

**The Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity of the University of Montreal, the Religion and Diversity Project, and the CÉINR (Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire) present the**

# **“NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS, MINORITIES AND MEDIA CONFERENCE”**

**University of Montreal, Marguerite-d'Youville pavilion, Thursday March 17<sup>th</sup> 2016, 2:00-6:30 pm and Friday March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016, 9:00 am-4:30 pm**

**Organisation:** Solange Lefebvre, Chair-holder, Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity (University of Montreal), and Mathilde Vanasse-Pelletier, Ph.D. Candidate, religious studies (University of Montreal).

**Theme:** In recent years, collective anxiety surrounding religious identities seems mainly to be concerned with “world religions”, especially Islam. However, another religious issue is also catching public attention, causing concern and attracting the interest of scholars: new religious movements (NRMs), frequently labelled as “cults”. With this framework in mind, the aim of the conference will be to explore the status of minority religious groups in the contemporary globalized context. More specifically, we will consider media treatment of small religious minorities, and the theoretical, methodological and conceptual issues surrounding the study of NRMs and varieties of media sources.

**If you wish to attend,** please send an email to the following address: **[mathilde.vanasse-pelletier@umontreal.ca](mailto:mathilde.vanasse-pelletier@umontreal.ca)**

CHAIRE SUR LA GESTION  
DE LA DIVERSITÉ CULTURELLE  
ET RELIGIEUSE



Université   
de Montréal



**Thursday March 17<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Room 3038, Marguerite-d'Youville pavilion, University of Montreal**

**2375 chemin de la Côte Ste-Catherine, Montreal**

**1:30-2:00: Welcoming committee**

**Presidency: Dominic Larochelle, Member of the direction committee, Centre CROIR (Centre de Ressources et d'observation de l'innovation religieuse), Université Laval (<https://croir.ulaval.ca>)**

***SESSION 1: Religious Minorities, Internet and Social Media***

**2:00-2:30: Alain Bouchard, Lecturer (Laval University) and Professor (Sainte-Foy College). NRMs and YouTube. “Don't Believe Me, Just Watch', New Religious Movements' Leitmotifs in a Globalized World?”**

Abstract: On video-sharing websites such as YouTube and Dailymotion, one can find remakes of commercial music hits created by new religious movements. “Get Lucky” by Daft Punk is used by Hassidic Jews in order to explain the principles of Rosh Hashanah, “Gangnam Style” by Korean singer Psy becomes “Mormon Style” and “Uptown Funk” by Mark Ronson is used by evangelicals to present details about Easter. While many believers feel that these productions are spoofs of their religions – even when they feature members of said religions – a content analysis highlights a particular aspect of the situation of religions in a globalized context. Olivier Roy presents this type of phenomenon as an example of a “loss of culture” and a deterritorialisation of religion. From this, a conception of “pure religion” is developed, as some religions choose to ignore pagan culture in order to survive and preserve the purity of their faith, through a “holy ignorance”. For Roy, new religious movements are withdrawing from social life because they fear that involvement in the world would put their faith in danger. But is the situation more complex than it seems? What does this mediatisation of new religious movements in a pagan universe tell us? Could we be facing a religious modulation of globalization? Is this presence on YouTube an example of standardization of the religious sphere? Through examples taken from a few of these videos, we will reflect on these questions.

**2:30-3:00: Fabrizio Vecoli, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies (University of Montreal). “Internet, Truth, Spiritual Progression.”**

Abstract: The advent of the Internet, particularly in its highly interactive 2.0 version, inevitably changes the relationship that we sustain with the idea of knowledge. In the religious sphere, knowledge defines our relationship with the truth, the field of the management of salvation goods and the monopolisation of

this field by specialists of the sacred. In certain religious paradigms (we have selected a new religious movement as an example), the esoteric character of knowledge, which is the object of revelation adaptable to each person's capacity, brings a foundation to a hierarchical structure, to a form of spiritual direction, and most of all to a diversification of conceptions of the truth (varying with each member's personal level). We therefore ask the following question: in an environment in which all secrets are revealed in the name of total accessibility, how is spiritual progression managed? With this presentation we aim to put in interaction Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the religious field, the question of religious truth as presented by Jan Assmann, and the latest findings emerging from Internet studies regarding religion.

**3:00-3:30: Questions and discussion**

**3:30-3:45: Break**

**Presidency: Alain Pronkin, media reporter and member of the CÉINRC.**

**SESSION 2: *New Religious Movements in the United States***

**3:45-4:15: Donald Westbrook, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Church history, (Fuller Theological Seminary). "The Art of PR War: Scientology, the Media, and Legitimation Strategies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."**

Abstract: This lecture explores the relationship between the Church of Scientology and various forms of media. Building on insights in the academic literature (e.g. Cusack 2009 and Lewis 2015), this presentation attempts to fill a lacuna by giving more attention to Scientology's own media programs and institutions. Some of these are intended to respond to external public relations threats (such as special issues of *Freedom Magazine*), while others are purposed with the direct dissemination of Dianetics and Scientology to parishioners and outsiders. In 2011, the Church of Scientology International purchased a television station in Los Angeles (the former site of KCET, a local public station), which it reincorporated as Scientology Media Productions (SMP). The goal is to broadcast TV programming on behalf of the church and community at large to the Greater Los Angeles Area (and presumably then digitally distributed nationally and internationally). Despite these and other impressive efforts, the Church of Scientology is a case study in the challenges that a new religion faces in legitimating itself to an increasingly globalized audience in the digital age. On a popular level, parishioners seem increasingly open to discussing, defending, and disseminating Scientology on social media platforms. These efforts may encourage others accustomed to a theology of evil in which "entheta" should be avoided and "suppressive persons" shunned. As such, socially engaged Scientologists, in particular second and third-generation members, may become witting and unwitting foot soldiers on behalf of the church in waging an ongoing

public relations war, and poised to legitimate Scientology to outsiders who are disinterested in or suspicious of “institutional religion.” This hypothesis is all the more intriguing and plausible in the American context, given the market share created by the heterogeneous “rise of the nones” (religiously unaffiliated/disaffiliated populations).

**4:15-4:45: Mathilde Vanasse-Pelletier, Ph.D. Student, religious studies (University of Montreal). “Construction of Normality and Deviance in *Breaking the Faith* and *Escaping the Prophet*.”**

**Abstract:** While increased media attention is now being directed towards the many branches that form American Mormon culture in the largest sense (the LDS Church, Community of Christ, various fundamentalist/polygamous groups), different tendencies regarding the way this culture is represented are noticeable. This paper focuses on the manner in which Mormon groups practicing plural marriage are depicted in popular culture. Although a tendency towards a more pluralistic and positive representation of this minority religious movement has been noticed by many scholars, some anti-polygamy activists remain thoroughly involved in the media. This is for example the case of Carolyn Jessop and Flora Jessop, ex-members of the FLDS Church, which was made famous in recent years with the 2008 Yearning for Zion raid and controversies surrounding its prophet Warren Jeffs. This presentation will address two reality television series produced in collaboration with these anti-cult activists and will consider the manner in which the categories of “deviance” and “normality” are constructed in these shows. To do so, we will use labelling theories and pluralist conflict theories, and consider studies concerning Mormon fundamentalism and the anti-cult movement.

**4:45-5:15: Questions and discussion**

**5:15-6:30: Welcoming cocktail**

**Friday March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Room 3113, Marguerite-d’Youville pavilion, University of Montreal**

**2375 chemin de la Côte Ste-Catherine, Montreal**

**SESSION 1: *Guest of honor***

**9:00-9:45: Massimo Introvigne, Professor, Sociology of religion (Université pontificale salésienne de Turin). “Modern Art, Esoteric Movements and Media. Has Media Censored the Relationship between Modern Art and Esoterism?”**

Abstract: We now know that many great modern artists were inspired in a decisive manner by esoteric movements, including the Theosophical Society. Esoterism however has had a bad reputation throughout its history, linked to its irrationalism and its real or supposed links to an extreme right political posture. Some media outlets, specialized or generalist, have thus tried to censure the relationships between modern artists and esoterism. Some artists with evident links to this religious movement were marginalized. The context has somewhat changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but a tendency towards censorship and marginalization remains in many media outlets.

9:45-10:00: **Questions and discussion**

10:00-10:15: **Coffee break**

**Presidency: Mike Kropveld, Managing director, Info Sect/Cult**  
[www.infosecte.org](http://www.infosecte.org)

## **SESSION 2: *Minority Religions and Media in Canada***

10:15-10:45: **Maria Alekseevskaja, Ph.D Student, sociology (University of Ottawa). “Mass Media Coverage of Dutch Neocalvinists’ Activities in Canadian Socio-political Life.”**

Abstract: In the postwar decades the profile of Canadian population has changed dramatically. The fourth largest ethnic group associated with postwar immigration is the Dutch. My research is focusing on that part of Dutch immigrants who are the followers of neocalvinist movement which appeared in the Netherlands at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Adhering to the idea of ‘pillarization’ (the institutionalized tradition of vertical division of society) and neocalvinist theological thought, Dutch neocalvinists (‘Reformed’ is used as a synonym) have established in Canada their own churches, schools, newspapers, etc.

From the beginning the Reformed tradition has emphasized the significance of the word as an effective tool for communication and teaching. Due to publication of a regular and popular newspaper, a theologian and politician, prime minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905) and one of the founders of neocalvinism Abraham Kuyper strengthened neocalvinist movement itself and its support by Dutch population. Though nowadays the Reformed community in Canada does not reject other types of mass media, it appreciates the printed one. Thus, the focus of this paper is a critical comparative analysis of the coverage of neocalvinists’ activities in Canadian socio-political life in both printed Christian and mainstream mass media.

Theological magazines target the Reformed community's members and present the Reformed view on Scripture; an application of Calvinistic teaching to contemporary issues; etc. Although in the majority cases the title 'the Reformed Church' is not indicated, Canadian mainstream mass media often has some references to it, when it discusses such questions as: the *Loyola school* court process; the debates on selection abortion and legalization of euthanasia; an integration of Muslim immigrants in the society; etc. The topic and rhetoric of publication reflect the political orientation of mass media.

**10:45-11:15: David Michels, Law Librarian and Researcher (Dalhousie University). "Seeing the Others: Alternative Religions in the News."**

*Abstract: On One Day: Religion in the News* is an international longitudinal news media study that considers news reporting in Australia, Canada, Finland, and the United Kingdom. Local, regional, and national newspapers are gathered each year on one day, September 17th, in each of the participating countries. In the initial analyses, issues involving traditional religions such as Islam and Roman Catholicism dominated religion reporting in the Canadian, United Kingdom, and Australian news. Church scandals and acts of terrorism easily capture the attention of the audiences, and sell the news. Consequently, studying the news media's treatment of traditional religions is comparably easy, and several Canadian studies, for example, have already examined how various religious groups are framed in the news. In contrast, alternative and new religious movements are rarely mentioned. Since they may lack the recognizable structures of traditional religions, it may be more difficult for news writers to recognize and describe these groups. Religion researchers can perpetuate the invisibility of these religious groups in our coding and analyses. This presentation looks critically at our coding schema, and re-examines our data to reveal non-traditional religious groups. By paying attention to these challenges we can refine our ongoing coding, and identify the non-traditional religious issues that attract the attention of mainstream news media.

**11:15-11:45: Questions and discussion**

**Lunch will be served**

**Room 3038, Marguerite-d'Youville pavilion, University of Montreal**

**2375 chemin de la Côte Ste-Catherine, Montreal**

**Presidency: Martin Geoffroy, Department of Sociology, CÉGEP Édouard Montpetit**

**SESSION 3: *Expressions and Reception of New Religious Movements***

**12:45-1:15: Connor Steele, Ph.D. Student (University of Ottawa). “Cult of Prison: Analysing Representations of New Religious Movements in *Orange is the New Black*”.**

Abstract: The Netflix series *Orange is the New Black* based on the bestselling memoir by Piper Kerman, has become something of a cult phenomenon. The show has been both roundly praised and criticized for its representation of prison life—at times overly romantic and upbeat, at others an incredibly dark and insightful portrayal of capitalism’s effect on women in relation to the prison industrial complex. This paper proposes to add to this growing discourse by analysing the shows subversive depictions of religious pluralism. On the one hand, the prison instantiates the American dream by presenting a Utopic vision of religious pluralism, in which characters of different faiths, whether these are marginal or not, show equal respect to one another. On the other, this show undercuts this narrative by showing the constant collapse of religious faith, in order to disrupt the audience’s tendency to theologize the prison experience. These ambivalent interconnections between tragedy, resistance, utopianism, and nationalism are seen in the storyline of Norma, a mute and passive character who develops a new religious movement within the prison, based on a charismatic cult of her personality. The tragic collapse of this cult illustrates the struggle for meaning and hope within the oppressive context of the prison. It is a critique of the vision of religious pluralism that the show seems to present upon superficial reading. Norma, a former victim of a new age religious movement, becomes a dumb prophet who prolixly portrays the powerlessness of women in patriarchal America. She enjoys her newfound influence for a while but she and the audience experience despair when her miracles do not come amid flashbacks of religious abuse. Thus, the caustic critique of the show is to implicitly compare the prison to a cult.

**1:15-1:45: Susan J. Palmer, Affiliate Professor, Department of religion (Concordia University) and Research Fellow in the Faculty of Religious Studies (McGill University). “Media Treatment of NRMs in Quebec.”**

Abstract: On the basis of field research conducted in various NRMs, called *sectes* in Quebec and France over the last 15 years, this presentation explores some of the ethical, legal and deontological issues that have arisen in journalistic coverage of controversial NRMs based in the province of Quebec. The role the media has played in the history and public perception of the following groups will be examined: *Les Apôtres de l'Amour Infini*, *Le Mouvement Raëlien*, *L'Église essénienne chrétienne*, *L'Ordre du Temple solaire*, *La Cité Écologique de Ham-Nord*, and *la Mission de l'Esprit-Saint*. The media’s partisan role in anticult activism will be illustrated through examples of journalists colluding with angry ex-members to bring “les gourous” to justice, or to help win custody battles. Prejudicial and stigmatizing media reports on “cults” and “cult leaders” accused of child abuse (Lev Tahor, Pope Gregory XVII) which erode the principle of presumption of innocence will be discussed. Striking examples of how anticult groups have used the Quebec media to promote their agenda, and of how

*antisecte* strategies for “fighting cults” (*lutter contre les sectes*) from France have been imported to Quebec via *La Presse* and *Le Devoir* will also be described.

This presentation will conclude with an account of two ground-breaking legal battles where NRMs have sued journalists for defamation and invasion of privacy (*L’Eglise essénienne vs La Presse*; *Mouvement Raelien vs Journal de Montréal*). These legal outcomes suggest that Quebec’s laws still uphold religious freedom, as compared to similar cases in the U.S. and France.

1:45-2:15: **Questions and discussion**

2:15-2:30: **Coffee Break**

**Presidency : Sara Teinturier, Postdoctoral Fellow, Religion and Diversity Project (University of Ottawa) and Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity (University of Montreal)**

**SESSION 4: *New Religious Movements, Discourse and Psychoanalysis***

2:30-3:00: **Guy-Robert St-Arnaud, Associate Professor, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies (University of Montreal) and Member of the CÉINR (Centre d’écoute et d’interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire). “Shamelessly Manipulating Desire: The Ethics of a Media Operation.”**

Abstract: For decades, vocabulary regarding conditioning techniques by sects has been making a comeback: brainwashing, addiction, mental manipulation, and even radicalization. Media hardly escape the influence of these discourses, and one wonders if they are becoming, more or less directly, instruments of manipulation (see Harold Dwight Laswell and the influence of propaganda on public opinion)?

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, interviews conducted for my “Croire à l’extrême” research project allowed us to discern an auto-manipulation paradox, underlining the way in which the manipulation concept had led us into a deadlock. Where are we 15 years later?

Comparing the point of view of Luc Boltanski on denunciation to Pierre Bourdieu’s thoughts on the effect of speech with regards to symbolic capital, Arnaud Esquerre (*La manipulation sociale*, 2009), using John Langshaw’s analysis, concludes that: “A person defending themselves from an accusation of manipulation involves a paradoxical situation: autonomy (the state of not being manipulated) means that a human being should be able to justify every action they take, but justifying every action is as exhausting as it is impossible” (p.90-91). Does the reminder of this impossibility bring an end to the concept of mental manipulation or at least to its outrageous use since it is for a matter of fact unjustifiable? These issues are linked to an ethical dimension.

Would it be better to speak of psychological subjection? From a psychoanalytical point of view, this line of questioning leads us to Freud's first elaborations, where he used the reflex arc outline to bring forth an understanding of relationships between perception and representation as primary acts of consciousness, representation also here meaning media fabrication.

**3:00-3:30: Lydwine Olivier, Volunteer Worker and Treasurer, CÉINR (Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire) and Ph.D. student, Faculty of theology and religious studies (University of Montreal). "Between Media Discourse and Research about Sects and Media, Where is the Place for the Testimony of those Involved in the Sectarian?"**

Abstract: The relationship between sects and media was written about extensively and have long attracted the attention of researchers who worry about the social representation of sects that the media discourse propels in the public space. For this reason, it seems important to consider the role of research in sect-media relationships. Specifically, the CEINR proposes to focus on how the media, as well as researchers, take into account the testimony of those involved in the sectarian. Indeed, what we know about sects is only what people say about them in a general manner, or what is said when a tragedy happens, both instances involving an act of speech. What impacts can research concerning the sect-media relationships have on the research material constituted of the testimony of those involved in the sectarian? The question ask is: what place is given by researchers and the media to what these people are saying? How is their speech taken in account? Our presentation aims to introduce the speech of the people involved in the sectarian, according to the CEINR approach, which postulates that faith and speech are the foundations of a relevant manner of listening to the subjectivity present in sectarian activity. What difference occurs when one works from the subjectivity of the people involved in the sectarian?

**3:30-4:00: Questions and discussion**

**4:00-4:30: Final discussion**

**Presidency: Solange Lefebvre**

**Panellists: Martin Geoffroy, Dominic Larochelle and Massimo Introvigne**

**Marguerite-d'Youville pavilion (Do not hesitate to contact us if you need more information about the best route to take)**

2375 chemin de la Côte Ste-Catherine, Montreal

Metro station: Édouard-Montpetit

Buses: 51, 129

More information on the University of Montreal website:  
[http://plancampus.umontreal.ca/montreal/?tx\\_lhocampusmap\\_pi1%5Bbuilding%5D=338&tx\\_lhocampusmap\\_pi1%5Baction%5D=show&tx\\_lhocampusmap\\_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=Building&cHash=aafc7cb03b96c44f6a38a6a207001e85](http://plancampus.umontreal.ca/montreal/?tx_lhocampusmap_pi1%5Bbuilding%5D=338&tx_lhocampusmap_pi1%5Baction%5D=show&tx_lhocampusmap_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=Building&cHash=aafc7cb03b96c44f6a38a6a207001e85)

**This conference is presented by the Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity of the University of Montreal, the Religion and Diversity Project, and the CEINR (Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire).**

**Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity:** Faced with the reality of religious pluralism, both Quebec and Canadian societies must redefine the relationship between religion and the core values of their respective culture(s). The aim of the *Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity* is to promote multidisciplinary research and its distribution, while also developing cutting-edge expertise and training on emerging issues related to religion. First of its kind in the country, the *Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity* has already proven its influence by the progress that has been made since its creation: the Chair acts as a catalyst for scientific and public events.

Website: <http://gdcr.umontreal.ca/eng/index.html>

**Religion and Diversity Project:** The *Religion and Diversity Project* is a \$2.5 million, seven (7) year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI) housed at the University of Ottawa (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada). The project's main contribution is to identify in detail the contours of religious diversity in Canada and the potential benefits of approaches to diversity that promote substantive or deep equality and move beyond tolerance and accommodation. Our comparative research places Canada in the context of other Western democracies and identifies global patterns in responses to religious diversity. Our research provides new data and theoretical articulations concerning religious diversity. This research program presents diversity not primarily as a problem, but as a resource and to propose strategies for equality that will advance knowledge and

enhance public policy decision-making. Website: <http://religionanddiversity.ca/en/>

**CÉINR (Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire):** The CEINR (Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire) is a non-profit organisation which was born under the name CINR (Centre d'information sur les nouvelles religions) in 1984. The mission of the center is to encourage serious research about new beliefs in a context of modernity. The CINR was an important organisation in Quebec, mainly because of its researches and orientation towards dialogue and attentive listening of people going through a sectarian experience. Still focusing on observation and research concerning new spiritual practices, sects, and alternative therapies (with special attention paid to belief and the process of listening), the CEINR is the only organisation in Quebec offering a listening service to people involved in research about new forms of beliefs. Website: <http://www.cinr.qc.ca/>

## **Participants' Biographies**

### **Maria Alekseevskaia**

My research interests are closely connected to the study of how ethnicity and religion define the way immigrants integrate into Canadian society. Also, one of my goals is to investigate various issues which Canadian religiously diverse education system faces. My thesis project is devoted to the analysis of separate school system of postwar Dutch Reformed immigrants and its influence on the worldview of its graduates and their functioning in Canadian society.

### **Alain Bouchard**

Alain Bouchard is a Professor at Sainte-Foy Collee and a lecturer at Laval University. He studies religious innovation in the context of globalization. His researches explore the cultural aspects of religious innovation, particularly the topic of UFO watching groups and the media reception of new religions. From 2002 to 2007, he was president of the Quebec Society for the Study of Religion. Since 2009, he is the French-language editor for the Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses journal, attached to the Canadian Corporation of Religious Studies.

### **Massimo Introvigne**

Massimo Introvigne is a Professor in Sociology of religion at the Université pontificale de Turin (Italy). He is the author of 60 volumes on the subject of new religious movements, esoterism, and religious pluralism. In 2011, he was a representative for the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), working on the fight against racism, xenophobia, and religious discrimination.

### **David Michels**

Dr. David H. Michels is a Law Librarian at Dalhousie University, and a Research Associate of the Religion and Diversity Project. His research interests are information seeking in religious contexts, religion and new media, and religion and law in the public square. He is currently engaged in ethnographic explorations of information seeking of leaders and members of Christian churches wrestling with significant transitions in the lives of their congregations.

The research presented was conducted in collaboration with Dr. Christopher Helland. Dr. Helland is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Dalhousie University, and is a Team Member of the Religion and Diversity Project. His current research activities explore the relationships that have developed, and are developing, between new media and religious beliefs and practices. His central questions focus upon the impact of the Internet and World Wide Web on issues of religious authority and control, religious information seeking behaviour, social shaping/spiritualizing of technology, ritual activity, pilgrimage, and popular religious expression.

### **Solange Lefebvre**

Chair holder of the Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity (before 2003, Religion, Culture and Society) at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies (University of Montreal) since 2003, Solange Lefebvre has degrees in music (piano, 1984), theology (Ph.D. 1992) and social anthropology (D.E.A., Paris, 1996). A member of the Royal Society of Canada, she leads different comparative projects about the management of religious diversity, which have received funding by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. She founded the Centre for the Study of Religion at the University of Montreal, and acted as its director from 2000 to 2008. She was a member of the expert committee for the Bouchard-Taylor commission on reasonable accommodations and interculturalism, and works on contemporary socio-religious trends. Her most recent publications include the following collective works: *Catholicisme et cultures. Regards croisés Québec-France*, (Presses de l'Université Laval and Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015), *Religion in the Public Sphere. Canadian Case Studies*(University of

Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2014), *Le programme d'éthique et culture religieuse : De l'exigeante conciliation entre le soi, l'autre et le nous* (PUL, 2012), and tens of articles and book chapters.

### **Lydwine Olivier**

Lydwine Olivier is a volunteer worker and the treasurer for the CEINR. She is also a Ph.D. Student at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Montreal. Her research explores the subjectivity of speech with regards to commentaries about women and desire in Genesis 3.

### **Susan J. Palmer**

Susan J. Palmer is an Affiliate Professor at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, and a Research Fellow in the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University. She is the author of eleven books based on her research in new religious movements.

### **Guy-Robert St-Arnaud**

Guy-Robert St-Arnaud is an associate Professor at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Montreal. He is also a member of the CEINR and of the Montreal Lacanian School (ELM).

### **Connor Steele**

Connor completed an undergrad in Humanities at Carleton University, in which his particular area of focus was New Testament studies and sexuality studies, as these disciplines relate to the history of western political thought. After graduating with the Humanities medal for academic achievement, he entered a Master of Arts in Political Science at Carleton University. In this program, Connor specialized in 20<sup>th</sup> century existentialist thought, particularly the political implications of Heidegger's later writings. His MA thesis discussed Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics in relation to the phenomenological experience of persons deemed disabled. This interdisciplinary project drew on queer and disability theory in an attempt to bring them into closer dialogue with Heideggerian scholarship. He was awarded the medal for outstanding graduate research, on account of this project.

### **Mathilde Vanasse-Pelletier**

Mathilde Vanasse-Pelletier is a Ph.D. Student in Religious Studies at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Montreal. Her research focuses on the media representation of Mormon fundamentalism, a subject which allows her to combine the expertise acquired through a bi-disciplinary baccalaureate in anthropology and religious studies. More broadly,

she is interested in the relationship between minority groups and media, Mormon culture in general, the legitimation strategies of minority religions, and the study of deviance.

### **Fabrizio Vecoli**

Fabrizio Vecoli is a Professor at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Montreal. He is also in charge of academic programs for the Faculty. He studied at Turin University (Italy) and at L'École des hautes études en sciences religieuses de Plaisance (Italy). He taught in Turin and Ottawa before moving to Montreal. He is interested in ancient Christianity, especially in the history of primitive monasticism and theories of religion. His work on religion and internet emerged from this interest in theories of religion.

### **Donald Westbrook**

Donald A. Westbrook received his PhD in American Religion from Claremont Graduate University (USA), where he wrote a dissertation on the Church of Scientology that is he is preparing to publish as a monograph. In addition to work on New Religious Movements (NRMs), he has done research in the fields of interfaith dialogue, Middle Eastern Christianity, and Diaspora Studies. He is presently Adjunct Assistant Professor of Church History at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA, USA).