



Summer 2003

GORABS Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 2

NEWSLETTER  
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Please send comments, questions, letters, and newsletter submissions to David J. Rutherford, Newsletter Editor, dr1002@txstate.edu

**HISTORY OF GORABS\***  
**(Primarily prior to 2000)**

by Robert Stoddard  
 May 2003

A small group of scholars has studied the geographic aspects of religion for a long time, so it is impossible to specify a precise date for the establishment of an organization dedicated to this specialty. During the last half century, one of the early publicized attempts to begin an on-going group was a notice placed in the *Professional Geographer* in the spring of 1965 by Reed Stewart. As a result, more than two dozen geographers assembled during the 1965 AAG meeting to discuss common interests. However, since no formal organization survived into the next decade, that meeting can hardly be regarded as the origin of the current specialty group.

A more sustained origin is evident by action at the 1976 AAG meeting, which resulted from plans initiated during the AAG meeting of the previous year. A new organization, *(continued on page 3)*

\*Portions of this article are based on "Some Comments about the History of The Geography of Religion and Belief Systems," authored by Robert Stoddard, in the GORABS Newsletter, Fall 1990 (vol.12, no.2), pp.1-3.

**EDITOR'S NOTES**

The GORABS revival continues. In the last newsletter I wrote of the resurgent enthusiasm present among GORABS members during our meeting in March, and this second newsletter since that meeting reflects a promising commitment by members to maintain that enthusiasm and reenergize our group.

Robert Stoddard's GORABS history provides a foundation of continuity for our efforts, while the Chair's Column by Mike Ferber emphasizes the important contributions that our sub-discipline can make in the contemporary world. David Hurford's "News from Elsewhere" echoes Mike's message as it also draws attention to international trends.

Finally, the Member News section reports the exciting work that our members are doing, and it also seems to express a desire to collaborate as we work toward establishing greater community in our sub-discipline. So please, dive in. I hope something intrigues an interest and invites you to join this effort.

**VISIT GORABS ON THE INTERNET**

**Webpage:**

<http://gorabs.geo.wvu.edu>

**Listserv:**

To subscribe to the gorabs listserv simply send an email to [listserv@listserv.wvu.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.wvu.edu) with "subscribe gorabs firstname lastname" in the body of the message or send your request to Michael Ferber at [mferber@geo.wvu.edu](mailto:mferber@geo.wvu.edu)



## CHAIR'S COLUMN

**A Challenge to Geographers of Religions and Belief Systems***by Mike Ferber*

As chairperson of our specialty group, I would like to issue a challenge to the membership. My challenge is to bring geographies of religions and belief systems to a more prominent position in American cultural geography.

In the August 2002 edition of *The Professional Geographer*, Cutter, Golledge and Graf outlined the "Big Questions in Geography." Their introduction traces the tendency of researchers to focus on "small problems that can be solved quickly, produce professional publications, and support a drive for promotion and tenure, rather than investigating more complex, bigger problems that are not easily or quickly solved and do not necessarily lead to academic publications of a type the genre usually demands." In their plethora of examples of unreported geographic engagements of major issues a better understanding of Islam is *the very first* illustration followed by transportation, ecosystem management, spatial thinking, and global mapping.

Meanwhile, President Alexander Murphy, in his first President's Column in the July / August 2003 AAG *Newsletter*, outlines the "Hopelessness of confronting the issues and concerns of our world without the benefits of geographic understanding and analysis." While religion is not specifically mentioned, Murphy does cite as an example the impossibility of comparing the current situation in Iraq with post World War II Japan. Clearly religion should be one of the important geographic components of this discussion. However, Islam is not the only religion or belief system exerting significant influence in our world. In our own nation we are experiencing a Presidential Administration that consistently uses religious rhetoric to justify a broad range of transformative policies and procedures. In addition, there is a high probability that when you read the newspaper this morning you learned about the death of individuals killed over a conflict concerning sacred space. Or, there may be an environmental debate occurring in your own community underpinned by groups with radically different belief systems concerning the environment.

Religions and belief systems are certainly not the only component of today's culture wars, but they are undoubtedly one of the major elements and they deserve a more prominent role in such discussions. Adding five words to the verbatim of Murphy's closing paragraph

summarizes my challenge: "The more that geography [of religions and belief systems] becomes part of the public debate over where our society has come from and where it is going, the more geography will be strengthened, as will society at large."

In order for this to happen, however, steps need to be taken to advance our sub-discipline through scholastic dialog and debate in both journals and conferences. Your board is already taking steps to provide environments of impetus and enthusiasm through the GORABS newsletter, a listserv, the website, the Sopher Award, and a planned pre-conference at the 2005 Denver AAG meeting. While these strides are important, your participation is critical if we are to bridge the gaps necessary and become the vibrant, causative sub-discipline many of us visualize on the horizon. You can help us advance GORABS in the following ways:

- Organize a GORABS session at the Philadelphia meeting. This is especially important if you are a multidisciplinary scholar with expertise in both GORABS and another field. Your initiative will enhance both subjects and provide a medium for accelerated intellectual growth and stimulation. (Please contact me at [mferber@geo.wvu.edu](mailto:mferber@geo.wvu.edu) to officially sponsor a GORABS session.)
- As a new scholar, apply for the Sopher Award described in this newsletter.
- Attend the GORABS annual business meeting and subsequent evening fellowship activities in Philadelphia.
- Contribute your expertise and experience to the next newsletter with articles concerning your research, travels, or ideas for new directions.
- Generate discussions on the GORABS listserv to foster academic advancement and learning.
- Begin preparing for the 2005 Denver GORABS pre-conference at which we will together discern and debate directions for our discipline.

GORABS has a long and fruitful history that at times has reaped a bountiful harvest. The fields are ripe for a new wave of research and advancement to continue this rich history. Please join us as we embark into this new era of geographic knowledge of religions and belief systems.

*(History of GORABS continued from page 1)*

called the International Working Group of the Geography of Belief Systems, was formed and structured according to guidelines set by the I.G.U. The steering committee consisted of a chair, Manfred Buttner from West Germany, a secretary, Klaus D. Gurgel, a graduate student at Syracuse University, and board members Elaine Bjorklund from Canada, Zygmunt Poniatowski from Poland, and Kurt Rudolph from West Germany. Among the projects the group undertook were the sponsorship of papers presented at annual meetings of the AAG, the distribution of a newsletter twice a year, the compilation of an international bibliography, and the publication of a book on contemporary research on the geography of belief systems.

In addition to the organization meeting, a series of papers were presented by members of the steering committee and others (Edwin S. Gaustad, Bharat L. Bhatt, and Jack A. Licate). At the 1977 AAG meeting, papers were delivered by Manfred Buttner, Michael Vermilyea, Mayland Parket, Karl Hoheisel, Robert Stoddard, Jane Ratcliffe, and Charles Heatwole. For the next several years, one or more sessions were organized by this group, sometimes in cooperation with those interested in the Geography of the Bible.

The first issue of a newsletter, "Geography of Religion/Belief Systems", edited by Jane E. Ratcliffe of DePaul University and Charles A. Heatwole of Hunter College-CUNY, appeared in January 1977 (see separate listing of dates and editors). The newsletter continued for a few years, but none was produced in 1980. When it reappeared in 1981 (vol.4, no.1), it carried the title of "Geography of Religion and Belief Systems" and included the logo that has persisted. During this period, editorship included, in various combinations, Gregory P. Stein, Thomas McCormick, and Jeffry Maddux. However, financial hardship resulted in the cessation of a newsletter after the January 1985 (vol.7, no.1) issue.

In addition to organizing sessions at AAG meetings and producing a newsletter, the group undertook the compilation of an international bibliography of the geography of belief systems. Jack A. Licate, whose 1967 MA thesis was "The Geographic Study of Religions: A Review of the Literature", was the director of this undertaking. By January 1981 he reported the bibliography was 85% completed; and at the same time he authored an article in the newsletter titled

"Annotated Bibliography of Atlases of Religion", which contained 86 entries

A project that evidently did not reach fruition was a book on current research in the geography of belief systems, which was to be edited by Klaus D. Gurgel. The fortunes of this proposed publication apparently declined when the "1977 group" became less involved.

By the early 1980s, the core geographers presenting papers and producing the newsletter were no longer primarily from the "1977 group". It was at this time that two attempts (one in the summer of 1981 and another in late 1985) were made to become recognized as specialty group of the AAG. Although the newsletter was mailed to approximately 200 individuals in 1983, many recipients were not AAG members and thus not eligible to support a petition for specialty status. Some members suggested gaining recognition by joining the Geography of the Bible Specialty Group, but others believed the goals of the two groups were too divergent. Even though some geographers were discouraged about the lack of funds and official recognition, most persisted during the next few years in their commitment to studying and sharing geographic understanding of religion.

In 1989 the newsletter was revived, primarily by the efforts of Carolyn Prorok, who continued to provide this critical service by being editor for the next decade (i.e., through the Summer 1999 issue) She also was a prime mover in finally getting a petition signed by enough AAG members that the Geography of Religion and Belief Systems (GORABS) became an official Specialty Group of the AAG in 1991. In fact, the success of this Specialty Group during the 1990s was assured by the financial security of being a recognized SG and the regular publication of the newsletter.

The first set of officers for the GORABS Specialty Group consisted of Surinder Bhardwaj (Chair), Mary Lee Nolan (Secretary/Treasurer), and three Board members: Carolyn Prorok, Robert Reed, and Barbara Weightman. Subsequent Chairs for this period (1991-99) were Mary Lee Nolan, Carolyn Prorok, Robert Stoddard, Richard Jackson, and Mohammed Hemmasi (see list of GORABS officers). During this period, emphasis was given to organizing and promoting special sessions on the geography of religion at annual meetings of the AAG, and sometimes special field trips to religious sites were arranged.

*(Continued on page 4)*

(History of GORABS continued from page 3)

Between the annual meetings, the newsletter served as a major vehicle for publicizing current projects, recent publications, and numerous announcements of interest to GORABS. Furthermore, short essays were often included. In the latter part of the decade, the newsletter was partly supplemented by a web site, but neither the one originating in North Dakota nor the subsequent one in Utah persisted more than a year or two.

It was during this period that the earlier bibliographic project was revived, primarily under the direction of Allan Gleason. Furthermore, the periodic listing of theses and dissertations relating to the geography of religion continued to be published in the newsletter. In the late 1990s, bibliographic references were also collected by Robert Stoddard and Carolyn Prorok in preparation for the GORABS' chapter in *Geography in America*.

In the late 90s, GORABS established two awards. The David E. Sopher New Scholars Award

honors new scholars (i.e., students or non-tenured faculty members) for their outstanding contributions to the field of geography of religion. This honor, along with a certificate and a small stipend, was awarded to Alexei Krindatch (1996), Sinclair Sheers (1997), Bruce Crew (1998), and Beth Schlemper (2000). The other program designed to honor work in the field, the Robert Stoddard Achievement Award, was instituted in 1999, but no awards have been designated yet.

In summary, the organizational structure of GORABS and its predecessor have changed during the last quarter century, but the goals have remained similar: to encourage and advance the study of the geographic dimensions of religious phenomena and belief systems. The methods of achieving these goals have shifted in emphasis, but they generally have included the organization of scholarly paper presentations at professional meetings, the publication of information about activities involved with the geography of religion and belief systems, and the establishment of networks among scholars in related disciplines.

### GORABS Officers 1992-2000

Compiled by R. Stoddard  
May 2003

	<u>91-92</u>	<u>92-93</u>	<u>93-94</u>	<u>94-95</u>	<u>95-96</u>
Chair	[Specialty Group	Surinder Bhardwaj	Mary Lee Nolan	Carolyn Prorok	Robert Stoddard
Sec./Tres.	formed in Fall	Mary Lee Nolan	Carolyn Prorok	Robert Stoddard	Richard Jackson
Past-Chair	1991]	n.a.	Surinder Bhardwaj	Mary Lee Nolan	Carolyn Prorok
Bd. Member		Robert Reed	Gisbert Rinschede	Barbara Weightman	Peter Halvorson
Bd. Member		Barbara Weightman	Robert Stoddard	Jeanne Kay	Mohammed Hemmasi
Bd. Member		Carolyn Prorok		Gisbert Rinschede	Barbara Weightman
Bd. Member					Jeanne Kay
Stu. Bd. Member		Lee Faro	Lee Faro	Carol Cameron	Benjamin Tillman
	<u>96-97</u>	<u>97-98</u>	<u>98-99</u>	<u>99-00</u>	<u>01-03</u>
Chair	Robert Stoddard	Richard Jackson	Richard Jackson	Mohammed Hemmasi	Darrel McDonald
Sec./Tres.	Richard Jackson	Chandra Balachandran	Chandra Balachandran	Kathleen Braden	
Past-Chair	Carolyn Prorok	Robert Stoddard	Robert Stoddard	Richard Jackson	Mohammed Hemmasi
Bd. Member	Chad Emmet	Robert Kuhlken	Linda Pittman	Linda Pittman	Linda Pittman
Bd. Member	Chandra Balachandran	Darrel McDonald	Gail Sechrist	Gail Sechrist	Gail Sechrist
Bd. Member	Peter Halvorson	Chad Emmet	Robert Kuhlken	James Miller	James Miller
Bd. Member	Mohammed Hemmasi	Surinder Bhardwaj	Darrel McDonald	Sam Crouch	Sam Crouch
Stu. Bd. Member	Benjamin Tillman	Rebecca Dobbs	Rebecca Dobbs	Anita Howard	Anita Howard

**Note:** Information for the 01-03 period provided by Darrel McDonald

## NEWSLETTERS OF GORABS

*Listed by R. Stoddard*

May 2003

Vol.1, No.1	Jan.1977	Eds. Jane E. Ratcliffe & Charles A. Heatwole
Vol.1, No.2	July 1977	Eds. Jane E. Ratcliffe & Charles A. Heatwole
Vol.2, No.1	Jan.1978	Eds. Jane E. Ratcliffe & Charles A. Heatwole
Vol.2, No.2	July 1978	Eds. Jane E. Ratcliffe & Charles A. Heatwole
Vol.3, No.1	Jan.1979	Eds. Jane E. Ratcliffe & Charles A. Heatwole
Vol.3, No.2	July 1979	Eds. Charles A. Heatwole & Gregory P. Stein
Vol.4, No.1	Winter 81	Eds. Thomas McCormick & Gregory P. Stein
Vol.4, No.2	Summer 81	Eds. Thomas McCormick & Gregory P. Stein
Vol.5, Nos.1&2	Win.81/Win.82	Eds. Jeffrey Maddux & Thomas McCormick & Gregory P. Stein
Vol.6, Nos.1&2	Spring 82	Eds. Jeffrey Maddux & Thomas McCormick & Gregory P. Stein
Vol.7, No.1	Jan.-Apr. 84	Eds. Thomas McCormick & Gregory P. Stein
Vol.7, No.1	Jan. 85	Eds. Thomas McCormick & Gregory P. Stein
Vol.11, No.1*	Spring 89	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.11, No.2	Fall 89	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.12, No.1*	Spring 90	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.12, No.2*	Fall 90	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.13, No.1*	Spring 91	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.13, No.2*	Fall 91	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.14, No.1*	Spring 92	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok (Guest Ed.: Surinder M. Bhardwaj)
Vol 14, No.2*	Fall 92	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.15, No.1*	Spring 93	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.15, No.2*	Fall 93	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.15, No.3*	Winter 93	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.16, No.1*	Spring 94	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.16, No.2*	Summer 94	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.16, No.3*	Fall 94	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.17, No.1*	Winter 95	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.17, No.2*	Summer 95	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol 17, No. 3*	Fall 95	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.18, No.1*	Spring 96	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok (Guest Ed.: Robert Kuhlken)
Vol.18, No.2*	Fall 96	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.19, No.1*	Winter 97	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.19, No.2*	Summer 97	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.19, No.3*	Fall 97	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.20, No.1*	Spring 98	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok
Vol.20, No.2*	Summer 98	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok Asst. Ed. Rebecca Dobbs
Vol.20, No.3*	Fall 98	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok Asst. Ed. Rebecca Dobbs
Vol.21, No.1*	Spring 99	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok Asst. Ed. Rebecca Dobbs
Vol.21, No.2*	Summer 99	Ed. Carolyn V. Prorok Asst. Ed. Rebecca Dobbs
Vol.25, No 1*	May 03	Ed. David J. Rutherford
Vol 25, No 2*	Summer 03	Ed. David J. Rutherford

\* Asterisks indicate copies of the GORABS Newsletters that are available online for viewing and downloading at the GORABS website <<http://gorabs.geo.wvu.edu>>. These newsletters not only represent a rich source of the history of the group but also provide some scholarly essays related to topics of interest to the sub-discipline.

Other volumes of the newsletter are not available online because no copies of them are known to still exist. If anybody still possesses copies of these newsletters, GORABS would greatly appreciate receiving a copy that could be scanned and posted onto the website. Please contact Mike Ferber at [MFerber@geo.wvu.edu](mailto:MFerber@geo.wvu.edu).

### News from Elsewhere

by David R. Hurford

Research conducted in the last few months reflects both more traditional routes of enquiry and some of the wider trends that have shaped the emergence of the geographies of religion, particularly outside of the U.S. With regard more long-standing interests, recent publication includes two enquires which have thought through the way in which sacred places are contested spaces whose visibility comes most to light when sacred locations are opened up to tourism. Arguing that pilgrimage is a phenomenon experiencing global resurgence, Digance (2003, p. 143) focuses on the competing interests, and relations between, the aboriginal landholders and park managers of Uluru, central Australia (see also Gelder and Jacobs, 1998). The author draws out not only how sacred place is produced through the contestation of various interest groups, but also how such places are being made by those who have no legitimate representation, those who illegally enter and take benefit from sacred sites. Sacred place is reproduced through both practices that may be represented and those that may not. Along a similar theme, Ryan and McKenzie (2003) have also considered how New Norcia, in Western Australia, has become a place of competing interests, particularly in the face of a growing tourist industry. Initially a self-sufficient mission settlement of Benedictine monks, tourists are now able to experience the temporary adoption of the ascetic way of life. Ryan and McKenzie argue that the motivation for the construction of, and pilgrimage to, sacred places derives from people's 'sense of place'.

Whilst some scholars continue long-standing interests in sacred sites and locations, others have followed more recent trends which think through the ways in which religion informs, and is constructed through, the broader spaces of everyday life (Cooper, 1992). Haynes' (2003) has led research into the way in which the religious identities of 22 Jewish women are being constructed through racism and sentiments of anti-Semitism in several inner-city state schools. Despite feelings of isolation, these identities are being constructed across difference: the women deliberately opting to work in non-denominational schools.

Haynes' research links to that of Blumen (2002), who has also considered the construction of female Jewish identities through the spaces of the workplace (see Hurford 2003, p.4). Moreover, such enquiry also highlights growing trends towards the 'intellectual refinement' (Ley 2000) of new geographies of religion, the ideas of post-structuralist thinkers, such as Deleuze and Derrida, and post-Marxist thinkers such as LeFebvre continuing to provide theoretical underpinnings. Specifically in this research, Haynes draws closely on Derrida's understandings of difference.

#### References:

- Blumen, O. 2002: Criss-crossing boundaries: Ultraorthodox Jewish women go to work. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 9(2), 133-151.
- Cooper, A. 1992: New directions in the geography of religion. *Area*, 24, 123-129.
- Digance, J. 2003 Pilgrimage at contested sites. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(1), 143-159.
- Gelder, K. and Jacobs, J.M.: 1998: *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Hurford, D. R. 2003: Geography of Religion and Belief Systems Newsletter, Vol 25(1), available at <http://gorabs.geo.wvu.edu/>
- Haynes, M: 2003: Vive la différence: Jewish women teachers' constructions of ethnicity and identity and their experiences of anti-Semitism in secondary schools. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 6(1), 51-70.
- Ley, D: 2000: Geography of religion. In Johnston, R.J., Gregory, D., Pratt, G., and Watts, M., (eds) *The dictionary of human geography 4<sup>th</sup> edition*, Blackwell, Oxford, 697-699.
- Ryan, M. M. and McKenzie, F.H: 2003: A monastic touristic experience: The packaging of place. *Tourism Geographies* 5(1), 54-70.

## MEMBER NEWS

**Recent Publications from GORABS Members**

Guelke, Jeanne Kay. 2004. Looking for Jesus in Christian Environmental Ethics. *Environmental Ethics*, forthcoming.

Kostelnick, John C. 2001. The diffusion of the Catholic and Methodist churches across the Iowa frontier, 1833-1891. *The North American Geographer* 3(2): 84-100.

Miles Richardson, *Being-in-Christ and Putting Death in Its Place: An Anthropologist's Account of Christian Performance in Spanish American and the American South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003. 414pp.

**From Joy Whiteley Ackerman**

[jackerman@antiochne.edu](mailto:jackerman@antiochne.edu)

My work on the sacred geography of Walden has received support from the Thoreau Society. I gave a presentation titled *The Politics of Sacred Space: Reading the Signs at Walden*, at the Society's Annual Gathering in Concord, MA July 10-13, and was awarded a Fellowship to use for a month of research with their archives at the Henley Library in Lincoln, MA (I will probably do the research next spring).

The presentations at the Annual Gathering tend toward literary and historical scholarship, so bringing a geographical perspective was appreciated by them, as well as challenging for me. Since 2004 will also mark the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Walden*, there is interest in a session on pilgrimage at next year's gathering.

I'd also like to think about the Philadelphia meeting of the AAG in terms of sessions that we might co-sponsor with another specialty group. Any others out there interested in pilgrimage, or anyone connected with pilgrimage scholars in the Tourism specialty group? (*Walden* receives over half-a-million visitors a year, most of them for recreation and tourism).

Anyone interested in seeking co-sponsorship for a Politics of Sacred Space session, maybe with the Cultural and Political Ecology group? Any suggestions for contacts there (I am a student member, but haven't been active)?

And if there are others in GORABS who are interested in sacred place/space topics and who are open to another participant, keep me posted.

**From Ed Davis**

[ehdavis@ehc.edu](mailto:ehdavis@ehc.edu)

I'm looking for a co-worker or just discussion partner on two small, steady research projects:

1. Environmentalism among Methodists in the USA and UK: Christian theology and practice have both made some progress in reviving the work of stewardship. Yet how much? Although Methodist leaders have made statements about protecting the environment, are there significant contributions being made to environmental protection among churches, by pastors and/or lay leaders? There is little research among geographers to document this. A good start might be a comparison of efforts in the USA and UK.
2. The meaning of place among Primitive Baptists: Primitive Baptists form a small and scattered denomination within the US, with a strong presence in parts of Southern Appalachia. Geographers have not (as far as I know) given them much attention. Primitive Baptists are determined to avoid "worldly" developments such as mission work, musical instruments, and formal interchurch organizations. They seemingly deny the significance of the tangible world in so many ways that I wonder if their theology is rather placeless. This might be a fertile ground for a study of geography and theology

If you have knowledge of or interest in these topics, please contact me.

**From Jeanne Kay Guelke**

[jkg@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:jkg@fes.uwaterloo.ca)

I just had a paper accepted in *Environmental Ethics* titled, "Looking for Jesus in Christian Environmental Ethics," due out in 2004. The paper starts with the observation that very little of the extensive literature in Christian environmental ethics stems from the explicit teachings of Jesus as reported in the New Testament. Rather than searching for ways to value the environment through other aspects of Christian theology, as most authors have done, I examined three teachings of Jesus that should provide collateral benefits for the environment if followed by Christians: frugality combined with assistance to the poor, the Golden Rule, and non-violence. In order to minimize problems associated with the "historical Jesus" the paper's approach is to interpret the Bible as a work of literature.

## MEMBER NEWS

**From John Kostelnick**

[kostel@ku.edu](mailto:kostel@ku.edu)

I'm working to compile references for a GORABS bibliography – basically a listing of everything that has been written on the geography of religion. Contributions from GORABS members in the form of references, personal bibliographies, etc. would be greatly appreciated. Any citations can be sent to me in the text of an e-mail message or as a Word attachment.

**From Elizabeth Leppman**

[ejleppman@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ejleppman@stcloudstate.edu)

I traveled in Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand in June and July, visiting religious places in all three countries. These included a Hindu temple in Nadi, Fiji; various churches and Uluru (Ayers Rock) in Australia, and the magnificent new Anglican Cathedral in Auckland, built with Polynesian themes to serve also as a concert hall for the community. While abroad, I presented a symposium at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and a paper at the New Zealand Geographical Society meeting in Auckland, both on Appalachian churchscapes in Kentucky. The conference opened with a Maori welcome ceremony in the University of Auckland's marae, or traditional Maori meeting hall.

**From Melanie McCalmont**

[melanie.mccalmont@ptk.org](mailto:melanie.mccalmont@ptk.org)

As part of a new Geography program at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, I will begin study of this private Baptist university's current shift from a teaching-based to a research-based institution. Baylor, founded in 1845 under the Republic of Texas, has historically shunned the high-impact emphasis on publication and research for personal and faith-based educational relationships between faculty and students. A 10-year transition plan, Vision 2012, hopes to take Baylor into the big leagues of colleges while maintaining a faith-based focus, but the plan is causing considerable doubt, debt, and controversy. I intend to study the changing cultural geography of this private religious university as it migrates to secular priorities. I am very interested in hearing from any GORABS members who can provide contacts or data about recent religious-to-secular university transitions.

**From Miles E. Richardson**

[gamile@lsu.edu](mailto:gamile@lsu.edu)

My newest publication has been released, *Being-in-Christ and Putting Death in Its Place An Anthropologist's Account of Christian Performance in Spanish America and the American South*. I try to bring together the concepts of culture and place, so even though it says "An Anthropologist's Account", I hope geographers will profit from picking it up. A few words from the publisher's summary follow and provide a little more insight into the nature of the book.

*Miles Richardson uses forty years of empirical research to examine the ways Christians address the uniquely human question of death. Rooted in the author's personal story of why he became an anthropologist, the book represents Richardson's lifework and his own answer to that question. He explores the paradox that while humans must die like all evolving life forms, they have adapted a unique symbolic communication that makes them aware of their naturally occurring fate; and through word and artifact they dwell upon that discovery. The concepts of culture, as an emergent dialogic exchange, and place, as the experiential location of that exchange, illuminate how two groups, Catholics in Spanish America and Baptists in the American South, create "being-in-Christ" and thereby "put death in its place."*

**From Rebecca Dobbs**

[grdobbs@email.unc.edu](mailto:grdobbs@email.unc.edu)

Call for Papers: Indigenous geography Papers are sought for one or more edited collections of work in the area of Indigenous Geography. The proposed collection(s) reflect not only the growing (if still faint) voice of indigenous peoples in today's globalized world, but also the increasing profile of Indigenous Geography within the discipline of Geography. It has long been recognized among a subgroup of geographers that geographic inquiry is extraordinarily well suited to the study of indigenous peoples because of the range of land/place/space-based issues involved in the lives of indigenous peoples, past and present. In today's Geography, as we become increasingly aware of the legacies of colonialism and the ongoing power relationships embedded in neocolonialism, geographic inquiry has perhaps even more to offer. With this in mind, we encourage submissions from all subfields of Geography that may have relevance to Indigenous Geography, with the aim of developing a critical overview of the current issues and debates. Essays should be 12-25 pages in length, and contributions will be considered on a rolling basis until such time that we feel we have sufficient materials to proceed, hopefully October 15, 2003

### DAVID E. SOPHER NEW SCHOLAR AWARD

The following announcement is presented here to encourage new scholars in the sub-discipline of geography of religions and belief systems to consider applying for the Sopher Award. The deadline for submitting the completed paper for consideration is 15 February 2004. However, the paper must be presented at the AAG annual conference in Philadelphia in March of 2004, so if you intend to submit a paper for the award competition, you must submit the paper title and abstract to the AAG before the conference deadline of 9 October 2003.

**Description:**

The purpose of the David E. Sopher New Scholar Award is to promote intellectual enquiry from new scholars into geographies of religions and belief systems through the presentation of papers at the [AAG meeting](#). Papers will be judged on potential contribution to the field of Geography of Religions and Belief Systems, organization, and written composition.

**Eligibility:**

Both graduate students and untenured faculty who are not serving on the GORABS board can apply for the award.

**Award:**

The amount for the 2004 award is a travel grant of \$250. The recipient will also be given an official certificate at the AAG awards luncheon.

**Disbursement:**

A check will be disbursed to the winner at the 2004 Geography of Religions and Belief Systems annual business meeting at the AAG event.

**Requirements:**

The paper and application form must be emailed to the GORABS chair in rich text or Microsoft Word format no later than midnight, February 15th. The paper must subsequently be presented at the national AAG meeting, though it does not have to be in a GORABS sponsored session. A panel of previous GORABS chairs will judge the papers and determine a recipient. The winner will be announced in time to attend the awards luncheon with a GORABS representative. GORABS reserves the right to not make an award in a given year.

**Application Form:**

[In Microsoft Word](#)

[In Adobe PDF](#)

[In HTML](#)

**More Information:**

For more information please contact the present GORABS chair, Michael Ferber, at [MFerber@geo.wvu.edu](mailto:MFerber@geo.wvu.edu).