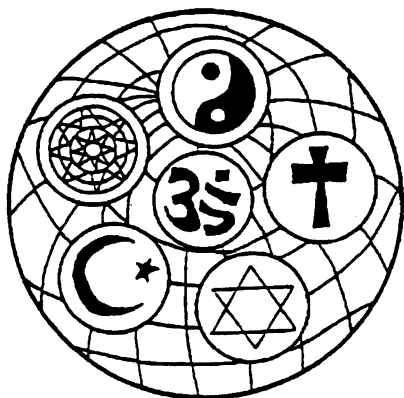


Geography of Religions & Belief Systems



Editor: Carolyn V. Prorok
Slippery Rock University
Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Email: carolyn.prorok@sru.edu
Phone: (724) 738-2384

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Pittsburgh Travel Grants

At the last business meeting, GORABS decided to award four \$50 travel grants to students presenting papers at the Pittsburgh 2000 AAG meeting. The first four students to turn in their completed papers for the David Sopher New Scholar Award competition will receive the travel grants. To qualify, applicants should send a letter of intent, and a copy of her/his abstract to Mohammad Hemmasi by 12/1/99. Then, send your Sopher Award application with a copy of your paper as soon as you are able but no later than March 15th, 2000 to Mohammad: U. of North Dakota, Dep't of Geography, Grand Forks, ND 58202. hemmasi@badlands.nodak.edu

FUNDING FOR THIS NEWSLETTER IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES AT SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

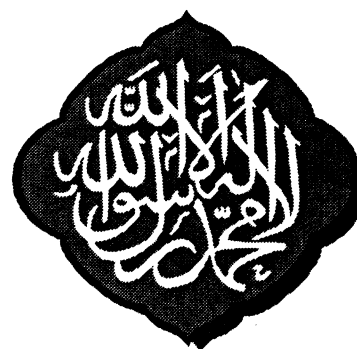
GORABS Review Corner*

William Forbes is a graduate student in environmental philosophy, geography, and environmental science at the University of North Texas. He is currently taking a course on Western Religion and the Environment from George James. As a member of the AAG he is most involved with the Rural Development Specialty Group, having edited their newsletter from 1993-97. After reading Kathleen Braden's recent essay in our newsletter, Bill was inspired to share summaries of several books he has recently read.

Zaidi, I.H. On the Ethics of Man's Interaction with the Environment: An Islamic Approach

Zaidi's hypothesis is that Islam provides a useful framework for dealing with the ecological crisis through analysis of its world view, and the decision-action processes within it. At-Tawhid is the fundamental dogma of Islam, and the main source is the Holy Quran. Zaidi brings up Lynn White's paper, countering that degradation has occurred even in societies which have traditionally regarded nature as sacred. He cites Tuan, who pointed out that in ancient China the philosophy of people's harmony with nature was demonstrably violated in the quest for material progress. He agrees with White that the solution lies in a religious approach, yet differs in that Zaidi's approach would

(Continued on Page 2)



INSIDE:

Travel Grants.....	1
Review Corner	1
Gorabs Minutes	3
Sacred Spaces Symp.	3
Focus on Sam Couch	4
Call for Papers	4
Announcements	4

GORABS REVIEW

(Continued from Page 1)

maintain human dominance. Zaidi also notes the emphasis on material progress in both capitalist and socialist systems. He sees Tuan's definition of conceptual experience as a 'feedback loop' for testing a belief system based entirely on revelation, a framework of thought and action ordained by God through the Quran. Zaidi concludes that our approach should be the optimization of resources, and the alteration and modification of environmental features need to be properly managed in accordance with Islamic principles.

Hiers, R.H. Ecology, Biblical Theology, and Methodology: Biblical Perspectives on the Environment.

Hiers sees White's paper as an overly-simplistic interpretation of the cause of the ecological crisis. He sees a problem in not realizing the context of when the Bible was written, and accepting uncritically everything the writers had to say. He also points out, as does Zaidi (and White), that ancient cultures without Judeo-Christian influence were destructive. He cites the sense of wonder with nature in the Psalms and Proverbs, and Noah's saving of species. Hiers sees no biblical spokesperson for heedless exploitation of natural resources.

J.G. Gibbs. Pauline Cosmic Christology and Ecological Crisis.

Gibbs cites the resurrection of the Crucified One as disclosing the direction of human history and cosmic destiny. Though not directly evident, he sees the major presupposition for an ecological ethic in a holistic cosmology of St. Paul. Gibbs answers criticism of Pauline cosmology.

Bratton, S.P. The Original Desert Solitaire: Early Christian Monasticism and Wilderness. Environmental Ethics, Vol. 10, Spring 1988.

Bratton asserts that, rather than St. Francis being unique in assigning autonomous spiritual value to nature, he was preceded by a reciprocal thousand-year relationship between Christian monks and nature. In particular, the desert provided spiritual solace from worldly concerns and a place of prayer and contemplation. Bratton notes the monastic documents she researched were primarily written to instruct others in Christian virtues, and thus contain heroic tales and folklore as well as histories and sayings. However, though the literal facts of history may be suspect, Bratton claims that this does not present a problem in determining the monks' attitudes towards nature, since the documents were written by the monks themselves and were primarily there to teach values.

Bratton notes problems her findings present that may help other efforts in analyzing environmental history: (1) an academic bias against somewhat extreme religious phenomena such as asceticism, from both rational humanists and Reformed Christians; and (2) the use of secondary or higher order sources, such as Nash relying mostly on George Williams' Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought; (3) attempting to summarize a complex relationship to nature as positive or negative; and (4) a lack of continuity in historical analysis, resulting in thinking that St. Francis was unique in history. Bratton, in summary, recommends use of primary sources and possibly field and/or archaeological study, in historical analysis of environmental values.

Bratton goes on, in her book **Christianity, Wilderness, and Wildlife**, to cite Celtic monasticism as "one of the first great flowerings of monasticism away from the deserts and from Greek and Hebrew culture." Here, too, she finds references of the value of nature to Celtic monks, including compassion for wolves, respect for wild boar, and retreats to caves and oak trees for

prayer. She points out that; repeated, long retreats in the wilderness is not necessary for a spiritual life; wilderness experience is not only for prophets; Christian wilderness tradition sees the wilderness as negative.

Rafiq, M., M. Ajmal. 1989. Islam and the Present Ecological Crisis. In World Religions and the Environment. Dwivedi, O.P., ed. New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House.

Rafiq and Ajmal reiterate Zaidi's emphasis on the monotheistic approach of Islam, centered on the Quran. Unlike Zaidi, they offer evidence of writings within the Quran that support an environmental ethic. Notable quotes are: "All created things are alike; plants are superior to minerals; animals are in ad-

dition to these powers; and humans, while of the animal kingdom, also speaks and reasons." The authors cover order, pollution, protection of flora and fauna, and concludes with seminal principles of unity, balance, order, and harmony. A mention is made of an IUCN document, Islamic Principles on the Conservation of the Environment.

Dubos, R. 1972. Franciscan Conservation versus Benedictine Stewardship. In A God Within. Charles Scribner & Sons.

Dubos champions the Benedictine monks who focused on living in nature and combining practical and theoretical skills in a spirit of experimentation. He suggests that, rather than emphasizing dominion over nature (Genesis 1), they focused on stewardship (Genesis 2). For this reason, he sees them as more relevant than St. Francis to a present environmental ethic. "Reverence is not enough," says Dubos.

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(Continued on Page 5)

GORABS MINUTES

March 26, 1999

The following is an abbreviated version of the minutes submitted by Kathleen Braden for the general business meeting held in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Attendees: R.Jackson, S.Couch, R.Bartlett, L.Pittman, J.Smialek, K.Braden, R.Stoddard, J.Kopf, H.S.Ock, G.Sechrist

R.Jackson opened the meeting at 6:15 p.m. and the 1998 Minutes were presented and approved.

Treasurer's Report: The treasurer's report was accepted (\$1,996.51 beginning balance; 1998 Sopher Award (-\$200.00); 1998 special session support (-\$100); interest earned (+\$26); dues (+\$364); balance=\$2,086.48.

Election of Board Members: About 10% of the membership voted for new Board members. New Board members are:

Secretary-Treasurer:	Kathleen Braden Seattle Pacific University
Regular Board Member:	James A. Miller Clemson University
Regular Board Member:	Sam Couch Georgia Southern University
Student Board Member:	Anita Howard University of Wisconsin
Continuing Board Member:	Gail Sechrist Indiana U. of PA
Continuing Board Member:	Linda K.F. Pittman Richard Bland College

The group thanked outgoing Board members R.Kuhlken of Central Washington University and D.McDonald of Stephen F. Austin State University. R.Jackson reported that C.Balachandran had to resign, thus necessitating a replacement for Chair, but that such an eventuality is not covered in the by-laws. M.Hemmasi at U. of N.Dakota has agreed to serve. Attendees nominated and accepted Hemmasi as the new Chair.

David E. Sopher Award: We received one applicant for the \$200 Sopher New Scholar Award. The proposal was circulated, but the committee decided not to make the award this year. Publicity and promotion of the award was discussed. K.Braden will look into recently completed dissertations and master's theses for potential targeted mailing to solicit proposals for next year. S.Couch moved and R.Stoddard seconded that \$50 travel grants be awarded to the first four abstracts for the 2000 Sopher New Scholar Award received by M.Hemmasi by December 1, 1999, payable upon attendance and presentation at the Pittsburgh AAG meeting. The motion passed by majority vote.

Newsletter: C.Prorok hopes to have back issues of newsletters on the website by the end of the year and to make the newsletter available electronically. The group consensus was a preference that the newsletter body be included directly in the email message itself, rather than as an attachment and that subscribers be given a choice of hard copy or email.

Website: R.Jackson has created a "bare bones" website and C.Prorok will work on a more ambitious one. R.Jackson suggested that GORABS make it clear that defamatory comments about religions and associated negative remarks would not be permitted, and the group agreed to this constraint.

Travel Support: Jeffrey Smialek of Chicago State University was awarded \$200 to attend the Hawaii meeting. His paper: "The Protestant Reformation and the Study of Geography."

Pittsburgh 2000 AAG Meeting: Various ideas for GORABS paper sessions were discussed. J. Kopf suggested organizing a session on the constitution of Islam. G.Sechrist is interested in organizing a session on any topic relevant to members, and S.Couch may be willing to explore a session with themes about connections between millennium and belief systems.

Other Business: NSF has funds available for behavioral and perceptual studies. JKopf asked that faculty in GORABS who received funding could students on sources. L.Pittman asked about possible field trips for Pittsburgh. G.Sechrist will pursue this. R.Jackson initiated an award for people who have provided service to GORABS. The group agreed to periodically make an award in honor of Robert Stoddard for contribution to GORABS and that a plaque be conferred. Nominations will be requested. R.Stoddard and C.Prorok wrote the GORABS chapter for the new Geography in America book and R.Stoddard distributed copies of the draft, requesting input but noting the limitations imposed on length by the editors. Membership in GORABS was 116 for 1999.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Sacred Spaces Symposium

Ball State University (Muncie, Indiana) is host to a Fall 1999 symposium entitled **Space, Place & Spirituality: Cultural Explorations of the Sacred in the Built Environment**. Chaired by Professor Brian R. Sinclair (MRAIC Assoc.AIA), and offered through the Department of Architecture, this symposium will bring together a broad interdisciplinary spectrum of speakers and participants interested in sacred architecture & landscapes. Dates: September 17/18, 1999. Early Registration Fee: \$60 USD. For more information phone (765) 285-1900 or visit www.bsu.edu/cap/sacredspaces.

CALL for PAPERS

Greetings from North Dakota, where the sun is shining, and the weather is pleasant and warm. This also means that it is time to begin putting together our abstracts and paper sessions for the 2000 AAG meeting in Pittsburgh. The AAG deadline for paper abstracts is September 3, 1999. The July 1999 issue of the AAG Newsletter contains forms and instructions for session organizers and presenters. I will be coordinating the GORABS-sponsored sessions this year, and am eager to have several stimulating and diverse GORABS sessions at the AAG meeting. Since this is my first year in this position, I need your help and welcome any suggestions that could further improve GORABS' mission.

I propose to act as a "clearinghouse" for papers intended for GORABS sessions. To coordinate our efforts, I suggest the following:

- Those of you that are organizing a session under the GORABS banner, please inform me of your intent. The session organizer should submit the actual session materials directly to the AAG Office. I am just asking for a copy of the materials for coordination purposes.
- Contact me also if (a) you are interested in organizing a GORABS session, but do not have sufficient papers on the topic or (b) if you would like to have your paper included in a GORABS session but do not know of an appropriate session. I will try to match session organizers with paper presenters. If necessary, I will organize additional GORABS sessions to include papers sent to me.
- If after these efforts, we cannot find an appropriate session for a member's paper, I will inform the author before the September 3 deadline to submit it to the AAG general session.

I will keep you informed about our progress on making the AAG Pittsburgh meeting another very successful one. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be any help or if you have any questions.

Wishing you a relaxing and productive summer,

Mohammad Hemmasi
Professor and Chair
Department of Geography
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, ND 58202
Tel: (701) 777-4592
FAX: (701) 777-6195
Email: hemmasi@badlands.nodak.edu

GORABS Focus On:

Samuel L. Couch

Sam is an assistant professor of geography in the department of geology and geography at Georgia Southern University. He earned a BA in Theater & Speech Communications and a MA in English and Geography Education from Chadron State College in Nebraska. In 1996 he earned a PhD in cultural geography at the University of Idaho where his research focused on Chinese settlement and topophilia in Idaho. His PhD dissertation was titled: Topophilia and Chinese Miners: Place Attachment in North Central Idaho. In addition, Sam continues to study topophilia among the Gaelic speaking peoples on islands off the coast of Ireland. He is also one of only 72 specially trained scholars supported by a six year NSF grant to teach other scholars cross-cultural research methodology. His essay, "Topophilia of the Northern High Plains in the Poetry of Loren C. Eiseley," has been accepted for publication by the Great Plains Quarterly. You can contact Sam at the dept of geology & geography, GSU, Statesboro, GA 30460; scouch@GaSou.edu



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Look for the next issue of the Journal of Cultural Geography (Volume 17, 1998) with Allen Noble (Akron) as the guest editor. The entire issue is dedicated to papers drawn from a special session at the Fort Worth meetings on Asian sacred places. This issue will be available in the very near future.

The latest issue of the Annual Report of the Institute of Geoscience at the University of Tsukuba in Japan (#24, 1998) has an article entitled, "A Reexamination of Recent Studies on the Geography of Religion in Japan," by K. Matsui (pp. 7-12).

GORABS REVIEW

(Continued from Page 2)

Cobb, J. B. Jr. 1972. *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*. Denton, TX: Environmental Ethics Books.

Cobb, citing Lynn White, Jr. as many others do, outlines Christianity as a major source of the development of science and technology that contributes to environmental degradation. He also sees it as a source of valuing the individual in society. This combined effect devalues nature. Cobb cites Leopold's reference to the limited benefits of 1930's farm conservation programs, where farmers only participated in those programs that offered short-term economic benefits, such as contour plowing. Cobb suggests that finding long-term value outside the human community is essential to both humans and the environmental crisis. This is fertile ground for discussion. What are examples of a land ethic, and are they exhibited by other than those who have the wealth and time to worry about it?

Cobb also looks at non-Western views of nature, focusing on Native Americans and the Chinese. He notes Native Americans' shock towards European utilitarian approaches to nature. Yet he notes that Native Americans were capable of environmental degradation despite their spiritual views. Cobb emphasizes Taoism over Confucianism as an environmentally sensitive approach of non-interference. Yet non-interference with nature also meant non-interference with destructive activities such as deforestation. Cobb calls for a new vision, neither primitive nor laissez-faire, that includes appropriate technology and science to solve environmental problems and restore habitats and processes. Cobb's noting of degradation by Native Americans was reinforced by geographers Butzer and Denevan in 1992.

Cobb does not call for a move to a different (Eastern) religion or inventing a new one. Instead he suggests relooking at Christianity. A new Christianity can be built on the examples of St. Francis and Albert Schweitzer. Noting the period of St. Francis and his monastic practices, Cobb focuses on the usefulness of Schweitzer's "reverence for life." He further notes that Western humanists can identify with much of Schweitzer's work in medicine, music, philosophy, and theology. Cobb sees difficulty in their understanding of his devotion to human service, and especially in his reverence for life. However, Cobb sees the former as fitting within Christian tradition, and the latter extending it.

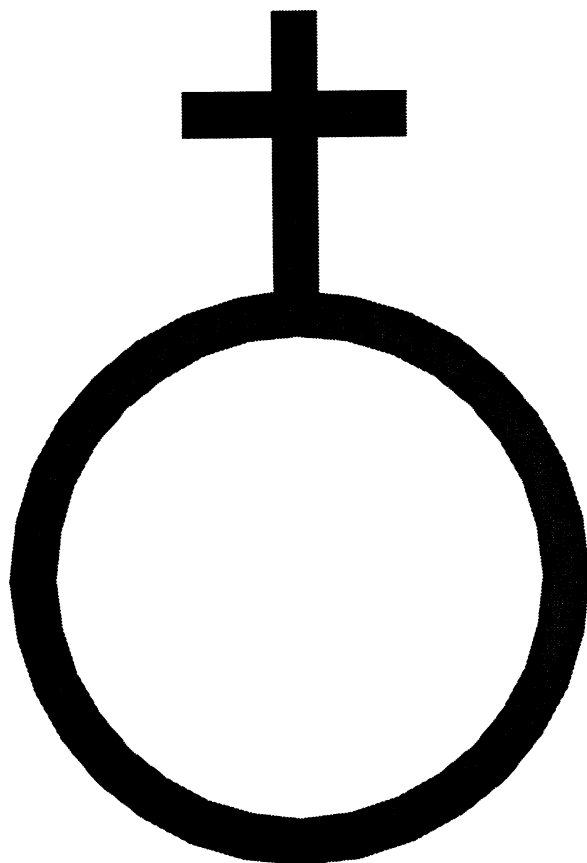
Cobb sees Christianity as focusing more on the human-God relationship than does Judaism, leading to a further conceptual gulf between humans and nature. Christian love is an important concept, not simply based on justice and righteousness in the treatment of neighbors, but on actual concern for them as human beings. Thus it is not motivated by the desire to be righteous, but theoretically by an altruistic 'motiveless motive.' In addition, he notes problems with Kantian Western thinking that prevents a combined human dominance and intrinsic value for other living things. Cobb calls for the extension of Christian love beyond human beings to other living things. He notes the sacredness of human value in Western culture, using other examples of sacred, 'absolute' concepts. Cobb suggests putting humans at the top

of Leopold's biotic pyramid, and focusing sacredness primarily on God instead of humans. For example, in the first chapter in Genesis, God perceives the nonhuman world as good. Isn't this the chapter that suggests human dominance? Does he adequately address the pragmatic problems in implementing Schweitzer's reverence for life?

Cobb calls for us to see nature as both historic and contingent upon our care. This is a nice perspective, often overlooked, to broaden an environment ethic. Leopold's biographer Curt Meine points out how natural resource professionals often do not know the history of their own profession or aligned professions. He notes that Descartes both influentially and dualistically defined humans as more dominant than in previous Christian and philosophical traditions. Evolution of philosophy brought an epistemology and reality based on human experience. Berkeley attributed this knowledge to God, while Kant attributed it to the human mind. Cobb relates the importance of Kant to subsequent philosophies of phenomenology and existentialism based on the 'aloneness' of the human mind. Hume was an empiricist, which laid a foundation for a positivism that de-emphasized human and nonhuman values in favor of scientific truth. Ordinary language analysis cannot provide a new vision, despite its attention back to Aristotelian approach, due to its grounding in present culture. Thomas Aquinas developed a Aristotelian independent reality of the nonhuman world, yet neo-Thomism has de-emphasized this. Even Marxism based reality on human needs. Intrinsic value independent of humans was not recognized in the dominant philosophies. Exceptions can be seen in Leibniz, Edwards, Bergson, Heidegger, de Chardin, and Whitehead. Cobb concludes by stating the importance of everyday people recognizing intrinsic value in nature. Hume had value for Leopold and the development of his land ethic. It is important not to completely write off historical personalities and their viewpoints as good or bad. I agree that perhaps the most important conceptual leap that needs to be broadly addressed for societal progress in environmental ethics and environmental quality is that of intrinsic value.

Cobb notes the subsidence of Christianity and rise of humanism as the dominant worldview. Humanism relies on the affirmation of present human values and the application of human rationality to problems. Yet even humanism is now declining. Cobb attributes this to humanism's disregard for superstitions of traditional cultures, and its lack of focus of commitment. This leads to no basic 'sacred' commitments, only provisional ones, within a secular atheism. Cobb cites the new paganism of youth as a popular rejection of humanism, yet it has more value in criticism than in presenting its own affirmations. Escapism and creation of separate 'tribes' also contains humanistic problems. Cobb suggests that stewardship is needed more than commitment, yet stewardship is not adequate either as it implies humans are outsiders.

Cobb asks if it is too late to realign our theology of ecology, given current destructive trends. He gives an individual answer, that the attitudes of complacency give the same result, one of inaction. If we take either of these approaches, indeed there is surely no hope. I agree.



****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.

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****GORABS NEWSLINE****



SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

Editor: Carolyn V. Prorok

107 Spotts World Culture Building

Slippery Rock, Pa. 16057-1326

