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Editorial

I am pleased to say that the latest edition of *Fieldwork in Religion* opens with a piece written by Steve Bruce, one of the most influential sociologists of religion currently plying the trade. In typically robust fashion, Bruce's article underlines not only the contribution of quantitative methods to understanding religion but also the limitations of qualitative methods. Acknowledging that qualitative research plays a valuable role in the academic study of religion, the piece nevertheless asserts the attendant weaknesses of qualitative approaches in respect of, for example, generalization, reliability and comparative testing. As to be expected, Bruce offers an assured defence of the importance of "empirical positivistic social science" to a rounded understanding of religion.

As if the Charismatic Renewal and Opus Dei movements were not evidence enough of Roman Catholicism's innovative accommodation to the variegated forces of modernity, Palmisano's treatment of the "Reconstructors in Prayer" provides further grist to the mill. In addition to outlining its relatively short history (the movement began in 1980), this article describes the Reconstructors' doctrinal structure and ritual practices. Drawing upon participant observation and its attendant methods, Palmisano offers an informed analysis of this group's "close interweaving" of appropriated Tantric-yoga teachings with established Christian traditions. In addition, the author reflects upon a number of ethical and methodological issues raised during her time in the field. Mindful of the Reconstructors' precarious position relative to a wary, if not downright suspicious, Roman Catholic hierarchy, Palmisano suggests some potentially fruitful lines of enquiry which might throw further light upon this novel religious phenomenon.

Arkotong Longkumer's article treats a variety of issues, empirical and theoretical, which remain central to contemporary academic engagements with religion and its social-cultural contexts. Arising from ethnographic research among the Heraka movement of the Naga peoples of northeast India, Longkumer's reflections

touch upon the variegated dynamics and matrices of power. The relationships of power engaged pertain particularly to the local agency, situated knowledges and identity negotiations which occur both among those who are the objects of research and between these people and their academic interlocutors. Reflexive in respect of his own status as both "native ethnographer" and "outside researcher," Longkumer offers an insightful reflection upon the ramifications of ethnographic methods as they apply to the intersection of, for example, insider–outsider and local–global relations.

Drawing on the methods of participant observation and discourse analysis, Ann Gleig's article makes a number of important contributions to academic understanding of contemporary spirituality in the California region. With specific reference to A. H. Almaas's "Diamond Approach," the piece provides a helpful description of two group contexts in which this new form of spirituality is being practised. At the same time, Gleig offers a detailed analysis of the discursive contents of the Diamond Approach with a view to elucidating its particular fusion of Asian traditions and Western emphases. In so doing, Gleig provides the basis for further reflection upon ongoing debates as to whether emergent spiritualities such as the Diamond Approach constitute "psychologically sophisticated forms of modern religiosity" or psychologized "dilutions of traditional mysticism."

Abby Day's contribution details the innovative research method she developed in order to better explore the nature of contemporary belief in the United Kingdom. Wishing to avoid overtly religious vocabulary which might impact upon the research's central concerns, the qualitative method employed gathered data in respect of contemporary forms of belief and interpreted these data through multidimensional belief analysis. Analysis and interpretation of the data lead her to conclude that many who self-identify as "Christian" are actually marking social difference ("believing in belonging") rather than articulating religious belief or faith. Typified by this conclusion, Day's article problematizes both the relevant findings of the 2001 UK census and the political decisions and subsequent policies formulated in response to these findings.

Each in its own way, the qualitative approaches of Palmisano, Longkumer, Gleig and Day complement Bruce's evangelistic assertion of the continued place within the academy of quantitative methods and all that they bring to the study of religion. Of course, and thankfully so, academics of religion are not faced with an "either/or" choice when it comes to deciding upon what particular method best corresponds with the research questions asked and the requisite data thereby to be acquired. At the same time, it is no small matter to ensure that the methods employed not only capture the sought-after data but do so in the form most suited to addressing the questions at hand.