

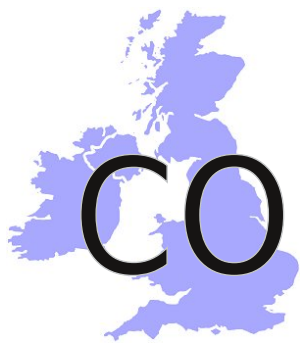
BASR BULLETIN

#125 - Nov 2014

Peace, Everyone!

BASR





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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

Welcome, Comrades, to the 125th edition of the BASR Bulletin. As always, the Autumn edition includes full proceedings of the AGM, held at the annual conference in Milton Keynes this past September. These might not make for everyone's idea of light reading, but they are an important part of the Bulletin's function as a permanent record of the activities of the BASR. Even a cursory glance however will show that we end 2014 in robust health. This is shown most clearly in the strong financial situation, thanks to the sure hand of our Treasurer on the tiller.

An important result of this financial position is that the BASR will be able to continue to give conference bursaries to postgraduate students, and perhaps even to extend this scheme. The report from this year's bursary holders is published on page 18 of this issue. In the current climate, it is imperative to support junior colleagues as they seek experience and ultimately jobs, both financially and in terms of the support and advice of those of us with more experience. Naomi Appleton reports on such a scheme at the University of Edinburgh whereby female postgraduates are being mentored by female staff members to address the particular problems they face, and to promote gender equality in RS. The scheme has proven successful, and the plan is to offer it to students of all genders in future. Further help for younger scholars is offered in George Chryssides' latest column, in which he shares his experiences of publishing in journals, from both sides of the paywall.

For those of us already embroiled in the realities of academic work, Dominic Corryright outlines the benefits of gaining an HEA Fellowship, and how to go about it. Paul Hedges sets out an agenda for 'Interreligious Studies', which he sees as being capable of bridging critical and post-colonial RS scholarship with theology, as well as those outside these disciplines.

We also include what we hope will be the first in an ongoing series, "From Our Correspondent...", in which we invite senior scholars from other countries to report back to the BASR about the current issues in RS where they are. This series is intended to help members keep abreast of the international situation, to reflect upon the situation here in the UK, and importantly to remind us that the BASR is one part of a global network of scholars, represented at the highest level by the IAHR, of which the BASR is a member. Any of our BASR members currently domiciled abroad are encouraged to offer a dispatch for a future issue.

This issue continues the move towards the Bulletin being produced principally for electronic publication, although it will continue to be produced physically for the time being. There are a number of advantages to this move: financial for the BASR, integration with online resources and colour pictures for you; and of course, it's better for the environment. In the meantime, enjoy, and we'll see you in May.

David G. Robertson & David Wilson

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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

PLEASE SEND ALL MATERIAL FOR INCLUSION TO d.g.robertson@ed.ac.uk
DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE 2015 ISSUE IS **15 MAY 2015**



NEWS, ETC

PRESIDENT ELECT

We are happy to report that at the September AGM, Steven Sutcliffe (University of Edinburgh) was unanimously elected to take over as BASR president from Graham Harvey. His apotheosis will take place at the 2015 annual conference.

2015 CONFERENCE

The next BASR Annual Conference will take place at the University of Kent on 7th to the 9th of September 2015. The conference theme will be "Religion in the Local and Global", and will have a particular focus on bringing different disciplinary perspectives together. It will also mark the 50th anniversary of the Study of Religion at Kent. Further details, including the Call For Papers and details of the bursary programme, will be made through all the usual channels in the coming weeks.

MATERIAL RELIGION BLOG

The 'Material Religions' blog went live in early September 2014. The blog was developed by John J. McGraw and Urmila Mohan in response to discussions by various attendees of the conference 'The Bodily and Material Cultures of Religious Subjectivation' held at the Department of Anthropology, University College London, in June 2014. Although the blog is not affiliated with the 'Material Religion' journal, it is supported and guided by members of the journal's editorial team.

There are sites that deal with either materiality or religion but we are among the few who focus on

the interaction between the 'material' and the 'religious'. The blog features new posts once a week on a range of topics and incorporates varied approaches drawn from religious studies, history, anthropology, archaeology, cognitive studies, media studies, science and technology studies, material sciences etc. Those who prefer not to wait for a week can also visit our facebook page for more frequent updates.

Recent posts have included contributions by David Morgan, Ann Taves, Jeremy Stolow, Julia Shaw, Eric Reinders and Rane Willerslev. The aim is to highlight a range of theoretical and methodological approaches that will not only lead to a diversity of content but also expand on both our key concepts. Other features on the blog include a lengthy bibliography that, although by no means exhaustive, serves as a good resource for those interested in the field.

We welcome contributions from students and scholars of religion. Please write to John (quickdraw74@hotmail.com) or Urmila (u.mohan.11@ucl.ac.uk)

www.materialreligions.blogspot.co.uk

www.facebook.com/materialreligions

CORRECTION

The previous edition of the Bulletin (#124) erroneously stated that Equinox had been bought by Routledge. This was incorrect, and should have read that Acumen had been bought by Routledge. The editors express their apologies to Equinox for any confusion caused.

Calling all academics...

If you have written material for a journal, or a book, we may be holding monies due to you.

None of us can afford to be complacent about money, especially during a recession. In addition to your day job, if you have had an article published in a printed academic or trade journal or written or contributed to a book then the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) could be holding money owed to you.



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and promoting
authors' rights

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If books, magazines and journals containing your work are available to be photocopied or scanned in schools, universities, businesses or public sector bodies then you may be entitled to a share of the income collected. These organisations buy a licence enabling them to do limited amounts of photocopying. ALCS ensures that from this licence fee writers are paid their dues.

But I am not a writer....

For the majority of our 85,000 Members, writing is not their main job. Many of our Members are doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, academics etc. They might have written for a journal or have contributed to a book. These people might not consider themselves as writers but have written to share learning and best practice, or even just to supplement their income.

Academic writers, fiction, non-fiction, translators, adaptors, scriptwriters, magazine and journal article writers, editors and children's writers are all eligible to be ALCS Members.

What do I need to do if I want to join and claim my money?

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In order to claim your secondary royalties you will need to register your published works or specialist academic journal and magazine articles. You can apply to join on-line at www.alcs.co.uk or alternatively contact our Membership Services Department on 020 7264 5700 or drop us an email at membership@alcs.co.uk.

Who is the Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society?

ALCS is a not-for-profit membership organisation. We represent the interests of all writers and safeguard their intellectual property rights. We collect secondary royalties on behalf of over 85,000 writers across the UK and abroad and pay them directly to our Members, twice a year.

For more information, check out our website at www.alcs.co.uk, call our Membership Services Department 020 7264 5700 or write to us at: ALCS, The Writers' House, 13 Haydon Street, London EC3N 1DB.

European Network for Buddhist-Christian Studies (ENBCS) 11th Conference

Buddhist-Christian Relations in Asia

25 – 29 June, 2015, the Archabbey of St Ottilien, near Munich, Germany

CALL FOR PAPERS

The theme of the 11th ENBCS conference is; Buddhist-Christian Relations in Asia. Invited speakers will address Buddhist-Christian relations in six countries: China, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka. There will be three speakers on each country. These include: Professor John D'Arcy May (introductory lecture); Professor Pan Chiu Lai (China); Revd Dr Samuel Ngun Ling (Myanmar); Dr Martin Repp (Japan); Ven Jinwol Sunim (Korea); Professor Asanga Tilakaratne (Sri Lanka); Professor Suwanna Satha-Anand (Thailand).

Academics involved in Buddhist-Christian Studies, independent researchers and others committed to Buddhist-Christian understanding are welcome to attend the conference.

In addition, papers from postgraduate research students and experienced researchers are invited for sessions on the evenings of Friday and Sunday. The Network places great importance on giving postgraduate research students the opportunity to share their research and gain feedback. It also welcomes papers from experienced academics working within Buddhist-Christian Studies.

CFP: Beyond 'Gays in the Church': New Approaches to the Histories of Catholicism and Same-Sex Desire.

A Conference and Discussion, 25-26 September 2015, London, venue tbc

Organisers:

Dominic Janes (Professor of Cultural and Visual Studies, University of the Arts, London and Reader, Birkbeck, University of London).
Mark Chapman (Acting Principal of Ripon College, Cuddesdon and Reader in Theology, University of Oxford).

Invited Speaker, Mark D. Jordan (Mellon Professor of Christian Thought, Harvard University).

The relationships between diverse forms of religious and sexual identities have been widely contested in the media since the rise of the lesbian and gay liberation movement in the 1970s. One of the key images that often appears in public debate is that of 'gays in the church' as a significant 'problem'. On the one hand many members of faith communities have remained hostile to physical expressions of same-sex desire, whilst on the other hand many lesbian and gay activists have been suspicious of various forms of religion. The compromise that has been reached over church exemptions from the obligation to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies in England indicates that many people do continue to find interactions of religion and homosexuality to be highly problematic. This event aims to approach these issues from a different viewpoint. John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (1980) and *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (1994) created considerable controversy because they argued that the early and medieval Church was not inherently hostile to same-sex desire and that this was a development of the later middle ages. Inspired by such work we want to invite discussion on new creative approaches to the histories of Catholicism and same-sex desire. This invitation is being sent out both to academics and to members of faith groups in order to facilitate a set of discussions which is open and inclusive.

People are encouraged to email Dominic Janes at d.janes@arts.ac.uk to indicate if they would like to attend such an event, participate in an informal discussion group or deliver a more formal paper (in which case

Minutes of the BASR Annual General Meeting

Held at 11 a.m. onwards on Thursday 4 September 2014 at the Open University in Milton Keynes

1. Welcome. The BASR President opened the meeting by welcoming all members (32 members plus three guests attending).
2. Apologies received from Chris Cotter, James Cox, Eileen Barker, Ursula King and Steven Sutcliffe
3. Minutes of the AGM, 5 September 2013 (published in the BASR Bulletin 123, November 2013). Accepted and signed.
4. Matters Arising
None that are not covered by any other item on the Agenda

5. Presidential address (Graham Harvey):

GH started with reflections on the changes in the Higher Education section over the last 12 months, highlighting the student loan system and the decline in student numbers. They have an impact not only on universities but also on the discipline.

An important role as President has been the representation of study of religions in various networks and meetings. The Arts and Humanities Alliance (AHA, former A-Hug) for instance tries to combine the effort of subject associations to express concerns about government policies affecting education. Some of the issues currently discussed are the revision of the school curriculum and the governmental policy on open access publishing.

The BASR is at the forefront of open access publishing with our journal DISKUS and every year publishers approach the BASR with offers to take over DISKUS. Though it means extra work for the executive committee, we have defended successfully ownership of DISKUS. Nonetheless, the open access issue is an important one and the BASR is engaged in the discussion of this and other issues.

GH also commented that after the last meeting many members were occupied with the final submission for REF, in particular the preparation of impact case studies. However, a new round has already started and preparation for the next REF has already begun.

At the end GH thanked all committee members for their work for the BASR.

6. Secretary's Report (Bettina Schmidt):

BS read a letter from James Cox expressing thanks for being made Honorary Life Member in 2012. He was out of the country at that time. He wrote that he was extremely grateful to have been recognised in this way and asked the secretary to extend his warm thanks to the BASR for this award.

The current membership list (including Honorary Life Members) lists two hundred and fifty nine (259) members. Since the last meeting we gained 12 new members, two members withdrew and one was taken off the list. An ongoing problem is that several members have not paid despite several reminders by email and in writing (distributed via the Bulletin). We were not able to take further measures this year but in early 2015 non-paying members will be taken off the membership list.

The committee has met two times since the last meeting: in February at the Open University in London and before the conference began on Wednesday in Milton Keynes. The discussion about the bursaries in May was conducted on-line. In order to save costs for the BASR we try to discuss issues whenever possible by email or phone though the two meetings in person are important.

The BASR awarded four bursaries. All award winners accepted the bursary and attended the conference. Their report will be published in the next Bulletin. The secretary also received two late applications which had to be declined.

For the first time the BASR nominated four members for the peer-review college of the AHRC. Two of the nominations were successful. While other members may have been nominated by their universities, the nomination by the BASR helps to further the visibility of the BASR.

In addition we submitted a response to a consultation on policy changes (by HEFCE).

BS further reported that the QAA benchmark exercise has come to an end. The public consultation of the revised benchmark statement for undergraduate programme and the added appendix for Master levels programmes received a good number of responses which were discussed by the group over the summer. The final version will be published by QAA in the coming weeks. In the name of the executive committee BS expressed her warm thanks to Marion Bowman for leading the revision of statement for undergraduate programme and to George Chryssides for leading the development of the statement for Master levels programmes.

BS expressed her thanks also to all members to responding so enthusiastically to the email about Alexander Sodiqov. In response of members emails the BASR has signed the letter requesting this PhD student's release.

BS reported about an initiative of SOCREL to develop a mentoring scheme for women in response to a study by Matthew Guest and others about the gender imbalance in TRS. BS was unsuccessful in persuading SOCREL to extend the scheme to colleagues outside their organisation. However, TRS UK (former AUDTRS) will consider the recommendation to develop a similar scheme for all women in TRS in the UK.

In conclusion BS reported that her main work for the BASR remains keeping contact with members and with other organizations and individuals about the BASR.

GH expressed his thanks to the secretary.

7. Treasurer's Report and Accounts (Stephen Gregg)

(A table with accounts follows these minutes)

The treasurer began with highlighting the surplus of £7,756 from the last conference. Referring to the accounts presented to colleagues on a projected screen he explained that the subscriptions cover the basic costs of the BASR. Nonetheless, the number of non-paying members and members who pay only part of the subscription remains a problem.

There has been also an increase in the subscription for the IAHR, the EASR and REC. Nonetheless, the BASR is in a healthy financial situation. The committee has therefore decided to extend the number of bursaries and to widen the bursaries to unemployed post-docs and ECR. The committee is also considering supporting the presence of the BASR at the next IAHR Congress.

In response to a question SG confirmed the executive will continue the good practice of retaining part of the funds in order to ensure a healthy balance.

Peggy Morgan and Marion Bowman nominated approval of budget. Approved by all members.

GH expressed his thanks to the treasurer.

8. Diskus Co-ordinating Editor Report (Suzanne Owen)

SO reported that DISKUS will have three issues this year following the last conference. The first one on music and religion has been published already, the second one on census and statistics will be out soon and the third one with the keynote lectures and other papers will be out in December.

SO asked for nominations of papers from the current conference.

She further reported that DISKUS has changed its format when moving to the new website. There will be a few further changes which will improve her work.

GH expressed his thanks to SO.

9. Bulletin Editors' Report (David Wilson and David Robertson)

DW reported that the last edition of the Bulletin was published with a new format and added content. The e-copy also contains helpful links.

It was decided to publish the summer edition in June instead of May while the winter edition remains in November.

DW reminded everyone to submit reports on conferences, book reviews, notification of new publications or changed affiliation to the Bulletin.

He also asked members for support in saving costs and accept e-copies instead of hard copies.

GH thanked both Bulletin editors for their work.

10. Website and Social Media (David Robertson)

DR reported that the BASR website has now successfully moved to a new server, independent from the Open University. With the help of a new software programme changes can be implemented very easily.

He further reported that social media works well. There is a good mix of different groups involved on Facebook and Twitter.

He also mentioned that the executive committee has extended sponsoring of the Religious Studies Project for a further year.

GH expressed his thanks to DR.

11. Teaching & Learning group (Dominic Corrywright)

DC began with thanks to Stephanie Sinclair for organising the T&L panel at this year's conference. T&L is now present at all BASR conferences and has managed to attract new members.

As the BASR representative he attends regular meetings about RE teaching and policies but he would like to encourage other members to attend.

The A level reform is an ongoing issue and needs our attention. A further government consultation will be held in Manchester in October which DC will attend.

He also reported that the T&L site of the BASR website will be revised in the coming months. Finally he highlighted the poster session in the coffee break room and asked members to discover the various teaching tools.

GH expressed his thanks to DC.

12. Election of President Elect

The BASR received one nomination: Bettina Schmidt and Dominic Corrywright nominated Steven Sutcliffe, Edinburgh University, as President Elect. Approved by all members.

Members expressed their delight that Steven Sutcliffe has accepted the nomination.

13. Open Access Publishing (George Chryssides)

George Chryssides reminded everyone that at the last meeting Janet Joyce from Equinox has asked us for our response to open access publishing. Since then the issue has become increasingly relevant. Most Open Access journals are different from the way DISKUS is set up, Open Access publishing requires authors to pay for the publication of articles. According to his information the fee can be between £200 and £300 per article. This puts financial pressure in particular on ECR who need to build up their publication record. While Open Access publishing makes material available to the public, publishers expect payment. GH added that institutions should usually pay the fee. The discussion

highlighted in particular the financial pressure on young scholars but also colleagues outside an institution.

GH expressed his thanks to George Chryssides for bringing the issue to the attention of the BASR.

14. Membership in TRS UK (former AUDTRS)

Jolyon Mitchell, the President of TRS UK joined the stage. He informed members about the changes of AUDTRS that resulted in a new name and a new structure – TRS UK. In addition to university departments the association decided to include under the umbrella of TRS UK learned subject associations in order to successfully represent the wide field of TRS in the UK. It would be good if the BASR becomes affiliated member of the TRS UK. Several members of the BASR are actively involved in the executive committee of TRS UK.

In the discussion he mentioned that more information about TRS UK can be found on the new website of TRS UK.

BS also mentioned that a report would be published in the Bulletin annually. JM further indicated that TRS UK would be in a good position to respond to the REF outcome and plans for the next REF.

Nominated and seconded by BS and GH the meeting approved that the BASR becomes member of TRS UK.

15. BASR conference 2015

The president began by encouraging members to attend the IAHR 2015 Congress in Erfurt. He then reported that the next BASR conference in 2015 will be held at the University of Kent in Canterbury. The dates are 7-9 September 2015. The topic will likely to be 'The Local and the Global' with a sub-theme on religion and the disciplines (to be confirmed in the next Bulletin). Kent will celebrate at the conference the 50th anniversary of study of religion at Kent.

BS asked members for suggestions for conference locations in 2016.

16. Any Other Business

Members expressed their thanks to Graham Harvey and his team for the organization of the conference and its excellent programme.

17. Date and Venue of the next meeting

The next AGM will be held during the 2015 conference at the University of Kent in Canterbury. Further details will be announced in the Bulletin and website.

Graham Harvey closed the AGM at 1 p.m.

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR
THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS
ACCOUNTS as at 15 AUGUST 2014**

RECEIPTS**PAYMENTS**

General Fund	<i>Notes</i>	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2012-13</i>		<i>Notes</i>	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2012-13</i>
		<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>				
Balance at 16 August 2013		19624	<i>18187</i>	Audit Fee		0	0
Inland Revenue		0	<i>0</i>	Printing & Postage Bulletin		-1066	<i>-474</i>
Subscriptions		3840	<i>3780</i>	T&L Grant		-350	<i>-788</i>
Bulletin insert fees		0	<i>0</i>	Committee Expenses		-1073	<i>-1555</i>
T&L Grant		0	<i>0</i>	Society Subs	<i>i</i>	-785	<i>-372</i>
Bank Interest		21	<i>20</i>	Bank Charges	<i>iii</i>	0	<i>-82</i>
		<u>23484</u>	<u><i>21987</i></u>	Insurance		0	<i>-703</i>
				Balance in hand 15 August 2014		20210	
						<u>23484</u>	
Conference Fund		<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>			<i>TY</i>	<i>LY</i>
Balance at 16 August 2013		3387	<i>2125</i>	2013 Conference Expenses		-119	
2013 Conference Receipts		8200		2014 Conference Expenses	<i>iv</i>	0	
2014 Conference Receipts		150		Balance in hand 15 August 2014		11618	
		<u>11737</u>				<u>11737</u>	

BALANCE SHEET as at 15 August 2014

Cash Funds: Bank Accounts				Represented by:			
Lloyds Current	8778	<i>2046</i>		General Fund		20210	
CAF Cash	5438	<i>3459</i>		Conference Fund		8231	
CAF Gold	13789	<i>13768</i>					
PayPal Holding	411	<i>323</i>					
Petty Cash	25	<i>25</i>					
Cheques not yet presented	0	<i>0</i>					
Total	28441	<i>19621</i>				28441	

FINANCIAL SUMMARY UP TO 15 AUGUST 2014

Balance as at 16th August 2013	19624	BASR/EASR/IAHR 2013	
Total Receipts	12210	Total Receipts	8200
Total Payments	-3393	Total Payments	-119
Net Receipts/Payments	8817		
Balance as at 15th August 2014	28441	Deficit/Surplus	<i>ii</i> 8081

NOTES TO ACCOUNTS

- i* IAHR, EASR & REC including all charges
ii £325 was spent in 2012-13 accounting period, meaning final profit for BASR/EASR/IAHR 2013 is £7,756
iii Bank charges subsumed within IAHR & EASR international payments
iv Bursary and keynote expenses to be paid in next accounting period

*Affiliated to the
International Association for the History of Religions and
the European Association for the Study of Religions*



FEATURES

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT ...IN ALABAMA

Steven Ramey,
Assoc. Professor,
University of
Alabama

Save the Humanities! That is the battle cry that we often express in the United States today. The Humanities are under-appreciated among the general public as well as many legislators and government officials. Many want to emphasize STEM (Science, Technology, Mathematics) programs that, they assume, lead to innovation and economic development. Parents want students to be able to land a secure job after graduation. And too often, students, parents, and officials assume that the Humanities do not provide this innovation or gainful employment. Along with those who devalue the Humanities, universities in general face fewer tenure-track faculty positions, enrollment pressures focused on credit hour production, and the emphasis on reporting particular types of assessment of student learning. These developments—hardly foreign to UK universities, I know—compound the sense that academics, and the Humanities in particular, are undervalued and facing a crisis.

To be honest, though, it is not simply the government officials and general public that make some of these assumptions. I remember as a grad student wondering what I could do with my training if I did not succeed on the job market. We would joke about getting a job flipping burgers (as a vegetarian, no less). In the midst of

specialized studies in the Humanities, we failed to recognize the wider relevance of these studies and the value of the education that we received.

The Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama, where I fortunately landed a job 9 years ago,

"For them, training in the academic study of religion, was not about becoming more moral or reaching some idealized image of a well-rounded human but, instead, prepared them to function in a complicated world, thinking creatively and analytically about the people and tasks that they encounter"

devoted our annual lecture series in 2012-2013 to discussions of the relevance of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Students and faculty alike had a range of reactions to the lectures, including a frustration with our failure as scholars to articulate clearly the relevance of what we research and how we train our students. The most memorable point

occurred as students began to question publicly the older clichés about the Humanities helping us to be fully human or teaching us the art of living well, pointing out the dehumanizations of people who have not had similar opportunities for education and the faulty assumptions inherent in those rationales.

Hearing students apply critical thinking skills to discussions from distinguished professors who were trying to defend the very disciplines that our students have chosen for their major made me realize that our students can articulate and illustrate successfully the relevance of the academic study of religion, and the Humanities more generally. Recognizing the importance of better representations of the value of degrees in the Humanities, the department now invites recent graduates to return to campus to discuss how their training in the Humanities relates to their jobs and general lives now. Guests have included a public school teacher, a medical student, a lawyer, a nonprofit grant writer, and an entrepreneur, all of whom have emphasized in different ways the skills (such as critical and creative thinking, writing skills, an ability to discover the best ways to work with coworkers/students/clients, the ability to analyze a task through its various parts), that they acquired in their coursework and that have contributed to their success in a range of pursuits. For them, training in the academic study of religion, was not about becoming more moral or reaching some idealized image of a well-rounded human but, instead, prepared them to function in a

complicated world, thinking creatively and analytically about the people and tasks that they encounter in a range of fields.

Learning from students and alumni has therefore helped me re-conceive my discussions with current students about majoring in any of the fields grouped together as the Humanities. Their insights on the wide relevance of their training, regardless what they've gone on to do with their lives, have also encouraged me to experiment

with other types of assignments in some of my courses, such as assigning short essays, like blogposts, that explain course ideas in a manner accessible to the general public. While learning to do research and to write formal papers remains important for a variety of reasons (whether or not students pursue graduate work in the Humanities), honing their ability to function in this age of digital media helps students communicate complex ideas in an accessible, succinct fashion, which also provides another

skill—one that could also help all of us articulate the value of our research and our teaching more generally.

Now, instead of laughing nervously when asked what you can do with a religious studies degree (while, yes, still imagining myself as a short order cook), I have learned from my colleagues, and even more so from students and alumni, that we can articulate a clear relevance for a degree in religious studies in relation to a wide range of careers.

GENDER EQUALITY IN TRS: A REPORT FROM EDINBURGH

I am delighted to announce that Edinburgh's School of Divinity has become the first TRS unit in the UK to be awarded a Bronze Gender Equality Charter Mark (GEM) award. GEM is a new scheme run by the Equality Challenge Unit, designed to be a Humanities equivalent to the Athena SWAN charter that has done so much to advance women's career development in STEMM subjects.

The Bronze GEM award recognises the School's commitment to promoting gender equality. In preparation for the application, we formed a small committee and surveyed staff and postgraduate students to ascertain perceptions of gender culture in the School. We then put into place various initiatives to tackle areas in need of improvement. The award application itself hinged on an extensive action plan that sets out our targets and strategies for the coming three years, after which we plan to apply for a Silver award.

So what have we learnt about gender equality in TRS? Perhaps our most important findings have been around

the experiences of female postgraduate students. As the recent Durham report (Guest, M., Sharma, S. and Song, R. (2013) *Gender and Career Progression in Theology and Religious Studies*, Durham, UK: Durham University) highlights, there are some issues distinct to Theology that can result in inequalities in recruitment and treatment of students and staff. In particular, the fact that Theology postgraduate degrees attract large numbers of male conservative Christians from north America affects the make-up of our student body at PG level and the experiences of female students therein. While we welcome these enthusiastic theologians from across the pond, we have been looking at creative ways to improve PG culture for all.

One of our initiatives is a women-only discussion group, which involves female staff and PG students meeting informally in a local café a couple of times per semester to discuss the experiences of academic life. We have also created an opt-in mentoring scheme in which PG students (male and female) are allocated staff

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mentors outside their subject area. Focus groups are looking at ways to tackle the "leaky pipeline" that results in a loss of female students during the move from UG to PGT to PGR, as well as considering further ways to support female PGs once they have arrived. Meanwhile, developments in staff policy and practice have been directed at such areas as increasing female representation at managerial level, and equitable career development for all. There is much more in the pipeline, but already we have started to see changes, and it continues to be a positive and valuable process in which to be involved.

I recommend the GEM process to colleagues around the UK, and would be delighted to hear from anyone keen to share ideas and initiatives for improving gender equality in TRS.

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INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES: A NEW DIRECTION IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION?

This year sees a new Group in 'Interreligious and Interfaith Studies' added to the annual American Academy of Religion Conference to be held in San Diego, California, while a growing number of chairs and courses bearing the name 'Interreligious Studies' are springing up, in universities like Oslo, McGill, and elsewhere. However, the term is a relatively new one in the field, and to date there is only one notable monograph using this as a title (Leirvik, 2014). It is therefore fitting to explore a little more about what the terminology means, especially as the term has, perhaps, gained wider currency both in the US and mainland Europe as well as elsewhere around the globe than it has in the UK.

The Mission statement of the AAR Group describes itself in this way:

This Group creates a space for critical interdisciplinary engagement with interfaith and interreligious studies, which examines the many modes of response to the reality of religious pluralism (theological, philosophical, historical, scriptural, ethical, praxological, and institutional) (IIS, 2014).

This clearly lays out a primary concern which is the question of religious diversity and responses to it, which many would see simply as an area of Religious Studies more broadly, however, many within Interreligious Studies would see it as going beyond this – although not suggesting that

one cannot do both (even at the same time). While not wishing to be prescriptive of an emerging field I would suggest that the following points describe the field (this draws from Hedges, 2013 and Leirvik, 2014). First, its primary focus is interreligious encounters or relations, broadly construed, which means that it looks at the relationship or meeting of at least two religious traditions (which may include the secular). This may or may not involve any form of formal interreligious dialogue, and may equally concern contestation as much as irenic relations.

Second, Interreligious Studies is not a self-enclosed discipline nor is it a distinct subject area, rather it is the nexus of a set of interlinked disciplines or activities. This can include, but is not limited to, the following: a sociological side exploring interreligious relations in diverse multifaith societies; the work of theologians doing comparative theology and the theology of religions; and a practitioner basis, especially in the areas of interreligious dialogue and social activism.

Third, something 'becomes' Interreligious Studies when it engages with at least some of the following five areas in a scholarly way. One: the issue of religious encounter as a dynamic lived reality – even if this is done as textual study – and concerns the 'inter' of 'Interreligious', which has an interest in the relational aspect of religion and the dynamic

change and interaction of traditions. It is not simply noting interesting comparative observations. Two: it is interdisciplinary which is seen as necessary because religion is understood very much as a multi-layered set of phenomena (or varied aspects of culture and society), which cannot be penetrated nor properly understood through one approach. While any particular scholar may, naturally, specialise in one area this is done in relation to other disciplines. Three: while not necessarily engaged in activism, it often is, and does not see a clear boundary between the scholar and the practitioner, such that the theological questioning is not separated off from scholarly reflection, although one may not see oneself as a theologian in any specific tradition (Pagan, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, etc.). However, the active dynamic of engagement between traditions is often what inspires Interreligious Studies. At one level such activism concerns the practise of interreligious dialogue which may not simply be formal or informal meetings amongst faith communities, but can also take place between scholars, with, for instance, Christian and Muslim theologians working not just alongside each other, but mutually engaging and enriching each other. Four: and linked in to the previous point, it recognises that the researcher, teacher, or student is an agent implicated in negotiations of power for there is no neutral value-free position. As such it involves self-critical reflection in that dynamic as

an agent or practitioner, while also recognising that religion is not static but involved in individual and group identity at many levels. Fifth: it pushes at the hegemonic boundaries, either within academia about such things as disciplinary boundaries or within religious traditions which may seek to maintain dominance. This is often about questioning those who want to keep identities tied down, or else it plays with the boundaries of traditional categories, for instance in exploring dual religious belonging or identity.

Much of this, of course, is already found within Religious Studies and other academic disciplines, especially within some particular areas, but often those sometimes sidelined or questioned. As such I find it as no surprise that many of those who identify with Interreligious Studies come from, or identify with, postcolonial, feminist, queer, or critical theory areas. Perhaps, though, where Interreligious Studies most differs from much traditional Religious Studies is in bridging the gap between itself and theological scholarship, so those engaged in areas like Comparative Theology, such as Francis Clooney or John Thatamanil, will find themselves aligned with the Interreligious Studies nexus. Also, there are also some who do not necessarily see Religious Studies as their primary area who identify with Interreligious Studies, which is often sociologists, but may also include anthropologists and historians amongst others. It also stands in sharp contrast to aspects of approaches of scholars like Russell McCutcheon and Timothy Fitzgerald who have seriously questioned the role of Religious Studies scholarship and its entanglement with traditions and theology, for while they certainly raise important issues, it can be asked whether the distinction between

critics and practitioners is viable, as everyone is involved in one way or another as an agent in the shaping of discourse, especially given the soft power of scholarship. (However, it is also engages their critiques of the category 'religion' and may ask what Interreligious Studies looks like after 'religion').

One question often asked is whether 'Interreligious' or 'Interfaith' is the best term, and certainly there are disputes about what each means. For some, the inclusion of 'religious' implies reified and static traditions and so they prefer 'faith' which is taken to mean the perspective of specific believers at grassroots level; however, it is also possible to speak of faith traditions in the sense of religious traditions, while faith itself has connotations of belief as opposed to praxis which also raises questions about what is prioritised. I have here used 'interreligious' as it is, I believe, more widely used, while the connotations of 'religion' or 'faith' vary from definition to definition and so I do not think we should see either term as meaning something essentially different from the other. As such, depending upon local usage, I understand 'Interreligious Studies' and 'Interfaith Studies' as coterminous.

It may be asked whether this new Group or discipline has staying power, however, the growing number of those aligning with it suggests it will certainly make an impact. Evidence for this includes: the AAR Group; the growth of courses and chairs (see Leirvik, 2014: 7-8, and Stanton, 2014); societies bearing the name such as the European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ESITIS); the renaming of the Journal of Interreligious Dialogue to the Journal of Interreligious Studies (Stanton, 2014); and, increasing

numbers of named or related publications, for instance the Journal for the Academic Study of Religion will produce a Special Edition on 'Interreligious Studies' this year, while there are well established journals in the area like Studies in Interreligious Dialogue (SID), and also a growing number of book series. I would also suggest that with increasing awareness and scholarly attention to our religiously diverse society and world, a chance to bring interdisciplinary work together will become increasingly important, as such Interreligious Studies may be a foretaste of what is to come. Indeed, for those who work as scholar-practitioners in multi-religious contexts it seems a fertile area for future study and exploration. I certainly hope to be at the inaugural AAR meeting of the Group and would hope to meet a number of you there.

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ADVICE FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS: Getting That Article Published

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It seems a long time since I tried to get my first article published, and I would be embarrassed to admit to some of my early mistakes. Now the tables are turned, and I often have to sit in judgement on the work of others. Refereeing is an instructive process, and it may be helpful to describe what the other end is like.

A reputable peer-reviewed journal uses a “double-blind” process, whereby neither the author nor the reviewer are identified to each other. Although this can enable reviewers to make derogatory comments with impunity (and I have had my share of these), the process ensures that famous names are not unduly privileged and early-career scholars are not unfairly dismissed. Established scholars can sometimes pass their “sell-by date”, and postgraduates often write really good material, being keen to impress.

Some journals provide formal criteria of assessment for the referee to grade the submission. These typically include: originality, completeness, organisation of the material, writing style, clarity of aims and conclusions, soundness of methodology, appropriateness for the journal, and others. Writers can profitably use these to give their writing a health check, and a closer look at some of them may be helpful.

Originality involves more than a literature review, however well accomplished, or a news update about a spiritual community. An article needs a definite research question, analysis

of competing positions, a clear thesis relating to the chosen topic, and probably some justification of one’s methodology.

Check that the aims are stated and realistic – it is surprising how many authors omit them – and check that they are fulfilled in your discussion. Refer substantially to published work in the field: while no article can ever claim to be complete, if a referee can swiftly list half a dozen important publications that do not seem to have been consulted, the article will certainly be referred back, if not rejected. With advanced electronic searching facilities at our disposal, an effective literature survey can be expected.

One vital question is which journal to aim for. Aiming too high increases the risk of non-acceptance and time loss while working down the hierarchy of less prestigious journals until the article finds its niche. Aiming too low can involve selling oneself short. Much depends on how swiftly you need to clock up a publications, taking into account factors such as REF, job applications and funding opportunities. There is no magic solution, but avoid being tempted to save time by submitting to more than one journal simultaneously.

Approaching the right journal is vital. It should certainly be peer-reviewed, with an editorial board – preferably an international one. Every writing school advises that we should never submit copy to an editor without first looking at past copies of the journal. What

sort of material do they like? What wordage? Who else writes in it? (The company you keep is important!) What is the journal’s focus? There are important distinctions, for example, between new religious movements, Pagan studies, New Age studies, and esotericism, so the article must fit the relevant category. The journal’s editorial policy is usually stated on its website, and should indicate its focus, required word length, and formatting preferences. There is no harm in approaching an editor to ask informally whether a topic is of likely interest; this can sometimes save unnecessary waits and disappointments.

E-journals are now considered perfectly respectable, provided that they have the same quality assurance procedures as traditional ones. However, care needs to be exercised with open access publications, where the author pays the publisher a fee (typically £200-£300), once the article has been accepted. Unless you can get funding, this arrangement privileges wealthier researchers, and might be considered as an investment if it helps to get a job! But take care – there are some sharks around who pretend to edit prestigious journals, but in reality publish anything so long as they get paid. Getting involved with them will damage both your bank balance and your reputation! The BASR’s open access e-journal DISKUS does not charge its authors, but at present it does not invite unsolicited material. This may change – so keep checking its policy.

So far I have assumed that the reader is an author looking for a sympathetic editor. However, it is quite possible to get yourself headhunted, even in early career. Giving a good conference paper can be the gateway to an article. A journal may run a special edition on a theme into which your paper fits, and you may even find rival editors competing for your material.

Thesis chapters can also form the basis for a journal article, and a supervisor can advise on this. Be prepared to adapt the relevant section of a thesis, though: it needs to be free-standing, the appropriate length, and with its own aims and conclusions. You will also have a cast-iron response at a viva if an examiner asks what parts of your thesis are publishable.

Finding a mentor or a critical friend is important. As a post-graduate, I gained a lot from swapping material with other researchers. My first experience of this was when an older post-grad returned a section, with three entire pages of unrelenting criticism, and no praise whatsoever! Once my wounded pride had recovered, however, I realised that he had done a better favour than a well-intentioned friend who says that however we're doing, we're doing great! Developing a thicker skin to absorb frank criticism is vital for any good researcher. After many years of writing, I am still reluctant to submit material unless someone else has seen it.

Finally, in the words of life-coach Tony Robbins, "There is no such thing as failure. There are only results."

Although negative comments can be discouraging, they can always be used as opportunities to improve one's work. If you feel they are unjustified, they can still suggest ways in which to clear up possible misunderstandings and misplaced objections.

Those who want more detailed advice might like a free look at the introduction to Wendy Laura Belcher's *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks* at www.sagepub.com/upm-data/26605_1.pdf (The rest of the book is quite reexpensive, unfortunately.) More ambitiously, Inger Mewburn and Judy Maxwell promise completion in seven days, and offer their advice for free at www.slideshare.net/ingermewburn/write-that-journal-article-in-7-days-12742195



Inform Seminar: "Innovation, violence and paralysis: how do minority religions cope with uncertainty?"

Saturday 7th February 2015

New Academic Building, London School of Economics

What happens when groups lose control of their own destiny? Whether it leads to violence, as in the case of Aum Shinrikyo's response to a potential police investigation in 1995, or to non-violent innovations, as found in minority religions following the death of their founders or leaders, uncertainty and insecurity can lead to great change in the mission and even teachings of religious groups. What does it take to bring back certainty? Bringing together past and current members, as well as academics and practitioners this seminar will explore how minority religions and their members work with notions of uncertainty and insecurity.

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

TEACHING AND LEARNING:

HEA Fellowships – on Achieving a Fellowship Award and the Challenges of ‘Unmasking’ Personal Achievement

I would like to encourage colleagues to consider applying for HEA teaching fellowships. The benefits, according to the HEA, include:

- A distinguished mark of quality, consolidating your personal development to emphasise the professionalisation of good practice in your field of HE.

- For individuals, entitlement to use post-nominal letters (AFHEA, FHEA, SFHEA, PFHEA), which is indicative of the HEA's confidence in your continued success and eligibility to work towards the next level of fellowship.

- Increasingly sought by employers across the education sector as a condition of appointment and promotion. They provide a valuable measure of success and are increasingly recognised by international institutions, representing diligent and committed teaching academics.

- For HE providers, a vital indicator that your institution is fully aligned to UKPSF practice and a badge of assured quality throughout your organisation.

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition/hea-fellowships/benefits-hea-fellowship>

The ‘costs’ (there are no personal financial costs for members of ‘subscribing institutions’ to HEA: there

are some graded costs for non-affiliated colleagues) include providing evidence of personal achievements to merit the award. We have all applied for positions and roles that require strong assertions about our achievements and contributions to our fields of research and teaching. For many people, but not all, this can feel like an uncomfortable exercise in vainglory. Indeed, when I have endorsed the value of the HEA Fellowships for teaching, within my institution and across professional associations in the study of religions, colleagues comment on the self-affirming requirements of application. But as teachers we should know that development and learning require this review of success, as much as of failure. Taking time to reflect upon these elements of our practice is an ongoing part of each occasion we think about teaching sessions, or review and redesign our modules. Yet the systematic and careful compilation of a history of one's own teaching is both a bigger process, encompassing a wider and longer range of teaching situations, and it is a more nuanced process, including theories and ideologies of pedagogy in our personal biographies. Application for HEA fellowship is a process of deep and subtle review and recollection.

Moreover, engaging with the process of application is intrinsically rewarding. To recollect and recover one's own achievements and contributions to teaching is a positive learning experience; to hear about

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and discuss with peers their contributions and ideas is inspiring. Peer discussion is a core element of gathering evidence and reflection on teaching practice. One's colleagues can unmask complex values and originalities that we forget or take for granted.

It is possible to apply individually. Equally many institutions offer internal programmes or support systems for application, usually through relevant departments for professional development or human resources. These programmes offers structured means of gathering the evidence to make a claim for Fellowship.

I am not comfortable blowing my own trumpet, it's easier to sing praises of others than to self-promote. But I commend colleagues to think again about HEA fellowships as a means of engaging with the professional standards of HE teaching, and perhaps both recovering and uncovering personal achievements that deserve recognition and reward.

CONFERENCES



BASR ANNUAL CONFERENCE, MILTON KEYNES, 3-5 SEPT 2014.

This year's BASR conference, hosted at the Open University, was twin themed on the topics of "Religion, Art, and Performance" and "the Cutting Edge".

In the opening session three of the four of us were drawn to the panel on "Political Values of Religious Studies". An appeal no doubt brought on by the topic of the panel being the implications of outside politics on the study, publication and future of religious studies. An issue that no one of us can escape. Paul-Francois Tremlett questioned how our brains (biological response) contradicted our social acceptance (physical/cultural response). A discussion recently brought out by Donald Wiebe and Luther Martin's charge that we have a natural propensity to be religious. But, as Tremlett pointed out, this sort of appeal to biology can be just as political as the appeals to theology. Jeremy Carrette's paper on the

"salaried profundity" of university education work drew on an Adornian perspective in taking issue with the knowledge economy of religious studies, using the example of how William James is taught. Carrette in focusing on the significance of being paid to "think" (research) religion versus being paid to teach religion raises important questions on the nature of Religious Studies and our pedagogical imperatives.

These questions strongly related to the panel on the "Insider/Outsider Problem". Both George Chrystides and Stephen Gregg swiftly challenged these terms, however. Preferring "issue" to "problem" the speakers also traversed a far more varied terrain than a simple in/out binary: apostates and leave-takers, those with propensity or "structural availability" for adhering to particular groups, and ideas about translating and moving through religions rather than simplistic ideas of conversion. The issues they discussed could be seen playing out in the panel on

"Methods and Taxonomies". This potentially wide-ranging title included Anna Piela's reflections on feminist methodology in using Skype interviews in her work with Muslim women who choose to wear the niqab. This raised interesting questions of mediation and space to be navigated, as did Anja Pogacnik's outline of the gendered and religious social, spatial, and familial aspects of the lives of Jain women in Leicester. Carole Cusack presented a compelling case teasing out parallels between the actions and reception of 17th Century Ranters and 20th/21st Century followers of the Church of the Subgenius, in light of the broader question of classifying groups as "religious." Studying what people create when they create "fake religions" can be illuminating for what people take "real religions" to be.

Two of the bursaries were presenting in the conference's largest stream "Research among spirits, ghosts and deities – How to study non-ordinary realities" organised by David G. Wilson

and Bettina Schmidt. The stream opened with Fiona Bowie's keynote paper on "Transformational Encounters with Non-Ordinary Realities". Setting out her position on the subject, Bowie's paper forced us to question whether we can look beyond emic descriptions of non-ordinary realities to consider what they mean to people, and what they feel like. Drawing on the work of Edith Turner, Evans-Pritchard, and Ardener, Bowie argued that we, as researchers, need to move beyond our Anglo-Saxon tradition of recoiling from feeling, and begin to learn through the senses, through what she described as a "cognitive, empathetic engagement methodology" in the hope to get us to consider anew what it means to "feel fully human". Wilson's response made reference to his in-depth research into, and engagement with, Spiritualism, and supported much of Bowie's emphasis on body knowledge and the importance of engaging with transformational encounters in the field.

This was followed in the next panel on methodologies for approaching the question of "non-ordinary realities". The unquestionable (he was unfortunately not present) Jack Hunter provided a pre-recorded presentation on anthropology and parapsychology with an emphasis on considering altered states of consciousness concluding that a multi-disciplinary approach could question the "nature and meaning of human existence". Wilson's paper followed up his earlier response to Bowie's keynotes in its focus on studying spiritualist mediumship. Jonathan Tuckett then

bombastically (Beth's original description) closed out the panel with his discussion of the human prejudice. He argued loudly (Beth's revised description) that if we are to study non-ordinary realities then we must stop thinking of only humans as "selves".

The final panel of the stream focused on ethnographic work. Beth Singler spoke on her work studying Indigo



Leonard Primiano - Keynote

Children drawing on many of the key thinkers brought out in Bowie's keynote. The Indigo Children, who view themselves as ontological Others, offer up interesting parallel challenges to those scholars involved in studying spirits and ghosts. Schmidt's study of spirit possession focused on her work in São Paulo. Relating to earlier panels, Schmidt discussed the complex way in which the people undergoing such possessions view their experiences and how they are perceived by others.

A number of panels focused on the topic of ritual – specifically pilgrimages. The first opened with a roundtable discussion between Dionigi Albera, Marion Bowman and John Eade. During their discussion they covered a range of topics such as the examined the idea and study of shared shrines), the scholarly/institutional/vernacular use of the term 'pilgrimage' and more narrowly, the specific site of Lourdes in order to give a broader view of the idea of *communitas* and contestation of pilgrimage sites.

A later panel focused on "Muslims and Pilgrimage" which featured some drastically different papers: Mohammed Mesbahi explored the idea of a modern Muslim pilgrim, how today's technological, cultural and societal norms are affecting new generations of young Muslim pilgrims and how governments and communities are getting involved in dispersing the myths surrounding Islam. Nehad Khanfar analysed the Quranic understanding of the timing of the Hajj and its impact on the modern Hajj performance (and how they contradict not only the Quran and its message of inclusivity, but also how the holy pilgrimage could realistically be spread out to allow less tension on communities, pilgrims and governments who perform and control the mass influx of people travelling each year to Mecca). Finally, Ali Ali al-Hakum examined the artistic ritual of reciting poetry during the Hajj, with both its holy and profane exemplars.

Continuing the theme of ritual, the

panel on “Ritual, Therapy and Experience” approached these themes in different cases and in different styles. Richard Roberts gave an autobiographically resonant presentation, speaking of music, choirs and healing, though not without some conflict. Yael Katz-Henkin followed this with investigations on the function of ritual in Wicca and Pagan practice in Israel, before Aled Thomas compared two narratives featuring religious experience in the Tintin books; the three papers offering an implicit juxtaposition of ways of representing, discussing and valuing experience.

The theme of ritual was then expanded upon in the panel on “Performing religious alterity” which explored different aspects of embodied religious practice, discourse and identity. Rebecca Lynch brought a medical anthropology perspective to bear on her consideration of the bodily causes and effects relating to the devil and the holy spirit in Trinidad. Owen Coggins also discussed the body and how the body is discussed, as well as the ways time and space are ritualised, in a survey of religious symbols and images circulating around an extreme heavy metal subgenre. Finally, Deirdre Nuttall provided some evocative examples of the assertion and performance of an Irish Protestant identity, such as the contested meanings of wearing Poppies and the prohibition of working on Sundays, sometimes at great economic cost.

These discussions were of relevance to the panel on “Religion and the Performing Arts”. Catharine Christof’s energetic presentation explored how Gurdjieff’s ideas arose in the theatre of Polish director Jerzy Grotowski,

while Laurie Milner also drew lines of influence through the works of Jackson Pollock and John Cage. Nick Hanks then demonstrated as well as explained how some of Clive Barker’s ideas about theatrical space are exemplified in rituals and places from stone circles to Anglican liturgy and marriage ceremonies.

Closely related to these were the panels on “Materialities of Religious Engagement” and “Visual Cultures



and Display”. In the first panel Carmen Tomfohrde spoke on Polynesian and their relation to Christian conversions between 1790-1830. Aleks Knuutila then discussed an evangelical community in inner-city Austin. This geographically specific group was then juxtaposed by Jaspreet Kaur’s paper on the development of community and interconnectedness through social media by Sikhs. Together all three papers highlighted the vastly different way that materiality (whether physical, emotional or technological) and religion have interacted throughout

the centuries. The latter panel was very focused on the modern audience and how religions continue to engage with their faithful (or tourists) in ways that reflect on the past, present and future generations. Marion Bowman examined the Krakow szopka tradition of local people building extravagant nativity scenes for display throughout the Christmas season. Jasleen Kandhari gave a broad survey of the modern Sikh practice of portraiture in manuscript illumination and painting. And Lyndsey Smith considered the modern display and performance of religion in Museums (the British Museum), Heritage Sites (Hagia Sophia, Istanbul) and Religious Properties (Santiago de Compostella, Spain).

This year’s Keynote lecture was given by Leonard Primiano who gave a fascinating talk on his work with “sister” Ann Ameen. Sister Ann was a self-professed Evangelical Christian Missionary known for her religious folk art. She was also a liar. Primiano’s discussion focused on an ethnographic informant well aware that her personal history did not match with her religious beliefs or the

sensibilities of her fellow Newfoundlanders. Not only was this an interesting foray into “material religion” it was a reflection upon the methodological difficulties that informants can present to a scholar.

Nor can a BASR conference report go without mentioning of the RSP exploits either. This year featured recording of Masterbrain with contestants being grilled by Jonathan Tuckett on their RS general knowledge and a specialist topic (and religion) of their choosing. In the hot seat were Stephen Gregg (Buffy the

Vampire Slayer), Beth Singler (Game of Thrones), Carole Cusack (Bob Marley), and David Robertson (The Beatles).

Several panels focused on questions of religion/secular. First there was “Islam and the performance of ideology”, a politically and secular based panel, Stephanie Sinclair and Driss Bouyahya examined two modern instances of Islam and modern politics clashing over perceived ideological actions, such as the recent “Trojan Horse Plot” in Birmingham schools and the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco. In a second panel Liam Sutherland headed up discussions of Scotland’s religiosity and national identity. A timely discussion with the Referendum looming at the time. His paper discussed the roles of Christianity in the creation of the “Scottish Identity”, particular at a time when it is considered to be in decline. This was counterpoised by the virtual presence of Chris Duncan speaking on the presence of the Hindu Temple in Edinburgh and how its various attendants negotiate their identities as, for example, “ethnic Hindus” or “worldview Hindus”.

The third panel on the “arts and the contest of religious and secular space” drew our attention to the role and cultural significance of monuments. Nickolas Conrad’s discussion of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Paris and the statue of Jean-François Lefebvre de la Barre gave us an overview of historical transitions and transformations. Referring to Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory, Conrad argued that these monuments form a part of the developing, and contested, memory of what is ‘France’. A fascinating paper by Faye Haun described the excommunication of actors in France between 1761 and 1766. This was a key

battleground in the disputed boundary making between civil and religious matters, and the moral dangers of the theatre became a flag pole for the Jansonists who had come to dominate the order of barristers. Moving away from France, the final paper by Eve Seegers considered the visual representations of Tibetan Buddhist Art in Europe through a particular Stupa project in Spain. Stupas are adopting contemporary meanings without losing traditional functions. Visual representations of the stupa were explored, with descriptions of the physical spaces that encapsulate and present to visitors. These three papers were extremely visually engaging and the cultural artefacts they discussed were extremely key illustrations of the religious, civil divide and contestation.

Owen Coggins, Beth Singler, Lyndsey Smith and Jonathan Tuckett

CESNUR– 4-7 JUNE 2014, BAYLOR UNIVERSITY, WACO, TEXAS

Many conferences have very broadly defined themes, to avoid having to turn away good papers. The theme of this year’s annual conference was “The Vitality of New Religions: Thinking Globally, Existing Locally”, although – in case this theme was insufficiently broad – participants were invited additionally to offer contributions on topics on which there are currently working.

The intended focus was physical space – “the global visions projected by new religion and their attempts to embody their vision in local centers” – and this elicited some papers on spiritual tourism, as well as very localised expressions of religions, for example Soto Zen in Peru and the revival of paganism in Israel. Other participants

interpreted “local” somewhat more broadly, offering papers on the Unification Church in Japan, and Religious Freedom in the West. To other presenters the word “vitality” suggested health, and there were papers on the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ position on spiritual healing, Christian Science, and the spiritual dimension of chiropractic.

One important feature of CESNUR conferences is that there are usually exponents of new religions as well as academics. In one of the sessions a family from the Twelve Tribes spoke at a plenary session about the controversial theme of parenting and discipline in the organisation.

None of us like to admit skipping sessions, but probably most of us do it. One session that did not appeal was a two-and-a-half- hour long marathon on rather obscure Korean new religions – with no alternative parallel session. A quick look into the chapel, where the plenaries were held, indicated that most participants also opted for some extra free time. I was only glad that I had not been asked to chair it!

CESNUR conferences typically end with an optional field visit. On this occasion participants visited the Homestead Heritage– a neo-Mennonite community of around 1500 residents. While some of the attendees spent the entire afternoon there, the rest of us went on to the famous Mount Carmel site where David Koresh’s Branch Davidians were based. The site has changed somewhat since the last CESNUR conference was held in Waco in 2004: the Visitors Center has been closed, and the victims’ monuments have been brought together and repositioned near the entrance. At the beginning of the conference Catherine Wessinger, who has written

extensively about Koresh's movement, give a detailed analysis of the 1993 siege, with particular reference to the FBI's account.

For those who want to read some of the papers, the cyber proceedings are located

www.cesnur.org/2014/waco-cyberpro.htm Next year's conference is due to be held in Estonia; and details will be announced on the CESNUR website.

George D. Chryssides

EUROPEAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION'S SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION RESEARCH NETWORK, BELFAST, SEPT 3-5 2014.

In September 2014 I had the pleasure to attend the European Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Research Network conference, hosted at the Assembly Buildings in the heart of Belfast city centre. My attendance at this conference was a somewhat strange experience for three distinctly subjective

reasons. First of all, having grown up less than ten miles from the conference venue, it was lovely to be back in Northern Ireland, seeing familiar places through the lens of 'work' – such as the fabulous surroundings of Belfast City Hall where we were treated to a civic reception – and catching up with my family in the late evening after hard day's conferencing. Secondly, I was attending the conference having been invited, in my capacity as co-founder of the Religious Studies Project (RSP), to serve on a panel discussion towards

the end of the conference, focusing on the conference's theme: 'Religion in the Public Domain'. Consequently I viewed the whole conference with that specific goal in mind, and much of what was said in that presentation is reflected in this report. Finally, the



Participants look at the Memorial to the 1993 Mount Carmel Centre victims.

conference clashed completely with the BASR annual conference... and that made me very sad. Not only did I feel somewhat out of place at a sociology of religion conference, but the whole experience felt a bit like I was betraying my BASR family. Thankfully I got a lot out of the experience, and enjoyed myself in spite of the guilt... hopefully the BASR will welcome back their prodigal son in 2015!

The conference took place from 3-5 September and was organized around seven groups of parallel sessions, three keynote lectures – from Prof. John Brewer (Queen's University Belfast), Prof. Linda Woodhead (Lancaster) and Dr Erin Wilson (Groningen) – and the panel discussion with myself, James Kapalo (University College Cork) and Véronique Altglas (Queen's University Belfast). Parallel sessions covered a broad range of topics, with regional themes – 'Religion in...' Russia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Germany etc. – and those constructed with the all-powerful 'and' – 'Religion and...' Gender, Politics, Public Engagement, Public Policy, LGBT Issues etc. – dominating.

A couple of papers that particularly stood out were those of Annamaria Orla-Bukowska and Anthony-Paul Cooper. Orla-Bukowska's paper – How Private the Omnipresent Symbol? Non-Christian Perceptions of the Cross in the Public

Domain – focused upon the simultaneous embeddedness and invisibility of the 'Christian' cross in particular contexts, demonstrating that particular constituencies, 'religious' or 'secular', can experience 'othering' independent of any intent behind the perceived cause of this 'othering', be that the cross on a Swiss Army knife, or the presentation of the letter 't' in some fonts. Cooper's paper on 'Using geo-enriched Twitter data to uncover hidden church populations' presented a highly innovative methodology for

utilizing the range of free data that is at our disposal through Twitter to literally map particular types of self-declared 'religious' activity. Although he was keen to stress the limitations of this approach, he left his audience with little doubt that careful triangulation from thousands of tweets can present researchers with an alternative, below the radar and up-to-date snapshot of the activities of a particular constituency in dense urban centres that can stand alongside, complement, and potentially subvert more established research methods.

Naturally, given the calibre of the keynote speakers, each of their lectures gave me lots of food for thought. John Brewer's address on 'The Public Value of the Sociology of Religion' built a convincing case for how the 'sociology of religion' enfeebled itself with its obsession with secularization to the point where it seemed like the sociology of secularization', and argued that the sociology of religion can be a major part of 'regenerating society for the twenty-first century' through a focus on peacebuilding, life, death, gender, sexuality, the body, addressing the 'global democratic deficit', and so on. Linda Woodhead presented on 'How Public Religion has Changed now that 'Church and State' isn't the only Game in Town', tracing the history of the relationship between religion and the state – particularly in the UK – and discussing the impact of processes of de-compartmentalization, de-traditionalization, marketization, and globalization, upon this relationship. Erin Wilson's paper was entitled 'Global Justice in a Postsecular Public Domain: Challenges and Possibilities'. In it, she presented some fascinating insights particularly relating to the interaction between 'religion' and NGOs oriented toward 'development' where, for example, in some contexts, 'faith-based' NGOs utilize 'secular'

language to achieve their goals, and in others 'secular' NGOs employ contextually effective 'theological' arguments for similar purposes. Finally, in our closing panel discussion on the conference theme, Véronique, James and I – despite having attended our own idiosyncratic selection of panels throughout the conference – raised a number of similar points concerning the problematic notion of 'public' and the extent to which scholars of 'religion' should be involved in this domain. It is to my specific comments on these related areas that I wish to turn in concluding this report.

One basic point that I did not hear addressed head-on at the conference concerned what exactly we mean by 'public' when we speak of 'Religion in the Public Domain'. If by 'public' we mean 'not private', then a further question might be does it make any sense to speak of 'private religion'? Setting aside the perilous question of defining 'religion', mustn't all 'religion' be in the public domain, in some sense, to make it relevant or meaningful for sociological study? It seemed to me, from many of the papers that I heard at the conference, that what might be meant in discussions of 'religion in the public domain' is equivalent to 'religion in the secular domain'; 'religion out of place'; 'religion resurging in a place where it is visibly different'. If this is the case, by potentially reifying the distinction between the 'public domain' and the 'private', scholars also risk reifying a dichotomy between the 'religious' and the 'secular', as if social actors cannot occupy positions within both constructed camps, and as if they are coherent homogeneous categories that are consistently dominant in encounters at all levels of society.

Setting aside issues surrounding this

public/private distinction, my final point concerns the extent to which the social scientific study of religion should participate in this domain. Many of the papers at this conference – particularly Brewer's keynote – raised a lot of questions in my mind not only about what 'the public value of the sociology of religion' is, but also about whether having 'public value' is of value to the sociology of religion, or the social scientific study of religion more generally. To which 'public' should we want to have value? The current political and economic elites in our respective countries? Minority or oppressed communities? The 'religious', 'religious institutions', or 'religion' in general? While I absolutely understand the need for academics to defend their privileged position, particularly in these current hard economic times, if we are constantly trying to give society what it wants – i.e. to have a 'public value' – are we therefore complicit in the very power structures and politics of the society we purport to study? Is that a problem? Is it our job to try and change society? More provocatively, is it our job to try and change 'religion'? We might all be personally implicated in these societal discourses, but might our job as academics not be to attempt to rise above these? Are we the protectors of a phenomenon called 'religion' that objectively exists? Are we observers of societal discourses which politically invest certain phenomena with 'religious' or 'sacred' status? I know how I would choose to answer these questions, but I also know that there are many who would disagree with me.

Clearly there is a lot more to (the study of) 'Religion in the Public Domain' than first meets the eye. These few days in Belfast, hearing perspectives from across Europe and beyond, asking questions, interrogating categories, and enjoying

great hospitality and friendly banter, provided an excellent opportunity to begin to tackle some of these questions. With any luck, we may yet come up with some answers.

Thanks to Gladys Ganiel and all at the ESA Sociology of Religion Research Network for this wonderful opportunity. Do look out for the RSP podcasts with Kevin Gray on 'The Post-secular' and Véronique Altglas on 'Bricolage' recorded at this conference.

Christopher R Cotter
University of Lancaster

SOCIETY FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY
OF RELIGION AND THE RELIGIOUS
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION,
INDIANAPOLIS, OCT 31 - NOV 2 2014

On October 31 – November 2, the Marriot Hotel of downtown Indianapolis, Indian hosted the 2014 annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) in conjuncture with the Religious Research Association (RRA). The major theme for SSSR was “Building Bridges” and beautifully illustrated on the program cover by Kenan Sevinc. From my understanding, this was the first year that the program was in color. This theme had several interpretations in which it meant building bridges within the study of religion, cross discipline research, and across countries, just to name a few. The major theme for RRA was Revisiting Gender and Religion. The program chair for this conference was Dr. Ralph W. Hood Jr. from The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

The first day of the conference began with several sessions during the morning. The overall topics were quite broad ranging from “Research Perspective on the Church of

England,” “Biological and Evolutionary Aspects of Religion,” and “Navigating ‘Norms’ in Society,” among many others. One such presentation from “Navigating ‘Norms’ in Society” was by Cory Anderson from Ohio State University who spoke of the Amish-Mennonite culture of Central America. Anderson spoke of his time living with different Amish-Mennonite communities in Central America and the conversation of non-born Amish-Mennonites into the faith. Interestingly, this religion is growing in popularity in this area. Presentations such as these continued until 11:30 in which a lunch was served in honor of all new members to the society and to present award to many of the presenters. Further, several business items were discussed during this lunch. Of interest, the conference boasted a record number of individual paper acceptances (over 430), 70 organized sessions, and more than 600 people from different backgrounds in attendance. Additionally, 36 different countries were represented through various paper presentations. Although the program chair and committee were concerned that attendance would be sparse due to holding the conference on Halloween, it is clear from these number that this was not the case.

Following the lunch, sessions began again with diverse topics such as “Young People, Religion and Diversity,” Language, Theology, and Space,” and “Advances in Prayer Research.” Of special interest was the panel titled “Secularism & Nonreligion Journal – panel on Atheism and Secularism,” convened by Barry Kosmin. Several researchers presented including John Shook from the University of Buffalo, Ryan Cragun from the University of Tampa, Christopher Silver from the University of Tennessee, and Thomas J. Coleman III from The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. This panel boasted one

of the highest attendances in the conference with standing room only in the back. Specifically, “The Six Types of Nonbelief,” by Silver, presented a new taxonomy system for identifying different types of atheism and secularism. Following the completion of the last presentations for the day, Oxford University Press hosted a new book reception followed by an address by the president of RRA, Joy Charlton from Swarthmore College entitled “Revisiting Gender and Religion,” in concurrence with the RRA theme. The day concluded with three receptions for Graduate Students held at TGI Fridays and a special reception hosted by outgoing SSSR president Jim Richardson honoring those that attended from outside of the USA. A general reception was also held for anyone in attendance to attend.

Saturday began with several paper sessions in the morning with topics ranging from “Church Renewal and Evangelization,” “Sex and Religion,” and “Religion in China” to mention a few. Jun Lu from Purdue University presented on the Chinese governments leading propaganda news source’s inclusion of Christianity in many of its articles. Interestingly, many of these articles were in favor of the religion. Following the many morning presentation, a special plenary lecture was held honoring Dr. Jack Shand titled “Legacy: Who was Jack Shand?” The program chair, Dr. Hood, personally requested this presentation be prepared and presented. Dr. Shand was a member of the Society and upon his death donated a generous gift to SSSR. This presentation was based on an examination of the unprocessed archives of Dr. Shand providing a nice glimpse into his history and his legacy. Following a break for lunch, the conference continued with more panels such as “Religious and So

Identity,” “Research on Pentecostalism,” and “Exploring Catholicism.” One very interesting (and quite unique) presentation by Joshua Ambrosuis was on religion’s impact on space exploration. Ambrosuis suggested that many religions that are opposed to space travel may experience a decline if space colonization does occur in the future due to not making themselves available to those that do colonize space. The day concluded with a presidential address by James Richardson from the University of Nevada entitled, “Managing Religion and the ‘Judicialization’ of Religious Freedom” followed by a reception for anyone in attendance. Following the reception, a special plenary was held providing the debut of Andrew Johnson’s documentary entitled, “If I Give My Soul: Pentecostalism in Rio’s Prisons.”

The final day of the conference had a slightly smaller attendance due to many scholars having to catch plane flights early that morning or even the

previous evening. Sunday’s schedule was the same as the previous days with the exception that only morning presentations were given. These presentations ranged from several topics including “God, the Father: Influences of God Attachment and Image,” “Religion, From the East to the West,” and “Young People, Religion and Diversity.” Of special interest was the author meets critic session, “Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity” by Dr. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi. This was one of the more popular sessions purely based on the number in attendance, especially considering the decrease in those there and it being one of the last sessions. This session, of which I had the honor to convene, allowed three other scholars to comment and critique Dr. Beit-Hallahmi’s book. These “critics” included Dr. Michael Nielsen from Southern Georgia University, Coleman (mentioned previously), and Dr. David Wulff from Wheaton College. Dr. Beit-Hallahmi was allowed to address and comment on each criticism or question posed by

the three “critics.” The panel ended with a large picture session with Dr. Beit-Hallahmi, the critics, audience members, and I.

Overall, the conference included several diverse presentations and was able to boast several record breaking achievements. Many disciplines were represented with scholars representing History, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, different religious affiliations and church denominations, and many others. To my dismay as a psychologist, psychology was somewhat less represented in comparison to many of the other disciplines. Considering the overall theme of Building Bridges and cross collaborative research, I hope to see this discipline increase in attendance in upcoming conferences. The next annual meeting of SSSR and RRA will be held October 23 – 25th, 2015 in Newport Beach California. A call for papers has already been issued.

Robert Arrowood, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

BOOKS RECEIVED

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

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

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

***The Public Face of African New Religious Movements in Diaspora.* Adogame, A. (ed.), Ashgate/INFORM, 2014.**

***Love, Drugs, Art Religion: The Pains and Consolations of Existence.* Clack, B. Ashgate, 2014. .**

***God, Mind and Knowledge.* Moore, A. (ed.) Ashgate, 2014.**

***Christianity in the Modern World: Changes and Controversies.* Vincett, G. and Obinna, E. (eds.) Ashgate, 2014.**

***Freedom of Speech and Islam.* Kolig, E. (ed.) Ashgate, 2014.**

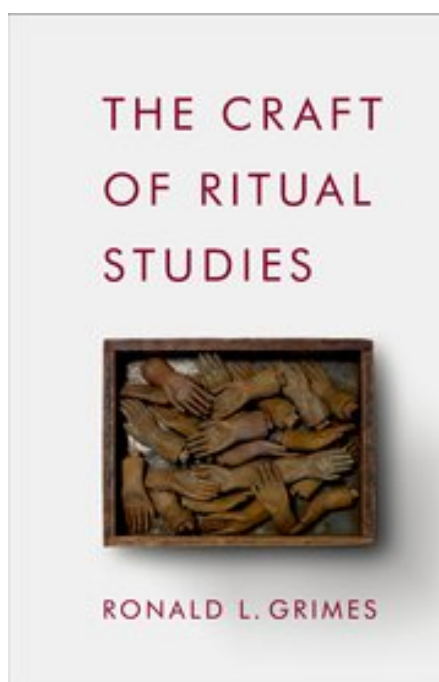
REVIEWS

THE CRAFT OF RITUAL STUDIES. RONALD L. GRIMES, 2014. OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Ronald Grimes' *The Craft of Ritual Studies* is essentially an introductory manual for both undergraduate and postgraduate students engaging with the anthropological study of ritual. Grimes, a well-established authority on the theoretical and ethnographic study of ritual, presents a pragmatic and coherent mapping of the major methodologies and theoretical expositions for the study of ritual, intertwined with his own voluminous ethnographic accounts of the Santa Fe Fiesta.

The first section of the book approaches methodology as neither science or art, but as a "craft" (11). He introduces the technicalities, formalities, and details for planning, conducting, and presenting a research project on ritual strongly advocating "the value and necessity of carrying out ethnographic, historical, literary, and videographic tasks when studying in the field." (12). Upon reading this section I said to myself, "I wish he had written this when I was an undergraduate anthropology student", as it confronts and resolves complex issues that a novice researcher is not always aware of. Reflecting on the affairs of fieldworking ritual as an enterprise of participant observation, ethnography and media, Grimes addresses in a concise and informative fashion how to engage reflectively with descriptions and representations of

ritual behaviour, including emic and etic narration, hermeneutics, and ritual criticism. Based on his own manifold experiences with the Santa Fe Fiesta as a fieldworker and ethnographer, Grimes repeatedly emphasises the fundamental relationship between ritual and performance. However, he also



astutely compares rituals to books as both are entrenched in patterns of meaning and articulation "contained by a cosmos and located in one or more geography and ambient ecology" (55). Hopefully readers will contemplate this further and apply this comparison as a methodological preparation for the multifaceted challenges of encountering from multiple positions the empirical reality of ritual as a collection of many possible scenarios. My only minor critique of this section is that Grimes

could have included more ethnographic case studies to demonstrate further a diversity of methodological approaches to the complexities of fieldworking ritual.

In regards to the theoretical section of the book I have to admit that I was not greatly impressed, but this was due to my concerns regarding Grimes' overambitious attempt to present an array of definitive theories regarding the ontology and epistemology of ritual performance within limited textual space. Despite this, Grimes' arguments concerning the hazards of just relying on theory when studying ritual and not ethnographic fieldwork demonstrate his expertise and insight as an experienced ritologist. By identifying the centrality of the dispute that haunts the relationship of theory and ritual, with the former in academic parlance having a superior status and the latter in popular parlance as having the superior, Grimes exposes the challenges of researching ritual in terms of the relationship of theory and practice. However, he wisely clarifies that this dualism does not always reflect the reality of the ethnographic study of ritual, as most scholars studying ritual do so based on fieldwork practice and most ritualists theorise about their own performances in testimonies of self-representation.

In continuum Grimes briefly discusses the strengths and weaknesses of critical responses to constructing theories about rituals addressing the works of Bourdieu and Bell, before

examining how various established researchers have come to define ritual, such as Turner, Rappaport, Smith, Lawson and McCauley. Grimes' critical input to this discussion relates to the troublesome affair of attempting to limit the interpretative vastness of ritual phenomena without reflecting on whether the categorisation of ritual is a sociocultural reality or an anthropological invention. By further exploring ritual modes and methods of mapping ritual in comparison to arenas of performance such as sport, music, and theatre, Grimes exhibits the diverse nature of ritual, and also presents definitive elements research, such as how the active rationale of ritual may shape modes of embodiment and cognition, for both students and novice researchers.

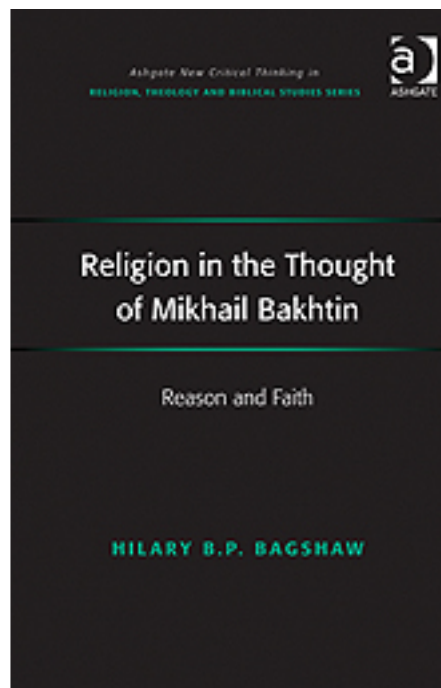
Grimes' approach to the troublesome relationship between theory, method and other areas of interpretation, such as criticism, representation, and the positioning of the emic and etic in ethnographic accounts is a constructive argument. However, the development of this argument could have been more inclusive if Grimes had presented further references examining the key theories of ritual he introduces instead of just presenting them, dismissing them, and then hastily moving on. This critique of mine though is mainly due to the fact that whilst reading the theoretical section I gained the impression that *The Craft of Ritual Studies* should have consisted of two volumes, with the Santa Fe Fiesta acting as the underlying structure informing a more inclusive volume on method and another on theory. This, in my opinion, would have produced a strategic study of ritual engaging in a more critically expansive manner with ritual theory and how it shapes and is shaped by method, concluding with an open discussion about further

developments in the method and theory of ritual.

Damon Zacharias Lycourinos
University of Edinburgh

RELIGION IN THE THOUGHT OF MIKHAIL BAKHTIN: REASON AND FAITH. HILARY B. P. BAGSHAW, 2013. FARNHAM AND BURLINGTON, VT: ASHGATE.

This slim volume is Hilary Bagshaw's doctoral research, which is of considerable interest to Religious Studies academics and students for two principal reasons. The first is that, although the work of the Russian polymath Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975)



has been drawn upon by a range of humanities scholars, it has to date not been integrated into the methodological frameworks of the academic study of religion in any real way. Bakhtin, a philosopher, semiotician, and literary critic, has been influential mainly in linguistics, literary theory, aesthetics, and cultural history. The second is that Bagshaw's book is a direct rejoinder to the one study that proposed Bakhtin could resolve issues intractable problems in

the phenomenological approach that dominated Religious Studies for much of the twentieth century, Gavin Flood's *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion* (1999).

The 'Introduction' economically provides biographical details for Bakhtin, gives a broad-brush treatment of the state of philosophy and theology in the Russia of his youth, and distinguishes carefully between Bakhtin's personal religious views and religious interpretations of his life and work by biographers and critics. Chapter 2, 'Themes from Philosophy of Religion', begins with the influence of two figures, Herman Cohen (1842-1918) and Max Scheler (1874-1928), on Bakhtin's early thought. This opens up a consideration of themes in Bakhtin's writings, such as the centrality of the self, understood in the act as 'I-for-myself, the-other-for-me, and me-for-the-other' (p. 27), the intimate relationship of aesthetics and ethics, the idea of unfinalizability, 'the perspective of the individual subject on his or her own life, where the subject never knows the end of the story' (p. 33), and its connection with Christian-derived notions such as confession, redemption, and divine grace.

Chapter 3, 'Myth, Religion and Language', traces Bakhtin's relationship to figures in the group known as the 'Marburg neo-Kantians' (p. 47), including the above-mentioned Cohen, Paul Natorp (1854-1912), and the best-known Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945). Bagshaw's clear writing style and patience in exposition renders what could be a mass of detail comprehensible and logical. Here Cassirer's three-volume *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1923-1929), which treated respectively language, mythical thought, and

phenomenology of knowledge, is central. Both Cassirer and Bakhtin seek a reconciliation of Kantian and Hegelian perspectives. After noting that Bakhtin drew no sharp distinction between myth and religion, in Chapter 4, 'The History of Genre and the Secularization of Literature', Bagshaw looks at interpretations of why Bakhtin began writing on literature (including that he could not speak openly about religion and so disguised what he wished to say, a largely unsupported over-reading). Her focus is 'Bakhtin's ideas on the history of literature and its place in the philosophy of culture' (p. 65).

In Chapter 5, 'Carnival and Carnavalesque Literature' Bagshaw expounds on the Bakhtin who is most well-known in Anglophone scholarly circles, the champion of Rabelais and proponent of the cathartic qualities of the carnival. Bagshaw demonstrates that many of Bakhtin's ideas on this subject are derived from English anthropologists such as Edward Burnett Tylor, author of *Primitive Culture* (two volumes, 1871) and James G. Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough* (twelve volumes, 1890-1915). These scholars are important for the developing discipline of Religious Studies, and provide a bridge to Chapter 6, 'Can Bakhtin's Work be Applied to the Study of Religion?' In this chapter she evaluates Flood's *Beyond Phenomenology*, acknowledging that very few scholars have attempted to critically assess the relevance of his introduction of a Bakhtinian dialogical approach to solve the apparent difficulties besetting the phenomenology of religion. She concludes that Flood has correctly identified issues and 'makes an appeal to dialogical theory that is coherent, but only loosely based upon Bakhtin's work' (p. 109). He has read Bakhtin selectively, and his conclusion that Bakhtin's 'work ... support[a] a claim

to overturn philosophical phenomenology with an epistemology based on language' (p. 114) is false.

Chapter 7, 'Outsidedness', argues that Bakhtin's original conception that the 'outsider sees more than an insider' (p. 115) can be profitably employed in the academic study of religion, as it intersects with a number of methodological debates (the insider/outsider – or emic/etic – distinction, the difference between understanding and explanation, and between theological approaches and social scientific approaches, and so on). This chapter reviews these methodological flashpoints and charts a clear path in favour of the Bakhtinian idea that '[b]eing in the same position as someone else adds nothing to the sum of knowledge or artistic creation, and the artist's ability to donate artistic form on the object or hero requires an unmerged perspective' (p. 127). This very interesting book deserves a wide readership. It is genuinely new and interesting, as greater numbers of Bakhtinian texts are drawn into conversation with each other (as more translations become known and the critical literature expands) and the relevance of his thought to the academic study of religion is unquestionably demonstrated. Bagshaw deserves to be congratulated on such a fresh and invigorating study.

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM: COLLECTED ESSAYS OF BRYAN S. TURNER. BRYAN S. TURNER AND KAMALUDEEN MOHAMED NASIR (EDS.), 2013. FARNHAM AND BURLINGTON, VT: ASHGATE.

The Sociology of Islam is a collection

of essays published as part of Ashgate's series on Contemporary Thought in the Islamic World. The series editor, Carole Kersten, identifies the need to 'challenge deeply ingrained dichotomies and binaries' in his introduction to this work and certainly the Sociology of Islam presents many avenues in which to rethink established paradigms within contemporary research in Islam. The book itself is edited by Bryan Turner and his colleague Professor Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir.

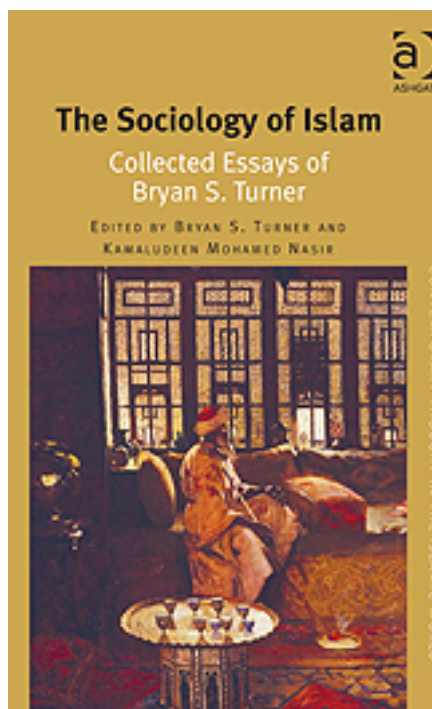
As a PhD student currently completing a doctorate that involves ethnographic research on a British mosque, I have naturally flirted with a variety of scholarly works that can be classed either as the sociology of religion or the sociology of Islam. Bryan Turner is a name that has repeatedly presented itself within these fields. Despite this, I never felt I had a grasp of the author or his ideas other than knowing he was significant. The Sociology of Islam thus presented itself as a way to acquaint myself with the author, the debates he has contributed to, and his immense contribution to the field of Islamic studies and particularly research concerned with contemporary Islamic societies. For others who have likewise come across the name Turner and desire a greater understanding of the scholar, this provides an invaluable reader drawn from his corpus of works.

The book is divided into three sections. These are prefaced by a general introduction, authored by Nasir, which outlines the key themes of the work as well as providing an orientating biography of Turner. Following this, Turner himself introduces each section, exploring the key ideas, debates and arguments which run through the section's collection of essays and papers.

Section I, titled 'Classic Approaches – Understanding Islam' looks at one of Turner's key influences, Max Weber. Turner's use of Weber is defended in the chapters that follow, and importantly, for those interested in understanding how Weber's key ideas as a sociologist of religion relate to Islam, there is no surer or more capable a guide than Turner. The second section moves to look at Orientalism, a key theme not only of Turner's career but also of contemporary Islamic studies more generally. The section is titled 'Orientalist Debate – Positioning Islam'. A simple description might call Turner a critic of Edward Said's Orientalism, this section however shows Turner engaging with the issues raised by Said's Orientalism rather than dismissing them, and articulating Turner's own vision of a self-aware sociology, influenced strongly by Bourdieu's writings on reflexivity. The final section, 'Islam Today – Sociological Perspectives' examines the issues facing contemporary societies, connecting the political reality of Weber's era (Islam vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire) to more recent realities (a significant Muslim diaspora, and the emergent paradigms of multiculturalism and secularism). The section also includes an essay that is a worthy introduction to one of Turner's most significant contributions to the field, a sociology conscious of the body. His co-authored paper "The Body and Piety: The Hijab and Marriage" examines religiosity amongst Muslims in Singapore, and though not explicitly, builds on the work of Bourdieu.

The *Sociology of Islam* is a useful collection. Although at times some sections are repetitive, it is rarely a distraction and a feature one would expect with an edited collection (and presumably, few readers would engage with the book by reading it

cover to cover). The text does not set out to be an introduction or comprehensive outlining of the



existing field of the sociology of Islam (though the title may mislead some), but is rather a valuable insight into the works of a single scholar who has greatly shaped the field over the past few decades. Taken alongside other texts, such as Tugrul Keskin's 2012 publication under the same title and works classed under the bracket of the anthropology of Islam, *The Sociology of Islam* provides a relatively short but thorough insight into the field. The book will also have immense utility to those interested in Weber as a sociologist of religion and how his theories, terms and sociological understandings can be applied in a 21st century context in research with Muslims and Islam.

Abdul-Azim Ahmed
University of Cardiff

REVISIONISM AND DIVERSIFICATION
IN NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS.
EILEEN BARKER (ED), 2013. FARNHAM
AND BURLINGTON, VT:

ASHGATE/INFORM.

This volume continues Barker's recent focus on how NRMs develop in the long-term, echoing her own long term involvement in the field. Much of her current research considers how the individuals within NRMs are affected by aging; this volume, however, considers how the NRMs themselves age - or rather, how their authorities choose to portray them as their social context and power structures change over time.

Such research is timely in two ways. First, it is a very good example of the general move in RS away from construction religion in terms of monolithic, eternal, authoritative traditions towards one which sees a vast matrix of competing and overlapping interpretations and appropriations of many different narratives and cultural systems. This is significant, because if such an approach is fully adopted, it promises the flourishing of RS into a discipline distinct from its theological roots and in sync with contemporary sociology and the social sciences more generally. Secondly, it is in keeping with a trend in the study of contemporary religious narratives (both more institutionalised forms like NRMs and less distinct forms of popular religion like New Age) to examine them seriously as culturally located phenomena with their own genealogies and their own fields of power. Indeed, these two academic trends are related - defending a construction of certain traditions as authentic institutions has often been at the cost of constructing other forms as marginal, through stressing their impermanence, small numbers and, often, deviance.

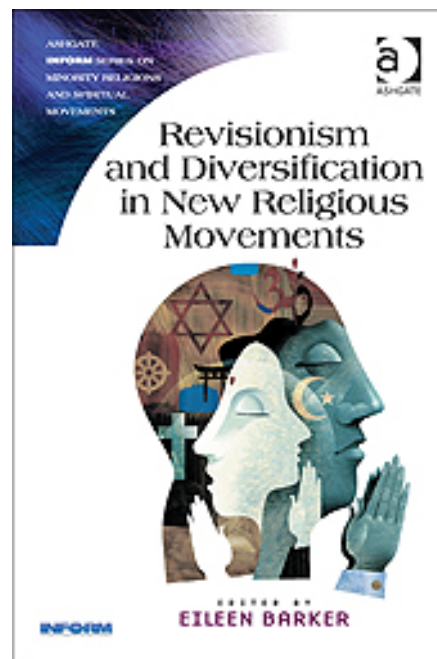
Therefore, I enjoyed reading it a great deal. After Barker's editorial introduction, the book proper opens

with chapters on the “old new religions” - the Family International, ISKCON and the Unification Church, each of which sets out histories of vacillating claims and agendas through the postwar period. Many chapters - Hugh Urban on Scientology, Massimo Introvigne on the Mormons, Erica Baffelli on Aum Shinrikyo and James W. Tong on Falun Gong - break little new ground, but nevertheless might provide excellent entry-level introductions to contemporary scholarship which would be of particular use in teaching on NRMs. The most interesting material is found in those chapters concerned with more obscure groups, however. Susan Palmer’s chapter, *La Mission de l’Esprit-Saint: One Hundred Years of Prophecies and Schisms in a Quebecois NRM*, paints a particularly vivid picture of an early 20th Century Christian sect in its fissiparous journey to the modern day. Eugene Clay’s chapter on the Orthodox Church of the Sovereign Mother of God is an excellent case study on the construction and maintenance of hagiographic narratives, in this case of the founder Blessed Father John. Ironically, officials of the New Cathar Church have been permitted to respond to the more controversial assertions in the chapter.

Interestingly, a chapter on the anti-cult movement in the US is included. This is interesting not only because these groups have been responsible for many of the revisions aforementioned in the volume, but because the movement has undergone a number of schisms and revisions itself, reminding us that these mechanisms do not apply exclusively to religious groups. The volume concludes with a reflective chapter by David Bromley which brings the theoretical threads of the volume together. He suggests that all of the chapters demonstrate two

interrelated processes; envisaging/concentration and re-envisaging/diversification. The former indicates the initial process of defining the purpose and meaning of the movement and establishing a group structure, while the latter refers to later developments and departures from previous authoritative structures, as the structure becomes increasingly differentiated.

The volume is not without problems, however. In fact, as suggested by the title, there is a tension between representing the endless flux and one in which central authoritative traditions remain, but become more diverse, or perhaps adapt themselves,



as a creature might evolve into a form more suited to its environment. Such Darwinian metaphors tend to suggest, if only implicitly, the agency of the traditions themselves, and perhaps even a subtly sui generis model. More practically, it shares a problem with the other volumes in the INFORM series inasmuch as it seeks to reflect emic as well as etic perspectives. However, by finding a level of discourse which is accessible to insiders as well as (supposedly) critical scholars, it seems as though the work

falls somewhat between two stools. This may be less of an issue at the biannual INFORM conferences at the London School of Economics where discussion takes place between all parties, but in the case of the books it means considerable discrepancy in the level of discourse and use of language between the chapters. This presumably also limits the audience for the book, as it may be too scholarly for a general audience and not quite scholarly enough for university use. It also leads to somewhat uncomfortable inclusions such as the Appendix to Chapter 11 (111-113), Eugene Clay’s chapter as mentioned above. However, this may be something which INFORM are tied to, given their public role. However, it is worth pondering whether INFORM are better able to publish controversial material given their ongoing friendly relationships with the groups in question.

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Members' Recent Publications

George D. Chryssides

2014 'The Jehovah's Witnesses' Changing Hymnody'. *Diskus* 16(1): 82-95. Accessible online at www.religiousstudiesproject.com/DISKUS/index.php/DISKUS/article/view/6/6

2014 "'Come On Up, and I Will Show Thee": Heaven's Gate as a Postmodern Group'; in James R. Lewis and Jesper Aa. Petersen (eds.), *Controversial New Religions*. 2 ed. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.349-369. [Reprint of 2005 article.]

Christopher R. Cotter

2014 *Without God yet not Without Nuance: A Qualitative Study of Atheism and Non-religion among Scottish University Students*. In *Atheist Identities: Spaces and Social Contexts*, edited by Lori G. Beaman and Steven Tomlins. Dordrecht: Springer.

John Eade

2014 (ed. with Mario Katic) *Pilgrimage, Politics and Place in Eastern Europe*, (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate).

2014 'Representing British Bangladeshis in London's East End: The global city, text, performance and authenticity' in Sean McLoughlin (ed.), *Writing the British Asian City* (London and New York: Routledge).

2014 (with Matt Wood) 'La construction des religions publiques: ethnicité, Etat-Nation et méthodisme britannique' in *Le Protestantisme Évangélique À L'Épreuve des Cultures* (Paris: Harmattan).

2013 'Identitarian Pilgrimage and Multicultural Society' in Anton Pazos (ed.), *Pilgrims and Pilgrimages as Peacemakers in Christianity, Judaism and Islam* (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate).

2013 'Bengalis in Britain: Migration, State Controls and Settlement' in Joya Chatterji and David Washbrook (eds), *Routledge Handbook of the S. Asian Diaspora* (London and New York: Routledge).

Paul Hedges

2014 (General Editor) *Controversies in Contemporary Religion* (3 volumes), Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

2014 'Hospitality, Power, and the Theology of Religions: Prophethood in the Abrahamic Context', in Douglas Pratt, Angela Berlis, and Andreas Krebs (eds), *Interreligious Engagement and Theological Reflection: Ecumenical Explorations*, *Oecumenical Interreligious Studies series Vol. I*, Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 155-74.

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2014 'The Old and the New Comparative Theologies: Discourses on Religion, the Theology of Religions, Orientalism and the Boundaries of Traditions', in Francis Clooney and John Berthrong (eds), *European Responses to the New Comparative Theology*, Basel: MDPI.

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Moojan Momen

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2013 The Merging of the Sacred and the Profane: What Substitutes for Ritual in the Baha'i Faith. *Implicit Religion* 16/2: 157-68.

2012 Persecution and Resilience: A History of the Baha'i Religion in Qajar Isfahan. *Journal of Religious History*. 36/4: 471-485. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9809.2012.01225.x

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2014 'Walking in Balance: Native American recovery programmes,' *Religions* 5(4) (2014), 1037-49

2013 'Prayer with Pain: Ceremonial Suffering among the Mi'kmaq,' in J. Fear-Segal & R. Tillett (eds) *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, Reclaiming* (State University of New York Press), 129-143

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2014 "Transformation: Whitley Strieber's Paranormal Gnosis". In *Nova Religio* 18.1. (2014), pp 58-78.

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Bettina E. Schmidt

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"Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge."
(Foucault 1971: 163)



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