Welcome to the Symposium

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Ladies and gentlemen this is a seminar, a symposium on the occasion of my retirement as a professor and a lecturer in non-institutional and implicit religion at Leiden university.

Why a symposium to say goodbye, rather than the traditional valedictory lecture? It is because I want to show that this saying good bye is not only the end of an era. It is also a handing over of a tradition to a new younger generation.

Two of them are of my own breed: Karen Pärna, who did a very good job in studying the internet as implicit religion, and Markus Davidsen, who has almost finished a book on the religion that is implicit in *The Lord of the Rings* by Tolkien. Tatjana Schnell and Abby Day are here because of their publications, of course (Abby has written a marvellous book on *Believing in Belonging*, Tatjana is an authority on the psychology of meaning), and because of their involvement in the empirical problems of the idea of implicit religion.

Why then are the other half of the speakers seniors, people who have most, if not all, of their academic life behind them? It is for exactly the same reason: because it is a matter of handing over a tradition. The oldies, Hamilton, Heelas, Riis and myself have known each other for over twenty years, and had many discussions on implicit religion and related problems. Hamilton did a lot of work on the theoretical background of implicit religion; Heelas is an authority on New Age religion, and Preben Riis has recently worked on religion and emotion.

Last but not least, Edward Bailey is here as the man who turned the study of implicit and non-institutional religion into an institution.
People who have something to contribute to the discussion are invited to contribute to the special issue of the journal *Implicit Religion*.

O.K. I have said enough, let’s hear what the others have to say. We will start with Karen Pärna.