

Book Reviews

Reviews Editor: Victor C. Hayes

Many Faiths, One Nation. A Guide to the Major Faiths and Denominations in Australia.

Ian Gillman

Sydney: William Collins, 1988.

416+xvi pp., \$19.95

Here is a timely and useful publication produced at the invitation of the Interfaith Program of the Australian Bicentennial Authority (and partly funded by the latter). Its author, Ian Gillman, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, and specializes in the history of Christianity. Ian is a longtime member of AASR and was Chair of the 1983 Brisbane Conference.

Many Faiths, One Nation claims to provide "a comprehensive directory to the diversity of faith groups in Australia". Essentially the claim is justified despite one's suspicion that the author has not satisfactorily sorted out how he is using terms like "denomination", "faith group" and "religion" or how he has determined that the total number of contenders in the field should be forty-six.

Part One is headed "Religion in Australian Life — an Exploration". Its three sections ask "what understandings we can glean" "Out of our Yesterdays" (pp. 6-31), "And from today" (pp. 31-55) and "What about Tomorrow?" (pp. 55-58). The organization of and headings in this part of the book are untidy, and only the middle section is referred to in the Table of Contents! Nevertheless it represents Dr. Gillman's own reflections and he has many clear-headed things to say as he touches on the peculiarly Australian version of past and present relationships "between Religion and" such areas and

issues in Australian life as morality, aboriginals, church-state relations, theological antipathies, socio-economic issues, the quest for prosperity, the natural environment, dependence on Britain and the U.S.A., women in society, social welfare and missionary involvement, and a multi-cultural society.

Part Two, headed "The Major Faiths and Denominations" (a heading not to be found in the Table of Contents), has 32 entries — from Aboriginal Religions to The Uniting Church, from Anglicans to Hindus (pp. 61-358). Here is the central up-to-date material we have needed at our finger-tips for a long while — ever since Tess van Sommers' brave effort (*Religion in Australia*, Rigby, 1966) fell out of date. Dr Gillman has enlisted the help of some 35 representatives and experts (as listed on pp. 398-400) to provide succinct, authoritative outlines of the *history, beliefs, forms of worship, membership, ministry and government of each faith or denomination*. The representatives were consulted in order to ensure that what was said about a group was acceptable to it. Each entry gets about 9 pages of text concluding with a brief booklist and a few names and addresses from which more information may be obtained.

Two misgivings arise at this point. One concerns the fact that the groups in this major section have been arranged "in the order in which they appeared in organized and continuing forms in Australia" (p. xiv). This is no help at all. No one could be expected to know this order by heart in the way we know the alphabet. So it's a matter of poking up and down the list till you find what you are looking for. A second misgiving concerns the Booklists. Of course they contain "advocacy"

and "interpretative" materials produced by insiders. But sometimes — and, I think, unfortunately — they contain *only* such material. (See, for example, the entries under Jehovah's Witnesses or, in Part Three, The Church of Scientology.)

After the 300 pages of Part Two come the dozen or so pages of Part Three. This is a strange kind of clean-up section with the entirely non-committal heading: "Also to be Found throughout Australia are" (though this is another heading which, thankfully in this case, is not to be found in the Table of Contents). There are fourteen entries here. They include groups like the Cooneyites, the Moonies and The Church of Scientology, as well as that most ancient of revealed faiths, Zoroastrianism.

The reader might imagine that we can now say with some certainty just how many religious groups there are in Australia. One just adds the 32 mentioned in Part Two and the 14 mentioned in Part Three, and the answer is 46. The back cover confirms it: 46. But not so fast. Consider the following:

- Presbyterian is one of the 46, but at the end of the essay three other separate Presbyterian groups are mentioned. The 46 becomes 49.
- "Orthodox" (now about 3% of our population) appears as one entry, but within that entry there are eight Orthodox Churches: Greek, Antiochan, Russian, Serbian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Macedonian — the latter being not yet recognized by the other Orthodox Churches (Denominations?!). In addition there are four "Non-Chalcedonian" Orthodox Churches, from the 4,000 strong Syrian to the 25,000 member Coptic. Our total moves from 49 to 60.
- "Islam" is a single entry but gives details of a dozen or so "factions" or "divisions", most of which are to be

found among Australia's 200,000 Muslims. Add the divisions mentioned within other single entries — like Jews, Baptists, Mormons, Brethren — and the total approaches 80.

- Then there is the single entry "Pentecostal". To be sure, the word "Pentecostal" describes a movement rather than a single denomination — there are Pentecostals in many mainline congregations. But Gillman (or informant Barry Chant) proceeds to list nine major sub-groupings (denominations) within the movement (e.g., The Assemblies of God with 500 congregations and the Christian Revival Crusade with 100) assuring us that "in addition, there are about 100 independent congregations" (p. 276). Add 109 to the 80 and we are up to 179.
- Another single entry is "Buddhism". We learn that between .75% and 1.50% of Australians are Buddhist — although it is hard to get agreement on a definition of "Buddhist" and membership is often "a cultural rather than a religious matter". Nevertheless the three major traditions of Buddhism are present in Australia (Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana) which means there are many Buddhist sects here (like Zen and Sokka Gakai from the Mahayana tradition). In fact, Australia has some 80 Buddhist groups or organizations, and "most Buddhists feel they have little to gain from developing closer ties with one another" (p. 330).

Buddhism is an umbrella term for a great number of sects or schools or denominations, as is the term "Christianity". "Christianity", of course, is not a single entry in this volume; it is not an entry at all. Only Anglicans, Methodists, *et cetera* are listed. If we followed the same pattern for Buddhism, we should list only its

sects and denominations. So add another 80 to the 189. This brings us to 269.

- Now try the Hindus, another single entry! Some 20,000 of the 40,000 ethnic Indians are Hindus, and Gillman (or informants Purusottama Bilimoria and Jayant Bapat) have provided (on pp. 334f) a list of some three dozen of the major groups in Australia. They include the Vaishnavas, Shaivites, Shaktas, and worshippers of various other gods; the Arya Samajis; the followers of Sai Baba, or Swami Shivananda or some other guru; the Hare Krishnas; the followers of various yoga systems; and members of fringe offshoots like the Ananda Marga, the Rajneeshis or Da Love-Free John. (Our total now is past 320).
- By contrast, half the Australian population are covered by just two entries in Gillman's book: the Catholic (our largest "Major Faith" with some 4,000,000 members) and the Anglican (now shaded into second place). Few would suppose these "Communions" to be as monolithic as their single entries suggest.
- Finally, consider the entry under "Aboriginal Religions". The title is in the plural because "there are many Aboriginal religions, and they vary considerably in content" (p. 61). So how many? And what's the new total? And how many will we get if we keep on like this? 500? More than that?

The Encyclopedia of World Christianity (Barret) reports 22,000 Christian Denominations, one criterion being that a group must have 50,000 members to be called a denomination. On this basis, 14 of Gillman's 46 entries could be denominations.

The question of nomenclature and categories and definitions has become acute because the fairly solidly "Christian"

complexion of "religion" in Australia up to World War II has been replaced by a luxuriant proliferation of alternative creations of the human spirit which refuses to be comfortably embraced by our accustomed Western categories. Dr Gillman adopts a fairly broad definition of Religion on page 5 and a slightly different one on p. 61 (though neither, I think, justify his inclusion of Rationalism and Humanism as religions). One cannot pursue the question of the definition of "religion" here, but it can be suggested that all the terminology used in this book needs examination and, perhaps, replacement, viz., "Church", "denomination", "sect", "faction", "division", "faith", "faith-group", "school", "sect", etc.

Although Dr Gillman writes at times like a Christian insider (which he is), it is also true that the "multi-cultural, multi-religious mind" is emerging in this volume. *Many Faiths, One Nation* will be the standard handbook on religious groups in Australia for a generation to come.

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The Charles Strong Lectures 1972-1984.

Robert B. Crotty.

Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987.

206+xviii pp.

Ever since 1961, and more than a decade before the establishment of tertiary Religion Studies departments in Australia, the Charles Strong (Australian Church) Memorial Trust (established 1957) has been quietly promoting the scholarly study of world religions. In 1961 the Trust instituted its Charles Strong Memorial Lecture Series, specifying that the lecturers could deal with any religion other than Christianity.

From 1974 to 1979 these lectures were given in the context of the Annual Conferences of the Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies

(ANZSTS). From 1978 to the present, however, with some overlapping, the lectures have been given at AASR Conferences. In addition, the Trust, in an innovative move in 1980, established a Young Australian Scholar Lecture Series. These lectures, too, have been given at AASR Conferences.

In the past quarter century, then, this pioneering Trust has contributed to the Study of Religion in Australia through some 28 lectures in its "Senior Scholar" Series (1961-1987) and 8 in the "Junior Scholar" Series (1980-1987). AASR, since its own establishment in 1975, has arranged for the publishing of each individual lecture for the Trust and, during this period, we have been able to send all the printed lectures in both series free to AASR members (except in a couple of instances where manuscripts were not submitted by the lecturers).

Now Robert Crotty has judiciously selected a dozen of these 36 lectures and published them in book form with a brief Introduction. The Trust's selection of lecturers over the years may have been fairly *ad hoc*, but there has been an attempt to represent a variety of religious traditions. Crotty has preserved this variety and balance by gathering his selected lectures into four major categories:

(a) ABORIGINAL RELIGION

W. E. H. Stanner, "Some Aspects of Aboriginal Religion" (1976)

R. M. Berndt, "A Profile of Good and Bad in Aboriginal Religion" (1979)

Dianne Bell, "Aboriginal Women and the Religious Experience" (1982)

(b) EASTERN RELIGIONS

Joseph Kitagawa, "Reflections on the Japanese World of Meaning" (1975)

Liu Ts'un-yan, "The Essence of Taoism" (1981)

Peter Bishop, "Tibet in its Place" (1983)

Klaus Klostermaier, "The Body of God" (Hinduism) (1983)

(c) WESTERN RELIGIONS

A. H. Johns, "Moses in the Qur'an" (1982)

Zwi Werblowsky, "Jerusalem: Holy City of Three Religions" (1972)

(d) METHODOLOGY

Eric J. Sharpe, "Universal Religion for Universal Man" (1978)

Rowan Ireland, "Interpreting Babel" (1981)

Graham Rossiter, "Studying Religion in Australian Schools" (1984)

According to the editor, "the lectures in this volume have been selected on the basis of their academic worth and their topical variety. They treat of the phenomena of religion from various aspects and from within various traditions. They are an ongoing monument to Charles Strong, a person of vision and courage." (xviii) That is all fair comment.

(Charles Strong (1844-1942), was born in Scotland, studied Arts and Divinity at Glasgow, and came as minister to Scots Church, Melbourne, in 1875. Ostracised from the Presbyterian Church because of his liberal views, Strong established the Australian Church in 1885 and remained as its minister until his death in 1942. In 1957 the Australian Church was finally dissolved and its assets placed into the hands of the Charles Strong Trust. The full story is told by C. R. Badger in his The Reverend Charles Strong and the Australian Church, Melbourne: ABACADA Press, 1971.)

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At Cross Purposes.

Robin J. Pryor.

A Report of the Commission on Continuing Education for Ministry, Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria, 1986. 160pp.

Distress (that is, non-beneficial stress) and "burnout" among members of the people-helping professions have been popular research topics in recent years. The caring and "people-intensive" professions include, of course, religious leaders — clergypersons and para-church professionals and counsellors — as well as nurses, social workers, teachers, doctors, dentists, mental health workers, psychologists, psychoanalysts, police, air-traffic controllers and the like. All have been quizzed and questioned by researchers anxious to help these people-helpers.

In 1981, AASR published Robin Pryor's *High Calling, High Stress*, an annotated bibliography dealing with the vocational needs of ministers. Still in print, it contains a 572-item review of research (monographs, journals and unpublished papers) from the period 1971-1980 but with some relevant earlier material. The literature search focuses on Victoria and Australia but identifies key overseas findings. Two hundred items deal directly with role stress in ministers. Its insights were and are relevant to the issues surrounding leadership in all faiths, and can be read with profit by imam and rabbi as well as by pastor, priest and lay-leader.

Now comes the sequel. *At Cross Purposes* is a more substantial project carried out at the request of the Synod of Victoria in the Uniting Church in Australia. It updates the 1981 bibliography by including quite a few books and articles from the period 1981 to 1985, and reports some new surveys.

After defining such terms as "stress", "strain", "tension", "depression" and "burnout" and discussing the causes and symptoms of stress among religious lead-

ers, Pryor raises a number of other interesting questions. How widespread really is burnout, depression, distress? Is "burnout" a myth? As the author notes, it cannot be assumed that every minister "suffers" from stress (p.1). Perhaps it relates to particular personalities rather than to vocational factors? Does it affect only a small minority anyway? What is the impact of stress on spouses, family, associates and employees? Do the battles of life have to make us casualties? Is there good stress ("eu-stress") as well as bad stress ("dis-stress")?

Chapter One, then, defines vocational stress and related concepts. Chapter Two looks at the matter from a Christian theological rather than a vocational/empirical point of view. Chapters three through seven investigate the experience of stress, helpful coping mechanisms, sources of support, and measures of "success" and "satisfaction" in the Christian ministry, especially among Uniting Church parish ministers in Victoria. The main sources (surveys) drawn on in this study are described in Chapter three.

Pryor's work is professional. His information comes from self-completed, anonymous questionnaires, not from clinical observations. Hence he frequently notes the possibility of bias and the limitations inherent in the questionnaire methodology (e.g., intractable problems of recall and *post hoc* rationalisation) and in the form of the data (e.g. the impossibility in some cases of specifying which are the independent, intervening and dependent variables). (Cf. pp. 49, 62, 66, 67, 70 et al.)

Pryor's professionalism lends authority to any number of interesting observations in the course of his presentation. For example:

- male clergy reported greater stress than female clergy (p. 63).
- of the various areas of ministry, preaching was most enjoyed by half (but only half) the ministers surveyed.

Administration was enjoyed least (p. 43f).

- today men and women are being ordained into the UCA ministry in their mid- to late-30s or older (p. 34).
- overall satisfaction with ministry is relatively high for those with no tertiary qualifications, low for those with one qualification, and about average for those with two or more qualifications (p. 47).

Pryor concludes that the Uniting Church ministers covered by his Victorian study are, overall, strongly committed to their ministry, and find many joys and satisfactions in their preaching, administration of sacraments, leadership of worship, pastoral care and counseling. But the signs and effects of distress — emotional, physical and spiritual — are significantly present in more than half of the ministers surveyed (p. 119).

This is an interesting conclusion when placed against the results of Fichter's study of 4,660 U. S. Catholic priests, reported by Pryor (p. 8). Fichter concluded that a minority of 6.2% could be regarded as "candidates for burnout", and concluded that while distress and burnout in the ministry are a legitimate concern they are certainly not of epidemic proportions so there is a "need to deflate the pop-psychologists and human relations experts who spread worrisome rumours".

At Cross Purposes is written by a good researcher who is also an insider. Perhaps we need to make more room in religious studies for examination of the category of "religious leadership" where this is understood to include more than shamans and witch doctors.

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The Gospel is not Western: Black Theologies from the Southwest Pacific.
G.W. Trompf (ed.).

Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987.
213pp. \$17.95.

The articles in this volume illustrate the growing interest in, and significance of, indigenous religion in the Southwest Pacific. The selection of materials is excellent and the force of the articles inescapable. Religion in this part of the world is a power which interacts closely with politics and has the capacity to help determine the destiny of a number of small nations. In these emerging societies, traditional Christian and new 'synthetic' religious movements both have a role to play. The future of both and their interaction will be fascinating to follow.

The Gospel is not Western is divided into five sections reflecting different aspects of the interaction between religion and culture. Part I includes Trompf's own outline of the historical, geographical and religious context of the articles which follow. He maintains that the contributors are well aware that Christianity "has unusually arrived as part of the larger parcel of colonial interventions, and they must uncover the partially obscured truths of the Gospel and avoid being duped" (p. 7). Aruru Matiabe from the Highlands, who was Minister of Education at the time of writing, issues "A Call for Black Humanity to be Better Understood." Blacks, he contends, are not 'pagans' but human beings with the same Spirit within and worshipping the same Supreme Being. God preceded the Christians to Papua/New Guinea, but the Christians were too biased to discern his presence in the religion of the land.

Part II of the book explores the interface between the Christian cum Western culture and the traditional cultures of Australia and Melanesia. Pokawin maintains that evangelisation was a vehicle for replacing traditional culture with Western chauvinistic "Christian culture," a culture which Melanesians first accepted

uncritically. Now Christianity is recognised as a 'tradition' which is culturally conditioned and everchanging as it interacts with traditional cultures today as it has in the past. Christianity, like Melanesian religion, is a cultural tradition. In speaking of the advent of Christianity among the Aranda, Rose Kunoth-Monks describes the Gospel as a 'God-send' which countered many of the superstitions and evils of their tradition. Yet, the Aboriginal Christians did not accept all that the missionaries said was part of the Christian faith. The Aborigines could not surrender their *tjurungas*. More recently the Hermansburg Mission has been willing to acknowledge traditional mythology as a legitimate basis for land claims. Aboriginal Christians discriminated between what they saw as central tenets of Christianity and the Western application of that faith to their specific cultural situation.

Part III focuses on "The Impact of Indigenous Tradition on Emergent Black Theologies." Among many groups in the Solomon Islands, it is believed that powerful ancestors, who were 'put to sleep' by a special ritual, lived on in the *hope* or *sope* house. Priests alone had access to that house. According to Esau Tuza, these powerful ancestors have migrated to the church buildings. Today important people are buried close to the church in line with this belief. The religious leader Holy Mama employs traditional structures of worship which centre on the ancestors. Jesus on the crucifix becomes the substitute for the skulls of the ancestors 'made to sleep' in the *sope*. Thus, like the ancestors, the risen Jesus is alive in the worship and touches people with ecstatic experiences which are replicas of spirit possession.

In his article on "The Land is Sacred" Goboo Ted Thomas takes us on a journey through the valley of Omona in New South Wales and relates the mythical meaning of the landscape in terms of the traditional culture into which Christian traditions have been absorbed. A great

rock on a hill top is Noah's ark. In that, as in other rocks, the ancient energy of the spirits is still present. Another rock is the Rainbow Serpent who moves through the land at will and emerges from holes in the landscape. The landscape is full of spiritual realities; with the destruction of the landscape these spiritual realities retreat. But the Aborigines knew Darama, God the Spirit, long before the missionaries came. "It is about time whites learned these old truths" (p. 94).

Part IV is entitled "Theological Horizons and Adjustments" and includes articles reflecting the search for a Theology in the Black Pacific context. Rose Kara Ninkama, for example, is a Lutheran theological student from the Central Highlands. She has a vision of women taking their place as clergy on the same terms as men. She bases her argument both on Biblical and traditional Melanesian grounds. Without the creation of woman man is not fully human (Gen. 2.18). John Kabida's search for a Melanesian theology illustrates the growing desire to develop a 'home-grown' theology for Pacific regions of Melanesia and Micronesia, "not just an imported religion, but an authentic expression of the people's response to the Gospel in their particular environment" (p. 140). Labels such as liberal, evangelical or charismatic are all reflections of Western theologies. Indigenous theology must reflect local life; practices must fit the local culture. Yams and sweet potato, for example, are more viable than bread as an element for the Eucharist. Sevati Yuwere offers a similar study about a theology in Fiji which would take into account its multiracial, multireligious and traditional culture.

In Part V, "Politics, Tradition and Christianity," the relationship between religion or theology and society is explored by political leaders as protagonists for the oppressed. John Nomis' article outlines the kind of Christian values needed to establish a new society in a new nation as traditional societies fade. Liberation from the oppressive and de-

structive forces of world powers and ideologies is essential if a new society is to be created in the unity of Christ. Dialogue between church and government is therefore vital. What is needed is a society based on sharing, not competition or greed, a classless society dedicated to the equitable distribution of resources. Utulu Saman, a well known partisan of the Melanesian Alliance, offers a variation of this model from a Christian socialist perspective. Trwar Max Ireeuw makes an appeal for Melanesian Christian solidarity to bring this new society together under human and Christian principles. His brother, Pierre Qaeze, asks the pointed question whether it is possible to call oneself a Christian when so many of the followers of Jesus Christ do nothing to bring about Kanak independence from French overlordship.

The final article, entitled "A Theology for Justice and Peace in the Pacific" is by a Fijian, Suliana Siwatibau, who challenges Christian theologians to face the reality of

overpowering economic, technological, social and military change. The current arms race is 'demonic.' The liberating Christ is needed to disarm the powers (as in Eph. 6). In the face of the arms race, Christians are called to be advocates of peace and justice.

The text of this volume of articles is well-edited, organised and developed. The material is generally representative, though only four of the twenty one articles are by Australian Aborigines. The relative stages of emerging theologies can be gleaned from these writers and the challenge they present to 'Western' Christian churches of the Pacific is evident at many points. Trompf has done us a great service in collecting these materials. This should be a basic text for any course on Liberation Theology or Religious Movements.

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