



LAPIDOMEDIA

Religious Literacy in World Affairs

WINTER/SPRING 2012

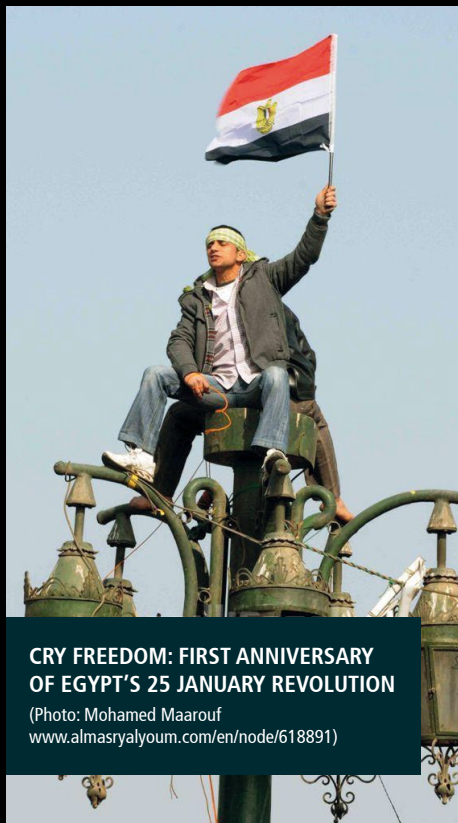
Lapido Media is a small, internationally-networked charity helping journalists and faith-based groups engage with each other meaningfully in a de-secularizing, multicultural society.

We are developing our capacity as a go-to place for media queries on religion and its social and political impacts, as well as publishing reports, handbooks and our own web-based reportage from the UK and abroad.

THE ARAB SPRING will mean little if freedom remains a religious crime

GETTING TO THE NUB of the Arab Spring means understanding what stands in the way of political freedom. Lapido continues to highlight the religious dimension that is often occluded in the reportage of foreign affairs. In Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood protected churches at Coptic Christmas, but this has resonances of *dhimmitude* – second-class citizenship for Copts under the new Islamist regime. In Jordan, the secret police are manipulated by tribal allegiance to practise torture against religious converts – and only appeal over the Jordanian government to the US Secretary of State is able to stop it. And in Bahrain, young, media-savvy professionals who joined the fight in Pearl Square for freedom last year, may not even be seen in a church if their background is Shia.

Subscribe to our web reports and World Media Watch at <http://www.lapidomedia.com/contact-us>



CRY FREEDOM: FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF EGYPT'S 25 JANUARY REVOLUTION

(Photo: Mohamed Maarouf www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/618891)



Religion is news and news organisations don't know how to explain it. Religion is business and businesses don't know how to react. Religion is social, and societies that long tried to smother differences don't know how to link people. Religion is politics and politicians don't know what is law anymore. A media group that explains, informs, analyses and inspires debate, and is unequivocal about the source of truth in the world is needed – and is coming.

Dan Damon
World Update presenter
BBC World Service
Lapido partner

EGYPT'S REVOLUTION has added to the daily struggle for survival of refugees who pour into Cairo from elsewhere in Africa. So it might seem a kind of miracle to find themselves being coached by a Brazilian football pro, who gives his time. André Leitao, 37, is one of the Anglican cathedral's 60-strong Refugee Egypt team, working with Nuer, Dinka, Darfurian, Eritrean and Nubian boys to break down traditional enmities and improve morale through the requirements of the game.



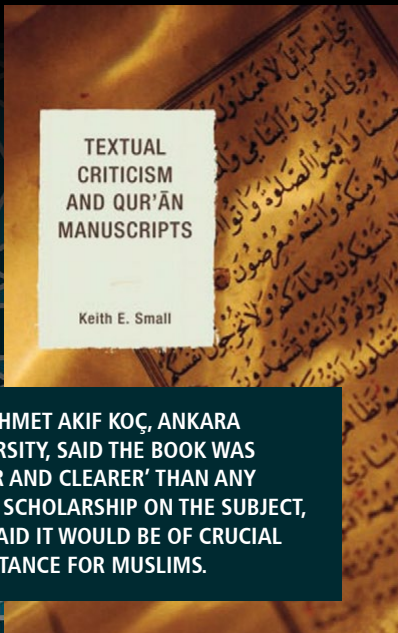
Helping Big Society projects

KINGSBRIDGE COMMUNITY SPORTS is a voluntary-run consortium of local businesses and faith groups, which aims to develop a vibrant and exciting new venue in a formerly derelict site in the south of Birmingham for vulnerable kids who would otherwise miss out. A model of Big Society thinking, it's now threatened by Birmingham City Council's deficit reduction strategy. The Council slammed on the brakes after four years of negotiations under 'community asset transfer' provisions. Competition from a lucrative new university partnership could still derail the bid, yet Project Director Roger Lynch says the idea is right for Birmingham, and he has built a powerful case with across-the-board support. Said Lynch: 'All through the process Lapido has given invaluable advice and support.'

If your faith-based project could benefit from pro bono PR advice, call 0207 250 8366.



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DR MEHMET AKIF KOÇ, ANKARA UNIVERSITY, SAID THE BOOK WAS 'WIDER AND CLEARER' THAN ANY OTHER SCHOLARSHIP ON THE SUBJECT, AND SAID IT WOULD BE OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE FOR MUSLIMS.

Promoting a better conversation about religions

NEW STUDY of Qur'an texts is at last putting Qur'anic manuscript studies on the same level of equality as the Hebrew Bible and New Testament manuscript studies. In November Lapido hosted a dinner in London bringing together some of the world's top scholars to launch Dr Keith Small's Textual Criticism and Qur'anic Manuscripts (Lexington).

A major theme at the recent Qur'an conference at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University was the relationship between Qur'anic studies in the Muslim world and Qur'anic studies in the West. Dr Small's study applies Western methods of evaluating textual variants in manuscripts to 21 representative and important early Qur'an manuscripts. Professor François Déroche from the Sorbonne, Paris; Dr Christopher Melchert from Pembroke College, Oxford; Dr Mehmet Koç from the University of Ankara and Andrew Brown from the Guardian joined other scholars to celebrate a work that has been praised from the US to the Middle East. Andrew Rippin at the University of Victoria described it as 'the first work to bring out the full implications of several generations of scholarly activity in the area of Qur'anic textual studies.'

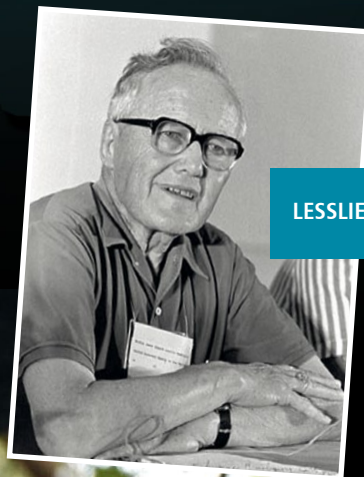
When mass murder is a religious issue

WHEN PRESIDENT MUSEVENI routed the Acholi from power in a coup in 1986, they took to the hills of southern Sudan to enact God's revenge. One group, the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony, went feral, bringing mayhem and terror to the north for more than 20 years. They did so according to a misreading of Ezekiel in the Old Testament. This, mixed up with traditional snake religion and *muti* sacrifice held an entire nation in terrified thrall. The secular world understood little of this, least of all the destructive power of a sin/revenge/fear culture in a lawless state – and largely ignored it. It was a handful of Acholi church leaders who alone stayed to offer leadership, fight for justice and advocate for a peaceful way through a terrible

impasse that had become a by-word for child soldiering. By 2003, in partnership with British and European churches, they woke up the world. Bob Geldof went and filmed there; the UN tripled its aid budget, and the International Criminal Court made it their test case. Today there are more than 450 NGOs helping re-build Acholiland where before there were none. But the ICC did not finish the job. Kony was never caught, and has moved to the Congo and 100 US military advisers are on his tail. Lapido Media was born out of the campaign to end this war, inspired by theologian Lesslie Newbigin's call to a 'radical encounter with secular culture'. This story forms part of a case study in a

new book about his legacy, *Theology in Missionary Perspective* edited by Paul Weston and Mark Laing, to be published by Wipf and Stock later this year.

To order a copy online go to <http://wipfandstock.com/>



LESSLIE NEWBIGIN



CLOSING IN:
JOSEPH KONY'S
DAYS AS 'GOD'S
MOUTHPIECE' MAY
BE NUMBERED

(Photo: Der Spiegel archive)

An in-depth look at state/Muslim engagement

THE MUSLIM PARTICIPATION in Contemporary Governance Project at Bristol University is a crucial project set up by Professor Tariq Modood to explore forms of state engagement with British Muslims, from 1997 under Labour to the present Coalition government. Students on the project use doctoral research by Lapido's Director, Dr Jenny Taylor, who was consulted by Dr Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, research associate of the project, about her findings that de-secularization in UK is due in part to Islam. He said: 'Despite New Labour's claims that "we

don't do God", our research finds a substantial history of engagement with faith, and particularly with Muslims in policy areas such as equalities, welfare, urban regeneration, community cohesion and counter-terrorism. Our aim is to develop a better understanding of Muslim political actors that goes beyond caricatures that mythologise or demonise Muslims' participation in governance. Our research is uncovering a nuanced account of the development, and in some respects maturation, of state-Muslim engagement.'

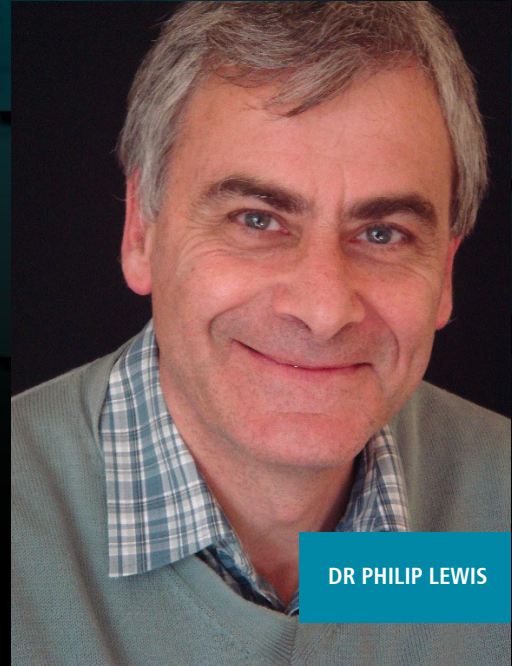


PROFESSOR TARIQ MODOOD

(Photo: BBC)

GOOD GOVERNANCE: Lapido welcomes Dr Phil Lewis

LAPIDO RECENTLY welcomed Dr Phil Lewis, honorary visiting lecturer at the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford onto the Board. Dr Lewis is an expert on the role of religion in conflict and how complex multi-ethnic and religiously diverse cities and countries can enable human flourishing. He is also the inter-religious adviser to the Bishop of Bradford and specialist in Christian-Muslim relations. He helped draft the Runnymede Trust's Islamophobia Report and is the author of two definitive works on Islam in Britain, the latest being *Young Muslim and British* (Continuum 2010). 'We are honoured to welcome Dr Lewis onto the Trust at this stage in our consolidation as a religion media hub,' said acting chairman Dr Arne Fjeldstad of Washington based Media Project. 'He brings to the Board unique credibility with journalists as a scholar of British Islam, particularly youth trends, and a commitment to facts, objectivity and fairness that are our hallmarks.'



DR PHILIP LEWIS



Out and about...

THE WILBERFORCE DIALOGUE in Southampton in September debated the tough question 'Has multiculturalism failed?' Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali and the government's former religion advisor Francis Davis scrutinised the ideological and Christian dimensions of the subject – moderated by Lapido's Director, Jenny Taylor. Organizer Julian Davies described the event as 'the most successful of the Dialogues so far'.

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 **LAPIDOMEDIA**
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