Information Network on Religious Movements



Annual Report April 2016 – March 2017

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Introduction

Inform has continued to fulfil its charitable objective of collecting, assessing and disseminating reliable information about minority religions, and, as usual, we were able to help a wide range of enquirers and service users. The enquirers included government departments, the police, chaplains, members and former members of movements, their relatives, students, academics, journalists and documentary makers, as well as a variety of members of the public. We also held our two annual public seminars and an additional evening seminar was organised in conjunction with Treadwell's Bookshop. Work continued on the Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements, with three volumes published in 2016 and a further four being prepared for publication between 2017 and early 2018. Inform staff have continued to update the database of religions and the Inform library with publications.

However, this period has also been a challenging time for Inform. Owing to government cutbacks in funding, Inform had to draw heavily on its financial reserves throughout 2016 and to refocus a considerable amount of time and energy on compiling proposals for project funding. We have to date been successful with gaining funding for two projects: one with the Centre for the Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements (CenSAMM) to create profiles of millennial religious movements for their website; the other for the Department for Education analysing religious movements' attitudes to education, with a focus on unregulated schooling. Nonetheless, Inform is continuing its day-to-day work of responding to enquiries while working on these research projects.

Some Major Events

In March 2016, the International Shugden Community (ISC), the group that arranged protests against the Dalai Lama and to which some New Kadampa members were affiliated, announced it was ceasing its protest activities. The New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) continued to be the group most enquired about at Inform. Of the 14 enquiries received about the NKT between April 2016 and March 2017, two were from the general public, one each from a chaplain and a relative, and the rest were from former members and their associated networks.

In July 2016, The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) had its appeal rejected against a 2015 High Court decision that it must pay £275,000 compensation to a victim who had been sexually abused by a member of the Church. The appeal court judge said the Church should pay both the fine and the legal costs of the case, which have been estimated at around £1 million. The WTBTS is continuing to appeal against a Charity Commission investigation into its handling and documentation of sex abuse claims. Similar court cases are also ongoing in America.

In Australia, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continued to investigate a number of religious movements including the Jehovah's Witnesses and Satyananda Yoga Ashram. The Commission claimed that children are not adequately protected from the risk of sexual abuse in the Jehovah's Witnesses and that the JWs demonstrated a 'serious failure' to protect its children. It is not yet clear to what extent the English and Welsh 'Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse' will cover minority religions, although 'churches, mosques and other religious organisations' do fall within the remit of the inquiry.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have also been in the news in Russia, where, on 15 March 2017, Russia's Ministry of Justice filed a claim in the Supreme Court "to declare the religious organisation, the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, extremist, ban its activity, and liquidate it". On the

same day the First Deputy of the Ministry of Justice issued a directive to suspend immediately the activity of the national Administrative Centre of Jehovah's Witnesses of Russia, and all 395 local religious organisations were forbidden to "organise and hold assemblies, rallies, demonstrations, processions, and other mass or public events; and to use bank deposits". In Kazakhstan a district court sentenced a 60-year-old Jehovah's Witness (who had converted from Islam) to five years in prison for claiming that his religious, family, and racial hatred". In South Korea, there were on-going legal battles over the Witnesses' conscientious objection to military service, with over 500 being held in prison.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed that Fethullah Gülen and his followers in the Hizmet movement were responsible for the failed coup of 15 July 2016. He decreed the closure of institutions linked to Gülen, including over 1,000 private schools, 1,000 foundations and associations, 35 medical institutions, 19 unions, and 15 universities. The assets of these institutions were to be seized by treasury. He also called on the USA to extradite Gülen for human rights abuses in Turkey; the USA has not done so. Gülen and his followers vehemently deny involvement in the coup. The UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on the UK's relations with Turkey interviewed and received written evidence from Hizmet members and concluded that there was no hard evidence of either Gülen or Hizmet being responsible for the coup, and although there was some evidence that some individual Gülenists might have been involved, this was mostly anecdotal or circumstantial, sometimes premised on information from confessions or informants, and the Committee found no evidence to justify designating Hizmet as a terrorist organization.

In September 2016, police officers were called to a Sikh temple in Learnington Spa after more than 50 individuals entered the building to stop an interfaith marriage service between a Sikh bride and a Hindu groom. It was initially reported as an armed stand-off, but this language later changed and instead the members of the protest were reported as merely carrying the traditional Sikh kirpan. It was later alleged that those who had entered the temple to protest against the marriage were members of Sikh Youth UK. *The Guardian* described this as an 'inter-generational clash' and claimed that police had overreacted.

Articles critical of Scientology, including interviews with former members, some of whom have written autobiographies about their time in the movement, continue to be published in America and the UK. Louis Theroux's new feature-length documentary about Scientology was released in the UK in October. Ex-member Leah Remini's documentary series was shown in America in November 2016.

Inform's Governors



Inform welcomed two new members to its Board of Governors. Warwick Hawkins, MBE, a former civil servant who was previously Inform's contact at the Department for Communities and Local Government and who is now Co-Director of the organisation 'Faith in Society', joined the Board in June 2016. The Right Reverend William Kenney, Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham, was appointed as the



William Kenny

Nominee of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster in September 2016.

Warwick Hawkins

There were three resignations from the Board in this period. Dr Hamish Cameron, former child psychiatrist and advisor to the Family Courts; and the Reverend Canon Ralph Godsall, nominee of the Church of England and Priest Vicar of Westminster Abbey, resigned in May 2016. Professor Conor Gearty, Professor of Human Rights Law at the London School of Economics, resigned in January 2017 due to other commitments; he has, however, joined Inform's Advisory Panel.

Under the chairmanship of Professor Eileen Barker, Inform's Board of Governors held three meetings in this period. Our Treasurer, the Reverend Andrew Maguire, presented Inform's annual accounts, which had been audited by Knox Cropper, at the Annual General Meeting and, following approval by the Governors, these were submitted to the Charity Commission and to Companies House.

The **Management Committee** met formally on four occasions under the chairmanship of Professor James Beckford; however, most of its work was conducted on a weekly or, often, daily basis by email, which enabled quick responses to issues arising over the practical running of Inform.

Staff

Accompanying the changes in Inform's financial situation, there have been some adjustments in its staff. No longer able to afford a full-time Administration Officer, we very reluctantly had to make



Staff and Governors' farewell dinner for Amanda and Sibyl (left to right: Eileen; George; Sarah; Shanon; Sibyl; Marat; Suzanne; Alan; Amanda; Andrew

the post redundant and say farewell to Sibyl Macfarlane, who has, however, been appointed to an interesting new job with the Red Cross. We were also sorry to lose Dr Amanda Van Eck after almost 20 years' contribution to Inform, for, although we were able to offer her a return to her full-time contract, she resigned from her position as Deputy Director for family reasons to go to live with her partner in the South of France. Dr Suzanne Newcombe resigned from her post as Research Officer when she accepted a position as a half-time Lecturer in Religious Studies at the Open University, having previously taught there

as a part-time Associate Lecturer. She continues to work out of the Inform office as a Research Fellow on her European Research Council funded project, AYURYOG, and also continues to advise the Inform staff on the CenSAMM project.

Sarah Harvey continues to work for two days a week and from April 2017 will be the Senior Research Officer responsible for managing the projects in close consultation with Professor Barker and other staff members. She is still working on her PhD thesis entitled, *A Nicer Birth: Negotiating the Ideal and the Practical in Natural Birth,* and plans to submit it by the end of 2017. Silke Steidinger continues in her post as a part-time Assistant Research Officer, whilst for the rest of her time, she remains a United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) registered attachment-based psychoanalytic psychotherapist working part-time for the NHS, and has started a Master's programme at the Royal College of Arts.

Following interviews for new positions held in March 2017, three new Research Officers were



appointed: Susannah Crockford, who has just completed her PhD, After the American Dream: Spirituality and Political Economy in Northern Arizona, in the Anthropology Department at the London School of Economics, will work full time from

April 2017. Dr Shanon Shah, who had already been working at Inform on a

voluntary basis, alongside a paid internship at the Templeton Foundation, will work two days a week from May. And Dr Catherine Loy, a former student of Inform's Governor, Dr Marat Shterin at King's College, London, who has been working at Christian Aid and teaching at the University of Roehampton, was pointed to work two days a week from mid-June 2017.

Student Placements

Inform has hosted its usual steady stream of student placements.

- Martyn Venskutonis, who had graduated from King's College, London, worked one day a week in the office from November 2014 until November 2016. He is now working full time elsewhere.
- Debbie Elliot, a graduate from the University of Wales, worked one day a week in the office from June 2015 until September 2016.
- Siyu Feng, an undergraduate student from Amherst College, USA, who spent a term as an exchange student at SOAS, worked two half-days a week at Inform between February and June 2016, when she returned to the USA.
- Tingfeng Yan, a first year LSE Anthropology student, worked one day a week between June and September 2016.
- Oscar Satchell-Baeza, who had graduated from King's College, London, worked in the office for one week in July.
- Sophia Poppy Povey, a first year student in International Relations at St Andrews University, worked in the office for one week in August.
- Emily Nicolle, a Masters Student at King's College, London, has been working one day a week since June 2016.

Enquiries

The highest number of enquiries to Inform between April 2016 and March 2017 concerned Buddhist movements, including the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), Triratna (formerly called Friends of the Western Buddhist Order - FWBO) and Rigpa. Many of the NKT enquiries were received from former members who had previously contacted us. However, there was also a number of new enquirers, some of whom had become concerned about NKT running various mindfulness and meditation classes in healthcare settings. Enquiries about Triratna followed a BBC 'Inside Out' programme (aired in September 2016) which had focused on historical cases of sexual abuse in the 1980s. However, enquirers have told Inform that sexual abuse within the movement has occurred more recently. Triratna has been updating its safeguarding policies as a result of these allegations.

Enquiries which have involved a considerable amount of staff time include those that have required the preparation of reports on the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the Khatme Nubuwwat movement, whose activities include campaigning against Ahmadi Muslims; the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (sometimes referred to as the Exclusive Brethren); and Dahn Yoga (also called Dahn Hak or Body and Brain Yoga).

Amanda was interviewed for a BBC documentary about Aravindan Balakrishnan (Comrade Bala) who, in January 2016, was sentenced to 23 years imprisonment for various counts of child cruelty, rape and assault. The documentary, 'The Cult Next Door', was aired in January 2017. Whilst Amanda's interview was not included in the final edit, the director expressed gratitude for the contextual information which she had provided. Suzanne was interviewed for a BBC Radio 4 Programme 'The Secret History of Yoga' which was aired on International Yoga Day on 17 June 2016 and for a BBC Magazine article on yoga and relaxation in November 2016.

Among the media interviews in which Eileen was involved were some for ITN, Sky News, the BBC, the Religious Freedom Center of the Newseum Institute, Washington DC, The Joongang Daily (PRK), Radio Islam, Mediacorp (Singapore), and various freelance journalists from around the world.

A number of enquiries requested further information and resources on the issue of religious radicalisation and extremism across traditions, especially around the times of our two public seminars which were both focused on this issue (see Appendices II and III). One new group, about which we received five enquiries during the second half of 2016, was Parachristo, a Korean Christian group linked to the movement Shincheonji, Church of Jesus, or the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (SCJ). This group was researched and added to the Inform database.

Some Statistics

In the period April 2016 to March 2017, Inform dealt with 186 enquiries concerning 54 different groups. These do not include either enquiries about groups we classified as 'unknown' (11 of which have since been, or are in the process of being, researched, classified and filed), or any of the 82 enquiries about 20 different general themes.

It should be noted that the number of enquiries received about a particular group is merely a statistic relating to which groups are generating the most enquiries; it does not indicate either negative or positive evaluations.

The groups most enquired about during the period:	
New Kadampa Tradition	14
Triratna (previously Friends of the Western Buddhist Order)	8
Parachristo (SCJ)	5
Unification Church	4
Scientology	3
Dahn Hak Yoga	3
International Churches of Christ	3
Rigpa	3

Enquirers

Inform responded to a wide range of enquirers, with academics and the media making the highest number of enquiries in this period. Enquiries from government bodies, which were the largest proportion of enquiries in the previous period (2015-16), have reduced this year, related to ongoing negotiations for funding and the restructuring of government departments after the 2015 election and the 2016 resignation of David Cameron.

Academics/writers	20
Media	20
General public	19
Chaplains and church network	18
'Cult watching groups'	17
Ex-members	17
Current members	16
Relatives and friends	15
Students	15
Government bodies	12

Enquiries were also received from teachers (3), legal firms (2), and one each from a counsellor, an education institution, an interfaith organisation and a think tank. As always, we received some enquiries from anonymous sources unwilling to identify themselves (5).

19 international enquiries were received from the USA (6), Germany (4), Canada (2), Sweden (2), and one each from Albania, Belgium, Indonesia, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

Speaking and other Engagements

Inform Governors

Eileen Barker:

- "Whose Rights Trump Whose Rights? NRMs & competing Human Rights" Keynote address at the University of Padua, Italy, April 2016.
- "What's in a Name? New Non-Religious Movements by any other name ...?" ISORECEA conference, Zadar, Croatia, April 2016.
- "Okay, We got it Wrong, But now we're gonna get it Right: Internal Reactions to Child Abuse in New Religions." Dalarna University, May 2016.
- "Peace and Deradicalisation", Wycliffe College, Oxford, May 2017.
- "Cults, sects and/or new religious movements in contemporary democracies." Birkbeck College, University of London, 3 June 2016.
- "Why 'Spirituality' and Related Practises continue in Popularity despite the West's Apparent Decline in Religious Belief." *How the Light Gets In* Festival at Hay on Wye. 16 June 2016.
- "The Curse of Cults and the Scourge of Sects? Or a Coming Out of New Religious Movements?", Keynote address at the 17th Believers Church Conference on the theme *The Come-Outer Tradition*, Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada, 25 June 2017.
- Keynote talk on the presentation of the Human Rights Without Frontiers' Annual Report on "Religious and Belief Minorities under State Oppression." House of Lords, 29 June 2017.
- "Cults, Sects and New Religions: What are they Like and How do they Change?" talk at the British Embassy, Seoul, 4 July 2017.

- "Unification, Diversification or Fragmentation? The Globalization, Localization and Glocalization of a Korean New Religious Movement" Plenary talk at CESNUR Annual conference, Daejin University, South Korea, 5 July 2017.
- "Minority and muted voices: Challenges in identity construction for second generation and former members of unpopular new religions." British Association for the Study of Religions Annual Conference, University of Wolverhampton, 6 July 2016.
- "What is Freedom Anyway? Paradoxical Perceptions of Freedom with Religion" *Freedom* of/for/from/within Religion: Differing Dimensions of a Common Right? 4th ICLARS Conference, St Hugh's College, Oxford, 9 September 2016.
- "Can new religious movements demonstrate public benefit?" Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, 30 October 2016.
- "Studying New Religious Movements." Keynote talk, Jäneda, Estonia, 17 November 2016.

George Chryssides:

- "Beyond Armageddon Is the Jehovah's Witnesses' Paradise Earth conceivable?" Postgraduate seminar, Spurgeon's College, London, 14 December 2016.
- 'Jehovah's Witnesses'. American Academy of Religion, Chaplaincy Session. San Antonio, USA. 19 November 2016.
- 'Jehovah's Witnesses and the Uniformity of Space'. British Association for the Study of Religions; University of Wolverhampton, 5-7 September 2016.
- 'Religions in Wolverhampton'. Introductory lecture: British Association for the Study of Religions; University of Wolverhampton, 5-7 September 2016.
- 'Beyond Armageddon Is the Jehovah's Witnesses' Paradise Earth conceivable?' Keynote lecture: Conference on "Affective Apocalypses" Queen's University Belfast, 18-19 August 2016.
- 'The Truth is Out There and How Jehovah's Witnesses Find It'. Keynote lecture at: 'The Jehovah's Witnesses in scholarly perspective: What's new in the scientific study of Jehovism?' Antwerp, Belgium. Organised by the European Observatory of Religion and Secularism in partnership with CLIMAS, Université Bordeaux Montaigne, CESNUR (Turin) and the Faculty of Comparative Studies of Religion and Humanism (FVG). 21-22 April 2016.

Marat Shterin:

- Consultancy for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on New Islamic Movements in Britain and Russia, Paris, 13 October 2016.
- An Away-Day Training session for the Victoria State Police on New and Radical Religious Movements, Melbourne Australia, 9 November 2016.
- 'Russia's Muslims With and Without Islam'. Keynote Lecture at the International Conference 'The image of Islam in Contemporary Russia, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, 6 October 2016 [it was focus on new trends and movements within Russian Islam]
- 'Faith and Frontline: Religion in the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis'. Public Lecture, Monash University, Melbourne Australia, 9 November, 2016, and Victoria University Wellington, New Zealand, 21 November 2016 [It focused on the role of fringe religious groups in this crisis]

Inform Staff:

On 18th November, Amanda, Suzanne and Sarah gave two training workshops at the Department for Education. The DfE had approached Inform to give this training in the summer and we worked closely with them to tailor the workshops to what was needed, including a planning meeting at the DfE in October. Amanda, Suzanne and Sarah delivered two 2.5 hour workshops which consisted of a presentation on 'the 5 main faiths' (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism) as well as an overview of religious diversity in the UK and then an exercise in which attendees broke into small groups to each discuss a case that had come to the DfE Prevent helpline.

Amanda:

- In September 2016, Amanda gave a talk to a training seminar of clergy who were visiting from Germany on a trip organised by Kai Funckschmidt of the Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen. The talk focused on complexities of fraud and deception in religious milieus.
- In October 2016, Amanda attended the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) conference in Atlanta, where she spoke about the research on which her book *Perfect Children Growing Up on the Religious Fringe* (2015, Oxford University Press) is based. She also joined an Author meets Critic panel for her book, where four scholars reviewed her book.
- Amanda gave a talk on the topic of radicalization to the Bromley branch of the University of the Third Age on 22nd November.

With Sarah:

• In July 2016, Amanda and Sarah gave a talk at the Inform-Treadwells event, *The UK Satanic Abuse Scare in the UK: 25 Years On.* Their talk was entitled 'Perceptions of Paganism: 28 years from the Inform Archives.'

Sarah:

- Sarah gave a talk about Inform and religious diversity in the UK to students from Oregon State University on a London exchange programme on the 30th November.
- She also gave talks to two Cub Scout groups (consisting of around 20 eight-to-ten year olds) on the topic of religious festivals in March 2017.

Suzanne:

- Suzanne introduced a panel discussion at the conference, *ISKCON at 50*, organised by Bath Spa University in connection with ISKCON, in April 2016. This also involved a follow-up correspondence with the ISKCON Revival Movement.
- From 19-21 May, Suzanne attended an international academic conference which she helped organise as part of the Modern Yoga Research Group entitled *Yoga darśana, yoga sādhana: traditions, transmissions, transformations* in Krakow, hosted by the Jagiellonian University Institute for the Study of Religions. She also gave a well-received paper on the case of a 1938 incident of kaya-kalpa treatment involving an Udasi sadhu who, it is claimed, had reached the age of 185 years when he died in 1955. She is likely to be involved in publishing the conference proceedings in the form of special issues of journals.
- In early June 2016 and again in March 2017, she gave a talks to sixth form Sociology and Religious Studies students at St Marylebone School in London
- Also for the Ayuryog project, Suzanne gave a presentation about relaxation, yoga and rejuvenation claims in early English-language yoga manuals at an invitation-only conference

held at the Wellcome Institute in London on 17 June and attended a team meeting in Vienna.

- In October 2016, Suzanne gave a paper on 'Human Hibernation and 185-year-old Sadhus Claims of life extension and aspirations for immortality in the modern period' at an Ayuryog workshop in Vienna entitled 'Rejuvenation, longevity, immortality. Perspectives on rasāyana, kāyakalpa and bcud len practices'
- In February 2017 she spoke to sixth form students at St Mary's, Ascot and gave a presentation entitled 'Immortality and the Medical Interventions of Sadhus' to the Postgraduate Social Sciences and Religion Seminar at King's College, London.
- In March 2017 she gave a guest lecture on Yoga in Modern India for MA students at SOAS.

Inform's Visitors

Inform has welcomed many visitors to its office, ranging from academics, writers, researchers for media institutions and think tanks, to members and former members of religious movements, and more. On 12 September 2016, Inform hosted two members of the French government's 'cult watching group' MIVILUDES, (the Inter-Ministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combatting Cultic Deviances) for a day-long meeting when we exchanged information about our respective Centres, our methods, notable cases, and more.

Inform staff have had several meetings with representatives of CenSAMM and the Department for Education in order to discuss the research projects. We have also had meetings to discuss other avenues of funding: Eileen and Amanda had meetings with Lord Nash (from the DfE) and Lord Bourne (from the DCLG). Jamie Loder, from the risk analysis company Herminius, visited Inform to meet with Eileen and Amanda and to learn how Inform might be able to help with risk analysis projects. Inform staff and some governors attended a fundraising information session led by James Newell, Director of the Fundraising and Management division of Kingston Smith.

Resources

Throughout the year we updated and added to Inform's database. By the end of March 2017, our electronic database held information on 5,002 movements, groups and organisations; 102 new groups were added to the database during the period covered by this report, and details of countless others were updated by Inform staff and students during their placement with Inform.

Our library has also increased and, by the end of March 2017, our Endnote bibliographic database has a total of 22,812 entries, 10,101 of which are entries of publications located at Inform, including 1,562 books, 303 edited books and 4,633 journal articles. 5,406 entries refer to publications among those which, owing to lack of space in Inform's accommodation, are located at Professor Barker's house, including 1,473 books, 470 edited books and 2,170 journal articles. (There are thousands more books and articles that have yet to be entered in Endnote.)

Research

Eileen visited and was visited by members and former members of several religions, including The Family International (Children of God); Church of Almighty God (Eastern Lightning); Hizmet (the Gülen movement – including a visit to their school in North London); ISKCON (the Hare Krishna

movement); the Hutterites; Jehovah's Witnesses; the Jesus Fellowship; Knutby Filadelphia; the Mormons; Scientology; Swaminarayan; the Unification Church; and Won Buddhism. She also attended events organised by various groups, religions and movements such as the Ahmadiyya Community, the Brahma Kumaris, CAGE, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and the Dialogue Centre. In addition, she attended a number of meetings organised by fund-raising bodies and by the Association of Charity Chairs, when there were talks on various aspects of running charities and the opportunity to network with others facing similar challenges.



Eileen being interviewed for South Korea's *Joongang Daily*

In May, Eileen took a trip down memory lane when she attended the funeral of Doris Orme, who, with her husband Dennis, had led the British Unification Church in the 1970s when she (Eileen) had started her study of new religious movements. There she met a number of greyhaired former and current members of the Church whom she had not seen since they were enthusiastic converts preparing to restore the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Later in the year, whilst in Korea, she visited Cheongpyeong, the vast Unificationist complex north of Seoul, and was able to catch up with both current and former Unificationists of different factions. She also met

with the Jehovah's Witnesses who had over 500 of their members in prison on grounds of conscientious objection, and visited the centres of a number of Korean new religions.

In Beijing, Eileen gave what has now become her annual course of lectures at the Chinese People's Public Security University on religion and the methodology of the social sciences, comparing reactions to various new religions in China and the West. She also visited a rehabilitation centre for former members of Falun Gong in Nanjing and spent a day in Shanghai with scholars and lawyers interested in unregistered religions.



Eileen lecturing to police cadets at the Chinese People's Public Security University in Beijing Poster showing a comic depiction of Falun Gong's leader, Li Hongzhi, alongside Branch Davidian members being arrested in Waco, Texas, and Jim Jones, leader of the People's Temple, on a wall of the 'Love Family Care Centre', a rehabilitation centre for former members of Falun Gong, Eileen visited in Nanjing, September 2016 Eileen and Amanda were invited to Dalarna University in Falun in Sweden as peer reviewers of a three-year research project that was nearing its conclusion. Dr Liselotte Frisk, Dr Peter Åkerbäck and Sanja Nilsson had researched and drafted a book about children in new religious movements in Sweden. On this occasion, a day-long open seminar was held to present the research findings, and the following day there was a closed meeting when the peer reviewers and colleagues commented on the draft chapters. After this event the group had a weekend visit with Knutby Filadelfia, a controversial evangelical community.



Amanda and Eileen with Swedish colleagues visiting the Knutby Filadelphia Community. Third from the left in the front row is Åsa Waldau, the charismatic 'Bride of Christ'.

Amanda met several times with David Perfect, from the University of Chester, who was an invaluable source of information and support in her research on changes in inter-faith work and the Inter Faith Network for the UK. This was for a paper to be published in a forthcoming volume in the Routledge Inform series, *Minority Religions and Uncertainty*. Amanda attended part of the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) conference in September, and was asked to contribute a brief article for their publication Crest Security Review

(https://crestresearch.ac.uk/news/csr-issue-3-transmission/ which can be accessed at

<u>https://crestresearch.ac.uk/comment/twist-how-beliefs-may-come-and-go/</u>), having been published in the winter of 2017. She was invited to attend a workshop at Lancaster University, organised by Dr Sarah Marsden, on how to support the reintegration of 'foreign fighters'. And she attended the annual meeting of the Family Survival Trust.



Eileen and Professor Milda Alisauskiene from Lithuania with colleagues appropriately robed to enter the Fellowship of Daesoon Truth Temple (Yeoju, South Korea)

In April 2016, Suzanne attended a workshop on Digital Literacy led by the Religious Studies Project in Milton Keynes. In May she attended an All-Parliamentary Working Group meeting on Yoga and Indian Traditional Sciences held at the Archbishop's Room in Millbank House. In June, she attended the Ground-Breaking ceremony of

Bhaktivedanta Manor's Haveli. During September she attended a seminar at SOAS on the legacy of Max Weber on studies of India. In November she attended an LSE Anthropology seminar given by Joe Webster from Queen's University Belfast about his recent research on the Exclusive Brethren in Northern Ireland and the doctrine of separation. She was also present at two LSE events related to caste in Britain and India, and several events related to Tibetan yoga and longevity practices held in relation to the exhibition *Tibet's Secret Temple* at the Wellcome Museum. And she attended two meetings of the Educational Advisory Committee for CenSAMM (in August 2016 and February 2017).

In October, Sarah attended Adam Dinham's inaugural lecture at Goldsmiths, entitled "Religious Literacy - taking religion seriously, whether you believe it or not".

Publications by Inform Staff and Governors

Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements:

With Eileen Barker as the series editor, work has continued on the 'Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements'.¹ Three volumes were published in early 2017: 'Cult Wars' in Historical Perspective: New and Minority Religions and Visioning New and Minority Religions: Projecting the Future both edited by Eugene V. Gallagher. These include updated versions of papers first presented at the 2014 Inform International Conference, 'Minority Religions: Contemplating the Past and Anticipating the Future'. The third volume was Fiction, Invention and Hyper-reality: From Popular Culture to Religion, edited by Carole M. Cusack and Pavol Kosnáč. Four further volumes are in the pipeline. See Appendix IV.

Eileen Barker:

2017 'From Cult Wars to Constructive Cooperation – Well, Sometimes' in Eugene V. Gallagher (editor) '*Cult Wars' in Historical Perspective: New and Minority Religions*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. pp 9-22.

2017 'The Changing Scene: What Might Happen and What Might Be Less Likely to Happen?' in Eugene V. Gallagher (editor) *Visioning New and Minority Religions: Projecting the Future*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. pp 7-19.

2016 "From The Children Of God to The Family International: A Story of Radical Christianity and Deradicalising Transformation" in Stephen Hunt (ed.) the Handbook of Contemporary Christianity: Movements, Institutions & Allegiance. Leiden: Brill. 402-421.

James A. Beckford:

2016 'Comments by James A. Beckford.' Religion in Society 7(1): 102-104.

2017 'Preface' in Elisabeth Arweck (editor) *Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. pp ix-xi.

2017 'Hope and creativity. The shifting nexus between religion and development' in Mathew Guest and Martha Middlemiss Lé Mon (editors) *Death, Life and Laughter. Essays on Religion in Honour of Douglas Davies.* Abingdon and New York: Routledge. pp 141-60.

George Chryssides:

2016 With Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Dawoud El-Alami. *Terror and Religion: An Interfaith Dialogue*. Exeter UK: Impress.

¹ <u>https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Inform-Series-on-Minority-Religions-and-Spiritual-Movements/book-</u> series/AINFORM See Appendix IV.

2017 With Stephen E. Gregg. 'The Silent Majority?': understanding apostate testimony beyond 'insider/outsider' binaries in the study of new religions' in Eugene V. Gallagher (editor) *Visioning New and Minority Religions: Projecting the Future*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. pp 20-32.

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Inform Seminars



Sibyl and Sarah at the Inform publications table

Inform's biannual Seminars were well attended with around 90 participants at each. *New Religious Radicalisms* was held on the 21st May 2016 with the usual mixture of scholars, members of religious minorities, and other interested persons (see Appendix II for the full programme). The Autumn Seminar, on 5th November 2016 was on a similar, but more focussed topic: *Minority Religions and Extremism in Schools and on Campus*. The speakers included two parents who had chosen to home educate their children for different reasons, and a former member of a girl's Islamic boarding school. One of the



issues that recurred throughout the day was the government's Prevent Programme (see Appendix III for the full programme).

Extremism Panel from left to right: James Walters; Mehri Niknam; Alison Scott-Baumann; Paul Thornbury; Eileen Barker; Aliyah Saleem; Simon Webb; Rachel Sara Lewis; Radha D'Souza

Following the May Seminar, Eileen organised a closed workshop involving representatives of four 'cult-watching groups' (Inform; CIAOSN from Belgium; ² Info-cult from Canada;³ and CIC from Switzerland,⁴ and representatives from minority religious groups (the Jesus Fellowship; ISKCON; the Unification Church and Scientology). This was the eighth meeting of what has become an annual event, with each 'cult-watching group' taking it in turns to host the meeting. It usually includes a closed discussion on a particular topic for one day – on this occasion it was the issue of 'confidentiality' – and visits with different local religious movements on a second day – on this occasion we invited a 1970s convert and a second-generation member in a leadership position from (1) ISKCON, (2) the Jesus Fellowship, (3) the Unification Church and (4) the Church of Scientology to discuss changes their respective movements had undergone over the past three decades. We found it interesting that the first three of these religions considered they had undergone considerable change, whilst the Scientologists declared that their movement had really not changed at all. Even more interesting was that the members who had thought their movements had changed pointed to



precisely the same early mistakes they thought there had been as those that we have heard former members talk about.

On 5 July 2016, Inform, in conjunction with Treadwell's Bookshop, organised an evening seminar entitled, *the UK Satanic Abuse Scare in the UK: 25 Years On.* One of Inform's Honorary Research Fellows, Professor Jean La Fontaine, gave the opening address, followed by a presentation by Amanda and Sarah. The other speakers were the journalist Dr. Rosie Waterhouse, Prudence Jones of the Pagan

Federation and Phil Hine, editor of *Pagan News*. The event opened with a wine reception and a display of Treadwell's books and relevant materials from the Inform archives, and closed with a

Participants of the 'cult-watchers' workshop'

panel discussion. It was a very interesting and successful event with around 50 attendees.

² Le Centre d'Information et d'Avis sur les Organisations Sectaires Nuisibles, <u>http://www.ciaosn.be/</u>

³ <u>http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-home.html</u>

⁴ The inter-Cantonal Information Centre on Beliefs <u>http://www.cic-info.ch/wp/wp-</u> <u>content/uploads/CIC delpiant A5 EN Web 150417.pdf</u>

The Future

For the remainder of 2017, Inform staff will be focussing to a large extent on the two funded research projects for CenSAMM and the Department for Education respectively. This will involve writing profiles about 16 different millennial movements for the CenSAMM website and writing reports about a number of minority religions and unregulated schooling for the DfE. This latter project will involve primary research including visits to schools and interviews with teachers, pupils, their relatives, critics as well as observing some Home Schooling conducted by minority religions. It will also include workshops with DfE staff and the production of information for teachers, covering the key findings of the project. In addition, we are waiting to hear whether we have been successful in gaining funding for a number of other projects.

Despite this new focus, Inform remains committed to achieving its charitable objective of collecting, assessing and disseminating reliable information about minority religions in order to help enquirers. We shall continue to collect and assess material to add to our unique collection of resources and we hope to organise events that will contribute further to a greater understanding of minority religions.

We look forward to working with the new staff, who will be bringing new experiences, new information and a fresh outlook to Inform.

Eileen Barker Chair

APPENDIX I

Patrons

The Right Reverend Graham James, Lord Bishop of Norwich (Church of England) The Reverend Dr Hugh Osgood, The Moderator of the Free Churches' Group Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia (Greek Orthodox Church) Bishop Paul Hendricks, Nominee of the Westminster Roman Catholic Diocese Professor Lord Desai of St Clement Danes Lord Ahmed of Rotherham Baroness Sally Greengross of Notting Hill

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New Religious Radicalisms

Saturday 21 May 2016 London School of Economics

The presence of speakers on an Inform programme does not mean that Inform endorses their position. The aim of Inform Seminars is to help participants to understand, or at least recognise, different perspectives.

- 9.30 10.00 <u>REGISTRATION</u>
- 10.00 10.05 Welcome
- 10.05 10.30 **Eileen Barker** (Founder and Honorary Research Fellow, Inform) New Religious Radicalisms
- 10.30 10.55 Anabel Inge (PhD graduate, King's College London) 'Radical' Conversion: Why Young British Women Become Salafi
- 10.55 11.20 **Michael Williamson** (London International Christian Church) Actions speak louder than words!
- 11.20 11.50 TEA/COFFEE

11.50 – 12.15 **Tristan Sturm** (Lecturer, Queen's University Belfast) *Judeo-Evangelical Nationalism Through the Landscape at Armageddon*

- 12.15 12.40 Maria Porsfelt and Morgan Arundel (Tara Yoga Centre, London) Are the Teachings and Practices of Traditional Yoga Radical? Introducing an Uncompromising Approach to an Ancient Tradition for the Modern World
- 12.40 13.40 LUNCH
- 13.40 14.05 **Alexandra Plows** (Research Fellow, Bangor University) *Ritual, Magic and Bulldozer Diving: A Retrospective of 1990s Eco Paganism in the UK*
- 14.05 14.30 **Susan Palmer** (Research Fellow, McGill University) White Radicalization in North America and Government Responses: The Hutaree and the Freemen-on-the-Land

14.30 - 15.00 TEA/COFFEE

- 15.00 15.25 **Ismail Mesut Sezgin** (Executive Director of the Centre for Hizmet Studies) *Hizmet Movement and Radical Thinking*
- 15.25 16.15 GENERAL PANEL DISCUSSION

APPENDIX III Minority Religions and Extremism in Schools and on Campus

Saturday 5 November 2016 London School of Economics

The presence of speakers on an Inform programme does not mean that Inform endorses their position. The aim of Inform Seminars is to help participants to understand, or at least recognise, different perspectives.

- 9.30 10.00 **REGISTRATION**
- 10.00 10.05 *Welcome*
- 10.05 10.20 **Eileen Barker** (Founder and Honorary Research Fellow, Inform) *Minority Religions and Extremism in Schools and on Campus*
- 10.20 10.45 Alison Scott-Baumann (Professor of Society and Belief, Centre of Islamic Studies SOAS and Principal Investigator of Islam on Campus project) Who Cares about Islam on Campus?
- 10.45 11.10 **Radha D'Souza** (Reader, International Law, University of Westminster) *Secularism* and Fundamentalism in South Asia: A Historical Understanding
- 11.10 11.40 <u>TEA/COFFEE</u>
- 11.40 12.05 **Mehri Niknam** (Executive Director of The Joseph Interfaith Foundation) *Hearing it From the Horse's Mouth*
- 12.05 12.30 Lynn Davies (Emeritus Professor of International Education, University of Birmingham and Co-Director, ConnectFutures) Building Resilience to Religious Extremism
- 12.30 13.30 LUNCH
- 13.30 13.55 Yasmeen Akhtar (Programmes Manager, Three Faiths Forum)
- 13.55 14.20 **Paul Thornbury** (Head of Security, LSE) *Prevent in Higher Education: Security Perspectives*
- 14.20 14.50 TEA/COFFEE
- 14.50 15.15 Rachel Sara Lewis (Home Educator) Education Crisis and My Personal Solutions
- 15.15 15.40 Aliyah Saleem (Co-founder, Faith to Faithless) What Impact is The Deobandi Movement Having on Young British Muslims?
- 15.40 16.05 **Simon Webb** (Author of "Elective Home Education in the UK") *Religious 'Extremism' and Home Education in Britain*
- 16.05 16.10 Jim Walters (Chaplain and Interfaith Adviser, LSE) Perspective of a University Chaplain
- 16.10 16.45 GENERAL PANEL DISCUSSION

APPENDIX IV

https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Inform-Series-on-Minority-Religions-and-Spiritual-Movements/bookseries/AINFORM

Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements

Series Editor Elleen Barker

Inform is an independent charity that collects and disseminates accurate, balanced and up-to-date information about minority religious and spiritual movements.

The Routledge Inform Series addresses themes related to new religions, many of which have been the topics of inform seminars. The series editorial board consists of internationally renowned scholars in the field.

Books in the series will attract both an academic and Interested general readership, particularly in the areas of Religious Studies, and the Sociology of Religion and Theology.



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