Carole M. Cusack and Rachelle Scott

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Carole M. Cusack is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney. She trained as a medievalist and her doctorate was published as *Conversion Among the Germanic Peoples* (Cassell, 1998). Since the late 1990s she has taught in contemporary religious trends. She is the author of *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Ashgate, 2010).

Rachelle Scott studies the history of Theravada Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, with an emphasis on contemporary Buddhism in Thailand. Her first book, *Nirvana for Sale?: Buddhism, Wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple* (SUNY Press, 2009), examined contemporary debates over monastic and lay wealth in Thailand.

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The first issue of *Fieldwork in Religion* for 2019 contains a fascinating group of articles that discuss fieldwork in varied contexts, including the Church of England in the United Kingdom, in Hobart (the capital of Australia's smallest state, Tasmania), in the Netherlands, among the nuns of a convent in Poland, and on the streets of London, a metropolis with a powerful appeal for tourists and pilgrims, whether religious, spiritual or secular.

The first article by Alex D. J. Fry (Durham University/The London School of Economics and Political Science) is "Justifying Gender Inequality in the Church of England: An Examination of Theologically Conservative Male Clergy Attitudes towards Women's Ordination". This study is a thematic analysis of fourteen interviews the author conducted with evangelical priests who opposed female ordination. The ordination of women was permitted by the Church of England in 1992, but Fry identifies traditionalist gender values, and a clergy group Reform (established in 1993), as contributing to systemic discrimination against women seeking ordination within the Church. The article is especially interesting because it probes the

psychological *reasons* for holding conservative attitudes to gender roles, as well as detailing these attitudes and their impact on the ecclesiastical institution.

The second contribution is by Ariel Remund (University of Tasmania). In “Facing the Other: Religious and Community Leaders’ Negotiations of Religious Difference in Hobart, Tasmania”, Remund has analysed twelve interviews with religious leaders of various communities, in terms of two oppositional attitudes, *seeking sameness* and *agreeing to disagree*. This article has interesting synergies with Fry’s research, in that the conservative evangelical Christians are the most voluble respondents in terms of perceiving secular, non-religious society as attacking or sidelining traditional religious values. Remund discusses diversity, multiculturalism, and liberal democratic understandings of society in new and challenging ways and reiterates the value of respect and engagement in the contemporary public sphere in Australia.

The next article, “Social Generation as a Lens: A Qualitative Take on Generational Theory”, is by Frederique A. Demeijer and Hijme C. Stoffels (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and examines six interviews with members of the Apostolic Society, a small Protestant denomination in the Netherlands. Each interviewee was from a different generation, from the Pre-War Generation (born between 1910 and 1930) to the Screenage Generation (born 1985 and after). Demeijer and Stoffels trace the generations through a study of the leaders of the Apostolic Society, then analyse the interviews to illuminate the influence of two factors, the formative years of the interviewee, and the way that change and progression in the denomination interacted with social trends in wider Dutch society. The value of generational theory for Religious Studies is shown, and this research suggests it has much wider applicability than has been thought to date.

The fourth contribution is by Marcin Jewdokimow (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw) and is titled “Transcending Methodological Atheism and Not Thinking Transcendentally: Nuns’ Understanding of Life within the Cloistered Monastery”. This study proposes that a lived religion approach is more valuable than the traditional methodological atheism of Religious Studies when studying the inhabitants of monastic institutions. Jewdokimow interviewed members of a convent in Poland in 2018; this community was distinguished by the high level of education of the cloistered nuns, which the author speculates influenced their positive response to his research project. The article is important as very little research of this nature has been conducted and the majority of these focus on male monastics.

The final article is by Mujde Bideci (Université Internationale de Rabat) and returns attention to the place of religion in the United Kingdom. This study, “Exploring the Sacredness of Urban Spaces through Material Traces”, considers

the city of London as a site of encounters with the sacred for people who would not consider themselves traditionally religious but are open to experiences of the sacred in profane circumstances. It is a delight to have authors from academic institutions in three continents contributing to this issue of *Fieldwork in Religion*.

Our thanks are due to the referees who provided feedback on the five research articles. We are grateful also to George Chryssides, the journal's Review Editor, for the book reviews. We acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the staff at Equinox Publishing, and also of Sarah Norman, *Fieldwork in Religion*'s excellent production editor.