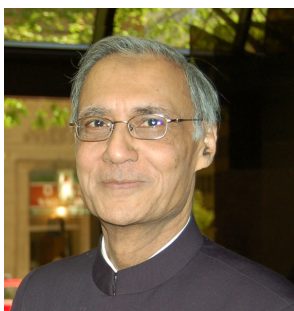


Page 1 of 2 **Eileen Barker, London School of Economics; Arvind Sharma, McGill University; and Shaun Casey, Wesley Theological Seminary**

At the 2009 Annual Meeting in Montréal, the Public Understanding of Religion Committee held a Special Topics Forum entitled “Religion Scholars and National Governments: Should They Be Partners?”. Below are excerpts from three of the members — Eileen Barker, Arvind Sharma, and Shaun Casey — of the international panel that addressed this question.



*Eileen Barker is professor emerita of sociology with special reference to the study of religion at the London School of Economics (LSE). Her main research interests are new religious movements and changes in the religious situation in post-Communist countries. Barker's publications include the award-winning *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (John Wiley & Sons, 1984) and *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1982). In the late 1980s, with the support of the British Government and mainstream churches, she founded INFORM, a charity based at the LSE, which provides information about new religions that is as accurate, objective, and up-to-date as possible. She is a frequent advisor to governments, other official bodies, and law-enforcement agencies around the world. In 2000, Barker was the recipient of the AAR's Martin E. Marty Award for the Public Understanding of Religion.*



Arvind Sharma is the Birks Professor of comparative religion in the faculty of religious studies at McGill University in Montréal, Canada, where he teaches courses in Indian religions and world

religions. Two books edited by him are widely used in teaching courses on world religions — Women in World Religions (SUNY Press, 1987) and Our Religions (HarperCollins Publishers, 1993). He is currently engaged in promoting the adoption of a universal declaration of human rights by the world's religions, and his latest book is entitled Hindu Narratives on Human Rights (Praeger, 2010).



*Shaun Casey is professor of Christian ethics and director of the National Capital Semester for Seminarians (NCSS) at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Casey served as senior advisor for religious affairs for the Obama campaign and was National Evangelical Coordinator in the 2008 presidential campaign. His research interests include ethics and international affairs, the public implications of religious belief, and the intersection of religion and politics. He has written on the ethics of the war in Iraq, as well as the role of religion in American presidential politics. Casey is the author of *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960* (Oxford University Press, 2009). He presided over the Annual Meeting panel upon which this article is based, and he serves on the AAR's Public Understanding of Religion Committee, which sponsored the panel.*

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