



## Open Research Online

### Citation

Slatter, Ruth (2023). Geographical approaches to religion in the past. *Geography Compass*, 17(4), article no. e12682.

### URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/87751/>

### License

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

### Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

### Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding

# Geographical approaches to religion in the past

Ruth Slatter 

The Open University, Geography and  
Environmental Studies, Milton Keynes, UK

## Correspondence

Ruth Slatter.

Email: [ruth.slatter@open.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.slatter@open.ac.uk)

## Abstract

This review assesses (anglophone) cross-disciplinary research that has used geographical methodologies to study religion in the past. It identifies three prominent themes within the existing literature: the spatialisation of religion, the intersections between religion and built environments, and the relationships between religion and physical landscapes. It argues that the application of geographical approaches to the study of religion in the past has made important contributions to feminist and postcolonial attempts to de-centre religious leaders and social elites. However, it also demonstrates that the existing literature has been fundamentally informed by inherently modern and western definitions of religion. Primarily, it identifies how the existing literature has prioritised the study of institutionalised Abrahamic religions, emphasised the analysis of sacred-secular dichotomies, and assumed that religious affiliation involves personal belief and spiritual encounter. In response, this paper calls for geographical approaches to religion in the past to engage with a more diverse range of subjects and use network or assemblage approaches to challenge modern and western assumptions about religious practices and experiences.

## KEYWORDS

geographical approaches, history, religion, sacred, spiritual encounter

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2023 The Authors. *Geography Compass* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

This is the first dedicated review of geographical approaches to religion in the past. There have been regular reviews of the trends, patterns, and oversights within geographies of religion (Denzin Gergan, 2015; Dwyer, 2016; Kong, 1990, 2001, 2010; Sanderson, 2007; Tse, 2014, 2019; Wilkins, 2021; Woods, 2011). There have also been many reviews of histories of religion (Kselman, 2006; Levitin, 2012; Rennie, 2012; Soares, 2014). These reviews have prioritised geographical studies of religion in the here and now or analysed the historiography of specific religious communities. When they have included references to geographical approaches to religion in the past (Brace et al., 2006; Della Dora, 2018), they have always positioned this research alongside geographical research into religion in the here and now or reviewed it as one example of broader thematic assessments of religion. Therefore, geographical approaches to religion in the past have never been reviewed as a specific body of literature. In response, this paper is a focused assessment of how historical geographers, historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and theologians have used geographical approaches to study religion in the past.

A review of geographical approaches to religion in the past is important and necessary because, although firmly situated within broader debates and trends within geographies and histories of religion, this research has encountered specific challenges and made distinctive contributions to the study of religion. Firstly, unlike cross-disciplinary approaches to religion in the here and now, those studying religion in the past have rarely been able to talk to, observe, or actively participate in the practices or communities they study. They have engaged with many different sources, including textual, numerical, visual, and material archives, the built environment, and physical landscapes. Indeed, they have begun to find innovative ways of undertaking participatory research with communities from the past (Denning et al., 2022). Nevertheless, they have largely been reliant on sources that have survived, been preserved, or made accessible because of their association with, or position within religious institutions' carefully curated archives (Bailey et al., 2009). This has created distinct challenges, particularly when trying to explore religion in the past beyond institutional contexts. But it has also provided meaningful opportunities to demonstrate the value of geographical approaches to religion. Principally it has allowed those undertaking geographical approaches to religion in the past to demonstrate how the concepts of space and place can be effectively used to negotiate the biases and uneven power dynamics within institutional archives. However, existing geographical approaches to religion in the past have also been fundamentally informed by the modern and western origins of the concept of religion. Principally, they have prioritised institutionalised expressions of Abrahamic religions, emphasised sacred-secular dichotomies, and assumed that religious affiliation involves personal belief and spiritual encounter. Therefore, this body of literature requires fundamental reconfiguration.

This paper will begin with a summary of cross-disciplinary debates that have informed, or should inform, the agendas and directions of geographical approaches to religion in the past. It will then draw on these debates to critically review (anglophone) geographical approaches to religion in the past, before concluding with specific suggestions for future directions.

## 2 | APPROACHING RELIGION - KEY DEBATES

Several debates will inform this paper's assessment of geographical approaches to religion in the past and its recommendations for future developments. Therefore, this section will introduce feminist and postcolonial theories and their relationships with geographical approaches to religion, before focussing on cross-disciplinary debates about the colonial origins and applications of the concept of religion.

Geographers and historians of religion have long been inspired by feminist and postcolonial theories to de-centre the perspectives, agendas, and influences of religious leaders and social elites (Hollywood, 2004; Kong, 2001). This has resulted in increasing academic interest in everyday or lived religion, through exploration of religious practices beyond institutional contexts (Kong, 2002, 2005; Holloway, 2003). It has led scholars to consider how social

categories like age, class, gender, and race have influenced individuals' engagements with religion (Armstrong, 2013; Dwyer & Parutis, 2013; Falah and Nagel, 2005). And it has resulted in new reflections on individuals' embodied experiences of religion (Vaderbeck et al., 2011). Such approaches have intersected with increasing calls for recognition of the importance of the more-than-rational aspects of religion. Arguing that divine or transcendent encounters are, and have been, fundamental and distinctive characteristics of religion, researchers have emphasised the need for more intentional analysis of spiritual beliefs and encounters that seriously engage with religion's 'more-than-material' characteristics (Tse, 2019, p. 22; Hollywood, 2004; Holloway, 2006; Dwyer, 2016). For example, Amy Hollywood (2004) encouraged historians to believe historical accounts of spiritual encounter without allowing modern secular assumptions to inform how they are interpreted. While Justin Tse (2014, 2019) argued that geographers of religion should undertake grounded theologies that explore how communities' or individuals' understandings of the transcendent inform their engagement in preformative place making. However, exploring more-than-material everyday religion poses particular challenges when undertaking historical research. When researching religion in the here and now, scholars have been able to use interviews, ethnographies, and participatory methods to gain insights into lived religion and the affect of spiritual encounter on individuals' experiences of space and place (Denning, 2021; Dwyer et al., 2019; Williams, 2016). However, those researching religion in the past have had to develop more innovative approaches. Some have found personal written reflections (Aalders, 2015; Cruickshank, 2006; Taves, 1999), but most have had to cultivate creative ways of unearthing insights into the mundane and transcendent aspects of religion from institutional archives focused on the intentions of religious leaders and bureaucratic systems (Whyte, 2017). In particular, this paper will celebrate how geographical approaches to religion in the past have demonstrated how space and place can be used as effective tools to de-centre religious leaders and social elites and gain new insights into the transcendent aspects of religion.

Geographical approaches to religion in the past also need to engage with cross-disciplinary debates about the colonial origins and applications of the concept of religion. The word religion has been traced through centuries of contested and changing meanings (Cotter & Robertson, 2016; Dubuisson, 2003; Smith, 1962), but is now widely used to describe specific belief systems - like Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism - and individuals' participation in practices or beliefs that are not secular (Fitzgerald, 2000). While this definition has been used to identify and analyse cultural practices across space and time, it is widely acknowledged that its development and application has never been neutral. Instead, many have shown that it is specifically modern and western (Botta et al., 2016; Hirst & Zavos, 2005; Scott, 1999). They have demonstrated that it was established to disseminate and legitimise modern, western, and Christian values (Botta et al., 2016; Fitzgerald, 2000; Murrey, 2017). Furthermore, they have highlighted how it is now so ingrained within academic thought that cross-disciplinary research into religion has continued to promote these values and censure alternative cultural practices (Cotter & Robertson, 2016). Geographical approaches to religion in the past are no exception and their subject matter, methodologies, and priorities have been consistently informed by modern and western assumptions.

The fundamentally modern and western nature of religion is apparent in three ways. Firstly, informed by Christian churches' relationships with, but intentional estrangement from, society and culture, the concept of religion assumes that religious groups are independent institutional organisations (Hirst & Zavos, 2005). Secondly, because Christian churches provide space and time to engage with the sacred away from the apparent profanity of everyday life, it defines religion as everything that is not secular (Fitzgerald, 2000). Finally, due to Christian, specifically Protestant, emphasis on individual faith and spiritual encounter, it maintains that religious participation always involves personal belief in, and experience of the divine or transcendent (Cotter & Robertson, 2016; Tremlett, 2020). Cross-disciplinary scholars have demonstrated that these modern and western assumptions are not universal truths. They have emphasised how spiritual expressions are not always associated with institutional frameworks. They have explained that dichotomies between the sacred and secular rarely exist beyond modern western society. They have highlighted how beyond Protestant Christianity, religion has rarely required personal belief and spiritual encounter. Furthermore, they have shown that the internalisation of these assumptions originates from white European colonisers using religion to control and judge non-white, non-Christian cultural practices (Botta et al., 2016; Fitzgerald, 2000; Murrey, 2017).

However, most pertinently, these studies have highlighted how colonial values continue to be present within contemporary academic studies of religion. Initially, the nineteenth-century Comparative Science of Religion played an explicit role in mobilising religion as a tool of cultural imperialism by categorising and ranking rituals and spiritualities according to modern, western, and Christian criteria (Cotter & Robertson, 2016). Since then, the relationships between academic approaches to religion and colonial agendas have been more subtle, but no less present. In the twentieth century, informed by colonial values, the World Religions Paradigm only studied religions that conformed to modern and western definitions of religion and assessed them against Christian practices and values (Fitzgerald, 2000; Hirst & Zavos, 2005). While until this day, modern and western values and agendas remain implicitly internalised within cross-disciplinary studies of religion. Most notably, distinctions between the sacred and the secular have informed social scientists' tendency to either focus on religious ideas and their relationships with social practices or the experiential and emotional aspects of religious belief and encounter (Holloway, 2011; Kong, 2001). Similarly, emphasis on religion's spiritual affect reflects the assumption that religion necessarily involves individual faith and personal experience (Tremlett, 2020).

In response, scholars have questioned whether religion is a useful and appropriate framework for studying culture across time and space. Some have deconstructed the concept and rejected any attempt to use it as a framework for ongoing research (Taira, 2018). For example, focussing on the false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, Timothy Fitzgerald (2000) argued that explorations of culture should make no distinction between cultural practices that involve engagements with the transcendent and those that do not. In contrast, while others agree that the concept of religion has challenging historical baggage, they argue it cannot be entirely disregarded within academic research as it continues to function as an important concept in the real world (Hedges, 2018; Schilbrack, 2013). This has led some to develop new words (Smith, 1962), phrases (Dubuisson, 2003), or approaches (Jazeel, 2013) to mitigate, confront, and undermine religion's modern and western assumptions.

Within geographical research, there have been some attempts to think critically about religion and the concept's history (Holloway, 2011). However, as Tariq Jazeel (2013) has emphasised, the modern and western definition of religion has continued to inform geographers' expectations of what religion is, what a religious space is, and how religion engages with social and environmental contexts. This raises difficult questions. Most notably, it challenges recent geographical explorations of spiritual encounter and affect. As already mentioned, these approaches were explicitly developed to confront limited explorations of the knowable, quantifiable, and observable theological, social, and cultural aspects of religion (Tse, 2014). However, they have done so by embracing the modern and western assumption that engaging with religion always involves personal faith and spiritual encounter. Not only is this not necessarily the case beyond Protestant practices in contemporary society (Jazeel, 2013), but historians have demonstrated how uncommon it was within historical Christian communities (Corpis, 2014). Furthermore, as Elizabeth Pritchard (2010) has argued, claims to refute secular liberalism by being open to the possibility of more-than-material spiritual realities, often reinforce secular liberal values by assuming that such realities could exist devoid of the power dynamics inscribed within the concept of religion. Therefore, this paper will pay particular attention to whether and how geographical approaches to religion in the past have negotiated tensions between calls to undertake theologically grounded explorations of spiritual encounter and to reformulate geographical approaches to religion in response to the implications of acknowledging religion's modern and western origins.

### 3 | GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES TO RELIGION IN THE PAST

Providing a critical review of existing geographical approaches to religion in the past, the following section has a dual purpose. Firstly, structured around three key themes in the existing literature, it will provide a concise review of principal debates, interests, and subjects of study. Secondly, as it analyses each theme, it will also reflect on how existing geographical approaches to religion in the past have engaged with broader debates. It will highlight how they have made valuable contributions to feminist and postcolonial agendas, been fundamentally informed by modern

and western values, and begun to find ways of challenging the consequences of the implicit colonial agendas within the concept of religion.

### 3.1 | Spatialisation

Geographical approaches have regularly been used to explore the spatialisation of religion in the past, specifically focussing on its geographical spread and specificity.

Some of this research has focused on where religion(s) have been present and most prominent (Albera & Couroucli, 2012; Ben-Arieh, 1975, 1989; Glover, 2013; Gwynn, 1983; Kark, 1983, 1996). Some has discussed how these patterns have changed over time (Corpis, 2014; Houston & Smyth, 1978; Numrich, 2000; Shelley, 2003). While other research has focused on how these patterns have varied on local, national, and global scales (Latner, 2006; MacDonald, 2001). To answer these questions, scholars have often mapped these processes (Al Faruqi and Sopher, 1974; Doeppers, 1976; Ell & Slater, 1994; Jones, 1976; Plewe et al., 2012; Snell & Ell, 2000) or used maps made by religious communities (Francaviglia, 2015). Directly descended from ecclesiastical geographies, which plotted the spread of religion to explicitly monitor and contribute to colonialisation (Kong, 1990, p. 356), tracing the geographical spread of religion is an inherently colonial process that should be abandoned.

However, understanding why and how religion has spread can contribute to postcolonial agendas and provide a practical framework for responding to some of the implications of religion's modern and western origins. Firstly, exploring why religious ideas and practices have moved, scholars have gained insights into the intersections between religion and significant social, cultural, and political processes. This has included insights into religion's relationships with empire building (DeRogatis, 2003; Lehr & Katz, 1995; Neal Leavelle, 2004; Porter, 2004; Quesada-Garcia, 2022; Wainwright, 2009); war and conflict (Banerjee, 2018; Burlacioiu, 2018; Cunningham, 2013; Gregory et al., 2013; Stump, 2005); migration (Burlacioiu, 2018; Kark, 1983); and trade (Michaelopoulos et al., 2018; Smith, 2018). In particular, explorations of the geographical spread of Christianity since the seventeenth century have critically reflected on its contributions to colonial expansion, cultural imperialism, and race-based violence (Taithe, 2009; Vallgård, 2016). As a result, this research has contributed to postcolonial evaluations of communities' lived experiences of European (de)colonialisation.

Secondly, considering how religion has moved, researchers have identified the role of ordinary individuals in this process. For example, Sergei Shubin and Marjory Harper (2022) have reflected on how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scottish migrants' used religion to help construct homes away from home. By foregrounding individuals' and families' personal decisions about when, where, and how to engage with religious ideas and practices, this research has challenged the conventional emphasis on institutionalised religion, specifically their strategies for geographical growth and influence. This suggests that more research into the intersections between personal and religious mobilities could help to reframe geographical approaches to religion in the past, moving it beyond the modern and western emphasis on institutionalised religion.

Researchers have also reflected on the geographical specificity of religion in the past. During the early twentieth century, environmental determinists constructed racist arguments about the correlation between regions' environments, climates, and religions (Huntington, 1945; Semple, 1911). Condemning and rejecting these studies' reductive emphasis on the environment's impact on cultural practices, geographical approaches to religion in the past have subsequently explored the intersections between history, place, and religion. Many have assessed how local social, cultural, and political contexts have contributed to geographical variations in religious policies, practices, and theologies (Halévy, 1971; Thompson, 1963). For example, David Luker (1987) identified a specifically west-Cornish version on Methodism. These approaches have demonstrated the importance of place in constructing the history of religion. However, often focussing on local variations within religious institutions, they have sought to identify coherent and consistent local expressions of religious beliefs and practices. Furthermore, primarily focused on the impact of place on religion they have overlooked the influence of religion on local society, culture, and environment.

In response, Adrian Bailey, David Harvey, and Catherine Brace (2007; Brace, et al., 2006, 2011; Harvey et al., 2007) developed more complex and nuanced place-based approaches to religion. Focussing on events and activities organised for children and young people by Cornwall's nineteenth-century Methodist communities, they argued that young people's diverse personal circumstances meant they never experienced a singular or consistent Cornish expression of Methodism. In contrast, they demonstrated that these young people's embodied engagements with Methodist ideas, services, and activities made important contributions to their constantly shifting sense of local community identity. Therefore, by reframing the relationship between religion and local place, Bailey, Brace, and Harvey contributed to feminist reformulations of the history of religion. Emphasising how young people's personal embodied engagements with religion influenced a local place, rather than how places have shaped religious institutions' policies and practices, they demonstrated how place-based thinking can effectively reveal historical engagements with religion that have left few traces within written archives.

Ultimately, everyone using geographical approaches to study religion in the past needs to know and acknowledge that tracing the geographical spread and identifying the geographical specificity of religion have their origins in explicitly colonial endeavours and racist agendas. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is no future for explorations of the spatiality of religion in the past. Instead, inspiration should be drawn from research that has analysed how and why religious ideas and practices have moved to gain insights into everyday experiences of (post) colonialism or religion beyond institutional contexts. Furthermore, scholars should think carefully about the complex relationships between religion and place, rejecting neat presentations of coherent local expressions of institutional religion and instead seek insights into the constantly shifting impact of religion on local communities' and their everyday experiences.

### 3.2 | Built environments

Geographical approaches to religion in the past have also explored religions' shifting relationships with built environments. They have reflected on the design, use, material culture, and materiality of spaces built for religious purposes. They have also considered how religious institutions, communities, and individuals have engaged with a more diverse range of built environments.

Geographical explorations of purpose-built religious spaces have often discussed their design. Some have read their design as illustrative of religious leaders' theological principles and liturgical practices (Cheshire, 2008; Corbin, 1986; Proctor, 2017; Slatter, 2015; Wodzinski, 2016; Yates, 2008; Yilmaz, 2012), or the economic, political, and social power of social elites (McDonagh, 2009; Rawding, 1990; Stevenson, 2013; Yeoh & Boon Hui, 1995). Such approaches have demonstrated how purpose-built spaces of institutionalised religion were simultaneously informed by religious principles and social expectations. However, by prioritising the perspectives of religious leaders and social elites, they have overlooked many of the ideas, practices, and experiences that shaped these spaces and unsatisfactorily suggested that they had one coherent use and meaning.

In response, scholars have developed various approaches to purpose-built religious spaces that have de-centred the aims and intentions of religious leaders and social elites and enabled more effective reflections on these buildings' complex and ever-changing identities. Many have focused on the impact of the design of purpose-built religious spaces (Bremmer, 2016). For example, Una Crowley and Rob Kitchin (2008) explored how Magdalene Asylums and Mother and Baby Units run by the Catholic Church, controlled the bodies and behaviours of women in early twentieth-century Ireland and left them with a lifelong sense of social and spiritual unacceptability. Emphasising how religious spaces have controlled users and shaped their ongoing sense of identity, these studies have shifted attention from how religious leaders intended these spaces to function, to the impact they had on the people who used them.

Others have explored the many uses and users of purpose-built religious spaces (Cheshire, 2008; Mills, 2015; Postels, 2007; Slatter, 2021). For example, Sarah O'Brien (1992) illustrated how, despite a lack of social capital,

nineteenth-century British Catholic women were able to affect the design and meaning of their Church spaces by making ephemeral decorations for seasonal celebrations. Therefore, by exploring how (potentially unexpected) users engaged with religious spaces in different ways, these studies have complicated the meanings of purpose-made religious built environments (Mackintosh & Forsberg, 2009).

Alternatively, others have considered the changing uses of purpose-built religious spaces over time. These studies have paid particular attention to buildings used by multiple religious communities (Bar, 2018); how migration patterns have changed the use and meaning of specific buildings (Katz, 2002); the process of turning religious buildings into heritage sites (Coleman, 2019; Sabri & Olagoke, 2019); and the appropriation of religious buildings for secular purposes (Chambers, 2006). Reflections on these long-term processes of change have continued to emphasise the complexity and fluidity of spaces specifically built for religious purposes. In particular, Veronica Della Dora (2018) developed the concept of the infra-secular to reflect on how purpose-built religious spaces gain multiple layers of meaning as they are used for different sacred and secular purposes. This conceptual framework usefully highlights how the preformative practices of religious communities have given spaces many different meanings over time. However, grounded in the modern and western distinction between the sacred and the secular, it focuses analytical attention on moments where built environments have shifted from sacred to secular, or secular to sacred uses and diverts consideration from other, more subtle changes to the use of purpose-built religious buildings.

Continuing to contribute to feminist and postcolonial agendas, other geographical approaches to religious built environments have focused on buildings' material cultural and materiality (Holloway, 2015; Whyte, 2017). Inspired by Daniel Miller's (2005) analysis of the social meaning of material culture, some have explored how material things moved in, through, and out of purpose-built religious spaces to understand people's experiences in these locations. For example, Carmel Mangion (2012) reflected on the material things that moved through Catholic sickrooms and how they contributed to patients' experiences of a holy death. Alternatively, others have considered the materiality of purpose-built religious spaces (Edensor, 2011; Slatter, 2019a). Engaging with Tim Ingold's (2012) arguments about the constantly changing material qualities of buildings and objects, these approaches have used references to the repair and maintenance of religious spaces to reflect on how changes in their material qualities affected users. For example, I have used archival references to the maintenance and repair of nineteenth-century Wesleyan Methodist chapels, to understand how these spaces were (miss)used and affected the sensory experiences of the people who used them (Slatter, 2020). Therefore, finding material things, archival references to material culture, or insights into the material change of purpose-built religious spaces, has allowed researchers to de-centre religious and social elites and focus on ordinary people's experiences of these spaces.

More than this, exploring the material culture and materiality of purpose-built religious spaces also has the potential to effectively negotiate the tension between attempts to accept the transcendent aspects of religion and challenge the modern and western assumption that religion necessarily involves spiritual belief. Geographical explorations of the material culture and materiality of purpose-built religious spaces have been inspired by the material religion movement and its fundamental principle that materiality is inextricably part of religion. Proponents of material religion approaches have explored material things as part of a network of religious practices, ideas, and places to gain insights into the embodiment of religious beliefs, practices, and rituals; the relationships between religion and space and place; and how religious values and agendas have influenced communities' attitudes towards material culture (Meyer et al., 2010; Morgan, 2008, 2010). Therefore, they have shown how reflecting on the role of material culture within religious networks shifts attention from religion as simply belief to religion as sensory *and* spiritual experience. Never dismissing subjects' spiritual beliefs and encounters, they always study out-of-body experiences alongside embodied experiences of physical places. As such, by embracing material religion approaches, geographical research into religion in the past has the tools to accept that religion can have a spiritual affect, without assuming that engaging with religion necessarily involves personal belief in, or experience of the transcendent.

However, material religion has almost exclusively informed geographical explorations of purpose-built religious spaces and has therefore continued to perpetuate the modern and western emphasis on institutionalised religion.



Nevertheless, there is a growing body of geographical researcher into the intersections between religion and built environments not specifically constructed for religious purposes (McCoy & Codlin, 2016; Shubin & Harper, 2022). For example, Abigail Gomulkiewicz (2020) used small household items to explore the spread of Protestant ideas during the Reformation and positioned theological change within the everyday context of individuals' homes. While, Timur Hammond (2022) used Ahmet Süheyl Ünver's written and visual reflections on twentieth-century Istanbul to explore how Ünver's Islamic identity intersected with contemporary social, cultural, and political change, to shape his shifting experiences of urban space and its built environments. These approaches have moved beyond explorations of the relationships between institutionalised religion and space and rejected explorations of the distinctions between sacred and secular space. Instead, approaching many different spaces as fluid assemblages of religious, spiritual, social, cultural, political, and economic ideas, practices, and encounters, they have explored religion as one of many contributing factors to people's constantly shifting experiences of built environments.

Geographical approaches to the religious built environment have made significant contributions to feminist and postcolonial histories of religion. They have found ways to explore the affect of religious buildings and unearth the impact of women and children on religious buildings. However, many of these studies are still fundamentally grounded in modern and western assumptions about the importance of institutionalised religion that necessarily involves spiritual belief and is the direct opposite of secular social practices. Nevertheless, some geographical approaches to religion in the past have been inspired by the ideas of material religion to undertake research into networks of ideas, practices, places, and things, that accepts that religion can have a spiritual affect without assuming it involves personal belief in, or experience of the transcendent. Furthermore, explorations of the relationships between religion and built environments not specifically constructed for religious purposes have demonstrated how network and assemblage thinking can be practically applied to move beyond the sacred-secular dichotomy.

### 3.3 | Landscapes

Finally, geographical approaches to religion in the past have explored the relationships between religion and physical landscapes. This has included research into how religion and landscapes have influenced each other and what can be learnt from how religious communities and individuals have represented landscapes.

Considerable attention has been paid to religion's relationships with physical landscapes. Much of this research has explored how religious practices and beliefs have influenced landscapes' materiality and meaning (Aiken, 2010; Carrasco, 1991; Chenoweth, 2021; Houston & Smyth, 1978; Kay & Brown, 1985; Lilley, 2009; Nevola, 2006; Schmelzkopf, 2002; Stocker & Stocker, 1996; Walsham, 2012). Some have explored how religious ideas and practices have left material marks on the landscape (Scafetta & Mazzarella, 2019; Smith, 2015), while others have considered how they have given landscapes meaning and importance. For example, John Glover (2013) argued that the Layenne of Senegal made pilgrimages to the coast of Western Africa to reimagine historical geographies of Islam and make this the centre of the Islamic world. Researchers have also (often simultaneously) considered how landscapes have contributed to and affected religious beliefs, practices, and experiences in the past (Della Dora, 2011; Duncan, 1990; Slatter, 2019b; Tuan, 1976). Despite resemblances to environmental determinism, this research has explored how landscapes have contributed to, rather than determined, the process of creating sacred space and informing religious practices. For example, Anne Drageset (2019) argued that the landscape around the Hereid Norwegian Iron Age cemetery shaped its spiritual meaning and importance. Researchers have also considered how landscapes have contributed to the affect of spiritual encounters. For example, Lynn Ross-Bryant (1990) and Linea Sundstrom (1996) argued that North America's natural environment contributed to Native Americans' identification of, and engagement with sacred atmospheres. Collectively, these approaches have made important contributions to de-centring religious leaders and social elites by using landscapes to provide insights into religious practices and experiences associated with communities who left few written records. By using landscapes as archives, they have provided new insights into ancient and native communities' beliefs and rituals (Lahiri, 1996; Richards, 1996; Sahlqvist, 2001) and

reflected on how the natural world has contributed to spiritual encounters over space and time (Ross-Bryant, 1990; Sundstrom, 1996). However, these approaches have often necessarily focused on significant or officially sanctioned rituals that involved enough people or were repeated enough times to leave physical marks on, or inform cultural perceptions of landscapes. Therefore, they have overlooked everyday practices conducted on a smaller scale. Furthermore, either explicitly discussing how religious practices made landscapes sacred (Carrasco, 1991; Francaviglia, 2003; Glover, 2013; Richards, 1996) or how landscapes helped make communities' practices sacred (Ross-Bryant, 1990; Sundstrom, 1996), these approaches have been informed by the modern and western sacred-secular dichotomy (Fitzgerald, 2000).

Researchers have also considered how religious communities and individuals have represented physical and metaphysical landscapes and what these representations reveal about religion, society, and culture across time and space (Aiken, 2010; Chen, 2007; Fuerst-Bjeliš & Zupanc, 2007; Goren, 2007; Kupfer, 1994; Loveday, 2003; Shalev, 2003). Some have used these representations to understand how communities have explained how landscapes were formed and functioned (Ben-Arieh, 1989; Bowden & Macdonald, 2019; Butlin, 1988; Emlen, 1987; Griffiths & Salisbury, 2013; Livingston, 1994). For example, Erling Sandmo (2020) used Olaus Magnus's map of the northern countries to explore the relationships between religion and natural history in the sixteenth century. Although demonstrating how geographical approaches to religion in the past can make significant contributions to broader historical geographies, these approaches have largely used representations to understand religious knowledge and theology. In contrast, Veronica Della Dora (2011), Timur Hammond (2022), and myself (Slatter, 2023) have focused on the affect of making and engaging with these representations. Considering representations of Mount Athos on Russian prayer cards, Della Dora (2011) argued that by engaging with these representations pilgrims relived the spiritual experiences they had while visiting Mount Athos and those unable to travel were transported to the mountain and its spiritual atmosphere. As a result, she demonstrated how religious representations of landscapes can be used to understand spiritual encounters, de-centre official religious ideas, and provide insights into individuals' personal experience of sacred landscapes. Della Dora's, Hammond's, and my own paper suggests that by drawing on historical geographer's recent applications of more-than-representational approaches (Awcock, 2021; Legg, 2020) to assess acts of making and engaging with religious representations of landscapes, geographical approaches to religion could gain intriguing insights into the breadth of religious experiences in the past.

Approaching landscapes as archives has facilitated insights into the religious beliefs, practices, and experiences of individuals and communities who left few written records. However, it has also necessarily prioritised large scale religious practices and perpetuated the modern and western sacred-secular dichotomy. As a result, the most exciting area for future exploration of the relationships between religion and landscapes is research into the practice of making and engaging with religious representations of landscapes and what this reveals about individuals' multisensory and out-of-body experiences of specific geographical locations.

## 4 | MOVING FORWARDS

Geographical approaches to religion in the past have made important contributions to reorientating historical approaches to religion. Using space and place as tools of archival analysis, they have unearthed insights into everyday, lived, and embodied experiences of religion from archives shaped by religious institutions and their leaders. Most influentially, they have used local place to explore the complexity of lived religion, materiality to reflect on embodied experiences of religion, and (representations of) physical landscapes to gain insights into the spiritual affect of religion. However, the existing literature has also been fundamentally informed by modern and western perceptions of religion. It has largely explored institutional, generally Abrahamic, expressions of religion and has de-centred religious and social elites by analysing the creation, recreation, and disruption of sacred and secular space. Furthermore, negotiating the tension between demands for geographical approaches to religion to move beyond the rational and the implications of religion's modern and western origins, it has been uncertain about whether or how to explore

the affect of spiritual encounters. Therefore, geographical approaches to religion in the past need to be profoundly reformulated, rejecting how modern and western assumptions about religion have influenced what they study and how they approach it.

Firstly, geographical approaches to religion in the past need to diversify their subject matter and disrupt the current emphasis on institutional expressions of Abrahamic religions. This could be achieved by engaging with non-Abrahamic religious communities such as Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs and by paying equal attention to institutionalised and non-institutionalised practices, beliefs, and rituals (Bartolini et al., 2016). This may require researchers to develop more diverse language skills and will often compel them to think more creatively about finding archival material when they cannot rely on (often easy to access and navigate) institutional collections. Julian Holloway's (2006) research into nineteenth-century séances and Jude Hill's (2011) and Sarah Williams's (1999) explorations of popular religion in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain provide fascinating examples of how this process could begin. While geographies of non-Judaeo-Christian pilgrimage (Maddrell & Scriven, 2016), global folk spiritualities, and witchcraft, sorcery, and the occult (Murrey, 2017) appear particularly ripe subjects for exploration.

Fundamental alterations also need to be made to how geographical studies of religion in the past approach their subject matter. Acknowledging the modern and western origins and colonial uses of religion raises questions about the legitimacy of exploring sacred-secular dichotomies. In addition, it creates a complicated tension between attempts to explore the transcendent aspects of religion and the need to challenge the modern and western assumptions that religion involves spiritual encounter. Geographical approaches to religion in the past have begun to use networks and assemblages to challenge and realign these priorities and assumptions. Inspired by material religion approaches, some have explored religion's people, practices, objects, and built environments as networks. This has allowed them to gain insights into individuals' embodied experiences of religion in the past without over-prioritising spiritual encounters. Alternatively, approaching the built environments of religion as shifting assemblages has allowed others to complicate pre-existing emphasis on the sacred-secular divide.

Geographical approaches to religion in the past are not alone in identifying the benefits of network and assemblage thinking. Cross-disciplinary approaches to religion have identified networks and assemblages as an effective way of challenging the modern and western assumptions that have fundamentally shaped the questions they have previously asked and approaches they have previously taken. For example, the religious studies scholar Paul-Francois Tremlett (2020) argued that using the concept of generative assemblages could facilitate explorations of the forms and flows of religion. This, he argued, would challenge the implicit modern and western assumptions within the concept of religion by focussing on religion's temporality and emphasising how relationships within religious assemblages continually make and remake what can be considered a 'religion' and how the concept is used. Geographical approaches to religion in the past could usefully engage with, adopt, and develop aspects of these pre-existing frameworks. Cross-disciplinary applications of network and assemblage thinking rarely consider geographical proximity or mobility within networks or assemblages and could therefore benefit from geographers' reflections of the spatial implications of these concepts. Therefore, there is an exciting opportunity for those taking geographical approaches to religion in the past to use their geographical engagements with networks and assemblages to lead the way in developing new cross-disciplinary applications of these ideas to challenge the modern and western assumptions within existing approaches to religion.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will be forever grateful to the late Prof. Claire Dwyer, a wonderful mentor who introduced me to many of geography's current debates about religion. Thank you Claire.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest.

## ORCID

Ruth Slatter  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5590-1410>

## REFERENCES

- Aiken, E. J. (2010). *Scriptural geography: Portraying the Holy Land*. I.B.Tauris.
- Albera, D., & Couroucli, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Shared sacred spaces in the Mediterranean: Christians, Muslims, and Jews at shrines and sanctuaries*. Indian University Press.
- Alders, C. (2015). 'Your journal, my love': Constructing personal and religious bonds in eighteenth-century women's diaries. *Journal of Religious History*, 39(3), 386–398. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9809.12162>
- Al Faruqi, I. R. & Sopher, D. E. (Eds.) (1974), *Historical atlas of the religions of the world*. Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Armstrong, N. (2013). 'I insisted I was myself': Clergy wives and authentic selfhood in England, c.1960–94. *Women's History Review*, 22(6), 995–1013. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2013.780842>
- Awcock, H. (2021). Handbills, rumours, and blue cockades: Communication during the 1780 Gordon Riots. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 74, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2021.07.005>
- Bailey, A., Brace, C., & Harvey, D. (2009). Three geographers in an archive: Positions, predilections and passing comment on transient lives. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 34(2), 254–269. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2008.00334.x>
- Bailey, A., Harvey, D., & Brace, C. (2007). Disciplining youthful Methodist bodies in nineteenth-century Cornwall. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97(1), 142–157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.2007.00528.x>
- Banerjee, H. (2018). The other Sikhs: Sikhs and Sikhism in Odisha (c.1600–2000). *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, 14(2), 135–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448727.2017.1352647>
- Bar, D. (2018). Between Muslim and Jewish sanctity: Judaizing Muslim holy places in the State of Israel, 1948–1967. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 59, 68–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2017.11.003>
- Bartolini, N., Chris, R., MacKian, S., & Pile, S. (2016). The place of spirit: Modernity and the geographies of spirituality. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(3), 338–354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516644512>
- Ben-Arieh, Y. (1975). Patterns of Christian activity and dispersion in nineteenth-century Jerusalem. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2(1), 49–69. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(76\)90153-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(76)90153-5)
- Ben-Arieh, Y. (1989). Nineteenth-century historical geographies of the Holy Land. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 15(1), 69–79. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488\(89\)80065-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488(89)80065-9)
- Botta, S., Ferrara, M., & Saggiaro, A. (2016). Editorial: Toward a global history of religions? *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, 82(2), 521–526.
- Bowen, J. P., & Macdonald, N. (2019). 'A dreadful phenomenon described and improved': Reverend John Fletcher's account of the Buildwas earthquake of 1773. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 64, 72–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2019.02.003>
- Brace, C., Bailey, A., & Harvey, D. (2006). Religion, place and space: A framework for investigating historical geographies of religious identities and communities. *Progress in Human Geography*, 30(1), 28–43. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132506ph589oa>
- Brace, C., Bailey, A. R., & Harvey, D. (2011). Investigating the spatialities of youth spirituality: Methodist mutual improvement in Cornwall (UK) c.1870–1930. In C. Brace, A. Bailey, S. Carter, D. Harvey, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Emerging geographies of belief* (pp. 74–90). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Bremmer, G. A. (2016). Narthex reclaimed: Reinventing disciplinary space in the Anglican mission field, 1847 – 1903. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 51, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2015.10.013>
- Burlaciou, C. (2018). Russian Orthodox diaspora as a global religion after 1918. *Studies in World Christianity*, 24(1), 4–24. <https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2018.0202>
- Butlin, R. (1988). George Adam Smith and the historical geography of the Holy Land: Contents, contexts and connections. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 14(4), 381–404. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488\(88\)80038-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488(88)80038-0)
- Carrasco, D. (1991). *To change place: Aztec ceremonial landscapes*. University Press of Colorado.
- Chambers, P. (2006). Sacred landscapes, redundant chapels and carpet warehouses: The religious heritage of south west wales. In E. Arweck & W. F. Keenan (Eds.), *Materialising religion; expression, performance and ritual* (pp. 21–30). Ashgate.
- Chen, H. (2007). The human body as a universe: Understanding heaven by visualization and sensibility in Jesuit cartography in China. *The Catholic Historical Review*, 93(3), 517–552. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.2007.0236>
- Chenoweth, J. M. (2021). Spatial analysis of religious community: An integrated approach to Barbados Quakerism, 1655–1780. *Historical Archaeology*, 55(4), 511–532. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41636-021-00307-2>
- Cheshire, J. (2008). Space and the Victorian ecclesiastical interior. In S. Alfoldy & J. Helland (Eds.), *Craft, space and interior design, 1855–2005* (pp. 27–43). Ashgate.
- Coleman, S. (2019). From the liminal to the lateral: Urban religion in English cathedrals. *Tourism Geographies*, 21(3), 384–404. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2018.1449236>
- Corbin, H. (1986). *Temple and contemplation*. Routledge.
- Corpis, D. (2014). *Crossing the boundaries of belief: Geographies of religious conversion in southern German, 1648–1800*. University of Virginia Press.
- Cotter, C., & Robertson, D. (2016). *After world religions: Reconstructing religious studies*. Routledge.

- Crowley, U. and Kitchin, R. (2008). Producing 'decent girls': Governmentality and the moral geographies of sexual conduct in Ireland (1922–1937). *Gender, Place & Culture*, 15(4), 355–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09663690802155553>
- Cruickshank, J. (2006). 'Appear as crucified for me': Sight, suffering, and spiritual transformation in the hymns of Charles Wesley. *Journal of Religious History*, 30(3), 311–330. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9809.2006.00496.x>
- Cunningham, N. (2013). The doctrine of vicarious punishment': Space, religion and the Belfast troubles of 1920–22. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 40, 52–66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2013.01.001>
- Della Dora, V. (2011). Circulating sacred place: Fin-de-Siecle Russian cards of Mount Athos as travelling object-icons. In C. Brace, A. Bailey, S. Carter, D. Harvey, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Emerging geographies of belief* (pp. 168–192). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Della Dora, V. (2018). Infrasecular geographies: Making, unmaking and remaking sacred space. *Progress in Human Geography*, 42(1), 44–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516666190>
- Denning, S. (2021). Persistence in volunteering: An affect theory approach to faith-based volunteering. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 22(6), 807–827. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2019.1633685>
- Denning, S., Scriven, R., & Slatter, R. (2022). Three participatory geographers: Reflections on positionality and working with participants in researching religions, spiritualities, and faith. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 23(6), 892–910. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2020.1815826>
- Denzin Gergan, M. (2015). Animating the sacred, sentient and spiritual in post-humanist and material geographies. *Geography Compass*, 9(5), 262–275. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12210>
- DeRogatis, A. (2003). *Moral geography: Maps, missionaries, and the American frontier*. Columbia University Press.
- Doepfers, D. (1976). The evolution of the geography of religious adherence in the Philippines before 1989. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2(2), 95–110. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(76\)90249-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(76)90249-8)
- Drageset, A. (2019). The Heredid cemetery: Relational agency and topography within the Iron Age mortuary landscape of Hardanger, Western Norway. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 66, 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2019.09.001>
- Dubuisson, D. (2003). *The western construction of religion: Myths, knowledge, and ideology*. The John Hopkins University Press.
- Duncan, J. S. (1990). *The city as text: The politics of landscape interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dwyer, C. (2016). Why does religion matter for cultural geographers? *Social & Cultural Geography*, 17(6), 758–762. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2016.1163728>
- Dwyer, C., Beinart, K., & Ahmed, N. (2019). My life is but a weaving: Embroidering geographies of faith and place. *Cultural Geographies*, 26(1), 133–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474018792703>
- Dwyer, C., & Parutis, V. (2013). Faith in the system?' State-funded faith schools in England and the contested parameters of community cohesion. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38(2), 267–284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2012.00518.x>
- Edensor, T. (2011). Entangled agencies, material networks and repair in a building assemblage: The mutable stone of St Ann's Church Manchester. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36(2), 238–252. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2010.00421.x>
- Ell, P. S., & Slater, T. R. (1994). The religious census of 1851: A computer-mapped survey of the Church of England. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 20(1), 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.1994.1005>
- Emlen, R. P. (1987). *Shaker village views: Illustrated maps and landscape drawings by Shaker artists of the nineteenth century*. University Press of New England.
- Falah, G. W. & Nagel, C. R. (Eds.) (2005), *Geographies of Muslim women: Gender, religion, and space*. The Guildford Press.
- Fitzgerlad, T. (2000). *The ideology of religious studies*. Oxford University Press.
- Francaviglia, R. V. (2003). *Believing in place: A spiritual geography of the Great Basin*. University of Nevada Press.
- Francaviglia, R. V. (2015). *The mapmakers of New Zion: A cartographic history of Mormonism*. Utah State University Press.
- Fuerst-Bjeliš, B., & Zupanc, I. (2007). Images of the Croatian borderlands: Selected examples of early modern cartography. *Croatian Geographical Bulletin*, 69(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.21861/HGG.2007.69.01.01>
- Glover, J. (2013). The Prophet Muhammad reincarnated and his son, Jesus: Re-centering Islam among the Layenne of Senegal. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 42, 24–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2013.04.017>
- Gomulkiewicz, A. (2020). Religious materiality in Elizabethan Essex (1558–1603). *Material Religion*, 16(3), 275–297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2020.1756166>
- Goren, H. (2007). Pilgrimage, tapestries, and cartography: Sixteenth-century wall hangings commemorating a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33(3), 489–513. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2006.07.003>
- Gregory, I. N., Cunningham, N., Lloyd, C. D., Shuttleworth, I., & Ell, P. (2013). *Troubles geographies: A spatial history of religion and society in Ireland*. Idiana University Press.
- Griffiths, H., & Salisbury, E. (2013). 'The tears I shed were Noah's flood': Medieval genre, floods and the fluvial landscape in the poetry of Guto'r Glyn. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 40, 94–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2012.11.008>
- Gwynn, R. (1983). The number of Huguenot immigrants in England in the late seventeenth century. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 9(4), 384–395. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(83\)90256-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(83)90256-6)

- Halévy, E. (1971). *The birth of Methodism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hammond, T. (2022). Conjunctions of Islam: Rethinking the geographies of art and piety through the notebooks of Ahmet Süheyl Ünver. *Cultural Geographies*. Online first. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14744740221120248>
- Harvey, D., Brace, C., & Bailey, A. (2007). Parading the Cornish subject; Methodist Sunday schools in west Cornwall, c.1830–1930. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33(1), 24–44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2006.02.002>
- Hedges, P. (2018). Comments: The deconstruction of religion: So what next in the debate? *Implicit Religion*, 20(4), 385–396. <https://doi.org/10.1558/imre.36139>
- Hill, J. (2011). Tracing material geographies of belief. In C. Brace, A. Bailey, S. Carter, D. Harvey, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Emerging geographies of belief* (pp. 193–215). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hirst, J. S., & Zavos, J. (2005). Riding a tiger? South Asia and the problem of 'religion'. *Contemporary South Asia*, 14(1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930500194868>
- Holloway, J. (2003). Make-Believe: Spiritual practice, embodiment and sacred space. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 35(11), 1961–1974. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3586>
- Holloway, J. (2006). Enchanted space: The séance, affect and geographies of religion. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96(1), 182–187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.2006.00507.x>
- Holloway, J. (2011). Tracing the emergent in geographies of religion and belief. In C. Brace, A. Bailey, S. Carter, D. Harvey, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Emerging geographies of belief* (pp. 30–52). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Holloway, J. (2015). Sealing future geographies: Religious prophecy and the case of Joanna Southcott. *Transaction of the Institute of British Geographers*, 40(2), 180–191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12066>
- Hollywood, A. (2004). Gender, agency and the divine in religious historiography. *The Journal of Religion*, 84(4), 524–528. <https://doi.org/10.1086/422478>
- Houston, C., & Smyth, W. J. (1978). The Orange Order and the expansion of the frontier in Ontario, 1830–1900. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 4(3), 251–264. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(78\)90264-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(78)90264-5)
- Huntington, E. (1945). *Mainsprings of civilization*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Ingold, T. (2012). Towards an ecology of materials. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41(1), 427–442. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-081309-145920>
- Jazeel, T. (2013). *Sacred modernity: Nature, environment, and the postcolonial geographies of Sri Lankan nationhood*. Liverpool University Press.
- Jones, P. N. (1976). Baptist chapels as an index of cultural transition in the South Wales coalfield before 1914. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2(4), 347–360. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(76\)90123-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(76)90123-7)
- Kark, R. (1983). Millenarism and agricultural settlement in the Holy Land in the nineteenth century. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 9(1), 47–56. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(83\)90141-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(83)90141-X)
- Kark, R. (1996). Sweden and the Holy Land: Pietistic and communal settlement. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22(1), 46–67. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.1996.0004>
- Katz, E. (2002). Authenticity and place: The authenticity of place in culture and nature: Thoughts on the holocaust in the Spanish synagogue of Venice. *Philosophy and Geography*, 5(2), 195–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10903770220152416>
- Kay, J., & Brown, C. J. (1985). Mormon beliefs about land and natural resources, 1847–1877. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 11(3), 253–267. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488\(85\)80002-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488(85)80002-5)
- Kong, L. (1990). Geography and religion: Trends and prospects. *Progress in Human Geography*, 14(3), 355–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030913259001400302>
- Kong, L. (2001). Mapping 'new' geographies of religion: Politics and poetics of modernity. *Progress in Human Geography*, 25(2), 211–233. <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913201678580485>
- Kong, L. (2002). In search of permanent homes: Singapore's house churches and the politics of space. *Urban Studies*, 39(9), 1573–1586. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980220151664>
- Kong, L. (2005). Religious schools: For spirit, (f)or nation. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23(4), 615–632. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d394>
- Kong, L. (2010). Global shifts, theoretical shifts: Changing geographies of religion. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(6), 755–776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132510362602>
- Kselman, T. (2006). Challenging dechristianization: The historiography of religion in modern France. *Church History*, 75(1), 130–139. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088363>
- Kupfer, M. (1994). Medieval world maps: Embedded images, interpretive frames. *Word & Image*, 10(3), 262–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.1994.10435518>
- Lahiri, N. (1996). Archaeological landscapes and textual images: A study of the sacred geography of late medieval Ballabgarh. *World Archaeology*, 28(2), 244–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.1996.9980344>
- Latner, R. (2006). 'Here are no newters': Witchcraft and religious discord in Salem Village and Andover. *New England Quarterly*, 79(1), 92–122.

- Legg, S. (2020). "Political atmospherics": The India round table conference's atmospheric environments, bodies and representations, London 1930–1932. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 110(3), 774–792. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2019.1630247>
- Lehr, J. C., & Katz, Y. (1995). Crown, corporation and church: The role of institutions in the stability of pioneer settlements in the Canadian west, 1870–1914. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 21(4), 413–429. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.1995.0028>
- Levitin, D. (2012). From sacred history to the history of religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European historiography from reformation to 'enlightenment'. *The Historical Journal*, 55(4), 1117–1160. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X12000295>
- Lilley, K. D. (2009). *City and Cosmo: The medieval world in urban form*. Reaktion Books.
- Livingstone, D. N. (1994). Science and religion: Foreword to the historical geography of an encounter. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 20(4), 367–383. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.1994.1029>
- Loveday, A. (2003). Mapping early Christianity: Acts and the shape of early church history. *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, 57(2), 163–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430005700205>
- Luker, D. H. (1987). *Cornish Methodism, revivalism, and popular belief, c. 1780–1870*. Unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford. Available online: [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:fe395cb7-7a81-40ee-9aaf-7cc8a5b5b593/download\\_file?file\\_format=application%2Fpdf&safe\\_filename=601848679.pdf&type\\_of\\_work=Thesis](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:fe395cb7-7a81-40ee-9aaf-7cc8a5b5b593/download_file?file_format=application%2Fpdf&safe_filename=601848679.pdf&type_of_work=Thesis). Accessed 17 01 23.
- MacDonald, F. (2001). St Kilda and the sublime. *Cultural Geographies*, 8(2), 151–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096746080100800202>
- Mackintosh, P. G., & Forsberg, C. R. (2009). Performing the Lodge: Masonry, masculinity, and nineteenth-century North American moral geography. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 35(3), 451–472. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2008.08.004>
- Maddrell, A., & Scriven, R. (2016). Celtic pilgrimage, past and present: From historical geography to contemporary embodied practices. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 17(2), 300–321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2015.1066840>
- Mangion, C. M. (2012). 'To console, to nurse, to prepare for eternity': The Catholic sickroom in late nineteenth-century England. *Women's History Review*, 21(4), 657–672. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2012.658175>
- McCoy, M. D., & Codlin, M. C. (2016). The influence of religious authority in everyday life: A landscape-scale study of domestic architecture and religious law in ancient Hawai'i. *World Archaeology*, 48(3), 411–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2016.1164073>
- McDonagh, B. A. K. (2009). Women, enclosure and estate improvement in eighteenth-century Northamptonshire. *Rural History*, 20(2), 143–162. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793309990021>
- Meyer, B., Morgan, D., Paine, C., & Brent Plate, D. (2010). The origin and mission of material religion. *Religion*, 40(3), 207–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.religion.2010.01.010>
- Michaelopoulos, S., Naghavi, A., & Prarolo, G. (2018). Trade and geography in the spread of Islam. *Economic Journal*, 128(616), 3210–3241. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eoj.12557>
- Miller, D. (2005). *Materiality*. Duke University Press.
- Mills, S. (2015). Geographies of youth work, volunteering and employment: The Jewish Lads' Brigade and Club in post-war Manchester. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 40(4), 523–535. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12092>
- Morgan, D. (2008). The materiality of cultural construction. *Material Religion*, 4(2), 228–229. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183408x328334>
- Morgan, D. (Ed.). (2010). *Religion and material culture: The matter of belief*. Routledge.
- Murrey, A. (2017). Decolonising the imagined geographies of 'witchcraft'. *Third World Thematics. A TWQ Journal*, 2(2–3), 157–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2017.1338535>
- Neal Leavelle, T. (2004). Geographies of encounter: Religion and contested spaces in colonial North America. *American Quarterly*, 56(4), 913–943. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2004.0060>
- Nevola, F. (2006). Ritual geography: Housing the papal court of Pius II Piccolomini in Siena (1459–60). *Renaissance Studies*, 20(2), 201–224. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-4658.2006.00196.x>
- Numrich, P. D. (2000). How the swans came to Lake Michigan: The social organisation of Buddhist Chicago. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 39(2), 189–203. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0021-8294.00015>
- O'Brien, S. (1992) Making catholic spaces: Women, decor, and devotion in the English Catholic church, 1840–1900. The church and the arts, papers read at the 1990 summer meeting and 1991 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, 28, 449–464. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0424208400012614>
- Plewe, B. D., Kent Brown, S., Cannon, D. Q., & Jackson, R. H. (2012). *Mapping Mormonism: An atlas of Latter-Day Saint history*. Brigham Young University Press.
- Porter, A. (2004). *Religion versus empire?: British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700–1914*. Manchester University Press.
- Postles, D. (2007). Micro-spaces: Church porches in pre-modern England. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33(4), 749–769. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2006.08.003>

- Pritchard, E. A. (2010). Seriously, what does "taking religion seriously" mean? *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 77(4), 1087–1111. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfq066>
- Proctor, R. (2017). Designing the suburban church: The mid twentieth-century Roman Catholic churches of Reynolds and Scott. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 56, 113–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2017.03.005>
- Quesada-Garcia, S. (2022). A cartography of al-Andalus' landscape: Mapping settlements of Muslim agricultural colonization in Europe applying GIS techniques. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 77, 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2022.02.003>
- Rawding, C. (1990). The iconography of churches: A case study of landownership and power in nineteenth-century Lincolnshire. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 16(2), 157–176. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(90\)90087-R](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(90)90087-R)
- Rennie, B. (2012). The history (and philosophy) of religions. *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 41(1), 24–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00084298111430055>
- Richards, C. (1996). Monuments as landscape: Creating the centre of the world in late Neolithic Orkney. *World Archaeology*, 28(2), 190–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.1996.9980340>
- Ross-Bryant, L. (1990). The land in American religious experience. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 58(3), 333–355. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/LVIII.3.333>
- Sabri, R., & Olagoke, O. A. (2019). Predicaments in the management of religious heriage buildings and sites in Nigeria. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, 21(1), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13505033.2019.1596521>
- Sahlqvist, L. (2001). Territorial behaviour and communication in a ritual landscape. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 83(2), 79–102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2001.00096.x>
- Sanderson, E. (2007). The challenge of placing spirituality within geographies of development. *Geography Compass*, 1(3), 389–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00016.x>
- Sandmo, E. (2020). Dwellers of the waves: Sea monsters, classical history, and religion in Olaus Magnus's Carta Marina. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 74(4), 237–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2020.1810114>
- Scafetta, N., & Mazzarella, A. (2019). The city of the sun and Parthenope: Classical astronomy and the planning of Neapolis, Magna Graecia. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 65, 29–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2019.05.004>
- Schilbrack, K. (2013). After we deconstruct 'religion', then what? A case for critical realism. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 25(1), 107–112. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341255>
- Schmelzkopf, K. (2002). Landscape, ideology, and religion: A geography of Ocean Grove, New Jersey. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28(4), 589–608. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2002.0412>
- Scott, D. (1999). *Refashioning futures: Criticism after postcoloniality*. Princeton University Press.
- Semple, E. (1911). *Influences of geographic environment on the basis of Ratzel's system of anthropo-geography*. Henry Holt and Co. and Constable and Co.
- Shalev, Z. (2003). Sacred geography, antiquarianism and visual erudition: Benito Arias Montano and the maps in the Antwerp Polyglot Bible. *Imago Mundi*, 55(1), 56–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0308569032000097495>
- Shelley, T. J. (2003). Catholic Greenwich Village: Ethnic geography and religious identity in New York City, 1880–1930. *The Catholic Historical Review*, 89(1), 60–85. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.2003.0087>
- Shubin, S., & Harper, M. (2022). Spiritual home on the move: Narratives of migrants from Scotland in the 18th and 19th centuries. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 23(8), 1135–1154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2021.1907856>
- Slatter, R. (2019a). Material 'becomings' and a historical geography of religious experience: Metropolitan Methodism, 1851–1932. *Area*, 51(1), 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12345>
- Slatter, R. (2019b). Materiality and the extended geographies of religion: The institutional design and everyday experiences of London's Wesleyan Methodist circuits, 1851–1932. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 64, 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2019.01.001>
- Slatter, R. (2020). Becoming chapels and everyday congregations: How the repair and maintenance of London's Wesleyan chapels illustrates their communities' everyday practices and experiences (1851–1932). *Journal of Design History*, 33(1), 34–49. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epz032>
- Slatter, R. (2021). Worship, social gatherings and the 'more-than-Wesleyan': The multiple uses and congregational experiences of London's Wesleyan Methodist chapels (1851–1932). *The London Journal*, 46(2), 165–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03058034.2020.1846925>
- Slatter, R. (2023). Sacred squares? A non-representational study of James Smetham's (1821–1889) everyday artistic experiences of religion, faith, and spirituality. *The Journal of Historical Geography*. Forthcoming.
- Slatter (nee Mason), R. (2015). The design of nineteenth-century Wesleyan space: Re-reading F. J. Jobson's Chapel and School Architecture. *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 7, 78–99.
- Smith, H. Z. (2018). Risky business: The seventeenth-century English company Chaplain, and policing interaction and knowledge exchange. *Journal of Church & State*, 60(2), 226–247. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csx002>
- Smith, S. A. (2015). The Cities of Zion? Mormon and non-Mormon town plans in the U.S. Mountain west, 1847–1930. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 50, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2015.03.003>
- Smith, W. C. (1962). *The meaning and end of religion*. Macmillan.
- Snell, K. D. M., & Ell, P. S. (2000). *Rival Jerusalem: The geography of Victorian religion*. Cambridge University Press.



- Soares, B. (2014). The historiography of Islam in west Africa: An anthropologist's view. *The Journal of African History*, 55(1), 27–36. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853713000819>
- Stevenson, C. (2013). *The City and the King: Architecture and politics in restoration London*. Yale U.P.
- Stocker, D., & Stocker, M. (1996). Sacred profanity: The theology of rabbit breeding and the symbolic landscape of the warren. *World Archaeology*, 28(2), 265–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.1996.9980345>
- Stump, R. W. (2005). Religion and the geographies of war. In C. Flint (Ed.), *The geography of war and peace: From death camps to diplomats* (pp. 149–173). Oxford University Press.
- Sundstrom, L. (1996). Mirror of heaven: Cross-cultural transference of the sacred geography of the Black Hills. *World Archaeology*, 28(2), 177–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.1996.9980339>
- Taira, T. (2018). Categorizing "religion": From case studies to methodology. *Implicit Religion*, 20(4), 377–384. <https://doi.org/10.1558/imre.36138>
- Taith, B. (2009). Humanitarianism and colonialism: Religious responses to the Algerian drought and famine of 1866 – 1870. In C. Mauch & C. Pfister (Eds.), *Natural disasters, cultural responses: Case studies toward a global environmental history* (pp. 137–164). Lexington Books.
- Taves, A. (1999). *Fits, trances and visions; experiencing religion and explaining experience from Wesley to James*. Princeton University Press.
- Thompson, E. P. (1963). *The making of the English working class*. Gollancz.
- Tremlett, P. (2020). *Towards a new theory of religion and social change: Sovereignties and disruptions*. Bloomsbury.
- Tse, J. K. H. (2014). Grounded theologies: 'Religion' and the 'secular' in human geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(2), 201–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132512475105>
- Tse, J. K. H. (2019). Geographies of religion as theological ontologies: A difficult 'rapprochement' with religious studies. *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, 48(1–2), 19–26. <https://doi.org/10.1558/bsor.34095>
- Tuan, Y. F. (1976). Geopietry: A theme in man's attachment to nature and to place. In D. Lowenthal & M. J. Brown (Eds.), *Geographies of the mind: Essays in historical geography* (pp. 11–39). Oxford University Press.
- Vallgård, K. (2016). Were Christian missionaries colonizers?: Reorienting the debate and exploring new research trajectories. *Interventions*, 18(6), 865–886. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2015.1131179>
- Vanderbeck, R. M., Andersson, J., Valentine, G., Sadgrove, J. and Ward, K. (2011). Sexuality, activism, and witness in the Anglican Communion: The 2008 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101.3(3), 670–689. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2011.561105>
- Wainwright, J. (2009). 'The first duties of persons living in a civilized community': The Maya, the Church and the colonial state in southern Belize. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 35(3), 428–450. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2008.09.001>
- Walsham, A. (2012). *The reformation of the landscape. Religion, identity and memory in early modern Britain and Ireland*. University of Oxford Press.
- Whyte, W. (2017). *Unlocking the church: The lost secrets of Victorian sacred space*. Oxford University Press.
- Wilkins, D. (2021). Where is religion in political ecology? *Progress in Human Geography*, 45(2), 276–297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132520901772>
- Williams, A. (2016). Spiritual landscapes of Pentecostal worship, belief, and embodiment in a therapeutic community: New critical perspectives. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 19, 45–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2015.12.001>
- Williams, S. C. (1999). *Religious belief and popular culture in Southwark c.1880–1939*. Oxford University Press.
- Wodzinski, M. (2016). Space and spirit: On boundaries, hierarchies and leadership in Hasidism. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 53, 63–74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2016.04.016>
- Woods, O. (2011). The geographies of religious conversion. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(4), 440–456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132511427951>
- Yates, N. (2008). *Liturgical space: Christian worship and church building in western Europe 1500–2000*. Routledge.
- Yeoh, B. S. and Boon Hui, T. (1995). The politics of space: Changing discourses on Chinese burial ground in post-war Singapore. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 21.2, 184–201. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(95\)90035-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(95)90035-7)
- Yilmaz, M. (2012). Historical mosque orientation in Turkey: Central-Western Anatolia Region, 1150–1590. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 38(4), 359–371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2012.06.002>

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Ruth Slatter** is Lecturer in Geography at The Open University. A cultural and historical geographer, her research is interested in individuals' everyday experiences of religion.

**How to cite this article:** Slatter, R. (2023). Geographical approaches to religion in the past. *Geography Compass*, 17(4), e12682. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12682>