

EDITORIAL

Once again, the editors are delighted to get the May 2006 issue of AASR Bulletin to you. We regret the lateness and plan to take measures to ensure that the November and following numbers will be more speedily produced and despatched.

Nevertheless, readers will find the content of this issue informative and interesting. Of great importance is the IAHR Regional Conference and 3rd AASR Conference in Africa, which is coming up in Gaborone, Botswana, in July 2007. We hope that members will have ample time to prepare for that event. The 2nd AASR Conference in Africa, which was in Accra, Ghana, in February 2004, had a large participation, and was judged by all as a success. Surely, the Gaborone one will equally be successful. Its theme, 'Health, Healing & the Study of the Religions of Africa' is both significant and broad, and will hopefully take care of the interests of members and others. Dr Musa Dube and others are already preparing to make the conference a worthwhile one.

Very topical for our consideration is Pope Benedict's September 12 speech at the University of Regensburg, Germany, and the subsequent protests from Muslims around the world. These issues have once again revealed how in recent times religion has occupied the public space and is shaping international events. While the furore is dying down, we cannot indulge the nostalgia of the religious past, which the Pope's reference to the fourteenth century Byzantine Emperor has called up. We need to look critically at the possible scenarios of religion in world politics in the next ten years. In the face of the uproar, scholars of religion could see how the events of 9/11 and subsequent ones like the Cartoon episode in 2005, and this recent one could provide a new research agenda on religion and politics, religious tolerance, and the role of the media in exacerbating religious conflicts. We hope members are already critically examining the issue in their scholarly writing. Certainly, they are important events and issues to engage the attention of scholars of religion. Best wishes.



Jim Cox
AASR Treasurer

2005 TREASURER'S REPORT

1) European Fund 2005 Accounts

Starting balance 1 January 2005 EUR 4500.10

Income: EUR 2402.52

2,390.00 membership fees and AASR subscriptions
12.52 interest from savings account

Total Income 2402.52

Expenditures EUR 4497.86

2866.75 Support for African participation in IAHR Congress Tokyo
850.34 AASR bulletins
761.60 AASR website
19.17 bank charges

Total expenditure 4497.86

Balance 31 December 2005: EUR 2404.76 (= US Dollars 3024.69)

2) North American Fund 2005 Accounts

Starting balance 1 January 2005 \$1000

Income \$970.00 membership fees

Expenditures \$200 AASR bulletins

Balance 31 December 2005: \$1,770.00

TOTAL AASR FUND (European + North America) = \$4794.69

Notes:

- 1) Thanks to Gerrie ter Haar and Kathleen Wicker for providing reports on the European and North American funds respectively.
- 2) I have converted the euro to dollars on the basis of 1 EUR = 1.25793 US dollars.

CONFERENCES AHEAD

3RD AASR CONFERENCE IN AFRICA & IAHR REGIONAL CONFERENCE

HEALTH, HEALING & THE STUDY OF THE RELIGIONS OF AFRICA GABORONE, BOTSWANA, 8-13 JULY, 2007

Statement of the Problem

The continent of Africa is sometimes stereotyped as the cradle of disease and death. With the HIV & AIDS epidemic this stereotype has not been helped. Within twenty-five years (1981-2006) HIV & AIDS has infected 40 million people, 30 million of those are in Africa. The epidemic has claimed up to 22 million lives, seventeen of those from the continent of Africa. There are up to 14 million children that have been orphaned, 12 million of which are in the African continent.¹ HIV & AIDS is, as some have noted, an 'African Holocaust'. Moreover, HIV & AIDS has brewed social stigma against People Living With HIV & AIDS (PLWHA) and their families. It traumatizes both the infected and the affected, leading to fear, hopelessness and desperation that manifest itself in surprising social evils. Twenty-five years of living and struggling with HIV & AIDS has brought the continent and the world to realize that HIV & AIDS is not just a virus wrecking havoc of individual bodies; it is not about individuals lacking sexual morals to abstain from sexual activities or to be faithful to their partners or to condomise. Rather HIV & AIDS is an epidemic within other social epidemics of poverty, gender inequality, violence of all forms, abuse of children rights, racism, national corruption, international economic policies of injustice, oppressive cultural practices of various forms, etc. HIV & AIDS, in other words, dwells and thrives through pathways of social injustice.

The experience of HIV & AIDS and its interconnection with all aspects of our lives has challenged the world to have a wider understating of health and to realize that health and healing is more than just attending to a virus or bacteria that attack or our biological bodies. Health and healing is also beyond the medical guild. Rather, health and healing should involve all disciplines and departments of our lives. That is, all of us should be part of interrogating and highlighting what constitutes health and healing. All of us should interrogate their role in seeking to curb the spread of HIV & AIDS and its accompanying social epidemics. This brings the responsibility at the door of the academic of study of religion as well. Be that as it may, during the twenty-five years of the 'Af-

¹ <http://www.prcdc.org/summaries/aidsinafrica/aidsinafrica.html> has the following data: at the end of 2001, 2,4 million children with HIV/AIDS were living in Africa; 90% of the 4 million children under the age of 15 who died of AIDS were living in Africa; more than 12 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa are maternal orphans of AIDS.

frican holocaust', African scholars of religion, in the continent, the diaspora, and among Africanists, have largely gone around with business as usual. Their conferences, articles, books, courses and projects hardly reflect a significant response to HIV & AIDS or any preoccupation with health and healing. Scholars of African religions such as African Indigenous Religion/s, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other religions of the continent cannot boast of a visible academic response to the 'African Holocaust' and their contribution to understanding of health and healing.

The silence of scholars of African religions and their programs in the face of an HIV & AIDS epidemic puts a question mark of the academic study of religions of Africa in Africa, in the African Diaspora, and among Africanists. How are academic programs of Religion structured? What are the frameworks of analysis that inform the study of religion in Africa, the African Diaspora and among Africanists? How is religion taught and what are its goals of teaching religion? Is the academic study of religions of Africa and its scholars decolonized and depatriarchalised? Is the academic study of religions of Africa socially detached from African struggles? Is it western founded? How do we explain the silence of scholars of African religions and their programs to the 'HIV & AIDS holocaust'? Does the academic study of African religions in Africa, the African Diaspora and among Africanists need to be decolonized? How can and should the academic study of African religions be reconstituted? What are some available models that have demonstrated engagement to health and healing? What are some available models that have decolonized programs of studying African religions in the continent, African Diaspora and among Africanists?

Call for papers

Abstracts of papers on African Indigenous Religions, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, etc., dealing with any of the above raised questions are invited. Generally papers must either deal with

- Health and healing,
- The academic study of the religions of Africa, or
- The intersection of the two.

Thus papers exploring the general understanding of health and healing; how particular religions contribute to health and healing; and how they deal with health care, and any other aspects of various diseases of concern are invited. Papers dealing specifically with religion and HIV&AIDS prevention, care and other aspects of the epidemic are especially invited.

Papers could also deal with how different concepts of religion can serve as good paradigms for understanding and promoting good health. Or they could interrogate the link of health and healing with justice, the environment and the divine from their particular religions of specialty. Papers could also interrogate and highlight the link between health and healing and colonial and patriarchal oppression.

Similarly, papers that interrogate and highlight the academic study of African religions (African Indigenous Religions, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, etc.) are invited. These papers should interrogate and highlight the structures, theories, methods, frameworks, textbooks, courses of the academic study of religion in Africa, African Diaspora and among Africanists. How much have the academic study of religion moved away from colonial paradigms and how much have they infused gender analysis in research

and teaching? Has decolonization of the study of religion occurred or is it yet to occur and how must it occur?

These, the above listed questions and any other relevant issues to the academic study of African religions in Africa, African Diaspora and among Africanists can be tackled.

DRAFT CONFERENCE PROGRAM

July 8: *Arrival and Registration*

July 9

Health, Healing & the Academic Study of African Indigenous Religion/s

Morning sessions

- Plenary Presentation: *Mapping Academic Study of African Indigenous Religions*, followed by questions and discussions
- Tea
- Three simultaneous workshops/panels/sessions

Lunch

Afternoon sessions

- Plenary Presentation: *Mapping Health and Healing in African Indigenous Religion/s*, followed by questions & discussions
- Tea
- Three simultaneous workshops/panels/sessions

Dinner

July 10

Health, Healing and the Academic Study of Christianity

Morning sessions

- Plenary Presentation: *Mapping Academic Study of Christianity*
- Tea
- Three simultaneous workshops/panels/sessions

Lunch

Afternoon sessions

- Plenary Presentation: *Mapping Health and Healing in the Christian Religion*
- Three simultaneous workshops/panels/sessions
- Tea
- Excursion to visit HIV&AIDS Projects

AASR Dinner Party.

July 11

Health, Healing and the Academic Study of Islam & Judaism

Morning sessions

- Plenary Presentation: *Mapping Academic Study of Islam/Judaism*
- Tea
- Three simultaneous workshops/panels/sessions

Lunch

Afternoon sessions

- Plenary Presentation: *Mapping Health and Healing in Islam/Judaism*
- Three simultaneous workshops/panels/sessions
- Tea
- *Way Forward: The Academic Study of African Religion & Health and Healing*

Dinner.

July 12

Excursion to tourist sites and shopping

July 13: Departure

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM
AASR CONFERENCE JULY 8-13
GABORONE, BOTSWANA

Name: _____
 Title: _____
 Institution: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____
 Fax: _____
 Email: _____

Religion of Specialization _____
 Title of Paper _____
 Presentation Equipment Needed _____

Travel from _____
 Travel by: a. AIR _____ b. Road _____
 Visa Invitation Letter needed: a. Yes _____ b. No _____
 Time of Arrival _____
 Accompanied by a. Partner _____ b. Children _____
 Accommodation a. Metcourt _____ b. Grand Hotel _____ C. Other _____
 Holiday Opportunities: a. Extended Stay _____ b. Tour Botswana _____

RELIGION ON THE BORDERS: NEW CHALLENGES IN THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION

19-22 APRIL 2007, SÖDERTÖRN, STOCKHOLM

CALL FOR PAPERS

Keynote Speakers

Professor Gavin Flood, Professor Caroline Humphrey, Professor Tariq Ramadan, Professor Håkan Rydving.

Organizing committee

David Thurffjell (Södertörn University College), Lena Roos (University of Gävle), Marja-Liisa Keinänen (Stockholm University), Peter Jackson (University of Tromsø), Jenny Berglund (Uppsala University). Website: www.stocon.se/religion2007

Theme

Borders and boundary conceptions are important themes in the academic study of religion. As scholars of religion we have always been challenged by the religious significance of borders. This is true no matter whether we study ritual, linguistic, social, gendered, economic, or political aspects of religion. Furthermore, the crossing of borders is a recurrent theme in our time. A seemingly boundless world is taking shape. Formerly fixed borders between ethnic groups, classes and sexes are dissolving. At the same time, new borders are drawn up. New political agendas with universal claims are outlined while the gap between rich and poor grows. Religion plays a crucial part in these processes. The organizers are pleased to invite scholars of different disciplines to take part in this conference, by which they hope to stimulate the theoretical, methodological and empirical progress within our field. Religion on the Borders is organized in collaboration IAHR (International Association for the History of Religions).

AFRICAN STUDIES IN FRANCE CNRS, PARIS, 29.11-1.12.2006

Because Africanist studies in France are being reorganised and redeployed, Africanist scholars in France have founded the *Réseau thématique pluridisciplinaire (RTP) 'Etudes africaines'*, the Multidisciplinary Network for African Studies. Africanist scholars from all over France participate in it, notably Michel Agier (IRD-EHESS, CEAF), Pierre Boilley (CEMAF-Paris), Dominique Darbon (U-Bordeaux, CEAN), Alain Dubresson (U-P10, GECKO), Odile Goerg (U-P7, SEDET), Marc-Eric Gruenais (IRD UR

002/IEA), Eric Jolly (CNRS, CEMAF-Ivry), Emile Le Bris (IRD CSS4), Gérard Philippson (U- Lyon II, INALCO), Jean Polet (U-P1, Arscan), Jean-Louis Triaud (U-Provence, CEMAF-Aix). In order to strengthen their common interests and improve exchange of views between the various disciplines researching in and on Africa, they propose to organise a conference on the theme *Etudes africaines : état des lieux et des savoirs en France*, at CNRS, 3 rue Michel-Ange, 75016 PARIS, from 29 November till 1st December 2006.

The purpose of the conference is to develop a cross-disciplinary survey of Africanist studies in France, their research issues, debates and recent attainments. To achieve this, contributions are requested, in particular on three themes:

- *Etat des lieux et des savoirs dans le domaine des Etudes africaines*
- *Représentations et inventions de l'Afrique*
- *Construction des savoirs sur l'Afrique*

The deadline for handing in proposals is 31st May 2006. They should be sent to: etudes-africaines@ivry.cnrs.fr. Further information: <http://www.etudes-africaines.cnrs.fr>

ISLAM IN EASTERN AFRICA & THE HORN OF AFRICA NAIROBI, KENYA, 1- 4 AUGUST 2006

The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, has planned for a Regional Conference of Islam in Eastern Africa & the Horn of Africa. Its theme is: Islam's Encounter with the Challenges of the 21st Century.

The *sub-themes* are

- Muslim Communities in Eastern Africa and the Horn;
- Islam and Social Change;
- Islam and Interfaith Relations;
- Islam, Peace-building and Conflict Management;
- Religion and the Mass Media;
- Muslim (Islamic) Education;
- Islam and Development.

Important dates

Abstracts are to be received by 1st April 2006, but we could consider abstracts submitted after the deadline, i.e. up to end of May, in some circumstances. Full papers are to be received by the 10th July 2006.

For more *information*, write to:

snjoka@avu.org; abkheir@yahoo.com; nkahumbi@yahoo.com,
to whom papers and abstracts should also be send.

Dr. Kahumbi Maina, Secretary to the Organising Committee.

REPORTS

Kathleen O'Brien Wicker
North American Regional Representative

The recent application of the AASR-NA to become a Related Scholarly Organization (RSO) of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) has been approved by the AAR. The Related Scholarly Organizations of the AAR are listed, with a description of their history and work, under the Other Resources link on the AAR web site:

<http://www.aarweb.org/other/rso.asp>. There the AASR is described as follows:

African Association for the Study of Religions

Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Scripps College

The African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) is an academic association of scholars of religions posted in universities in Africa, and of scholars of the religions of Africa posted in universities outside of Africa. It was founded at an IAHR (International Association for the History of Religions) conference in Harare, Zimbabwe, in September 1992 for the purpose of promoting the academic study of religions in Africa and the study of the religions of Africa more generally through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject. The AASR seeks to stimulate the academic study of religions in Africa in a variety of ways: providing a forum for multilateral communications between scholars of African religions; facilitating the exchange of resources and information; encouraging the development of linkages and research contacts between scholars and institutions in Africa, and between scholars in Africa and those overseas. The AASR also endeavors to assist scholars to publish their work and travel to professional meetings. The AASR is an affiliate of the IAHR since 1995. It meets at the IAHR quinquennial congresses and organizes conferences in Africa. Its members participate in panels at conferences outside of Africa. The AASR publishes the bi-annual AASR Bulletin and maintains a web site: www.a-asr.org.

Being a RSO of the AAR allows us to schedule our meetings during the annual AAR meetings and to have them listed in the annual meeting program, among other benefits. I encourage AASR members who will take part in the AAR meetings in Washington DC in November 2006 to visit the AAR website and check the annual meeting program of the AAR for the time and place of the AASR meeting. We hope to schedule it just after one of the meetings of the African Religions Group of the AAR, and to use the meeting as an occasion to welcome our colleagues from Africa to the AAR. Our fundraising efforts through November will also be focused on providing additional support for our visiting African colleagues.



Teresia Hinga
Santa Clara University

AAR FOCUS ON AFRICA

In its centennial strategic plan (2004-2009) the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Executive through its International Connection Committee (ICC) identified several goals designed to help accomplish its mission. These goals included the intention 'to enhance awareness of the international context of the study of religions and to include involvement in the AAR by scholars and teachers around the globe'. Accordingly, the AAR Executive determined to dedicate its annual meetings between 2004 and 2009 to one or other international regional focus. In 2004, the focus was on Latin America, in 2005, on Eastern Europe, while 2006 it will be on Africa. In 2007 the focus will be on China and in 2008 on South Asia.

Since the AAR through its ICC (previously chaired by Mary McGee and currently by Richard Jaffe) announced the Africa focus initiative, the steering committee of the African Religions Group, currently co-chaired by Cynthia Hoeller-Fatton and Samuel Kip Elolia, and the AASR leadership in North America (Jacob Olupona, AASR past President, and Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, current AASR Representative for North America) have worked closely with the ICC, the membership of which include Elias K. Bongmba (Rice University) and Teresia Hinga (Santa Clara University), who are also members of the AASR, as are the co-chairs of the African Religions group.

The African Religions Group and the AASR US Chapter enthusiastically welcomed the announcement of the focus on Africa. They saw in this initiative a *kairos*, an opportunity

- to bring to the attention of the AAR the kinds of research being done by African scholars of religions;
- to communicate to the international community what are the central themes, concerns and critical issues for scholars working in the field of African studies in religions; and,
- most importantly, to strengthen ties between American and African scholars and enhance possibilities for future collaboration and intellectual exchange.

The initiative was deemed an exciting and important event by the African Religions Group, which has also an advocacy role to play in rendering more visible and less peripheral the study of Africa and its religions in the American academy.

As a result of the enthusiasm with which this announcement was received, and in close partnership with the AAR Executive through the ICC, an exciting array of programs have been lined up including themes for panels, special topic forums, proposals for plenary speakers from Africa, pertinent films and cultural events commensurate with the focus on Africa and also commensurate with the suitably international and therefore multicultural venue that is Washington DC. In addition, a list of invitees from Africa, both senior and junior scholars, was drawn up and recommended for consideration by the AAR Executive. They were chosen for their high potential to enrich the conversations in November particularly, but not exclusively, through the special topics forum. At least 15 African participants have been chosen from this pool of recommendation for

the competitive paper and panel proposals, which they submitted to the various sections and groups of AAR. The participation of a substantive number of scholars from Africa will no doubt make an impact in the efforts to make Africa visible in the American academy and beyond.

The African Religions Group on its own behalf and also in partnership with other programs and sections will be hosting 5 sessions as follows.

1. African Religions in the 21st Century
2. Religion and Public Life in Africa
3. Ritual and Contemporary Africa (co-sponsored by the Ritual Studies Group)
4. Religion and Public Health in Africa
5. The Church in Africa and Neo-Diaspora

Other program units have also warmly embraced the idea of the focus on Africa and are in full support of it. Several already commendably partnered with the African Religions Group to co-sponsor sessions. These include the Ritual Studies Group, the Religions and Healing Group, and the newly formed World Religions Group, while the Religions and Ecology Group has actively tried to locate African scholars as possible conversation partners in the debates surrounding Religion and Ecology. Furthermore, a significant number of programs and sections have sent out calls for papers with a specific African focus. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Ethics Section; it called for papers on African Liberative Ethics
2. History of Christianity Section; it called for papers on 'Christianity in Africa: From Periphery to Center'
3. North American Religions Section; it called for papers on 'Africa and the Making of American Religion'
4. Philosophy of Religion Section; it called for papers on Philosophy of Religion in Africa
5. Religions in South Asia Section; it called for papers on Asian religions in the African diaspora
6. Study of Islam Section; it called for papers on all topics on Islam in Africa, including sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa, North Africa, etc
7. Women and Religion Section; it called for papers on Women and religion as theorized and lived in Africa
8. Afro-American Religious History Group; it called for papers on the importance of the Asuza Street Revival for historic and contemporary aspects of African & African American reflection; and encouraged interdisciplinary proposals that emphasize this year's African focus and the Washington DC conference location.
9. Anthropology of Religions Group; it called for papers on 'Africa: Anthropological Perspectives'
10. Asian North American Religion Group; it called for papers on the religious practices of Indian re-emigrants from Africa
11. Black Theology Group; it called for papers on the place of Africa in Black theologies
12. Indigenous Religions Group welcomes especially papers from scholars on the continent on the designated theme, including theorizing on spirit possession in indigenous religions; 'Elderhood, Authority and Knowledge in Indigenous Religions'; and 'Indigenous Understanding and Responses to Natural Disasters'

13. Native Tradition in the Americas Group; it called for papers focusing on dialogue between Native American Studies and African Studies
14. New Religious Movements Group; it called for papers on NRMs in Africa
15. Person, Culture & Religion Group; it called for papers that reflect on the complexity of African/American personality, African & African/American sexuality and spirituality through a synthetic conversation between Black Theology, Psychology, Anthropology, etc.
16. Religion and Ecology Group; it called for papers on eco-religious practices, movements or environmental issues in Africa; and on African-American religious responses to environmental issues
17. Religion in Latin American Group; it called for papers on religion in the Black Atlantic: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean
18. Religion and Film Group; it invites papers with a focus on representations of Africa.
19. Religion and Holocaust Group; it called for papers on religion and genocide in Africa
20. Religions and Social Conflict Group; it called for papers on religious influence on governments of African countries; on social conflicts and the AIDS crisis; on ecological justice, etc.
21. Ritual Studies Group; it called for papers on ritual in contemporary Africa; on theorizing on African ritual; etc.
22. Womanist Approaches to the Study of Religion Consultation; it called for papers on USA public policy towards Africa; religion and HIV/AIDS; the problem of child soldiers; the effect of the tsunami on East Africa; displacement and issues of asylum of African and Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American Women; issues of intimate violence in Africa and the Diaspora
23. Animals and Religions Consultation; it called for papers on 'Animals in African Indigenous Religions: Religious Aspects of Wildlife Conservation.

While, as indicated above, approximately 15 scholars will be funded by the AAR, many others will be self-sponsored or sponsored by their institutions. The wide array of themes focusing on Africa promises to be a most exciting experience during this year's AAR meeting. It is therefore most opportune that the AASR through Kathleen O'Brien Wicker sought and received affiliation status with the AAR this year. The affiliation could not have been more timely.

Beyond November 2006 and perhaps even before November 2006, it is hoped that the international focus on Africa will provoke or enhance substantive thought and practice regarding the expansion and enrichment of the study of Africa and its religions both in the AAR as well as in the Religious Studies departments around the US. It is hoped that departments will find in the African focus initiative an opportunity to strengthen their curricula not only quantitatively by offering more courses on Africa, but also qualitatively by incorporating the many and varied themes, issues and critical areas of concerns that are central, or ought to be central, in the academic study of Africa and its religions today.

Moreover, while the idea of the focus on Africa has thus been received with enthusiasm by all concerned, the single most important issue for the success of the 2006 international focus has been the funding for participants in Africa. As indicated above, a substantive number of scholars from Africa have been funded to attend the AAR. Such a visible participation of scholars from Africa would be in keeping with the AAR goal

cited above: 'to enhance awareness of the international context, and to include the involvement in the AAR by scholars and teachers from around the globe' (in this case Africa). We commend the efforts made by the AAR Executive, under the leadership of Barbara De Concinni to secure funding to support such a substantive level of participation by scholars from Africa. Funding continues to be an enduring challenge to the initiative and supporting the AAR Executive in helping make the African focus a success in November 2006 and beyond, a commitment both by the leadership of African Religions Group and the AASR US Chapter, represented by Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Scripps College. To this end, it is hoped that members and friends of the AASR will respond positively to the USA Chapter's call for support for the scholars from Africa who will be attending the AAR. A formal invitation thus to support the participation of African scholars will be coming soon from the AASR representative, Prof. O'Brien Wicker .

For further information on the AAR meeting at Washington DC, 18-21 November 2006 and its focus on Africa, visit the AAR website: www.aarweb.org, or the AASR website: <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=40>.

Jan G. Platvoet
AASR WebMaster

WEBSITE PROGRESS REPORT

The AASR website has been operating now for nine months. Despite its as yet undeveloped state, www.a-asr.org proves already a very useful instrument of information for both the general public and the AASR membership body as is clear from the number of people visiting it and from the documents that have been placed on it. Further structural changes will soon be introduced in order to make into an instrument of not only information but also of communication.

Visitors

The site keeps a record of the number of unique visitors consulting, how often they have visited it and how many page impressions they have made in their visits. In its rubric Statistics (<http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=3>) it says that to date (25.09.2006) 13,384 distinct visitors have paid 14,676 visits to the site and made 22,929 page impressions. Today, 25 September, 111 visitors paid 120 visits and made 169 page impressions. This month, 1,096 visitors paid 1,202 visits, making 1,736 page impressions.

Content

To date, 173 documents have been posted on the AASR website, some permanently, but subject to occasional revision and updating, others until an event has taken place, a deadline has passed, or for as long as needed. At the moment they are ordered in the following 'rubrics' or folders:

- AASR contains the Welcome statement, the AASR Aims, the AASR Constitution, the list of the AASR Publications, a description of AASR History, the lists of the AASR Executive 2005-2010, and the AASR Membership Form

- *AASR Bulletin 24* (November 2005), broken down into its 26 distinct contributions; *AASR Bulletin 25* (May 2006) will be added now
- *AASR Conference on Health, Healing and the Study of the Religions of Africa*, 8-13 July 2007, at Gaborone, Botswana, with the statement of the problem to be addressed, the call for papers, the draft conference program, and the conference registration form
- *AAR 2006 Call for Papers* has four documents. The first document is General Information on the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting at Washington DC, USA, from 18 to November 2006, which will have Africa for its international focus. Its second document contains the General Guidelines for submitting panel or paper proposals; its third the Specific Guidelines; whereas its fourth lists all the sections, groups and consultations which invite paper proposals from scholars of religions in and on Africa.
- *News* is perhaps the most important rubric of the present AASR website. It contains 24 documents of an explicitly temporary nature, such as conference announcements; calls for panels and papers, and for contributions to edited volumes; offers of fellowships and scholarships; adverts for lectureships, research posts and other vacancies; news items, and a request for help in an HIV/AIDS project. It will be re-ordered soon into three more specific folders: Calls for ...; Vacancies; News.
- *E-Publications* is a new rubric. It contains three articles, one from *AASR Bulletin 24*, and two from this number. In due time it will hopefully be expanded into an Electronic Archive of articles by AASR members and others on the study of the religions of Africa.
- *Weblinks* contains links to the IAHR and to those of its affiliates which have their own web site; to the AAR; to e-journals; and to the web sites of AASR members
- *Site Statistics* (see above)
- *Forums* (see below)
- *Search this site* (see below).

Structure

The AASR web site is at the moment only informative and whatever documents have been posted on it are accessible to both AASR members and the general public. That will change in early 2007, when the AASR Members-Only level will become operational. That level will be accessible to AASR members by means of their (working) e-mail address and a password. The 57 AASR members listed in *AASR Bulletin 24*, pp. 6-8, who have no working e-mail or have not send me their current e-mail address, are therefore again urgently requested to send me their e-mail addresses in order that they too may gain access to the Members-Only level as soon as that becomes operational. At a later moment, to be determined in consultation with the AASR Executive and in particular with the AASR Regional Representatives, access to the Members-Only part of the AASR website will be restricted to members who have paid their annual membership fee.

As soon as this level is operational, most of the rubrics mentioned above, except that on the AASR, will be moved to the AASR Members-Only level. That level will moreover also be greatly expanded by the addition of at least two more features: the complete and updated electronic version of the AASR Register of Members, and, in the course of 2007, the Forums facility. The latter will enable AASR members who have

access to the Members-Only section of the AASR website, to communicate with any other AASR member who has access on any subject relating to the study of the religions of Africa.

Communication

An important step has recently been taken in the development of the AASR website into not only an instrument of information but also of communication. 'Open source' software for handling all future AASR e-mail traffic has been installed on the server on which the AASR website operates. This non-commercial software is capable of handling any number of e-mail accounts, which the AASR may wish to install now or in the near future in conjunction with the AASR website, and imposes no limits on the size of the messages to be sent through it. As a first step, all members of the AASR Executive have been sent an e-mail account name, a user name, an ...@a-asr.org e-mail address and a password, together with an extensive document that instructs them in precise detail how to install the account(s) linked to their particular AASR office(s). For the moment, they are the following:

Account name	e-mail address
AASR President	President@a-asr.org
AASR Vice President	VicePres@a-asr.org
AASR General Secretary	GenSecr@a-asr.org
AASR Treasurer	Treasurer@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for East Africa	RepresEA@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for Southern Africa	RepresSA@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for West Africa	RepresWA@a-asr.org
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AASR Publications Officer	PublOff@a-asr.org
AASR WebMaster	WebMaster@a-asr.org
AASR Internet Officer	info@a-asr.org
AASR Mail Administrator	admin@a-asr.org

The following four of these AASR e-mail addresses are now operational:

WebMaster@a-asr.org (Platvoet);

Co-Editor@a-asr.org (Platvoet);

info@a-asr.org (Platvoet);

admin@a-asr.org (Platvoet).

AASR members may use these for any business relating to the AASR website, the AASR Bulletin, the AASR e-mail system, and for asking questions or sending information, e.g. for updating their AASR registration particulars. As soon as other AASR e-

mail accounts will also have become operational, an AASR officer's personal or institutional e-mail address will be replaced by his or her AASR e-mail account in all relevant lists in order to inform AASR members that they may use these for conducting AASR business with him or her.

In addition, other accounts, permanent or temporary, may be installed whenever the need for them arises, e.g. for organising the Botswana conference, for the fund raising committee, etc.

To complete this system, four e-mail distribution lists have also been installed on the server. A message sent to one of these addresses will distribute it to all those on the list of that address. They are:

e-mail address	distributed to
Executive@a-asr.org	all members of the AASR Executive
Editors@a-asr.org	editors of the AASR Bulletin
Representatives@a-asr.org	the five AASR Regional Representatives
Technical@a-asr.org	WebMaster and Mail Administrator

When the need arises, other such distribution lists may be installed, temporarily or permanently.

Conclusion

The next progress report will be published in AASR Bulletin 26. It will report on the introduction of the Members-Only section and the operation of the AASR e-mail system. It will also announce when and how the Forums and the Search This Site facilities of the AASR web site will become operational. Once these are in full swing, the AASR website will be structurally and functionally complete but for one (crowning) part, the Electronic Archive.

IAHR 20TH QUINQUENNIAL WORLD CONGRESS TORONTO, CANADA, 15-21 AUGUST, 2010

IAHR 20th Quinquennial World Congress will be held at Toronto, Canada, 15-21 August, 2010. It will be hosted by the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR), the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR) and the Société québécoise des études de la religion (SQER). It will be held at the University of Toronto and organised by its Department and Centre for the Study of Religion and its Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion. Its main organizers will be Prof. James Di Censo and Prof. Donald Wiebe.



ARTICLES

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES – (OPTING) OUT OF AFRICA²

How many courses on African religions does your department offer? How many courses solely devoted to Africa does your institution offer? How many scholar/teachers whose area of specialization is Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, does your department or institution employ? How many courses on African religions did you take as an undergraduate student? As a graduate student?

If you and your institution are like most institutions of higher learning in the United States, the answer to all of those questions is either none, one, or very few. If we look at the structure and history of the study of religion, that fact is hardly surprising. It represents the results of a long-term, widespread, and structurally consistent institutional exclusion of non-Europeans, either as subjects or objects of study in general, and sub-Saharan Africans in particular. Let's look at some facts to flesh this out a bit more.

The continent of Africa – and it is a continent, not a nation – represents a considerable portion of the earth's inhabitable surface, and is the second largest land mass on earth at roughly 11.68 million square miles of area (compared with 6.88 million for North America and 4.8 million for Europe). With a population of roughly 869,274,316, it represents about 13.54% of the world's population. By comparison, all of the Americas, at 882,816,692, constitute 13.75% of the world's population, while Europe is at 802,018,054, or 12.49%, and Asia's considerably larger population of 3,834,374, 574 represents 59.72% of the total population of world (all numbers taken from Population-Data.net). Roughly 700,000,000 of Africa's population live below the North African region, i.e., they are sub-Saharan, living in either the western, eastern or southern regions of Africa.

Africa is also easily the most linguistically complex place in the world. 'It is estimated that there are between 2000 and 3000 languages spoken on the African continent, with possibly as many as 8000 dialects' (<http://africanlanguages.com/>). There are about as many subcultures and ethnicities as there are languages. The continent is home to fifty-three different nation-states, more than even Asia's forty-eight. According to Thomas Lawson, 'depending upon how one defines religious traditions, there are either hundreds or thousands of religions in Africa' (Lawson 1993: 20).

² This article was published in *CSSR Bulletin* 34, 3 (September 2005): 51-54. It is republished in AASR Bulletin with permission from the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion (CSSR, www.cssr.org) in the USA. It has also been posted on the AASR website (www.a-asr.org) in the rubric Recent Publications.

All of this, combined with its incredibly long and varied history, would seem to make Africa an ideal candidate for the study of anything pertaining to humans, but especially religion. Yet, the study of African religions barely exists as a field in the American Academy of Religion, and the study of Africa barely exists as any kind of substantial field in universities and colleges in the United States.

By way of an analogy for the place of Africa in what we call 'knowledge' in the university, I offer an artifact: The Hammond Atlas of World History, published in 1979, used in connection with an undergraduate course in world history at my alma mater. Yes, it is out of date, yet nevertheless telling in the way in which Africa is treated as an object of knowledge in the American academy. It is described, in the inner folio, as a *World History Atlas: A collection of maps illustrating geographically the most significant periods and events in the history of civilization*. The atlas contains one hundred maps: eight include Africa, six include Asia, and six include South America. The entire continent of Africa only has one individual map devoted to it and that was of Africa in 1914, at the height of the colonial period. The major kingdoms and cultures of indigenous Africa appear nowhere. By contrast the ancient city of Rome has five maps devoted to it, while the individual nations of France and England have no less than six maps each. All of the other maps are either global maps or maps of Europe. When this geographical distortion is seen in conjunction with traditional academic treatments of what is and is not included in 'world history', most obviously and egregiously in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, but wide-spread throughout the academy, the message is all-too clear: Africa is not part of world history, i.e., its accomplishments, nations, cultures, and tragedies are not to be counted among 'the most significant periods and events in the history of civilization'. Africa did not contribute to European Modernity – *ergo*, it does not count.

The pertinence of the analogy becomes immediately clear when we look at a recent survey of jobs offerings in Religious Studies published by the American Academy of Religion (in *Religious Studies News*, 19/1 [January 2004]). It surveys the number of positions advertised in Religious Studies (broadly construed) between 1996 and 2002 by job category. The numbers of jobs and the breakdown of the categories tell much of the story about the place of Africa in the American Academy of Religion. It goes as follows: Africa/Oceania [sic]: 27 jobs; New Testament: 163; Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: 130; Church History: 109; and Philosophy of Religion/ Theology: 158. Between 1996 and 2002 there were a total of 560 jobs advertised. The approximate ratio in this abbreviated list between religions of European 'concern' (for lack of a better word) and African religions is 20:1.

There are many, many things that can and should be said about this list, but let us ponder this: what do Africa and Oceania have in common, after all? It is approximately 2000 miles from the eastern shore of Africa to the nearest part of anything that would count as Oceania. In terms of historical origins or cultural contact, there is absolutely no connection. One is tempted to think that the answer to this question is all-too starkly obvious: Africans and 'Oceanians' are both dark-skinned, non-European, non-Christian cultural groups, who were brutally colonized by Euro-Christians. As such, the connection would be structural: they constitute the Other, or 'not-self', to Europe's own sense of self. *Prima facie*, this looks like a classic racist posture of denying peoples any individuality or cultural distinctness by lumping them together by race, as if race spoke their essence and nothing more needed to be said.

Be that as it may, as a job category, or taxonomy of areas studied, it is simply abysmal. We should reject it on epistemological and pedagogical grounds, if no other. By comparison, the distinction between New Testament/Old Testament is extraordinarily fine-grained. In job classifications, we are able to differentiate 'Hebrew Bible' from 'Old Testament', and 'Philosophy of Religion' from (Christian) 'Theology', yet we cannot distinguish, as a matter of professional practice, between these two totally unrelated areas.

When I presented this analysis at a conference convened by the Department of Religious Studies at The University of Alabama titled 'The African Diaspora and the Study of Religion' (April, 2005), a colleague of mine, Theodore Trost, who organized the conference, pointed out in a series of responses that my analysis of the job categories is somewhat misleading. To summarize his very cogent argument, he noted that the structure of job categories reflects: (i) the fact that the AAR began as an organization primarily dedicated to Christian education (it was formerly known as the National Association of Bible Instructors); (ii) that many of the jobs advertised were seminary positions, and that I had wrongly conflated those with non-sectarian positions, as seminaries employ a considerable number of 'self-described "scholars of religion"' who work in the AAR'; and finally, (iii) the allegedly disproportionate number of positions related to Christianity reflect the distinct mission of the institutions that do much of that hiring. This is, in all likelihood, a position with which many people agree: it seems 'natural' that the AAR is dominated by Christian-Biblical-Jewish concerns, as those are the faiths of origin of most of its members. It seems natural to most scholars of religion that their faith of origin would become their professional expertise, or, that a scholar of a particular religion would also be a practitioner of that religion.

These are very pertinent points, but from the viewpoint of a broad approach to the study of religion, this only names the source of the problem, it does not change it. Two major problems become clear, at least to me. First, Christian theologians in the AAR are constantly claiming that what they do is as much 'religious studies' as what secular, or non-sectarian descriptivists or theorists do. If theologians are claiming to do Religious Studies, they must account for how they do it. African religions is a site where the glaring differences between a faith-based approach to the study of religion and an approach which mandates methodological uniformity, comes home to roost. By systematically excluding African religions from their curricula, training, research, and hiring, either theologians/seminarians practise a very deformed version of Religious Studies, or they are doing something the basis of which is very different from that of a discipline governed by area studies content and methodological uniformity. When viewed in these terms, it becomes very clear that the systematic exclusion of Africa in 'Religious Studies' occurs for precisely the reasons Professor Trost noted: the study of African religions is not part of the 'mission' of Christian (or Jewish) seminaries, graduates of which constitute a significant portion of the scholars in the field. Those of us whose study of religion is not bound by such a faith-stance can only conclude that, since seminaries are never going to include African religions on an equal basis with other areas, they will always be contributing to the systematic exclusion of Africa. Is this not a case of trying to have one's cake and eat it, too? One cannot claim to do 'Religious Studies', just like secular scholars, programs, and departments do, and arbitrarily exclude such an enormous and rich body of data on the basis of a faith-stance.

The difference is this: a non-religious or non-sectarian approach to the study of religion in its totality would never have rational grounds to prefer one body of data over other bodies of data in such a systematic and categorical fashion. A rational approach to the diverse data of 'religion' would never allow such an incredibly one-sided emphasis on one pool of data at the expense of so many other pools of data. That's just really, really bad science. Furthermore, it just 'happens' to coincide with real, empirical, historical conflicts between whites and non-whites, between North and South, Occident and Orient. That is, the deformities in our discipline exactly mirror the distorted intellectual 'map' of the world created by European colonization. This is a classic instance of Foucault's 'power/knowledge' correlation. This is all the more relevant when we think of what the two-headed beast, AAR/SBL combined, did to the field of Religious Studies. (A friend of mine who did his PhD in Hebrew Bible at a prestigious private university, in the context of a discussion on this issue, laughed and said, 'Yeah, in Bible, we don't study religion'.)

Secondly, if there are such radical differences in what will and will not be included in the academic study of religion, what possible sense does it make to have an umbrella organization that houses such disparate and incommensurable enterprises? Insofar as the AAR's 'African adventure' represents the way in which it is forced to structure knowledge, research, jobs, and teaching because of its institutional genealogy, perhaps the AAR in its current form should no longer continue to exist? Perhaps it is time for yet another cleavage in the institutionalization of the study of religion, one between nonsectarians who do not privilege one set of data and those whose faith-stance allows them only to focus on one small segment of the data. (For now, we will have to save these debates for another instalment of 'Notes From the Field'.)

Another pertinent question Professor Trost raised about my critique of the scheme of job categories was that it would seem that other 'small' areas, such as women studies, gay studies, lesbian studies, and Native American religions are in a similar situation, so perhaps I am making too much of the place of Africa in all of this. Of course, it is true that all these other areas are in a similar position. While this is a painful and difficult truth, it is hardly an argument that the omission of Africa is not a problem. So besides being racist and Eurocentric, the study of religion has also historically been sexist and phallogocentric, heterosexist and heterocentric. The minimalization of Africa is only one of the systematic exclusions in the structure of Western knowledge along with many others. Individually, it is telling. Cumulatively, they are devastating.

While we would hope that it would be better, the problem becomes even worse when we look at a place where Africa often is included Religious Studies, namely, in world religions textbooks. The way in which one of the more popular world religions textbooks, Mary Pat Fisher's *Living Religions*, (which just issued its 6th edition in 2005), treats African religions is typical of this genre. In a chapter titled 'Indigenous Sacred Ways', she presents 106 examples of 'indigenous religion', drawn from (by my count), 50 different cultural groups. The full list of groups would be too tedious to present here, but a sampling includes: Lakota, Huichol, Ainu of northern Japan, Yoruba, Dene Tha of northwest Alberta, Kikuyu of Kenya, Inuit, 'traditional people' and shamans of Nepal, 'mana' of the Pacific Islanders, traditional Maori, Balinese, Buryats, Kung of Botswana, Toltecs, traditional peoples of Tibet, Navajo, (unspecified) Australian aborigines, Osage, tribal peoples who lived 'deep in the forests and hills of India', Vodou, Tsalagi (Cherokee), Akan of Ghana, Yup'ik of Alaska, Dagara of Burkina Faso,

Anishinaabe of Mississippi, Iqjugarjuk of northern Hudson Bay, and unspecified 'indigenous Mexicans'.

A typical example of how this material is handled can be seen in her description of various indigenous beliefs about the 'Supreme Being':

Many indigenous traditions worship a Supreme Being who they believe created the cosmos. This being is known by the Lakota as 'Wakan Tanka' or 'Great Mysterious' or 'Great Spirit'. African names for this being are attributes, such as 'All-powerful', 'Creator', 'the one who is met everywhere ...'. The Supreme Being is often referred to by male pronouns, but in some groups the Supreme Being is a female. Some tribes of the southwestern United States call her 'Changing Woman ...'. Many traditional languages make no distinction between male and female pronouns ... (*ibid.*, 39).

The author moves with rather shameless ease from the Dakotas to a completely set of unspecified 'African names', back to another unspecified set of 'tribes', presumably Pueblo (as if even they were all the same), in the United States, shifting back again to an excessively general claim about 'many traditional languages'. This entire exposition is sustained by the patently false notion that there is some constant object, a 'Supreme Being', which is incidentally, i.e., non-substantially, worshiped in various ways and hailed by many names. ('Wakan Tanka', by the way, is not understood as a singular being.) That they each could have profoundly different conceptions of the nature of divinity itself – which seems rather obviously to be the case – each of which is unique to their religion and culture and defies synonymy, seems lost on Fisher.

The peoples named in this chapter have nothing in common but, again, the structural position vis-à-vis Euro-Christianity, i.e., that of the Other. Even many of the African societies named have no cultural, religious, or historical connection with one another: they are merely 'African'. To make use of an analogy people in North America can readily understand: if you want to know what kind of cultural contact the Native American societies of the Lakota and the Pueblo were likely to have, such that they could share a common view of the divine, try walking from South Dakota to Arizona. That is what it would take for there to be any real cross-cultural transmission. Walking from Benin to Kenya would be exponentially more difficult, yet Fisher cavalierly tosses off 'African religions' as if there were no space, no time, no history, in short, nothing individual about 'African' societies, as if the word 'Africa', an unmistakable placeholder for the category of 'race', spoke a timeless essence that could be so summarized.

By contrast, on the first page of her treatment of Daoism and Confucianism, she gives a detailed historical chart (*ibid.*, 177) which separates periods, authors, movements, ideas, and events in a relatively fine-grained manner. Even a cursory overview of Daoism and Confucianism, different as they are, shows that they have exponentially more in common with each other than do, say, traditional Lakota religion, which shows virtually no interest in the afterlife, and Haitian Vodou, which is notorious for its obsessive concern with the afterlife. Yet, the two 'civilized' religions are differentiated by rather fine degrees, while the two 'primal' traditions are lumped together.

Similarly, in her treatment of Buddhism she differentiates between no less than six different versions of this one religion (*ibid.*, 142-163), spending almost as many pages on these variations of Buddhism as she does in the entire chapter on indigenous religions. On page 143, she gives a detailed map of the origin and transmission of Buddhism throughout Asia, whereas by contrast, the entire chapter on indigenous religions,

Africa included, does not have a single map –despite the fact that practically every part of the globe is mentioned. The message, again, is clear: civilized religions have a history, indigenous religions are determined, not by history, but by race, a timeless, unchanging essence. ‘World Religions’ has not changed its underlying conception much, if at all, since ‘World History’ was articulated by Hegel in the 1820s, in his *Philosophy of History*. We have not changed the paradigm, we have only watered it down and smoothed some of its rougher edges.

Fisher’s book is by no means an isolated case. Many world religion textbooks now deal with more localized, diverse cultural traditions, including those of Africa, by lumping them together as ‘primal’ religions, or by means of the less offensive but still problematic category, ‘indigenous religions’ (see, *e.g.*, Ellwood & McGraw 2005, 29-56; Ruland 1998, 9-30; Ludwig 2001, 31-61; Nielsen 1993, 21-45; and Demming 2005, 75-83).

Jonathan Z. Smith notes the degree to which this is, again, not a moral, scholarly, or political, lapse on the part of individual authors, but constitutive of the categories we have inherited in the study of religion:

A World Religion is a religion like ours; but it is, above all, a tradition which has achieved sufficient power and numbers to enter our history, either to form it, interact with it, or to thwart it We recognize both the unity within and the diversity between the ‘great’ World Religions, because they correspond to important geo-political entities with which we must deal. All ‘primitives’ by way of contrast may be simply lumped together as may the so-called ‘minor religions’ because they do not confront our history in any direct fashion. They are invisible (Smith 1978, 295).

African cultures, in their individuality and specificity, simply do not exist for the enterprise of ‘world religions’. This not only distorts our image of Africans, it distorts the very concept of ‘religion’, and so, distorts the most fundamental basis of our entire field.

To take a different approach, it has become common to differentiate religions by the strategies, even ‘technologies’, they employ in their ongoing activity of self-constitution. Some religions are ‘orthopraxis’ in orientation, while others emphasize ‘orthodoxy’; some are more performative, while others are more textual and doctrinal, and so forth. Richard King has made a very salient point about how these distinctions affect the very notion of what counts as a religion:

It has been estimated that of the thousands of languages that have been spoken by humans throughout history only some 106 have ever produced anything that might be described as literature. Equally, the vast majority of humans throughout history have participated in an oral as opposed to a literate culture. This point perhaps needs to be underlined, for it means that the vast majority of religious expression throughout history has been of a non-literate nature, taking the form of speech, song, performance, or iconography. Bearing this in mind, we should note that the literary bias in Western notions of religion does not accurately reflect the diversity of human experience. (King 1999, 62)

So much the more so for sub-Saharan Africa, whose indigenous form of religious practice leans much more towards ritual than it does towards creedal affirmations or the production of written texts. This is one of the most important things the study of African religions contributes to the methodologically uniform study of religion: it makes us change the very model of ‘religion’, moving us away from a Euro-centric, textualist

and/or 'confessionalist', model to a much more informed and nuanced sense of how religion actually works.

In contrast to Mary Pat Fisher and the 'lumpers' of world religion textbooks, Thomas Lawson argues that:

There are also many books about 'primitive religions' in which these [African] peoples and their religious traditions are lumped together with small-scale societies from Polynesia, South America, North America, and even the Arctic. The assumption in these books is that such widely disparate societies have something important in common. But there is little agreement as to precisely what it is We shall avoid lumping together all the people of sub-Saharan Africa, and we shall not argue that they are all alike (1993, 23).

This is, of course, an intellectually responsible way to deal with the complex, heterogeneous plurality that is Africa. However, dealing with Africa (*mutatis mutandis*, Asia, Native America, Oceania, 'indigenous peoples', etc.) in this way makes it impossible to include it in those areas of curricular and pedagogical practice which are predicated upon sweeping generalizations, such as 'world religions' and 'Intro to Religion' courses – which, as many a department chair knows, are the 'bread and butter' courses for most departments. It also complicates, at best, any attempt to generalize, descriptively, theoretically, or pedagogically about 'religion', '*homo religiosus*', 'the nature of religion', or 'religious experience'. We are suddenly confronted by the stark fact that we do not and cannot, in the course of our professional lives, learn enough about such 'local knowledge' to speak with any authority about something as complicated as that. In order to include Africa, we would actually have to hire new people, people trained in ways and areas quite different than is typical of the make-up of most departments (i.e., Bible, theology/ethics, Judaism, Asian religions, and ...). In short, in order to accommodate this most incommensurable cultural reality, we, i.e., Religious Studies as it has been traditionally constituted in departments in American universities, would have to give something up. Entrenched power, in the form of the possession of benefits and privileges (jobs, dedicated endowments and chairs, etc.), is not likely to give up anything. *Ergo*, change in this area is not likely to come any time soon – despite the fact that without it, Religious Studies operates with a crippled, possibly even corrupt, 'map' of the world. We then have to live with this uncannily *unheimlich* fact: although 'we' as individuals are not racists, and I know no one in the American Academy of Religion who is, the historically sedimented, objective, impersonal, institutional structures within which we work, to which we are committed, and which define and sustain us as professionals, are racist.

In conclusion: Clifford Geertz once described the activity of scholarship as 'vexing each other with profit'. My hope is that this is what this installment of 'Notes From the Field' has accomplished.

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NORTHERN UGANDA'S WAR-SICK CHILDREN MOVE INTO THE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

After years of neglect and obscurity, the plight of Northern Uganda's war-sick children is finally becoming a global media item.³ Journalists and filmmakers are vying for the most apposite epithet — abducted, lost, stolen, invisible, forgotten — to describe those at the center of this seemingly endless war. Articles on the horror stories of the 30,000 children abducted by the rebel insurgents of the Lord's Resistance Army, and turned into killing machines, sex slaves, or corpses, can now be found in regional newspapers from Knoxville, Tennessee, to Sligo, Ireland, and online news sources from OhmyNews, South Korea, to CNN's Anderson Cooper's 360 Blog. Celebrities from Don Cheadle of Hotel Rwanda fame to author Christopher Hitchens have visited the region, recounting vividly their experiences on ABC's 'Nightline' and in Vanity Fair, respectively.

Yet human-rights and humanitarian agencies have long been sounding the alarm about this twenty-year-old war between the LRA, led by the mysterious and elusive Joseph Kony, and the Ugandan government, headed by President Yoweri Museveni, now in a controversial third term of office. The United Nations lists Northern Uganda as one of the 'Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About'. Jan Egeland, the U.N. Under-

³ Source: http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/sightings/archive_2006/0330.shtml

Secretary General of Humanitarian Affairs, has called the situation 'the world's most neglected humanitarian crisis' and 'one of the biggest scandals of our generation', with 1.6 million, or 90 percent, of the Acholi people herded into internally displaced people's camps. In these insecure, unsanitary, and miserable conditions, where rates of rape, murder, suicide, and HIV/AIDS are high, it is not surprising that the UN cites a death toll of 1,000 each week as a consequence of this low-intensity 'dirty war'.

Archbishop John Baptist Odama, Catholic archbishop of Gulu Diocese, has tirelessly circled the globe as an advocate for the children who know only the abject poverty of refugee camps or the nightly treks from their villages to seek safe haven in the urban areas. Odama's pleas, along with others from the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, for political action on the part of the Ugandan government and the international community to end the conflict through peace talks rather than military action are gradually being heard.

Meanwhile, efforts by three youth-based organizations have been making most noticeable impact in recent months. Uganda-CAN (Uganda Conflict Action Network) was founded in May 2005 by five American undergraduates studying in Uganda as 'a project for Ugandans and non-Ugandans to work together for a comprehensive resolution to the war and its consequent suffering'. Working under the auspices of the Africa Faith and Justice Network, they have been very effective in raising awareness about the conflict, mobilizing support, and influencing U.S. and Ugandan policy. Gulu Walk was introduced in July of 2005 as an attempt by two Canadians, through their well-publicized walks, to better understand the ordeal of the night-commuter children. It has since developed into an impassioned worldwide movement for peace.

The third initiative is the film *Invisible Children*, which is flying around to church congregations and high school and college campuses. Racy and moving, with touches of MTV and reality TV, it is striking a chord with youngsters who, like many other Americans, did not know or care about genocides and child soldiers in Africa. In addition, it has spawned an NGO seeking to channel this surge of youthful humanitarian concern. Joining forces with Uganda-CAN at a screening for policy-makers in Washington, D.C., in March 2006, they have discovered that they can, and should, influence political will.

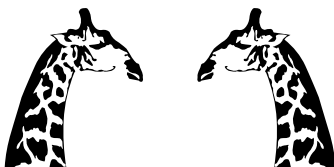
Beyond the frontline, so to speak, let us not forget the efforts of academics and media and policy analysts to scrutinize the history of the conflict, its political logic or lack thereof, the vested economic interests on both sides, and series of failed peace negotiations. The debates surrounding the religious elements of the war are also significant, for the deviant labeling of Kony as crazed Christian fundamentalist, Muslim convert, traditional prophet, and/or Satanist, in addition to 'terrorist', influences both national and international political and military strategies. For anyone imagining that the story of this tragic war is some local, ethnic conflict, there are plenty of sources to indicate its international dimensions, not least Sudanese government support for the rebels and U.S. aid to the Ugandan military. The International Criminal Court has weighed in, too, issuing arrest warrants for Kony and four of his commanders, despite calls by many Acholi for traditional methods of reconciliation and rehabilitation.

As rebel forces weaken, there is no improvement in the humanitarian situation, and fears concerning aid distribution and government efforts to end the war grow, given the massive defeat of Museveni's party in the North in the recent elections. Uganda's lost generation is going to need more than the global media spotlight for some years to come. Perhaps in the future some of the survivors will offer trenchant theological reflec-

tions on how Sartre's famous dictum 'hell is other people' became 'hell is being forgotten by other people'.

References for further reading

Information about Uganda-CAN can be found at www.ugandacan.org. For information about GuluWalk, see www.guluwalk.com. You may read about Friends for Peace in Africa at www.friendsforpeaceinafrica.org. Consult www.invisiblechildren.com for information about the movie and mission of Invisible Children.



REQUESTS

MAKE MEMORIES LAST

Request for Help in the *Remember Me When I'm Gone* Project

Juliette Reinders Folmer

Tel. / fax.: +31 (0)35 6910391

Mobile: +31 (0)6 5424 1642

translations@remembermewhenimgone.org

The *Remember Me When I'm Gone* Project is a world-wide, no-budget, non-profit initiative which aims to inspire, motivate and help parents who expect to die before their child(ren) have grown up, to make a memory book about their own life for their child(ren). Whenever the early death of a parent is imminent, he or she may write a memory book for his or her children. So far, memory books have especially proved valuable in AIDS-related projects. The *Remember Me When I'm Gone* Project aims to make the memory book concept available world-wide by providing a generic Memory Book template through the website www.remembermewhenimgone.org. The template can be downloaded free of charge and is currently available in 33 languages already. Distribution of the template is free provided that the document is distributed as it is and without charge.

Appeal for help

In order to increase the number of languages we currently offer, we would like in particular to add many more African languages to the project. As this is a no-budget project, we depend completely upon volunteers to provide us with translations. So our request to you is: Would you (or someone else you know) be willing to participate in this project by translating the document into your native language? It is not a big job: the document contains only 225 words. It should take a native speaker less than an hour, but it is a very important one for our effort to make this memory book template available world-wide. If you, or someone you know, would like to help us, please contact us in English on translations@remembermewhenimgone.org in order that we may mail the text to you.

Translations are already available in

Afrikaans, Arabic, Armenian, Bambara, Bemba, Brazilian Portuguese, Burmese, Cantonese, Catalan, Chichewa, Chinese, Cebuano, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, Frisian, German, Greek, Hadiya, Hungarian, Igbo, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kimeru, Kinyarwanda, Lithuanian, Malay (Bahasa), Norwegian, Nyannja, Oromo, Papiamento, Polish, Portuguese, Pulaar, Romanian, Russian, Servo-Kroatian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tigre, Tigrigna, Turkish, Ukrainian.

Translations have been promised for

Akan (Twi), Amharic, Azeri (Azerbaijani), Ekegusii, Farsi, Fulfulde, Ga (and another Ghanaian language), Hausa, Caribbean Hindustani, Kikuyu, Kongo, Lango, Luganda, Mandingo, Ndebele, Punjabi, Setswana, Shona, Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Sranan Tongo, Tajik, Tsonga, and Zulu.

For further information about this non-profit project, visit:

<http://www.remembermewhenimgone.org/>

This site contains also all translations which are currently available.

Please feel free to e-mail me should you have any questions

“Remember me when I’m gone ...”

Inspiring people to tell their own story...

... and help keep the memory of them alive

Online since World Aids Day 2005 (December 1st) !

REQUEST FOR REVIEWERS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES REVIEWS

Dr. Elias Bongmba, Associate Professor in the Dept. of Religious Studies at Rice University, Houston, Texas, USA, and Managing Editor of the two journals of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religions (CSSR), Religious Studies Reviews (RSR) and the Bulletin of Council of Societies for the Study of Religion, has taken over as the RSR Africa subsection Editor from Adeline Masquelier. He is searching for African Religions scholars to review books for the Religious Studies Reviews journal. He would like to build a strong list of reviewers who would write booknotes for the

journal on African religions (all religions), and in consultation with the editor be willing to do longer review essays based on several publications. If you have any publications that you would like RSR to review, do ask the publisher to send it to him, or give information to request the book. For further information, contact:

Dr. Elias Bongmba

MANAGING EDITOR CSSR (Council of Societies for the Study of Religions)

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Websites: http://reli.rice.edu/rice_reli.cfm?a=cms.c.3.7

<http://reli.rice.edu/cmsFiles/Files/Bongmba1.pdf>



PERSONS & POSTS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY GAZETTE

APRIL 13, 2006

Steve Bradt

FAS Communications

JACOB OLUPONA NAMED PROFESSOR OF AFRICAN STUDIES & RELIGION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Scholar has 'redefined ... understanding of Africa's religious diaspora'

Jacob K. Olupona, a noted scholar of indigenous African religions who is currently leading an ambitious study of the religious practices of African émigrés in the United States, has been appointed professor of African and African-American studies and religion in Harvard University's Faculty of Arts & Sciences and Harvard Divinity School, effective July 1. Olupona, 55, comes to Harvard from the University of California, Davis, where he is professor and director of African-American and African studies.

'Professor Olupona is without peer among scholars of indigenous African religions', says William C. Kirby, Edith and Benjamin Geisinger Professor of History and dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. 'His unusually strong scholarship in this challenging field has redefined the study of African religions and is poised to reshape our

understanding of Africa's religious diaspora. His rich interdisciplinary approach will attract undergraduate and graduate students with interests in a broad range of fields'.

'Jacob Olupona brings to Harvard an immensely important capacity to join the serious and groundbreaking study of indigenous West African religious traditions and practices to the study of African-American religion and practice and its deep involvement even to the present moment in its African heritage and inspiration', says Dean William A. Graham of the Harvard Divinity School. 'We look forward with great anticipation to welcoming him as an important participant in a variety of discourses here at Harvard, both in comparative religious studies and in American religious studies more broadly'.

Olupona is currently working on a path-breaking study of the religious practices of the estimated 1 million Africans who have emigrated to the United States over the past 40 years. He intends to examine several populations that remain relatively invisible on the American religious landscape: 'reverse missionaries' who have come to the United States to establish churches, African Pentecostals in American congregations, American branches of independent African churches, and indigenous African religious communities in the United States. This work stands to contribute greatly to our understanding of how international migration has shaped the mosaic of American religion, as well as illuminate the similarities and differences between Christianity's African and African-American variants.

Olupona's earlier research has ranged across African spirituality and ritual practices, spirit possession, Pentecostalism, Yoruba festivals, animal symbolism, icons, phenomenology, and religious pluralism in Africa and the Americas. He examines how the structure, content, and meaning of religious beliefs and practices permeate daily life, as in his forthcoming book *Ile-Ife: The City of 201 Gods*, which examines the modern urban mixing of ritual, royalty, gender, class, power, and religion. He has authored or edited seven other books, including *Kingship, Religion and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A Phenomenological Study of Ondo Yoruba Festivals* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiskell International, 1991), which has become a model for ethnographic research among Yoruba-speaking communities.

Olupona has received prestigious grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, American Philosophical Society, Ford Foundation, Davis Humanities Institute, Rockefeller Foundation, Wenner-Gren Foundation, and Getty Foundation. He has served on the editorial boards of three influential journals and as president of the African Association for the Study of Religions. In 2000, Olupona received an honorary doctorate in divinity from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

Since 1991, Olupona has taught primarily at the University of California, Davis. He has also held visiting appointments at Florida International University, Harvard, Muhlenberg College, Smith College, Bayreuth University in Germany, and Selly Oak Colleges in Britain. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1975, followed by master's and doctoral degrees from Boston University in 1981 and 1983, respectively.

AASR-NA colleagues congratulate Prof. Jacob Olupona on his recent appointment to the faculty at Harvard University.

MUSA DUBE PROMOTED TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Prof. Musa W. Dube has recently been promoted from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor at the University of Botswana.⁴ Dr Musa W. Dube taught Biblical Studies (Synoptic Gospels, New Testament Greek, Johannine and Pauline Literature) in the University of Botswana, Dept. of Theology and Religious Studies, from 1997 to 2002. From 2002-2003 she was seconded to WCC, serving as a HIV/AIDS and theological consultant for churches and theological institutions of Africa. Her role was to train theological lecturers and church leaders to mainstream HIV/AIDS and gender issues in their programs. Towards this end, Dr Dube has edited two volumes: *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programs* (Geneva: WCC, 2003), and: *Africa Praying: A Handbook of HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermons and Liturgy* (Geneva: WCC 2004). In 2004, she joined Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA, as Professor of Religious Studies and Head of the Department of Religious Studies. In 2005, she rejoined the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Botswana, at Gaborone, Botswana.

Dr Dube has published numerous academic articles in journals, books, and magazines and has edited several volumes. Her research and writing is focused on postcolonial feminist interpretations of the Bible, which explores feminist ways of reading the Bible without colonizing the other. She is also exploring ways of reading the Bible that are authentic to her cultural background such as 'reading with (non-academic readers)', divination and storytelling methods of reading. Of late, she is exploring ways of reading the Bible in HIV/AIDS contexts—for prevention, quality care and breaking the stigma. A new volume towards this end, *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*, has just come out with Orbis & Cluster; *The HIV/AIDS Bible: Selected Essays* will be coming out by the end of 2005 from the Scranton University Press.

Dr Dube is also actively involved with the Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians, where she has served as the chair of biblical research and publication for the association, charged with motivating research, writing and publications in the area. Under this role she has edited such volumes as *Other Ways of Reading; African Women and the Bible*, and *Talitha Cum Theologies of African Women*.

Dr Dube, who describes herself as an activist-scholar, is a highly sought international speaker in academic and ecumenical circles, has given papers in more than twenty-two countries. She is the author of *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretations of the Bible*, a book published by Chalice Press, 2000.



⁴ The following information is taken from: <http://www.scrippscollege.edu/dept/religion/index.htm#>

JAMES COX
PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
AT EDINBURGH

Dr James (Jim) Cox BA, MDiv, PhD, AASR Treasurer, has been granted a Personal Chair in Religious Studies at the Edinburgh University School of Divinity.

Professor Cox's interests are in the study of indigenous religions, in particular those of Africa and the Arctic, and in the methodologies in the academic study of religions. These interests were born from appointments in Alaska in 1981 and in Zimbabwe in 1989, in both of which he did fieldwork.

In 1993, he became Director of the African Christianity Project in the University of Edinburgh's Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, and in 1999 Reader in Religious Studies at New College, Edinburgh. He is currently President of the British Association for Study of Religions (BASR), and editor, with Gerrie ter Haar, of the Religion in Contemporary Africa Series, published by Africa World Press in the United States.

The General Secretary on behalf of the Executive and Prof. Olupona send congratulations, and appreciate the commendable work of Professor Cox in the AASR

Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku will retire from Lafayette College in Easton, PA, USA, at the end of this academic year. He will return to his home in Ghana where he plans to continue his research and writing in African religions and cultural traditions. His colleagues in the AASR-NA bade him a fond farewell during the 2005 annual meeting and expressed the hope that he will return to join them for future meetings.

Prof. Teresia Hinga, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, delivered the first Kathleen O'Brien Wicker Endowment Lecture at Scripps College, Claremont, CA, USA on February 27, 2006.⁵ The Kathleen O'Brien Wicker Endowment was established at Scripps College by trustees, alumnae, and friends of Kathleen Wicker, professor emerita of Religious Studies. The endowment honors her as a teacher, role model, scholar, and humanist. It was conceived to continue in perpetuity her interdisciplinary and multicultural approach to feminist Biblical Studies. Each year, the endowment invites a distinguished scholar in Religious Studies to speak on campus.

Prof. Hinga's lecture was entitled 'In the Footsteps of Kimpa Vita: African Feminism and the Search for Decolonized and Liberating Religion in Africa'. Beatriz Kimpa Vita (1684-1706) led a Christian movement to build a Congolese Catholicism and unite Congo under one king. Kimpa Vita, baptized a Catholic, answered a calling during her youth as a traditional healer and medium to the spirit world. She eventually emerged as an *nganga marinda*, a healer and medium specializing in social concerns – especially the civil wars in the region that fractured the kingdom. Her movement recognized the papal primate but was hostile to the European missionaries. Kimpa Vita challenged her

⁵ The following information is taken from:

<http://www.scrippscollege.edu/dept/newscenter/news/2006/wickerlecture.html>

fellow nationals to reject the colonizing religiosity of the European missionaries and sought to create an African church, which affirmed African peoples as worthy of political and spiritual freedom. Before being burned as a heretic in 1706, Kimpa Vita had attracted thousands of followers in the short time span of two years.

Many African women have followed in Kimpa Vita's footsteps. Professor Wangari Maathai, Nobel Prize recipient and founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, serves as an example of the women in Africa who continue to organize movements in the quest for human rights and justice. The speaker, Professor Teresia Hinga, says of Kimpa Vita and the others who have followed her lead, 'These women constantly and creatively reject the victim status ascribed to them by many historiographers of African religions, cultures, and histories, and their stories should be reclaimed, celebrated, and emulated. Such is the task, however partial and preliminary, that I will undertake in this lecture'. The lecture appears as an iPod link on the Scripps College website:

www.scrippscollege.edu.

Professor Abdulkader I. Tayob, the Chair at the International Institutes for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, has been appointed to head the Centre for Contemporary Islam, a new programme on Islamic Studies, at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The position involves establishing an international research and teaching programme focusing on Africa. Professor Tayob has left ISIM as of 1 July 2006.

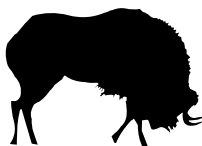
During his tenure at ISIM, Professor Tayob made valuable contribution to the research programme of ISIM, in particular as programme director of the Contemporary Islamic Identity and Public Life programme, as well as to research and teaching activities on modern Islam at Radboud University, Nijmegen. Furthermore, he directed the ISIM project *Rights At Home* and brought it to a successful completion. The students, colleagues, staff members, and fellow scholars at ISIM and Nijmegen will miss Professor Tayob's friendship and scholarship, but hope to continue collaborating with him in the coming years.



FELLOWSHIPS & SCHOLARSHIPS

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL WOMEN'S STUDIES IN RELIGION PROGRAM REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS OF RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Ann Braude, Director of the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School, requests nominations for the 2006-2007 search for candidates for the post of Research Associate in the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School. The post affords opportunity for undisturbed time and an interdisciplinary context in which to pursue work in women's studies in religion. Appropriate potential applicants will be informed by Braude that they have been nominated and receive information about the Program. Braude would also appreciate suggestions of any group email lists in which the program should be announced. For more information about the Program and the post, for the application guidelines and for the list of 2006-2007 Research Associates visit www.hds.harvard.edu/wsrrp. In addition to news about the Program and application materials, it also includes a full list of Program scholars and their publications and recent audio lectures. You may also contact Tracy Wall at twall@hds.harvard.edu.



FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONS

David Westerlund
Sodertorn University College
Stockholm, Sweden

STUDYING RELIGIONS (& AIDS) IN GABORONE, BOTSWANA

In December 2005, I had the privilege of visiting some colleagues in Pretoria, South Africa, and Gaborone, Botswana. One of the institutions I visited was the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Botswana. In this brief report I will present some features of the teaching and research programmes of that Department.

The University of Botswana was established in 1982 and now (2005) has six faculties: Business, Education, Engineering and Technology, Humanities, Science, and Social Sciences. There is also a School of Graduate Studies. The Faculty of Humanities has seven departments, one of which is the Department of Theology & Religious Studies. This department has sixteen members of staff (associate professors, senior lecturers and lecturers), and the present head of department is Fidelis Nkomazana. Associate professors are James Amanze and Musa Dube-Shomanah. A striking feature is the international character of the staff composition. In addition to those who hail from Botswana, members of staff come from countries such as South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and the United States, which contributes to a dynamic and creative atmosphere.

Besides Theology, with Biblical Studies, and Religious Studies, Philosophy is a strong area of specialization. Thus there are courses in, for instance, African Philosophy and Culture, Epistemology and History of Philosophy. The main emphasis in Theology is on Christianity, which reflects the predominant role of this religion in Botswana and neighboring countries. However, in addition to Biblical languages, Arabic is taught also. Religious Studies includes courses on specific religions, like African Traditional Religions in Botswana, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and New Religious Movements. There is a wide range of perspectives, and courses are also offered in various thematic fields, such as Religion and Development, Religion and Politics, Religious Pluralism, and Religious Rituals and Sacred Places.

The research of the staff members has a strong regional dimension. Hence there is a primary emphasis on studying religious issues in Botswana. A particularly striking characteristic of the research is the focus on various aspects of religion and HIV/AIDS. Most of the staff members are in some way involved in research projects focusing on this very serious problem. Considering that Botswana and neighboring countries are the worst AIDS-affected areas in the world, there is an obvious need for intensive research on this tragic problem. Examples of AIDS-related research are 'African conceptions of human sexuality' (Amanze), 'How Pentecostal churches have contributed towards or fought against stigmatization of HIV/AIDS' (Nkomazana) and 'The healing of HIV/AIDS patients by the Lambs Followers Church in Maun and Gantsi' (senior lecturer O.

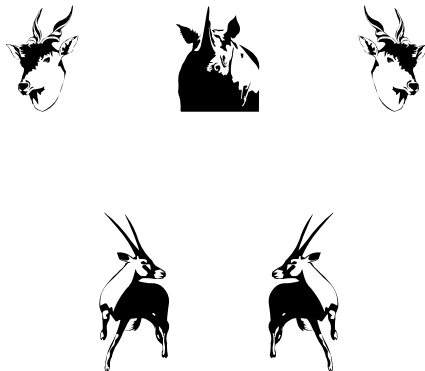
N. Kealotswe). Dube-Shomanah focuses on the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS in theological education and feminist perspectives on this health problem, while others concentrate on, for instance, the role of traditional doctors.

In addition to AIDS-related research themes, there is a wide range of topics. Most of these have a Christian context, but several of the staff members study indigenous or traditional religions and Islam too. Some examples of ongoing research are 'Religion and Society in Botswana' (Amanze), 'Postcolonialism, Feminism and Biblical Interpretation' (Dube-Shomanah), 'The History of Pentecostalism in Botswana (with special emphasis on contemporary developments)' (Nkomazana), 'Interaction between traditional doctors and Christianity' (lecturer L. Nthoi) and 'Contemporary Developments amongst Botswana's Muslims' (senior lecturer M. Haron).

Articles and books are published locally as well as internationally. An example of a recently published book co-edited by one of the staff members is *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives*, ed. by Musa Dube-Shomanah, Althea Spencer Miller & Kathleen O'Brien Wicker (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005). There are several regionally and inexpensively produced series of research reports and books, such as *Studies on the Church in Southern Africa* and *Inter-Faith Dialogue in Botswana*.

For several years, annual regional conferences have been organized in co-operation with colleagues in the Departments of Theology and Religious Studies in Lesotho and Swaziland. These BOLESWA conferences have provided a forum for both staff and students to present and discuss research. For instance, in 2001 the Department of Theology and Religious Studies in Gaborone hosted the BOLESWA conference on the theme of 'God'. It published the proceedings of the conference in 2002 in the series BOLESWA: Occasional Papers in Theology and Religion.

There is a strong wish among the staff members to organize and host a wider international conference in Gaborone. Given this wish, and the good infra-structure of the town as well as the resources of the expanding University of Botswana, there appears to be fine opportunities for such a conference. Hence the AASR preparations for sponsoring a major conference there in 2007 seem timely.



CALLS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Muhammed Haron

Dept. of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Botswana
& Centre for Contemporary Islam, University of Cape Town

TYDSKRIF VIR LETTERKUNDE: SPECIAL ISSUE

AFRICA & ITS ARABO-ISLAMIC HERITAGE: EXPLORING ARABIC & ISLAMIC LITERATURE

Muhammed Haron will coordinate a Special Issue of *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* on ‘Africa and its Arabo-Islamic Heritage: Exploring Arabic and Islamic Literature’, scheduled to appear in August 2007. The focus for the Special Issue will be on Arabic and Islamic Literature (written and oral); and within these two broad categories contributions that cover the classical and contemporary genres will be considered.

The Special Issue allows contributors to explore the ideas captured in these literatures and get their readers to know the cultures of Africans through their texts. There is little doubt that Africa is a continent where civilizations converged and cultures connected over many centuries. The Islamic civilization and Arab culture penetrated the northern part of the African continent and weaved their way into the fabric of Sub-Saharan Africa. Because of this process, the Arabo-Islamic lifestyle became enmeshed with Sub-Saharan cultures and brought about phases of renewal and transformation among the communities located in these regions.

From the 13th century onwards West Africa was indeed the hub of socio-economic activities and interactions. Cities such as Timbuctou and Djenne emerged and became important nodal points that not only joined numerous trade routes but also gave life to a hive of African intellectual scholarship. This consequently led to the emergence of a vast body of literature that ignited intellectual activities in the region. The bibliographical compilations by scholars such as Hunwick and O’Faye and the works published by Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation bear testimony to rich heritage that the earlier African scholars left behind.

Similar developments took place along the East Coast of Africa, where Arab traders conducted commercial activities with the peoples along the coast and shared their language and culture with the coastal communities; these interactions eventually gave birth to Swahili, which eventually became the lingua franca of the region. Whilst this was taking place along the East African coast, another related development took place at the southern tip of the African continent. The nascent Cape Muslim community employed the Arabic script in order to write their religious texts in Afrikaans – a socio-linguistic engineering process that was called Arabic-Afrikaans.

It is hoped that this Special Issue will not just be an enriching and insightful exercise, but one that will surely be an educational one; one that will bring about a better understanding of African communities and cultures through an interpretation and analysis of their literary productions or via pieces of translations that represent their writings.

Tydskrif vir Letterkunde thus makes a Call for Papers that may be in the form of analyses and commentaries on oral traditions, literary genres, national and comparative literary approaches, African-Arabic-Islamic syncretism, translations and the relationships between theology, jurisprudence and African localities.

Paper proposals (250-300 words) are expected by the 15th of July 2006. The full papers should not exceed 15 pages (bibliography included). It should be presented in a clear type format with 2.5cm all round, and in double spacing (including quotes, notes, and references). Graphics are welcome and when submitted meet the following requirements:

- be in a format no smaller than A5,
- be in camera ready or in digital format,
- have a resolution of at least 300 dpi, and
- be accompanied by an appropriate caption.

The deadline for final submission of papers is 31st of October 2006. The proposals and full papers should be sent in MS Word format to the coordinator: **Muhammed Haron**, Dept. of Theology & Religious Studies, Private Bag UB 0703, Faculty of Humanities, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana. Email: haronm@mopipi.ub.bw. Fax: 09267-318-5098. Alternative Address : *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, GW/ HSB 15-28 University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002, South Africa. E-mail: tv1@postino.up.ac.za. Fax: 27-12-4202349. Website: www.letterkunde.up.ac.za

Stefan Höschele
Theologische Hochschule Friedensau

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO *ADVENTISM IN AFRICA* BOOK

Editors:

Stefan Höschele, PhD, Theologische Hochschule Friedensau,
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Nehemiah Nyaundi, PhD, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya
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Contributions are invited to an academic publication with the working title *Adventism in Africa: Varieties of a Religious Movement*. It will be part of the *Adventistica* series published by the Archives of Adventist History, Friedensau, with Peter Lang Publishers. With its 5 million members and 10 million adherents in Africa, Adventism is a growing and significant movement on the continent of Africa. There is some literature on this de-

nomination in particular African countries, but this book will be the first scholarly monograph on Adventism in Africa as a whole. It aims at bringing together chapters about different regions, historical epochs, and themes, written from diverse perspectives, approaches, and disciplines by Adventists and non-Adventists alike. Some noted authors have already agreed to write a chapter. The editors will be happy to receive your contribution to this endeavour also. Please consult the 'Instructions for Prospective Authors' and the list of 'Proposed Chapters' sections below and inform the editors which topic you would like to work on. Contributions may be submitted until December 31, 2006. Stefan Höschele is also working on a *Bibliography of Adventism in Africa*. He is eager to add titles of publications which are not found on the website of this project: http://www.thh-friedensau.de/dozenten/hoeschele/projekte/africa_book.htm

PROPOSED CHAPTERS

Introductory Chapters

1. N. Nyaundi & S. Höschele, 'General Introduction'
2. N. Nyaundi, 'Adventism and Africa: Facets of an Emerging Factor of Society'
3. N. Nyaundi, 'Beginnings, Backgrounds, Influences'
4. S. Höschele, 'On Writing Adventist History in Africa'

Chapters on Adventist History in Africa

Chapter on Adventist history in Africa will deal with peculiar stories of missionary beginnings, decisive periods of pre-independence history, interesting post-independence developments, or other outstanding episodes, e.g.

5. Daniel Heinz, 'Beginnings in Ethiopia and Egypt'
6. Russell Staples, 'The Adventist People Movement in Rwanda in the 1920s and 1930s'

Chapters on Adventist Perspectives in Africa

Chapters on Adventist perspectives in Africa propose analyses that may be applied to peculiar issues from disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, History, Missiology, Theology, e.g.:

7. Klaus Fiedler, 'African Adventism as Part of the Post-Classical Churches' (Church History)
8. Klaus Fiedler, 'Are African Adventists Fundamentalists?' (Sociology)
9. Gottfried Oosterwal, 'Adventism in African Dress: How Africa Shaped Adventism'

Chapters dealing with Adventist Themes

Examples of themes which may be of special interest include:

10. Adventist worship in Africa
11. Other aspects of Adventist church life in Africa
12. Adventists in Africa and health
13. The inculturation of Adventism in Africa
14. Cultural conflicts in the history of Adventism in Africa
15. Ordinary Adventists' lives in Africa
16. Outstanding Adventists (e.g., of a particular region) in Africa

17. Adventist evangelism in Africa
18. Adventist literature in Africa
19. Adventist church administration in Africa
20. Adventist institutions in Africa
21. Adventist missionary methods in Africa
22. Adventist folk churches in Africa
23. Adventism and Islam in Africa
24. Adventism and African Traditional Religions
25. Missionary failure of Adventism in Africa
26. Adventism in Africa and women
27. Adventism and governments in Africa
28. Adventist urban mission in Africa
29. Adventist Theology in Africa
30. Music and Adventist churches in Africa
31. Art and Adventist churches in Africa
32. Architecture and Adventist churches in Africa
33. Ethics and Adventist churches in Africa
34. Youth and Adventist churches in Africa
35. Adventism as a force of 'Enlightenment' in Africa
36. ... and other themes!

Regional Overviews

37. Adventism in Eastern Africa
38. Adventism in West Africa
39. Adventism in North Africa
40. Adventism in Central Africa
41. Adventism in Southern Africa

Conclusion

42. N. Nyaundi & S. Höschele

Bibliography

43. S. Höschele

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE AUTHORS

Who qualifies for writing?

- Anybody who has a serious contribution to make!
- Especially teachers in academic institutions, those who have earned an academic degree, and those who have knowledge of Adventism in more than one African country.

Why should you write?

- Because hardly anything is available on Adventism in some countries and on certain topics, periods, and regions.
- Because this is the first book that deals with Adventism in Africa as a whole – you will be among the pioneers who contribute.

Which topics qualify for a chapter?*Adventist History:*

- Peculiar stories of missionary beginnings, or
- Decisive periods of pre-independence history, or
- Interesting post-independence developments, or
- Outstanding episodes exemplifying African Adventism as a whole or at least a major part of it.

Themes and perspectives:

- Particular themes (see list above) should be addressed in a broad manner, i.e., in relation to more than one country if possible and possibly from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- Authors who choose a particular perspective, should take a large area as their object of writing, preferably a whole region or the continent.

Regional articles:

- Summaries of Adventist history
- Present issues in whole regions.

How should the chapter be written?

- In English or French.

Procedure

Those interested in contributing a chapter should send to Stefan Höschele by e-mail

- a working title of the paper and
- a very short proposal or tentative abstract.

He will then advise on further steps.

What is the benefit that a writer can expect? You will be remembered as one of the prime scholars regarding Adventism in Africa.

Award

A prize will be awarded to the three best contributions by African authors.

The Award committee will consist of D. Heinz, N. Nyaundi, and S. Höschele.



BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

Prof. Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, AASR Representative for North America, filed an application with the American Academy of Religion (AAR) for the recognition of the AASR as Related Scholarly Organization (RSO) with the AAR on 22nd February 2006. She did so at the request of the AASR Executive and the AASR members in North America. There are no costs involved either in making this application or once the AASR has become an RSO of the AAR. But the RSO status will allow the AASR to operate more comfortably within the AAR meeting and will privilege certain of our requests. Members of the AAR Executive who are familiar with the AASR encouraged Prof. O'Brien Wicker to submit this application for RSO status, because they feel that the AASR meets the criteria for RSO status. The IAHR also has RSO status with the American Academy of Religion. Prof. O'Brien Wicker argued the application as follows:

We believe the AASR meets all of the published eligibility criteria of the AAR for RSO status. We are independent and formally organized, and were founded in 1992. We do not yet have formal not-for-profit status [in the US], but we are certainly a not-for-profit organization. The AASR's *Welcome* statement [on the AASR web site] describes the extent of our international constituency, most of who are professional scholars and teachers and all of who evince interest in the study of religion. The AASR, both internationally and nationally, also supports free inquiry and critical examination. Based on the statements in our public documents, and in our personal experience, the AASR acts in a manner consistent with AAR policies on non-discrimination, harassment, and professional standards.

Prof. Wicker concluded the letter of application by stating that 'the members of the AASR look forward to the opportunity for a closer relationship with the AAR made possible by our being approved for RSO status, to the mutual benefit of both organizations. We look forward to hearing the result of your deliberations'.

Nidān: International Journal for the Study of Hinduism is an annual journal in the field of studies in Hinduism, but in particular in its global, or 'diasporic' forms, and especially in its developments in Southern Africa. It is edited and managed from the School of Religion & Theology of the University of KwaZulu-Natal by Prof. Pratap P. Kumar as Editor and D. Chetty as Managing Editor. So far seventeen volumes of *Nidān* have appeared. From volume 16, 2004, onwards *Nidān* was made an international journal. In his editorial to vol. 17 (December 2005) the editor states that *Nidān* is 'very conscious of the debates between the so called "insiders" and "outsiders"' and keen to publish views from both sides, while avoiding both sectarian as well as scholarly biases. Apart from concern with the issue of 'vernacular' and 'sanskrit' forms of Hinduism, *Nidān* encourages the study of global Hinduism and intends to bring together 'a variety of methodologies and theories' in its study, and balance the traditional text based methodologies with social scientific methods. For further information or subscription (R70.00 per volume in South Africa; US\$ 30 elsewhere), one may write to:

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BOOK REVIEW

Brigid M. Sackey
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YORUBA SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM⁶

Aina Olomo 2002, *The Core of Fire: A Path to Yoruba Spiritual Activism*. New York: Athelia Henrietta Press, 2002, 190 pp. ISBN 1-890157-35-X. \$24.95

The efforts by Africans and people of African descent in the Diaspora in fostering a cultural identity, reconstructing African histories and uniting the African family are increasingly finding resonance through many activities on the African continent. The bi-annual celebration of Panafest (Pan African Historical Theatre Festival) in Ghana is an example of such collective consciousness. Aina Olomo's book, *The Core of Fire: A Path to Yoruba Spiritual Activism*, is another endeavour to redirect Africans to their cultural heritage through the path of Yoruba spirituality. In order to meet this challenge there is the need for African peoples to perceive God or the 'Infinite Mystery' in their own African image and culture.

The Core of Fire: A Path to Yoruba Spiritual Activism, is unique because it is written from the perspective of an 'Orisa worshipper', and 'a spiritual mother and guide', who has had many opportunities to participate in and observe not only her own evolution in Yoruba spirituality but also the spiritual progress of others' (13). Aina Olomo's objectives are basically to share her own experiences and the processes she had gone through in her quest for spirituality; to describe her observations on the spiritual progress of others; and to purge African spirituality of external ideologies, particularly the 'childhood and societal indoctrination' of especially African peoples in the Diaspora (19). Olomo's ultimate goal in this redirection and reconnection of African peoples' traditional religious heritage is to enable them survive as a people. The author succeeds in this task by using a methodology that embraces a combination of anthropological approaches including the reflexive, *emic* (insider) and *etic* (outsider) methods that give more balance in an ethnographic research.

The book has 11 chapters and the author devotes five chapters to analyse the Yoruba Core Belief System (CBS), which fundamentally revolves around the *orisas*, ancestors and rituals. Olomo outlines the salient elements of Yoruba spirituality, which includes the nature and functions of the *orisa*, ancestors, and Ifa divination. According to her, the CBS encompasses 'the things we have seen, heard and experienced as children, as adults, and as participants in our society' (14). The CBS not only conditions the hu-

⁶ This review was first published on the web page of the [American] Society for Anthropology of Religion (SAR) listing Members' Books and Articles, last updated on 27.02.2006 at < <http://www.aaanet.org/sar/pubs.html> >.

SAR is a section of the American Anthropological Association (AAA).

man psyche, intellect, senses or emotions, and behaviour but also forms the basis of Yoruba spirituality, linking divinity and humanity.

Olomo also shows her readers how to get access to the spiritual world and attain spiritual dexterity. Human beings, she argues, can be spiritually accomplished and 'unite with allies in other worlds', if they consistently interact with 'Skilled Mystics, Shamans, Priests and Priestesses, Medicine men and women' (17). The author gives examples to illustrate how her spiritual links have enlightened, encouraged and 'expanded [her] personal experience of [her] ancestors and divinities' (17).

Yoruba spirituality is based on the worship of *orisa* (deities) and ancestor veneration. However, ancestral veneration, which is the 'foundation core of all Yoruba derived spirituality', is mainly effected through rituals (15). As the vehicle of Yoruba spirituality therefore, there is the need to 'make our rituals and spiritual practices reflect the responsibility we bear as practitioners of a nature-based tradition', and 'What we do must honor the domains of the forces of nature who are our *orisas*' (15).

The author perceives the *orisas* as ever-evolving energies of the planet and its people. She is emphatic that the Yoruba people were the first to practice *orisa* belief system, though many other people outside of Yorubaland have embraced it. Because the concept of *orisa* is an evolving process, *orisas* can choose to 'unveil new dimensions of their powers' (44) as exemplified by the religious continuum found among African peoples in the New World.

In chapter 4, Olomo examines the phenomenon of dreams through which human and spiritual beings manifest themselves to each other. Dreams are phenomena that enable the spirit component in humans to be on par with the unseen, potentate, and spiritual bodies. Juxtaposing the theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, the author argues that Freudian and Jungian interpretations of dreams do not inherently 'conflict with our spiritual beliefs' (70). Dreams, however, have been an important aspect of African spirituality that have endured to become an integral part of the African religious innovations known variously as Aladura Churches, African Independent Churches, Spiritual Churches, Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches that have proliferated among the Yoruba and other African peoples. It is mainly through dreams that these churches get established and perform some of their crucial activities, particularly the healing of various human diseases and afflictions.⁷

In the concluding chapters of the *Core of Fire*, Olomo argues that the processes of Ifa divination are meant to guide human beings back to the path that is the divine plan of the Infinite Mystery, and accentuates the importance of the *Orisa* Orunmila, the keeper of divination and interpreter of the will of the Infinite Mystery (Oludumare) to humanity (121). According to the author the Infinite Mystery is not all present or all knowing – or perhaps more succinctly put, Oludumare is not always involved in what is happening on the earth. This is a bold statement that might not be acceptable to the African authors, who take a theological perspective of God. These African scholars attempt to synchronize African and Western religious thoughts.⁸ In African Traditional Religions, God or the Infinite Mystery, delegates authority and representation to other

⁷ See Brigid Sackey 2001, 'Charismatics, Independents, and Missions: Church Proliferation in Ghana', in *Culture and Religion* 2, 1: 41-59.

⁸ For example E. Bolaji Idowu 1970, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London: SCM Press; Joseph Boakye Danquah 1968², *The Akan Doctrine of God*. London: Frank Cass & Co.; and Okot p'Bitek 1990², *African Religions in Western Scholarship*. New York: ECA Associates, 1990.

spiritual beings that are his/her children, ministers, or administrators. This idea of representation demonstrates the democratic nature of indigenous African religions and portrays the balanced, flexible and holistic nature of God. However, this aspect of God in African indigenous religions has been misconstrued and attributes such as *deus otiosus* (redundant or withdrawn God) and *deus remotus* (remote God) had been assigned to God in Africa. Olomo's appeal for a rediscovery of the African collective consciousness is therefore a plea in the right direction.

Since rituals are central in ancestral veneration and vehicles of communication with the *orisas*, the discussions on rituals should have been a little more detailed. Some Yoruba words used in the text are not entered in the glossary. These notwithstanding, Aina Olomo's *The Core of Fire*, will be a useful introductory book on Yoruba spirituality for students and people who would like to know more about African religious traditions. Like Aina Olomo, the book will also stimulate other practitioners of the religion to tell their own experiences to reflect the African proverb, which says that: 'until lions narrate their own stories, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunters'.



DISCUSSION

Jan G. Platvoet
AASR Bulletin Co-Editor

ON BOUNDARY HOPPING
& 'PRIMITIVISM'
REPLY TO GRAHAM HARVEY

'None is beyond debate'.⁹

In AASR Bulletin 21 (May 2004), I concluded my review of four recent books on 'indigenous religions' with the following reservation:

Harvey, as editor, clearly also pursues his own agenda. He has a partisan interest in indigenous religions and modern neo-paganism. His purpose is 'to aid and abet' dialogue with them, promote 'joyous participation' in them, and engagement with the struggle of the First Nations of the Fourth World movement. Though many of the points he makes are historically and methodologically correct, he clearly pushes the 'new primitivist' approaches which Armin Geertz criticized.¹⁰

I should have written again that 'he clearly *also* pushes ...', for, having read many more of his publications recently, it is indeed true that 'many of the points he makes are historically and methodologically correct', and should be taken to heart, and that he is therefore making valuable contributions to the ongoing methodological discussions. And I should have added references for my assertion that he has 'a partisan interest in indigenous religions and modern neo-paganism', and for the quotations. The reference for the quotations is the following:

The intention of this Companion is *to aid and abet* the collaborative engagement in dialogue – with its central emphasis on respectful listening and *joyous participation* – that is the essence of the study of indigenous religions.¹¹

His 'partisan interest' is my, perhaps unkind, qualification for two pervasive traits of his publications. One is the polemical manner in which he defends, and identifies with, neo-paganism and indigenous religions, by collapsing the complex history of the methodology of ethnography and the anthropology of religions into a dichotomy of aggressive,

⁹ Harvey (2002a: 6): the means by which academia has constructed both itself as subject and its object, indigenous religions, are not 'equally just or equally valuable', but 'none is beyond debate'. Cf. also Harvey 2003.

¹⁰ AASR Bulletin 21 (May 2004): 52.

¹¹ Harvey 2000a: IX; also Harvey 1997: VII, VIII.

abusive, exploiting, partisan colonial ethnography¹² *versus* postcolonial dialogue of guesthood ‘beyond insider and outsider’,¹³ which he quite rightly advocates. Since several decades, however, reflection on the *emic* approach has been central in anthropology of religions: how the views and practices of believers may be accurately and respectfully translated into Western idioms intelligible to Western and global audiences and useful for further comparative and theoretical studies in (Western?) academia, itself caught in a process of rapid globalisation in this imploding world. The other is his promotion of one recent, contested paradigm in anthropology of religions, that of the ‘anthropology of extraordinary experience’. He writes:

Readings is intended to enhance the more recent tendency towards a fuller mode of participation, [... the] celebration of indigenous or insider’s sovereignty. Academics who ‘go native’ [...] to the degree [...] that they ‘see the spirits’ can now say that they have had this experience.¹⁴

Edith Turner’s participant-observation took a major step forward not principally when she shared her host’s experience of the reality of intrusive alien spirits [...], but even more so when she accepts and insists that it is data for reflection and discussion. Academia does need to deal with the reality of such experiences – and also, perhaps, the reality of that of which they seem to be experiences.¹⁵

Having stood back and tried not to be moved or involved, the study of religions [...] is beginning to find out how guests and friends relate. The old choices between objective distance and “going native” or between insider, outsider, and researcher, now seem tired.¹⁶

Apart from the fact that the ‘guest’ does not become an insider, but remains an improved outsider, guest-researchers of the Edith Turner-type ‘go native’ in a manner which seems to me to conflict with a basic limitation on academic scholarship in religions, to wit that the (ontological) ‘reality’ of the meta-empirical realm postulated by believers – and that of its intra- or sub-empirical variety when they believe the meta-empirical to be manifest in, and to operate in tangible form within empirical reality¹⁷ – can neither be verified nor falsified by empirical research. The ontology of belief-assertions is therefore out of bounds to academic affirmation or denial, the first being confessional, the second positivist. For neither the scholar who does the original research, nor his/her colleagues who test it, can conclusively prove or disprove the claims of the believers. Their truth-claims can empirically and historically be described only, therefore, as beliefs, as postulations, as non-verifiable/non-falsifiable assumptions, and as powerful imaginations and inspirations.¹⁸ Whereas believers and theologians may constantly

¹² Harvey 2002: 5, 6

¹³ Harvey 2002: 6.

¹⁴ Harvey 2002a: 5.

¹⁵ Harvey 2002a: 8.

¹⁶ Harvey 2002a: 13

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Platvoet 2004; Harvey 1997: 1, 9, 20-21, 27-28, 37-38.

¹⁸ In this respect, all beliefs in respect of the meta- or intra-empirical are perfectly equal, whether neo-pagan, indigenous, folk or elite, esoteric or mainstream, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim or whatever. I agree with Harvey (1996: XVII, In2; 1997: 3) that all terms of opprobrium, such as ‘superstition’, ‘credulity’, ‘magic’, ‘witchcraft’, ‘sorcery’, ‘paganism’, ‘heresy’, etc., by which outsiders dismiss beliefs in respect of the non-empirical of insiders, should be banned from scholarship

hop the boundary between the empirical and the meta-empirical, scholars of religions may not.¹⁹ Harvey lists Edith Turner and other anthropologists ‘of extraordinary experience’ as foundational ancestors of his approach.²⁰ Reading his *Listening People, Speaking Earth* (1997), I was struck how time and again his description of the various modalities of modern neo-paganism subtly drifts into affirmation. Just one example from his chapter on Druidry when he discusses the role of the Bards:

The invocation of Awen [inspiration] is not only or even primarily an individual activity or experience. Most Druidic ceremonies include some form of chant both invoking and expressing Awen. The assembled group together and still themselves, gently take a deep breath and chant “Awen” or “A-I-O” in one long unbroken breath. This is usually repeated three times. Such chanting shifts the consciousness of participants. Before the chant it is possible to feel like an observer of the select few who establish the circular space in which the ceremony takes place and that there is a division between participants and observers, or, worse, clergy and laity. The chant makes everyone a participant, which is what they are meant to be from the beginning. Those who greet the four directions and mark the circle are supposed to be giving voice to what the entire company is thinking, feeling, doing, envisaging. Participating in the chant changes this from imagination or intention into experienced reality. The chant enchants; it is not only a symbol or an expression of hope that Awen will descend or rise, but an experience of inspiration. Awen flows not only into the Bard but through the Bard, around the circle and outwards, changing the world which witnesses the story or song.²¹

This and the joyous participation and celebration for which he repeatedly thanks his pagan hosts seem to me to underpin the ‘reservation’ I voiced in my review in AASR Bulletin 21. His dialogical guest-approach is in itself fine. The assent to pagan beliefs which his descriptions regularly seems to suggest, however, suffuses in particular his book on contemporary paganism with an Eliadean, ‘primitivist’ quality, not because his object of study is neo-paganism – a very modern object of study – or indigenous religions – my own field of study –, but because he shares with Eliade and some of his other ‘foundational ancestors’ the agenda of what Eliade termed ‘creative hermeneutics’. Its aim is to represent (a) religion in such persuasive manner that it restores mod-

on religions. An exception, of course is, when particular groups of believers, often of a more marginal or esoteric kind, re-adopt a term such as ‘pagan’, or ‘witchcraft’, or ‘magic’, as an *emic* designation in defiance of its established pejorative denotation and connotations, usually after having significantly re-constituted its belief contents in respect of the non-empirical as Harvey (1997) amply documents. I may point out in this respect also, that we need to trace the semantic histories of the terms we use as our conceptual tools. Such histories show that the meanings of some terms have shifted from neutral and/or socially approved to biased and dismissive, and others from disapproved to approved or neutral. For examples, cf. Platvoet 1999, and Platvoet forthcoming.

¹⁹ They need to stay within the empirical realm, for only assertions about that realm can be subjected to proof and disproof by testing, and/or to other instruments of scholarship for progressing towards as high a degree of objectivity as is achievable in the several fields of research. Those available for research into human mental constructs, such as constitute our cultures, societies, histories, literatures, languages, art and religions, are notoriously weak. They consist of qualitative, non-repeatable research into extremely complex and dense data by the trained intersubjectivities of scholars, who need to form a democratic community of organised scepticism by much research into research and methodological discussion in order to arrive at a modicum of objective knowledge.

²⁰ Harvey 2002a: 8; Harvey 2003 132.

²¹ Harvey 1997: 21-22.

ern desacralized man as *homo religiosus*. Eliade charged all historians of religions to join him in that project.²² Harvey's affinity with Eliade is apparent in his closing lines:

In the end [...], Paganism might be summed up as a poly-theophany in which the [...] Gods [...] declare an end to religious wars'.²³

Does this 'primitivist' quality disqualify Harvey's impressive scholarly production. Not to me! All the various modalities of scholarship in religions have their peculiar virtues and vices, whether positivist and 'reductionist', or religiously inspired, or agnostic on grounds of methodology. It is a main part of our duty as scholars of religions to discuss honestly and fairly both the qualities and defects in the work of our colleagues. That was what I attempted in my review, and have attempted again in this reply to his response. I certainly meant no insult.

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²² Eliade 1969: [v-xi], Preface; 1-11 ('A New Humanism').

²³ Harvey 1997: 227-228.

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