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Sociology of Religion Study Group

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## Religion and the Individual

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### ABSTRACTS

#### **Reza Afkhami**

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#### **Religiosity, authoritarianism and Iranian socio-political beliefs: A survey study**

The study reported here analyses data collected from a survey of Iranian students firstly to describe the range of socio-political beliefs held by a significant group in modern Iranian society and secondly to test several explanations of why peoples' socio-political beliefs vary.

The key problem is: what leads some people to be reformist liberal and others to be conservative in their socio-political stance, even though all claim to act on Islamic principles? Why, in religiously orientated Iranian politics, is there a polarised system of social and political beliefs, which is far from monolithic?

After establishing the close link between religious fundamentalism and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), my argument is that a certain type of religiosity (religious fundamentalism associated with high level of religious orthodoxy) contributes to authoritarianism and tough-mindedness. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis are employed to build a measurement model for the full structural equation model.

#### **Humoud Alqashan**

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#### **The relationship between religiosity (spirituality) and marital satisfaction: A field study on a Kuwaiti Sample**

This study is one of the few studies conducted on Arab sample. Its

objective was to reveal the relationship between piety (spirituality) and marital satisfaction. It attempts to answer the following question: Does any difference exist between pious and impious individuals regarding marital satisfaction?

The sample was randomly selected from the six governorates of Kuwait. It consists of 2500 individuals – males and females. The demographic variables of sex, duration of marriage, level of education and standard of income will be included for classification.

The study helps to shed light on the real practice of Islamic principles inside the Kuwaiti family, whether there are extremist behaviours within the family. This study will help the counsellors, social workers and marital therapists for further understanding of their clients from a scientific perspective and to implement the right counselling strategy to achieve positive results.

### **Kristin Aune**

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### **Evangelicals, Marriage and Individualization**

One of the most significant contemporary social theories within the sociology of families and relationships is the concept of individualization. It is commonly argued that contemporary partnerships are individualized, i.e. that partnerships a) have been cut loose from the traditions of industrial modernity, including marriage itself; b) have become more egalitarian, less subject to gender-differentiated roles; and c) are less stable and long-lasting. Yet others have countered that such claims are overstated, pointing out continuing patterns of differentiation and tradition, especially as regards gender.

The significance of religion for people's ability to live out individualized partnerships is the focus here. Drawn from participant observation and interviews among British evangelical Christians from the 'New Church' movement New Frontiers International, the paper explores whether, and how far, evangelical intimate partnerships have been impacted by processes of individualization. While individualization has affected evangelical partnerships, traditional elements remain that differentiate evangelicals from their less religious counterparts.

## **Sarah Bänziger**

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### **Praying in Dutch society: The socialization versus individualism hypotheses**

Dutch society has been called 'an experimental garden of religiosity', originating from the distinct paradox between the simultaneous existence of a profound secularization process and the persistence of individualized religious practices, such as praying. Previous research shows that 41% of non-church members appear to pray regularly. In present study, the central question is whether people who do not attend church, but nevertheless pray, represent the remains of an impoverished institutionalized religiosity, due to a decreasing socialization effect, or represent an individualized form of religiosity, whereby people reinvent their own religion. We distinguish between three separate groups: (1) people who pray and visit church on a regular basis, (2) people who pray regularly, but do not attend church (our target group), and (3) people who neither pray nor go to church. We examine the extent to which these groups vary according to religion, mental health, prejudice and helping behaviour.

## **Eileen Barker**

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### **No man (nor yet woman) is an island – especially where religion is concerned**

Some sociologists, be they students of religion or anything else, believe that the individual is their only object of study; others believe that society is their object of study. We can find psychologists, particularly evolutionary psychologists, assuming that universals can explain particulars; and we can find cultural theorists or structuralists who assume that individuals are no more than structure or culture fodder. These assume that the individual is 'determined' – be it by DNA or environment. Opposing them are those who would deny the possibility of a sociology of religion because the individual is completely free to do and believe whatsoever s/he chooses. The paper argues against such fallacies, yet each of them contains some necessary, but insufficient, truth; and it draws on processes involved in the conversion into and within new religions to illustrate the dynamics of the relationship between the individual and the religious context.

## **David M. Bell**

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### **Development of the religious self: A theoretical foundation for measuring religious identity**

The notion of religious identity has been plagued by a lack of conceptual clarity. Scholars in sociology and psychology have independently measured levels of religiosity and of identity achievement, but few have considered the unique cognitive and psychosocial function that religion plays as a separate domain of identity. As part of an ongoing project in constructing a measure for religious identity, this paper posits a theoretical foundation based in Marcia's four stages of identity achievement (an outgrowth of Erikson's psychosocial theory) as an independent aspect of each individual's religiosity. This developmental perspective entails an integration of empirical research in identity domain specificity with social psychological measures of religiosity (i.e. Allport & Ross extrinsic and intrinsic measures). Areas of further research in the sociology of religion are suggested – namely, an investigation into types of religious institutions that promote different aspects of religious identity.

## **John Breadon**

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### **Between heteronomy and autonomy: Tracking the limits of belief and belonging in the publications of the Doctrine Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England, 1938-2003.**

Since 1938 the Church of England's Doctrine Commission has published popular works of theological reflection on a broad range of subjects designed to 'strengthen believers in their faith and to challenge those who are uncertain about what to believe'. This paper looks at the Commission's battle to adjudicate between the claims of creedal orthodoxy and individual autonomous believing. The paper will thus examine what the Commission's work over the past 65 years says about the limits of orthodoxy, the tolerance of heresy and the criteria for Christian belonging.

## **Ali Carkoglu**

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### **Social vs. spiritual/religious capital in explaining philanthropic giving: A comparison of religious and secular donations in Turkey**

This paper aims at offering, first, a conceptual clarification of the relationship between social and spiritual/religious capital in accounting for philanthropic donations. Competing hypotheses are derived and evaluated. Next measurement issues involved in empirical research are underlined. Lastly, an empirical test of the hypotheses is offered using data collected in Turkey. The sample is nationally representative with 1536 face-to-face interviews in urban and rural settlements conducted in February-March 2004. The paper concludes with an assessment of the empirical usefulness of both social and spiritual/religious capital concepts for the analysis of philanthropic giving in a predominantly Muslim society and underlines further areas of research in this field.

## **Rebecca Catto**

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### **From the rest to the West: Mission to Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

In this paper I will present data from my doctoral project, which is an investigation into the contemporary phenomenon of Christian Missionaries from other countries working in Britain as a missionary field, in order to explore the relationship between religion and the individual.

Respondents belong to a transnational religious community. There is a push and pull between their home and host society, and they have to manage their bi-locality. The religion, and often denomination, is the same. However, the form and context differ. Consequently, respondents develop strategies in order to fulfil their missionary enterprise in what can be a hostile environment both physically and socially. Through reference to research conducted with Christian missionaries from South Korea, India, Melanesia, Chile and the Crimea, how such missionaries negotiate the tension between the global and the local in their daily lives will be illuminated.

## **David J. Chalcraft**

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### **Revisiting Max Weber on sects and the meaning of self-assertion (Selbstbehauptung)**

In the light of the new Weber studies, whose quest for the historical Weber is grounded in historical-critical approaches, it is argued that we may have prematurely moved beyond Weber on the grounds that the sociological reception of Weber's ideas (from Troeltsch through Wilson to contemporary writers) has been largely based on a partial reading of his texts and has failed to place his treatment of sects within the development of his *oeuvre* as a whole. I aim to trace the often complex and largely unknown development of Weber's writings on sects before moving on to consider the importance Weber gave to the moulding of particular types of character and personality which ascetic Protestant sects achieved through the demand that the individual 'assert themselves' (Selbstbehauptung). The extent to which this notion (and others) might appear to be culturally specific and hence somewhat limited in their applicability will be considered.

## **Peter Collins**

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### **Individuality and sociality: Two plots, one narrative?**

In this paper I focus on two recurring and apparently antipathetic themes, ontologies, modes of being...in the history of religions: individuality and sociality. My primary aim is to interrogate the dominant meanings of these terms and the uses to which they are commonly put in religious contexts. Apart from representing what is probably the archetypal dualism in the social sciences, together they express perhaps the most vital tension present not only in the history of religions but also in accounts of the quotidian, of the vernacular, of the religious faith and practice experienced by adepts in their daily lives. My analysis takes its theoretical lead from the work of the British anthropologist, Nigel Rapport, and is grounded in empirical accounts of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

## **Sylvie Collins-Mayo**

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### **Young people's spirituality and the meaning of prayer**

This paper is a work in progress. It draws on data from the Nazareth Project – a study looking at the role of Christian-based youth work in the spiritual development of (primarily) un-churched young people. The initial phase of the research built-up a picture of young people's interest in religion and their current spiritual practices. 104 young people were interviewed and 294 young people surveyed via a questionnaire in Christian-based youth clubs around England. Amongst the results, prayer was found to be an important practice for many of the young people interviewed. This paper will discuss the meaning and experience of prayer as utilised by these young people in their everyday lives, and how it fits with their experience of Christian youth work.

## **Jayeel Serrano Cornelio**

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### **Hope Filipino Singapore: Commitment and growth in non-denominational Christianity**

One interesting feature of many Protestant Christian churches in Singapore is the presence of a Filipino congregation. Mature churches have more than one congregation (youth, adult, and Chinese-speaking, etc.); each conducts its own services, programs, and other activities. In this paper I consider the 6 year-old Filipino congregation of Hope Church Singapore. Although very young, Hope Filipino already has more than 500 members and it aims for 1,000 in 2006.

This research becomes instructive as it examines the rise of the Filipino congregation despite the fact that Filipinos are mostly Catholics. Evidently, the conversion of Filipinos is the focus of the entire organization. What is critical to consider here is the membership's commitment to personal evangelism. I intend to come up with an empirically-based presentation of the actions, patterns, and structures that account for the expansion of a non-denominational Protestant Christian movement among Filipinos in Singapore.

**Douglas J. Davies**

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### **Religion and death: Individual response to institutional provision**

This paper will use empirical material in a comparative way (much of it related to the newly published Encyclopedia of cremation edited by the author) to describe the shift from the public funeral ceremonial of Modernity – rooted both in the burial and cremation ceremonial of the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, to the increasingly privatized rites of Late Modernity associated primarily with the rise of individualized ritual associated with cremated remains. In theoretical terms this paper will, initially, focus on the way in which a concern with a single focus, in this case funerary rites, provides one major avenue into issues of the relationship between individual and society, the nature of embodiment, and of secularization, otherwise largely ignored in the sociology of religion. It will, then, explore those themes more extensively through theoretical issues derived from symbolic-exchange theory.

**Abby Day**

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### **Believing in belonging: A qualitative analysis of being Christian for the 2001 census**

Why did 72 per cent of respondents to the 2001 UK census tick 'Christian' when less than 8 per cent of the British population attends church? This paper, based on recent doctoral research with nearly 70 informants, explores what people mean when they say they are Christian. The paper presents two broad, different categories: nominalists and faithful. Detailed qualitative analysis reveals that 'nominalism' is a nuanced category including at least three variations: natal nominalism, ethnic nominalism and aspirational nominalism. The paper argues that although nominalist Christians are godless, saviourless and churchless, they are not indifferent to Christianity when it can be used as a resource for identity and to mark inclusion and exclusion.

## **Pernilla Liedgren Dobronravoff**

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### **Entries and exits, their mechanisms and processes in the Jehovah's Witnesses**

The aim of the paper is to present the results of the research for my dissertation. The subjects of the study are the mechanisms and processes of entries and exits in a hierarchical, ideological movement, exemplified by the Jehovah's Witnesses. The data consist of twenty in-depth interviews with ten members and ten former members of the organization Jehovah's Witnesses. It also contains an analysis of a diary written during the last years of membership before the exit, some observational studies and interviews with officials of the Jehovah's Witnesses. From the material I have been able to sort out important factors in the processes of coming into, staying with and leaving the Jehovah's Witnesses.

## **Janet Eccles**

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### **Speaking personally: Women making meanings through subjectivised belief**

Part of work in progress, this presentation reports on five women who are representative of the middle of what seems to be an emerging spectrum of beliefs. 70 women have been interviewed, aged 40 and upwards, roughly a third churchgoers, a third disaffiliates with the rest occasional attenders, to determine what differences and similarities there might be in belief and praxis between the different groups.

The women have subjectivised their beliefs and/or praxis to lesser or greater degrees in order to connect with forms of the sacred which are 'consistent with their ongoing values and beliefs' (Tamney 2002). I will draw on the insights from *The Spiritual Revolution* (Woodhead and Heelas) and other commentators on subjectivised beliefs. But also, echoing Nicola Slee (2003), the conversations I had with these women keep the study earthed in real women's situations and 'conversational at its core', allowing women to speak for themselves.

## **Peter Edge**

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### **Sacred places as generators of dangerous social capital?**

Discussion of the interaction of law and religion frequently involves metaphorical use of terms related to place and space – the place of a religion in society; the provision of space for exercise of religious rights.

The strength of these metaphors is derived from the power of sacred places to act as a focus for a range of activities, and as a key point for the intersection of religious interests and the interests of the state. I will outline my understanding of the idea of a 'sacred place', one that seeks to foster engagement with religious diversity by separating the functions of religious communities and the state in identifying sacredness. I will then briefly explore different ways of seeing the importance of sacred places before considering how these ideas have played out in the English context. I explore the recent significance given to the perception of sacred places as dangerous places in need of firm state regulation.

### **Yannick Fer**

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### **Institutional work, community control and 'enchanted' individualism within the Assemblies of God of French Polynesia**

An apparent paradox of Pentecostalism lies in its ability to promote both individualism and community. This paper, based on an extended study of socialization within the Polynesian Assemblies of God, attempts to unravel this contradiction: it shows how 'unseen' institutional work enables believers to establish a symbolic continuity between the distancing from traditional structures of control that preceded their conversion, and their integration into a religious constraining community where institutional and community controls are subjectively experienced as personal 'enchanted' relations with God.

In this religious paradigm, 'brothers and sisters in Christ' do not replace the traditional family, but rather form a new space of possible 'familial' ties based upon personal affinities. In this secured space apart from 'the word', each believer has to find his/her 'own way' and different types of relations individuals/institutions can be observed, from 'enchanted' loyalty to one church to more or less radical 'misbelongings'.

### **Anja Finger**

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### **Slumber suppressed: Towards problematising Christian sleep discipline**

Contemporary individuals – purportedly socialised, rationalised and civilised ones – have learnt to restrict, organise and time their sleeping habits from early on in their lives. The (self-)disciplinary techniques thus developed play a crucial role in the functioning of a restless economy. While it seems to be mostly economic, health and media factors that drive the (more or less methodical) insomnia of individuals and society,

the suppression of slumber has in fact a religious antecedent. A non-sleeping god requires his creatures to be active, waking beings in prayer and work. This is most impressively illustrated by the monastic patterns of segmented and reduced sleep. The Puritans likewise did not have much time for what they considered the idleness of excessive sleep. Drawing on these historical examples, this paper looks at the discontinuities of religious and secular sleep, but also explores the persistent continuity of discipline in both worlds of sleep.

### **Leslie J. Francis**

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### **Introducing the New Indices of Religious Orientation (NIRO): Conceptualisation and measurement**

The notion of religious orientation as proposed by Allport and refined by Batson has provided a useful tool for identifying and discussing individual differences in religiosity within Christian and post-Christian context. The present paper accepts the conceptual and empirical usefulness of distinctions between the three constructs of intrinsic, extrinsic and quest religious orientations, reviews the conceptual and empirical strengths, weaknesses and limitations with existing studies in this field, and proposes three new indices to assess these orientations. The new indices are designed to be of equal length, to give equal weight to three components within each construct, and to employ direct and accessible language. Data are provided from a sample of 517 undergraduate students in Wales. A clear distinction is made between the appropriate use and the inappropriate misuse of these indices in future research.

### **Judy Frith**

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### **A faith/family balance: How the changes in family life affect the faithful involvement of British Quakers at the beginning of the twenty first century**

Families today are formed in many variations, and within a lifetime, a person may live alone, cohabit, marry, divorce, parent or any or all of these things. This paper draws upon twenty eight one to one research interviews with Quakers, most of whom are deeply committed to the Religious Society of Friends. It concludes there are both optimistic and pessimistic outlooks emerging from changing family structures. The emphasis on democratised relationship gives individuals the opportunity to negotiate involvement in 'friendship networks'. Thus the Society's

structure of local and national meetings, its learning opportunities and special interest groups yields possibilities for both Quakers and Quakerism to thrive. At the same time, and across all constructions of family, the demands of intergenerational care, heavy workloads and choices made by increasingly secularised family members and close friends present a challenge both for individual Quakers and for the Society.

### **Robin Gill**

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### **Religion and perceptions of leprosy and AIDS**

This paper will compare social perceptions of leprosy in the Jewish Bible with those contained in the Synoptic Gospels within the New Testament and will then compare both of them with social perceptions of AIDS especially within Sub-Saharan Africa today. In the process it will show how these social perceptions differ from the aetiology of these diseases and yet have been socially significant.

### **Peter Griffith**

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### **Legal control over religious employers: The impact of the new law**

The new restrictions on sexual orientation and religion or belief discrimination in the workplace threaten to limit the ability of employers with religious convictions to base their employment decisions on religious considerations. If implemented poorly this could affect the operation of a range of religious organisations. There are exceptions included in the legislation but these have proved controversial, particularly where religious beliefs and sexual orientation equality conflict. The scope for workplaces with a religious character is diminished, particularly for those religions with an institutional disapproval of homosexuality, and the influence and development of these religions is hindered. Members of these religions are limited both in the types of organisations they can establish and in the range of employment open to them. Revision of the legislation may be necessary for these concerns to be addressed.

## **Robin Harragin**

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### **How Christian Scientists see their faith in relation to their health**

I have given my respondent group of practicing Christian Scientists an open ended questionnaire. Among other questions I asked about the impact and effect of healing on their faith and in their lives. I have processed the data and have come up with some interesting findings such as the centrality of the healing effect of the religion in the lives of the respondents, how they react to the 'failures', how they see their healing work in relation to alternative therapies and so on. These findings are significant in the light of Rodney Stark's analysis of the reasons for the decline of Christian Science in his article 'The Rise and Fall of Christian Science' (*Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 1998).

## **Noel Heather**

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### **Critical Postliberalism and the 'site of struggle' between the group and the individual in UK institutional religion: Towards a model of 'error rules' within the cultural-linguistic system**

The paper seeks to explore how Critical Postliberalism (CP: Postliberalism + CDA = 'religion as the community-focused cultural-linguistic system' of believers) helps to shed light on a key relationship in UK institutional religion today. This relationship, as evidenced by observable 'sentences of belief and practice' of the believing community, concerns the 'site of struggle' between the group- and the individual-self in today's UK Christian institutional religion. Further to the research discussed in several previous SocRel conferences, the current CP model has been developed to include an R1A-R1B distinction as a subdivision within the universally apparent UK R1-R2 dialectic.

Reference will be made to the way linguistically-focused approaches from Critical Postliberalism may be able to model these kinds of processes in terms of 'error rules' (drawn from the model of child language development) of the cultural-linguistic system.

## **Hisham A. Hellyer**

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### **'Islam DIY': Modernity, individualism and construction of authority in normative Muslim communities**

In contemporary times, one of the most pressing issues facing communities of faith is that of the construction of authority. No less important is this topic in Muslim communities, where different and contradictory claims take place every day. Al-Qa'eda claims it, muftis claim it, 'reformists' claim it, with differing results emerging. Is there a normative construction of religious authority, in a community that denies a clerical class and an ecclesiastical hierarchy? Has it broken down, and what role does the modern conception of individualism have to do with it? Is this really the birth of 'Islam Do-It-Yourself', or is there an individual impulse within historical normative Muslim communities?

## **Anne Keeley**

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### **Religion and the individual: A musicological perspective**

Religion and music share an intimate and ancient relationship. In Greek mythology, for example, music had a divine origin. In ancient Syria-Palestine, religious celebrations often involved music. With the construction of the first Jerusalem temple, music became a part of Israel's official cult. This ages-old interconnection suggests that we can learn about religion and the individual from the study of music.

We do not have to reach back to antiquity, however, to undertake this task. The relationship between religion and music exists today, in the liturgies of formal religions and, increasingly, in newer expressions of personal faith. Twentieth-century composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) was a devout Catholic who consciously enunciated his faith through his *oeuvre*. Most of his compositions are not sacred music in the conventional, liturgical sense. Rather they are personal, musical expressions of theological concepts. Can Messiaen's music teach us anything about the evolving nature of the individual's engagement with religion?

## **Gerard Leavey**

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### **The supernatural, mental distress and pastoral care: A qualitative study of clergy conceptions of mental illness**

Clergy are contacted by people with mental health problems but little is known about how they conceptualise mental illness or how they deal with such problems. With regard to this matter, we aimed to examine the beliefs and experiences of clergy. In this qualitative study I interviewed 32 ministers of religion (Christian, Jewish and Muslim). The focus of the interviews was an exploration of spiritual and other explanatory models of mental illness and description of pastoral care provision for people with mental health problems. For most clergy psychiatric intervention is compatible with religious belief. However, Christian Pentecostal and evangelical clergy argue that western, secularist paradigms wrongly exclude the existence of supernatural phenomena in the development or expression of mental illnesses. The implications of this study for clergy and mental health services are discussed.

## **Christopher Alan Lewis**

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### **Religion and the individual: Obsessions, compulsions and religion**

Although anecdotal evidence may suggest that religion plays a significant aetiological role in obsessional behaviour, there has been little systematic research. The present paper reviews both non-clinical and clinical research that has examined the relationship between obsessions, compulsions and religion. From a review of the literature, two findings emerge. First, among non-clinical groups, religiosity is associated with obsessional personality traits, not obsessional symptoms. This suggests that religion may encourage behaviour seen as obsessional, but does not attract or foster obsessional behaviour. Second, among clinical groups religious themes are commonly presented in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. However, the relationship between religiosity and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is somewhat equivocal. This suggests that religion may provide a setting for obsessional behaviour, but may not play a direct causal role. In conclusion, religion may not play a significant aetiological role in obsessional behaviour, even though it may sometimes appear to do so.

## Lan Li

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### **How implementation of the post-Mao party-state policies changed the position of the non-institutionalised religion of *nuo***

In contemporary China some non-institutionalised and therefore illegal religions, such as *nuo*, have not only been granted official recognition and tolerated by the CCP's atheist ideology, but also significantly encouraged and even used by government officials to improve local social and economic development. The paper will examine the process by which the position of *nuo* completely changed after the implementation of the post-Mao party-state policy in religion, nationality and culture. I argue that the process has made *nuo* important for the strategy of developing local tourism and attracting state funding for local economic growth. The paper is based on the author's fieldworks in Guizhou province, southwest China between 1993 and 2005.

## Mia Lövheim

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### **Choosing Church – but why?**

In contemporary Sweden a majority of teenagers claim to be interested in religion and spirituality, but only a minority choose to take part in some kind of organized religion. This is particularly true in Stockholm, where confirmation rates in the Church of Sweden during recent years dropped below 20 percent. Still some teenagers choose to spend their free time in youth groups, services and other local church activities. This paper will present some preliminary findings from a study of teenagers in ten congregations in Stockholm. The aim is to explore why these young people choose to come to church and what meaning the church may have in their lives. Previous research points to the significance of religious socialization, yet our preliminary analysis shows that the majority of these teens do not have a religious upbringing nor consider themselves Christians. What, then, is the role of organized religion in their lives?

## **Gordon Lynch**

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### **Negotiating the self in progressive spirituality**

Over the past thirty years, the progressive milieu of Western religion has generated a new form of religious ideology – progressive spirituality – which finds advocates and supporters across and beyond a range of religious traditions. After briefly introducing the context and key features of progressive spirituality, this paper goes on to examine how this ideology describes the nature of the self. The importance of progressive understandings of the divine are discussed, particularly as they relate to strong and weak versions of the sacralization of the self within progressive spirituality. The paper also considers progressive spirituality in terms of the subjective turn within contemporary religion, arguing that whilst progressive spirituality endorses the authority of personal experience as a basis for religious choices, it demonstrates a somewhat ambiguous understanding of ‘personal experience’ and ‘tradition’. Like other forms of religion in contemporary, post-traditional society, then, progressive spirituality faces challenges of negotiating the relationship between self and cultural/religious tradition.

## **Martha Middlemiss**

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## **Anne Birgitta Yeung**

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### **Welfare and religion in a European perspective**

Welfare and Religion in European Perspective is a comparative research project encompassing eight European Countries that represent different welfare models and ecclesiastical traditions evident in Europe. The overall aim of the project is to analyse the function of majority churches as agents of social welfare in a comparative European perspective. The ongoing project addresses the questions: What roles do the historic churches in Europe play within different welfare systems? How do they influence welfare at a normative level, through their historical roles and through public debate? Which expectations do they meet? The research builds on case studies of eight medium sized towns which form the basis of a sociological, theological and gender-based analysis. Here we present

preliminary results from the cases of Finland and England with particular reference to the role of the individual and how individuals interpret and motivate church involvement in welfare at local level.

### **Kay Millard**

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### **The Individualisation of a Rite of Passage**

There is a paradox in rites of passage because they are expected to be 'standard' to be legitimate and yet at the same time they are highly personal to the individual(s) involved. A study of contemporary weddings in England shows that couples take every opportunity of making personally meaningful choices to individualise their wedding ceremony, in spite of the outward similarity of the traditional wedding. These choices are related to their religious and spiritual commitments, in particular reflecting a value commitment to the individual in relation with others. This is primarily a reflection of the bride and groom, but not wholly so; it is also an opportunity to reflect their relationship with other members of the family and significant friends. While primarily this-worldly, this value commitment nevertheless indicates a sense of sacredness and transformation.

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### **Speaking of interfaith peacemaking: Symbolic interactionism in exemplar Muslim and Christian peacemakers**

Symbolic interactionism is immediately relevant to the sociology of peacemaking in religious context. This study investigates social constructs of self and other in exemplar Muslim and Christian interfaith peacemakers. Peacemakers were interviewed with questions from McAdams' (1997) Life Narrative Interview, including facets of self and other in relational context. An unsupervised (computational) analysis was conducted of self and other representations ensconced in participant narratives using latent semantic

analysis (LSA; [lsa.colorado.edu](http://lsa.colorado.edu); Laham, 1997; Landauer, Foltz, & Laham, 1998). Transcripts were also qualitatively coded, forming a Grounded Theory model (Strauss, 1987) of the formation of peacemaking methodology. Five general themes emerged. Central to the model is Peacemaking Methodology. The remaining four themes (Ideological Commitment, Pragmatism, Community, and Personalization) interact with one another, leading to the Peacemaking Methodology. These themes represent the peacemaker's construction of the self in religion, the role of the self in peacemaking, and the role of others in peacemaking.

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### **Yaojun Li**

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### **Who are the religious believers in China?**

The social scientific study of religion is very advanced in Europe but this is much less the case in China. In particular the empirical study of religion in the People's Republic of China is relatively undeveloped. This has left the field open to unsubstantiated claims about the extent and composition of religious believers in the country. This paper is an empirical study of reported religious belief based on national survey data from China. It presents some new findings on the social and demographic background of religious believers. Just as much of the empirical research on religion in the West has been concerned with the effects of modernization, our data also allow us to comment on the relationship between modernization and religion in China.

### **Chang-Won Park**

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### **Religious practice and the individual: Copying the Bible in Korean Christianity**

This paper explores a new movement of copying the bible in Korean Christianity. It examines the rationale behind this practice in the internet age and its impact on the individual and the family, in relation to the growing significance of material culture studies. Copying the bible has become increasingly popular among ordinary believers regardless of denomination, age, and profession within less than two decades. Today more than 200,000 Christians are said to write down the bible on a daily basis. I situate this movement within the context of the interplay of Christian and Confucian cultures. Korea, once the most confucianised state in East Asia, has become one of the most dynamic Christian countries in the world. I argue that the practice of copying the bible

epitomises a fusion of the Christian piety for embodying the Word of God in daily life and the Confucian devotion to self-cultivation through learning and calligraphy.

### **Miriam Pepper**

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### **Tim Jackson**

### **David Uzzell**

#### **Christianity and sustainable consumption: An investigation of religiosity and consumer behaviours**

'Sustainable consumption' policy developments, research agendas, public debates, and practical applications emphasise the need to address consumer behaviour in order to move towards sustainable development. There is no precise definition of what constitutes a sustainable lifestyle. However, consumer behaviours undertaken with pro-social and pro-environmental intent, as well as behaviours like voluntary simplicity which are also practised for their personal benefits, may well be components. Faith groups are looked to as one possible setting for fostering such behaviours. This paper outlines what is already known about the relationships between religiosity and these behaviours in the context of the Christian faith. It then discusses focus group and questionnaire research underway in southeast England that examines relationships between religiosity (church attendance and churchmanship) and two types of consumer behaviours: socially conscious purchasing (buying products believed to have a positive effect on other people) and frugal consumption (constraining buying and resourcefully using what is bought).

### **Melanie Prideaux**

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#### **Who speaks for the community? Beeston after the bombings**

After the terrorist bombings in London on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005, the community of Beeston, Leeds, found itself thrust into the spotlight. The discovery that some of the bombers lived in Beeston and were active in local projects left members of the Muslim community feeling under suspicion; the way in which Beeston was represented in the press left the entire local community feeling under attack. For a short time local Christian Ministers and a Muslim community worker became the 'voice' of the community, and a Christian-Muslim community project became a focus for community mobilisation.

Using evidence from the local and national media and my on-going fieldwork, this paper explores the role of religion, and religious leaders, in defining and defending the community of Beeston post 7/7. I will argue that pre-existing patterns of Muslim-Christian dialogue and co-working had profound effects on structuring the response to the perceived threat to the local community.

### **Mandy Robbins**

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### **God images and empathy among secondary school pupils in South Africa**

A sample of 258 secondary school pupils attending year 8, 9, 10, and 11 classes in South Africa completed the empathy scale of the Eysenck Junior Impulsiveness Questionnaire, a semantic differential index of God images, and the short-form Revised Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. The data demonstrate a significant correlation between positive God images and greater empathic capacity, after controlling for sex and for individual differences in personality.

### **Russell Sandberg**

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### **Religion and the individual: A socio-legal perspective**

This paper seeks to examine the sociological debate as to whether religion is a collective or individual phenomenon with regard to the legal evidence. Whilst classical social theorists such as Marx and Durkheim saw religion as a collective force having a clear social function, other sociologists have seen 'private religion' as an individualistic and autonomous matter against the backdrop of institutional decay. The paper will examine whether the legal evidence supports, refutes these hypotheses or suggests a different understanding. Looking at judicial decisions, UK legislation (Acts of Parliament and current Bills), government practice and international law, the paper will take a historical approach to see how the law has treated religion and whether the law regards religion as an individual or a collective affair. This innovative approach will show how a multidisciplinary approach can allow conclusions to be made in relation to the future role of religion in British society.

## **Alan Smith**

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### **Declining mass attendance in the deanery of St Gregory, archdiocese of Liverpool: A study using grounded theory**

My research investigates the behaviour of Roman Catholics, in the Deanery of St Gregory, Warrington, with specific regard to the phenomena of declining Mass attendance, declining involvement in parish life, and declining involvement in Church movements. My aim is to establish causes for these behaviour changes – ‘Secularization’ eroding the belief systems of Catholics? Individuals who believe without feeling the need to belonging to a church? Or, a yet to be defined cause? I want to identify the causes of these phenomena and form strategies to enable the Roman Catholic Church locally to re-engage with its members. Grounded theory is the general methodology.

## **James Sweeney & Anthony Carroll**

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### **Religious identity in late modernity: An empirical and theoretical study**

We report on work in progress into religious (and other) identities manifested in a distinctive group – the student body at Heythrop College, University of London, a specialist philosophy and theology institution in the Catholic tradition with an increasingly diverse student group. Data will be drawn from responses to a questionnaire enquiry into perceptions of the College, its particular ethos, and respondents’ beliefs and values.

The intent of the study is a critical investigation into various models of understanding contemporary religious identity and theories of religion in late modernity. We use a hermeneutical framework for the interpretation and examination of contemporary ways of modelling identity: the self (Charles Taylor); spirituality v. religion (Heelas and Woodhead); religion and modernity (Weber, Habermas).

The presentation will make a preliminary report on the data recently gathered and explore the heuristic idea of a Catholic theory of modernity

## **Nuri Tinaz**

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### **The Nation of Islam's religious and economic influences in reforming and changing personal, religious, marital and economic lives of its UK members**

The Nation of Islam (NOI) is a well known ethno-religious movement, especially in the USA, with much coverage emphasising negative features. Since the mid-1980s, the movement has been involved in several controversies in the British media and mainstream society. Very few studies reflect the NOI's balanced and positive contributions to the lives of its members at individual level, and to community and society at local and national levels. This paper attempts to examine the NOI's religious and economic teachings and programmes on the lives of its UK members. It shows and reflects how the NOI UK members' lives changed; economic status became better off, marital and family lives improved, and their characters and attitudes reformed as well as sometimes causing negative impacts on relationships between family and parents members. The paper is based on the outcomes of a project that took place over two years in the London area.

## **Marta Trzebiatowska**

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### **Restricted or liberated? Polish nuns and the mediation of gender identity through religion**

This paper addresses the question of gender identity formation in a religious context using the example of Catholic nuns in Poland. It maps the ways in which nuns create a collective notion of what it means to be both a consecrated and a lay woman, and it draws a distinction between morally 'correct' and 'incorrect' models of femininity as outlined by the sisters.

The paper emphasizes the importance of human agency in the construction of gender identity without reducing it simply to a solipsistic and subjective endeavour. By analyzing the testimonies of Catholic sisters, it highlights the need for addressing the multiple ways of experiencing femininity through self-reflexivity in an apparently restrictive and traditional social setting. Finally, it demonstrates that nuns are not immune to social transformations as they provide a valuable commentary on the state of 'Polish femininity' at the beginning of the twenty first century.

**Léon Turner**

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### **First person plural: Self-unity and self-multiplicity in theology's dialogue with psychology**

The concept of self-fragmentation, so familiar to recent sociology and psychology, raises significant problems for Christian concepts of personhood. Paradoxically, there is both widespread theological agreement that the contemporary fragmentation of the individual must be taken seriously, and a widespread reluctance to acknowledge the possibility of self-multiplicity as it is variously understood in recent social and psychological thought. In this paper I mean both to examine the possible motivation behind this reluctance, and the potential value of narrative psychology in mediating between religious commitments to the unity of the individual person and sociopsychological visions of the plural self. I argue that the theological need to frame concepts of personhood in its religious dimensions as essentially unified is not necessarily incompatible with all possible concepts of self-multiplicity. This compatibility hinges on a frequently neglected distinction between self-unity and self-continuity, both of which might be understood in a variety of different ways.

**Rob Warner**

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### **Autonomous conformism – the paradox of entrepreneurial religion; Spring Harvest: a case study**

Spring Harvest exemplified the resurgence of entrepreneurial evangelicalism in the 1980s, achieving by 1990 an annual attendance of 80,000. Entrepreneurial leaders aspired to a mass-movement with increasing socio-political and ecclesial leverage, characterized by conformist adherence to conventional doctrine and ethics. Pragmatic, activist, detraditionalized and acculturating, this type of evangelical showed more capacity for growth than the conservatives and fundamentalists. Kelly's 'traits of strictness' and Hunter's theory that cognitive bargaining diminishes growth potential are therefore falsified in the British context. Spring Harvest's priority of contemporaneity infused the event with personal choice: the individual participant selected between alternative seminar streams, Bible expositions, and worship styles, which ranged from charismatic stadium rock to semi-liturgical reflection. This culturally consonant endorsement of the sovereign individual (compare C. Smith) produced a shift from the entrepreneurial to the therapeutic (compare Bellah) and a recasting of evangelicalism as commodified religion for the autonomous consumer (compare Hammond).

## **Xinzhong Yao**

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### **Belief, practice and identity: Religiousness of the urban Chinese 1995-2005**

By drawing upon relevant data from two surveys respectively conducted in 1995 and 2005, this paper examines the changes and characteristics of religious values and beliefs in urban China during this 10-year period. Its prime concern is whether or not religious beliefs and practices of the Chinese in urban areas changed, and if they did, then in which direction these changes took place. This sociological analysis of the survey data will also extend to examining the correlations between religious beliefs and practices and other personal and social variables such as gender, age and education, to reveal some aspects of Chinese religiosity. It will conclude that while commercialism and rationalism prevailed in urban China, spiritual beliefs and experiential practices in association with extraordinary phenomena also gained a strong hold in society and demonstrated a complex religiousness.

## **Malgorzata Zawila**

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### **Death, religion, and the individual: Religion and attitudes toward death and dying in a hospice circle in Poland**

At first glance, relations between religion and death seem to be obvious and undeniable. Many sociological definitions of religion (especially functional ones) are based on existential problems of humanity as a source of religious belief and ritual (Yinger, Bellah, O'Dea). Understanding mortality as one of these problems leads to the statement that death is one of the sources of religion.

However, a sociological discussion on contemporary processes such as secularization, privatization and individualization of religion involves also religion and death relations (Walter). In this context a question on individuals' attitudes toward death and dying is very important.

The paper presents results of research conducted in three Polish hospices. Analysis is based on 48 interviews with patients, their relatives and staff. A method chosen for the research and analysis is Grounded Theory.