

**Third International Conference of the  
British Association for the Study of Spirituality**

***Spirituality in a Challenging World***  
**Monday 19 May – Wednesday 21 May 2014**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHIES**

**KEYNOTE 1**

*'Religion, Spirituality and Health: What is the evidence and what are the challenges for research?'*

**Michael King**

Professor of Primary Care Psychiatry and Director of Mental Health Services, University College London

**Abstract**

There are many claims that religious and spiritual belief and practice lead to better physical and mental health. What is the evidence underlying these claims and how good is the research? I will argue that careful reviews of published research show that there is only a very small positive relationship between religion and health but that spirituality divorced from religious practice may be associated with worse health. Much of the research is poorly conducted and some researchers hold strong personal beliefs that influence its interpretation. Differences between research findings in the US and Europe may also help us to see why findings conflict.

**MONDAY 19 MAY, 17.45**

**Biography**

Michael is Director of Mental Health Sciences and Joint Director of PRIMENT Clinical Trials Unit at University College London Medical School. He is a psychiatric epidemiologist who undertakes large scale national and international research. He has a particular interest in the design and conduct of randomised trials of complex mental health interventions in primary and secondary care. He undertakes observational research which includes national surveys of mental health in the UK, and cohort studies in European populations to understand the risks for mental disorders. Over the past 20 years he has had a particular interest in the role of religious and spiritual beliefs in mental and physical well-being and has pursued this research in clinical and epidemiological cohorts as well as developing and standardising two rating scales for measurement of religious and spiritual belief. His other interests include the epidemiology of sexual dysfunction, the mental health of patients in the late stages of cancer and gene-environment interactions in the epidemiology of mental disorders.

~~~~~

## KEYNOTE 2

### *'Spirituality at the Sharp End: The challenging world of Social Work and Social Care'*

**Margaret Holloway**

Professor of Social Work, University of Hull

#### **Abstract**

The contemporary spirituality discourse is characterised by its increasing equation with positive mental health and what could be termed a 'life-style' approach to spiritual praxis. This sits ill with the lived experience of many users of social care services and raises important cultural, hermeneutic and epistemological questions. The lecture will argue that unless these questions and alternative models are embraced by spirituality scholars and practitioners alike, the movement risks becoming increasingly inward-looking and vulnerable to a growing critique from religious and cultural studies and professional practice quarters.

TUESDAY 20 MAY, 09.15

#### **Biography**

Margaret is Professor of Social Work at the University of Hull and a qualified social worker. She directs the Centre for Spirituality Studies and the Centre for End of Life Studies and, from 2009 - 2013, she acted as Social Care Lead on the UK National End of Life Care Programme. Margaret is a founder member of the British Association for the Study of Spirituality and former Vice-Chair. She researches death, dying and bereavement, with a particular interest in spiritual and philosophical issues and transcultural approaches. She also undertakes research into social aspects of chronic illness and the delivery of health and social care services for frail older people. Amongst her many publications are *Negotiating Death in Contemporary Health and Social Care* (2007), with Bernard Moss, *Spirituality and Social Work* (2010) and with Steve Nolan, *A-Z of Spirituality* (2013).

---

## KEYNOTE 3

### *'Spirituality at Work and the Leadership Challenge'*

**Roger Gill**

Visiting Professor of Leadership Studies, Durham University

#### **Abstract**

Human beings have an animating need for meaning, value and a sense of worth in what they do. This animating need concerns the *why* of life and work. More and more managers – particularly across those industries in which the profit motive is commonplace – are seeking meaning in their work associated with personal values and beliefs or the need for personal fulfilment other than creating material wealth. This trend is reflected in a growing sense of spirituality in the workplace and, in turn, an increasing academic interest in the topic, spiritual intelligence and spiritual leadership. It poses a growing challenge to those in leadership positions.

Spirituality can be defined as that which relates to, or affects, the non-physical part of a person that is the seat of emotions and character – the human spirit – as opposed to material or physical things. The Dalai Lama makes a very clear distinction between religion and spirituality. A religious view of spirituality, for example St Ignatius of Loyola's, combines the search for God in the inner world with a search for personal vocation. However, the concept of spirituality at work has come to incorporate or transcend religiousness, or even to

replace it with a secular humanist view that also involves looking inward at oneself, in contrast to organized religion, which has an external focus. Spirituality at work, therefore, is 'accessible' to everybody, whether religious or not. This is clear, for example, from one American study in which managers were found to be positive towards spirituality but negative towards religion.

A British study found that it is employees rather than employers who are leading the trend towards greater spirituality, perhaps because of the subject's vagueness to them and its association by some with 'weird cultism'. The terms 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' provoke an adverse emotional reaction in some 'hard-nosed' business executives as relating to self-indulgent sentimentality.

In some cases, contrarily, workplace spirituality has been 'hijacked' by managers and employers. And for some it has become yet another management fad – like counselling, empowerment and corporate social responsibility. Worse, spirituality at work has become in some cases a cynical business, with leaders cast as 'engineers of the human soul' charged with providing 'meaning' in employees' lives far beyond their normal work tasks or responsibilities. The 'workplace spirituality' movement 'promotes constricting cultural and behavioural norms and thus seeks to reinforce the power of leaders at the expense of autonomy for their followers', according to one view. And it is seen by some as yet another means by which to help managers and employers to achieve *their* goals and thereby enrich their own pockets at the expense of their employees' well-being: 'Workplace spirituality can enhance your company's spiritual capital and boost your bottom line! We can help you achieve it. Call us now!'

Nevertheless, spirituality is linked closely in the workplace with employee empowerment and engagement at work – two core characteristics of effective leadership. One of the multiple forms of intelligence that effective leaders display, particularly in empowering and engaging employees, is spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is understanding that human beings have an animating need for meaning, value and a sense of worth in what they seek and do and responding appropriately to that need. More and more people, especially managers, are seeking higher meaning, value and worth in what they do and are willing to forsake materialism for it, coming to appreciate that happiness does not necessarily result from material wealth. Indeed Theodore Zeldin, the Oxford philosopher, from his conversations with business leaders and MBA students, believes that the majority of them are not *primarily* interested in making money. Spiritual intelligence underlies what we believe in and the role our beliefs and values play in the actions we take and the way we shape our lives.

Spiritual leadership is characterized by spiritual intelligence. Effective leadership is showing the way and helping or inducing others to pursue it. Spiritual leadership concerns creating or providing meaning and value to others in what they seek and do by displaying behaviour and articulating messages that reflect their needs and wishes. Meaning and value come from a sense of shared vision, shared purpose and shared values and beliefs – three more core characteristics of effective leadership.

Spiritual leadership is *a* – if not *the* – crucial characteristic of the effective *and ethical* leadership that we need for the survival and success of our work organizations, indeed of our human civilization. That is the leadership challenge we face in our search for meaning and value at work – for spirituality at work.

**TUESDAY 20 MAY, 12.00**

### **Biography**

Roger is Visiting Professor of Leadership Studies at Durham University Business School and an independent consultant in leadership and leadership development. He is also supervising doctoral research in workplace spirituality and leadership in Durham University's Department of Theology and Religion. Roger was formerly Professor of Business Administration (Organizational Behaviour & Human Resource Management) and

Director of Executive Development Programmes at the University of Strathclyde Graduate Business School and the founder and Director of the Research Centre for Leadership Studies at the Leadership Trust Foundation, as well as Director of their joint MBA in Leadership Studies. He worked previously at university business schools in England and the USA, in management consultancy in the UK and Southeast Asia (including running his own company in Singapore for eight years), and in human resource management in the engineering, computer and textile industries in England. Roger is a graduate in psychology, philosophy and management from the universities of Oxford, Liverpool and Bradford, a Chartered Psychologist, and a Fellow of the Leadership Trust Foundation. His latest book, *Theory and Practice of Leadership, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (SAGE Publications, 2011), was shortlisted for the Chartered Management Institute's "Management Book of the Year" Award in January 2013.

~~~~~

#### **KEYNOTE 4**

#### ***'Mystical dimensions of Islam, past and present'***

**Carole Hillenbrand**

Honorary Professorial Fellow, University of Edinburgh

#### **Abstract**

*'Islam has given the world mystics no less than Hinduism or Christianity'* (Gandhi)  
Mystical experience often comes to a person who follows a particular religion, but adherence to a specific religion is by no means a basic condition for being a mystic. All the world's major faiths have had famous figures who are known to have experienced direct and close contact with God, the One, the transcendental or whatever other name can be given to ultimate reality. When reading the accounts of mystics in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, the similarities between them are striking. Yet there are clear differences, since mystical experiences are embedded within individual religious traditions that have their own associated rituals, ideals and ethical systems. Islam, of course, whose mystical tradition is called Sufism, is no exception in this matter. This lecture will discuss aspects of the little-known mystical dimensions of Islam.

Mysticism in Islam has existed from the earliest period. At times it has encountered difficulties, hostility and persecution. On numerous occasions it has been viewed as being outside the main doctrinal evolution of Islam, although so many of the greatest Muslim thinkers were indeed followers of Sufism. The most successful missionaries of Islam were the Sufis, and, above all, it is the Sufis in many parts of the world, such as Africa and Indonesia, as well as in the US and Europe, who today still provide the major emotional support and inspiration for many Muslims.

**TUESDAY 20 MAY, 16.00**

#### **Biography**

##### *Academic career*

Educated at the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Edinburgh

Professor of Islamic History, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom, 2000-8

Head of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1997-2002, 2006-8

Visiting Professor at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, USA, 1994 and 2005

Visiting Professor at the University of Groningen, Netherlands, 2002

Professor Emerita of Islamic History, University of Edinburgh, 2008-

Visiting Professor at the University of St Louis, USA, 2011

##### *Books published*

1. *The waning of the Umayyad caliphate*, Albany, 1989

2. *A Muslim principality in Crusader times: the early Artuqid state*, Leiden, 1990

3. *The Crusades: Islamic perspectives*, Edinburgh, 1999

4. *Turkish myth and Muslim symbol: the Battle of Manzikert*, Edinburgh, 2007

##### *Books edited*

1. *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change, 1800-1925*, Edinburgh, 1984
2. *The Sultan's Turret*, Leiden, 1999

*Awards within the UK*

Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 2001

Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, 2001

Fellow of the British Academy, 2007

Awarded the Order of the British Empire for Services to Higher Education, 2009

Awarded an Honorary Fellowship at Somerville College, Oxford, 2010

*International awards*

Awarded The King Faisal International Prize in Islamic Studies, 2005; this was the first time this prize (the highest scholarly prize in the Arab world) has been awarded to a non-Muslim.

Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America, 2012

---

## KEYNOTE 5

***'Spirituality-in-Healthcare: Just because it may be "made up", does that mean it is not real and does not matter?'***

### **John Swinton**

Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care, University of Aberdeen

#### **Abstract**

The paper will explore the current and extraordinarily diverse concept of spirituality, particularly as it relates to healthcare practices. It will suggest that there is such no 'thing' (singular) as spirituality. Rather it is a 'made up' concept that helps us to understand certain things about human beings and human living. It is in this sense there is no such 'thing' (singular) as spirituality. However, once we 'make up' spirituality and create 'spiritual people' who require 'spiritual care,' and then enshrine that in our policies and values, the concept of spirituality becomes extremely important and practically significant. The paper will argue that the on-going discussions around whether or not spirituality is 'real' or otherwise miss the practical point that spirituality may be necessary even if it is not 'real.'

**WEDNESDAY 21 MAY, 09.00**

#### **Biography**

John is Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care in the School of Divinity, Religious Studies and Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen and an honorary Professor of Nursing at the University's Centre for Advanced Studies in Nursing. He has a background in mental health nursing and healthcare chaplaincy and has researched and published extensively within the areas of ageing, dementia, mental health and illness, spirituality and human well-being and the theology and spirituality of disability. He is the Director of Aberdeen University's Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability(<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/sdhp/centre-for-spirituality-health-and-disability-182.php>), and Co-Director of the University's Kairos Forum for People with Intellectual or Cognitive Disabilities:(<http://thekairosforum.com/>).His publications include: *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God* (2012). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/London SCM Press; *Spirituality in Mental Health Care: Rediscovering a "forgotten" dimension*. (2001) Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London. *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (2008) (With Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier) IVP; *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research Methods*. (2006) London: SCM Press (With Dr. Harriet Mowat)