

23 June 2005

Dear Colleagues interested in the envisioned “RNC” society:

The response to the March 2005 invitation to form a scholarly Society, provisionally titled the Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, has been enthusiastic in both the US, Europe, and beyond. This summer, in Germany, European Scholars held a workshop sponsored by the European Science Foundation entitled “[Religion and Environment in Europe](#).” Scholars attending arrived at an easy consensus that they wanted to be involved, and wished for this society to be broadly international, and of course, interdisciplinary. We have also recently sent out letters to prominent scholars around the world to be on an advisory board for the society, and again, while we have not yet heard back from everyone, the response has been tremendous and gratifying. (The advisory board list is posted and will be periodically updated at www.religionandnature.com/society.) The idea seems to be gaining momentum.

We are, therefore, proceeding with the idea mentioned in our earlier invitation to hold a planning meeting for this society, 8-11 September 2005, at Cocoa Beach, Florida. This is conveniently close to Orlando International Airport. Faculty and students involved with the graduate program in religion and nature at the University of Florida will host this meeting.

Initial discussions about the September meeting suggest we need to form at least the following sub-committees, which will shape the agenda:

- 1) Bylaws & Administration (Proposals need to be developed regarding leadership and administrative procedures database management and communication, whether to have regional affiliates and their nature if so, and so on).
- 2) Finance & fundraising. (Proposals are needed about dues, how & where to manage funds, whether and if so what rebates there might be to regional affiliates, and so forth.)
- 3) Conferences (Decisions and planning for conferences or workshops are already under discussion and refinement is needed)
- 4) Outreach (How to best continue efforts to ensure diverse geographic and disciplinary representatives.) This committee will also determine which meetings we should have a presence at in both Europe, America and beyond
- 5) Publishing (Discussion is needed over whether the society should establish officially or loosely relationships with existing or envisioned scholarly journals.)

This September meeting will, we hope, lead to a number of proposals in the above-mentioned areas, and will be followed by listening sessions at several professional meetings including the American Academy of Religion Meeting in Philadelphia in November and the American Anthropological Association in Washington DC in late November and early December. The idea for these sessions is gain insights and ideas as to how the proposals and alternatives prepared by the sub-committees might be refined and improved, thereby creating both good initial structures for the society and efficient and transparent procedures for the ongoing development of the society.

If you would like to attend the September meeting, please contact us at society@religionandnature.com. We are especially interested in having those with experience in the formation or administration of scholarly or other non-governmental organizations, so please let us know of such experience and what committees you would be especially interested in

joining, if you were to come. We hope to be able to cover on-site expenses (modest, shared accommodations and food) for those who can make it a priority to attend this planning

Even if you cannot come, we earnestly want your ideas and insights before the September planning meeting.

Also, we want to remind all of you of the meeting prior to the American Academy of religion at Swarthmore College, a short distance from downtown Philadelphia, beginning about 5 p.m. Thursday 17 November, and the following day. Mark Wallace of Swarthmore College will host this meeting at a small, nearby conference/retreat center. This meeting is open to all who wish to attend. Those interested in attending this meeting should also be in contact with us as soon as possible. Limited accommodations will be available on site (and those for whom we cannot provide accommodations may attend by registering at the AAR conference hotel and making the short trip to the meeting venue.)

The Swarthmore meeting is being generously subsidized by Swarthmore College and the University of Florida, which will allow us to keep costs to participants small. Details will be forthcoming to all who express interest as soon as they are made. Several anthropologists are now developing plans for presenting the Society idea at their meeting; anyone interested in this meeting, or planning it, should also contact us, and we will put you in touch with those who will be making arrangements at that venue.

In addition to the outreach already undertaken, we have developed a database into which we are placing the names and contact information of interested scholars, along with their areas of expertise that are relevant to this society, which will be searchable and useful in many ways. We have also posted a prospective mission statement and the names of those who have thus far agreed to be on the advisory board, at the project website, as well as the initial invitation. This will be a place to check back for further developments.

Let us also encourage you to mark your calendars for 6-14 May 2006. This is the range of dates where there is a good chance we will hold a several day, kick-off conference for the society, at the University of Florida. Plans have also been hatched by our European colleagues for a second meeting in Athens, approximately a year later. Finally, as we all receive too much mail and it is likely that some who would be interested in this initiative do not know about it, please make sure friends and colleagues in your orbit know about it and have an opportunity to get involved. We look forward to hearing from and working with you all! Just send them to the project website at www.religionandnature.com/society.

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