

News Events

AASR Women's Caucus Meeting, July 1994

Because the AASR conference in Adelaide this year combined with the ANZATS/ANZSTS conference, we were very happy to meet a number of new AASR women members who are scholars in theology and philosophy. The main topics of discussion were the extent and availability of various support groups across Australia, and the anomalous position of lecturers in theology who have access to very much lower salaries than lecturers with comparable qualifications and experience in the Universities.

Women in Tertiary teaching positions in Australia

The meeting congratulated two women who have been appointed to University positions in Studies in Religion: Lynne Hume, at the University of Queensland and one of the Charles Strong Lecturers for 1994, and Majella Franzmann, at the University of New England. She and Deborah Bird Rose were the very first women Charles Strong lecturers. We assessed the current position of women in tertiary positions in Australia as far as we know it: several in Catholic Studies and Religion Studies in the University of South Australia, an unknown number in Catholic Studies at the Australian Catho-

lic University, one at La Trobe, two at Edith Cowan, one at each of the Universities of New England and Queensland, together with an unknown number of session-lecturers, including three women at Edith Cowan, one who takes three courses at the University of Sydney and others who tutor in various courses. There are a number of prominent women lecturing in Theological Colleges affiliated with Universities but who are disadvantaged by not being paid at University rates nor enjoying the same sabbatical leave. No doubt these anomalies apply to male Theological College lecturers also, but we would see the women as doubly disadvantaged because clergy positions are often closed to them also. We apologise if we are incorrect in this account - certainly, the position of women in tertiary employment in Studies in Religion has improved marginally in the last five years or so and there are a number of women in other disciplines, such as English language and literature, anthropology, history and philosophy, who offer courses closely connected with aspects of Studies in Religion.

Support Groups for Women Scholars in Religion

Enid Adam reported for WA - there is no AASR women's caucus group meeting at present; nor is there one in Adelaide, although the staff at the University of South Australia have a system of support for women postgraduates, at least six of whom gave papers at the AASR conference.

In Melbourne, there are a number of Women's Studies groups, some of them cross-University, and postgraduate women in Religious Studies attend these when possible; in Sydney, 1993 was a good year in which Jane Simpson and Erin White ran well-attended seminars in Religious Studies, supported by the University of Sydney. There are changed circumstances which have made it difficult to continue these seminars in 1994.

In Queensland, there are no AASR groups meeting at present, but the Universities in Brisbane, especially the University of Queensland, have strong Women's Studies groups in which the Religion Studies postgraduates feel welcome. At the Australian National University, there is no AASR group, but again, women postgraduates there participate in other groups' meetings.

All the women resident in Australia present at the meeting agreed that their work at home, their outside employment and their studies made it difficult to initiate new meetings series and groups. In contrast, Elaine Lindsay reported that energy for new associations was still evident in the recent establishment of the *Australian Feminist Theology Foundation (Incorporated)* for the support of the ongoing very successful conferences on feminist theology as well as other activi-

ties which do not enjoy funding from established sources.

Women as students and teachers in Universities thought that women in Religion Studies should attend and give papers in general Women's Studies seminar series within their Universities. They also pointed out that although none of them had specific supervision problems associated with their gender, they felt the need for support from other women. It was clear for instance, that the Department of Philosophy at the ANU has a number of women staff who are very supportive of women postgraduate students working in philosophy of religion, even if their research interests do not coincide. It is clear that there are many different needs among women in different locations and that no one specialist association can fulfil all functions.

The situation in England was described by Josephine Backus from the Bath College of Higher Education as being very similar to that in Australia; Morny Joy on the other hand described the situation in Canada as being very good for women scholars at the present time - the Women and Religion Caucus represents members from the four different Studies in Religion and Theological Societies and the number of women tertiary teachers in religion is a larger proportion of lecturers as a whole than is the case in Australia.

The Caucus and its Raison d'Étre

Various suggestions were put to the meeting which represented ideas expressed in the past as to a possible need for reorientation of the Caucus. The present situation was thought to be acceptable for the time being, that is, a very

open confederation of AASR women who meet for mutual support and any intervention/pleading function requested in particular cases, together with responsibility for the Gender and Religion panels and sections in AASR Conferences. It was thought anomalous however, that there should be other separate women's groups, in Christian Theology for instance, on the basis that all of us need the most widespread support we can get. The Canadian model appealed to members of the meeting, that is, one Women's Caucus, open to women members of all societies of scholars in religion, including theological societies. This possibility will be explored over the next twelve months. The problem of mistaken mutual perception of different groups was highlighted by one AASR Caucus member who stayed at Aquinas College in Adelaide during the last AASR conference which was run jointly with a major Theological conference. She was always referred to by theologians as belonging to 'that other conference' and surprise expressed that she could join in their conversations and appreciate their papers. Of course, a number of theologians also belong to and contribute importantly to the AASR, but there remains the uneasy feeling that the two fields are absolutely distinct and opposed in such a way as to prevent good quality communication and joint schol-

arly concerns. Women especially are the losers as a result of this division.

The first AASR Publication by women scholars

Claiming Our Rites: Essays in Religion by Australian Women Scholars, edited by Morny Joy and Penny Magee, and with a beautifully designed cover featuring one of her works, by the prominent Australian artist Fiona Hall, was launched at the conference with much celebration. The editors first planned the volume 7 years ago and 32 women working or studying in Studies in Religion/Anthropology were invited to submit a paper, of whom 16 accepted and were able to complete their papers. Onerous workloads, theses and family crises prevented many working to schedule and it is hoped very much that new editors will emerge and gather women scholars' work together in a second volume not too far into the future. There are possibilities too for a volume in which women and men contribute together as equal partners. The meeting also congratulated Enid Adam whose excellent MA thesis on Buddhism in Western Australia will be published soon.

Penny Magee

State Notes

New South Wales

University of Sydney

At the University of Sydney, the School of Studies in Religion has been

deeply saddened by the loss of Dr Bill Jobling, our learned colleague in Middle Eastern religion and Australian Anglican history, who died on 4 December. The

school remains hard-pressed to replace him, and there are still matters to be sorted out concerning his pending publications. Fortunately his Nabatean lexicon was completed and is now being proofed for publication.

Student enrolment increases have made the School a growth factor in the Faculty of Arts. The Faculty has accepted the new development of a BA,BTh program for undergraduates. Staff changes include the appointment of Garry Trompf to a personal Chair in the History of Ideas. New publications include Garry Trompf's *Payback* and the Trompf-Tony Swain general textbook *Religions of Oceania* for *The Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices* Series. Conferences organised included one on Persian (the Iranian Studies Seminar organised by Garry Trompf in advance of new teaching on the Zoroastrian tradition in 1995), and one on Religion and Literature (organised by Jim Tulip). New lecturing responsibilities were given this year to Carole Cusack (for the course on New Religious Movements) and Ruth Lewin-Broit (for the course on Jewish-Christian dialogue). Visiting professors in residence were Professor Shoji Nakamura, of Komazawa University, a specialist in Zen, and Emeritus Professor Gilles Quispel, a world authority on gnosticism, from Rijkuniversiteit te Utrecht.

Jim Tulip & Garry Trompf

University of New England

The Studies in Religion Program within the Philosophy Department is now three years old. The Program continues to be monitored by the Board of Studies in

Religion, chaired by Prof Peter Forrest of the Philosophy Dept, while I co-ordinate the Program. Currently on offer are two introductory subjects (Varieties of religious Experience; How Can Religion Be Studied?), and three advanced subjects (Religious Literature; Religions of the Ancient Near East; Women and Religion), all of which are offered internally and externally. Enrolments are gradually increasing with external students accounting for the greatest numbers. I am still the only official lecturer for the Program, though Mary Dolan provides enormous assistance by taking Religions of the Ancient Near East. We have currently one MA and one MLitt student, with quite a few expressions of interest that have not borne fruit as yet. I am also involved in the Philosophy Dept with some cosupervision of postgraduate work where appropriate.

On the research front, I have been given a two-month extension on my previous Fellowship by the Humboldt Foundation, and will be returning to Germany to work on a number of projects in Tübingen and Bonn during June-July this year.

Majella Franzmann

Alan Black in Sociology has been very successful in obtaining ARC funds to further the study of religion. He won an ARC grant to investigate values in Australian society as part of the International Values Study. He also secured continued funding of a small grant to look at 'Religion and Orientations towards the Environment: a comparative study of Environmentalists, Church Members and Humanists and Rationalists'.

'Tricia Blombery

Queensland

University of Queensland

This year the Department of Studies in Religion at UQ will celebrate its twentieth anniversary. The Department continues to grow in strength, particularly in the postgraduate area. Over 20 PhD students are currently enrolled, and seven completed the degree in 1994. The Department's postgraduate performance won it quality money last year, in recognition of excellence in teaching and the high percentage of PhD dissertations published.

Ed Conrad, now settled into his position as Head of Department, has been working with other HOD's in the Humanities Group to introduce interdisciplinary majors. These will make it possible for students to develop majors comprising related subjects from more than one department.

Michael Lattke's position is now formally renamed 'Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity Studies'. During 1994 Michael participated in seminars on New Testament studies at conferences in Edinburgh and Leuven. He also gave a guest lecture and seminar at the Divinity School of Harvard University in Dating the Odes of Solomon. In November he was elected a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Lynne Hume gave one of the Charles Strong Memorial lectures at the 1994 AASR conference in Adelaide, on Witchcraft in Australia. In first semester 1994, Lynne taught a new course, "Witches, Pagans, and the New Age", with an enrolment of over 50 students. Another of her subjects, "Aboriginal Religions", is also

attracting a lot of attention. Last year one-quarter of the hundred-strong enrolment consisted of overseas students. Lynne has now been appointed to a tenure track position.

Ross Reat read a paper entitled 'Pluralism, deconstructionism and world theology' at the AAR conference in Chicago. The appearance of his book *Buddhism: A History* has led to his participation in several radio interviews and talkback shows on ABC. He will be on study leave during the first semester of 1995, working on another book.

Phil Almond has been awarded quality funds to take a semester off teaching, which he will devote to researching "The Garden of Eden in Seventeenth Century English Thought." He will spend the second semester on study leave in London.

Richard Hutch again taught his subject, "Death and Dying" in the first semester of 1994, attracting over 100 students. He spent the second semester on study leave at Princeton Theological seminary and Princeton University. He also lectured on "The Phenomenological Tradition in the Psychology of Religion" at Fuller Theological Seminary in Los Angeles, and attended the AAR conference in Chicago.

Among other events in 1994, Rod Bucknell took a semester off teaching to work on his book on the teachings of early Buddhism; and Eddie Crangle became the proud father of Aldous John Crangle.

Rod Bucknell

South Australia

University of South Australia

Staff Movements

Professor Norman Habel has taken early retirement as of the end of 1994. He has been awarded the title of Adjunct Professor by the University. Those who know Norm will know how much we will feel his absence. But of course he will not be unoccupied and has many plans in train. Norm will be teaching courses at Luther Campus and the Adelaide College of Divinity this year as well as setting up his consultancy. We will reflect more at length on Norm's career in the next issue of the Review.

Dr. Marion Maddox has been promoted to Senior Lecturer and has had her contract renewed for a further two years. Given the very difficult financial situation the University is facing it is a tribute to her that her's was one of the few contracts that was extended.

Dr. Evan Zuesse has returned to the department after more than two years at Monash University teaching in Jewish history.

Associate Professor Robert Crotty returns for first semester after study leave

during which he visited the Oxford Centre for Hebrew Studies.

Student Research

Some of the interesting research projects currently being undertaken by students in the department include.

* Heather Foster, *Incorporating Difference: the cultural construction of the Hindu women of Adelaide.*

* Helen Raduntz, *Labour process analysis of the work of Religion Education teachers.*

* Simon Dash, *Epistemological shifts made by teachers and students as they shift from catechesis to Religion Studies.*

* Rachel Tullio, *Parent, teacher and student perceptions of the nature and effects of Confirmation.*

* Charles Riding, *How Fundamentalist Christian Schools establish and maintain their ethos.*

* Jill Dodd, *How junior primary students narratise their own lives by drawing on culture stories.*

* Mark Sattler, *A critical policy analysis of NSW HSC Religion Studies Curriculum.*

Victoria

University of Melbourne

"Grasping the Nettles: Prickly Issues in Campus Ministry" was the theme of the annual conference of the Tertiary Campus Ministry Association, held in Melbourne towards the end of second semester 1994. It drew the largest enrolment since these national conferences began, and was rated by old hands the

best to date. The planning group drew heavily on local talent, involving faculty and other staff from Melbourne University. St Mary's College was the venue.

Geology's Professor Ian Plimer further enhanced his reputation as the bete-noir of 'Creation Science' with the release shortly before Christmas of *Telling Lies for God: Reason vs Creationism*

(Random House, \$14.95). In a review of the book John Bodycomb writes,

Plimer believes that the so-called 'creation science' obliges people to suspend their critical faculties, propagates a fallacious view of the world, and brings discredit on religious thought...where 'tolerance' is extended to creation science, he believes both church and the larger society to be misguided. He asks why the taxpayers' contribution to public revenue should support the teaching of what is scientifically fraudulent. He believes that mainline religious communities ought to take a firmer line in respect of this particular expression of religious fundamentalism.

With a long history of cavalier disregard for the social sciences, Melbourne is moving toward the introduction of units in sociology this year, and probably at

least one in sociology of religion - all under the umbrella of the Politics Department.

St Mary's College is the venue for monthly meetings of SATNET (or Science and Theology Network). Founded in 1993, this normally draws together a polyglot thirty or forty staff, faculty and interested others from Monash, La Trobe and Melbourne. Program planning has been in the hands of Professor Kevin Burke (Principal of Christ Campus of ACU), Father Julian Ahearn and Dr John Bodycomb. John Bodycomb was the occasional preacher at the service at St Paul's Cathedral to mark the opening of the legal year.

John Bodycomb
University Chaplain

News of Members

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Ronald Nichols, newly appointed Editor Religious Programs (Radio), writes of the five new series which began in January:

* *Come Sunday* - an early morning two hour "grass roots" program (5-7am) aiming to connect with religious communities all round Australia in a celebration of religion and spirituality;

* *The Words to Say It* - hosted by Florence Spurling, this series explores personal faith journeys (Sunday 605-630 pm);

* *The Moral Map* - an entirely new series focussing on ethical dilemmas and questions in private and public life (Sunday 630-7 pm);

* *Meridian* - an entirely new series produced by the Religious Department, in conjunction with other specialist units, providing an interface between schools of thought impacting on our society in the past, now, and in the future (Sunday 1210-1 pm);

* *Religion Today* - a new Thursday evening series of topical events, issues and figures in the world of religion and in-depth exploration of theological issues (710-8 pm).

The current 710-8 Sunday acclaimed documentary/feature series *Encounter* continues. On ABC Classic FM *For the God who Sings* continues, presented by Kay McLennan (Sunday 605-8 am). On the Metropolitan and Regional network of stations *Sunday Night Talk*, the weekly talk-back program continues (1010-midnight).

We wish Ronald well in his new position and congratulate the ABC on their continuing commitment to quality religious broadcasting.

Individual Members

Don Wodarz - It was with sadness that I received the news from Cyril Halley of the Pacific Mission Institute that Don had died suddenly last October. Many of you will remember big Don as a faithful and cheerful conference partici-

pant. His willingness to help and his easy wit will be missed.

Juliet Sheen - Exciting news from Juliet. She is spending the first six months of this year at the University of Essex compiling the World Report on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion or Belief. There is a publishing deadline and conferences and workshops in London to raise the profile of the issues later in the UN Year of Tolerance. Anyone wanting to contact Juliet can at the Human Rights Centre, Department of Law, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, Essex, UK. Fax: 44-206-873428.

More Electronic Fun - New Lists

ANDERE-L

The official listserv of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara serves as a forum for discussion of theories, methods, and approaches to the study of religion. To subscribe, send the following command to LISTSERV@UCSBVM.UCSB.EDU:

SUB ANDERE-L yourfirstname yourlastname, your institution

Owner: J Shawn Landres
6500land@ucsbuxa.ucsb.edu

Association for Religion and Intellectual Life

This list is a forum for the publishers of the journal *Cross Currents* and provides an opportunity to discuss the types of issues raised in the journal. To subscribe send:

SUB ARIL-L Your name
to listserv@ucsbvm.ucsb.edu

Ecclesiastical History

A list for those interested in Church History, History of Christianity and/or Historical Theology. To subscribe send:

SUBSCRIBE ECCHST-L Your Name
to listserv@bgu.edu

Any difficulties subscribing or questions, contact

Gregory Singleton - ugsingleton@uxa.ecn.bgu.edu

International Network for Interfaith Health Practices

This is a forum for dialogue and resource sharing among persons of all religious traditions, regarding the dynamic relationship between spirituality and health, especially its practical expression in the advancement of human wellness.

To subscribe send:

subscribe IHP-NET your email address
to
MAJORDOMO@interaccess.com

Internet Interfaith Consortium

An ad hoc association of people interested in spirituality, the search for truth, and the spiritual welfare of the human race.

To subscribe to INTERREL, send the command SUB INTERREL Your Name to LISTSERV@vm.temple.edu . This command subscribes you to all messages sent to INTERREL with no defined

"topic". To join the IIC mailing list, add another line to your subscription command.

Either:

SET INTERREL TOPICS= IIC to subscribe to IIC exclusively, or

SET INTERREL TOPICS= ALL to subscribe to all INTERREL topics

Enquiries to Bruce Schuman at origin@rain.org

Australian Conferences

Out of Africa: Texts for understanding the African past

3-6 July 1995, Humanities Research Centre ANU

Contact: Dr David Dorward, African Research Institute, La Trobe University 3083

Tel: 03-479-2431; Fax: 03-478-5814

Studying Australian Christianity 1995

10-12 July, Sydney

Contact: The Director, Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, PO Box

1505, Macquarie Centre 2113. Tel: 02-888-7133; Fax: 02-805-1582; Email: 100026,3265.compuserve.com

Professional and Applied Ethics

28-30 September, Brisbane

Theme: Ethics in Practice - applying ethics in workplace and society

Contact: Ron Marks, St John's College, St Lucia 4067 Tel: 07-871-8312 Fax: 07-870-5124

Overseas Conferences Coming Up !

Annual Meeting Canadian SSR

1-4 June, Université de Québec, Montreal

Contact: Prof Alain Bouchard, Faculté de théologie, Collège de Ste-Foy, 2410 Chemin Ste-Foy, Québec, QC G1V 1T3, Canada

Sociology of Early Christianity Workshop

2-3 June, Université de Québec, Montréal

Contact: Prof Gregory Bloomquist, Saint Paul University, 223 Main St,

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 1C4 Fax: 1-613-236-4108

International Society for the Sociology of Religion 1995 Conference

26-30 June 1995, University of Laval, Quebec

Theme: The Regulation by Religion of Nature and the Body

Contact: Dr Grace Davie, Department of Sociology, University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4RJ, England

Tele: +44-392-263302; Fax: +44-392-263305

**International Association for the
History of Religions**

5 -12 August 1995, Mexico City
Contact: Prof Elio Masferrer, Avenida
La Paz 37-A-63. San Angel, C P 01000.
Mexico D F

Email: inantrop@red-
vax1.dgsca.unam.mx

**The International Institute for the
Study of Human Ideas on Ultimate
Reality and Meaning**

August 1995, Toronto
Theme: The Social Construction of
Moral Limits

Contact: Anthony Blasi, 52 East Main
Street, New Concord, OH 53762

**Assoc for the Sociology of Religion
Annual Conference**

18-20 August, Washington DC
Theme: Community, Globality and Re-
search Paradigms in the Sociology of Re-
ligion

Contact: Peter Beyer, Dept for the
Study of Religion, University of Toronto,
123 St George Street, Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M5S 2E8. Fax: 1-416-978-1610
email: pbyer@epas.utoronto.ca

Religious Research Association

27-29 October, St Louis Mo

Theme: Religion and American Plural-
ism

Contact: Jim Spickard, Dept of Sociol-
ogy & Anthropology, University of Red-
lands, Redlands CA 92373 email:
spickard@ultrix.uor.edu

**Social Science History Association
Annual Convention**

16-19 November, Chicago IL

Contact Religion Section: Lowell Gus-
tafson, Department of Political Sciences,
Villanova University, Villanova Pa
19085, email: gustafson@ucis.vill.edu

Contact Women/Gender Section:
Carole Turbin, History and Sociology,
Empire State College, SUNY, PO Box
130, 223 Store Hill Rd, Old Westbury
NY 11568 Fax: 1-516-997-4942 email:
cturbin@sescva.esc.edu

Media, Culture and Religion

11-14 January 1996, Boulder Colorado

Contact: Lynn Schofield Clark at
clark1@ucsu.colorado.edu

Submissions to: Dr Stewart Hoover,
Center for Mass Media Research, School
of Journalism and Mass Communication,
Campus Box 287, University of Colorado
at Boulder, Boulder CO 80309

Journal of Ritual Studies

Founded in 1987, the *Journal of Ritual
Studies* is the only serial publication deal-
ing exclusively with ritual in all its as-
pects. The journal is published twice
annually. Subscription rates:

Individuals (Internat airmail) \$US40

Libraries (Internat airmail) \$US 50

Enquiries and subscriptions to:

The Production Editor

Journal of Ritual Studies
Dept of Religious Studies
2604 CL

University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

email: ritual+@pitt.edu

Gender, culture and religious identity through the prism of four Melbourne conferences.

Over all the years of full-time teaching, child rearing and general chaos, I used to count myself lucky to be able to attend one conference a year....in the latter half of 1994, released at last from full-time everything, I celebrated my move to Melbourne with participation in four very interesting gatherings:

* July 26-28, Royal Exhibition Building - *'Women, Power and Cultural Difference in South Asia: Negotiating Gender'* (South Asian Women's Study Group).

* September 30-October 2, University of Melbourne - *'Linking our histories: Asian and Pacific women as migrants'* (Gender Relations Project, ANU; Gender Studies Unit, University of Melbourne).

* October 21-22, Deakin University Toorak Campus - *'Religious/Cultural Nationalism and Fundamentalism in South Asia and South-east Asia'* (Deakin University; Monash Asia Institute; National Centre for South Asian Studies)

* December 16-18, University of Melbourne - *'Culture/Sex/Economies'* (convened by Judith Grbich and sponsored by the Australian Feminist Law Foundation; School of Law and Legal Studies, La Trobe University; Office of the Status of Women)

The first of these provided a rare opportunity for meeting a number of scholars and publishers from South Asia who were in Melbourne also for the International Feminist Bookfair, among them: Farida Akhter, Urvashi Butalia, Tanika Sarkar, Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay and Ratna Kapur. With a good crosssection of Australian-South Asian (and a few non-

South Asian) scholars, they took part in panels on feminist theory and political practice, gender representation, secularism and communalism, development theory, literary and artistic traditions, Bengali/Bangladeshi politics, gender and the environment, labour movements, women's trade unions and emigration.

While the conference proved a feast for insight into contemporary feminist theory and practice in South Asia, with excellent material in relation to religions, there were very few Australian feminist scholars present who were not themselves specialists in South Asia -had there been, the interaction at both theoretical and practical levels could have been very rewarding. There were also very few male scholars and it was noticeable that the younger generation of postgraduate students, both South Asian and non-South Asian, even when themselves giving papers, had very little opportunity to meet and interact with the more famous visitors. From my own idiosyncratic viewpoint, I will remember this conference (which included several not-South Asia papers) for the pleasure of hearing Foong Ling KONG from Melbourne University send 'Postcards from a yellow lady' back to Alison Broinowski and others, but also for the unpleasant confusion of the discussion of the case of Taslima Nasreen, where Farida Akhter's plea for a more contextual and complex interpretation of Bangladeshi feminism was misunderstood by many of her colleagues.

This kind of specialist conference illustrated both the possibilities and cul de sacs of concentrating on gender and a par-

ticular ethnicity in a conference framed in 'international' (read 'western?') feminism. One could say that Australian feminism in particular lacks the education and political will to engage intelligently with the feminisms of South Asia, particularly where Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are concerned. And that conversely, South Asian feminists are involved in so many of the contradictions of post-colonialism that questions worth answering and answers worth listening to are not yet a possibility for them in dialogue with 'us'. One result is the conflation of religion and Christianity in Australian 'feminism and religion', and indeed, in feminism in History/Studies of Religion (see for instance 'Feminist Approaches to the Study of Religion', ARS REVIEW, 6,1, 1993, an article, which in itself quite properly speaks only from the location of the author in Christianity, but in its title, promises something much more plural.) Another (related) problem is the mediocre and ill-informed writing in even the better Australian media, in feminist 'development' theory and practice and 'multicultural' debates when the subject is Islamic and Hindu and Buddhist women in both Australia and in South Asia. The lack of connection and interaction between 'secular', Christian and non-Christian gender debates is a sad irony in view of the developing identities of Asia, the Pacific and Australia in the 90s.

Very few mainstream ignorances were apparent however at the conference on Asian and Pacific women as migrants, although religion as an issue or theme was not addressed directly, being rather embedded in the fabric of the proceedings. The title (*Linking Our Histories*) says it all. Women from a large number of academic disciplines, political groups, the media and government organizations,

speaking from a dazzling variety of Asian, Pacific and Anglo-Celtic ethnic backgrounds listened and responded in a very well-organized program. Plenary and concurrent sessions opened up such areas as: global and local perspectives on migrant women; cultural contestation; representation; migrant women, marriage, family and the body; migrants as domestic workers; as mothers; refugees; migrants in the Australian labour force; migrating feminisms and the vexed question of women and globalisation.

This conference provided opportunities for new learning to even the most experienced migration experts, especially in areas outside traditional statistically derived categories such as employment, language, literacy and health. Connections are urgently needed between these and, for instance, such anthropologically informed work as that of Kalpana Ram ('[Re]creating the body, and memory: classical dance, Indian immigrant women and issues of class, gender and ethnicity'), Santi Rozario ('Community and resistance; Muslim women and Islam in Australia and the UK) and Kehaulani Kaunani on feminist/nationalist interaction ('Native Hawaiian women in California: displaced nationalisms, and diasporic feminisms'). One of the most pleasurable aspects of this conference was partly a function of the way in which it was organized. It was the opportunity to mix with groups of women who in any one conversation, might be from places as diverse as Japan, Malaysia, Tonga or Indonesia, or another dozen or so localities, in an atmosphere of generosity of spirit and real enjoyment. It was at this conference also that I learned from one of the bookshop representatives that 6 copies of *Claiming Our Rites* had been sold at her shop recently and more copies had been ordered.

No doubt this gave the conference an extra gloss of enjoyment.

I doubt whether any of the male participants (with some honorable exceptions) at the conference on Religious/cultural nationalism and fundamentalism had read any feminist material although some brave souls did try to 'include' questions of fundamentalism and women. I rather wished that many of the other participants had been familiar with women's scholarship on communalism and fundamentalism, especially in view of the paper given by Kumkum Sangari which presupposed a more comprehensive and complex model of analysis than is familiar to many local scholars. Some of those who spoke of Islam even colluded in the supposed truism that women in Islam are universally the most oppressed women in any world religion and smaller irritations included the naming of Allah as 'God' and some very strange uses of the word 'irrational'. Various interventions from the floor by Islamic women were not really understood. I suspect also that the several reminders from panelist Don Miller (University of Melbourne) that 'intellectuals can be fundamentalists too' went unheard.

In spite of these general grumbles, I enjoyed papers given by Djohan Effendi ('The Emergence of Fundamentalist Tendencies among Islamic Groups in Indonesia'), Sumit Sarkar ('Identity and Difference: caste in the ideologies of Hindutva and nationalism'), Kumkum Sangari ('Some reflections on common laws and communalism') and the session on Islam in Central Asia, The Maldives and Pakistan (Ahmed Rashid, Abdullah Saeed and Samina Yasmeen). But the lack of input from specialists in Studies in Religion was obvious (some did all the organising and maybe felt obliged to be good hosts

rather than give papers). It seems that some local self-styled 'secular marxists' are making 'new' discoveries about the difference between 'faith' and 'religion', and while complaining that religion 'is a real problem...one cannot escape', demanded 'new thinking about religion' without acknowledging the virtually complete absence of reference to contemporary work in either studies in religion or anthropology. Somehow, studies in Indology, Islam and 'other' areas have to emerge from the shadows of real or imputed Orientalism and enter into dialogue with other historians, philosophers and social scientists interpreting events in contemporary South, East and Southeast Asia. As it was, there was also very little evidence of acknowledgement of the varieties of post-modern critique in the social sciences and no sign of ongoing self-critique, other than in Kumkum Sangari's paper and Leela Gandhi's dissentant-response in the same panel - the best response of the conference. In spite of Sangari's reluctance to move beyond an absolutist interpretation of the position that 'religious identities are punitive to women', I think that together with colleagues such as Gandhi, she should be a diasporic Professor of Good Scholarship, preferably in a locality near me.

No-one organising or attending the 'Culture/Sex/Economies' conference was interested at all in who was or was not a Professor. I do not know what I expected of a conference organised by feminist lawyers, but never have I seen such an absence of pretentious organising, academic posturing and frantic self-interested networking - none, absolutely none of these familiar conference diseases. Papers came from a variety of academic disciplines: philosophy, anthropology, law, history, language, drama, fine arts, psychology,

cultural studies, Australian studies, women's studies, economics, politics, human movement studies....from film makers, technologists, a playwright dominatrix, photographers, theatre directors and a multitude of others, including a respectable number of males and a contingent of students from undergraduate to postgraduate. Not many papers tackled issues in religions directly, but much was discussed that opened up possibilities for new approaches in the field, especially in relation to the current emphasis on religion and 'social justice' in Australian Christian circles. New work on gender, the body and western philosophy, the body as property in law, problems associated with sexuate rights/civil rights, and several excellent papers on aboriginal identity and western law would intersect very fruitfully with aspects of studies in religion and theology. The highlight of the conference for me was Adrian Howe's wonderfully clear but intricate analysis of the High Court's decision in *Mabo v Queensland* in the light of Kevin Gray's thesis that property itself is 'mere illusion....fraud'. Apart from the concerns of 'social justice', this paper and many others examined key moral questions on which all religions have spoken and in which both religious and civil law are deeply implicated.

Moral (and by implication) religious questions were also the theme of the keynote speaker Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who is the most controversially well-known South Asian diasporic feminist scholar in academia. One interesting sidelight of the conference was the almost complete absence of diasporic Indian feminist scholars, among whom Spivak is *persona non grata*. This is unfortunate as everyone there had an opportunity of learning the art of self-critique: to hear

such a one as Spivak speak of her own 'writing out of ignorance' and her struggle to 'learn more' was movingly relevant to all scholars who are courageous enough to return again and again to the same difficult questions in response to others' critique. As she said, 'I learn most from the questions of the most resistant' [to her ideas]. Spivak's central concern in her address was the implications of her experience at the Cairo Population conference where non-western feminist scholars' interventions went unheard. Beginning with a critique of the underlying theory/practice of 'international' (read 'northern') feminism in relation to unheard claims of poor women to sexuality and subjecthood in their own right, Spivak moved on to expose 'anti-essentialist fundamentalists', the sinister art of 'repressive tolerance', the doubtful scripts of notions of 'sustainable development', and the 'education' push of the UN, the World Bank and many NGOs. And this was just her beginning.... She reported that the NY Times refused to publish her point of view on all these questions and concluded with a theoretical/practical analysis of aspects of the ethics of power, culture, and 'free choice' in the context of global production. Anyone immersed in questions of women and social justice, both in this country and in relation to developmental aid, including liberation and other theologians, should be required to engage with Spivak's thinking to examine once more the quality of their resistance to ancient and contemporary imperialisms.

The enterprise of Australian feminist lawyers enabled compassionate confrontation of these and other life and death matters - perhaps we should recruit a number of them for the AASR - for one, I have a completely revised view of what young

women lawyers think about in response to what they have been taught in our law schools. Together with the other three conferences, 'Culture/Sex/Economies' gave me enough intellectual stimulation to last many years. And think of the (at least) three Melbourne conferences I was not able to attend: 'Human Rights, social Justice and the Role of Religion in Asia and Australia (July 29-31 - World conference on Religion and Peace/Deakin University); 'Hildegard of Bingen and the Gendering of Theology in Judaeo-Christian Tradition' (a worrying title from the

Jewish point of view) - (July 30 - Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology, Monash University); and 'International Feminisms: Towards 2000' (August 1 - Australian Women's Research Centre, Deakin University). Each of them looked to have much to offer to studies in religion. It may be that religious questions are at last coming out of the oppositional ghetto of the Australian not-'secular' at last.

Penny Magee