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Editorial

The editors welcome you to the first edition of Volume 2 of *Fieldwork in Religion*. As editors we are pleased with Volume 1 and thank all the reviewers and the staff of Equinox for their work. In particular we are grateful for the contributors who provided us with excellent contributions that fulfilled the expectations of the editors when they conceived of the journal. We also thank John Wallis for his sterling efforts to produce the themed edition which completed Volume 1. The challenge is now on to continue the quality of the journal and place it in the pantheon of more established journals in the study of religion.

In this edition we range not only geographically from Australia, Brazil, West Bengal to Britain but also across time as one article explores twenty-five years of fieldwork carried out by the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick. A number of important themes are introduced including the relationship between text and popular religion, the value of religious education research to the study of religion, and the emergence of new religions and their relationship to established or dominant traditions. As we would expect, the fieldwork carried out challenges previous perspectives and provides new insights gleaned from 'on the ground'.

Adam Possamai, John Bellamy, and Keith Castle analyse the results of The National Church Life Survey (NCLS), carried out in 2001, of a random sample of churchgoers in Australia, and discover that if all churchgoers are analysed as one single category, Australian churchgoers do not have much affinity with the New Age, a result which fits with the current literature. However, when looking more closely at the sample, it is discovered that Catholics have the highest affinity with the New Age among all Christian groups and evangelical groups have the least affinity. It is also found that churchgoers in their teens are more inclined towards these alternative ideas. The article goes in to analyse the causes of this differences found between denominations or age groups and suggests that there could be a

Weberian affinity between Roman Catholicism and New Age worldviews. However, the picture is complicated by the ethnic diversity of the Roman Catholic population. The authors challenge the link between New Age sympathy and the degree of relativism amongst Christian groups as simplistic.

Continuing the New Age theme and its relationship to Christianity, Andy Dawson explores the enthusiastic reception of a number of homegrown and imported new religions that demonstrate the growth of alternative spiritualities and mystical practices in Brazil. Together these new and alternative forms of late-modern religiosity are reshaping contemporary understandings of religion and what it means to be religious in a nation integrated increasingly within the globalizing system of late-modernity and undergoing widespread transformation in every sphere of its economic-political, socio-cultural and religious-spiritual life. Once a bastion of Roman Catholicism, Brazil is today home to some of the fastest growing non-Catholic religious movements. The paper builds upon fieldwork undertaken in Brazil in recent years to offer a phenomenological study of a neo-esoteric organization, the Gnostic Church of Brazil (*Igreja Gnóstica do Brasil*). After locating the Gnostic Church of Brazil within the Brazilian neo-esoteric field, the article details the origins, *raison d'être*, discourse, and practice of this organization. Concluding remarks signal the possibility of organizational transition within the Gnostic Church of Brazil to a less traditional neo-esoteric repertoire of action. Together the two articles provide an insight into the relationship of Catholicism and non-Christian esoteric movements in two very different environments – Australia and Brazil.

Eleanor Nesbitt and Elizabeth Arweck explore the findings of fieldwork at the University of Warwick's Institute of Education over the last quarter of a century and argue that the body of data clearly repays recurrent analysis. The article has extricated the concept of *sampradaya* as a constituency that emerged from the data of initial research and became the focus of retrospective analysis, plus being the basis of recent projects. Implicit in the data is a critique of 'New Religious Movements' as a label applied to Indian religions that have appeared in the west in the second half of the twentieth century. They show that consistently with the concerns of its institutional base in an education department, the Warwick fieldwork has illuminated three interfaces between religion and education: the 'gap' between Hindus' lived experience and representation of 'the Hindu tradition' in schools' religious education, the prominence of *sampradayas*' activities in the religious nurturing of many young British Hindus and the connection between certain *sampradayas* and values education initiatives. They argue that the Warwick ethnographic studies not only yielded information and insights for the representation of the Hindu tradition in the religious education curriculum but point to the need to reconceptualize the religious education curriculum with a shake-up of the 'world religions' paradigm.

Finally, continuing with the Indian theme, Jeanne Openshaw interrogates the classical division in Indic religious traditions between the realms of householder and renouncer, with movement only permitted from former to latter and only for certain individuals. Using fieldwork material from West Bengal, India, this article considers connections between the Caste Vaishnavas and renunciation and demonstrates that the presence of castes with renouncer names (Yogis, Naths, Vaishnavas) suggests that realities 'on the ground' challenge the textual model of householder/renouncer divisions. She shows that not only do Caste Vaishnavas often follow renouncer practices, but that male Caste Vaishnava status is conferred by renunciation rituals in which the loin-cloth is functionally equivalent to the Brahmin sacred thread. Contrary to most textual accounts, there is constant movement of renouncers as well as other householders, in groups as well as individuals, into this 'open caste'. The relation of joint renouncers (a male and female pair) to Caste Vaishnavas is examined, as is the status of women within the caste. Her contribution raises an important issue for the study of religion, that is the relationship between text and lived religion and the discrepancies that are often found between them.