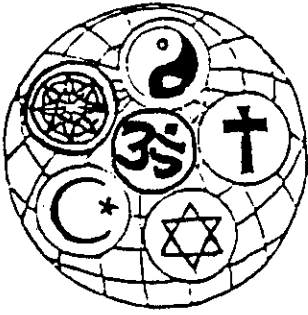


Geography of Religions



& Belief Systems

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Special sessions at AAG conferences on the subject of GORABS continue to increase in number and more new people seem to be involved. We need to develop a better network for communication between those individuals interested in GORABS. Please pass on a copy of your newsletter to interested individuals and send me their names and addresses so that I can add them to the mailing list. I will carry extra copies of this newsletter to Toronto for those people not already on the mailing list. Also, and as I have done in the past, I request contributions to the newsletter. If anyone would like to submit an essay, or pass on relevant information about conferences or publications, etc., please mail them to the editor by September 15, 1990 (or at least contact the editor by that time if the essay is not complete) for the fall issue. Your contributions will help in making this newsletter a success.

TORONTO AAG, 1990-UPDATE

NOTICE:

As reported in the last issue of GORABS, a special session is scheduled and entitled Religion and Geography: Diverse Patterns. This session is scheduled for Friday, April 20th at 12:55 to 2:35 pm. Due to unforeseeable circumstances, Gisbert Rinschede will not be able to present his paper entitled, "Catholic Pilgrimage Centers in Quebec, Canada." As a result, the AAG Toronto Program committee will notify participants in an addendum to their program. Other members of the session will have an additional 5 minutes to present their research. The list of presenters and the titles of their papers is in the previous issue of GORABS.

More Sessions on GORABS!!!!

Friday April 20th; 11:00am to 12:40pm Religion and Landscape, Chaired by Richard T. Lewis of Kent State University.
Frank J. Pucci, University of Minnesota: An Historical Geography of the Presidios along the Northern Frontier of New Spain from 1759 to 1788;
Barbara A. Weightman, CSU-Fullerton: Religious Symbolism in Landscape and Lifeworlds: A Humanistic Perspective; Susan Wiley Hardwick, CSU-Chico: The Religious Geography of Russian Pentecostals in the American West; Gail S. Sechrist, Indiana University of Pennsylvania: Church Names in Western Pennsylvania; Roger W. Stump, SUNY-Albany: Patterns of Religious Affiliation in the Montreal Metropolitan Area.

Friday April 20th; 5:25pm in the session entitled, Socio-Political: Geography of Institutions, Chaired by Clark Archer of UN-Lincoln. Kathleen Molnar Brown, GeoSpectra Corporation: Modelling Catholic Parish Consolidation; A Location-Allocation Solution.

Saturday April 21st; 1:45-3:25pm Geography of the Bible Specialty Group: Historical, Cultural and Philosophical Thought, Chaired by Bruce R. Crew of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Barry J. Beitzel, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School: The VIA MARIS in Literary and Cartographic Sources; Karel Bayer, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee: The Bible and the Spread and Perpetuation of Christian Monasticism II: Contemplation and Formation of the Church; Bruce R. Crew, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee: The Nabatean Geographical Domain During Inter-Testamental/New Testament Times; Jonathan J. Lu, University of Northern Iowa: Tragedies on Mt. Gilboa.

Saturday April 21st, 1:45-4:15pm Poster Session
Richard T. Lewis, Kent State University: Presbyterians in Akron, 1963-1989.
Guay Lorraine, Universite Laval: The Empty Cemetery: Morphological Aspects of Cemetery Development in Quebec City.

Saturday April 21st, 4:00pm in Historical Geography Specialty Group: Student Scholars in Historical Geography II and chaired by William K. Wyckoff, Montana State University. Darrell P. Kruger, LSU: The Pietermaritzburg Voortrekker Burial Place: An Appraisal.

Sunday April 22nd, 7:40am in The Geography of Sport: Challenges and Opportunities, Chaired by Robert S. Dilley, Lakehead University. Michael L. Kelsey and Surinder M. Bhardwaj, Kent State University: Sports Shrines and Secular Pilgrimages.

Sunday April 22nd, 1:25pm in Political Geography: The Israeli-Palestinian Question, chaired by Walter G. Hardwick, University of British Columbia. Yossi Katz, Bar-Ilan University: The Political Status of Jerusalem in a Historical Context: Zionist Plans for the Partition of Jerusalem in the Years 1937-38.

Sunday April 22nd, 1:25-3:05pm. Diffusion Patterns in Religion, Chaired by Eliza Husband, University of Illinois/Urbana-Champaign. Roger L. Henrie, Central Michigan University: The Diffusion of the Mormon Subculture into Other Culture Areas; Clifford B. Craig, Utah State University: Contemporary Polygamous Lifestyles Within the Mormon Culture Region: Fundamentalists and Neofundamentalists; Oscar H. Horst, Western Michigan University: The Diffusion of the Cult of the Guatemalan Black Christ of Esquipulas; William R. Brown, Prairie View A&M University: The Nation of Islam: A Geographical Analysis of African-American Alienation; Surinder M. Bhardwaj, Kent State University: Sentimental Journeys: Thoughts on the Nature of Pilgrimage.

FIELD TRIP led by Allan Gleason of Toronto on Wednesday, April 18th from 9:30am to 5:00pm on New Religious Patterns (of the Toronto area).

REFRAIN (from the last newsletter!)

Bring your ideas to Toronto.

Because the schedule does not give us a lunch break and because of the difficulty in organizing a dinner meeting, I suggest that we meet near the registration tables in the Sheraton at 9:00pm on Friday night to discuss topics of interest to our group. From there we can find a place to sit and imbibe together. A major topic for discussion might be the possibility of becoming a specialty group with official recognition. This was attempted before and I am not sure why it did not work since I was not a part of the process at the time. Do we have enough interest in the group to become an official AAG organization? Should we approach the Bible Specialty Group people and forge some kind of coalition? Roger Stump suggests that we develop a volume of GORABS readings. Last year Bob Reed shared his Geography of Religion course curriculum with us. Has anyone made any progress towards development of such a course at their own university? We can discuss promotion of such courses at our respective universities. Finally, we can discuss participation at the Miami meetings. What about a poster session dedicated to Geography of Religion? If you have any other topics that you think we should discuss, then by all means, bring them up at the meeting. I hope to see you there.

GORABS FEATURE

GEOGRAPHIES OF SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT IN A SMALL COASTAL PARISH IN FELIXSTOWE, SUFFOLK COUNTY, ENGLAND

by Adrian Cooper

This short article attempts to provide readers of the GORABS Newsletter with a brief and general summary of the work currently in progress at Birkbeck College, University of London on the Geography of Religion, as part of the writer's PhD Studies. Hopefully, publication will stimulate a healthy debate and exchange of constructive ideas in future Newsletters.

Commitment to a single point of reference cannot and does not exist without reference to other phenomena. Consequently, at the heart of this research, lies the belief that humans observe, think and articulate their spiritual beliefs within frameworks of meanings and references which are specific to their environment and personal circumstances.

With that recognition, Geography immediately assumes a central role in any further debate since these selected and developing frameworks of perception significantly define individuals' relationships with their landscape. In my research, I closely examine these personal geographies, and consider peoples' relationships with Church appropriated places as a metaphor for their spiritual commitment and participation in that Church. As a whole, the sample spans all ages and degrees of commitment and abstention. So far, my research may be divided into four linked elements.

Firstly, I examined the ways in which childhood, adolescent and adult landscapes had contributed to people's contemporary beliefs and their current understanding of God. One man, for example, in his late twenties, was overwhelmingly fundamentalist within the Evangelical motivation. Much of this zeal was inspired by the apparent evil he perceived in the town he previously lived in. For him, the Parish landscape was a forum for justified Evangelical proclamation, a resource to be exploited, and a tangible forum for a sustained period of great optimism in his life.

Equally though, I also received contributions from a nineteen year old woman who had only recently moved to Felixstowe from a housing estate in Manchester. She used memories of her earlier landscapes to justify her strong belief in the complete absence of any Divine Being. For her, the noise, danger and perceived hopelessness of her inner city life was enough to eliminate the need for, or the existence of God.

For these two individuals, as well as for the others considered in the research, perceptions of landscape and the selected significant elements within each of those familiar landscapes, have been differentially used to justify the constituent elements within their personal conceptions of God.

The second aspect of the research is to intensify the scale of enquiry from the level of broad townscapes, to relationships with the three churches in the Parish. Again though, personal relationships with those places, exposed significant aspects of individuals' spiritual commitment. This remained true both for highly motivated and committed Evangelical Christians as well as those who had little or no recognition of the Divine.

It was fascinating to observe, for example, how consciously the formation of geographical relationships were encouraged by the Parish Minister during the financing and building of the Parish Church Extension. In order to encourage parishioners to contribute towards the building costs, the Minister organized times where people could pay for bricks and actually place them on the walls as they were being erected. Very clearly therefore, emotional relationships were being encouraged and developed with the Extension. Consequently, local people felt justified in accepting and using the Extension since they had contributed to its building - both by paying for the building materials, and by physically laying those materials in place. The great popularity of the extension to that Parish Church is therefore of no surprise at all since it was substantially the product of geographical engineering as well as civil engineering!

The third element of enquiry considered parishioners' relationships with homes appropriated by the Parish Church for mid-week fellowship meetings and other social events within the Church. As with the relationships with the church buildings, these homes are exposed in the research as embodying an often intense fusion of invested optimisms, frustrations, and uncertainties. At no other stage in the research does the validity of analyzing relationships with nominated places as a metaphor of spiritual commitment and participation become so clearly justified.

The first three elements of the research concentrate on relationships with places as they are encountered by adults. This imbalance is corrected in the fourth element by concentrating on the more erratic thought, action and experience of children and adolescents. Specifically, the research shows that the Sunday School and other teaching and leadership provided by the Parish Church largely fails to stimulate these young imaginations. Consequently, many young people leave the Church as they reach adolescence. Behind this evaporation of participation lies a generally inadequate appreciation by the Parish Church of the ways in which young people relate to ideas and trends in their familiar landscape and therefore, to an important extent, to the ways in which their conceptions of God's personal relevance develops. Many of the young people who are contributing to this research note that they find the teaching and leadership quite unstimulating, confining and often suffocating. Frequently therefore, the Sunday School building and the church discard their previous embodiments of enjoyment and frustration. Once again therefore, specific geographical relationships with specific places clearly become very useful metaphors for analyzing spiritual commitment.

Adrian would appreciate any input or commentary from our readership.
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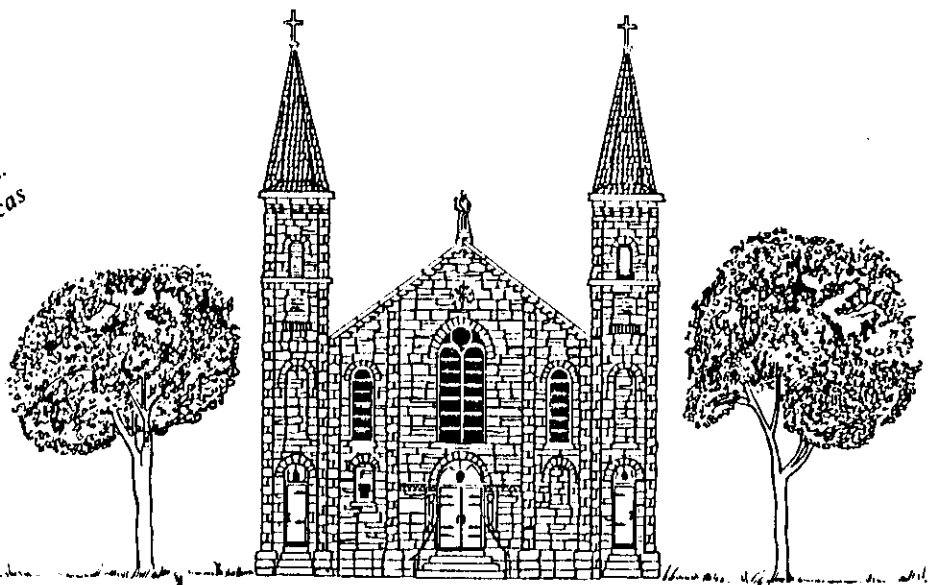
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gisbert Rinschede and Surinder Bhardwaj are editors for the volume of Religium Geographie published at Katholische Universitat in the FRG and entitled, "Pilgrimage in the U.S." Contributors include J. Preston, S.H. Bhardwaj, P. Giuriati, R.H. Jackson G. Rinschede and C. Weber, G. Faiers and C.V. Prorok, A. Hecht, and W. Zelinski

For more information about this volume, contact Gisbert Rinschede at Lehrstuhl fur Didaktik der Geographie, Universitat Regensburg, Universitätsstr. 31, D-8400 Regensburg, FRG (West Germany) or Surinder Bhardwaj, Department of Geography, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio 44242

GORABS SPECIAL

St. Anthony's Chapel, a historical landmark, belongs to the Most Holy Name Parish located on Troy Hill in Pittsburgh, Pa. It was completed in June, 1892, under the direction of Fr. Suibert Mollinger. The Chapel contains a multitude of religious relics, many of which date back two to three centuries.
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St. Anthony's Chapel
Troy Hill, Pa.