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## ABOUT THE BASR

The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) was founded in 1954. It is a member association of the International Association for the History of Religions (founded 1950) and of the European Association for the Study of Religions (founded 2001). The object of BASR is to promote the academic study of religion/s, understood as the historical, social, theoretical, critical and comparative study of religion/s through the interdisciplinary collaboration of all scholars whose research is defined in this way. BASR is not a forum for confessional, apologetic, or similar concerns. BASR pursues its aims principally through an annual conference and general meeting, a regular Bulletin, and a Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions. Membership of BASR is open to all scholars normally resident in the United Kingdom.

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# editorial

Welcome to the May 2024 edition of the BASR Bulletin. I am grateful to Theo Wildcroft for giving me the opportunity to write this issue's editorial to discuss the upcoming BASR annual conference at the University of Leeds on September 2-4, 2024.

This year's theme is an increasingly important one in the scholarly study of religion: 'Reckoning with the Past.' This will allow our conference to cover themes such as the decolonisation of the study of religion, anti-racist education and education about the slave trade; in addition to the history of religious studies and colonial impacts. Simultaneously, religious institutions are also reckoning with their own problematic histories, which we're sure to explore in this conference. The study of religion has always thrived as an interdisciplinary endeavour and this conference is no different – if your research touches upon these themes, we encourage you to submit a proposal and get involved with the proceedings. Before departing the conference, be sure to take the opportunity to explore the many wonderful things to see at the city of Leeds – I've been based here for the past two years and can attest to its brilliance.

Once again, we are working with CenSAMM, allowing us to broaden the scope of the conference to issues pertaining to apocalypticism, millenarianism, and environmental concerns. We are also receiving support from the Hibbert Trust and are grateful to both for their enthusiasm and support. Collaborations such as these are essential as we continue in precarious times for Higher Education.

On that note, it is important to note the elephant in the room. As Stephen Gregg mentioned at last year's AGM, we are increasingly keen to receive offers to host our annual conference from BASR members – thus far, the vast majority of BASR conferences have been organised/hosted by committee members and their respective institutions. This is difficult to sus-

tain. Yet conferences are part of the lifeblood of the BASR – it is not only important to the discipline and our research community, but also its nurturing of future generations of scholars. Attending BASR conferences has been instrumental in my own career, and I know that I'm not alone in that regard. Beyond that, hosting the BASR is a great opportunity in itself – so please do speak to a BASR committee member if this interests you!

Teaching and learning can often be sidelined in academia in favour of conversations surrounding research, but these are also utterly essential to the future of our discipline. The study of religion works best when making a public impact, and our students are often our largest public. This year's conference will include a Lightning Talks panel for Masters students/early postgraduate researchers to present brief talks on their on-going or recently completed projects.

The contents of the bulletin speak to the vibrant community we have within the BASR and the work we do – including conference reports, teaching and learning activities, Meet the Members reports, and, sadly, reflections on departed colleagues. The recent announcement of closures at the University of Kent is a sobering reminder of the ongoing challenges we face; yet, as current affairs demonstrate, our disciplines are needed more than ever. I suspect these conversations will be prominent when we gather in September to seek collective ways forward. Please do share the CFP far and wide (along with the #BASR2024 hashtag) so that we can ensure as broad and lively conversations as possible.

I look forward to welcoming you, with my co-organiser Mel Prideaux, to Leeds in September!

Aled Thomas  
University of Leeds