



# BASR BULLETIN

128

May 2016





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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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# EDITORIAL

April showers bring May flowers... and May exams bring June marking. Then the conference season starts.

To tide you over, here's the new edition of the BASR Bulletin. I'm happy to say it's another packed edition, because for the first time, we're making the Bulletin publicly available, for anyone interested in the work of the BASR and the state of the academic study of religion in the UK. And indeed, further afield, as the issue features pieces from several international colleagues - the BASR does not exist in a bubble, but is part of an international network of organisations, universities and individuals, and the pieces in this issue are intended to remind us of that, and encourage further communication and collaboration.

In the latest in our series of dispatches from abroad, Ingvild Saelid Gilhus reports from Norway. Her missive describes a Religious Studies in rude health, making positive progress in a predominantly Christian state. Yet she can also see storm clouds gathering, with Christianity resurgent in secondary education, and cuts to neighbouring departments.

In the first of a new series, *Re:Thinking*, Russell McCutcheon reconsiders the work of Mircea Eliade. As a younger scholar, he made his name challenging the kind of essentialism which Eliade's work is perhaps

best-known example. And while that critique has not changed, after a decade as a department chair, McCutcheon has a rather different opinion of Eliade's efforts to promote the subject and its relevance in the public sphere.

George Chryssides continues his series offering advice to those just starting their careers, this time on getting a post - certainly something we need more help than ever with. There will be one more in this valuable series, and we are planning to gather them all together into an ebook when it is completed.

The Teaching Matters column this month announces the new Teaching and Learning WIKI on the BASR website. We do hope you'll consider contributing to something to what could become a valuable, open access resource.

As ever, we have our usual selection of book reviews and conference reports. If you are reading the Bulletin for the first time, welcome! I'd love to hear from you if you would like to contribute to *From our Correspondant...* or *Re:Thinking*, or with a book review or conference report. Get in touch at [d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk).

David G. Robertson

## GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

|                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| News Items                   | Up to 150 words             |
| Conference Reports           | 500-1500 words              |
| Conference Announcements     | Not more than a single page |
| Book Reviews                 | 700-1000 words              |
| Features                     | Around 1000 words           |
| Members' Recent Publications | Maximum 5 items             |

PLEASE SEND ALL MATERIAL FOR INCLUSION TO [d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk)  
DEADLINE FOR THE NOVEMBER 2016 ISSUE IS **31 OCTOBER 2016**



# NEWS, ETC

## **FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT**

Due to several successful conferences in recent years, the BASR finds itself with a surplus of funds, which as a charity, we have a mandate to reinvest. Following our AGM in Kent on September 8 and an extraordinary meeting in Lancaster on October 21, the executive committee asks members for suggestions for small funded project(s) supporting the aims of the BASR up to a total of c.£5,000.

Informal proposals should be sent to the Honorary Secretary, Stephen Gregg (s.gregg@wlv.ac.uk), by January 15, 2016, for discussion by the executive committee at our February meeting. Proposals should be for collaborative projects, to be designed and implemented in co-operation with the committee. Fuller details will be solicited before a final decision is made.

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## **RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROJECT: NEW RESPONDENTS NEEDED**

We're looking to add new writers to our pool of podcast respondents. As you may know, since our launch in 2012, a regular feature at the RSP has been the weekly podcast response, which draws on the week's podcast as a launch pad for expansion, critique, reflection or digression. It provides an excellent opportunity for established academics to bring the podcasts into conversation with other areas of the academic study of religion, and for up-and-comers to get their ideas out their in a supportive yet rigorous forum with a large international audience.

If you would like to be added to our pool of respondents, or know of one of your students who might make a good addition to the team, please circulate this note, or send an email to [editors@religiousstudiesproject.com](mailto:editors@religiousstudiesproject.com). Being added to the pool comes with no obligation to write anything, and entails receiving an email from Kevin every couple

of months with a list of upcoming podcasts. It's a great opportunity to see what's happening behind the scenes at the RSP, to try out a new kind of writing, and to get your work out there in an accessible, open-access format.

## **POSTER COMPETITION**

Are you a budding graphic designer or artist? Do you listen to the RSP? Want to see your work adorn the walls of RS departments around the globe? Then the Religious Studies Project wants YOU!

This summer, the RSP is running our very first Poster Competition. What does "critical, accessible, and cutting-edge scholarship in the academic study of religion" look like?

Email your designs (A3, full colour) with "RSP Poster Competition Submission" in the subject line to [editors@religiousstudiesproject.com](mailto:editors@religiousstudiesproject.com) by September 1st, 2016. Logos, photos and blurbs for you to use are available at <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/poster-competition/>. We'll share the best ones on our social media, and the winning design will then be printed up and sent to every RS department in the world.

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## **IMPLICIT RELIGION RELAUNCHED**

Following the death of founding editor Edward Bailey in 2015, the Equinox journal *Implicit Religion* will now be published in collaboration with The Religious Studies Project, taking a new, more critical direction. RSP founding editor David G. Robertson and Jack Laughlin of Sudbury, Canada are the new co-editors.

*Implicit Religion* offers an international platform for scholarship that challenges the traditional boundary between religion and non-religion and the tacit assumptions underlying this distinction. It invites contributions from a critical perspective on various cultural formations that are usually excluded from religion by the gatekeeping practices of the general public, practitioners, the law, and even some scholars of religion. Taking a broad scope, *Implicit Religion* showcases analyses of material from the mundane to the extraordinary, but always with critical questions in mind such as: why is this data boundary-challenging?

## A Message from the Treasurer:

Dear members,

Over the past few months I have been settling into my role as Treasurer, and am happy to report that thanks to Stephen Gregg's hard work the BASR's finances are in good shape. So good, in fact, that we have been able to allocate some funds for BASR Members to apply for (see page 3 for details). However, in order to ensure that our finances stay in such good shape, the Executive Committee agreed to a number of measures at our meeting in Wolverhampton in February.

First of all, we unanimously agreed to abandon cheques and one-off payments, meaning that all subscriptions will now be recurring payments. This is in keeping with point 5 in the BASR Constitution: All members shall pay an annual subscription determined by the General Meeting, save that a General Meeting shall have the power in exceptional cases to confer Honorary Membership of the Association.

Much time, effort and funding has been lost each year chasing outstanding payments. If a member wishes to cancel membership, recurring payments can be cancelled by the member at any time. Membership runs from 1 October to 30 September each year.

Secondly, between now and the AGM I shall be rationalizing our membership list. If my records indicate that you owe subs, I'll be getting in touch. Also, many members are still paying the old membership rate of £10/£20, rather than £15/£30. Given that the AGM agreed to change the subscription rate at the 2011 conference, this is something else that I will be seeking to get under control.

Sorry that my first message is a nagging one, but I am sure that you will all agree that it's important that we get this right. If you have questions about any of this, you can get in touch with me on [basr.treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:basr.treasurer@gmail.com). Payment for subscriptions can be made via Bank Transfer or PayPal. For bank details, send me an email; for PayPal details, see here: <http://basr.ac.uk/membership-payment/>

Thanks all,

Chris

what do such marginal cases tell us about boundary management and category formation with respect to religion? and what interests are being served through acts of inclusion and exclusion?

The editors would like to extend a call for papers addressing this new approach. We are particularly keen to hear suggestions for review essays and symposia on publications pertinent to boundary maintenance in RS. We are also keen to hear proposals for themed editions and any other novel suggestions for content. Papers can be submitted at <https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/IR/index>, and more general suggestions and queries may be emailed to [d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk) and [jlaughlin@usudbury.ca](mailto:jlaughlin@usudbury.ca).

## **NEW RESEARCH PROJECT: CROSSFIT - FINDING MEANING IN SPORTS**

CrossFit is an increasingly popular high intensity sport that originated about a decade ago in California. It is based on functional movements and combines bodyweight exercises and elements from gymnastics and Olympic Lifting to create high intensity workouts. Its aim is to create "a broad, general and inclusive fitness" and prepare athletes for the "unknown and unknowable" [[www.crossfit.com/what-is-crossfit](http://www.crossfit.com/what-is-crossfit)].

CrossFit, however, is more than a new - or very well marketed - way to exercise. CrossFit emphasizes community spirit, togetherness, and values such as integrity and inclusivity. The workouts are performed in small groups which allows for the forging of bonds and

friendships that often extend beyond the walls of the gym (or “box” in CrossFit lingo). Some people also talk about the time they started CrossFit as transformative experience that helped them overcome challenges in their life. In short, CrossFit can be seen as bodily practice that is both meaningful and creates meaning. While CrossFit did not emerge out of religious practice, with its emphasis on community and values it attracts a number of Christians and provides a forum in which they can live out, embody, experience, sense, and feel some of the values they believe in.

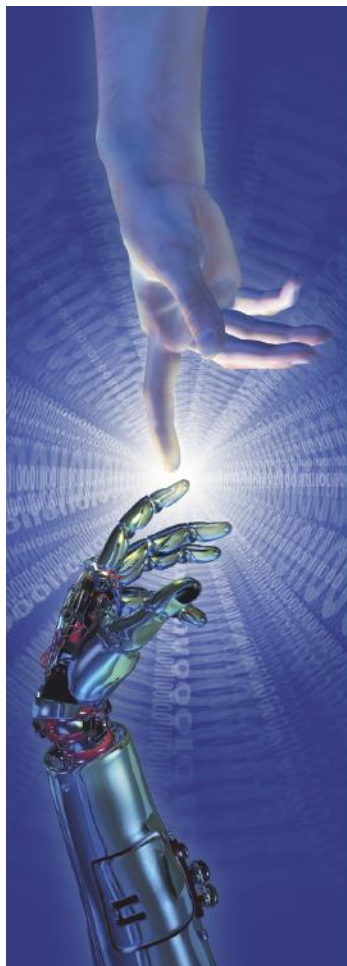
This CrossFit research endeavor, then, aims to explore two main perspectives: 1) CrossFit as meaningful practice and 2) the links between CrossFit and Christian athletes. It will also look at issues such as social commitment, questions of social change, gender, and disabilities, marketing, and sponsoring.

The researcher, Dr. Alexander D. Ornella, is a Lecturer in Religion at the University of Hull and an avid CrossFitter himself. More details about the project can be found on his website, <http://ornella.info/crossfit>. If you have any questions or are interested in a form of collaboration, you can contact him at [alexander@ornella.info](mailto:alexander@ornella.info).

## **JOBS ETC.**

In February Beth Singler started as a Research Associate at the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, University of Cambridge. She will be exploring the social and religious implications of advances in AI and robotics. A social anthropologist of new religious Movements, her recently completed PhD thesis is the first in-depth ethnography of the Indigo Children - a New Age re-conception of both children and adults using the language of evolution and spirituality. She has also written on the development and legitimation of Jediism and Scientology through social media.

Rosalind Hackett was elected as a Vice President of UNESCO’s humanities council (CIPSH) in October 2014, and became an Honorary Life Member of the IAHR in August 2015 after two terms as President (2005-2015). She was Visiting Professor in Women’s Studies and Religion and Research Associate, Women’s Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School (2014-15) and A. W. Mellon Fellow, Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town (May 2014). She has also been a member of the Steering Committee of the African Consortium on Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS) since its formation in 2011.



# **Reality, Robots & Religion** **Human Identity in an Age of Machines**

**Robinson College, Cambridge, 16-18 September 2016**

This short course provides a conversation between experts from a range of disciplines, including computing and robotics, sociology, ethics, anthropology and theology, addressing questions such as:

- What does it mean to be human in an age of increasingly intelligent machines?
- How do fictional representations of AI and robots influence our hopes and fears?
- Do visions of a posthuman future transformed by technology reflect or replace religious apocalypses and hopes?

For more details including speakers, fees and scholarships see

**[www.faraday-institute.org](http://www.faraday-institute.org)**

or call +44 (0)1223 741281



# British Association for the Study of Religions Annual Conference 2016

Theme: 'Religion Beyond the Textbook'  
Keynote Speaker: Prof. Martin Stringer (Swansea University)  
University of Wolverhampton, 5-7 September 2016

#BASR2016

People enact, perform and live religion in a multitude of specific contexts, which are studied through a wide range of methods and approaches; and yet mainstream discourse on religion – public, media and textbook – too often reverts to generic, out-dated essentialisms concerning the lives of religious actors and the classification of 'religion' itself. However, new methodological approaches are emerging which ensure diverse forms of religion – often contradictory and complicated, offering counter-narratives to textbook accounts – are understood, which allow different voices to be heard, texts to be re-read, phenomena to be re-interpreted and identity boundaries to be challenged.

The BASR invites colleagues from across the UK, Europe and beyond to the University of Wolverhampton – the heart of multicultural Britain – to contribute papers or panels on the above theme. Papers will be 20-25 minutes with 5-10 minutes for questions/discussion. Panels will be 90 minute sessions, to normally include 3 papers. Roundtables and poster presentations may also be accepted – please contact the below email for details. Ideas for papers and panels may include, but are not limited to:

Lived and vernacular religion  
Multiple religious belonging  
Contested identities within and between religions  
Minority and muted voices  
Counter-cultural practices and purposefully 'discordant' worldviews  
Non-Religion in diverse forms  
Pedagogic challenges and opportunities  
Emergent methodologies and paradigms in the Study of Religion/s

Abstracts (200 words plus paper title, author name and institutional affiliation in Microsoft Word format) should be submitted to [basrconference@gmail.com](mailto:basrconference@gmail.com) before 31st May 2016. Panels should be submitted in the same way, with details for each paper along with the panel title and the name of the convener/chair.

Deadline for paper/panel submissions: 31st May 2016  
Notification of acceptance of papers/panels: No later than 6th June 2016  
Online registration for conference open from: 1st June 2016  
Deadline for registration: 31st July 2016

Further updates and announcements, including registration details, will appear here and across social media in due course. For any general enquiries, please contact the Conference Organisers, Dr. Stephen E. Gregg & Dr. Opinderjit Takhar on [basrconference@gmail.com](mailto:basrconference@gmail.com).

## ***Call for Bursary Applications***

A limited number of student bursaries will be made available to support research students to attend the conference. Bursaries are open to all research students, at all points of their research, and cover registration and accommodation, but not travel. Applicants must already be BASR members, or be willing to join if their application is successful. The deadline for applications is 31st May.

To apply for a Bursary, please complete the Student Bursary Application Form from <http://basr.religiousstudiesproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Student-Bursary-Application-Form.docx> and return it to Dr. Stephen E. Gregg at [s.gregg@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:s.gregg@wlv.ac.uk) by 31st May



# FEATURES

## FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT ...IN NORWAY

In 1913, Wilhelm Schencke described the Faculty of Theology in Oslo as “the inflamed appendix of the university” and suggested that it be removed by surgery because of its commitments to theological values and norms. He got the first professorship in the History of Religions in Norway the year after – and was moved from the Theological Faculty to the Faculty of Humanities. Schencke’s outburst marked the beginning of the secular study of religion in this country. His words also point to an important generative mechanism in the scientific study of religion, namely its attempted break with theology. The institutional framework for the study of religion was an issue from the very beginning and the identity of the new field was partly constructed on it being different from theology, and on theology as its significant other. However, in spite of the critical view of Christian theology and the positive interest in religions and forms of religions that are usually seen as marginal, scholars of the Science of Religion (religionsvitenskap) in Norway have only to a limited degree been bent on pushing for actual reforms in society, as some scholars in the Social Sciences have done.

From being a country with a huge

Christian dominance, Norwegian society began in the late 1960s and early 1970s a very slow development towards a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. (The Church of Norway still includes nearly 70% of the population.) Together with the general increase in the number of students at the universities, and the fact that teachers with degrees in religion from Faculties of Humanities were allowed to teach in secondary schools, it meant a significant growth of students in religion at these faculties. Science of Religion, which had been a small and rather esoteric field, became in the 1990s one of the most popular subjects. Parallel with this development there has been a growth in departments and chairs – the number of permanent positions in the subject has increased from one at the beginning of the sixties to about thirty in 2016. Most of them have now their education in the Science of Religion. Today, Science of Religion is taught at the universities of Bergen, Oslo, Tromsø and Trondheim. Geographically, research has focused especially on the Mediterranean, India, South Asia and Norway, and thematically on Ancient Scandinavian religion, Buddhism, Christianity, Diaspora

Ingvild Sælid  
Gilhus,  
University of  
Bergen

Studies, Hinduism, Gender Studies, Gnosticism, Iconography, Islam, Jainism, Methods and Theory, New Age, Religion and Nature, Politics, Popular Culture, Public religion, Ritual Theory, Sami religion, Sacred Animals, Satanism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism. A Norwegian journal, *Din: tidsskrift for religion og kultur*, was started in 1999.

With its 5 million inhabitants, Norway is a small country and Norwegian is not (yet) a language of international currency. The Scandinavian languages, however, are closely connected and there is a co-operation between historians of religion in the Scandinavian countries. The journal *Chaos* was initiated in Copenhagen in 1982, and became a joint venture between Copenhagen and Bergen in 1986. Later other universities in Norway were included and from 2006 Swedish universities joined also. The co-operation includes a yearly conference as well as the journal – both in Scandinavian languages. This year the conference took place at the University of Bergen at the end of April, with the theme of “Religion and Materiality”. The conference included 20 papers, over two extremely busy days.

This reflects that our field is very much alive and kicking in this part of the world, but the future is not without ominous signs. In recent years, the subject in schools has changed its name from KRL to RLE and recently to KRLE. The letters stand for Christianity (K), Religion



(R) Philosophy of Life (L) and Ethics (E). A conservative government with Christian Democrat support has brought the K for Christianity back, which means more Christianity and perhaps more teachers with education from religious and semi-religious institutions. In addition, there is an on-going process of reducing the number subjects taught in schools, which may result in religion being transferred to other subjects and downscaled. A new political situation in relation to schools may reverse the happy development which the Science of Religion has enjoyed in recent decades.

Two other processes may also influence future development. The Research Council of Norway has staged an evaluation of all Humanities research this year, at the same time as the Ministry of Education and Research is working on a White Paper on Humanistic Research and Education. It is not possible to know what this will result in – but what has recently happened with our neighbours is scary: the funding of the University of Copenhagen has been reduced by c. 50 million Euros and 500 jobs have been cut, and the budgets of the universities in Finland have been seriously reduced, meaning that the University of Helsinki will lose 1000 staff.

There are dark clouds on the horizon, but on the bright side, the Norwegian Science of Religion is vibrant, which at least makes us better equipped to meet these future challenges.

*The first part of the article is built on Ingvild Sælid Gilhus and Knut Jacobsen. 2014. "From the History of Religions to the Science of Religion in Norway. Temenos 50, 1, 63-78.*

# ADVICE FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS: GETTING YOUR FIRST JOB

So you're just finishing your Ph.D. on the Yaohnanen cargo cults in the southern island of Tanna in Vanuatu and are now seeking full-time employment. What to do? It would be great to find a job ad that said, 'The University of Eruditia is seeking an enthusiastic lecturer on Cargo Cults to initiate research work on the Yaohnanen, and offers generous research funding and study leave.' Be realistic! This is unlikely to happen, and you are faced with the of how you make research on an obscure area seem relevant to a department with an undergraduate syllabus offering the staple diet of Introduction to Religion, Christianity, Philosophy of Religion, Ethics, Islam.

By definition, Ph.Ds are on untrodden academic territory, but if appointed, there aren't going to be hordes of students queuing up at your door, keen to know about the sabbatical the department funded for your latest trip to Vanuatu. So how do you sell your life-time's work to an appointing panel? A good strategy is to identify aspects of your research that are likely to be of use to the department. Your work probably involved research methods and fieldwork, for example; maybe you would be willing to develop your expertise into anthropology of religion, the study of indigenous religions, the effects of Christian mission, maybe new religious movements. There is much scope for making an obscure area look

George D. Chryssides,  
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University

relevant on your application.

If you churn out the same CV regardless of the job description, you are probably on to a loser. Your first task should be to look at the job specifications, and re-organise your CV to demonstrate that you satisfy them. Most job specs now indicate primary criteria that are flagged as "essential" and secondary criteria that are "desirable". So, if the further details specify the teaching of Buddhism and research methods, plus good administrative skills and ability to attract funding, then it is a good idea to structure your CV around these requirements. Devise headings such as 'Teaching experience', 'Administration', 'Funding', and so on. At the outset of one's career, experience may be limited, but it should be possible to think of something – tutorial work with undergraduates, helping with a conference or two, funding for your own post-graduate work. Persuade, don't just assert: it's no good saying that if you were appointed you would seek funds from the Leverhulme Trust, the AHRC and the British Academy: think of what you have already achieved, rather than construct a wish list.

If you get as far as the interview, you have been doing things right. You now have a first-hand opportunity to persuade potential employers that you are the person for the job. Some candidates find it useful to look at professional advice on interviews, or even do practice interviews with sympathetic friends. While this may be useful, I would avoid over-rehearsing, since one's responses run the risk of becoming wooden.

It is common for candidates to be asked to give a presentation, usually before the interview. It could be a sample student session, a summary of a piece of your research, or maybe an outline of how to attract funding. The entire interview panel will probably not be the audience, but someone will be there who will report on your performance. If possible, try to find out if students will be present and, if so, engage them in your discussion. Use visual backup – PowerPoint is the obvious choice, and you should be confident that you can operate it smoothly.

The ensuing interview is not a viva. Probably most of the panel won't have specialist expertise: it is usual to have an interviewer from another subject area, so you may be trying to persuade an accountant or an engineer that you are the person for the job! What they are interested in is finding someone with good teaching ability, competent administrative skills, and potential for a good contribution to the next research assessment exercise – in other words, good publishing output.

You want the job, but why should they want you? To convince the appointing panel that you are the candidate for the job, you should

have found out about the institution and the department. What courses do they offer? What might you contribute to them? Are there possible additions to their portfolio? Most interview panels ask candidates if they have any questions, so questions that demonstrate that you have done your homework will create a good impression.

The most obvious interview question is, "What attracts you to this post?" The truthful answer is probably that you want a job, need the money, and would accept almost anything! However, focus on what you can offer the institution, rather than what it offers you.

Another typical question is how you would teach a module. Prior reflection is important. The answer is not that you would use PowerPoint and videos – that's the icing on the cake. Mention content, not just teaching methods. If the module is Buddhism, you could suggest possible fieldwork opportunities. Would you include indigenous folk practices, and examine western adaptations? Try to suggest something fresh and innovative, but not beyond the students' reach.

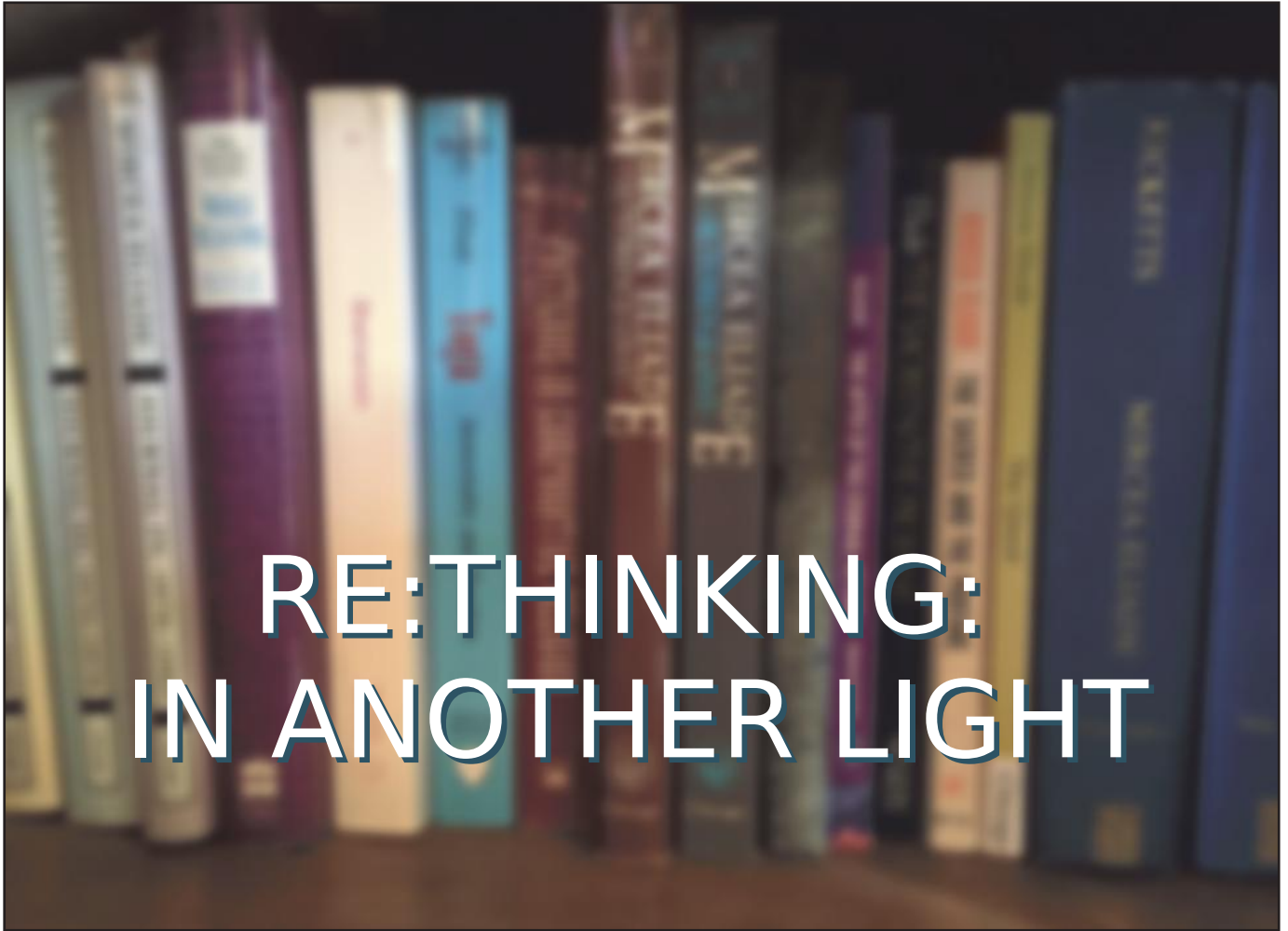
Why is your research important? The panel may not want details about Yaohnanen, but the likely impact of one's research is important. "Impact" is a favourite byword right now. It is a good idea to reflect on what interested you in the first place, why your funding body wanted to support it, and how it cements a gap in scholarship. Perhaps cargo cults show us something beyond themselves – consequences of Christian mission, or how

unpromising worldviews can be internally coherent. Perhaps the department runs a module on "Worldviews" or some such topic, to which this could be a case study. Showing that it is more than just an academic apprenticeship is to your advantage. Whatever you do, be convincing, and have a plan!


How do you see your career developing in the next ten years? Becoming Oxford University's Boden Professor of Sankrit is probably too specific and ambitious. When applying for one job, you should not be thinking of your next one. Telling the panel that you hope to make your Ph.D. into a book is a start, then what areas of research you might subsequently explore. Will you continue with the cargo cults, or have you some other – preferably related – area of research that might enhance the department's profile?

One area that is gaining increasing attention is equal opportunities, and interviewers may ask about this. It covers a range of issues, spanning how to deal with disability to how one ensures that male and female students both receive a fair deal when it comes to fieldwork. Not all religions treat men and women equally, so how should we take this on board?

You may or may not be asked to wait around for the panel's decision. However, if you are unsuccessful, this does not mean that you were not up to scratch – only that someone else was reckoned to be a better fit on that occasion. Something else – or even something better – may come up next. I can see with hindsight that I had some very lucky escapes!



# RE:THINKING: IN ANOTHER LIGHT

The partment in which I work was established in the mid-1960s, when public universities all across the US were first opening Departments of Religious Studies. Those familiar with this history know enough of the circumstances at that time (i.e., of the US Supreme Court's various decisions on such matters as public school prayer and school integration, but also increased knowledge about Asia via the Korean War and at that time, the US's growing involvement in Vietnam, not to mention the persistent Cold War fear of the "godless Communists" back then) to understand some of the reasons why a field devoted to the study of religion so successfully popped up all across the country (it had made its way to the US prior to the Great War but soon after died out in public universities). But that success was

also linked to some pretty strategic rhetoric on the part of scholars in the late 1950s and 1960s, rhetoric that played a role in securing the very field in which I now do my own work.

All of that is to say that, now that I've been a Department chair for over a decade, I'm able to see the work of Mircea Eliade in a rather different light—not that I now find myself agreeing with his views on "total man" or the hermeneutics of the sacred. No, not at all—so rest assured that I've not had some road to Damascus moment. So yes, I still find his work to be highly problematic, for reasons I described at some length in my early writings. But if you make the shift from thinking that Eliade—whether intentionally or not on his part, of course—was making substantive claims about

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University of  
Alabama

some actual object of study that he was trying to interpret properly (and yes, that's the way we normally read him and others) to reading his oeuvre as an extended rhetorical effort to create an object of study that could be seen to be so special that it would require the invention of an institution to study it, then, at least as I see the world as a Department chair, one has to have a grudging respect for the success of this one way of talking about religion as well as what it would take to study it adequately. For although the

American university of the mid- to late-1960s, when it was gearing up for the arrival of the baby boomers, was certainly different from the cash-strapped institution of today (in which state governments keep cutting their education budgets and universities keep raising tuition), it's still pretty impressive to think of wholly new departments so quickly and so successfully being invented all across the nation (with a helping hand from a variety of private funding sources too, something discussed in chapter 4 here.)—all because an utterly unique datum required utterly unique methods housed in brand new departments, complete with new classes and new professors (some of whom came from the University of Chicago, certainly—thereby helping to justify his own program's existence. And round and round the social formation goes).

Case in point: because the successful invention of the University of Alabama's department was premised on it never really being all that large (as I've written elsewhere, we were 4.25 full-time faculty when I arrived in 2001—about the largest the Department had been in its what was then its 40 year history—and only in the last few years have we grown to, as of this coming Fall semester, 10 tenured or tenure-track faculty), the irony was that much of what might count as the study of religion was housed elsewhere on campus. Anthropology owned the anthropology of religion, History owned courses on the history of Christianity. Psychology owned the psychology of religion. Philosophy owned the philosophy of religion. And so on and so on (though

somehow we retained the English Bible as Literature class). In fact, not long after I arrived on campus a newly minted course on Roman religion was listed as a Classics course yet our department had never been consulted. None of this was a problem, of course, back when the department had only 2 or 3 professors—i.e., when it was so small that its faculty members couldn't help but be thankful that their students could also find courses that satisfied their interests all across campus; but the successful reinvention and growth of the department, over the past fifteen years, means that turf has become an issue in a whole new way, requiring strategies and arguments for why this or that topic ought to be something over which we, as opposed to others, exert some sort of curricular control, as well as arguments for why we need a new position to teach on/study this or that topic, region, period, etc. So while we've changed significantly since 2001 (something I wrote on in the afterword here) that success has brought with it a whole series of new challenges that need to be met with a strategic hand in order to both cooperate with other units (on whom we still depend for a variety of classes) while also staking out a reliable territory for ourselves, so as to ensure students who have never heard of what we do (aside: few US high schools teach anything like our field) find us nonetheless and enroll in a few of our classes; for, like it or not, two of the viability measures of the modern US university are credit hour production and the number of majors (i.e., graduates). And so it does us, as a department, little good to have a thriving major in the study of religion if students can satisfy its requirements by

taking courses elsewhere.

And here I come back to Eliade's still famous arguments for the autonomy of the study of religion (based on the supposed socio-political autonomy of the object of study: what he termed hierophanies of the sacred). While this certainly is not the way we've talked about the study of religion here at Alabama—if anything, we've adopted the exact opposite approach, one that sees our relevance to reside in how we use this one e.g. (i.e., things people call religion) as an opportunity to use widely adopted social theoretical tools to talk about what are common, culture-wide processes—like our predecessors we too are situated in a competitive economy and must work diligently to ensure students, colleagues, administrators, even parents and the general public, understand that what we do is worthwhile, interesting, and even valuable and thus worth supporting (among the reasons we have an active department blog, a Vimeo site, as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts). For discussions of the practical effects of higher education today are something of which, whether or not one agrees, a responsible faculty member and chair must be keenly aware (issues now of increased relevance in the UK as well, I certainly realize). So add to the budget cuts many universities have experienced those recurring arguments for the need to invest exclusively in STEM disciplines or majors that lead directly to a credential that will earn for the student a job upon graduation (e.g., “Why do we need anthropology majors” the Governor of Florida asked not so long ago) and you arrive at situation today that's not all that

different form when the modern field was (re)established, at least in the US. For like then, the successful department will have to be nimble in its efforts to identify what it does and why it matters, and then communicate that effectively to a host of audiences. And so now, when I read those pieces Eliade wrote in the 1950s and 1960s—being careful to disengage my reading from the assumption that he was talking about some actual thing, religion, and instead reading him as artfully trying to create the intellectual conditions in which it was possible for a reader to think autonomous Departments of Religious Studies

into existence, arguments that would have to win over colleagues, Deans and university presidents—well, it's an interesting experience to see him as a classic bricoleur, working with what was at hand in order to help create a social group (complete with tenure-track jobs for the students he was helping to train).

So while I hardly define or study religion in the manner he advocated, and while many in our Department today train students to be rather suspicious of arguments about unique things—things that, by definition, cannot be compared to anything

else and thus things about which it is impossible to claim to know anything—the space in which we do our work is, to whatever extent, here because others long before us made persuasive arguments about autonomy and uniqueness, illustrating the ambiguous, even conflicted, situation in which all social actors find themselves. So although it doesn't mean I'm any less critical of his work, it does mean that now, more than 25 years after first turning a critical eye toward *The Sacred and the Profane*, I'm able to read his works in a rather different light.



INFORM Seminar - New Religious Radicalisms  
Saturday, 21 May 2016; 9.30am – 5.00pm  
New Academic Building, London School of Economics  
Registration is now open online at [www.inform.ac](http://www.inform.ac)

Religion has a long history of radicalism and teachings and/or practices considered extreme by some, or even most. The point of radicalism is that it is a significant departure from norms or traditions. From the extreme acts of mortification of the self by some ascetics to the theologically and politically radical position of the Protestants protesting against what they considered errors inherent in the then dominant Roman Catholic Church, the history of religion is a history of extremes and opposition. It has always provided commentary on the worldly (as well as the other-worldly).

A recent example is the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon by an armed group protesting against the federal management of land, including grazing rights - a political issue. However, the main initiator of the occupation, a Mormon, stated he was compelled to lead this initiative after praying for, and receiving, divine inspiration. Several key figures in this stand-off have cited Mormon scripture as justification for opposing and challenging the federal government. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has strongly condemned the action.)

Usage and understanding of the terms radical and extreme have changed over time, often to reflect the norms and politics of the era. This seminar will explore new religious radicalisms, and new forms of opposition, with the aim of developing new understandings of such world views.

# TEACHING MATTERS: INVITATION TO THE BASR TEACHING AND LEARNING WIKI

Dominic  
Corrywright,  
Oxford Brookes  
University

This is a short invitation to visit and contribute to the new wiki developed for the Teaching and Learning section of the BASR website;

<http://basr.ac.uk/wiki/teaching-and-learning/>

What's a wiki? Neither a wookiee nor a bear (see *Four Lions*, Chris Morris, 2010 – a prescient and a splendid resource for teaching courses on terrorism, fanaticism and representations of Islam and the West). That's to say, it is not a usual web site, especially as are commonly designed for professional associations, where the model is for passive receivers. Wikis are collaborative, and promote active engagement. But they are not a sandbox for all players on the web –there is some editorial oversight, in their initial schemata, objectives and continuing editorial selection and deletion.

'A wiki (wiki/ wik-ee) is a website which allows collaborative modification of its content and structure directly from the web browser'. A Wiki, according to Ward Cunningham, inventor of the first wiki software:

'...promotes meaningful topic associations between different pages by making page link creation almost intuitively easy and showing whether an intended target page exists or not. A wiki is not a carefully crafted site for casual visitors. Instead, it seeks to involve the visitor in an ongoing process of

creation and collaboration that constantly changes the Web site landscape.'

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

The wiki has initially been designed with four distinct areas:

***Curricula and Benchmarks – UG and***

***PG taught***

***Pedagogy – Research and Practice***

***Learning outside the Classroom,***

***Fieldwork and Study Trips***

***Resources and Useful Links***

This invitation is for colleagues to add material, links or ideas for both innovative and legacy approaches and resources for teaching and learning in the study of religions. Indeed it is informative to see in such resources as this Wiki, how the new becomes legacy, becomes new again. An example of this process occurred in the selection of useful legacy resources for the Wiki from the now defunct, though erstwhile innovative, publication *Discourse*. This journal was established by Higher Education Academy subject centre, Philosophy and Religious Studies Learning and Teaching Support Network in 2001 under the networks' name and became *Discourse* from 2003 until its closure (due to the end of government funding) in 2011. In the first edition a report on a workshop for teaching South Asian religions identifies a preliminary question 'How serious a problem is the 'world religions' paradigm?' (Jackie Suthren Hirst,

Mary Searle-Chatterjee, Eleanor Nesbitt 'Report on a Workshop on Teaching South Asian Religious Traditions, Centre for Applied South Asian Studies' (PRS-LTSN Journal Vol 1, No. 1, Summer 2001, p. 77). The paradigm of world religions resonates loudly in current discussions about the terminology and curricula of religious studies. Thus the hermeneutics of religious studies has questioned concepts, terms and methods reflexively and repeatedly throughout its brief academic history.

I have filing cabinets and box files of teaching resources, seminar ingenuities, assessment tools, and curricula that are no longer current, or of much use (though some parts are multivalent and segue neatly into new modules). Equally, I have a whole undergraduate course for distance learners on Moodle which is soon to be archived as the course has closed. 'All that is solid melts into air' and we are left grasping fading legacies while reaching for new forms to coalesce. Just as the intellectual capital of research is stored and accessed in hard and electronic reusable objects (vide: Alison Le Cornu and Angie Pears 'Reusable Electronic Learning Objects for Theology and Religious Studies' Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring 2007, pp. 143 – 158) so the resources of pedagogy in specific subject areas need locations for re-use and reconsideration. The Wiki can be a home for such resources, as they

(Continues on page 32)

# CONFERENCES

## SPECIAL REPORT: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIOLOGICAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2016, ASTON UNIVERSITY, BIRMINGHAM, 5 – 8 APRIL / BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF ISLAMIC STUDIES (BRAIS) ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2016, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, LONDON, 11 – 12 APRIL**

The title borrows from Charles Dickens's classic work – a story of revolution, conflict, sacrifice, and the seeming necessity of violence for liberation from established tradition. These themes capture the tone and sentiment of both conferences, and were marked out by rousing calls to action, anti-establishment rhetoric, and “punk sociology”. In this whistle-stop tour of two conferences I hope to convey the sheer energy of the

discussion, with some details in between.

The BSA event began with a Postgraduate Forum event, bringing together the new blood and established academics to reflect on what it means to be a sociologist. The Sociological Rebellions panel summed up the response – it is time to make change. Dr. Hannah Jones and Dr. Emma Jackson's discussion of “punk sociology” outlined a way of doing sociology that could actually respond to what was happening on the street. The idea of an ad-hoc group of academics, students, and local volunteers getting out there to find out what communities thought of “Go Home vans” captured my imagination, whilst the implicit

criticism of the academy's preoccupation with funding, theory, and methodology was palpable. Prof. John Holmwood made these criticisms explicit, scathingly attacking the privatisation of knowledge in universities through the REF and TEF. His point is clear – if the university is becoming increasingly accountable to businesses, then its pursuit of democratic knowledge ends. The Games we Play roundtable session brought this into sharp relief. The session was meant for finishing PhD students and early career researchers to discuss getting jobs, and the best advice that was given was to “play the game” and focus on “demonstrable impact” in applications. Prof. Laurie Taylor, of BBC Radio 4 fame, brought an explosive end to the day, calling for “fun” sociology to bring it back into the limelight: “there is a reason that sociologists don't get asked to go on TV, because they can't give a bloody straight answer”! Sociology clearly needs its Bergerac. I know for most who attended this was the highlight of the week, and a big thanks goes out to the conference organisers for creating such an exciting space.

Over the next three days were a staggering array of presentations that literally took over Aston University's campus. The Conference Programme is testament to the size of the event and the diversity of panels, as it is now the biggest book I own. On the



Clare Alexander and Nyooop Nayak's keynote

first day this was the Sociology of Education plenary. The room was packed out with at least 50 people crammed into a seminar room to hear the current state-of-play of sociology in the university. Following on from Prof. Holmwood's comments, the panel was a revolution, covering discussions around the REF and TEF, privatisation, and #whymycurriculumwhite? At the close it was clear that it was up to lecturers to make these changes – can we look different from the bearded, white, male faces Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel?

Thursday's keynote – Clare Alexander and Anoop Nayak's talk of Race in and out of the Academy – was again agenda-setting. The reality of endemic institutional inequality faced by black prospective university students and graduates was demonstrated through stark, simple statistics, followed by a moving ethnographic account of racism on the street, spit included. The point was to bring race back in its proper form – not as reduced to purely the micro or cultural, but as interactions in the micro that represent the macro. The talk's juxtaposition of stats and street really brought this home.

Talking about race inevitably brought talk about Muslims, as seen through a lens of race, state, and policy. Bailey's ethnography with British Jihadis before, during, and after their incarceration painted a nuanced picture of radicalisation as "everyday micro-processes" that should replace the blunt, static definition that prompts such blunt responses. Narkowicz & Kapoor's findings from the 'Deport, Deprive, Extradite' project explored the loss of citizenship as a loss of self. Saini's discussion of middle-



class "ethnoreligious" South Asian identity looks to confirm previous thought that religion is a singularly important identity marker for Muslim communities in Britain, but Scandone's study of British Muslim students' points to "middle-classness" being unobtainable for many. What was interesting was that, given the number of panels focussing on Muslims, I did not hear the terms "Islam", "religion", or "faith" mentioned once, even Alexander & Nayak's keynote.

In contrast, BRAIS brought a distinctly "Islamic" edge to the study of Muslims. After a welcoming open talk, we were treated to displays of Islamic art and talks about scripture, philosophy, and history. Unearthing the hidden history of Islamic thought was a running theme throughout the first day, culminating in a plenary from the IMPACT project. Judith Pfeffer, as leader of this project, really demonstrated how little Western academia understands about the foundation of Islam, and how much the philosophical traditions owe to Islamic thought. For example, Goudie's, Amin's, and Wilkinson's insights into al-Ghazali was reminiscent of the philosophical

scepticism of the later Descartes and Hume, but writing in the 11th Century.

If the first theme was tradition, the second theme was revolution. The number of feminist scholars is testament to this, opening up new spaces through re-readings and "double hermeneutics"; Hadromi-Allouche's comparative reading with the Psalms standing out. Slater's thesis of changing notions of authority and Shari'ah looked to grassroots analysis, where innovative trends were being packaged as traditional jurisprudence. Jenny Berglund's analysis of children moving between Islamic and secular education questioned the perceived dichotomy between the two, where these students were fully part of "both worlds". The book launch of *Islamic Education in Britain*, by Scott-Bauman and Cheruvallil-Contractor, took this to a much wider scale and demonstrated that there is much Islamic education has to offer to a secularly-dominated Western academic paradigm. As a new researcher myself their construction of an ethical framework for research with Muslim communities is significant, emphasising collaboration and



equality in the research process.

The final panel of the day, British Islam: New Movements and Identities, was a tour de force of ethnographic research. Anabel Inge's accounts from young Salafi women was a poignant counternarrative to the dehumanised burkha rhetoric, expressing the very real tensions, challenges, and shortcomings of meeting strict doctrinal expectations. Laura Jones's work with Muslim chaplains documented the "professionalization" of Islam in their role, mixing theology with psychological practice. The panel was rounded-off by Riyaz Timol, who managed to make the study of British Tablighi Jama'at incredibly funny and intensely powerful. New generations of Muslims are marching forward, with the lived experiences of their contexts, to forge new theological spaces. To use Timol's words, "it's now the old guard and the Avant guard".

Ziauddin Sardar's closing plenary session was fitting given these themes of revolution and transformation. Discussing 'What it

Means to be a Critical Muslim', for Sardar nothing is to be taken for granted. Traditional authority should be questioned; traditional texts should be questioned; traditional understandings should be questioned, by Muslims living today on their own terms. For some in the room this was fraught with danger, with one audience member calling this the death of the Ummah. Yet, given the previous panel, it left the question as to whether these processes are happening already at the grassroots even in the most traditional of Islamic movements like the Tablighi Jama'at.

Juxtaposing both conferences together left me feeling conflicted. Both featured sociological accounts of Muslims living in Britain, but seen through distinct lenses: crudely separated here as race and ethnicity (BSA) and Islam (BRAIS). I cannot help but feel that something was lost in the purely "sociological" articulation of Muslims at the BSA conference. For the former "faith" was barely visible, and so the epistemological weight of such critical engagement by Muslims was

therefore lost. Yet "faith", and its implications, was something that was keenly felt by Sardar's keynote audience in terms of their identity. As Grace Davie summarises, these two poles represent the modern religious paradox – we are becoming more secular, but talking more about religion.

I left London on the 12th of April suitably pumped and ready for action, with Rage Against the Machine blaring in my headphones. As a new researcher it feels like an incredibly energetic time to be coming into the field of Religious Studies, or Sociology of Religion, or whatever "categorisation" best fits. Established establishments are being pulled down to make way for new ways of thinking to the tune of "punk" researchers getting their hands dirty. The "old guard" are being succeeded by the "Avant guard", with nothing taken for granted from the traditional ways. Even the very (white) face of sociology is set to change, with course leaders searching farther for influential thought.

Matthew Vince,  
Cardiff University

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## **SPALDING SYMPOSIUM ON INDIAN RELIGIONS, CARDIFF, 15TH-17TH APRIL 2016**

The 41st Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions was held at St Michael's College, Llandaff, and hosted by Drs Simon Brodbeck and James Hegarty of Cardiff University. The theme was "narrative", and the papers ranged from the portrayal of animals in biographies of the Buddha to the competing narratives of M. A. Jinnah's nationalist vision.

The keynote speakers this year were Professor Phyllis Granoff (Yale

University) and Professor Rupert Gethin (University of Bristol). Professor Granoff opened the Symposium with a paper exploring narratives of conversion in early Buddhist and Jain scriptures. The paper spoke to some of the key themes that ran through the whole weekend, including the role of stories in religious teachings, the relationship between narrative and doctrine, and the ways in which narrative gaps or slippages invite further investigation. On the second day of the Symposium, Professor Gethin presented his exploration of how the narrative frames of early

Buddhist suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya inform our reading of the – often formulaic – doctrinal renditions therein, again speaking directly to the question of how narrative and doctrine inter-relate.

In addition to the two keynote speakers, there were ten excellent papers by scholars from as far afield as Vancouver and Delhi, and three postgraduate speakers also offered work-in-progress papers, giving us a window into emerging research in the field. A special mention must be made of the very thought-provoking after-dinner paper

delivered by Professor James Laine (Macalaster College) about the controversial response to his 2003 book on the 17th century Maratha king Shivaji, which included a temporary ban in Maharashtra and an attack on the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune. We also particularly enjoyed hearing from two visitors from Miranda House at the University of Delhi, Dr Saswati Sengupta and Ms Sharmila Purkayastha, who gave a rich and challenging portrait of colonial-era Bengal and the use of narratives of the goddess Lakṣmī to lay the blame for horrendous famines on local women.

All the papers were of high quality, and there was also an impressive level of coherence to the Symposium overall. This led to extensive discussions of common themes, including how we speak of genre, and the varied uses of narrative in teachings, conversion, entertainment, exemplification of doctrine or philosophical argument, expressing or establishing identities, drawing audiences into different worlds, and providing competing accounts of significant times, events or people.

The Symposium also benefited from the wonderful surroundings and food of St Michael's College, and the warm and efficient hosting of Drs Brodbeck and Hegarty. Generous coffee breaks and evenings at the local pub ensured that the conversation spilled out from the papers and panels. We are grateful to the Spalding Trust for their continued support of this Symposium, which enabled us to invite our keynote speakers and offer our postgraduate contributors a free place.

The next Spalding Symposium on

Indian Religions will be held at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, on 7th-9th April 2017, with the theme "Appearance and Reality". For more information please visit – and sign up to updates from – our website, [spaldingsymposium.org](http://spaldingsymposium.org).

Dr Naomi Appleton  
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**RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN SCOTLAND: MODERN PERSPECTIVES, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, 19TH APRIL 2016**

This conference was the third in a loose series of day conferences exploring questions of religious diversity in modern Scotland, with Dr Steven Sutcliffe (Edinburgh) serving as the common denominator organiser of the series. The first was held at the University of Stirling in 2002 with the theme of 'Interdisciplinary Perspectives', bringing together perspectives from sociologists, historians and ethnologists, and the second, co-organised in 2004 with Dr Suzanne Owen (Leeds Trinity and Chester), was held at the University of Edinburgh under the theme of 'Indigenous religion/s' to acknowledge the research interests of Professor James Cox in Religious Studies. The theme of this third conference was 'Religious Diversity and Cultural Change' and was designed further to explore the 'pluralization of life worlds' (Peter Berger) in Scotland as part of a longer-term process of qualifying a religious historiography of Scotland which remains couched in a Protestant/Catholic narrative. This third conference was co-organised by Dr Leah Robinson in Practical

Theology and Steven Sutcliffe in Religious Studies in the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, and received generous financial support from the Scottish Religious Cultures Network, The Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Centre for Theology and Public Issues, also in the School of Divinity.

"The modern western world has been remoralised" were the first words of the keynote address at this one day conference in Edinburgh. Professor Callum Brown (Glasgow) unveiled his data, 85 new interviews with Humanists, and his narrative of the development of a godless morality. Brown contrasted the hegemony of culture with the agency of individuals; the scholarly arc of philosophers, whose writings go unread, as compared with the activist arc of heroic deviance; Brown singled out gay rights and assisted suicide as symbolic markers of changing public opinion. Brown reported that the new morality precedes the loss of religion and affirmed that the development of humanist perspectives predate the articulation of 'Humanism'. Like a snake sloughing its skin the transformation, as he presented it, seems seamless and passes without surprise.

Over the course of the day what does surprise is the way the hegemony of secularisation is not rolled out. The Religion question in the 2011 Scottish census shows 'no religion' (not non-religion) is the choice for 37% of the population, for the first time exceeding the 'popularity' of the previously dominant Church of Scotland. However, the conference's combination of longitudinal and cross-sectional papers coloured a bigger, richer, picture accentuating cultural and religious diversity.

Strikingly, Dr Khadijah Elshayyal (Edinburgh) demonstrated how ‘the religious question’ on the census is a boon, not just to scholars but to the religious communities it numbers, as she deconstructed the data on Muslims in Scotland. Dr Elshayyal wryly observed that research into Muslims in Britain was a misnomer for Muslims in England, since 95.5% live there, before spinning everyone’s head with a demonstration of the rich picture the census data can now reveal about Muslims in Scotland.

While Dr Hannah Holtschneider (Edinburgh) eloquently traced the first Jewish settlement in Scotland from 1816 to relative assimilation ‘on the way to the suburbs’, PhD student Chris Cotter (Lancaster) provided a contemporary hyperlocal account from the Southside of Edinburgh of nuances in popular discourse on religion and non-religion, and Dr George Chryssides (York St John) contributed a Scottish view of Jehovah’s Witnesses as ‘cultural outsiders’ by dint of core teachings, but who nevertheless show some signs of acculturation, not least by partiality to a spot of haggis. The visitors to Iona studied by PhD student Kritika Bhattacharjee (Edinburgh) and the account by Dr. Marion Bowman (Open University) of the reappropriation of pre-Reformation Christian pilgrimage routes by modern ‘post-protestant’ peoples, bear witness to continuing experiences of the ‘Special’ and of an ancient relationship with the land.

But it is the cultural experience of the Great War, appearing in two presentations, which implicitly challenged Brown’s narrative. The Rev. Dr. Leah Robinson (Edinburgh) detailed her research into



Professor Callum Brown's Plenary opened the conference.

contemporary documents and letters revealing Christianity degenerating into a language of blind luck in the trenches; this contrasting with the theological contortions of Academics and Ministers back home justifying the slaughter. And, in this alienation, Robinson found theology students who suspended their studies to go to the Front but returned home no longer willing to be ministers. Dr Steven Sutcliffe provided a striking contrast in his account of Dugald Semple as vegetarian campaigner inspired by Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi, pursuing a vision of the ‘Simple Life’. Both studies find a focus in Semple’s experience as a conscientious objector at the hands of a military tribunal which exempted him from military service. Both papers show that questioning the morality of the Western world significantly predates the Brown’s humanist Baby Boomers.

Edinburgh PhD student Liam Sutherland’s closing paper analysed the make-up of the Scottish Interfaith Council, established in

1999, in which Scottish religious leaders mingle (un)equally discussing common ground. Their positions, as presented by Sutherland, contrasted starkly with this conference, whose papers made little effort to seek common ground. Instead, as snapshots of new scholarship on religious plurality and cultural change, they achieved their larger aim of bringing fresh perspectives to the dynamic mosaic of changing beliefs and experiences of diverse common, Scottish, people.

Richard Saville-Smith  
University of Edinburgh

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**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
RELIGION, ATLANTA, GEORGIA, 20-  
-26 NOVEMBER 2015**

The annual conference of American Academy of Religion (AAR) was held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, from 20 to 26 November 2015. This year’s AAR was combined with the Society for Biblical Literature (SBL) conference, which brings out, very vividly, the close relationship between

theology and religious studies at AAR. The programme book consisted of over 800 pages, reflecting the scale of the conference.

The panels and papers offered great diversity, encompassing religion of numerous cultural and religious traditions (for instance, Adventist Society of Religious Studies, European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism, African Diaspora Religions Group, Confucian traditions group, Daoist Studies Group - Medicine and Religion in East Asia - and so on); gender (for instance, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer Persons in the Profession); human rights issues; and various ethnic minorities in America (including Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society, Asian American Christian Ethics, Society for Hindu-Christian Studies and Dharma Academy of North America). There was also an emphasis on the comparative study of religion, a theme that was not as prominent at this year's BASR, as our keynote speaker Prof. Peter Van der Veer pointed out. At AAR Atlanta, comparative study groups and panels included "Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy", "Religions in Chinese and Indian Cultures: A Comparative Perspective Group", "Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies" and "Society for Hindu-Christian Studies". As an encapsulation of such diversity, this year's AAR also featured a Mandala sand painting ceremony (*See cover - Ed.*).

British scholars were highly active at the conference, and added to the diversity and innovation. Former Edinburgh students Corey Williams (currently Leiden University) co-chaired the business meeting of

World Christianity group; Crystal Lubinsky (currently University of Massachusetts) presented at the Eastern Orthodox Studies Group and Religion and Sexuality Group; Ting Guo (currently Purdue University) discussed her new research at the Recent Research on Chinese Religions roundtable.

Coming from across the pond, Prof. Jeremy R. Carrette from University of Kent and his team discussed the politics of engagement in the meeting of the Religion and Politics Section and International Development and Religion Group. Their panel was themed "The Politics of Engagement: Religious NGOs and the United Nations". Julia Berger from University of Kent introduced the case of Baha'i International Community which first chartered in the United Nations (UN) in 1948 and has remained a key player in shaping UN's policies on social engagement; Clara Braungart and Ann-Kristin Beinlich from Peace Research Institute, Frankfurt, discussed the impact of religious UGOs (RNGO) on UN diplomacy in terms of abortion issues; Jeremy R. Carrette discussed the status of "Asian religions" and their related NGOs at the UN, how the underrepresentation of Asian RNGOs is partly related to finance and in-country focus; Karsten Lehmann from KAICIID Dialogue Centre, Vienna, gave a perceptive talk on the historical transitions of Quakerism from church diplomacy to civil rights activism in relation to UN, showing the ways in which religion constitutes an active and constructive part of international politics.

In the Indigenous Religious Traditions Group panel, Suzanne Owen from University of Chester chaired the panel on "Critical

Analysis of Gender and Transgender in Indigenous Cultures". Presenters covered a wide range of topics including the following: Gabriel Estrada from California State University on "Visual, Erotic, and Theological Sovereignty in Kumu Hina (2014): Mahus and Kanaka Maoli Transgender Film"; Robert M. Baum from Dartmouth College on "From a Male to a Female Prophetic Tradition among the Diola of Senegambia"; Gregory D. Alles from McDaniel College on "The Gendering of Being Possessed in Eastern Gujarat". Discussing gender and transgender issues in Indigenous Studies invites new dialogues on both fields, and through an interdisciplinary approach to methodology as well as content, scholars engaging with this theme are effectively encouraging new ways to think about transgender studies, queer studies, indigenous feminism, film studies and religious studies, and gender, post-colonialism and religion more broadly.

Dr. Owen also presented at the Contemporary Pagan Studies Group and Indigenous Religious Traditions Group, with a theme on the problem of "religion" in the study of indigenous and polytheistic traditions. Erich Fox Tree from Wilfrid Laurier University presented paper "One Hundred One Myths about Indigenous Religion, or A Religion about "Mythical Indigens"; Suzanne Owen talked about the definition of pagan religions through charity law; Elana Jefferson-Tatum from Emory University discussed the concept of fetish and the construction of religion from the perspective of the discursive formation of African religious others. Such critical and innovative studies on the structure, practice and history of indigenous

religious traditions shed light on the long debated World Religions Paradigm (WRP) and the constantly contested notion of religion itself. As Dr. Owen herself noted in her widely read paper entitled “The World Religions Paradigm: Time for a Change”, the growth of traditions such as Paganism challenged our value-laden categories. While the World Religions paradigm was brought in to allow the inclusion of non-Christian religions in education, it has instead remodelled them according to liberal Western Protestant Christian values which emphasise theological categories. Pedagogy is one example of academic creative responses to the issue of WRP, as a recently published edited volume *After “World Religions”: Reconstructing Religious Studies* (Routledge 2016) demonstrates.

Along the lines of rethinking the way we study religion, Donovan Schaefer’s (University of Oxford) new book, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Duke University Press, 2015), also offers an alternative approach. This book itself was inspired by a panel at the AAR in 2011 on affect hosted by the Philosophy of Religion group. *Religious Affects* challenges the notion that religion is inextricably linked to language and belief, proposing instead that it is primarily driven by affects. Two panels at this year’s AAR, namely Affect and the Politics of Religious Conviction of Religion, Affect, and Emotion Group and the Animals and Religion Group also elaborated upon affect theory.

Moreover, as Atlanta is a historically significant site for the civil rights movement and is also the location of National Center for Civil and Human Rights Museum and Martin Luther King Center, AAR

has included tours and panels on these issues, for instance, “Exclusion and Embrace: The Challenge of Racism Today”. In response to the recent incidents in Paris, Beirut and Baghdad, there was also a special panel, “Study of Religion and Responses to Terrorism: Paris, Beirut and Beyond”, in which Stephanie Frank (Columbia College Chicago), Joshua Ralston (University of Edinburgh), Sophia Arjana (Ilf School of Theology), Edward E. Curtis (Indiana University-Purdue University), Jerusha Lamptey (Union Theological Seminary) and Sarah Rollens (Rhodes College) presented insightful observations.

Nonetheless, despite the high diversity of conference topics, the panel on cognitive science of religion remained one of the most popular, with at least a dozen people sitting and standing outside the fully crowded large conference room. It made me wonder whether its popularity was due to the universal nature of the subject, hence relatable to most attendees, while some panels on a particular religious tradition or philosophy had only the speakers themselves present. In this way it asks to what extent the “paradigm” in teaching and researching religions will need to be shifted, in order for the “contexts of religions” to be fully considered and studied.

To sum up, this year’s AAR was a meeting that engaged intensively with social realities and political structures. It concerned not only how religion is lived, practiced and represented in different sociopolitical contexts, but also how religious studies as a discipline is constituted and constantly reconfigured in rapid changes around the world, and how it may

help us understand ourselves as well as those changes around us.

Ting Guo  
Purdue University

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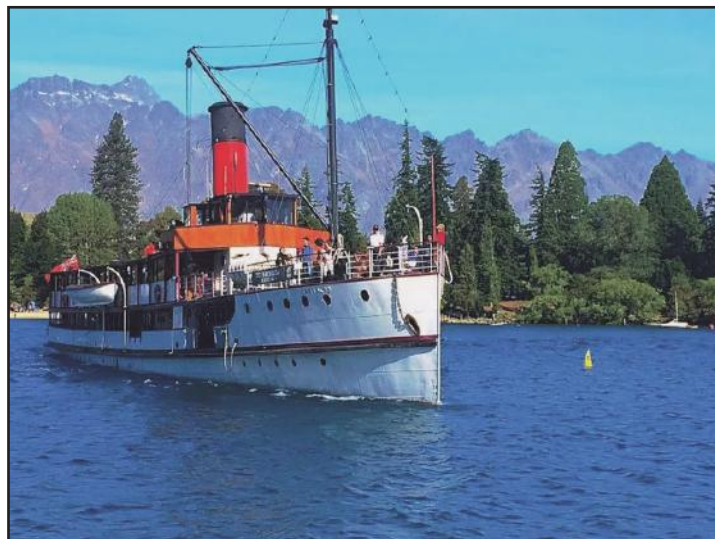
**NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION / AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION, QUEENSTOWN, 8-10 DEC. 2015**

This year the New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions (NZASR) conference and the Australian Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) conference were held concurrently in the beautiful city of Queenstown, on the South Island of New Zealand. Hosted by the Department of Religion and Theology at the University of Otago, the conference was held at the Mercure Queenstown Resort. Located above Lake Wakitipu, delegates were treated to striking mountainous views from virtually every conference room window. The choice to have no specific conference theme attracted a wide range of papers and panels. Sessions and panels were organised by theme according to submissions, not by association affiliation. This organisation strategy was highly successful in encouraging antipodean discussion and networking.

President of the NZASR, Dr Ben Schonthal (University of Otago, New Zealand), opened the conference on the 8th of December with an official welcome, following which delegates dove into the first day of sessions. To begin the conference I attended a thought provoking panel considering conversion, disaffiliation, and ex-

member status, entitled 'Inside and Outside'. Carole Cusack (University of Sydney, Australia) began the panel with "Both Outside and Inside: 'Ex-Members' of New Religions and Spiritualities and the Maintenance of Community and Identity on the Internet", investigating online 'ex-member' forums of the Kerista Commune and the School of Economic Science. Sara Rahmani (University of Otago, New Zealand) used an interview-based methodology to consider the spectrum of conversion in Goenka's vipassana movement in New Zealand, in "Tacit Disaffiliation: Disaffiliation in the Absence of an Explicit Conversion". In the afternoon, I attended the 'Contemporary Religions' panel, in which Dr Angela Coco and Dr Des Tramacchi (Southern Cross University, Australia) presented "Universal Medicine: An Overview", giving a comprehensive look into the workings of Serge Benhayon's medical movement. Also in this panel, Dr Douglas Osto's (Massey University, New Zealand) paper, "Buddhism and Psychedelic: Spirituality in America" brought together two modes of religious expression – Buddhism and psychedelic spirituality, addressing issues of rationality and altered states of consciousness. To conclude the first day, the AASR Presidential Address was given by Professor Douglas Ezzy (University of Tasmania, Australia), titled "Religious Symbols and Aesthetics: Morality and Ritual Performance in Japanese Religions", paying particular attention to Durkheimian aesthetics of experience.

A particular highlight was the AASR Women's Caucus Networking Breakfast, held rather early on the second day of the conference. This breakfast, held annually at the AASR conference, provides an opportunity to discuss women's work in the academy, and it is of particular help to female early career researchers. Although, for those presenting that day, there was not a lot of breakfast actually consumed. The first panels of day two were 'Religion and the State' and 'Atheist Aesthetics'. The latter of these contained my own paper, "They Painted the Town Red: Religiously Motivated Genocide as Represented on the Artist's Canvas"



The TSS Earnslaw.

which, admittedly, stood at odds with the atheistically focused papers in Zoe Alderton's "The Visual Rhetoric of New Atheism: Creating Enchantment" (The University of Sydney, Australia), Cassandra Hastie's "The Epic, Sensory Manipulated Individual: CrossFit, Art Galleries and Extreme Journeys as Instruments of Self-Transformation" (University of Sydney, Australia), and Christopher Hartney's "Atheist Aesthetics and Affect: Religion and Lars von Trier's Depression Trilogy" (The University of Sydney, Australia) that composed the rest of the panel. Regardless,

the panel brought up interesting questions of art as a primary source when considering trauma as well as the importance of art, film, and the online realm in investigating religious trauma (including Atheistic trauma). Following morning tea, Tulasi Srinivas (Emerson College, USA) offered an ingenious paper on 'creative Hinduism' titled "Worlds of Wonder: Creativity and Ethical Life in India" as the NZASR keynote address. That evening, delegates were treated to transportation via steamboat, the TSS Earnslaw, in order to reach Walter Peak High Country Farm for the conference dinner. The isolated homestead offered an array of local produce for our meal, before a sheep herding and shearing demonstration.

The final day of the conference began with two interesting panels, 'Religion in/and Politics' and 'Muslim Identities in the West', of which I attended the latter. Lisa Worthington (Western Sydney University, Australia) presented "The Lived Experience of Progressive Muslims:

Testing the Limits of Pluralism and Cosmopolitanism" which fed nicely into Dr David Radford's (University of South Australia, Australia) "Aussie Afghans: Negotiating Belonging(s) and Identity(ies) as Hazara Afghan Migrants Embrace Australian Citizens", both papers using interview-based methodologies. On this final day, prior to the Annual General Meetings which would round out the conference, Sally McAra (University of Auckland, New Zealand) presented "Pretty Strange Karma: Personal and Anthropological Entanglements in

Antipodean Buddhism” as the Penny Magee Memorial Lecture and Professor Emeritus Gary D. Bouma (Monash University, Australia) delivered “Two Disconnected Narratives of Disconnection: Anti-West and Anti-Islamic Discourses” as the Charles Strong Trust Lecture.

The 2016 AASR conference is to be held in conjunction with the Australian Sociological Association’s annual meeting. This conference will be held in late November, in Melbourne, Australia. The AASR also encourages attendance at the Biennial International Society for the Sociology of Religion conference (Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions) to be held in 2017 from the 3rd to the 7th of July, in Melbourne, Australia. The 2016 NZASR conference is yet to be announced.

Breann Fallon  
University of Sydney

**CESNUR (CENTER FOR STUDIES ON NEW RELIGIONS): THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES IN SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVE: WHAT IS NEW IN THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF THE MOVEMENT? ANTWERP 21-22 APRIL 2016.**

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are one of the best-known minority religions

worldwide, but possibly one of the least understood. There has been very little serious academic study of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, and it was therefore appropriate that CESNUR (a research organisation based in Torino, Italy) should organise a small conference in Antwerp, hosted by the Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions (FVG), a Belgian independent academic institution.

It was a fairly small gathering, with around two dozen attendees, mainly academics, but also one or two members and ex-members who were prepared to discuss a variety of related topics from a serious scholarly standpoint, in contrast with the countercult critics to which the public are more commonly exposed. A variety of topics were covered. George Chryssides gave an opening keynote address entitled “The Truth Is Out There – And How Jehovah’s Witnesses Find It”, which explored questions about the Watch Tower’s epistemology of religious belief. The ensuing presentations came from a variety of academic backgrounds. Some of these explored topics such as mental health, Bible translation, JW music, and inevitably the issue of blood, while others dealt focused on countries – Belgium, Estonia, Italy, the Ukraine, Lebanon, and

Australia. One particularly noteworthy presentation discussed unofficial publications by Jehovah’s Witnesses, which lacked the Society’s approval, but were nonetheless significant. (The Society’s official publications are largely anonymous, while independent authors divulges their identity.)

On the first night of the two-day conference there was breaking news of the death of Prince, who was a practising Jehovah’s Witness as well as a pop star. Unlike other new religious organisations, Jehovah’s Witnesses make little reference to members who have achieved worldly fame, preferring to direct seekers to the greater benefits of the coming New World, which will be established after Armageddon.

Participants agreed that the conference, probably the first of its kind, should mark the start of serious academic study of Jehovah’s Witnesses. It is planned initially to follow-up the event with an e-list for serious exchange of news and discussion of the Watch Tower Society. Anyone who did not attend the Antwerp conference is welcome to get in touch for further details at [GDChryssides@religion21.com](mailto:GDChryssides@religion21.com).

George D. Chryssides





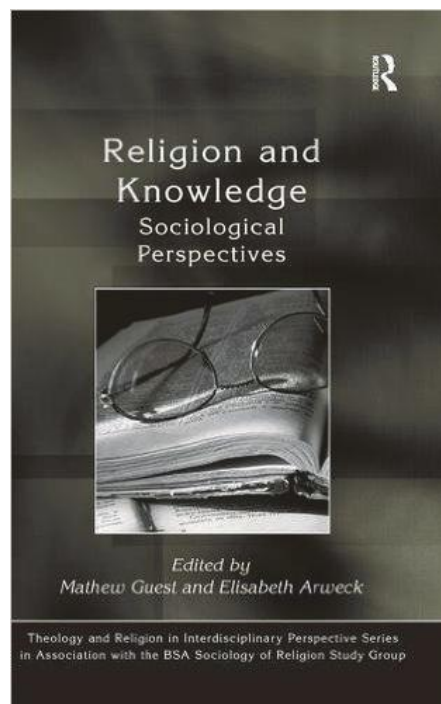
# REVIEWS

**MATHEW GUEST AND ELISABETH ARWECK (EDS.), RELIGION AND KNOWLEDGE: SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES, FARNHAM AND BURLINGTON: ASHGATE, 2012.**

In their latest edited volume – *Religion and Knowledge: Sociological Perspectives* – Mathew Guest and Elisabeth Arweck seek to engage critically with a number of current debates related to the production of religious knowledge, the construction of meaning and the exercise of power and authority in the post-modernist world by brining into conversation social scientists working at the intersection of the sociology of religion and the sociology of knowledge. In their Introduction, the co-editors undertake to delineate the main theoretical concerns of the volume by developing previous work on and highlighting some latest developments in the sociology of knowledge while at the same time posing some challenging questions related to the status of religion in the contemporary world. How do forms of religious knowledge acquire authority? How is religious knowledge constituted, transmitted and experienced in everyday life? How does religion help construct a coherent sense of reality for those who practise it? How are religious identities constructed and negotiated in a purportedly secular world? These are some of the questions that Guest and Arweck address as they seek to develop a new methodological approach to

the study of the mutually constitutive and intersecting dimensions of religion and knowledge.

The volume has 14 ethnographic contributions structured into three parts: (1) Institutions of knowledge; (2) The religious knowledge economy, and (3) Knowledge, religion and academic endeavour. The contributors to Part 1 explore the multiple ways in which diverse institutions – e.g. prisons in Britain and France (Beckford), social science departments at British universities (Fairweather), families of mixed-faith heritage and schools teaching religious education in the



UK (Arweck and Nesbitt), and the family and the wider community among the Amish in North America (Cooksey and Donnermeyer) – legitimise religion, reify (new) forms of knowledge about religion,

transmit religious knowledge and influence the articulation and expression of religious identities, thus transforming individual lives and perceptions of the self as well as power relations within their respective societies.

In Part 2, which is by far the largest section and perhaps the conceptual core of the volume, the reader is introduced to case-studies which explore the multiple interrelations and interdependencies between religion and knowledge within the contemporary knowledge economy. Taira provides an account of the populist and media-based approaches through which a 'new atheist' identity is being constructed as a positive form of identification (especially in the USA) based on the rhetorical distinction between rationality (science) and irrationality (religion) and claims to scientific knowledge about religion. McCallum's chapter explores what forms of knowledge are currently being advanced in popular evangelical writings about Islam in the UK, ranging from more negative conceptualisations of Islam as a threat to British society and culture to more positive appeals for inter-faith dialogue and cooperation. In his chapter Jones analyses some recent changes within Islam in Britain and the emergence of new forms of religious knowledge transmitted by various institutions outside the traditional mosque-education model, which are experienced as more culturally relevant and more engaged with the



wider society by a new generation of British-born Muslims. Collins-Mayo continues this conversation by offering insights into young people's experiences of religion as a matter of personal choice in an increasingly diverse 'spiritual market' and traces the formation of their religious knowledge about Christianity which informs their individual choices to (not) be religious. In Llewellyn's chapter reading of alternative texts outside the Bible is presented as a transformative religious and spiritual practice through which contemporary British women construct alternative forms of knowledge, enrich their spiritual lives and enhance their personal development. Fuller's contribution, in turn, challenges the perception that science and religion construct incompatible forms of knowledge about the world and argues that in Intelligent Design, as a new and legitimate form of knowledge identified with the Creationist Left, the epistemological frameworks of science and Christianity are combined for the realisation of the full potential of humankind as created in God's image. The evolution vs. intelligent design debate in relation to the construction of knowledge about the world also forms the essence of the next chapter by Cragun, Cragun and Creighton in which they seek to answer the question: Can people who, for religious reasons, reject evolution as a valid scientific explanation for the diversity of life nonetheless learn about it in biology classes without accepting it as true?. Part 2 closes with Davies' and Northam-Jones' chapter in which they draw some very useful conclusions on how composite religious identities and epistemologies are constructed as they study the reflexive self-

narratives of the members of the Sea of Faith Network - a 'non-realist' spiritual network, which supports its members in reconciling their continued commitment to orthodox religious practices (e.g. church-going) with their interest in alternative spiritualities while searching for truth, meaning and a more authentic religious experience.

In the last two chapters, which constitute Part 3 of the volume, the reader is introduced to two different approaches to understanding and explaining religious practice and claims to authoritative knowledge. Collins focusses on the material aspect of the construction of religious knowledge in Shaker communities in America which goes beyond the ideational and is expressed in embodied and material ways (e.g. village layout, dance, material culture, dress etc.), whereas Catto engages in a critical self-reflection on how a social scientist's preconceived notions and biases can impact their study of controversial religious practices such as those found in some of the so-called 'new religious movements'.

Overall, Religion and Knowledge: Sociological Perspectives is a well-compiled, engaging and empirically rich volume which is of interest to anyone who wishes to grasp the contemporary relationship between religion and knowledge in its complexity and diversity. Each chapter provides a compelling account of different aspects of socio-religious practice and knowledge construction within the traditions of Christianity, Islam and new spiritualities and introduces the reader to a number of current debates about the place of religion

in the world and the validity of the forms of knowledge it produces. Although a more thorough engagement with the various forms of Islam and inclusion of some Asian religious traditions would have added to the richness of the volume, it nonetheless remains a very valuable contribution to the social scientific study of religion and knowledge and a solid foundation for further research and debate.

Iliyana Angelova  
University of Oxford

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**DAVID G. ROBERTSON, UFOS, CONSPIRACY THEORIES & THE NEW AGE: MILLENNIAL CONSPIRACISM, LONDON: BLOOMSBURY, 2016.**

David Robertson's UFOs, Conspiracy Theories and the New Age is both engaging and highly accessible. As a Master's student in Religious Studies studying this area, this is an invaluable text for me. For starters, it convincingly expands on existing research which has previously linked New Age movements to conspiracism, arguing that the relative gulf between these groups was bridged by UFO communities.

A bridge was necessary because, especially as the Cold War ended, New Age millennialists began to feel as though their predictions for a new Aquarian age had failed to arrive. UFO communities, with their rich narrative history (which they felt was being actively suppressed), provided the answer: the New Age didn't fail to emerge, it was prevented. Occluded agents actively worked to suppress the truth and prevent the New Age from taking place. Like the UFO and conspiracy camps, New Agers began to turn their anxieties away from the enemies of the Cold War and

towards their own government and the ruling elite. UFO communities therefore served as the ideal focusing lens for those anxieties.

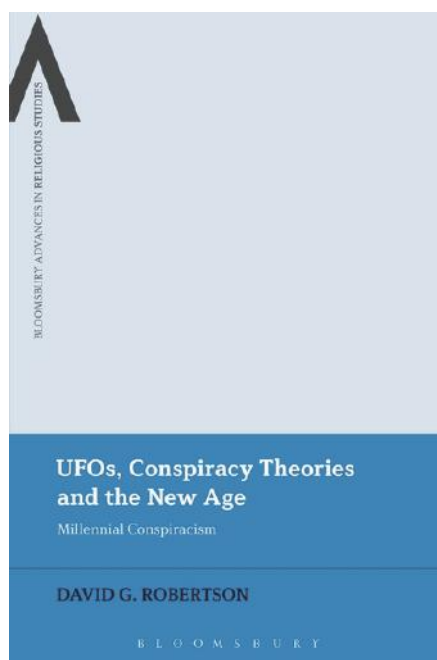
In addition to expanding on the existing literature in a novel new way, this book also holds substantial theoretical value, not only for the study of contemporary fringe movements but also for the field of Religious Studies as a whole. Robertson thoroughly challenges the current value placed on the relevance of belief, instead arguing that alternative epistemologies – ways of knowing, rather than belief – were the primary tools relevant to bringing New Agers into the UFO fold. On that basis, he proposes a shift from the analysis of belief to the analysis of epistemology.

He breaks the epistemologies shared by New Agers and UFO believers into five categories: tradition, science, experience, synthetic and channeling. It's through these epistemologies that a shared language drew New Age millennialists towards UFOs and eventually conspiracy theories. New Agers never went away; they simply found a new home.

This explanation also helps to clarify why New Agers and conspiracy theorists can have so much in common despite, ostensibly at least, highly distinct beliefs and values about the world. Many aspects of their respective ideologies may indeed be distinct from one another, but they share so much common ground via these counter-epistemologies that the apparent gulf evaporates. When viewed from this perspective, the observed relationship between New Agers, UFO communities and conspiracy theorists is not only unsurprising, it's precisely

predicted.

Robertson argues his case through a unique combination of historiography and fieldwork, focusing on three figures in the UFO community: abductee Whitley Streiber; 'reptilian thesis' David Icke; and the reincarnation of Edgar Cayce, David Wilcock. The historiographical sections are consistently thorough and highly accessible – this is where Robertson's arguments are at their most compelling.



For his fieldwork, he attended the conventions of two people, Whitley Streiber and David Icke. These sections are always engaging and well-written, taking on the voice of a storyteller, though I do find that his fieldwork tends to be somewhat sparse. That's because they're entirely pulled from just two events: a three-day Whitley Streiber convention with around 120 attendees and a 10-hour long David Icke convention of nearly 6,000 people. There was also a small social gathering after the Icke event, and Robertson supplemented his fieldwork with regular observation of radio shows, podcasts and online discussion

groups. He also handed out and received 57 responses to a short questionnaire at the Streiber convention and a further 13 at the talk by Icke.

The use of this fieldwork serves as a great illustration of his arguments, though is perhaps a little too limited to be used as a core defense. Combined, the observations take place over a period of only a few days (plus his supplemental fieldwork). Thankfully, his historiographical sections are more than sufficient to accomplish his objectives, but it does leave a slight gap that could be improved with a larger collection of field data. Having said that, he anticipates and defends against this criticism by pointing out how his own interactions with the communities tend to reflect the way actual members of UFO communities interact, through highly disparate methods such as occasional conventions or listening to podcasts.

Robertson concludes with a crucial point about the state of scholarship on counter-culture movements like New Age millennialism, conspiracism and UFOs. Tying back to his introduction where he reflected on his concern over the way people like David Icke are often bullied for their wild claims of reptilian conspiracies, UFOs and so on, he emphasized that the role of the scholar must not be to reproduce these regimes of power – by further delegitimizing members of these groups – but rather to illuminate these power struggles. This appears to be a consistent challenge in the field, which can at times oscillate between casual dismissiveness and overt hostility.

He makes it clear that counter-

epistemic, stigmatized and other marginalized communities deserve the same respectful-yet-critical treatment as any other cultural or religious movement. I hope Robertson's charge doesn't go unheeded, because it's an important lesson in the study of marginalized voices. Certainly, he leads by example.

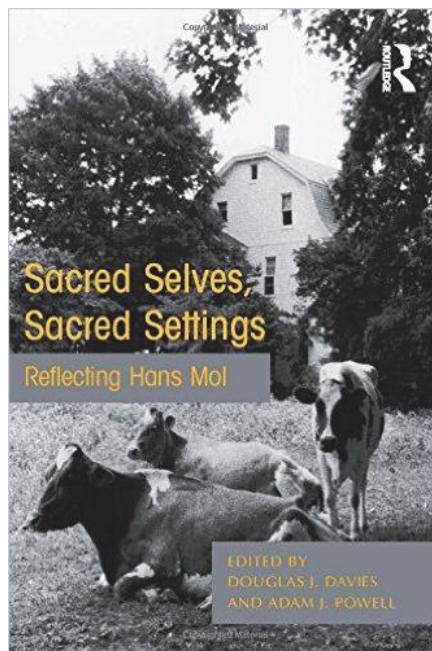
Kalen Christensen,  
University of Regina

**SACRED SELVES, SACRED SETTINGS:  
REFLECTING HANS MOL. DOUGLAS  
J. DAVIES AND ADAM J. POWELL  
(EDS.), FARNHAM: ASHGATE, 2015.**

The editors and contributors of this Festschrift bring together a number of reflections on, and insights into, the works and life of Hans Mol, the 'sociologist-priest' (p.165), a scholar whose extensive list of publications have had significant impact on the social-scientific study of religion for decades (pp.5-6). There are eight chapters in all, as well as an introduction and postscript written by those engaged with Mol's work, including some of those who have known him personally. This culminates into a unique and highly reflective collection of essays which offer a rare framework for interpreting Mol.

In the introduction Douglas J. Davies lays the foundations of the volume, providing its context and scope, but without simply repeating and summarising the arguments which the reader will encounter in due course. Rather, he provides an abridged autobiographical account of Mol's work in light of his own academic career. In particular, Davies provides a summary of Mol's key works, themes and influences, particularly in relation to his work on identity and sacralization.

Part I of the collection begins with a fuller biographical chapter by Adam J. Powell. The fact that large portions of this account are taken from Mol first-hand makes this an insightful glimpse into his life and work. The reader meets Mol at a more mature stage in his life before his childhood is recalled. At this point parental influence is discussed, especially in relation to Mol's later political and religious outlooks. Other important aspects of Mol's life are also mapped, such



as the political context of his early working life. The impact this had on the scholar-to-be is also highlighted. In particular, the relationship between his scholarship and his personal religious inclinations are noted.

In the second chapter Louis Greenspan, who knew Mol personally, explores the contemporary relevance of *Identity and the Sacred*. Greenspan helpfully outlines the intellectual context of Canada at the time when the theory was published (1976). The work is further contextualised with respect to Durkheim's and Hegel's works. The author then engages with the theory of sacralization in more

depth and highlights some inconsistencies he finds with the theory.

In this chapter Ian Weeks and Petra Brown discuss Mol's personal ideas and assumptions, before exploring Narrative Identity. In the first section his attitudes towards philosophy and his preference for sociology are considered, as well as a critique of these ideas, particularly with respect to methodology. In the second part the authors draw upon Peter Brooks and Kierkegaard in order to explain the history of Narrative Identity and its meaning, so as to demonstrate that this lies behind Mol's work; it is argued that this was influenced by his experience of Nazi Germany.

Part II opens with a chapter by Karen Dobbelaere, inspired by her earlier work which had been influenced by Mol. In the first part of this chapter Dobbelaere presents a theoretical framework for the process of secularisation, drawing upon studies conducted in Europe. In the second part she uses the framework's main concepts in order to analyse how key aspects of the judicial system are becoming secularised. In particular, she explores secularisation on the societal level, the organisational level, and at the level of the individual. She then explores how personal attitudes and laws involving the sanctity of human life have changed in recent decades before offering a rationale, reflection, and a conclusion which engages with Mol's previous work; it also encourages the Roman Catholic Church to understand the discrepancy between the teachings of the Church and the personal beliefs its members.

In Chapter Five, Roberto Cipriani

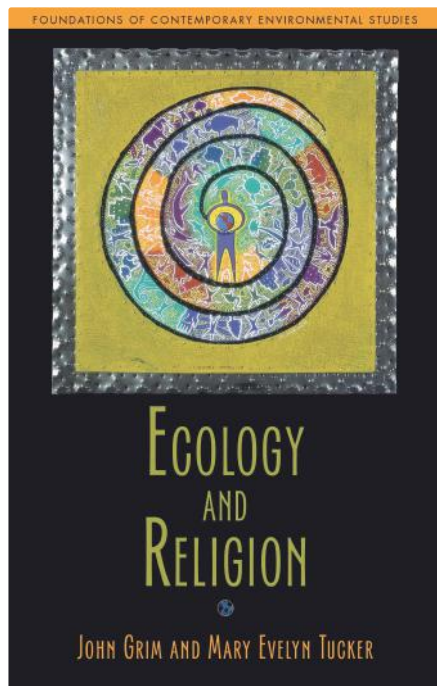
explores the public role of religion, particularly the shift from belief in its eminent and complete death to realising the greater complexity of reality. He outlines thinking in this area from Habermas to Böckenförde before outlining Mol's notion that religion aids morality. He also discusses the tension between the secular and religious belief in society, as well as the latter's presence in private versus public spheres. His conclusion offers a reflection on the mutual reciprocity needed between the sacred and the secular with respect to ethical enquiry.

Douglas Pratt authored the sixth chapter which discusses current challenges of living in a pluralist society. He draws upon Mol's *The Fixed and the Fickle* (1982) to revisit the issue of continuity versus discontinuity with the past amongst Maori and Pakeha communities in New Zealand. He traces the various Christian missionary movements from the nineteenth century before outlining Maori reactions to their presence and the wider impact of settlers to the country. He then closes by examining the relationship between personal, group and social identities for Maori society before reflecting upon the challenges of religious diversity in this context.

In Chapter Seven Desmond Cahill documents the emergence of a secularist, but also multi-faith Australia; he also explores European influenced secularism in Australia's recent history. He then discusses the rise of non-Christian religious communities in recent decades. In particular, he explores the impact of Anglican, Catholic, and protestant nonconformist religions in Australia since the start of the twentieth century. He then turns his attention to 'multi-faith Australia' before

exploring the rise of charismatic and 'nature religion' movements before addressing the rise of secularism. His conclusion reflects upon the tension between religious freedom, and the relationship between religion and the state in Australia.

In the final chapter James Haire explores the concept of context theology, or theologies, as he would put it. He builds on this in order to analyse and describe contextual theologies in Indonesia, before evaluating how such contextual theologies relate to the western tradition of Trinitarian theology. He demonstrates how language and discourses readily available in



Indonesia are adopted by the Christians there in order to understand the Trinity.

Gary D. Bouma's postscript offers a reflection in light of the above chapters, paying specific attention to the relationship between the sociologist and the pastor in Hans Mol, as well as between Sociology and Theology as academic disciplines. He explores their apparent tensions and provides an alternative way of viewing these

occupations and disciplines, as each set being complementary to each other. It is a highly appropriate way of concluding this Festschrift, offering a semi-autobiographical reflection on Mol's life and work.

This volume, which was presented to Hans Mol by Adam J. Powell, offers a distinct reflection of the well known scholar, made invaluable by the insights noted from those who knew him personally. It is a vital read for anyone engaging with the Sociology of Religion more generally, but for those researching in secularisation in particular.

Alex D. J. Fry  
Durham University

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**JOHN GRIM AND MARY EVELYN TUCKER, ECOLOGY AND RELIGION. WASHINGTON, COVELO, LONDON: ISLANDPRESS, 2014.**

The overall focus of this book is the question "What is religious ecology"? Its two American authors are long established scholars of religion with a wide knowledge of Asia. Mary Evelyn Tucker began her research with a PhD on Japanese Neo-Confucianism, and John Grim worked on Indigenous Traditions, both in Asia and in North America. They tell the story of their passionate engagement with the new academic field of religion and ecology in the Introduction to this wide-ranging, very informative study. Both scholars were deeply influenced by their teacher, the well-known American ecological thinker Thomas Berry (1914-2009). Originally a historian of world cultures and religions teaching at Fordham University, he became a historian of the Earth and its evolutionary processes, describing himself as a 'geologist' rather than

a 'theologian'.

It would be hard to find better qualified and more deeply engaged guides than Grim and Tucker to this challenging and fast growing academic field, introduced here in such concise and comprehensive form. Their densely written book can almost serve as a mini-encyclopedia, since its ten chapters present a rich synopsis supported by facts and figures, additional appendices, detailed endnotes, a glossary and a long bibliography. The new academic field has emerged since the 1990s, but its roots reach back to earlier scholars and periods. Grim and Tucker are key players in the field: from 1996-1998 they organised a ten-part conference series on World Religions and Ecology at the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions. Over three years some eight hundred scholars and environmentalists collaborated to integrate religious and ethical perspectives into environmental discussions by exploring views of nature in the scriptures, rituals and ethics of the world religions. This led to the publication of a series of books dealing with the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), Asian religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Shinto) and Indigenous Religions. The Harvard Project identified seven values that the world religions share in relation to the natural world: reverence, respect, reciprocity, restraint, redistribution, responsibility and restoration.

In October 1998 this work was followed by two further conferences at the United Nations and the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and it was at the UN that the "Forum on

Religion and Ecology" was announced to continue the work of research, education and outreach. This forum has now grown to a network of some twelve thousand people and organisations around the world and is based at Yale University (for information on the ecological contributions of the different world faiths, environmental statements from religious communities, annotated bibliographies and religious grassroots environmental movements see [http://fore.research.yale.edu/information/Yale\\_MA\\_Program.html](http://fore.research.yale.edu/information/Yale_MA_Program.html)).

Both authors are now based at Yale. Their book provides a handy overview to the major issues and current discussions in the field. Although not formally organised into two parts, this publication work falls clearly into two different sections: the first five chapters deal with major issues arising in the field of ecology and religion; they contain much analysis, probing questions, new knowledge and transformative insights gained so far. They explore the problems and promise of ecology, views of nature in the West at different periods of history, issues concerning ecology, conservation and ethics, and details about different ecologies and cosmologies where Christianity, Confucianism, Indigenous Traditions and Hinduism are briefly considered.

In the following half of the book, which may be considered a second section, each of these four traditions are discussed in a separate chapter with many specific examples from each of them. They provide much valuable material but I cannot help missing the treatment of Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism – to mention only the major

omissions. This makes the content of this valuable book somewhat uneven. The last chapter deals with "Building on Interreligious Dialogue: Toward a Global Ethic" and is rounded off by an Epilogue on ecological cultures.

I highly recommend this book, especially for teaching courses on "Ecology and Religion" but also for any scholar looking for initial grounding to undertake more research in this field. Questions for discussion are provided for each chapter and helpful further resources are found in the seven appendices where special mention must be made of The Earth Charter 2000, Online Resources for Religious Ecology, and the Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I.

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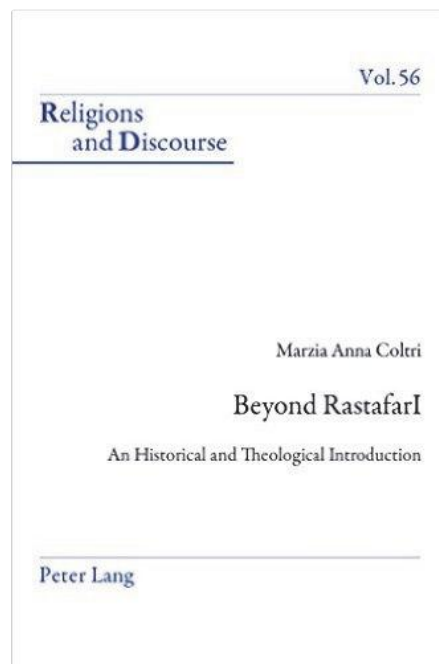
**MARZIA ANNA COLTRI, BEYOND RASTAFARI: AN HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION, OXFORD, BERN, BERLIN, BRUXELLES, FRANKFURT AM MAIN, NEW YORK, AND WIEN, PETER LANG, 2015.**

This interesting monograph is highly original, in that it is the first book about Rastafari within the broad discipline of Religious Studies by an Italian feminist scholar. Coltri's principal interests are the relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and Rastafari, and the place of women in this subaltern faith from Jamaica, as it has been transplanted to, and is practiced in the United Kingdom. Chapter 1, "Interpreting Rastafari Identity," is a brief sketch

of the history of the religion, explaining the author's rejecting of the academic term "Rastafarianism" in favour of the self-identified "Rastafarl," and a consideration of Rastafarl as lying between the EOTC and scholarly classification as a new religious movement. Chapter 2, "The East: Locating Ethiopia," discusses the admixture of Jewish, animist, polytheist, and Christian elements that were united in the fourth century CE when Christianity was pronounced the state religion by King Ezana. This broadly historical chapter considers the emergence of creeds and acceptable cultic practices in "Western" (Roman Catholic) and "Eastern" (Orthodox) Christianity, noting the multiplicity of views that Early Christianity encompassed, with particular attention given to Christological heresies. The EOTC is situated in the context of Eastern Orthodoxy, though its distinct character is acknowledged. The unfamiliar term *Tewahedo* becomes clearer to readers, in that it is linguistically cognate with *Tawhid*, unity, a term well-known from the Islamic tradition. The latter part of this chapter describes EOTC rituals, creeds, and institutional structures in considerable detail.

Chapter 3, "The Link Between Rastas and the Ethiopian Christians: The Monophysite Doctrine in Rastafarl," is fascinating, as studies of Rastafarianism tend to be sociologically-oriented, and not to analyse matters of doctrine. Coltri delves into the Rasta view of Haile Selassie I, crowned Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930, an event that triggered the formation of the first Rasta groups in Jamaica, centred on the early teachers Henry Archibald Dunkley, Leonard Percival Howell, and Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert. The chapter also traverses symbolism in

the EOTC and Rastafarl, the various Rasta "houses" (Nyabingi, Twelve Tribes, Bobo Shanti, and so on), and sundry movements that attempt to connect Rastas with the EOTC (the Rastafarian Ethiopian World Federation, Rastafarian World Federation, and the Ethiopian World Federation). A substantial part of this chapter covers Rasta symbolism, ritual life, use of colour meanings, and calendar of festivals. The tables are especially useful in this part of the book, listing linkages between the particular Rasta houses and Biblical teachings, including the connections of the Biblical Twelve Tribes with their Rasta equivalents, and the Nyabingi



ritual calendar. Chapter 4, "Rasta Talk: A Linguistic and Metaphysical Resistance," explains the distinctive argot used among Rastafarl to describe their spiritual condition in what they call Babylon, the world dominated by Whites. Coltri gives an extensive list of examples from the Rasta lexicon, and discusses it as a "creative and revolutionary minority language" (p. 114), which has been adopted in a range of contexts due to its prominence in the lyrics of reggae music.

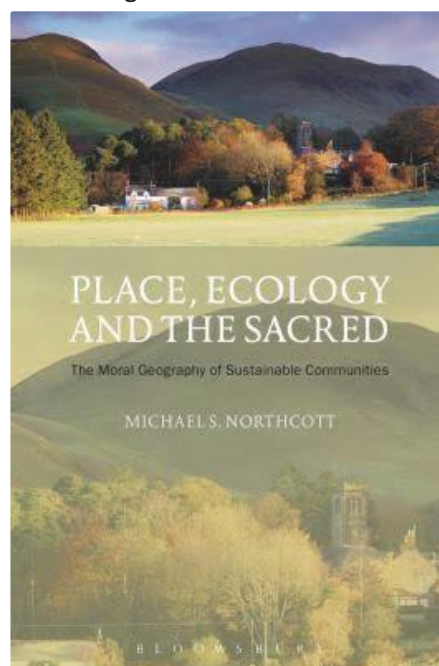
Chapter 5, "Afrocentricity in Rastafarl: The Origin of the Rastafarl Movement," investigates the "return to Africa" orientation of Rasta livity, assessing the early contribution of Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940), the Jamaican civil rights activist and founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey's work is connected to that of his younger contemporary, Martinique-born Frantz Fanon (1925-1941), an acclaimed philosopher and contributor to debates concerning de-colonialism in the African world after World War II. Coltri discusses the need for post- and anti-colonial perspectives, and the *Négritude* movement formed by Black activists and writers in the 1930s, which promoted pride in Black culture, self-determination, self-reliance, and emphasized the African heritage of Blacks. Chapter 6, "Relocating Xaymaca: Cultural Stereotypes in Confrontation," analyses colonial domination in Jamaica, and the resistance movements that developed among Blacks. Gender and sex are topics of interest, with the "first African revolutionary priestess-leader and forerunner of the Jamaican Maroon community, Nanny" (p. 157) being a focus.

Chapter 7, "A Woman in Rastafarl: Liberation and Ethnic-Religious Creativity," discusses religiously significant women in the Ethiopian genealogy drawn by Rasta, including the Queen of Sheba, Lilith, and the goddess Isis. Coltri covers the sexism that is often attributed to Rasta communities, and deconstructs this with emphasis on the writings of Rasta women, in particular Obiagele Lake. The legacy of the Queen of Sheba, and questions regarding her "Blackness," conclude the chapter.

Chapter 8, “The Bible and the Ethiopian Literary Sources,” discusses Rasta use of the Ethiopian national chronicle *Kebrä Nagast* (‘Glory of the Kings’), which traces the royal line to Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, whose son Menelik I is reported to have been custodian of the Ark of the Covenant, and asserts Ethiopia as a great ancient nation, on a par with Egypt, Israel, and Rome. Other texts, including the Ethiopian *Fetha Nagast* and *Lefafa Sedek*, and the “Rasta Bible,” the *Holy Piby*, are also covered. The brief “Conclusion” pulls the author’s strands of argument together. *Beyond Rastafari: An Historical and Theological Introduction* is recommended to all scholars with an interest in Rastafarianism, subaltern religions that emerge from colonial oppression, and new religions more broadly. The Rasta religion is a fascinating phenomenon, ninety years old in 2020, and going strong. More research and new and different perspectives are to be welcomed.

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concerns itself with the impact of corporate personhood on governance. “Place, Religion and Resistance to corporate power” narrates the Free Church’s impact on ecological campaigns in the Hebrides. “Food Sovereignty from Joshua to La Via Campesina” is an elegy to the small-scale agricultural communities of early Christianity. “The Moral Geography of Sustainable Communities” contrasts modern austerity politics and land inequality with grass-roots ecological initiatives such as Guerilla Gardening.



MICHAEL NORTHCOTT, *PLACE, ECOLOGY AND THE SACRED*. LONDON: BLOOMSBURY, 2015.

*Place, Ecology and the Sacred* is a collection of essays drawing on the author’s own experiences and devotions, together with a thorough knowledge of Christian texts—in so far as this non-specialist can tell. “Losing and finding sacred place” gives us a history of the theology of place. “Lament for a Silent Summer” critiques the romanticisation of wilderness in conservation strategies. “Artificial Persons and Political Economy of Place”

“Re-placing Ethics in the City and the Countryside” both praises medieval population and land organisation, and concludes the book with an impassioned case for the Christian Church in Britain as the sole indigenous religious form with the moral authority to combat increasing social and ecological decline. The essays combine in order within the book to construct an sustained argument for small-scale, bio-regional ecology underpinned by a specific form of Christian theology. This is a book with a definite religious mission. Reference to, and common cause is made with, many well-known

writers of ecological activism, from Rachel Carson (1963) to Rob Hopkins (2008); as well as theorists familiar to any scholar of material religion and ecology, such as Tim Ingold (2007) and Val Plumwood (1961). These are brought into service to construct what the book’s subtitle calls a “Moral Geography of Sustainable Communities”; highlighting and connecting such topics as species loss, land inequality, neoliberalism, wilderness politics and food sovereignty. Whilst such issues are unarguably vital to the ongoing health of our biosphere, among such critical treatment of land inequality the author could have spent more time reflecting on his own privileged status as an incomer to the Scottish Highlands. Much of the language is also unnecessarily partisan in descriptions of hills “infested with rabbits, and... ugly shooting tracks” (Northcott 2015: 8, emphasis added). Scholars of Christianity will be better able to judge whether the author is correct in stating that the medieval Church was a more benevolent landlord than modern corporate powers. I do believe the essay on Hebridean resistance to corporate power, mobilised by the Free Church, would benefit from comparing the highlighted campaign against an ecologically damaging super-quarry with a very similar campaign against a local wind farm.

As a doctoral researcher immersed in the study of religion, perhaps I can place the blame for my initial confusion over Michael Northcott’s book on early career naivety. I wasn’t, for some reason, expecting a book with the title of “Place, Ecology and the Sacred” to be theological in scope. Given the long history of productive tension between these two disciplines, I will

attempt to avoid the classic mistake of denigrating the text for not being the book I expected it to be. I was, however, uncomfortable with the book's lack of nuance or counter-examples to its thesis. The author has nothing positive to tell us of the 'wilderness ethics' of the Romantics; whilst lamenting the depopulation of rural Scotland, no mention is made of the stifling effects of localised, conservative religious dominance upon marginalised populations. Instead, we are told that if we repopulated the Highlands, and encouraged local governance along the lines of parish and 'indigenous' sect, an earthly paradise could be ours.

Thus, while this may be an encouraging, and indeed useful book for Christian theologians arguing for a greater Church commitment to local ecological politics, British non-Christians will be dismayed by the author's conclusion that Christianity holds a logical, national monopoly on religious responses to ecocide. Overall, this is an interesting, if flawed book, with a specific audience in mind.

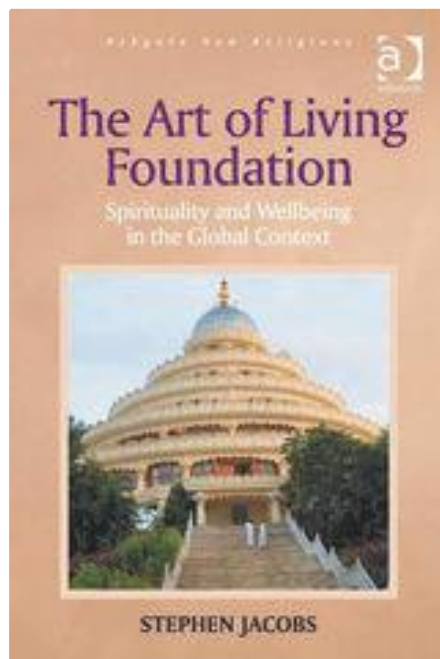
Theo Wildcroft  
The Open University

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**STEPHEN JACOBS, THE ART OF LIVING FOUNDATION: SPIRITUALITY AND WELLBEING IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT, FARNHAM & BURLINGTON: ASHGATE, 2015.**

Stephen Jacobs has produced an attractive, clearly written book on the relatively new neo-Hindu meditation movement, Art of Living (AoL), which was founded in 1981 by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a former follower of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008), the charismatic

founder of Transcendental Meditation (TM). He is careful with definitions, noting that AoL is not exactly a new religious movement (NRM), nor is it clearly a movement;



Jacobs prefers the term "networks" (p. 9). Chapter 1, "Locating Art of Living," is a broad survey of secularization and spirituality, East and West, the growing centrality of subjectivity and of the therapeutic approach to life's problems and self-identity. The 'Hindu' heritage of AoL is also evaluated, with the legacy of European colonialism, and the Romantic, Transcendentalist, and Theosophical context of Indian new religious movements. Vivekananda's impact at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893, and the later counterculture's interest in India, including the Maharishi's status as guru to the Beatles and other celebrity seekers are canvassed. The shift from a mainly religious view of Indian spiritual movements to a more broadly 'human potential' understanding is sketched, setting the stage for the emergence of AoL.

Chapter 2, "Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and a Brief History of Art of Living," focuses on the strategies of crafting

a guru's biographical narrative. Jacobs notes that little is known of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's life: his birth in 1956 in a Tamil Nadu village, his childhood love of pujas and meditation, and his explicit avoidance of the status of an avatar, an incarnate divinity are mentioned. Jacobs notes the existence of anti-AoL blogs that question the guru's life story. His charisma includes knowledge of the Veda, a Physics degree from a college in Bangalore, and his time as a follower of Maharishi. He broke from TM in 1981. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's best-known book is titled *The Science of Being and the Art of Living* (1963), half of which Sri Sri Ravi Shankar appropriated for his own movement. In 1982 he underwent a period of silence and developed the breathing technique called sudarshan kriya, which is the key practice of AoL. In 1988 Sri Sri Ravi Shankar enabled followers to teach the Art of Living "basic course" (p. 76), and now there is a suite of course offerings taught around the world by an accredited body of full-time teachers. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's headquarters is in Bangalore, and AoL now has a presence in more than fifty countries, though it is more successful in some than in others.

Chapter 3, "Beliefs and Practices," identifies four kinds of belief within AoL. First, there are therapeutic beliefs, which advocate and enable human happiness. Then there are spiritual beliefs, which is "understood in terms of being connected, primarily with oneself" (p. 91). Social beliefs relate to the core practice of seva, or service to others. Finally, there are religious beliefs that are Hindu-derived and include practices such as singing bhajans (devotional songs), and veneration of Guruji, as Sri Sri Ravi



Shankar is known to his followers. The three practices that are central, sudarshan kriya, seva, and satsangs (sittings with the guru), are collectively called sadhana. Jacobs describes practice at the Bangalore ashram, including yoga, meditation, mantras, diet, and service to the community. Chapter 4, "On Whose Authority?" considers the ways to validate the teachings of AoL. The most important validator is "personal experience" (p. 129), but the guru's "mode of dress and hairstyle are... symbolic" (p. 130). Jacobs connects Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's presentation to that of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and analyses the charismatic authority projected by Guruji. The experience of AoL members is understood as transformation rather than

conversion, and Jacobs uses Kathinka Frøystad's "model of concentric rings of participation" (p. 150), illustrated by the stories of people who drifted in and out of AoL. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's image is seen to work in both Indian and global contexts, and his teachings are deemed to be compatible with both science and "Vedic wisdom" (p. 167).

Chapter 5, "A One World Family," covers the globalization of Hindu ideas, the media coverage of Indian spirituality and culture, and the AoL theme of "unity in diversity" (p. 179). The AoL website's professional presentation and the January 2013 "Google Hangout" (p. 186) hosted by senior AoL members evidence the tech-savvy and contemporary

nature of the movement. The theme of meditating to "change the world" (p. 199) links AoL to TM, and Jacobs also explores unlikely connections between the yoga scene and the electronic dance music scene, in the form of "yoga raves" (p. 203). The brief conclusion effectively summarises Jacobs' arguments. This book is a valuable addition to scholarship on neo-Hindu groups, global new religious movements, charismatic gurus, and modern spirituality. It is attractively written, very readable, and suitably scholarly. It deserves a wide readership.

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(Continued from Page 13)

## BOOKS RECEIVED

The following titles have been received by the editor and are presently available for review. If interested, please email [d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk)

*Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power.* Donovan Schaefer, Duke, 2015.

*The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue.* Muthuraj Swami, Bloomsbury, 2016.

*Post-Materialist Religion.* Mika T. Lassander, Bloomsbury, 2014.

*A Beginner's Guide to the Study of Religion (2nd Edition).* Bradley Herling, Bloomsbury, 2016.

*Religion in Hip Hop.* Monica Miller, Anthony B. Pinn & Bernard "Bun B" Freeman (eds.) Bloomsbury, 2015.

*Contemporary Muslim-Christian Encounters.* Paul Hedges (ed.) Bloomsbury, 2015.

*Humanism: Essays on Race, Religion and Popular Culture.* Anthony B. Pinn. Bloomsbury, 2015.

are deemed valid and of utility to the wider academic network.

New currencies of pedagogy equally have a place in the new Wiki. Globally, academic institutions have a growing interest in higher education pedagogy. In the UK context a new Teaching Excellence Framework will promote further research and evidence of academic engagement with pedagogical theory and practice (see [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/474227/BIS-15-623-fulfilling-our-potential-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474227/BIS-15-623-fulfilling-our-potential-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice.pdf)). The wiki will be both a resource and an outlet for Religious Studies colleagues.

Scholars are like magpies, scanning for bright objects with which they populate papers or add interesting/amusing/illustrative vignettes to classroom discourse. Wikis welcome such approaches to their content.

# Members' Recent Publications

## **Elisabeth Arweck**

- 2016 (ed.) *Attitudes to Religious Diversity: Young People's Perspectives*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- 2015 (ed. with Anna Halafoff and Donald Boisvert) "Education about Religions and Beliefs: Promoting Intercultural and Interreligious Understanding in Secular Societies", special issue of *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (3 June).
- 2015 (with Gemma Penny) "Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity: Socialising Agents and Factors Emerging from Qualitative and Quantitative Data of a Nation-Wide Project in the UK", special issue of *Journal of Intercultural Studies* on "Education about Religions and Worldviews: Promoting Intercultural and Interreligious Understanding in Secular Societies" 36 (3): 255–273, edited by Anna Halafoff, Elisabeth Arweck, Donald Boisvert.
- 2016 "Religion Materialized in the Everyday: Young People's Attitudes towards Material Expressions of Religion", in *Religion and Material Culture*, edited by Tim Hutchings and Joanne McKenzie. Farnham: Ashgate.
- 2015 (with Anna Halafoff and Donald L. Boisvert) "Introduction: Education about Religions and Worldviews: Promoting Intercultural and Interreligious Understanding in Secular Societies", *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (3), 249–254, edited by Anna Halafoff, Elisabeth Arweck, Donald Boisvert.
- 2015 (Contributor) "International Bibliography of Sociology of Religions 2014." *Social Compass* 62 (3): 434–515.

## **Eileen Barker**

- 2013 (ed.) *Revisionism and Diversification in New Religious Movements*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- 2014 "New Religious Movements". In: James D. Wright (editor-in-chief), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, Vol 16. Oxford: Elsevier. pp. 805–808.
- 2014 "The Not-So-New Religious Movements: Changes in 'the Cult Scene' over the Past Forty Years." *Temenos* Vol. 50 No. 2 (2014), 235–56. <http://ojs.tsv.fi/index.php/temenos>
- 2014 "The Cult Awareness Movement in North America: Past, Present, Future" Interview with Michael Langone. WRSP (World Religion and Spirituality Project) FORUM INTERVIEWS Post Date: 8/10/2014. <http://www.wrs.vcu.edu/FORUM/Interview%20with%20Michael%20Langone.pdf>
- 2014 "But is it a Genuine Religion?" in Carole Cusack, Danielle Kirby (eds.) *Sects, Cults and New Religions, Volume III*, London: Routledge, Chapter 39. Originally published in A. L. Griel and T. Robbins (eds.) *Between Sacred and Secular: Research and Theory on Quasi-Religion* (JAI Press, 1994), pp. 97–111.

## **George D. Chryssides**

- 2015 'Power, Empowerment and Disempowerment in Religion'. IAFOR Keynote Series; ECERP2015 The Second European Conference on Ethics, Religion and Philosophy Brighton, UK. Accessible online at: <http://iafor.org/george-d-chryssides-power-empowerment-and-disempowerment-in-religion>
- 2015 "Conflicting expectations? Insider and outsider methods of studying Jehovah's Witnesses." *DISKUS* 17(1): 14-22. Accessible online at [www.religiousstudiesproject.com/DISKUS/index.php/DISKUS/issue/view/10](http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/DISKUS/index.php/DISKUS/issue/view/10)
- 2015 'A Scottish Vegetarian's View of Jehovah's Witnesses'. CESNUR Library Texts and Documents Cyber-proceedings of International Conference organized by CESNUR, Tallin University, Estonia, 17-29 June 2015. [http://www.cesnur.org/2015/chryssides\\_tallinn\\_2015.pdf](http://www.cesnur.org/2015/chryssides_tallinn_2015.pdf)
- 2015 *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. Entries on 'Hate, Hatred', 'Head', 'Healing Miracles', 'Hearing/Listening', 'Heaven's Gate', 'Hell', 'Heresy', 'Hislop, Alexander' Vol.11

## **Simon Coleman**

- 2015 (ed. with Rosalind Hackett) *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. New York: New York University Press.
- 2015 '(Re-)Placing Pentecostalism: Swedish Mission and the Idea of the Baltic', *Approaching Religion* 5(1): 4-15
- 2015 'Anthropological Tropes and Historical Tricksters: Pilgrimage as an "Example" of Persuasion', *Journal*

of the *Royal Anthropological Institute* 21: 144-161

2015 'On Mauss, Masks and Gifts: Christianities, (In-)dividualities, Modernities' *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5(1): 295-315

2014 'Pilgrimage as Trope for an Anthropology of Christianity' *Current Anthropology* 55 (10): 281-291

### **Carole Cusack**

2015 "Two Scottish Romanesque Parish Churches: St Athernase, Leuchars and St Cuthbert, Dalmeny," *Sydney Society For Scottish History Journal*, Vol. 15, pp. 97-122.

2015 (with Katharine Buljan) *Anime, Religion, and Spirituality: Profane and Sacred Worlds in Contemporary Japan*, Sheffield: Equinox.

2015 "Making Familiar the Unfamiliar: Teaching RLST 2626 Witchcraft, Paganism and the New Age at the University of Sydney," *Spotlight on Teaching: Religious Studies News*, January 2015, pp. 30- 34, at <http://rsn.aarweb.org/spotlight-on/teaching/new-alternative-religions/www.youtube.com/embed/mBNIS8Zg1WA>.

2015 "Apocalypse in Early UFO and Alien-Based Religions: Christian and Theosophical Themes," in Erik Tønning, Matthew Feldman and David Addyman (eds.), *Modernism, Christianity, and Apocalypse*. Leiden: Brill, 340-354.

2015 "Lab Rats and Tissue Samples: The Human in a Contemporary Invented Religion," in Kennet Granholm, Marcus Moberg, and Sofia Sjöo (eds.), *Religion, Media and Social Change*, Routledge, pp. 175-188.

### **Denise Cush**

2015 (ed. plus introductory and concluding chapters) *Celebrating Planet Earth, a Pagan/Christian Conversation: First Steps in Interfaith Dialogue*. Winchester and Washington: Moon Books.

2014 (with Robinson, C.) 'Developments in Religious Studies: Towards a Dialogue with Religious Education' *British Journal of Religious Education* 36.1. pp.4-17.

2014 'Combatting Sexism, Homophobia, Religionism and Subjectism: equality and diversity in religious studies and religious education'. Keynote lecture International Seminar for Religious Education and Values, July 2014, York St. John University.

### **Wendy Dossett**

2015 Bacon, H., Dossett, W., & Knowles, S. (eds.). (2015). *Alternative Salvations: Engaging the Sacred and the Secular*. London: Bloomsbury.

2015 "Reflections on the Language of Salvation in Twelve Step Recovery". In H. Bacon, W. Dossett, & S. Knowles (eds.), *Alternative Salvations: Engaging the Sacred and the Secular*. London: Bloomsbury.

### **Ting Guo**

2015 "Spirituality' as reconceptualisation of the self: Alan Turing and his pioneering ideas on artificial intelligence", *Culture and Religion*, 16.3

### **Robert Jackson**

2014 'Signposts': *Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing

2014 Rothgangel M., Jackson R. and Jäggle M. (eds.), *Religious Education at Schools in Europe. Volume 2: Western Europe* (Wiener Forum für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft, Band 10.2), Göttingen: Vienna University Press/V&R unipress.

2015 "The Politicisation and Securitisation of Religious Education? A Rejoinder", *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Special Issue on Education, Security and Intelligence Studies, 63 (3), 345-366. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2015.1069257>

2015 "Misrepresenting Religious Education's Past and Present in Looking Forward: Gearon Using Kuhn's Concepts of Paradigm, Paradigm Shift and Incommensurability", *Journal of Beliefs and Values: Studies in Religion & Education*, 36:1, 64-78. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2015.1014651>.

2014 "The Development and Dissemination of Council of Europe Policy on Education about Religions and

Non-religious Convictions”, *Journal of Beliefs and Values: Studies in Religion & Education* 35, (2), 133-143.

### **Eleanor Nesbitt**

2014 (with Gavin D’Costa, Mark Pryce, Ruth Shelton and Nicola Slee) *Making Nothing Happen: Five Poets Explore Faith and Spirituality*, Farnham: 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, 360-371.

2015 ‘Such was the World: A Verse Offering’ in Eugene E. Lemcio (ed.) *A Man of Many Parts: Essays in Honor of John Westerdale Bowker on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 222-231.

2015 ‘Interreligious Friendship: Insights from the Sikh Tradition’ in Alon Goshen-Gottstein (ed.) *Friendship across Religions: Theological Perspectives on Interreligious Friendship*, Lanham: Lexington, 117-134.

2015 “Oral History and the Study of Religions: Reflections on Professor Kiyotako Sato’s Memory and Narrative Series”, Discussion Paper no. 6, Tokyo: Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity, Meiji University.

### **Michael Pye**

2015 *Japanese Buddhist Pilgrimage*. Sheffield: Equinox.

2013 *Strategies in the Study of Religions*, Vols 1-2. Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter.

### **Donovan O. Schaefer**

2015 *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*. Durham: Duke.

### **Steven Sutcliffe**

2014 ‘Hard Work: Locating Gurdjieff in the Study of Religion/s’, *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* Vol 27 No 3. pp. 262-284.

2013 (ed. with Ingvild S. Gilhus), *New Age Spirituality: Rethinking Religion*, Durham: Acumen.

2013 (ed. with Carole M. Cusack), ‘Invented Religions: Creating New Religions through Fiction, Parody and Play’, Guest Edited Issue of *Culture and Religion* Vol. 14 No. 4.

2013 “Rosicrucians at large”: Radical versus qualified invention in the cultic milieu’, pp. 424-444 in guest-edited *Culture and Religion* Vol. 14 No. 4.

2011 ‘From “Comparative Mysticism” to “new age spirituality”’: teaching new age as raw materials of religion’, Chapter 14 (pp. 249-267) in W. Parsons (editor), *Teaching Mysticism*, New York: Oxford University Press (AAR Teaching Religious Studies series)

### **Christina Welch**

2015 ‘Death and the Erotic Woman: the European Gendering of Mortality in time of Religious Change’. *Journal of Gender Studies* 24(4): 399-418.

2015 ‘Coffin Calendar Girls: a new take on an old trope - Death and Maiden for the twenty-first Century’. *Writing From Below* Vol.2 (1): 1-29.

2014 ‘Religion and Culture: Religious Artifacts as T-shirts, Toys and Museum Exhibits’. In, Hedges P, (ed.), *Controversies in Contemporary Religion: Volume 2: Debates in the Public Square and Ethical Issues*. Oxford: Praeger: 177-212

2014 ‘Charisma, Scriptures, Revelation, and Texts: Sources of Religious Authority, (with Paul Hedges) In, Hedges P, (ed), *Controversies in Contemporary Religion: Volume 1: Theoretical and Academic Debates*. Oxford: Praeger: 57-80.

### **Michael York**

2015 *Pagan Ethics: Paganism as a World Religion*. New York: Springer.

"Give the word 'religion' some universal definition, cease to use it, or in its place... substitute a term alike capable of being conceived and incapable of being misunderstood."

(W. C. Distant, "On the Term 'Religion' as Used in Anthropology", 1877: 6.)

