



RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: THEIR AGEING & EMOTIONS

Annual Conference of the BASR

Monday, September 6th 2010

University of Birmingham

Selly Oak Campus

Programme

10.00	<p>Registration Tea and Coffee will be available</p>
10.30 – 12.00	<p>Welcome: Prof Douglas Davies, president of the BASR</p> <p>Panel 1: Postgraduate Research Outcome Chair: Bettina Schmidt</p> <p>Amy Whitehead: Gift Giving and Power Perspectives: Testing the Roles of Statue Devotion in England and Spain</p> <p>Ann Casson: The perceptions of Catholicity in a plural society: an ethnographic case study of Catholic secondary schools in England</p> <p>David Gordon Wilson: Spiritualist Mediums and other Traditional Shamans: Towards an Apprenticeship Model of Shamanic Practice</p> <p>Maria Nita: The Climate and Transition Movements as New Religious Movements</p>
12.00 - 13.00	AGM of the BASR
13.00- 13.40	Lunch
13.45 – 15.00	<p>Panel 2: Emotions, Identity and Religions Chair: Douglas Davies</p> <p>Eleanor Nesbitt: A Sikh Spectrum: emotion and identity in the Panth.</p> <p>Valerie DeMarinis: Emotional responses and psychological consequences related to meaning-making rituals' function and/or dysfunction after refugee relocation: some examples from the Swedish context</p> <p>Robert Segal: The integration of belief, emotion, and body in religion, as illustrated by the case of William James.</p> <p>Barnabus Palfrey: Some theological reflections on emotions.</p> <p>Elisabeth Arweck: How mixed-faith families manage emotions</p>
15.00 – 16.00	<p>Annual Lecture</p> <p>Eileen Barker: “When I am 64...New Religious Movements 40 years on”</p> <p>Chair: Douglas Davies</p>
16.00	Coffee/tea will be available

Abstracts

Panel 1: Postgraduate Research Outcome

Chair: Dr Bettina Schmidt

Amy Whitehead, Open University: Gift Giving and Power Perspectives: Testing the Roles of Statue Devotion in England and Spain

With a focus on offerings and gift giving, the practices and performances that take place in relation to statue forms of Our Lady of Avalon (the Glastonbury Goddess) in her temple, and the Virgin of Alcala de los Gazules, Andalusia, in her shrine, exemplify an aspect of the lived, everyday reality of religion. In these contexts, and despite religious doctrine, the relationships that take place between statues and devotees show that instead of being merely representational, statues of the Goddess and Virgin are subjective, relational participants in ceremony, rites and ritual, and they play central roles in how relationships with the divine are maintained and negotiated. Building on the works of Viveiros de Castro (2004) and Harvey (2005), this paper considers how gift giving to statues exemplifies a form of Western animism (different from Tylolean animism where alien spirits inhabit dead matter) where objects and subjects bring each other into co-inspired, co-relational being through encounters. Here, 'subjecthood' and 'personhood' are achieved through relational encounters. Here, a multiplicity of ontological possibilities emerge and it is, after all, the act of giving of gifts and entering into negotiations with statues that we know we are dealing with Western animism.

Ann Casson, Warwick University: The perceptions of Catholicity in a plural society: an ethnographic case study of Catholic secondary schools in England

This is an ethnographic study of a small sample of Catholic secondary schools in England evaluating their role within the Catholic faith tradition and their contribution to community cohesion. The research is firmly based within an ethnographic framework; it explores the perception of Catholic schools by members of the Catholic school community. The ethnographic data was collected through semi-structured focus group interviews and observations. The understanding of religion is developed from the work of Hervieu-Léger on religion as a chain of memory and from the idea of religion as 'lived practice'. The concept of social capital in the form of bonding and bridging, and both religious and spiritual capital provides a framework to understand the factors within Catholic schools, which are perceived to create a Catholic community and those which are perceived to develop or hinder cohesion in plural society.

The participants perceived their schools to have a Catholic nature, and a strong sense of community. Perceptions of the boundaries of the school focused on everyday encounters with outsiders such as 'the school next door' rather than members of other faith communities. Participants' explanation of their Catholic identity reflected a diverse and fragmented understanding of the Catholic faith tradition, with few clear links to the Catholic Church as an institution. However, there was a valuing of aspects of the Catholic faith tradition, which participants appeared willing to use to construct their own understanding of Catholicism, leading to a conclusion that the Catholic school does generate spiritual capital for its members. The implications of this research focus on: the use of ethnographic research in faith schools in relation to the insider/outsider issue, an understanding of Catholic identity within Catholic schools, the role of the Catholic school in the transmission of the Catholic faith tradition, and the place of the faith schools' admissions policy in issues of community cohesion.

David Gordon Wilson, New College, Edinburgh: Spiritualist Mediums and other Traditional Shamans: Towards an Apprenticeship Model of Shamanic Practice

Spiritualism has its origins in 1840s America, and continues to occupy a niche in the Anglo-American cultural world in which the craft of mediumship is taught and practised. Spiritualists often maintain that mediumship is a universal activity found across cultures and time, and some scholars have speculated in passing that Spiritualist mediumship might be a form of shamanism. This paper is based upon a recent thesis that uses both existing literary sources and ethnographic study to support the hypothesis that mediumship is indeed an example of traditional shamanism, and demonstrates that a comparison of Spiritualist mediumship and shamanism gives valuable insights into both.

In particular, an apprenticeship model is proposed as offering a clearer understanding of the nature of mediumship and its central role in maintaining Spiritualism as a distinct religious tradition, helping to clarify problematic boundaries such as that between Spiritualism and New Age.

Existing models of shamanism have tended to focus upon particular skills or states of consciousness exhibited by shamans and are therefore framed with reference to outcomes, rather than by attending to the processes of development leading to them. The apprenticeship model of mediumship is proposed as the basis first, of understanding the structure of Spiritualism, and secondly and comparatively, of a new definition of shamanism, by offering a distinctive, clearly-structured approach to understanding the acquisition and nature of shamanic skills, without being unduly prescriptive as to which particular shamanic skills should be anticipated in any given cultural setting.

Maria Nita, Open University: The Climate and Transition Movements as New Religious Movements

My doctoral research looked at faith groups involved in the Climate and Transition Towns Movements – two very new responses to the global threat posed by Climate Change. In line with this year's conference theme, my presentation will investigate the Climate and Transition Towns Movements as New Religious Movements. In particular I will compare and contrast these to the New Religious Movements of the 60s and 80s, and take a fresh look at old and new social factors, such as rationalisation, disenchantment, secularisation, globalisation, and others. Moreover, as a final year PhD student I will summarise my main findings, share my results and identify directions for future research in this area.

Panel 2: Emotions, Identity and Religions

Chair: Prof. Douglas Davies

Some members of this AHRC funded panel organized at the Department of Theology & Religion Durham University will give brief sketches of aspects of their own work in terms of this topic. These will not be formal papers but at approximately 8 minutes each will highlight issues that may provide opportunity for conference delegates and other Network members present to brainstorm, question and discuss related themes on emotion and religion.

The AHRC Emotions, Identity and Religion Network:

Eleanor Nesbitt, Warwick University: A Sikh Spectrum: emotion and identity in the Panth.

Valerie DeMarinis, Uppsala University: Emotional responses and psychological consequences related to meaning-making rituals' function and/or dysfunction after refugee relocation: some examples from the Swedish context

Robert Segal, Aberdeen University: The integration of belief, emotion, and body in religion, as illustrated by the case of William James.

Barnabus Palfrey, Oxford University: Some theological reflections on emotions.

Elisabeth Arweck, Warwick University: How mixed-faith families manage emotions.

Panel 3: Annual Lecture

Professor Eileen Barker, London School of Economics/Inform: “When I am 64...New Religious Movements 40 years on”

In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s a wide variety of new religions became visible in the West, attracting young converts who often dropped out of college or gave up their careers to work long hours for the movements with little or no pay. Half a century or so later, those converts are now in their fifties or sixties, and approaching an age when, in the wider society, they would be considered of pensionable age; some are beginning to develop medical problems, and quite a few are anxious about what their future might hold.

This paper addresses some of the challenges that the new religious movements (NRMs) and their members are facing with the demographic shift from a movement consisting of enthusiastic young converts with few dependents to one in which there may be a substantial proportion of children and a growing number of ageing members able to offer only a limited contribution to the resources of the NRM as they find themselves increasingly dependent on others.

These ageing members may have donated whatever personal assets they had to their movement; they may have worked for years without paying into any pension schemes; and they may not have any insurance policy for medical care or other contingencies. They may not be sure where they can live in the future, and they may be experiencing psychological anxieties, feeling of little worth and perhaps suffering from identity crises and/or disappointment at the ways in which the theological beliefs they espoused in their youth seem not to have resulted in the fulfilments for which they had held such high expectations.

Questions about who is responsible for these ageing members may give rise to a range of answers. Some might consider responsibility lies with the organisation as a whole, others that it lies with the local branch, yet others that it is with the individuals themselves or their families – yet others might consider it is up to the state. Of course, the fact that it is believed that responsibility lies in one direction, does not mean that that group, society or individuals agree. Furthermore, claims may be made from former members who say that they devoted a substantial part of their working lives to their erstwhile movement and that it owes them some sort of recompense.

Amongst the variables that will be considered in the paper's discussion of the situation, are the laws and services of the different countries in which the NRMs operate; the theology and the financial situation of the movement, and both its culture and its structure. While the paper will concentrate on what *is* the situation, it will also consider what various organisations (both NRMs and non-members) consider *ought* to be the situation. A brief comparison with the arrangements of a few longer-established religions will be included.