

Dear ACS members

one conference and a remarkable website with excellent content, both provided by ACS members.

There is an excellent website that has videos containing interviews with religious scholars, philosophers, and scientists who take on the big questions: why are we here, what is the meaning of life, how should we live, etc. I think the collection of videos are the best of the genre. Here's a link:

<http://www.closetotruth.com>

Sacred Journeys: Pilgrimages in the 21st Century

3rd Global Meeting

Call for Participation 2016

Monday 2nd May – Wednesday 4th May 2016

Prague, Czech Republic

Pilgrimages are some of the most ancient practices of humankind and are associated with a great variety of religious, spiritual and secular traditions. Today, the number of visits to sacred sites is increasing: more than 330 million people embark on traditional pilgrimages in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, India, Japan, and Spain. By some estimates, one-third of all international travellers are on some form of pilgrimage or spiritual vacation. In the 3rd Global Conference on Sacred Journeys, we will continue to explore the many personal, interpersonal, intercultural, and international dimensions of this profound phenomenon.

The conference welcomes proposals for presentations by anyone with an interest in sacred journeys, particularly pilgrims, spiritual and religious leaders across denominations, theologians, atheists, humanists, philosophers, clinical practitioners, psychologists, historians, anthropologists, artists, educators, journalists, writers, performers, musicians, lawmakers, civil servants, and representatives of NGOs. Organisers will consider proposals on any aspect of pilgrimage, including:

1. Defining Pilgrimage and the Pilgrimage Experience:

'Travel for transformation' embraces the sacred journey as a potential turning point in one's life. Witness the avalanche of books by pilgrims who have experienced the Camino, or those who have been influenced by the transformation of others. For instance, after his experience of the Hajj pilgrimage, the activist Malcolm X was stirred to reevaluate his lifelong journey in search of justice

and reconciliation as well as his thinking regarding race relations in the United States. Questions arise as to how and when a journey becomes 'sacred' and how and when pilgrimage devolves into a mere tourist endeavor, and what constitutes an 'authentic' pilgrim. Does tourism merely observe the authentic in others, whereas pilgrimage seeks it for oneself? What are the unique attributes of "pilgrimages" and what is at stake in defining something as "pilgrimage" as opposed to merely a journey? How do new (and old) definitions of sacred and secular pilgrimage inform our current understanding of authenticity? How has the meaning of pilgrimage and motives for travel changed over time? What role do the concepts of miracles and salvation play in the pilgrimage experience? How has the pilgrimage experience been explored by writers, artists, performers and singers, including humanists, agnostics, atheists and musicians? How can we understand the post-pilgrimage experience and its larger impact on individuals and the community (which can be non-religious and/or secular, involving, for instance devotional exercises, meditation practices, mental journeys, etc.)?

2. Reinforcing the Vision of the Ultimate Unity of Humanity:

Pilgrimage scholar George Greenia's insight that 'pilgrimages generate the least violent mass public gatherings [that] humankind has designed for itself' inspires the question: In what ways can the concept of the sacred journey lend itself to envisioning a world united in difference? We can reflect, for instance, on the sacred journeys to both Adam's Peak and Kataragama in Sri Lanka (major sites of interfaith pilgrimage), or to the Sufi sacred shrine in Ajmer in India, which likewise provides a powerful example of intercultural cooperation. Do pilgrimages always support self-improvement and unity? How do pilgrimages contribute to a sense of community and belonging? What are strategies for disseminating the personal enrichment and knowledge gained through pilgrimages to the wider community?

3. Pilgrimage and Globalization:

The global playing field is levelling and technology is impacting pilgrims in innumerable ways. In Mecca, for instance, telephone 'apps' assist Hajj pilgrims searching for animals for sacrifice; in Lourdes, an 'app' provides details on miraculous healings, proudly declaring, 'A miracle could happen' during the pilgrim's visit. Infrastructural and support services are also improving, and journeys once thought to be too difficult or challenging, such as that to Amarnath in India, are now within reach of vast numbers of pilgrims. What is the impact of modern conveniences on the experience of the pilgrimage, paying particular attention to how new trends sit alongside traditional practices and enable new opportunities for undertaking sacred journeys? What is the relationship between law, policy and the conditions of pilgrimage (i.e. immigration provisions, infrastructure and development, etc.)?

4. Modernization and the Global Trend Towards the Dissolution of Traditional Ways:

Pilgrims cling to what they ascertain as familiar and reaffirm what they believe to be 'true' at local levels. There may be a growing awareness that 'the world is one' and that we must work together

to deal with our common ecological, political, and security problems, but in the interest of cultural survival, primordial standard-bearers like nation, tribe, and race have been reified and re-energized. Now, for instance, journeys of all persuasions are being undertaken along ancient pathways that have been rediscovered and/or redeveloped. What kinds of trends along these lines might we forecast for the future? Could these developments also prove the undoing of pilgrimages, or merely generate changes in the way pilgrimages are understood? What are the implications of the monetization and commercialization of pilgrimages, both for the pilgrims themselves and the communities they visit on their journey?

5. Secular/Virtual Pilgrimage:

Major secular pilgrimages to such sites as Abbey Road in London, Elvis Presley's home of 'Graceland,' and rock star Jim Morrison's grave site in Paris attract astonishing numbers of 'pilgrims.' What are the similarities and differences between sacred and secular pilgrimages? More and more we are living in a 'global village' and the 'pilgrimage in my front room' phenomenon is facilitated by video and satellite links. Must pilgrimages, whether sacred or secular, always involve a physical journey 'in league' with others? How do virtual or alternative pilgrimages recreate the pilgrimage or tourism experience in a virtual world-and are these still 'authentic' experiences? How might considerations of fan behaviours in the context of pilgrimages allow us to better understand the psychological dynamics of being a 'fan'? What are the implications of 'dark' pilgrimages to sites of remembrance and commemoration (i.e., the Hiroshima Peace Museum, the Irish National Famine Museum, Rwanda genocide memorials, etc.)?

Further details and information can be found on the conference website:

<http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/persons/sacred-journeys/call-for-presentations/>

Call for Cross-Over Presentations

The Sacred Journeys project will be meeting at the same time as a project on Slavery and another project on Testimony. We welcome submissions which cross the divide between both project areas. If you would like to be considered for a cross project session, please mark your submission "Crossover Submission".

What to Send

300 word abstracts, proposals and other forms of contribution should be submitted by Friday 4th December 2015.

All submissions be minimally double reviewed, under anonymous (blind) conditions, by a global panel drawn from members of the Project Team and the Advisory Board. In practice our procedures

usually entail that by the time a proposal is accepted, it will have been triple and quadruple reviewed.

You will be notified of the panel's decision by Wednesday 16th December 2015.

If your submission is accepted for the conference, a full draft of your contribution should be submitted by Friday 18th March 2016.

Abstracts may be in Word, RTF or Notepad formats with the following information and in this order:

a) author(s), b) affiliation as you would like it to appear in programme, c) email address, d) title of proposal, e) body of proposal, f) up to 10 keywords.

E-mails should be entitled: Sacred Journeys Abstract Submission

Where to Send

Abstracts should be submitted simultaneously to both Organising Chairs:

Organising Chairs:

Ian McIntosh: imcintos@iupui.edu

Rob Fisher: sj3@inter-disciplinary.net

This event is an inclusive interdisciplinary research and publishing project. It aims to bring together people from different areas and interests to share ideas and explore various discussions which are innovative and exciting.

A number of eBooks and paperbacks have emerged and/or are in press from the work of this research stream. All papers accepted for and presented at the conference must be in English and will be eligible for publication in an ISBN eBook. Selected papers may be developed for publication in a themed hard copy volume(s). All publications from the conference will require editors, to be chosen from interested delegates from the conference.

Ethos

Inter-Disciplinary.Net believes it is a mark of personal courtesy and professional respect to your colleagues that all delegates should attend for the full duration of the meeting. If you are unable to make this commitment, please do not submit an abstract for presentation. Please note: Inter-Disciplinary.Net is a not-for-profit network and we are not in a position to be able to assist with conference travel or subsistence.

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