

Information Network on Religious Movements



inform

Annual Report

April 2020 – March 2021

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incorporated in England as a company limited by
guarantee under the Companies Act (No. 2346855).

Introduction

Inform has continued to fulfil its charitable objective of collecting, assessing and disseminating reliable information about minority religions. As usual, we were able to help a wide range of enquirers and service users. These included government departments; the media; students and academics; members and former members of religious, spiritual and other ideological movements, and their relatives; and members of the public. Staff have continued to update the Inform database of religions. The staff and governors of Inform have been regular contributors to the Religion Media Centre's briefings.

During this period, Inform has been focusing on completing specifically funded projects. Among other activities during this period, we have completed work for different government departments, written blog posts, articles and fact sheets for the Religion Media Centre. Inform has also continued to develop its partnership with the Theology and Religious Studies department at King's College London, collaborating on academic research, outreach, training programmes and seminars as well as continuing to offer work placements for KCL students.

Inform has also been looking towards how to contribute to wider conversations which ensure that accurate information about minority religions is part of the public discussion. Inform made formal submissions to the APPG on Religion in the Media's enquiry on religious literacy in the media which led to the *Learning to Listen* report, the Minister for Faith Colin Bloom's Faith Engagement Review and the public consultation on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Inform continued to make active contributions to the National Working Group for Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Belief.

With support from the Open University, Inform held a successful 'sandpit' event looking at ways of increasing collaborative working and bid-writing amongst organisations working to promote more accurate information about religion in society. A direct outcome of this project was partnering with the Faith and Belief Forum and the Open University on an 18-month project on Promoting the Exploration of Religion and Worldviews in Schools, funded by Culham St Gabriel's Educational Trust. This runs from January 2021 to July 2022 and aims to spread awareness of the importance of studying Religion and Worldviews in schools.

In June 2020 Inform successfully concluded a 5-year ERC-funded project on the relationships between Yoga, Ayurveda and Indian longevity practices. As a final output, Inform created a series of online resources highlighting what can be gained from adopting a comparative perspective on how different religious traditions approach health, healing and immortality.

During this period, Inform was able to hold two public seminars; given the ongoing Coronavirus situation, both took place online. They were both well attended and received. We are therefore exploring the idea of offering at least one online seminar every year going forward.

The Association for the Sociology of Religion gave Professor Eileen Barker, Inform's founder and former Honorary Director, its 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Some Significant Developments within Religious Movements

Coronavirus has continued to be the major focus in this period. Much academic work and media coverage has focused on the ways in which religious movements have had to adapt their services and on the ways in which they have provided services of public benefit, such as food banks, coordinating food and medicine provision for those who are isolating, providing correct medical information to their communities, and their places of worship becoming vaccination centres. Academic research projects include the 'British Ritual Innovation under Covid-19' (BRIC-UK) project at Manchester Metropolitan University. The positive work undertaken by religious movements during Coronavirus, and their connections to their local communities, seems to have reinvigorated government engagement with faith groups. In March 2020, Lord (Stephen) Greenhalgh was appointed as the new Faith Minister and has engaged with the UK's faith movements on various matters relating to Coronavirus, such as death management and safety at places of worship.

A further area in which religious movements and the Coronavirus pandemic intersect is in anti-vaccination sentiments (popularly called Anti-Vaxx). Government and others have invested in trying to understand the anti-vaxx position. An article by Sophie Mylan and Charlotte Hardman in *The Lancet*, 27 March 2021, referenced Inform authors and stated that, "Lessons from studying cults (which are less pejoratively called new religious movements, describing movements that emerged in the late 20th century) can inform approaches to the anti-vax movement" ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)00443-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)00443-8/fulltext)). Inform has been updating its information on a number of groups which take an anti-vaxx positions. Related to this, academics have found renewed purchase in the term 'conspirituality', coined by David Voas and Charlotte Ward in 2011, to indicate a cross-over of spirituality and conspiracy theories. International research projects are studying this phenomenon, such as the (Con)Spirituality in Australia Project.

With our lives increasingly revolving around the online space there has been greater concern at government and media level about potential online radicalisation and extremism. The campaigning movement, HOPE Not Hate, continues to be influential in this field and Inform has also continued to update its information on religious aspects of movements in this milieu and we have written a factsheet and other briefing materials about the Order of Nine Angles.

Much attention, media and academic, was directed towards the Q-Anon movement in this period. The popularity of this movement seemed to reach its pinnacle with the 6th January 2021 insurrection against the United States Congress meeting in the Capitol Building, Washington DC. Vocal support for the movement has lessened since Joe Biden became President of the United States of America. Academics debated whether or not it is helpful to describe the movement as a 'cult'; others traced the historical development of the movement from the 'Satanic Ritual Abuse Panics' of the 1980s and 90s, through to 'Pizzagate' in 2016, to the present.

In terms of new religious movements, there has been a continuation of cases and issues from previous years. This includes the court case, in America, of Keith Raniere and other leaders of NXIVM, a personal development movement in which an inner circle of women experienced sexual slavery, branding and corporal punishment. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to experience persecution in Russia, where they were banned as a legal entity in

2017 and, in March 2021, the Ghent congregation were fined on charges of discrimination based on religious beliefs and incitement to hatred for shunning former-members. In China religious minorities including Uyghurs and members of the Church of Almighty God and Falun Gong continue to experience persecution.

Religious hate tracking organisations such as Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) and the Jewish charity the Community Security Trust have reported increased hate crimes in this period. Instances of domestic abuse have also risen and a number of different charities have been created or seen their workload increase. There has been an increased recognition of this issue within Haredi Jewish communities, for instance, and a new Domestic Abuse Bill is working its way through Parliament. This also has some connection to the issue of abuse within religious movements, which is a major area of concern for those involved in the study of religion. Inform is involved in a number of research projects and initiatives to study and raise awareness in this area, as well as prevent future harm, including the National Working Group for Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Belief.

Inform's Governors

No new governors were appointed in this period and there were no changes to the Board. Professor Kim Knott continued as Chair of the Board of Governors. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic the Board met only once in this period, via Zoom, under the Chairmanship of Professor Knott. Inform's Treasurer, the Reverend Andrew Maguire, presented Inform's annual accounts, which had been audited by Knox Cropper, at the Annual General Meeting on 6 October 2020 and, following approval by the Governors, these were submitted to the Charity Commission and to Companies House.

The Management Committee consisted of Dr George Chryssides, Professor Knott and the Reverend Andrew Maguire. Dr Suzanne Newcombe continued as Honorary Director, attending meetings of the Management Committee ex officio. The Management Committee met online on 10 occasions under the chairmanship of Dr Chryssides; ad hoc work was conducted by email, which enabled quick responses to issues arising over the practical running of Inform.

Staff

Inform is under the Directorship of former Research Fellow Dr Suzanne Newcombe, who has also continued to work at the Open University where she was promoted to the position of Senior Lecturer in October 2020. She continued as a member of the Educational Advisory Committee for CenSAMM. She became an editorial board member for a new Open-Access journal *Extremism* published at the University of St. Andrews as well as continuing her editorial roles at the *Journal of Yoga Studies* and as book reviews editor at *Religions of South Asia*. This year she completed the five-year ERC AYURYOG project and saw the publication of the *Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies*, co-edited with Karen O'Brien-Kop at the University of Roehampton.

The rest of the permanent team also remained the same: Dr Sarah Harvey, Senior Research Officer, worked three days a week and has been responsible for contributing to and managing projects, responding to enquiries and ensuring the database of information is as

up-to-date as possible. She also worked two days a week as a Postdoctoral researcher on the King's Together project, Understanding the Experiences and Brain Processes of Spirit Mediums, for which Suzanne Newcombe also acted as an advisor. Silke Steidinger continued in her post as a part-time Research Officer; this year saw her primarily providing assistance with online seminars and video production. Warwick Hawkins continued as the Office Manager, working with Andrew Maguire on financial management.

Towards the end of 2020, Dr Shanon Shah returned to the team at one day a week for some specific project work. Former staff member Dr Susannah Crockford returned to help with a specific project. Our student placement, Ruby Forrester, was paid to contribute to some project research as was our former intern Abineash Barathan. Jane Cooper, a researcher and writer and Dr David Robertson contributed to Inform's work on a consultancy basis.

The Inform team worked from home during this period owing to Coronavirus lockdown. Occasional online team meetings have taken place to monitor workstreams.

Student Placements

Two student placements came to an abrupt end when the office closed in March 2020 due to Coronavirus. Anna Nedey and Abineash Barathan, both third year undergraduates at King's, had been working with us one day a week since early 2019. They were a great help in keeping the database up to date and assisting with the research for specific projects. As mentioned above, Mr Barathan did a piece of paid work for us during lockdown. Both he and Ms Nedey went on to complete Master's degrees.

In September 2020, Ruby Forrester, who had recently completed her undergraduate degree at Cardiff University, contacted us to enquire as to whether she could take up an online-only placement. After an interview, we were happy to offer her a position and she has worked hard to raise Inform's social media profile. In consultation with Dr Newcombe and Dr Harvey, she posted regularly on the Inform Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts and has live Tweeted during our online seminars. In the period October 2020 to May 2021, Inform's Instagram following grew by 59%, and the Twitter account averaged between 7,000 and 13,000 impressions every month. We now use social media for advertising our completed leaflets and factsheets, ongoing projects and surveys.

Ms Forrester has also assisted with updating leaflets and undertaking research on specific projects. We were also able to pay for her assistance on one project. She is planning to undertake a Master's degree at King's in September 2021 and we hope that she will be able to work in the office at some point in the near future.

Enquiries

Between April 2020 and March 2021, 123 enquiries were received – less than in previous years. These related to 35 different religious groups, one of which was previously unknown to us. There were a few groups about which we received more than one enquiry in the year, namely:

ICOC (International Churches of Christ) - 3
School of Economic Science - 3
Heaven's Gate - 2
Jesus Christians - 2
Kingdom Church - 2
New Kadampa Tradition - 2
Rigpa - 2
The Family International - 2
Twelve Tribes - 2
Vissarion - 2

64 of the enquiries related to the ten most popular themes. The majority (44 enquiries) were about Inform's work, often accompanied by requests to interview staff.

As usual, the media were the most frequent enquirer. Below is a breakdown of enquirers:

Media - 34
Government bodies - 18
Students - 15
Academics - 12
Former members - 9
Relatives and friends of members - 7
Chaplains/Church Network - 6
General public - 6
Cult watching groups - 5
Current members - 3
Medical - 2
Law - 1
Other - 3
Anonymous - 3

26 international enquiries were received, from the USA (9), the Netherlands (3), 2 each from Australia, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates, and one each from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden and Switzerland.

47 enquirers had previously contacted Inform, 76 were new enquirers. 42 enquiries went to Professor Eileen Barker initially. She either answered these directly or asked Inform to respond.

The majority of enquiries were received via email (80) – unsurprisingly, given that Inform staff were working from home in the whole period.

Speaking and other Engagements

Inform Governors

Eileen Barker

18 June 2020: Organiser and speaker at Zoom Seminar with Unification Theological Seminar, New York City on second-generation leaders in the Unification Church.

15 October 2020: Talk on 'The Changing Faces of Minority Religions in a Global World' at Zoom conference in Bulgaria.

22 October 2020: Talk on 'Senior Women Scholars of Religion Reflect on their Academic Journeys' for Dialogue Society webinar.

19 November 2020: Talk on Australia Broadcasting Corporation on 'cults'.

29 November 2020: Talk recorded for International Cultic Studies Association.

4 January 2021: Organiser and speaker at Zoom Seminar with Unification Theological Seminar, NYC on position of women in the Unification Church.

9 January 2020: Talk on Korean background to the theology of Daesoon Jinrihoe for Australian National University webinar.

4 March 2021: Talk on 'Is "Othering" a Universal Concept? After all, how else might we know who we are?' to webinar at Institute of Sociology of the University of Wrocław.

24 March 2021: Talk on Tai Ji Men on Taiwanese webinar.

Visits and interviews with members and former members of various minority religions including Baha'i; Church of Almighty God; Daesoon Jinrihoe; Jehovah's Witnesses; Jesus Fellowship; Mormons; Scientology; Tai Ji Men; The Family International; Umbanda; Unification Church.

George D Chryssides

Conference presentations:

14 July 2020: 'Jehovah's Witnesses and Covid-19'. Conference at the End of the World (online). www.crowdcast.io/e/the-conference-at-the/2 14 July 2020.

3 September 2020: 'Why Opposition? An Exploration of Hostility towards Jehovah's Witnesses'. (Online). Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius. Theme: Jehovah's Witnesses and Their Opponents: Russia, the West, and Beyond; organized by CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), Vytautas Magnus University, and New Religions Research and Information Center.

4-6 March 2021: 'Stages of Religious Oppression: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses'. Online conference on Limitations of Religious Freedom (Part 3); Sigmund Neumann Institute for the Research on Freedom, Liberty and Democracy in cooperation with Center for Regional and Borderlands Studies/Institute of Sociology of the University of Wrocław.

George D Chryssides has also joined the Editorial Boards of the Wuhan Journal of Cultic Studies and the Journal of the Daesoon Academy of Sciences. He continues as President of the International Society for the Study of New Religions.

Kim Knott

December 2020: Keynote lecture at an international workshop on 'Sacred Places in a Post-secular and Globalized World', organised by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

January 2021: Response to the papers given at the Inform Seminar on 'Becoming religious: How and why beliefs and practices are transmitted'.

Graham Harvey

December 2020: Keynote lecture, "Re-assembling democracy: cultural festivals as ways to generate approaches to democracy, citizenship, and ecology", Second International Conference on Indigenous Religions, hosted by Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia.

March 2021: "Divinities and the making of relations", Baron Thyssen Centre for the Study of Ancient Material Religion seminar focused on Emma-Jayne Graham's book Reassembling Religion in Roman Italy (Routledge 2021).

March 2021: Open University Religious Studies department blog: "Indigenous festivals and the re-making of the world" <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/religious-studies/?p=1242> .

Inform Staff

Suzanne Newcombe

21 April 2020: New Book Network interview on Yoga in Britain.
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/category/religion-faith/hindu-studies/> .

18 May 2020: 'The institutionalisation of Yoga as medicine in modern India' interview with Jacqueline Hargreaves: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsCd-VczN1g> .

22 June 2020: 'Inform's collaboration with the Ayuryog Project' interview with Sarah Harvey. Ayuryog final video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVBJIm4Xb-U> .

21 June 2020: Interviewed for Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) programme on the History of Yoga for the radio programme Rear Vision.
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/yoga-in-the-west/12359840> .

9 July 2020: 'Yoga and the Body' interview with Sarah Harvey. Ayuryog final video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57Y2sKfYYBk> .

27 August 2020: Presented on 'Religious Literacy, Safeguarding and an introduction to Inform' at the African Families Link Workers meeting (Social workers group).

19 September 2020: 'Yoga in Britain' Online Lecture. Triyoga London. Advanced Teacher Training 'Academics' Weekend'.

7 October 2020: Chaired online panel session via Zoom celebrating the end of the 'The Haṭha Yoga Project: understanding the history of physical yoga' SOAS Centre of Yoga Studies. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBJqS3PeQul> . 2.5k views as of Jan 2021.

29 October 2020: Presented on 'Conspiracy Theories - Beliefs, Communities and Public Health Implications' to the African Families Link Workers meeting (Social workers group).

30 November 2020: New Book Network interview on Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies. <https://newbooksnetwork.com/routledge-handbook-of-yoga-and-meditation-studies>.

23 November 2020: Online Book launch of Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jMOcS0ez8Q&t=13s> .

5 December 2020, with Karen O'Brien-Kop: 'Exploring Yoga and Meditation Across Cultures and Disciplines: Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies' for 'New Directions in Yoga Studies Online Weekend School Programme' Oxford Centre of Hindu Studies.

7 December 2020: Invited respondent to Theo Wildcroft's online book launch. Post-lineage yoga: from guru to #metoo. SOAS Centre of Yoga Studies. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-bgma16dMo .

9 December 2020: Contributing interview to 'Tuned in Dropouts' Lost Highways: Dispatches from the Shadows of the Rocky Mountains. Podcast of History Colorado Center. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2vbggNCehaRXCmqFfbISY9?si=1HIENRQMTMmaoAxWEqgiYw> .

19 February 2021: Guest on Yogic Studies Podcast discussing Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies. <https://podcast.yogicstudies.com/1046752/7967773-20-suzanne-newcombe-karen-o-brien-kop-routledge-handbook-of-yoga-and-meditation-studies> .

18 March 2021: 'Critical Religious Literacy? Religious Studies for a Functional Society' Online Religious Studies Seminar series at Roehampton University, London.

24 March 2021: Recorded Lecture on 'Yoga in Britain' for Naropa University, Colorado, USA on a MA module on 'Modern yoga' convened by Phillip Deslippe.

Sarah Harvey

April 2020: Briefing on the Genesis 2 Church of Health and Healing, for Religion Media Centre.

Inform's Visitors

No visitors were received in the Inform office this year as staff were working from home throughout. Inform staff had online and telephone meetings with members of several government departments, social workers, police officers, and a MP.

Resources

Throughout the year we updated and added to Inform's resources. By the end of March 2021, our electronic database held information on 5124 organisations. 15 new groups were added to the database during the period covered by this report, less than usual as no students could work in the office and hence on the database.

With the help of a small grant from the Spalding Trust, we were able to update all 15 of our information leaflets. These are mostly now available on the Inform website.

Although we have the use of two storerooms in the basement of Kings College's Norfolk Building, these are too small for books, journals etc to be displayed or easily accessed. We are therefore anxious to find somewhere, preferably in London, where we might store our books and archival material.

Project Work

In this period, Inform completed four projects for Government agencies, providing in-depth reports, executive summaries and presentation materials on a range of topics. We also wrote three articles for the new CenSAMM website, the Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements (<https://www.cdamm.org>).

To mark the end of the ERC-funded project, AYURYOG, on which Dr Suzanne Newcombe was a Research Fellow, she and Dr Sarah Harvey conducted filmed interviews with ten academics about their research on alternative health practices and immortality beliefs. The films are available on our website at <https://inform.ac/Inform-Ayuryog>.

For the July 2020 seminar on 'Sexual Abuse framed by Faith or Belief – Exploring boundaries and contexts' Inform was grateful for the financial support of the Religion and Sexual Abuse Project led by Professor Amanda Lucia at the University of California Riverside, funded in part by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Inform continued its participation in the National Working Group on Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Belief, of which Dr Newcombe, Dr Harvey and Professor Eileen Barker are all members. We assisted with the creation of an animation about child abuse linked to faith and belief – this is at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjLGQ4xk_k_AQkrivheWxkQ.

In January 2021 we started a new project funded by Culham St Gabriel's Trust: Promoting the Exploration of Religion and Worldviews (RW) in Schools, in partnership with the Open University and the Faith and Belief Forum. For the first phase, Dr Harvey wrote a baseline report outlining the state of opinion on RW as a subject, as well as exploring attitudes to religion in contemporary Britain that impact on school and government policy. This included

creating a survey for university students and RE teachers about their views and experiences of RW, to which Silke Steidinger and Ruby Forrester also contributed research.

Dr Harvey and Dr Newcombe worked on a King's Together Project, Understanding the Experiences and Brain Processes of Spirit Mediums. Dr Harvey is Research Associate for the project, and was the qualitative research lead for the first stage, recruiting and interviewing 40 mediums about their experiences of spirit communication. She is currently writing two articles based on this research. Dr Newcombe is an Advisor to the project.

In this period Inform continued its partnership with the Religion Media Centre (<https://religionmediacentre.org.uk>), and Dr Newcombe and Dr Harvey were invited to become RMC Advisers. Inform prepared 11 fact sheets, covering the Genesis 2 Church, the Order of Nine Angles, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Druidry, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Methodist Church. Dr Harvey regularly attended the RMC's weekly briefing sessions, and she and Professor Eileen Barker presented at a briefing on conspiracy beliefs in April 2020. We are in regular contact with RMC's Director and assist with its media enquiries whenever we can.

Publications by Inform Staff and Governors

Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements

With Professor Eileen Barker continuing as the series editor, work has continued on the Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements <https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Inform-Series-on-Minority-Religions-and-Spiritual-Movements/book-series/AINFORM>.

This year saw the publication of two new volumes in the Inform-Routledge series:

Minority Religions and Uncertainty, edited by Matthew Francis and Kim Knott (May 2020).
Reactions to the Law by Minority Religions, edited by Eileen Barker and James T Richardson (December 2020).

There are two further edited volumes in production for this series in 2021/2022.

Inform Governors

Eileen Barker

2020: "We need to know the truth about cults." Pp. 86-92 in *Cults, Sects, and New Religions*, edited by M. M. Eboch. New York: Greenhaven.

2020: "So What's New about Violence? A Reflection on New Religions and Physical Force." Pp. 169-91 in *Religionen und Gewalt*, edited by Franz Winter. Vienna: Tyrolia-Verlag.

2020: "Children of God." Pp. 126-27 in *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.

2020: "Unification Church." Pp. 876-77 in *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.

2020: "New Religious Movements." Pp. 536-39 in *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.

2020: "Scientology." Pp. 735-36 in *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.

2020: "Freedom of Religion." Pp. 305-7 in *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.

2020: "Hare Krishna (International Society for Krishna Consciousness)." Pp. 341-2 in *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.

2020: "People's Temple." Pp. 570-72 in *The Sage Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.

2020: "Freedom for me and, perhaps, you – but surely not them? Attitudes to new religions in contemporary democracies / Свобода для мене і, можливо, для вас - але, звичайно, не для них? Ставлення до нових релігій у сучасних демократіях." *Religious Freedom / Релігійна Свобода* 25:102-08.

2020: Preface. pp. ix-xv in "New Religious Movements in Modern Asian History: Socio-Cultural Alternatives", ed. David W. Kim. Lanham, Boulder New York, London: Lexington.

2020: "Denominationalization or Death? A comparative examination of processes of change within the Jesus Fellowship Church and the Children of God aka The Family International " Pp. 99-117 in *The Demise of Religion: How Religions End, Die, or Dissipate*, edited by Michael Stausberg, Stuart A. Wright, and Carole M. Cusack. London: Bloomsbury.

2020: "Health, Healing and Body in Minority Religions." AYUYOG/INFORM Untangling Traditions https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6lxzbrUiHY&feature=emb_logo .

2020: "Even New Religions have Legacies." *e-Rhizome* 2(2):65-80.

2020: "In Memoriam: Benjamin Zablocki." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 24(1):132-33. Reproduced with permission at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MSg8luL19iLnnylZC7NXQxrtJ72vrBunZicJWS3r-zs/edit> .

2021: "Contemporary Creations and Re-cognitions of Sacred Sites." Pp. 25-62 in *Scared Sites and Sacred Stories Across Cultures: Transmission of Oral Tradition, Myth, and Religiosity* edited by David W. Kim. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

2021: "Fight, flight or freeze? Reactions to the law by minority religions." Pp. 1-22 in *Reactions to the Law by Minority Religions*, edited by James T. Richardson and Eileen Barker. Abingdon: Routledge

2021. with Sarah Harvey: "Children of God / The Family International." in *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*, edited by James Crossley and Alastair Lockhart. 15 January: www.cdamm.org/articles/children-of-god.

George Chrystides

2020: *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. Entries on: Love V.D.; Lucifer II.E; Magi V.D; Manna IV.B; Maranatha II.B; Mark, Gospel of II.D; Martyr, Martyrdom IV.D . Vol.17: 45-47; 113-114; 421-423; 783; 871; 940-941; 1087-1088. Meal Customs VII.D; Meat IV.B; Meditate/Meditation III.D; Messiah IV.D; Messianic Age II.D; Messianism II.E; Metaphysics II.D; Metatron II; Michael (Angel) IV.D; Middle Asia III.E. Vol.18: 234-235; 266-267; 439-440; 875-878; 923-925; 961-963; 1032-1033; 1037-1038; 1134-1135; 1201-1202.

2021: "Charisma—Elusive or Explanatory? A Critical Examination of Leadership in New Religious Movements." *Fieldwork in Religion* 16(1): 35-54.

2021: "Why Opposition? An Exploration of Hostility Towards Jehovah's Witnesses." *The Journal of CESNUR* 5(1) January-February: 16-38.

2021: "Cult Critics and Cult Apologists: Can there be middle ground?" *Wuhan Journal of Cultic Studies*. 1 February: 64-82. Accessible online at https://www.academicpublishing.co/uploads/1/3/5/3/135306095/wjcs_1_2.pdf .

2021: Book chapter, "Heaven's Gate and Charismatic Leadership", in Zeller, Benjamin E. (2021). *Handbook of UFO Religions*. Leiden, Brill: 269-388.

2021: 'Jehovah's Witnesses: Disfellowshipping, Shunning, and the Ghent Ruling'. *Bitter Winter*, 20 April. Accessible online at <https://bitterwinter.org/jehovahs-witnesses-disfellowshipping-shunning-and-the-ghent-ruling> Accessed 20 April 2021 .

Kim Knott

2020, with Benjamin J. Lee: "More Grist to the Mill? Reciprocal Radicalisation and Reactions to Terrorism in the Extreme Right Digital Milieu", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 14:3, 98-115. <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2020/issue-3/lee-and-knott.pdf> .

2020, with Benjamin J. Lee: "How and Why Ideologies are Shared and Learned", *CREST Guide* (crestresearch.ac.uk).

2021, with Benjamin J. Lee: "Fascist Aspirants: Fascist Forge and Ideological Learning in the Extreme Right Online Milieu", *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2020.1850842> .

Graham Harvey

2020: "Indigenous rituals re-make the larger than human community" in Harvey, G., S. Pike, M. Houseman, and J. Salomonsen (eds). *Reassembling Democracy: Ritual and Cultural Resource*. London: Bloomsbury. pp.69-85. ISBN 9781350123014 Open access at <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/reassembling-democracy-ritual-as-cultural-resource/ch4-indigenous-rituals-remake-the-larger-than-human-community> .

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Inform staff

Suzanne Newcombe

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2020: "Yoga in Europe" in Knut Jacobson and Ferdinando Sardella (eds.) *Handbook of Hinduism in Europe*. Leiden: Brill. pp. 555-587. ISBN: 978-90-04-43228-4.

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Sarah Harvey

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2021, with Suzanne Newcombe: "Inform", in Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements. www.cdamm.org/articles/inform .

Inform Seminars

Despite the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic we were able to run two public seminars during the year, using Zoom. The programmes are reproduced at Appendix 2. The seminars were:

July 2020: 'Sexual Abuse Framed by Faith or Belief'

Many of the cults and new religious movements of the 1970s were assumed to be awash with abusive behaviour. However, high profile cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church have highlighted the pervasive potential that religious groups can be affected by behaviour understood as sexual abuse. This is a problem not confined to any particular religious context. The dynamics of sexual exploitation of minors have now been well explored and safeguarding frameworks are becoming more standard. Are there lessons that can be learned from working with children which can be applied to situations involving adults?

In many cases abuse appears to be incidental to the theological and ethical frameworks; in other cases, the sexual activity has explicit justification within a belief framework that is later framed as abuse by outsiders or 'survivors.' Does the framing of the behaviour make a difference for understanding the harm caused? To what extent are concepts like 'spiritual abuse', 'fraud' or 'moral injury' helpful in understanding the dynamics of adult sexual abuse in religious contexts?

The seminar considered the issue of sexual abuse occurring within religious contexts in hopes of identifying new ways of considering the problem and of mitigating harm. In the organisation of this seminar, we were grateful for the support of the Religion and Sexual Abuse Project, funded in part by the Henry Luce Foundation.

January 2021: 'Becoming Religious: How and Why Beliefs and Practices are Transmitted'

All people, young and old, are involved in the process of learning and passing on ideas, beliefs and practices that are important to them. This is how they express their identities and commitments, and how they sustain their worldviews, ideologies and ritual systems. Without effective processes for intergenerational and adult transmission, religious institutions, new or well-established, cannot survive and thrive. That 'chain of memory', as Danièle Hervieu-Léger noted, is the major feature distinguishing religion from other systems of meaning. And, although many in Western societies find themselves unschooled and adrift when it comes to religious affiliation and participation, they have increasing access, especially online, to an immense array of spiritual opportunities and resources. What paths

they choose to follow, formal or informal, and how they go about acquiring the necessary beliefs, practices and training is varied.

The seminar explored the motivations of minority religions and spiritual seekers to transmit and learn, and the processes they employ.

Speakers at both seminars included academics and members and former members of minority religions.

Ruby Forrester, our student placement, wrote a short article for the Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions (JBASR), reflecting on these two Inform seminars and the benefits and disadvantages of online seminars.

The seminars are available to watch on Inform's YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWrL53MHFxZQ1ac2iHKhrrg> .

The Future

Despite the ongoing challenges of its financial situation, Inform remains committed to its charitable objective of helping enquirers, through providing accurate, up-to-date and contextualised information about minority religions to the wide range of enquirers who approach us every year.

We shall continue to gather material to add to our unique collection of resources, and to further a greater understanding of minority religions through our publications and events.

Appendix 1

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
Baroness Sally Greengross of Notting Hill

Board of Governors

Professor Kim Knott, PhD (Chair), *Professor of Religious and Secular Studies, Lancaster University*
George D. Chryssides, DPhil (Vice-Chair); *Honorary Research Fellow in Contemporary Religion, University of Birmingham*
Professor Eileen Barker, PhD, FAcSS, FBA OBE *Professor Emeritus, Department of Sociology, London School of Economics and Political Science*
Professor Graham Harvey, PhD; *Reader in Religious Studies, Open University*
The Right Reverend William Kenney; *Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham, Nominee of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster*
The Reverend Andrew Maguire, MA, BD (Treasurer), *Nominee of the Free Churches' Group; Superintendent Minister of the West Norfolk Methodist Circuit*
Marat Shterin, PhD; *Reader in Sociology of Religion, Department of Religious Studies, King's College London.*
Reverend Alan Walker, MA, MTh, LLM, *Parish Priest*

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Honorary Research Fellow: Professor Jean La Fontaine, PhD
Honorary Research Fellow: Dr Bernard Doherty, PhD

Appendix 2

‘Sexual Abuse framed by Faith or Belief – Exploring boundaries and contexts’

Wednesday 22 July 2020 7-8:30pm BST

The recording of the seminar can be watched on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5itTMZadhOc>

Some of the information covered in this seminar may be upsetting or triggering for some of those watching. If this is the case, there are a number of specialist services which might be helpful. If you are:

In the UK look at this resource list: <https://www.bustle.com/p/13-resources...>

In the USA: <https://www.rainn.org/national-resour...>

In Australia: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/s...>

If you are looking for other kinds of support or help in a different geographical area, Inform may be able to point you in the direction of other support organisations if you send us an email at Inform@kcl.ac.uk and see www.inform.ac for more information.

In the organisation of this seminar, we are grateful for the support of the Religion and Sexual Abuse Project, funded in part by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Many of the cults and new religious movements of the 1970s were assumed to be awash with abusive behaviour. However, high profile cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church have highlighted the pervasive potential of religious groups to be affected by behaviour understood as sexual abuse. This is a problem not confined to any particular religious context. The dynamics of sexual exploitation of minors have now been well explored and safeguarding frameworks are becoming more standard. Are there lessons that can be learned from working with children which can be applied to situations involving adults?

In many cases abuse appears to be incidental to the theological and ethical frameworks; in other cases, the sexual activity has explicit justification within a belief framework that is later framed as abuse by outsiders or ‘survivors.’ Does the framing of the behaviour make a difference for understanding the harm caused? To what extent are concepts like ‘spiritual abuse’, ‘fraud’ or ‘moral injury’ helpful in understanding the dynamics of adult sexual abuse in religious contexts?

This online Inform seminar will consider the issue of sexual abuse occurring within religious contexts in hopes of identifying new ways of considering the problem and potential ways of mitigating harm.

Speakers and respondents include:

- Eileen Barker, professor emeritus of sociology with special reference to the study of religion, London School of Economics
- Leethen Bartholomew, head of the National FGM Centre at Barnardo's

- Mary Finnigan, journalist and broadcaster - co-author with Rob Hogendoorn of Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism - the Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche.
- Amanda Lucia, associate professor, University of California-Riverside, USA
- Gordon Lynch, Michael Ramsey professor of modern theology at the University of Kent
- Lisa Oakley, associate professor of applied psychology at University of Chester and chair of National Working Group for child abuse linked to faith or belief
- Michelle Tonkin, Rigpa whistle-blower and former Buddhist nun
- Theo Wildcroft, visiting fellow, The Open University and alt-ac.uk
- Belinda Winder, professor of Forensic Psychology at the specialist sexual crime unit at Nottingham Trent University
- Linda Woodhead, distinguished professor, department of politics, philosophy and religion, University of Lancaster

"Becoming religious - how and why beliefs and practices are transmitted"

Thursday 14th January 2021, 17.30-19.30 GMT

The recording of the seminar can be watched on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMrORf31ieY>

All people, young and old, are involved in the process of learning and passing on ideas, beliefs and practices that are important to them. This is how they express their identities and commitments, and how they sustain their worldviews, ideologies and ritual systems. Without effective processes for intergenerational and adult transmission, religious institutions, new or well-established, cannot survive and thrive. That 'chain of memory', as Danièle Hervieu-Léger noted, is the major feature distinguishing religion from other systems of meaning. And, although many in Western societies find themselves unschooled and adrift when it comes to religious affiliation and participation, they have increasing access, especially online, to an immense array of spiritual opportunities and resources. What paths they choose to follow, formal or informal, and how they go about acquiring the necessary beliefs, practices and training is varied.

This seminar will explore the motivations of minority religions and spiritual seekers to transmit and learn, and the processes they employ.

Short presentations in order of appearance:

- "The Stickiness of Non-Religion? Intergenerational Transmission and the Formation of Non-Religious Identities in Childhood" Dr Anna Strhan, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of York and Dr Rachael Shillitoe, Research Associate, Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham
- "Making Witches: Transmission of Wicca Before, During and After the Era of the Self-help Paperback" Dr Christina Oakley Harrington, Pagan Federation
- "The role of education in the development of British Hindu diasporas" Rasamandala das, founder and national coordinator for ISKCON educational services and PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge
- "Inventing Memory: the challenges of mass conversion in a liberal setting." Professor 'Ben' Pink Dandelion, Professor of Quaker Studies, University of Birmingham
- "Immigration, Socialisation and 'Intra-Religious Conversion' Among British Muslims" Dr Riyaz Timol, Research Associate in British Muslim Studies, Cardiff University
- "Religious transmission among British Sikhs" Dr Jasjit Singh, Associate Professor, School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science, University of Leeds

with Professor Kim Knott, Professor Emerita of Lancaster University responding.