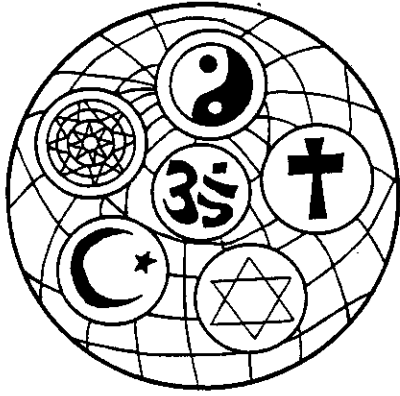


# Geography of Religions & Belief Systems



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

It seems as if the semester started only yesterday, yet my calendar reveals that an entire month has elapsed! Yikes! It's time to work on the GORABS Newsletter. So here I am, pulling together the neat stuff that you have been sending me since last spring. I have more than enough to fill this edition, so if you do not see your announcement, rest assured it will be in the second newsletter this term. And don't stop sending the material. The more you send, the better I feel. Missing though, are those pithy essays from our members that we have grown accustomed to. Contact me if you are interested in writing an essay (on the topic of your choice, of course), or just surprise me and send it in both hard copy and diskette (WordPerfect, please).

As you can see, we are finally moving into the high-tech era and our newsletter is looking a little snazzier than in the past. We can thank the dean of my college, Dr. Charles Zuzak, for the financial support to produce two newsletters per term. In addition, the folks in our Office of Communication Services are helping me with the desktop publishing software. Thus, I have profusely thanked them on behalf of our fledgling organization. Oh, and one final note, don't forget to send me information on any courses related to the geography of religions that you teach (including a copy of your syllabus). We are still trying to compile a list of places where we can find such courses. Have a great semester.

## GORABS FEATURE ESSAY

The following article is reprinted with the permission of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation. The article appeared on the cover of the foundation's membership newsletter, *PHLF News*, in July 1992. The *PHLF News* makes a case for incorporating religious structures into the National Register of Historic Places.

In a country with no official religion, belief and ritual are treated as purely personal matters to which the community owes nothing but non-interference, and whose claims to support from outside the denomination carry no more weight than those of, say, a social club. Thus, property used for purely religious purposes goes untaxed regardless of sect.

And yet, the National Register of Historic Places is reluctant to admit religious buildings and cemeteries. Philanthropic foundations have no interest, almost always, in grants that seem to further the expression of one of many religious creeds. Religion is seen as one's personal business, and the repair and upkeep of a religious edifice are seen as the congregation's private problem.

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## GORABS BOOK REVIEW

David Seamon, a GORABS member from the Department of Architecture at Kansas State University, permits us to reprint his review of *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* by Belden C. Lane (NY: Paulist Press, 1988; soft cover, \$9.95, ISBN 0-8091-2988-4). If you have written a review of a book that you think our members would like to know more about, or if you plan to write one, consider sending it to the GORABS newsletter.

Written by a theologian, this book explores the relationship between place and spirituality. "Places," writes Lane, "can be formative of our very being as humans, rooting us at the deepest levels of mystery and meaning" (p. 19).

In the prologue, Lane explains that most traditional studies of spirituality have typically separated religious experience from its place of happening, thus excluding "the palpable context of one's lived experience of the holy" (p. 6). Instead, Lane seeks ways whereby the study of spirituality "will be drawn instinctively to the manner in which one's lived experience of faith is rooted in time, space and culture" (ibid). In other words, what does it

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## Feature Essay

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But there are a few things to take into consideration: **AS ARCHITECTURE**, some churches and temples have extraordinary distinction. A church of the past, constructed with an ample budget, offered its architect more artistic freedom than any other building type. It was his mandate to be

lavish, to bring into being great spaces, towers, tracery, sculpture, and stained glass. Actual artistic success varied from place to place, but the true successes were great ones indeed. Thus great religious buildings are as significant to the whole community as are any works of great art. Recognizing this, the National Register will accept religious buildings on their architectural merits. In Pittsburgh, Calvary United Methodist Church, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, and First Baptist Church are outstanding elements of their City of Pittsburgh Historic Districts, and Emmanuel is on the National Register.

**AS A VISUAL ELEMENT** of a street or neighborhood, a religious building offers contrast of form or scale. It is also visible evidence of the neighborhood's history, its peoples and traditions of the past. It may also mark a historic intersection or simply be so conspicuous that the neighborhood is identified with it. The architectural quality of the building may or may not be high,

but the visual importance of the religious building gives it significance.

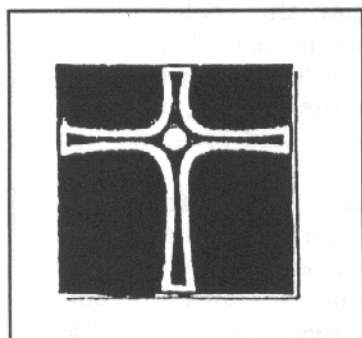
**AS A COMMUNITY FACILITY**, a religious property often reaches beyond sectarian boundaries. Other congregations may use the worship space, the social hall may be used for meet-

ings, entertainments, classes, or elections, and the basement may be a shelter for the homeless. For those who give to charitable and public causes, such places are worthy recipients; the donations further the public good. To many people, this public avail-

ability of space is the best reason for helping religious buildings to survive in good repair. In time, such buildings may be adapted for non-religious uses, public or private.



Church skyline at the McKees Rocks Industrial Bottoms



**AS A SPIRITUAL PRESENCE AND STABILIZING FORCE**, a religious building contributes a sense of goodness, wholeness, and order to neighborhood life. No matter what a person's religious beliefs may be, if any, the sight of a church or temple can inspire personal feelings of peace and hope. Pittsburgh is so often described as a city of neighborhoods. And religious buildings are the visual, spiritual, and architectural anchors in many of our neighborhoods. It is critical that as a community we encourage the restoration, maintenance, or adaptive use of these structures whenever feasible. In doing so, we may be keeping fine art in being, preserving a community's sense of itself, or giving the community shelter, space, and a pleasant setting for its joint activities. The religious building in need thus deserves an appraisal of its public merits.

## Book Review

Continued from Page 1

mean "to experience the holy within the context of a spatially-fixed reality?" (ibid). Lane writes:

Henry Miller may be right, after all, when he said that "our destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things." To be able to recognize the place of our encounter with God and know it as if for the first time is to be twice blessed--to "be there" in all the gathered immediacy that human dwelling in the divine presence makes fully possible.

St. Francis found himself returning all of his life to the Portiuncula, that tiny abandoned church down the hill from Assisi. The rolling Apennines, the red poppies in the fields, the extraordinary light of Umbria itself--all these were part of what drew him to the place. But it was ultimately a new way of seeing more than the place seen which marked the spirituality of this thirteenth-century troubadour. He regularly discerned wonder in what others viewed with scorn. His insight would turn us back to all the places we might once have found plain and abandoned in our own experience. Indeed, such is the goal, finally, of any geography of the spirit (p. 8).

To explore this spiritual geography, Lane draws on personal experiences, secondhand narratives, and historical case studies that he interprets phenomenologically and hermeneutically. In his first chapter, he offers ways to understand the phenomenon of sacred place, "grasping the meaning of religious experience as 'placed experience'." (p. 7). In the next chapters, he explores place in regard to several traditions in American spirituality--Native-American, Spanish and French Catholic, Puritan, Shaker, and the vision of Dorothy Day and her socialist newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*. In between these interpretive-historical chapters are more personal sections dealing with Lane calls "mythical landscapes"--e.g., the holy meaning of mountains, the desert landscape of Edward Abbey, and the locale around Galesville, Wisconsin--considered by one itinerant preacher, the Rev. D. O. Van Slyke, as the Garden of Eden.

Particularly useful for GORABS readers are four axioms that Lane believes will help one "to understand the character of sacred space" (p. 15): first, sacred space is not chosen, it chooses; second, sacred place is ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary; third, sacred place can be tread upon without being entered; and, fourth, the impulse of sacred place is both centripetal and centrifugal, local and universal (p. 15). Throughout his book, Lane uses these four axioms as a broad conceptual framework that indicates the richness of their interpretive possibilities.

Lane's book is powerfully written and conceptually coherent and strong. Though unfortunately not yet well known, this book is a major contribution to the phenomenology of place and sacredness. It is a useful book that all geographers and phenomenologists of religion should have as a major help for thinking through the relationship between spirituality and environment.

### GORABS NEW MEMBERS

GORABS extends a warm welcome to the following new members

Katharine Anderson	Louisiana State University
Brian Asbury	ISU, Terre Haute
Kurt Barclay	University of Arkansas
Francisco Brazile	University of Texas, Austin
Constantino Caldo	University of Palermo, Italy
Etan Diamond	Carnegie Mellon
Theodore Erski	University of Akron

### GORABS FOCUS ON:

*Susan W. Hardwick*

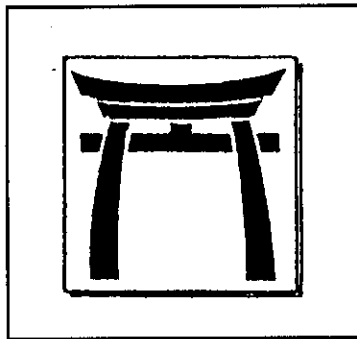
Susan is an associate professor at the Department of Geography and Planning, California State University; Chico, Chico, CA, 95929-0425 (O:916-898-5285/F:916-898-6824). Her educational background includes a B.S. in geography education from Slippery Rock University (believe it or not!!), an M.A. in geography from CSU-Chico and a Ph.D. in geography from UC-Davis. Her dissertation was titled: *Ethnic Residential and Commercial Patterns in Sacramento with Special Reference to the Russian-American Experience*.

The following is a selection of Susan's publications that may be of interest to GORABS readers: *Russian Refuge: Religion, Migration, and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.; "Russians in California," in *Modern Encyclopedia of Religions in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. by P. Steeves, Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1992.; "Russian Religious Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim," in *Geographical Snapshots of North America*, ed. by D.G. Janelle, NY: Guilford Press, 1992, pp. 223-227.; "Clinging to the Old in a New Land: Russian Old Believers and Doukhobors in the Pacific Northwest," in *Festschrift for James Scott*, 1993, forthcoming.; "The Impact of Religion on Ethnic Settlement: Russian Old Believers," in *The California Geographer*, V. 31, 1991, 19-36.; "Chinese Cemeteries in Butte County" and "The Chinese in Chico," *Diggins*, V. 18, 1974, 3-22.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Watch our next newsletter for announcements from Daniel Dory and Rana P. B. Singh)

**UNIVERSITÄT REGENSBURG:** Gisbert Rinschede, at the Institute for Geography in Regensburg (Universitätsstr. D-8400 Germany) informs us that a special issue of *geographie heute; Themen, Modelle, Materialien für die Unterrichtspraxis aller Schulstufen* (the December 1992 issue) focuses on religion in school curriculum in Germany. Gisbert edited the volume and the following articles appeared in it: Religionen prägen Räume, G. Rinschede; Religiöse Stätten in unserer Stadt, G. Preisler; Pilgerzentrum Fatima/Portugal, G. Rinschede; Die Old Order Amish in Pennsylvania, J. Vossen & A. Beller; Muslime in Deutschland, M. Hartl; Religionen und Umwelt, G. Rinschede; Müssen wir vor Japan Angst haben?, T. Breitbach; Literatur zum Thema "Religionen prägen Räume", G. Rinschede & J. Vossen.



### FROM THE EDITOR:

the following citations came across my desk this past year, and I thought you would be interested in them: Thomas Tweed (a GORABS member) just published his book, *American Encounter with Buddhism*, with Indiana University Press, 1992. Also, David Seamon just edited a new book titled, *Dwelling, Seeing and Designing: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology*, SUNY Press. Several of its papers are, "Modernity and the Reclamation of Place" by Edward Relph; "Toward a Phenomenology of Landscape and Landscape Experience: An Example from Catalonia" by Joan Nogue I Font; and "Sacred Structures and Everyday Life: A Return to Manteo, North Carolina" by Randolph T. Hester, Jr. Finally, I noticed that the February 1992 (Vol. 26:2) issue of *GeoJournal* focused on the History of Geographical Thought and was guest edited by Anne Buttner. Some of the papers included in it are: "Reflections on the History of Western Attitudes Toward Nature" by C.J. Glacken; "The Idea of Nature in the East in Comparison with the West" by H. Nakamura; "Japan's Traditional View of Nature and Interpretation of Landscape" by M. Senda; Indian Attitude towards Nature" by R.C. Pandeya;

"Nature and Cosmic Integrity: A Search in Hindu Geographical Thought" by R.P.B. Singh (GORABS member); "Round Sky and Square Earth (Tian Yuan Di Fang): Ancient Chinese Geographical Thought and its Influence" by Zhao Zhongshu; "World-Views of Arab Geographers" by H. Hanafi; "Perspectives on the Contribution of Arabs and Muslims to Geography" by El-Bushra, El-S.; "God, Thine Earth is Burning: Nature Attitudes and the Latvian Drive for Independence" by E. Bunkse.

**ST. PETERSBURG JUNIOR COLLEGE:** Mark Hafen, (Moore/Bowers Group, Inc. 3300 Henderson Blvd., Suite 201 Tampa, FL 33609) reports that he has, "run into a rather interesting dilemma, for which I would like to have some feedback, that involves a conflict in belief systems in physical geography/environmental studies. I teach a course in Earth Science at St. Petersburg Junior College. I recently gave an assignment to my students, requiring them to find a brief article concerning human impacts on the atmosphere (air pollution, ozone depletion etc.) and asking them to summarize the article and to make suggestions for ameliorating the problem. One of my students turned in a paragraph (sans article) stating that, as a creationist, he felt that humans would not substantially damage the environment before Christ's return, and that we therefore did not need to concern ourselves with environmental protection issues. In handling the issue, I was advised by colleagues not to make a major topic of his beliefs and to focus strictly on whether or not he satisfactorily completed the assignment (which he did not). This particular issue, however, "pushes my buttons." I have done research on the environmental consequences of belief systems, particularly the Judeo-Christian system. Although almost all cultures are guilty of environmental abuse in one form or another, Christianity has been criticized regularly by authors such as Roderick Nash and Lynn White for environmental negligence based on the belief in the Second Coming. In the end, I did focus on this student's failure to complete the assignment as I asked, but could not resist referring him to a couple authors (Rene Dubos and Wendell Berry), who refute the guilt of the Judeo-Christian belief system in environmental problems and also make biblical arguments for Christian stewardship of the environment. I have yet to ascertain what impacts, if any, I made on this student. Perhaps some GORABS readers could share their input on this scenario. The situation may repeat itself, as I will continue to teach this course throughout 1993, so I would value other opinions."

Send your comments to Mark directly or, maybe we can have a dialogue in the newsletter.

### Executive Board Nominations

The past-chair of the GORABS Specialty Group, Surinder Bhardwaj, reminds us to send in our nominations or self-nominations for the Executive Board. Only AAG-GORABS members can be on the Executive Board. The positions of secretary-treasurer, two regular board positions and one student board position are open. Contact him at KSU (address is under annual report) if you have any questions. Do this by Oct. 20, if possible.

## 1992 ANNUAL REPORT

submitted by Mary Lee Nolan, GORABS Chair

- I. No changes are needed in the GORABS specialty group listing that accompanies renewal forms and membership applications.
- II. The names and addresses of officers and their terms of office are as follows: Chair: Mary Lee Nolan/April 1993-1994/Dept. of Geosciences, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331; Secretary-Treasurer: Carol Prorok/April 1993-1994/Dept. of Geography and Environmental Studies, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, PA, 16057-1326; Past Chair: Surinder Bhardwaj/April 1993-1994/Dept. of Geography, Kent State University, Kent, OH, 44242-0001; Board Member: Gisbert Rinschede/April 1993-1994/Geography Institute, Universitätsstrasse, D-8400, Regensburg, Germany; Board Member: Robert Stoddard/April 1993-1994/Dept. of Geography, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE, 68588-0135; Student Board Member: Lee Faro/April 1992-1994/Dept. of Geography, Portland State University, Portland, OR, 97207-0751.
- III. The newly established GORABS specialty group planned and presented three sessions in the April meetings of the AAG in Atlanta.
- IV. Activities for the Coming Year: (selections)
  - A. Board members of the GORABS specialty group are planning three sessions at the AAG meetings in San Francisco in 1994.
  - B. Development of a special award for the best paper and/or dissertation of the year on a topic pertaining to religions and belief systems in geographical perspective. The award will be named in honor of David Sopher.
- V. Activities for the Future:
  - A. Co-operation with foreign scholars in the organization of an IGU Commission on religions and belief systems.
  - B. Development of a forum on curriculum development for courses in Geography of Religions and for sections on religion and beliefs in more general

courses such as "Introductory Cultural Geography."

- C. Establishment of closer ties with scholars in other disciplines who have interests similar to GORABS members.
- VII. Membership: Seventy-seven official members are listed on the 1993 GORABS roster. Of these 51 are regular members, 21 are students, 2 are CAG Associates, 2 are retired, and 1 is a spouse. Judging from attendance at AAG sessions and correspondence through the past year, approximately half of the members are highly active. The new group appears to have a high degree of cohesiveness and enthusiasm.
- VIII. Financial Report: GORABS Account is held at the First Interstate Bank of Oregon Corvallis Branch. As of this report, we have \$77.80. Approximately \$300 should become available from SG dues. Estimated expenses for 1994: A student paper award for \$100-200.

### GORABS BYLAWS

In this newsletter, and those following, articles from the bylaws will be highlighted until the entire set of articles are published.

#### Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be Geography of Religions and Belief Systems (GORABS) Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers. Hereafter the specialty group may be referred to as "GORABS", and the Association as the "AAG".

#### Article II: Purpose

The central objectives of GORABS are to encourage and advance the study of the geographical dimensions of religious phenomena and belief systems. This includes, but is not limited to, the study of spatio-religious aspects of human behavior, socio-economic and political issues, material culture, gender roles, and human-environment relations from a religio-geographical perspective. GORABS intends to achieve its objectives by organizing scholarly paper presentations and discussion sessions at the professional meetings, developing strategies to facilitate teaching the geography of religions, publicizing information about GORABS, establishing contact with scholars in other related disciplines, and by seeking funding for research pertaining to the geography of religions.

Articles 3 and 4 will be in the next issue.

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**\*\*GORABS NEWSLINE\*\***

Whenever space permits, the editor is happy to include in GORABS any news about you or your program that would be of interest to our members. Please type or print legibly. Also, send your vita to the editor if you would like to let the rest of us know a little more about you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Research in Progress:

Recent Publications: (You may attach a separate sheet)

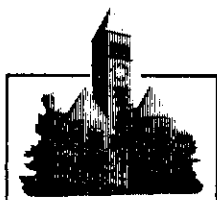
Program Activities:

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**\*\*GORABS NEWSLINE\*\***

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ROCK**



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