anna's hard work over the years was marked with a card and gift, and a toast at the Friday dinner.

It was agreed that in future years the symposium will be peripatetic, rather than based permanently in Oxford. The 2015 symposium will be held in Edinburgh in April next year, and full details will become available on the website (spaldingsymposium.org) in due course.

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EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION, 11-15TH MAY 2014, GRONINGEN

This year's conference of the EASR was hosted by the Dutch association for the study of religion (NGG) in Groningen. It was organised by NGG President Kocku Von Stuckrad with the theme: 'religion and the pluralities of knowledge.'

While I was sceptical about this theme and about the need for themes in general conferences, I was surprised by its relevance. There appears to be a division between those who regard disciplinary standards of knowledge to be plural and those who like me, regard them as basically singular, though it was a controversy which lay more in the conversational background than at the forefront of most presentations.

While I am sure some sat on the fence, that fence appeared to divide the rest of the academic herd.

The conference was opened by a keynote from Jörg Rüpke, who discussed narratives of collective memory and their construction of bounded identities. These are always plural and often do not fit into rigid

scholarly 'containers'. All human beings narrate the past, re-present it and codify it into a body of memory, mythology and history may be different but are not opposites.

At the first panel I attended, Steve Engler pointed to the shifting usage of the classification 'religion' in the lives of his Brazilian informants. Essi Mäkelä related the difficulties of 'liquid religions' in gaining legal recognition by the Finnish government, lacking creeds or sacred texts.

Anna Strhan and Louis Lee respectively described how Evangelical Protestants and non-religious groups attached deep aesthetic and normative significance to rationalism. Hartley Lachter discussed polemics by the medieval mystic Shem Tov Ibn Shem Tov, who contrasted the Jewishness of Kabbalah with the universalism of Aristotelian rationalism, policing ethno-religious boundaries.

Fabio Rambelli and Stefania Travignin, related how many Japanese and Chinese Buddhists critiqued capitalist individualism but were deeply involved in wealth economies even before industrialisation, turning to Buddhist texts for legitimacy. Kiri Paramore noted how while Confucian ideas underpin East Asian capitalism; this accompanied a decline of its institutional religious, political and educational position.

Egil Aspremi discussed how popular science relies on communication strategies to generate understanding and interest, explaining the invocation of Quantum Physics by many practitioners of new religions. Carole Cusack asserted that newer evolutionary approaches to art and religion are largely compatible with

social constructionism but the embodied turn has helped to integrate them further. Markus Altena Davidsen argued that texts used by fiction-based religions attain an aura of factuality, especially if the author's statements are supportive or if they contain teacher-figures whose teachings are detachable - expressing perceived reality behind fiction.

The second keynote was given by Birgit Meyer, arguing in favour of the material religion approach against 'mental bias' pointing to the fact that communication between beings, including invisible ones are always expressed through media. Images in Ghana often use the depictions of eyes to connect to such beings and emphasise that they are perceived by them.

James Cox argued that the Phenomenology of Gerardus Van Der Leeuw was non-theological; religions are culturally embedded but comparable and his approach is thus compatible with cognitivism, which provides a neurological basis for comparison. Shin Ahn related how Van Der Leeuw is highly influential in South Korea; his emphasis on the socially embedded and comparable characteristics of religions has proved useful in a multi-religious country with degrees of religious tension.

Guillermo Martín-Sáiz described how followers of Tablighi Jama'at in Barcelona created Islamic spaces in the secular city through distinctive embodied behaviours, norms and styles. Mohammad Magout related how an Isma'ili university in London emphasised Islam as cultural rather than doctrinal, binding culturally disparate Isma'ili students and advocating a public if not overtly political Islam.

At his public lecture, Bruno Latour

argued that religion had been transformed from 'opiate' to 'dynamite' because religious people had been reclassified as 'believers'. Religion was cast as 'non-rational', an internalised accusation regarding their relations with 'religious beings'. Attendees were packed into a Church with wooden pews; thankfully Latour was not asked to provide evidence for his claims which may have set off his inner dynamite.

Marjo Buitelaar showed how Dutch-Moroccan Muslims constructed a sense of 'home' around Mecca, where they were not identified primarily as Moroccan or Dutch but simply as Muslims, a Muslim identity not imposed but chosen. Audrey Allas showed how British-Pakistani connections to ancestral villages reinforces endogamy but exogamy is growing due to the influence of both individualism and universalistic Islam. Angus Slater demonstrated how both legal and mystical traditions within Islam recognised interpretative pluralism in the reading of texts, contrasting with modern scriptural literalism.

George Ioannides argued in favour of 'new materialism' which emphasises the body and materiality but also involves a new vitalism, asserting the consciousness of matter and 'awakening' people from dualism. Damon Zacharias Lycourinos in his study of Grimoiric magic concluded that the Grimoire structured embodied techniques for communication with beings and worlds it also served to structure, along with the practitioner's experiences.

The third keynote was given by Carlo Ginzberg, profiling the work of Ernesto De Martino who argued that late medieval Friulian magicians, Benandanti and Evenki Shamans

were connected. While De Martino had used both of these sources to justify his own belief in magic, Ginzberg cautioned that the pursuit of certain questions by such figures are worthwhile even if their answers aren't.

David Zbiral showed how Catholic, Protestant, romantic, liberal and Marxist meta-narratives have been constructed around medieval repressions of heresy, in order to assert agendas and construct identities. Stamatia Noutsou examined the anti-heretical writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, who cautioned against the manufacture of martyrs, advocating a form of non-physical violence: social exclusion.

The divisions within the conference were vigorously reinforced by Donald Wiebe, who argued forcibly that the study of religion should be confined exclusively to scientific knowledge. The audience was obviously split between those who agreed with this assertion and those whose feathers were clearly ruffled, though his assertion that art, literature and even philosophy were on the 'periphery' of belonging to a university didn't help his case much. He did however give his stamp of approval to the next paper presented by Svetlana Karassyova, detailing a research project on religious diversity in Belarus which sought to probe the qualitative realities behind the country's religious statistics.

I argued for a reappraisal of the work of E.B Tylor, including his advocacy of a scientific approach but jettison his evaluative approach to religions. James Cox, demonstrated how 19th century anthropological debates about 'cultural evolution' influenced ethnographers of Indigenous Australians who often regarded Aborigines as 'stone-age' while

missionaries by contrast emphasised their common humanity. Lujza Kotryová showed how the construction of the Aztec notions of 'deity' utilised a widely applied concept, *teotl*, appropriated by the Spanish cleric, Bernardino de Sahugún.

Overall, the EASR was an extremely stimulating conference, with a vast breadth of papers spanning the entire field. Most of the papers were concerned with their own highly specific area, which is just as it should be and only a few actually reflected the controversy over the pluralities of knowledge. However this was reflected more in conversation, at least many of the ones I was involved in and indeed in the roundtable we recorded for the RSP. Such divisions within the field are healthy but it is of such importance to the field that I hope that it will be debated further.

(Continued from page 9)

rogue publishers. If you have received an unsolicited approach from a (usually little known) publisher even before your Ph.D. is finished, or if you have been asked to pay for publication, beware!

Perseverance pays off. A quick glance at www.onehundredrejections.com will show how many famous authors have been rejected scores of times. When success does come, however, one should not expect huge royalties, champagne book launches and signing ceremonies. Instead, you will probably be asked to help with the marketing. The BASR Bulletin and the Religious Studies Project will be only too willing to help on that front.



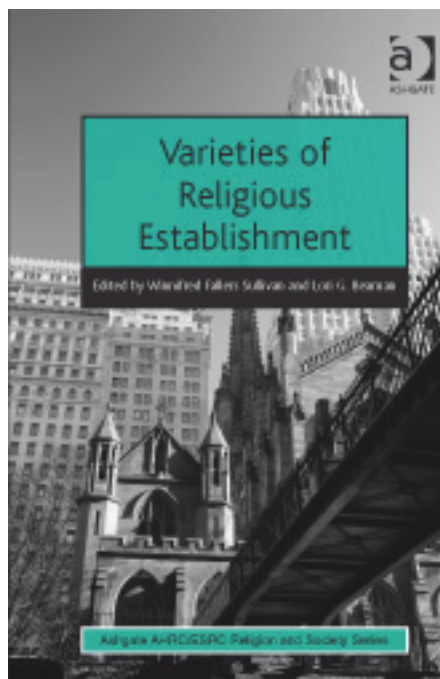
REVIEWS

VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT, WINNIFRED FALLERS SULLIVAN AND LORI G. BEAMAN (EDS.) ASHGATE AHRG/ESRC RELIGION AND SOCIETY SERIES, 2013

Religious establishment might typically draw attention to western models such as the US Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause, and 'shared Anglo-American legal history' (1), one that is still important, yet hardly extensive. The classic "church/state" debate is expanded in this collection to include a variety of fresh insights on the intersection between state and religion, utilizing interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives, which remains consistent with the multidisciplinary emphasis found in the rest of the AHRG/ESRC Religion and Society Series. Contributors embrace backgrounds in Religion, Law, Sociology, Politics, Psychology, and History, across many cultural contexts, challenging scholars of overlapping disciplines to reevaluate popular theories of "multicultural and interfaith models of religious freedom".

The book is separated into three parts: Theory and Structure, Retelling Religio-Legal Histories, and Rethinking Law's Capacities. The first part examines the conceptual issues of religion, state, sacred, and secular, provoking reflection on the meaning of these vague concepts by placing them within cultural contexts. Robert A. Yelle uses the case of ancient India

as a cross-cultural comparison to break down differentiation theories in favor of "a model that recognizes how various social orders incorporate simultaneously mundane and transcendent dimensions that exist in dynamic tension with each other" (17), which is surmised in his phrase "spiritual economy" (17). Yelle ascertains, as most in religious



studies have, that defining religion and contextualization are paramount to comprehending any proceeding discussion on secularization. Benjamin Berger utilizes Kant's notion of aesthetics (36-44), providing Canadian legal case studies, challenging the cultural understanding of how religious aesthetics can cooperate or create conflict with the state regarding the future of religious freedom. Greg Johnson then offers a unique context of US church/state situations by

citing various examples in which establishment manifests itself, intentionally or otherwise, revealing the multiple levels of interaction with various cultural and religious identifications of Hawaiian indigenous populations within both local and national establishment concerns. These examples implore us to see the problem with western theoretical frameworks of establishment, how establishment can be reduced to an underlying aesthetic structure, and how complex notions of establishment are, even in the most contextualized of cases.

Part II uses five contexts of religious establishment to demonstrate the historical transitions in various societies' legal and popular conceptions of religion. The first of these include a comparison of Canadian inheritance of the Westphalian Model of establishment, by focusing on Christianity as a national and cultural identity in transition (P. Beyer). This is followed by an excellent discussion of changing understandings of American religious belonging utilizing New York land right cases (W. Fallers Sullivan). The next few chapters are comprised of shari'a and secularism developments in Tunisia (M. Zeghal), tolerance and intolerance of Canadian religious broadcasting (M. McGowan), and re-evaluating the rigidity of the church/state paradigm through Taiwan's series of establishment transitions (A. Laliberté). Each propose distinct examples of the shifts of 'religious' establishment across different societies, while continuing to demonstrate how impermanent particular debates of current establishment are and how establishment can mutate from one understanding to the next within short periods of history.

The final part explores current and future realms of religious and state interaction covering acceptance of Muslim marriage in South Africa (P. Danchin), a necessary discussion of developing cooperation between religious and secular communities concerning domestic violence (N. Nason-Clark and C. Holtmann), and the quite contentious proposition of the inclusion of shari'a within a hypothetical legal pluralism in the West (J. Richardson and V. Springer). The three final cases are aptly situated as the conclusion, by taking into consideration the theoretical and historical cases across multiple societies in order to expand the discussion into the next phases of religious, secular and state developments.

The strength of this series is certainly the multidisciplinary approach that attempts to create a more holistic, legalistic and historically theoretical understanding of religious establishment and freedom. The organization allows readers to engage with the book as a whole or as individual units. If read as a whole it may seem that the collection favors Canadian and American examples of religious establishment, outweighing the international attempt the book intends to accomplish. However, the few non-North American examples challenge ethnocentric and static conceptions of Western establishment and notions of religion, enhancing the self-critical re-evaluations of these paradigms from the Canadian and American examples. If one is looking for a concise interpretation as to how state and religion should engage, this text does no such thing, but it does not disappoint. Varieties of Religious Establishment reveals the ambiguity of such a concise question if it is not placed within a historically, religiously, culturally, socially, and

legalistically contextualized framework.

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THE INVENTION OF GOD IN INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES. JAMES COX, 2014. LONDON: ACUMEN.

The *Invention of God in Indigenous Societies* is the latest text by Professor James Cox. In the book Cox aims to use a handful of case studies from his fieldwork with indigenous groups in Zimbabwe, Alaska, New Zealand, and Australia to unpack his primary target, a process he calls "cultural hybridization".



Following the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, Cox identifies two forms of cultural mixing, or hybridization, "organic" and "intentional". By digging into the processes and intentions of both missionary and local actors in colonized societies and how these influences altered the (re)creation of the identity and attributes of local deities vis-à-vis the European Christian God, Cox uses his case studies to show that cultures and societies are (of course) invented.

Further, that this invention, particularly in the colonial setting, is not unidirectional, flowing only from the colonizer to the colonized. Thus, he aims to present the second-order, etic concept 'cultural hybridization' as a useful tool for Religious Studies scholars who might be interested in forms of globalization, migration, etc.

Writing in an organized, easily readable style Cox succeeds at showing how elements of cultures can be dialectically exchanged, in some instances to the satisfaction of the colonizers and sometimes to their chagrin. The book is very much a theoretical piece with case studies adding substance and real-world impact to the theoretical discussion. *The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies* is broken up into six relatively short chapters, beginning with an introduction to colonial missionary debates about the posited existence of local equivalents to the Christian God. Continuing from this early theoretical location Cox takes the reader around the world to examine in some admirable detail the work done by primarily British and Russian (in the case of Alaska) missionaries in relation to their goal of deciphering whether their newly conquered peoples already have a Christian-like Creator God and/or how the Christian God could be imported to these peoples in the absence of such a preexisting deity.

Cox ends his book by returning to the modern reader and engaging once again with cultural hybridization, showing how in each location the alert scholar could identify either a form of organic or intentional hybridization in each respective indigenous society's relationship to their posited supramundane worldview; and further, how this tool might be efficacious to social scientists from several fields.

While I would argue for a renaming from organic/intentional to passive/active hybridity due to what I see as the more accurate connotations of the hybridization process that are possessed by the latter, one must stretch to find much else to critique. Written in an eloquent yet modern style, Cox ticks every box of a good analysis; though it should be noted that while elementary enough to be useful to researchers who are not specialists in indigenous cultures there is a certain Religious Studies/Social Science baseline knowledge that the reader must have to fully appreciate this text.

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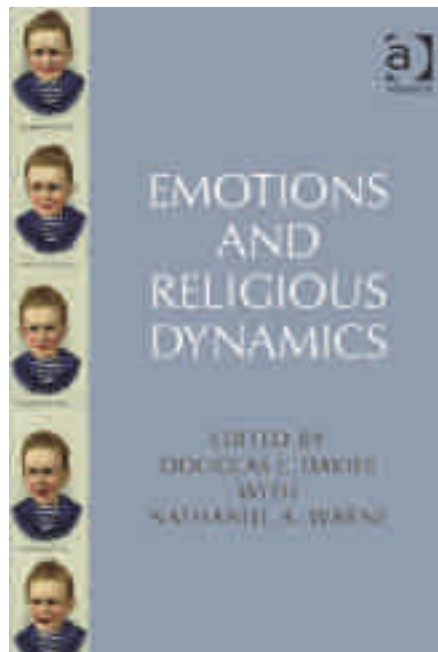
An audio version appeared alongside two others in the RSP May 2014 Book Reviews Podcast: <http://ow.ly/wBk0Y>.

EMOTIONS AND RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS. DOUGLAS J. DAVIES AND NATHANIEL A. WARNE (EDS.), 2013, BURLINGTON: ASHGATE.

The study of religion is no stranger to the concern with emotions; awe, compassion, humility, even anger and lust are all part of the religious experience. The role of religion in the management of strong emotions such as grief or suffering has been a central dimension of theological and philosophical research for a long time. Nevertheless, there has been an increasing interest in understanding the particular relationship between religion and emotions that has developed into interdisciplinary work that challenges traditional paradigms of research, as is shown in this book.

This volume brings together eleven chapters coming from different perspectives; theology, sociology,

religious studies and psychology, among other disciplines. It is the result of the networked study on 'Emotion, Identity and Religious Communities', funded by the Research Networks and Workshop Scheme. It starts with an insightful but brief introduction written by Douglas Davies, leader of the project, who explains that the book provides an analysis of different religious



traditions based on a diversity of disciplinary expertise and original research derived from ethnographic, historical and textual sources. The introduction presents the plan for the book but a more comprehensive approach to the contribution of this volume to the field is missing. Nevertheless, Davies' own study of emotion and religion has been developed in other works, mainly in his 'Emotion, Identity, and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity and Otherness' (OUP 2011).

Some of the chapters present an advanced state of the literature on the study of emotions that could be of interest not only for religious scholars but for those researchers and students interested in the cultural, psychological and social impact of emotions in the construction of

identity. In addition, this volume is successful in providing empirical explanations to common problems in the study of emotions. For instance, Eleanor Nesbitt's chapter contributes to solving the methodological challenge in the study of emotions of how to differentiate between deep emotions and emotions at the surface, or in other words, the double standards and 'hypocrisy' when dealing with 'behaviours aligned with different conventions and moral codes in different contexts' (42).

The diversity of chapters presents different levels of analysis; some of them emphasise a psychological perspective, while others accentuate the social or cultural analysis of emotions. The personal is perhaps the most immediate level where we can recognize the presence of emotions. Here, Marc Cleiren provides an excellent contribution from a holarchic perspective of emotion and identity formation in psychological terms (147). However, I consider that Cleiren's decision of using in his analysis a hypothetical case of an abstract migrant fails to translate a psychological explanation into a social one. The lack of a historical and social dimension in his analysis creates a potential reductionism that nonetheless is resolved in the other chapters, which are influenced by a more anthropological and sociological perspective. For instance, De Marinis analyses how cultural values become protective factors in the process of meaning-making for patients in Sweden who have experienced forced migration.

The social level of analysis, unlike the psychological and psychoanalytic approach, understands emotions 'at the intersection between emotions as embodied experiences, their social nature and their links with feelings of selfhood and personal identity

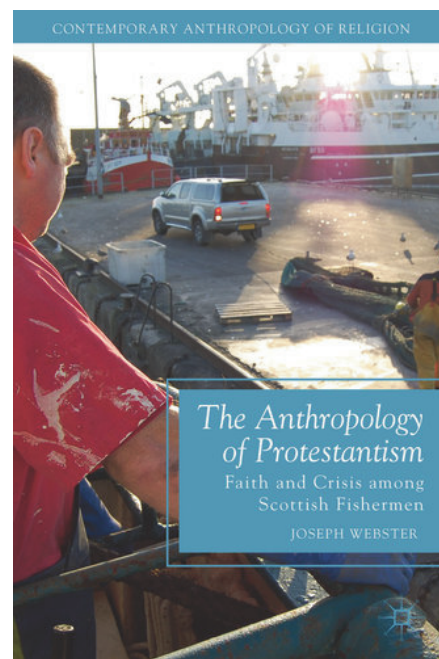
reflectively experienced' (14). Riis and Woodhead's *A Sociology of Religious Emotion* (OUP, 2010) has influenced many of the authors, but is also a subject of critique, particularly in regard to the necessity of including a deeper view to the embodied emotions, as is argued in Pafrey's chapter.

Finally, some of the chapters emphasise the interpretation of emotions as cultural practices. Their expertise in different religious traditions provides a strong ground for testing Loyal Rue's argument in *Religion Is Not about God* that 'religious traditions may be viewed as schools for educating the emotions' (Rutgers University Press 2005, 79). The authors' detailed knowledge of different rituals and theological arguments helps us to understand how different religions produce different emotional responses. For instance, Peter Harvey's chapter is outstanding in terms of his analysis of the place of emotions in Buddhist traditions. He explains how the four applications of mindfulness are related to the understanding of contemplation of feelings (*vedana*) (58). In this regard, I should underline that the reflexivity of the authors helped them to avoid reducing religious concepts to psychological definitions, where religious beliefs and practices cannot completely be understood in terms of emotions.

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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF
PROTESTANTISM: FAITH AND CRISIS
AMONG SCOTTISH FISHERMEN.
JOSEPH WEBSTER. 2013, PALGRAVE
MACMILLAN.

Too often, anthropology is a laboured attempt to fit the Other into the terminology of the Us - in our case, the West. What makes Joseph Webster's monograph particularly interesting is that it shows that the Us don't fit so well into the scholarly categories either. Deliberately or not, this work fits the recent trend in the study of religion which seeks to distance the discipline from earlier colonially-influenced approaches. David Chidester has outlined this position powerfully, arguing that the emergent comparative study of religion(s) tacitly encoded imperial and Protestant Christian values and presuppositions. More recently, Bruno



Latour has aimed the same critique at the West, arguing that the very "modernity" we impose on the Other is as much a construction as their so-called primitivism. The desire to perceive a universal "religiosity" underlying "primitive" religions is a product of the Protestant theological presuppositions of the scholars who studied them.

The problem, it is becoming clear, is that the theological position they were working from was never so hegemonic as we have been wont to describe it. To a degree, this has been

because of the elite status of the scholars in question, but more often it has been because the methods we have used have favoured textual and historical analyses, which have favoured elite narratives. The colonial legacy-in the shape of the "world religions paradigm"-has been thoroughly discredited within the more theoretically-minded regions of RS, although this has as yet significantly to spill out into pedagogy. Yet books like Webster's, Martin Stringer's *Contemporary Western Ethnography and the Definition of Religion* (2008) and Marion Bowman and Ulo Valk's *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life* (2012) offer new data from which we can rebuild the study of religion.

The Anthropology of Protestantism is a study of Gamrie (officially named Gordonstoun), a fishing village on the North East coast of Scotland, 45 miles north of Aberdeen. The village has an unusually large number of churches for its small population: six, including a Church of Scotland, and independent "Faith Mission" and four Plymouth Brethren groups. Brethrenism, which flourished among East Coast fishing communities from the 1920s, is both immanentist and exclusivist, and in Gamrie has split into one 'Open' and three 'Closed' churches, mainly over whether adults or children respectively are baptised. Webster describes the town and its inhabitants in rich, efficient prose which reminded me vividly of time spent personally with family in the area. Yet for all we think we might know (and all the words written) about Christianity in the UK in the present day, the world Webster describes is at the same time completely alien. It is a world in which every event, no matter how apparently mundane is part of a greater cosmic teleological plan, and in which no merely random events

happen: there is no coincidence, only “Godincidence”.

In chapter 3, Webster describes how ‘preaching’ the word was aimed at the ‘unsaved’, but ‘teaching’ aimed at the already saved, can be seen as a form of sacrifice, words made flesh and consumed by the hearer to sustain their faith. I found the argument here quite theological and hard to understand. Chapter 4, however, which brought Webster’s focus right down to the personal level with a close reading of the personal testimony of one of Gamrie’s Born-Again fishermen, was more relatable. Webster explores how the performance of the conversion narrative not only allows the speaker to embody the past event in the present, but also becomes part of the ongoing project of evangelising the

“unsaved”. This is complicated when Webster describes two trips undertaken working on the Gamrie fishing boats. The boats become microcosms of the village, with the rich skippers resting atop the regular fishermen and their Filipino shipmates; but also microcosms of the wider world beyond Gamrie, when Webster becomes embroiled in an ongoing “faith-versus-reason” debate amongst the crew. The narrative expands even more widely when the villagers’ concerns about the influence of the European Fisheries Commission are drawn into an immanentist Manichean cosmology wherein the Devil is physically operating in the European Union.

This will be an essential book for any of us researching the persistence of millennial thought in the supposedly

disenchanted, secularised Western world. The world that Webster’s Gamrie residents live in is one which is “local and universal, material and spiritual, immanent and transcendent” (xxi). For me, it provided a valuable window into the relationship between millennial and conspiracist worldviews in my own country in a Christian context, rather than the marginalised American cult model which is so often the standard. It should also give pause to anyone who thinks they understand modern Christianity. Most importantly, it challenges the idea that we understand what “we” believe. How can we describe the Other, when we know so little about the Us?

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BOOKS RECEIVED

The following titles have been received by the editors and are presently available for review. If interested, please email d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk

Social identities between the sacred and the secular. Day, A., Vincett, G. & Cotter, C. (eds.). Ashgate, 2014.

Sikhism: A guide for the perplexed. Mandair, A-P. S. Bloomsbury, 2013.

Santo Daime: A New World Religion. Dawson, A. Bloomsbury, 2013.

Sociology of Islam: Collected Essays of Bryan Turner. Turner, B. & Mohamed-Nasir, K. (eds.). Ashgate, 2013.

Caitanya Vaisnava Philosophy. Gupta, R. M. (ed.). Ashgate, 2014.

Contesting Secularism. Berg-Sorensen, A. Ashgate, 2013.

Religions and Environments: A Reader in Religion, Nature and Ecology. Bohannon, R. Bloomsbury, 2014.

Dr William Owen Cole

1931 – 26th October 2013

The personal and professional debt of gratitude we owe to many senior scholars is difficult to express, as we know from earlier obituaries of a particularly 'special' generation which includes Ninian Smart; Geoffrey Parrinder and Eric Sharpe, to name only three key figures in the establishment of religious studies in UK. They were not only pioneers academically in the development of RS in Universities but also believed that education in religion was an enterprise important throughout: from the beginning of formal schooling to adult education and should be done in collaboration with those whose faiths we study. They were also people distinguished by their hospitality, kindness, inspiration and support of others, both students and younger colleagues. Owen Cole is another of that generation.

I first met Owen Cole through the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education (founded in 1969). With other Shap members he was passionate not only about the accurate study and empathetic portrayal of religious traditions but about supporting classroom teachers in their practice of these ideals in schools. He once told me that he was never happier than working with teachers and was always suspicious of 'ivory tower' academics. His commitment was also to seeking justice and fairness towards the variety of faith communities in UK and this can be seen in his work as a vice president of the World Congress of Faiths and in his appointment by Archbishop Runcie as his interfaith consultant. Pioneering examples of his works in this arena are *Religion in the Multi Faith School* (1972 and 1983). He also edited the first *Commission for Racial Equality/Shap Handbook for teachers*, and when the Shap 'Mailing' became a Shap 'Journal', Owen edited it until the late 1970s when a team of editors succeeded him

Sikhs became part of Owen Cole's life when he moved to Leeds for a lectureship in 1968. Despite his suspicions of academics, the high standard of his own academic work and his phenomenological commitment to multi-faith religious studies and religious education led to a long list of publications and activities, of which only a few can be mentioned here. His close friendship with Piara Singh Sambhi

led to many single and joint publications on the Sikh tradition, including *The Guru in Sikhism* (1982); *Sikhism and Its Indian Context 1469-1708* (1984) as well as *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (1978 2nd. ed. 1995) and *Sikhism and Christianity A Comparative Study* (1993).

He and I often argued about the place of Buddhism, since he found its apophatic style perplexing. However, he was receptive to my arguments about the importance of Buddhism's place in our worldview analysis and asked me to extend his highly successful *Five Religions in The Twentieth Century* (1981) into *Six Religions in The Twentieth Century* (1984) and then, with an added chapter, *Six Religions in the Twenty First Century* (2000). His capacity for reflection and fresh thinking and asking difficult questions is present in his very last writing: an autobiography called *Cole Sahib and The Jesus Diary*. Owen was inspired by his father, a liberal-minded Congregationalist minister, and subsequently by his friendships with people of many faiths and his involvement in interfaith dialogue. As a conscientious objector he met Quakers and many years later he joined the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). His memorial service on November 10th was held in the context of a Quaker meeting for worship.

Many others have shared their memories of Owen, for example that he will be remembered for his integrity, compassion, vision and determination and as a true pioneer. For many colleagues, students and teachers his name is synonymous with the study of Sikhism and in this he had an international reputation, including amongst Sikhs in India where he held academic posts and made frequent visits to lecture.

Family meant a great deal to Owen. His wife, best friend and latterly carer, Gwynneth, died two months before him. They leave daughters, Eluned and Sian, and two grandchildren, Rhiannon and Ben.

Peggy Morgan
Mansfield College, University of Oxford
Honorary BASR President 2000-2003

Members' Recent Publications

Simon Brodbeck, Cardiff University

- 2014 "Refuge and Reform: Snakes, Gleaners, and Nishadas in Early Kavya", in Giovanni Ciotti, Alastair Gornall and Paolo Visigalli (eds), *Pushpika: Tracing Ancient India through Texts and Traditions. Contributions to Current Research in Indology, Volume 2*. Oxford: Oxbow Books. 1–34.
- 2013 "Harivamsha", in Alf Hiltebeitel (ed.-in-chief), *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Hinduism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 2013 "Some Textological Observations on the Analytic and Synthetic Modes", in Vishwa Adluri (ed.), *Ways and Reasons for Thinking about the Mahabharata as a Whole*. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. 135–154.
- 2013 "The Story of Savitri in the Mahabharata: a Lineal Interpretation." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23.4. 527–549.
- 2012 "Vaishampayana's Mahabharata Patriline", in John Brockington (ed.), *Battle, Bards and Brahmins: Papers of the 13th World Sanskrit Conference, Vol. 2*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. 1–38.

George Chryssides, University of Birmingham

- 2014 (with Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Dawoud El-Alami) *Why Can't They Get Along? A conversation between a Muslim, a Jew and a Christian*. Oxford: Lion Hudson. ISBN: 978-0-7459-5605-3.
- 2014 (ed., with Benjamin E. Zeller) *The Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements*. London: Bloomsbury. ISBN: 978-1-4411-9005-5.
- 2014 *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. Entries on "Ethics" and "Family" Vol.8, pp.126-127, 842-843.
- 2013 (with Ron Geaves) *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*. 2 ed. London: Bloomsbury. ISBN:978-1-78093-840-0.
- 2013 *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. Entry on "Ephraim". Vol.8, pp.1032-1033.

Prof Douglas Davies, Durham University

- 2013 (ed., with Nathaniel A. Warne) *Emotions and Religious Dynamics*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- 2012 (with Hannah Rumble) *Natural Burial: Traditional-Secular Spiritualities and Funeral Innovation*. London: Continuum.
- 2011 *Emotion, Identity and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity and Otherness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2010 *Joseph Smith, Jesus, and Satanic Opposition: Atonement, Evil and the Mormon Vision*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Theodore Gabriel, University of Gloucestershire

- 2014 (ed., with Ron Geaves) *Sufism in Britain*. London: Bloomsbury.
- 2013 (ed., with Rebiha Hannan) *Islam and the Veil: Regional and Theoretical Contexts*. London: Bloomsbury.
- 2013 *Playing God, Ritual and Belief in the Muttappan Cult of North Malabar*. Sheffield: Equinox.

David L. Gosling, University of Cambridge

- 2013 "Embodiment and Rebirth in the Buddhist and Hindu Traditions." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 908-15.
- 2012 "Science and the Hindu Tradition: Compatibility or Conflict?" *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 575-88.

Matthew Guest, Durham University

- 2013 (with Kristin Aune, Sonya Sharma and Rob Warner) *Christianity and the University Experience: Understanding Student Faith*. London: Bloomsbury.
- 2013 (with Sonya Sharma) "Navigating Religion between University and Home: Christian Students' Experiences in English Universities." *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 14, no. 1, 59-79.
- 2013 (with Sonya Sharma, Kristin Aune and Rob Warner) "Challenging "Belief" and the Evangelical Bias: Student Christianity in English Universities." *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 28, no. 2, 207-223.
- 2012 (ed., with Elisabeth Arweck) *Religion and Knowledge: Sociological Perspectives*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- 2012 (with Elizabeth Olson and John Wolffe) "Christianity: Loss of Monopoly". In Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (eds), *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*. London: Routledge. 57-78.

Elizabeth Harris, Liverpool Hope University

- 2013 "Buddhism and the Religious Other". In David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt & David Thomas (eds.), *Understanding Interreligious Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 88-117.
- 2013 "Buddhism and International Aid: A Case Study from Post-tsunami Sri Lanka". In Hiroko Kawanami & Geoffrey Samuel (eds), *Buddhism, International Relief Work, and Civil Society*. New York: PalgraveMacmillan, 1-25.
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- 2013 "Memory, Experience and the Clash of Cosmologies: The Encounter between British Protestant Missionaries and Buddhism in Nineteenth Century Sri Lanka", *Social Sciences and Mission*, 25.3, 265-303.

Graham Harvey, The Open University

- 2014 "Relational health: Animists, shamans and the practice of well-being" in Lucas Johnston and Whitney Bauman (eds), *Science and Religion: One Planet, Many Possibilities*. New York: Routledge. 204-15. ISBN 978-0415738422
- 2014 "Pagan Studies" in George Chryssides and Ben Zeller (eds) *Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements*. London: Bloomsbury. 37-40. ISBN: 978-1-4411-9005-5
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Justin Meggitt, University of Cambridge

- 2013 *Early Quakers and Islam: Slavery, Apocalyptic and Christian-Muslim Encounters in the Seventeenth Century*. (Studies on Inter-Religious Relations 59.) Uppsala: Swedish Science Press.
- 2013 "Did Magic Matter? The Saliency of Magic in the Early Roman Empire". *Journal of Ancient History* 1 (2): 170-229. doi:10.1515/jah-2013-0010.

Eleanor Nesbitt, University of Warwick

- 2014 (with Gavin D'Costa, Mark Pryce, Ruth Shelton and Nicola Slee) *Making Nothing Happen: Five Poets Explore Faith and Spirituality*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- 2014 "Sikh Sants and their Establishments in India and Abroad", in Pashaura Singh and Louis Fenech (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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- 2013 "Sparrows and Lions: Fauna in Sikh Imagery, Symbolism and Ethics", in F.M. Fabrizio and T. Dähnhardt (eds), *Charming Beauties and Frightful Beasts, Non-Human Animals in South Asian Myth, Ritual and Folklore*. Sheffield: Equinox. 64-81.

Bettina Schmidt, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

- 2014 "Spirit Possession in Brazil. The Perception of the (possessed) Body". *Anthropos* Vol. 109 (1). 135-147.
- 2013 "Animal Sacrifice as Symbol of the Paradigmatic Other in the 21st Century: Ebó, the Offerings to African Gods, in the Americas." In Johannes Zachhuber and Julia Meszaros (eds), *Sacrifice and Modern Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 197-213.
- 2013 "The Spirit White Feather in São Paulo: The Resilience of Indigenous Spirits in Brazil." In James Cox (ed), *Critical Reflections on Indigenous Religions*. (Vitality of Indigenous Religions series). London: Ashgate. 123-141.
- 2012 "'When the gods gives us the power of ashé' - Afro-Caribbean Religions as Source for Creative Energy." In Carole M. Cusack and Alex Norman (eds), *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production* (Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion series) DenHague: Brill. 445-461.
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Karel Werner, University of London

- 2013 "The Place of Relic Worship in Buddhism: an Unresolved Controversy?" *Buddhist Studies Review* 30/1, 71-87.
- 2013 "Was Richard Wagner a Buddhist?" *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture*, Volume 21, 57-82.

"Designating a variety of activity or orientation as spirituality is a way of seeking exemption from certain of the characteristics of what has come to be regarded as religion, but not others. It is a way, as it were, to 'look like a duck and quack like a duck' but avoid identification as a duck." (Peter Beyer 2006: 8)



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