

PERSON, CULTURE & RELIGION CALL FOR PAPERS

Proposals are invited on:

1) **The Psychodynamics of Religious Violence.**

Topics might include the psychodynamics of aggression; otherness, hybridity, and the role of the other; war and holy war; etc.

2) **The Psychology of Anomalous Experience and the Nonunitary Self.**

How, historically and in current theory, has psychology attempted to explain the unexplainable? Proposals might engage classical and relational psychoanalysis; self psychology and intersubjectivity theory; Jungian and transpersonal psychology; neuropsychology; etc.


3) (*co-sponsored with Wesleyan Studies*) Proposals employing social-

scientific, historical, and/or theological approaches to such categories as conversion, sanctification, social holiness, and/or other **transformations in**

Wesleyan traditions (see, for example, Haartman's new psychoanalytic study *Watching and Praying*).

Other proposals on psychology and religion welcome.

See details on submitting proposals on page 2.



**2005 Annual Meeting
November 18-22, 2005
Philadelphia, PA**

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ADDITIONAL CALLS FOR PAPERS

AAR/SBL MEETING, NOVEMBER 2005

(AAR) Religion and the Social Sciences:

Proposals are invited in relation to the following themes: 1) social scientific approaches to religion and race; 2) contemporary psychological approaches to the comparative study of religion; 3) social scientific analyses of religious discourse and religious participation in politics and the public sphere; 4) intersections of law, religion, and sexuality; 5) negotiating boundaries: religion and migration. Other proposals are welcome that employ social scientific methodologies in the study of religious or theological questions or that apply religious/theological methodologies to social scientific questions.

(SBL) Psychology and Biblical Studies

We welcome papers that address the psychological themes, dynamics, or effects of biblical texts, regarding two specific themes:

- Aggression and the Destructive Power of the Bible
- Personality Development in the Biblical Context: Heart, Soul, and Mind
- In addition, we are always open to papers that demonstrate and/or critique models for using psychology in biblical interpretation.

Contact: Dereck Daschke, <ddaschke@truman.edu>, or <psybibs@att.net>

For more information, see our website: <psybibs.home.att.net>; to propose a paper, go to the SBL Annual Meeting page <www.sbl-site.org>

Submissions are due by March 1, 2004.

SUBMITTING A PAPER PROPOSAL

The AAR is now using an online system for paper proposals and review. While this makes it far easier for program units to review proposals and compile sessions, it can be a bit daunting for those who may not be completely at ease with being online.

There are three ways that you can reach the page for submitting a paper proposal to PCR. One is to go to our PCR webpage <pcr-aar.home.att.net>, click on “Call for Papers” and then on the link to “AAR OP3 online submission system.” Follow the instructions from there.

The second is to go to the AAR website at <www.aarweb.org>. Click on the link to “Call for Papers - Online Paper/Panel Proposal (OP3) System Now Available” to enter the proposal system, or click on “2004 Call for Papers Now Online” to search or browse the AAR Call for Papers.”

The third is to go directly to the CFP page for PCR, which has this convoluted URL:

<http://www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/2005/call/list-call.asp?PUNum=AARPU044>

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Person, Culture and Religion Website:

pcr-aar.home.att.net

PCR-List online e-mail discussion group:

To subscribe send a message to:

pcr-list-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

WESTERN REGIONAL MEETING

March 13th and 14th, 2005, Arizona State University in Tempe

The Western Commission for the Study of Religion (WECSOR), with the cooperation of many volunteers, has organized a wonderful program for the regional conferences of AAR/WR, SBL/PCR, WJSA and ASOR to be held at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. For all information about the conference, including hotel, map, and program information, please click on "Invitation" at our website at <www2.sjsu.edu/wecsor/>

Special AAR/WR call for Graduate Student papers: Graduate students who are members of AAR are invited to submit papers for the President's Award for best Graduate Student Paper. Deadline for submission of papers is March 1st, 2005. The President's Award for Best Graduate Student Paper will only be awarded if there is sufficient competition to warrant granting of an award. The winner will be announced at the Conference Banquet and carries with it a cash award of \$300. Please send your paper to Miri Hunter Haruach, President, AAR/Western Region via email: <sheba_music@sbcglobal.net>.

Volunteers? Questions or difficulties? Please contact Will Krieger, the new WECSOR Executive Secretary at: <wkrieger@csupomona.edu>

A request from Dr. Joseph George in Bangalore:

You are aware of the Tsunami relief work operations and the need for psychological and social rehabilitation. The Counselling and Training department at the United Theological College is planning to devise a training module for the volunteers in the communities for dealing with crisis related issues. If anyone could suggest or send me published or unpublished materials in crisis management, care and counselling it will be a great help. Anything related to natural disasters will be great. Thanks.

E-mail: jgeor02@hotmail.com

Dr. Joseph George, Professor, United Theological College
63, Millers Road, Bangalore - 560 046
Phone: (080) 23638060 (Res) (080) 23333438 (off)
Mobile: 9845 222 505

NEWS FROM PCR MEMBERS

And a response from Peggy Kay, (Chicago Theological Seminary):

This is exactly the kind of work done by the Peace Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association. Headquarters are in Washington DC, and they are on the web.

I just finished my interdisciplinary doctoral dissertation in psychology and theology, and the relation between the two, and this is exactly the kind of example which evidences that psychological practice can be an invaluable adjunct to theological endeavor. I am available for consultation on this connection.

P-Kay-6@alumni.uchicago.edu

THE APA DIVISION 36 RESULTS ARE IN:

From **Robert Emmons** (UC Davis) comes the following report:

"The outcome was 56% in favor of the change, 44% opposed. So the name change process has begun [from "Psychology of Religion" to "Psychology of Religion and Spirituality"]."

This essay draws from the material in my Guest Editorial for Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling, which appeared in Fall 2004, v.58:157-167 entitled "Defining Spirituality: Multiple Uses and Murky Meanings of an Incredibly Popular Term." I also refer to the recent Person, Culture and Religion session presentation "Psychology Sliding into Spirituality," posted on the PCR website.

PCR COMMENTARY

The contemporary uses of the term "spirituality" are relatively recent, and the term has a kind of glow around it. I'm convinced that one reason for the glow is that this one term actually performs three separate roles, and that it seems convenient to keep these unclarified and mashed together. I am not an enemy of "spirituality," and I've found myself using it uncritically, caught up in its halo effect along with so many others.

First let's recognize that the term itself has a history with almost no connection to its current uses. I recommend the thorough and thoughtful survey of Walter Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality" (*Studies in Religion*, 1983, v.12:127-141) written a generation ago. Ominously, he noted how the term had already broad-

ened away from its roots in the discernment process for Roman Catholic religious, and the body of reflections on that practice. Today, we are much further from

"defining spirituality" than Principe imagined. It was once a clearly Catholic term, but with pietistic echoes for some Protestants. When a colleague of mine in the 1970s proposed a course on "Jewish spirituality" using the Jewish Prayer Book as a primary text, another (Protestant) colleague responded: "The course content sounds fine, but you've got to change the title. What student would want to take a class called 'spirituality'?"

What the proposed course, and the traditional usage and Principe's revision all share is a bipolar structure. There is an "objective pole" – "the chosen ideal" to use Principe's language – and a "subjective pole," the believing person who apprehends and appropriates that ideal. Also, it would be foolish in all such uses to divorce "spirituality" from its cultural and historical setting. Some but not all contemporary uses of the same word abandon this entirely, seeking a "spiritual

core" totally within the subject, and far removed from culture and history.

Today there seem to be three distinct uses for the single term "spirituality." The first and least interesting is as a vaguer synonym for "religion." When the announcer for the 2000 Olympics said "Romania, rich in spirituality, hopes to reclaim its primacy in gymnastics," the statement avoided "religion" because that might actually have led to empirically-testable claims about the personal faith of the Romanian athletes, or about a possible link between Eastern Orthodox Christianity and women's gymnastics! "Spirituality" sounded nice, but meant nothing so specific. It also carried with it the implied contrast between America, rich in everything else, and Romania, an impoverished

country rich only in "spirituality," which by a fluke has had an outstanding gymnastics program.

But the much more interesting role for the term

is to fill a niche long familiar to religious studies scholars: call it "personal religion," "personal faith," "invisible religion," or "personal myth." Each of these terms has been used to describe de-institutionalized worldviews of persons in post-industrial societies, not quite "secular," but without moorings to creed, community or visible tradition. The works of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in sociology of religion, of Paul Tillich in theology, and others more recently, have sought the right term for this use. None have been completely successful. For an interesting and well-known example of this problem, recall Bellah et al. *The Habits of the Heart*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) In this study of the language of values and commitment, the "traditionally religious" came off relatively well, since they had a shared language that transcended the immediate preferences and feelings of

Continued on page 5

Slip-Sliding into Spirituality

Lucy Bregman
Temple University

the individual self. But the researchers were horrified when one interviewee named Sheila Larson gave as her religion “Sheila-ism,” the belief in herself and her own innate potential. Given their expectations about “religion,” hers was a travesty, and became for them a symbol of everything that was wrong with American expressive individualism. Yet Sheila wasn’t as much of a bubble-head as this portrait suggests. She had nursed relatives with terminal illnesses, she had thought about her place in the universe...And today, she would be a top candidate for “spirituality,” for someone who could now say “I am spiritual but not religious.” This is not to deny that there are problems with “Sheila-ism.” But it fits the niche for “personal religion” now labelled “spirituality” without the contempt of those whose ideal of “real religion” resembles Bellah’s. Once again, religion scholars are familiar with the search for the right term, and with the sociological and cultural settings which house this niche. Other specialists or counseling professionals may not be.

Third, there is the substitution of “spirituality” for what the Human Potential Movement used to point to as *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. (This is the title of a book of essays by Abraham Maslow.) Possibilities for “Being,” or peak-experience and access to transcendence were once considered appropriate for Third Force Psychology to include in its concerns. The eclipse of this psychology’s prestige as *psychology*, and its slipping into “spirituality,” is one major trend in the area of healthcare and counseling professions. So, qualities universal and innate to “humanness” are now subsumed under “spirituality,” along with the essentialist and decontextualized language of the self which always characterized the Human Potential Movement’s core themes and images. These retain their appeal while re-labelled “spirituality.” And, no one expects these ideas to meet standards of scientific falsifiability. There are as yet no criteria for what measures or ideals “spirituality” might be measured against- not even internal conceptual coherence.

I want to stress the surprise factor in this. Scholars may have missed the boat not once but twice. Just as the “secularization hypothesis” did not pan out as once

anticipated, so “psychology replacing religion” did not prove to be a linear trend at all. Had “secularization” proceeded as predicted, religion would now be something like horse racing: once the sport of kings, but now faded and outworn, with only a tiny group of actual fans. To study it would be to study something of marginal and minimal interest. Meanwhile, psychology of the kind we have been speaking of here may have been stuck trying to serve two masters: as “science” it needed to court empirical credibility, but as “replacement for religion,” it attempted to offer frameworks of ultimate meaning. As Don Browning’s classic *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies* shows it has tried repeatedly to fulfill this second task. Without adequate philosophical foundations, Browning believed, it could not do so unassisted, and once that case is made the “replacement” theory founders. Psychology requires

something more basic for it to work. (PCR has long accepted this argument, in some form – but by now, so have many others.)

When “religion” did not

fade out, and psychology’s scientific status was challenged, the shift into “spirituality” may be a popular if temporary and precarious solution. Elsewhere, other forms of psychology can “medicalize” unimpeded, and those who like Sheila do not want to link their own ultimate meanings to a tradition and community can identify as “spiritual” without being ridiculed.

The above claims and statements need to be nuanced. The North American scene is too complicated to make Sheila Larson the forerunner of a new era for everyone’s “spirituality.” African-Americans may be less connected to Christian churches than in the past, but probably as a group less “spiritual but not religious.” Secular Jews are now the majority among Jewish North Americans, and might resent the term “spirituality” as “too Christian” to use with any comfort. Moreover, a good project for the future would be the patterns of residual and/or abandoned religiousness often concealed by the ahistorical and static term “spirituality.” Sometimes what is hidden are personal stories of loss, regret or recrimination; sometimes just relief. I think this approach will be more promising than endless searches for the “true” meaning of spirituality.

PCR Commentary: Slip-Sliding into Spirituality

PCR COMMENTARY

Despite objections from people in the PCR and other groups, the AAR is going ahead with its plan to split from the SBL beginning in 2006. All right, then, if we're going to start splitting things up, I propose the following: that the PCR group, and anyone willing to join us, split from all program units that allow presenters to read their papers in studious ignorance of any living beings in the audience. Dialogue partners of the AAR, unite! You have only your boredom to lose!

These revolutionary impulses were prompted by a particularly deadly session I attended at the San Antonio AAR meeting in November. (The sponsoring group's identity will remain hidden to protect the guilty.) The four presentations were straight recitals of written text, with little voice inflection, lots of jargon, and virtually no acknowledgment that other human beings might be in the room. I came into this session looking forward to learning something about a subject that interests me. I left feeling angry, depressed, and doubtful about the value of academic conferences.

Fortunately a PCR session later that afternoon renewed my faith in the worthiness of scholarly gatherings. The anger remained, though, and not just because of the wasted two and a half hours. There's something badly amiss with an AAR conference culture that accepts such sessions as the norm. Presenter nervousness is no excuse. Everyone is nervous when speaking before an audience, and it's precisely the job of the AAR and its program units to create and maintain an environment in which presenters can do without the crutch of reading a text. No, there are other factors at work besides performance anxiety: poor graduate student mentoring, weak steering committees, tenuous bonds of collegiality between and within program units, and, perhaps unconsciously, a narcissistic pleasure in the tyranny of the monologue. The irony is that the presenter who reads a

text effectively disappears from the room. He or she (in my experience both genders are equal offenders) abandons any real presence at the moment of presentation, and this combines with the effacement of the audience to produce a strangely dehumanized environment. The session becomes nothing more than a podium, a sheaf of papers, and several rows of chairs.

If further splits and secessions are unduly extreme reactions to this problem, a host of simpler solutions are available. Speaking from a short outline rather than a complete paper can alleviate anxiety and yet allow for more spontaneity and personal engagement with the audience. Telling stories can be a surprisingly powerful way of conveying complex theoretical

ideas (as F. LeRon Shults showed beautifully in his PCR presentation). Hand-outs can help explain technical terms and provide references. Making papers available online obviates

the need to pack everything you want to say into a 20-minute talk. Presiders and respondents can do more to frame the issues of the given session and stimulate genuine discussion between the presenters and the audience. For their part, audience members can ask real questions, rather than launching into self-aggrandizing monologues of their own. (At the San Antonio session I attended, one audience member had clearly made a proposal for this session and not been accepted, so his "question" became a ten-minute exposition of his work.)

The most eloquent statement of these dialogue-promoting ideas is Franz Metcalf's "Guidelines for Presenters," available on the PCR website. Perhaps the most direct action we can take is to boycott sessions that don't adhere to these principles. "Will you sign the Metcalf Pledge?" can become the rallying cry for a more humane and intellectually dynamic AAR.

Where's the Dialogue?

Kelly Bulkeley
Graduate Theological Union

PCR MEMBERSHIP

Membership in PCR entitles you to three copies of PCR News, goodies at the Friday pre-session, advance copies of the papers for PCR sessions, plus the warm glow of knowing that you're helping us distribute PCR-related information to scholars, clinicians, and clergy members interested in our work.

\$15.00 Regular Membership; \$10.00 Student Membership (with copy of student ID). Checks should be payable to Person, Culture, & Religion Group. Send to: Kelly Bulkeley, Secretary/Treasurer, 226 Amherst Avenue, Kensington CA 94708; Phone: 510-528-7198; Fax 510-528-0226; E-mail: kellybulkeley@earthlink.net

STEERING COMMITTEE 2004-05

Kathleen Bishop (Co-Chair)
58 Shadylawn Dr.
Madison NJ 07940
KBish97@aol.com

Bill Barnard
Dept. of Religious Studies
Southern Methodist University
PO Box 750202
Dallas TX 75275-0202
bbarnard@mail.smu.edu

Lallene Rector
Garrett Evangelical
Theological Seminary
ljr@garrett.edu

Kelly Bulkeley (Secretary)
226 Amherst Ave
Kensington CA 94708
Kellybulkeley@earthlink.net

Pamela Cooper-White (Co-Chair)
Lutheran Theological Seminary
7301 Germantown Ave.
Philadelphia PA 19119
pcooper@ltsp.edu

Felicity Kelcourse
Christian Theological Seminary
1000 W. 42nd Street
Indianapolis, IN 46208
fkcourse@cts.edu

Greg Schneider
Pacific Union College
Angwin, CA 94508
gschneider@puc.edu

D. Andrew Kille (Webmaster)
160 Maro Drive
San Jose CA 95127
revdak@worldnet.att.net

2005 paid members to date are listed below; if you think we missed you, contact Kelly Bulkeley (see address at left).

Jon Alexander
Hans Alma
Steve Bauman
Kathleen Bishop
Lucy Bregman
Peter Schuyler Brown
Kelly Bulkeley
Meredith Burns-Simpson-
Ovichegan
Charles Davidson
James W. Jones
Felicity Kelcourse
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Trevor Watt
David Wulff
Hetty Zock

ABOUT THAT RED SPOT

If you found a red dot on the address label on your copy of PCR NEWS, it means we have not received dues from you for several years. While we hate to drop anyone from our mailing list, it does cost us for duplication and mailing. Please consider sending in your dues!

INFORMATION FOR PCR NEWSLETTER VOL. 28 NO. 2

I. These days I find myself thinking about . . .
CURRENT RESEARCH INTERESTS AND WRITING

II. What we need is a good course in . . .
COURSES BEING TAUGHT OR PLANNED

Would a syllabus be available on request? yes ___ no ___

III. Have you seen ? . . .
ARTICLES, BOOKS AND PRESENTATIONS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE
TO BRING TO OUR ATTENTION
[PLEASE GIVE FULL CITATION IF KNOWN]

IV. INFORMATION OF GENERAL INTEREST [calls for papers, announcements, travel, promotions, job searches . . . anything you would like to share in the newsletter]

Your name and Address:

New Member Suggestion:

Send to: Kelly Bulkeley, 226 Amherst Ave., Kensington CA 94708
email: kellybulkeley@earthlink.net