

Chapter 28

Geography, space and the sacred

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Religion takes place in space. Religious people are distributed globally and locally in various patterns at different times and according to various factors such as mission and conversion, religious growth or decline, migration and population change, war and natural disaster. Religions – whether ‘indigenous’, ‘world’ or ‘new’ religions – are more or less closely identified with particular continents, countries or localities. Religious groups occupy social spaces, gathering in mosques, churches, temples, community centres and other buildings, and meeting at times in the open in places denoted or apprehended as sacred. Families and individuals practise their religions at home, sometimes setting apart a room or area for worship or meditation, chanting or dancing. Religious and cosmological beliefs often have a spatial character, such as ideas about where certain religious activities should occur or where objects should be placed, which lands or places are deemed to be holy, or how heavenly cities or spiritual landscapes appear and are spatially organised. Furthermore, the location of religion in secular spaces is important too. Is it confined to particular times and places by the secular state? Is this reflected in distinctions between public and private spheres, in planning regulations or in the ritual and discourse of state and civic life? Religions and religious groups change over time, and this affects their spatial arrangements. They change across space too: they may appear and be situated quite differently in the US, India and Indonesia, for example. As we can see, religions and places are mutually influential.

There are many reasons, then, for the study of religions to be concerned with matters geographical and spatial. The history of this concern has been intermittent, as I shall show in a later section, but in the first decade of the twenty-first century there has been a revitalisation of interest among both geographers and scholars of religion in each other’s subject matter. This follows what is now referred to as the ‘spatial turn’ in late-modern theory and methodology across the humanities and social sciences. Since the mid-1980s the spatial interests of continental social theorists, such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau, and radical geographers, such as Doreen Massey, David Harvey and Edward Soja, have had an impact on academics in many disciplines, including the study of religions. New perspectives on the geography of religion have begun to emerge in Europe, Asia and the US, and innovative theoretical engagements between religion, space and territory have been formulated by scholars of religion. Theologians have also turned their attention to place and space (Sheldrake 2001; Gorringe 2002; Inge 2003; Bergmann 2007).

Later in this chapter, I will set the study of geography, space and the sacred in historical context, and examine the new perspectives and innovative engagements mentioned above. After that I will look at several themes that have attracted the interest of contemporary

geographers and scholars of religion: pilgrimage and mobility; diasporas and migration; bodies and space; death and dying; and religion in secular spaces. I will illustrate these with examples from recent research and hope to generate ideas for potential projects and dissertations. First let me begin with an illustration from the work of students at my own university. Their research shows what can be learnt by undertaking studies of religion in the local area.

Local studies of religion

In recent years small groups of students at the University of Leeds have undertaken a teamwork project called 'The Religious Mapping of Leeds' (Knott 1998, 2000, 2009). Over one semester they work together to research the religious life of a neighbourhood and to examine the way religion intersects with, influences and is influenced by other local conditions, such as demographic, social, economic and political factors, education, crime, health and social provision. Over the years teams have studied various inner-city and suburban districts of Leeds – a multicultural city in northern England with a population of approximately 720,000 – such as Beeston, Moortown, Armley, Burley, Chapeltown, Harehills and Headingley (see Community Religions Project website). Working with a university supervisor and local community partner – these have included a police inspector, ministers and other religious specialists, and chairs of interfaith and other voluntary bodies – the team undertakes fieldwork in the area, visiting churches, chapels, mosques, synagogues, temples, attending services and interviewing congregation members and leaders, as well as identifying key local institutions and interviewing their representatives. Team members often conduct a street survey and speak to people in shops, restaurants, bars and other public places about their views on the area and the place of religion within it.

As well as learning a great deal about the history of local religious groups and the way religion functions within the area, they become aware of the way in which locality informs religion. One Baptist church is not just like any other, neither in its internal and external appearance, nor in its concerns. Baptist theological interests and commitments, and Baptist sacramental and ministerial practices may provide continuity from one church to another, but the way they are lived out is informed by the church's situation, the demographic profile of its congregation and local community, the type of neighbourhood, the built environment, the local economy and local resources of various kinds. This is equally true of mosques and gurdwaras. Furthermore, the role and place of religion differs from one neighbourhood to another. Religious leaders and members may be key players in local politics or active in social provision in some areas, or well known for their festivals or their contribution to fighting crime in others.

In many places in Leeds, as in other European cities, religion seems to have disappeared behind a lively façade of pizza take-aways, supermarkets, bars and boutiques, but when the students look more closely local charity shops come into focus, elderly people can be seen in day centres run by religious communities; mothers and toddlers make their way to groups held in church buildings; immigration advice and support services for asylum seekers can be witnessed in mosques and temples, and health food shops and libraries reveal the alternative spiritual life of the neighbourhood in posters and advertisements for local healers, meditation and yoga groups. Religious books, posters of deities, gurus and the Virgin Mary, prayer mats, tapes, CDs and videos of religious songs, films and festivals can be found vying for a little local space in bookshops or hardware stores. Focusing in still further reveals religion represented

on mobile bodies – in hijabs and turbans, Christian crosses, Sikh *kara* and *kirpan* (symbolic bangle and sword), Hindu *Aum* (letter or syllable), Jewish star of David, the colours of rasta – and in devotional music, alongside the songs of Bollywood, through open car windows.

Once the students have described and analysed their data, and considered key themes of local importance – such as religion and ethnicity, the role of religion in social work, youth provision or education, religious responses to crime and policing, the religious contribution to community and sustainability, or ecumenical and inter-faith relations in the area – they go ahead and prepare a report and directory, and give a public presentation and answer questions about their findings in a local venue. This requires them to engage, negotiate and be accountable to local people.

Local studies of religion have other advantages too. By starting from the particular rather than the general and by focusing on what happens to religions within designated local spaces, they challenge the 'World Religions' approach with its focus on discrete, generic traditions and normative beliefs and practices that is so common in religious studies. Students reason inductively from their examination of particular Methodist churches and Sikh gurdwaras rather than reasoning deductively from their reading of textbooks about Christianity and Sikhism. Local studies require a multidisciplinary and polymethodic approach that brings student researchers into contact with a variety of ways of working within and beyond the study of religions. Furthermore, because of the nature of late-modern urban neighbourhoods, such studies necessitate an investigation not only of local but also national and global communications and interconnections. Religious and ethnic plurality, diasporic relationships, global identity politics, national as well as local government support for faith-based initiatives, inter-faith ventures, and new spiritual collaborations can all be witnessed and studied (Stausberg 2009; Knott 2009).

Geography and the spatial study of religion: a brief history

Within the study of religions there has been a history of interest in religious places and movements – sacred landscapes, pilgrimage routes, places of worship, missionary activities, global religious developments and cyber-religious networks – but, except in a few cases to which I shall return, there has been a lack of concern with the explicitly geographical or spatial implications of such places and movements. Similarly, despite earlier interest within geography, religion has remained a fairly marginal object of study since the 1960s, though a change can now be discerned. In this section I will consider the history of these two separate, but interconnected, fields of study.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in Germany and England, the discipline of geography was forged overtly in a Christian mould, in part to demonstrate the 'visible side of the Divine revelation' (Park 1994: 9) but also to justify the superiority of Christianity in the context of other religions. However, despite Christian missionary interest in the relationship between religion and different geographical contexts, it was not until the late eighteenth century that the two were formally engaged in the scholarly project of *Religionsgeographie* by Gottlieb Kasche, and the possibility of a rational, non-confessional geography was addressed by Immanuel Kant (Büttner 1980; Park 1994). In the twentieth century several major geographical studies of religion were published, most notably by Deffontaines (1948), Sopher (1967), and Park (1994), with the latest addition by Stump (2008). Paul Fickeler is accredited with developing the modern agenda of the geography of religions in an article in German in

1947 (Fickeler 1962). He suggested that 'the science of religion should tackle the question of how environment affects religion, and that the geography of religion should tackle the question of how religion affects people and landscape' (Park 1994: 16–17), and identified a range of themes appropriate for geographical study (Fickeler 1962). The division of duties he proposed has since been challenged, with scholars on both sides breaching the disciplinary boundary. Furthermore, a number of geographers (e.g. Büttner 1974; Kong 1990; Cooper 1992) have called for an informed understanding and study of the dialectical reciprocity of religion and the environment.

Since the late 1990s the geographical study of religion has moved away from some of its old spheres of interest in denominational studies, religious demography, the landscape of death and pilgrimage, to new ones in the poetics and politics of the sacred, identity and community, and religion in relation to diaspora and postcolonial spaces, body and gender, global and local, political and ethical geographies, and theoretical considerations. Key contemporary contributors are Lily Kong, a major reviewer of recent trends in the geography of religion (Kong 1990, 2001), two British geographers, Julian Holloway and Oliver Valins (Holloway and Valins 2002; Valins 2003; Holloway 2006), Hans Knippenberg, editor of *The Changing Religious Landscape of Europe* (2005) and fellow European contributors, and those scholars with essays in the 2006 *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* who have sought to move the field forward with new conceptual and empirical interventions, including James Proctor (2006) and Adrian Ivakhiv (2006). The American scholar, Roger Stump, has made a significant contribution in recent years to developing the geography of religion for a student audience. Following earlier work on the geography of religious fundamentalism (Stump 2000), a later book organises the field according to four frames: the spatial dynamics of religious distributions, the contextuality of religions, religious territoriality in secular space, and the meanings and uses of sacred space (Stump 2008). This framework enables him to bring up to date subjects that preoccupied earlier geographers (religious distribution, sacred space and the spatial diversification of belief and practice in the major religions), whilst acknowledging and exploring the operation of religious territoriality within the secular spaces of everyday life, including the communal scale, body, home, the state and the global arena.

Despite the early development of *Religionsgeographie*, little significant reciprocal interest by religious studies scholars in space, place and geography can be witnessed before the mid-twentieth century. The content of Jacques Waardenburg's anthology of the first hundred years of the non-theological study of religions (1973) suggests that scholars of religion outside the discipline of geography gave little credence to these issues. The exception was Gerardus van der Leeuw in the mid-1930s who was the first to take an explicit interest in the role of different places and scales for religion. In a chapter on sacred space in his book, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, he identified a series of homologies (home, temple, settlement, pilgrimage site, human body) and linked synecdoches (hearth, altar, sanctuary, shrine and heart) which have since become key terms for a scholarly discussion of the location of the sacred (van der Leeuw 1938: 393–402; Chidester and Linenthal 1995: 6–7).

It was with the work of Mircea Eliade, however, that sacred space really became a significant subject of theoretical and critical enquiry, with its meaning, characteristics and functions being examined and typologised. His ideas have provided a frame of reference for subsequent scholars of sacred geography, both followers and critics. Eliade is known for positing several axioms, of sacred space as set apart from ordinary, profane space, as the 'Center' or *axis mundi* through which communication between different domains is possible,

and as the manifestation of the 'Real' (hierophany) (Eliade 1959: 26). Scholars investigating the meaning and power of sacred space and time have often used these axioms as a reference point. Belden C. Lane, for example, adopted and developed them in his phenomenological enquiry into the poetics of American sacred landscape as 'storied place' (Lane 1988: 11–20), whilst Chidester and Linenthal, accusing Eliade of mystifying the sacred and ignoring its politics, overturned them in their subversive, critical approach to the contested nature of American sacred space (Chidester and Linenthal 1995: 16–18).

These scholars were as indebted to Jonathan Z. Smith as they were to Eliade. In a lecture in 1971 entitled 'The Wobbling Pivot', Smith had queried Eliade's focus on the Center at the expense of the periphery, and went on to elucidate what was to become an influential dichotomy between two existential possibilities, 'a locative vision of the world (which emphasises place) and a utopian vision of the world (using the term in its strict sense: the value of being in no place)' (Smith 1978a: 101). He developed these perspectives in his later essay, 'Map Is Not Territory', as an imperial, ideologically-orientated map, and a utopian map which reverses the locative and seeks to escape to a new world (1978b: 308–9). Smith's use of the metaphor of the map in the context of investigating these cosmological perspectives simultaneously de-territorialised the sacred and showed how space operates as an organising principle beyond the material world in the arena of belief and ideology. Smith continued to employ spatial terminology in his 1987 book, *To Take Place: Toward a Theory of Ritual*, in which he moved beyond earlier phenomenological conceptions of the 'sacred' and 'place', in favour of anthropological and sociological approaches. He argued that 'human beings are not placed, they bring place into being' (Smith 1987: 28), using ritual to do so. People do not so much respond to sacred place, as Eliade suggested, as create it through their ritual activity (105).

One further scholar requires our attention before we turn to the current theoretical and methodological agenda and that is Manfred Büttner, a German scholar who, in the 1970s, strove to instruct a largely ignorant audience of religious studies peers of the importance of the geography of religion. Writing in English as well as German and in well known scholarly journals, including *Religion* and *Numen*, he charted the history of the engagement between geography and religion and sought to develop an agenda for field study that would bring scholars together from both sides to further their mutual understanding of the way in which settlement and landscape are moulded by religion and the way the environment influences religions and religious groups. He called for a 'synthetic geography of religion' within the meta-science of all disciplines concerned with religion (Büttner 1974: 84; 1980). Despite his valiant efforts, this has yet to be fully realised.

The spatial study of religion: theory and method

Before turning to some of the major themes that have preoccupied scholars writing about geography, religion and space, I will first review recent advances of a theoretical and methodological kind. As I suggested earlier, a spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences has focused attention on space, place and location. It has challenged previous Cartesian perspectives, has considered space in its engagement with discourse, representation, power, identity and practice, as well as in both its physical and social aspects. Despite his interest in genealogy and the historical outworking of power relations, Foucault referred to modernity as the epoch not of time but space (1986: 22). Following Lefebvre's ground-breaking work, *La production de l'espace* (1974), social relations and culture have been understood as having

their existence in and through space (Lefebvre 1991: 404), with social divisions and cultural classifications often being spatialised (Shields 1991: 29). These ideas can be seen to underpin the work of several scholars writing on space and religion to whom I shall now turn (Knott 2005a, 2008).

Contributing to the body of work developed by Eliade and Smith, and building on Durkheimian scholarship on the 'sacred', the Finnish scholar, Veikko Anttonen, engaged space and the sacred in two different ways. He used spatial concepts (of body and territory) to develop his theory of the 'sacred' as a category boundary, and also examined the topographical use of 'sacred' names and references within various landscapes and other contexts (1996, 2000, 2005). He saw body and territory, and the boundary between them, as pre-conceptual structures which humans use in generating discourse and practice about the 'sacred'. As bounded entities, they are co-extensive (1996: 41): the human body has both an inside and an outside, the latter being co-extensive with the inside of the territory. The boundaries between these pre-conceptual structures of body, territory and the wilderness beyond it have the potential to become markers for distinguishing between things on the basis of their value as well as for establishing rules for their engagement and transformation (1996: 42). This cognitive capacity for using spatial structures to distinguish certain things, events, persons and places as 'sacred' is culturally dependent. Anttonen demonstrated this in his work on territorial boundaries in the Baltic Sea area, commenting that the Finno-Ugric word *pyhä* was used of places that people wanted 'to demarcate from the rest of the environment as "separate", "designated", "prohibited", "dangerous"' (2005: 192). But he also noted that, in other cultural contexts, whether religious, national or ideological, a similar process of 'sacred' attribution was at work (2000: 280–1). Anttonen's theory unravels the cognitive and cultural relationship between space (body and territory), language and the process of sacralisation – making things 'sacred'.

Focusing explicitly on religion, rather than the 'sacred' as a category that crosses the boundary between the religious and the secular, Thomas Tweed used spatial tropes to develop 'a theory that made sense of the religious life of transnational migrants and addressed three themes – movement, relation and position', a theory with the potential to be applied to other (non-migrant) religious lives (2006: 5).

Starting with a spatialised understanding of theory in which he suggested that 'theories are embodied travels ..., positioned representations ..., and proposed routes' (Tweed 2006: 9), Tweed stressed the particular, located nature of his own and others' theories (18). At the heart of his work lies a definition of religion which employs spatial and aquatic tropes: 'Religions are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries' (54). Breaking this down, he discussed the orienting spatial metaphors of 'dwelling' and 'crossing' and the aquatic metaphors of 'confluence' and 'flow', drawing on the theoretical insights of Deleuze and Guattari (hydraulic model), Latour (circulating fluids), Appadurai (cultural flows), Long (religion as orientation; one's place in the world), and Clifford (dwelling-in-travel) (Tweed 2006: 57–61, 74). Following an examination of 'dwelling', Tweed turned to 'crossing', developing the three aspects of 'terrestrial crossing', 'corporeal crossing' and 'cosmic crossing'. He revealed the potential of this spatial term to connect geographical, embodied and imagined movements and transformations (123–63), concluding that 'religions are flows, translocative and transtemporal crossings' (158).

Tweed's theoretical project shows the rich possibilities of rethinking religion through spatial (and aquatic) metaphors, and – following Smith's contribution that 'map is not

territory' – may also provide geographers with a new perspective on the relevance of religion for their discipline. Religions facilitate 'crossings', movements from one position to another; such crossings are not confined to geographical scales, but may also be corporeal and cosmic.

Moving from theory to methodology now, I turn to my own work, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (Knott 2005a). In writing it, my intention was to develop a spatial methodology for locating religion, particularly in ostensibly secular places, things, communities and objects. Whilst this also required theorising a field of religious-secular relations, which I shall not discuss here, it chiefly involved extrapolating tractable 'tools' from cultural and social theories of space for the study of religions. I developed a set of terms for analysing the location of religion: (1) the body as the source of space, (2) the dimensions of space, (3) the properties of space, (4) the aspects of space, and (5) the dynamics of space (Knott 2005a: 12–58; 2005b: 156–66; 2008: 1108–11). These analytical terms – which together constitute a spatial methodology – allow for the close and detailed examination of a place, object, body or group by means of its spatial attributes. Beginning with the foundational role of the body for our experience and representation of space, in particular with signs of the body inscribed in the object or place of our investigation, the methodology then requires a consideration of that object's or place's physical, social and mental dimensions. The next step involves a study of its spatial properties, that is its diachronic extensiveness and synchronic interconnections, its configuration (the way in which the research object or place is formed by its constituent parts), and its power relations. The final stages entail a consideration of the dynamic aspects of the object or place, first by means of its spatial aspects – the way in which it is practised, represented and lived – and, second, by means of the processes of production and reproduction that form it and allow it to generate new spaces. A methodology based on these spatial elements is an interpretive process which may be employed systematically, though its various elements can also be applied in isolation. It has the effect of opening up the object or place of study to in-depth enquiry whilst at the same time taking seriously its interconnections, whether diachronic or synchronic. As such, it enables a thorough contextualisation of religion. Examples of the application of this methodology can be found in relation to the location of religion in the left hand (Knott 2005a), an English medical centre (Knott and Franks 2007), and an urban high street (Knott 2009).

Reconceived in contemporary theory as dynamic, 'space' is no longer merely the passive container or backdrop for human activity that it was once thought to be. It is thoroughly enmeshed in embodiment and everyday practice, in ritual, knowledge and discourse, and consequently it is enmeshed in religion no less than in other areas of social and cultural life. Considering pre-conceptual spatial structures for people's attribution of the 'sacred' as a category boundary (Anttonen), exploring the application of spatial metaphor for theorising religion (Tweed), and opening up 'space' and its constituent elements to closer scrutiny in order to examine the location of religion in secular contexts (Knott) are all examples of what thinking spatially has added to the theoretical and methodological resources of the study of religion. However, from the side of geography, it is important to note a complementary process. Adrian Ivakhiv, in an article subtitled 'Mapping the distribution of an unstable signifier', calls for geographers to adopt a deconstructive approach to 'religion' and the 'sacred', and to consider them as 'ways to distribute a certain kind of significance across geographic spaces' (2006: 169). Citing Foucault on the recent invention of 'religion' and the possibility of its erasure, he suggests that 'it is the task of geographers of religion to trace the changing orchestrations of those significances across space and place' (169), noting their relationship to other forms of significance, whether ideological, cosmological or political

(171). Geographers, he says, are particularly well suited to tracing the '(re)distribution and (re)configuration' (173) of such significances, for example of religious sacrality and irreligious profanity, and their relationship to ethnic or national sacralities. Starting from a base in geography rather than cognition, Ivakhiv nevertheless comes close to Anttonen in recommending a study of the incidence and distribution of the 'sacred' in its many forms and contexts.

Geography, space and religion: some contemporary themes

All academic disciplines have their own traditions and bodies of knowledge. Alister McGrath has referred to theology as having an organising 'architecture', to which theologians have historically deferred (2001: 141). The agenda of geographers of religion is insufficiently systematic or stable to be referred to in this way. The subject matter of geography of religion has reflected broader intellectual trends, though – as is the case in many disciplines – it has lagged behind them. I shall consider five contemporary themes, several of which have established roots in the discipline whilst others have appeared on the agenda more recently: pilgrimage and movement; diasporas and migration; bodies and space; death and dying; and religion in secular spaces.

Pilgrimage and movement

I begin with pilgrimage because it has repeatedly been drawn on as a theme for treatment by geographers, as well as anthropologists and scholars of religion. From Deffontaines' consideration of it in 1948 and the ground-breaking study on Hindu pilgrimage by Bhardwaj in 1973, up to the more recent attempt to re-frame it as 'cultures in motion' (Coleman and Eade 2004a), it has continued to attract significant scholarly attention (see Park 1994: 258–85; Stump 2008: 334–45). In the past the focus was on pilgrim distribution, types and levels of sacred space, and motivation for pilgrimage, with scholars from the late 1970s onwards responding in particular to the theoretical contribution of Victor and Edith Turner in *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978). Focusing on the popular and anarchic aspects of pilgrimage, the Turners introduced concepts of 'anti-structure', 'liminality' and 'communitas' which have since become an important focus for the comparative study of both pilgrimage and tourism and for challenging the boundary between religious and secular travel. Nevertheless, they worked within what Coleman and Eade have referred to as a 'largely place-centred approach to the culture of sacred travel' (2004b: 2). More recent studies have turned from a focus on place to one on movement to, in and from places, on the journey itself and on mobility.

The instability of place was signalled by the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan who suggested that, both socially and individually, people need to go beyond their own places and their routine experience of place, to be 'out of place' and to realise place as 'a temporary abode, not an enduring city' (Tuan cited in Park 1994: 260). Articulating the centrality of mobility, however, fell to Morinis (1992) who noted both the intersection of journeying with the embodiment of an ideal, and the structural opposition of stasis and movement as defining features of pilgrimage. Developing these ideas, Coleman and Eade sought to reframe pilgrimage in the context of several interlocking notions of movement (2004b: 16–17). In terms of *movement as performative action*, pilgrimage could be seen as bringing about transformations of various

kinds, such as invoking the idea of a pan-Hindu sacred space, more than the sum of separate local sites. *Movement as embodied action* saw pilgrimage as producing bodily effects, practices and experiences: the focus of contemporary travellers en route to Santiago de Compostela was on walking the journey and feeling the journey in the body, rather than on getting to the pilgrimage destination by the quickest route. Pilgrimage, they suggested, was best understood in the context of local conceptions of mobility, place and space (*movement as part of a semantic field*), there being no fixed, generic notion of movement that could be drawn on to explain different pilgrimages and pilgrim experiences. The final aspect, *movement as metaphor*, was important to pilgrimage irrespective of whether an actual physical journey occurred. References to the journeying soul, the inner pilgrimage, cosmic crossings, and life as quest all make metaphorical use of movement (see also Tweed 2006).

Coleman and Eade's reframing of pilgrimage with reference to movement can be illustrated using Paul Basu's study of 'roots-tourism' in the Scottish Highland diaspora (2004). Starting with *movement as metaphor*, many Scottish diasporic visitors from North America or Australasia describe travelling to and through Scotland in terms of the *route metaphors* of 'homecoming', 'quest' and 'pilgrimage', which together form a 'grammar for roots tourism' (154). In so doing they often draw on local myths of movement such as the Arthurian grail quest and other Celtic narratives as well as discourses of movement informed by their New World origins, such as 'diaspora' and 'return from exile' (*movement as part of a semantic field*). Working with the metaphors of quest and pilgrimage, in particular, enables Scottish diasporic travellers to draw on a related repertoire of behaviours and experiences, such as 'processing barefoot, kneeling, weeping, collecting relics, depositing ex-votos' (174) (*movement as embodied action*). Furthermore, in terms of *movement as performative action*, as Basu suggests, performing these journeys and seeing them through the *route metaphors* of homecoming, quest and pilgrimage enables Scottish diasporic travellers to imagine their destination as 'home', 'the indeterminate' and 'the sacred', and to experience it as profound, mysterious and enchanted (156).

Diasporas and migration

Basu's example evokes a second popular theme at the intersection of work on religion, geography and space, and that is diasporas and migration (Park 1994: 138–9, 153–8; Stump 2008: 63–77). The focus of another chapter in this volume, by Séan McLoughlin, this theme is now central for both geographers interested in religion and scholars of religion interested in space. As Kong made clear in her 2001 review of new geographies of religion, the multicultural contexts that arise as a result of population migration and diasporic identifications produce new religious landscapes, complex religious/secular relations and inter-religious contestations (2001: 214–5). The appearance and character of urban space may be changed as new communities transform existing buildings or build new ones; and disputes over planning, changes of usage, and heritage may arise. Different religious groups may vie over control of a particular space or its interpretation and significance; equally they may agree to share space. Kong's own work on Hindu *Thaipusam* processions in Singapore – which again highlights the importance of movement – brings to the fore the negotiation of religious and secular agencies, in particular the state's management of religion and regulation of time and space (2005).

Another important spatial consequence of the migration of religious people is the diasporic identification with and memory of the place of origin – sometimes referred to as 'home', as we

saw in the case of those Americans and Australians who retained an affinity with Scotland. Sometimes what is remembered and longed for is not a physical place but a scattered socio-religious community, such as the Muslim *ummah* or the Parsi diaspora. Although tangible transnational relationships may be maintained through visits or electronic communications, the imaginative and emotional spaces and connections are just as important, if not more so.

Thomas Tweed – whose theoretical contribution I discussed earlier – provides an example in his poignant account of the Cuban Catholic diaspora in Miami and the hope they placed in 'Our Lady of the Exile' to liberate their homeland from communism and return it to the place of their memories (1997). His account of the annual feast day, that recalls the journey by boat in 1961 of Our Lady of Charity from Cuba to the US mainland, reveals a complex politics of identity with multiple spatial referents: the Cuba of the nationalist diasporic imagination, the real Communist Cuba, the socio-spatial gathering of like-minded Cuban Catholics, the memory of the sea journey, the procession and sacred space with Our Lady at the centre, and the moving bodies of the worshippers (1997: 116). In his later analysis of this event, Tweed focuses on the themes of dwelling and crossing (2006: 169–71). He notes that Cubans in Miami, in addition to living in the US, orient themselves around the shrine to Our Lady and around the annual events with which she is associated. They are grounded in their conception of the Cuban 'homeland' and use of its associated symbols, the flag, map and national anthem. But their beliefs and practices also involve terrestrial, corporeal and cosmic crossings (169). The crossing from Cuba to Miami by the Virgin and by the migrants themselves is recalled; Our Lady's help is sought for rites of passage involving bodily crossings; and the ultimate horizon of salvation both for the nation and the individual is invoked and becomes a focus for prayer.

Body

Tweed draws attention to the affective dimension of this event, the weeping, shouting and singing, the swaying and waving of handkerchiefs, the reaching out to touch Our Lady, the pride as the national anthem is sung. The space of the body, as a resource for the expression of love of God and participation in religious community, but also as a site where the order and power of religion may be played out, is important for geographers and other scholars of religion interested in the interface between individuals and religious institutions (Stump 2008: 239–49). Largely ignored in earlier geographies of religion, as Stump suggests, its importance lies in its relationship to religious identity – through dress, ornamentation and body markings – to personal purity, in being the site where religious prohibitions are enforced, to the observance of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, as well as to personal expressions of faith (240). All bodies are differently marked by their social and cultural contexts and inflected by personal preferences and tastes. Their observation and analysis can be productive for understanding larger geo-political and religious/ideological movements and forces, as well as for working at the micro-level of individuals, families, objects, rituals and habits.

A much-studied subject of embodiment in recent years has been the *hijab* and other aspects of Islamic veiling. In addition to the increased incidence of covering by Muslim women in the Middle East, Asia and Europe since the Iranian revolution, the subject has sparked anxiety in secular liberal societies, contention between Muslims as well as with non-Muslims, and generated public debates about the appropriateness of veiling in schools and other public places. Because of the Islamic association of *hijab* with *purdah*, meaning 'curtain or screen' – that which separates public from private, and women from the gaze of those

who are not close family members – there are particular spatial considerations to be borne in mind, as well as those political ones which lead Islamist and feminist exponents to debate *hijab* and its importance for women.

The prominence and widespread nature of this debate has created a fertile ground for the discussion of other items of religious dress and bodily adornment, particularly the Christian cross and Sikh turban. The urban geographer Margaret Walton-Roberts, in an article on Sikh identity in the Vancouver area of Canada, critiqued essentialising notions of identity by examining the multiple meanings of the turban, whether in racialising discourse, as a strategic choice for a positive multiculturalism, or to affirm an ethno-nationalist agenda (1998). The turban in such cases may become a focus for scholars interested in the geography of body and identity, but also in the adorned body as part of a changing urban landscape (see also Knott 2005a: 40–2).

Death and dying

A spatial focus follows bodies through the dynamism of life to dying and death. As Park suggests, 'geographers have devoted more attention to landscapes of death than to landscapes of worship' even to the point of developing a new technical term, 'necrogeography' (1994: 213). This has occurred, at least in part, because religions themselves are so interested in the meaning of death, in the rituals that surround it, in its capacity to affect emotions and social relations, and in what happens afterwards – both in terms of disposing of the body and of any continuity of spirit or resurrection of the body. All of these aspects of death have spatial effects that are open to geographical study, the most common of which have been burial practices (see Park 1994: 213–26). The different ways in which religious groups have disposed of the dead – through burial, cremation or, in the case of Zoroastrians, exposure to sunlight and birds of prey – and what they do with the remains have been fertile subjects for study, with a particular focus on cemetery landscapes, their size, form and architecture. But beliefs and practices change, and in some Western societies – particularly in urban contexts where space is under pressure – cremation has become the norm and has produced its own geography. Furthermore, environmental issues have led to changes in the materials used for transporting bodies for cremation or burial, and to the sites selected for the scattering of ashes or interment, with woodland sites often favoured.

The mapping of deathscapes, the statistical and demographic study of socio-cultural patterns of death and dying (in relation to disease, accidents, old age, etc.) and the distribution of different religious practices vis-à-vis death and disposal all contribute to a complex necrogeography. But there are new areas too that are ripe for development, such as a shift of interest from the spaces of death to those associated with dying, bereavement, and relationships between the living and those who have 'passed over'. For example, the geography of the hospice movement, the architecture of hospices, and the movements of the terminally ill and those who take the journey with them provide a new focus. Another is the geography of belief and practice around contact with ancestors and other deceased people.

Holloway, in his work on Spiritualism and the geography of the séance, changes the focus from the fact of death to the spirit of vitality, to continuity beyond the grave and connections with the living. He considers the affects and sensations felt by those participating in the séance and the way in which they were touched by, possessed and haunted by ghosts and spirits (185). He charts the idea of 'enchanted space' and its possibility for focusing on bodies, feelings and vitality across the borderland between the living and dead, and in so doing

contributes to reorienting the contemporary geography of religion, moving it away from its fixation on traditional subject matter.

Religion in secular context

A key change in geographical studies of religion has been in the scholarly attention now given to the engagement between religion and its secular context. The distribution of religious people, their beliefs and practices and impact on the landscape is interesting in and of itself, but is nonetheless best understood in relation to the relations between religion and state, and – in many countries – between religion and the secular conditions of modernity. Religious organisations and individuals have to negotiate their relationship with secular government and other agencies, sometimes seeking recourse in human rights legislation which protects religious as well as other interests. In terms of space and geography, this process of negotiation is often witnessed in the planning process and built environment, as well as in relation to public ritual, proselytising, processions, and matters of external symbols, dress and individual behaviour. As Stump suggests, however, the relationship works in the other direction too with religious bodies seeking to resist or protect themselves from secular society by constructing firm boundaries, or by seeking to extend their influence in public matters by challenging secular laws and policies, or through the activities of faith-based organisations (2008: 268–79). Public space, health and education are key arenas in which both religious and secularist exponents may seek to 'gain ground'. This metaphor is not inappropriate as success may well be measured territorially, in terms of the colonisation of public places and the recognition of the right to own or build property, and to mark the landscape. Pnina Werbner, with reference to the sacralisation of space by British Muslims, calls this process 'stamping the earth with the name of Allah' (1996: 167). Other writers in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (Metcalfe 1996) refer to the 'islamization of space', to 'new Medinas' as well as the traditional socio-religious process of *da'wa* or propagation.

But secular spaces are interesting in their own right for geographers of religion, first, because such scholars have relevant tools and skills that enable them to examine these spaces with reference to the beliefs, practices and values that inform and shape them or that issue forth from them. Secondly, secular spaces are worthy of study precisely because they are places where religion is not present or which religious bodies are forced to negotiate or contest. In my own work with Myfanwy Franks on the location of religion in an English medical centre (Knott and Franks 2007), in addition to finding some surprising references to religion, we delved deeply into the range of secular values expressed and practised in its physical, social and discursive spaces. We saw how medical workers contested each other's interpretations of professional principles and practices, notions of vocation and code of conduct, sometimes drawing on metaphors of 'faith' and 'fundamentalism' for support or critique, and on notions of the 'sacred' to express those aspects of their work or working environment which were non-negotiable for them.

Sophie Gilliat-Ray, in her studies of what might be called 'secular sacred places' in British public institutions (such as hospitals and the Millennium Dome), considered the role they had for the people who use them, many of whom had not been nurtured in religious communities and have no formal religious affiliation. She suggested that,

[S]ites of spiritual activity that are in some senses generic or universal and where there is an absence of explicit religious symbols or architecture associated with one single faith

community, allow space for people to explore their own sometimes muddled beliefs (or lack of them) ... People can undertake their own private interpretive work ... Such spaces are thus perfectly suited to the needs of an increasing number of people who have forgotten (or who may have never known) the protocols of visiting religious buildings.

(2005: 364–65)

Her examination of the affinity between such unconventional sacred sites and the needs of the people who may pass through them raises questions about both the nature and function of secular sacred space and the process of sacralisation in late-modernity that form a new context for debates in geography of religion and the wider study of religions about sacred space.

Summary

The spatial turn evident in the work of social and cultural theorists from the late 1960s to the end of the twentieth century had an impact on the geographical and spatial study of religion and the sacred, broadening the interests of scholars and increasing the focus on theory and method. Traditional themes, such as pilgrimage and deathscapes, were revisited and developed; new themes emerged as a result of global developments, population movements, the politics of identity, awareness of the importance of gender and embodiment, and the need for secular agencies to engage with religious institutions and to express their own beliefs and interests. Small and large scales were considered: from body and locality to transnational movements and the new scapes of globalisation.

After giving examples of the many reasons for the study of religions to be concerned with spatial and geographical data and issues, this chapter focused on the small scale by considering the religious mapping of urban neighbourhoods, an example of the way in which students can engage with the subject of religion in their own localities.

The history of the geography of religion and the study of sacred space was presented, with particular reference to the work of Fickeler and Stump, van der Leeuw, Eliade and Smith. Recent theoretical and methodological contributions – by Anttonen, Tweed and Knott – were then discussed, showing the way in which scholars outside geography have worked productively with spatial concepts and tropes to understand more about religion and the sacred and to hone tools for their study. Ivakhiv's call for geographers to use their disciplinary knowledge and skills to challenge the boundary between religion and other kinds of significance and sacrality was also considered.

In the final section I took five themes – pilgrimage and movement, diasporas and migration, body, death and dying, and religion in secular context – and examined their contemporary relevance for the geographical and spatial study of religion. Examples were given from recent ethnographic work that show how scholars are able to innovate and refresh old themes as well as develop new ones. They suggest fruitful topics that can be pursued in student projects.

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Suggested reading

- Knippenberg, H. (ed.) (2005) *The Changing Religious Landscape of Europe*, Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
A collection of essays by geographers on religion in various European countries.
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A new definition and theory of religion which uses spatial and aquatic tropes, particularly the concepts of crossing and dwelling.