

Newslink

State News

New South Wales

ANU

Tony Johns participated in a Workshop on Medieval Islamic and Jewish Texts: the "Judaic Dimension" in Islamic Literature at the Oriental Institute at Oxford in December 1995.

University of New England

The fate of Studies in Religion at UNE is still fluctuating, but the general trend is the introductory units look healthy with around 60 external and 30 internal students having signed up. Student numbers in second and third year units are still small, but since this is our first year with a viable major sequence of study within the Studies in Religion itself, I expect this will improve in the next couple of years. We have enrolled our first Honours student to have come through the Program. Apart from this student we have one other Honours student and one research Masters student. Slowly but surely, the Program is developing!

With my *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* book up to the second proofs stage, I have begun to turn my attention to

the next project which is tentatively entitled *Jesus in Manichaeon Writings and Iconography*. I was successful in gaining an ARC Large Grant for this project with \$55,000 in 1996 and \$50,000 for each of 1997 and 1998. Other projects on the ethics of feminist biblical interpretation (ARC Small Grant) and on Women and Religion (contract for Oxford University Press) continues.

Majella Franzmann

University of Sydney

The volume from the conference "Religious Change, Conversion and Culture" is now on sale. *Religious Change, Conversion and Culture* edited by Lynette Olson from the History Department grew out of one of the Thematic courses taught by the History Department. After teaching the course for a number of years, we had the idea of holding a conference (9-10 April, 1994) in which scholars with some past or present connection to the University of Sydney in a variety of disciplines would examine conversion in a wider context. Thus although we started with Aboriginal

Australia, the scope expanded religiously, culturally and geographically to take in Medieval Islam, Judaism, the Middle East and New Guinea as well. Following the conference, Dr Bill Jobling spoke to me at some length about its value in bringing people together and promoting

communication about its subject. Not long afterwards, he died suddenly, and the book of the conference is dedicated to his memory.

Carole Cusack

Queensland

University of Queensland

At the end of last year the Department of Studies in Religion at UQ sadly farewelled Michelle Weil, who had served as administrative secretary since 1988. Her replacement, Christine Nichols, is settling in well.

The headship of the Department has also changed hands, but only temporarily; Phil Almond is taking over for the first semester of this year. Phil spent the second half of 1995 on study leave in London, mostly in the British Museum Library, where he was gathering material for his book on Adam and Eve in seventeenth century English thought.

Michael Lattke was also on study leave in the second half of 1995. He spent three months of it in Germany, mainly at the universities of Tübingen and Augsburg. In addition, he participated in a seminar on the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas meeting in Prague, and chaired a session at the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford. His teaching in 1996 will include a new course on Qumran and the Essenes.

Richard Hutch began the year by presenting a Death Awareness Workshop at the Second Australian Transpersonal Conference at Macquarie University in January.

Rod Bucknell has received an ARC grant for a two-year study project on Hinayana Buddhism sutras in Sanskrit. It will entail collecting the many scattered sutras that have been published piecemeal over the years, and bringing them together in one volume, along with English translation and information on Pali, Chinese and Tibetan counterparts.

Lynne Hume has study leave for the first half of 1996. She plans to spend most of it working on her book on paganism and witchcraft in Australia, but will also find time to attend two overseas conferences.

Ross Reat has recently gained promotion to reader/associate professor.

Eddie Crangle, after many years with the Department as a tutor and honorary research consultant, has left to do research as a Post-doctoral Fellow at Edith Cowan University.

Rod Bucknell

*Victoria***La Trobe University****Religious Studies Program**

Two years ago, after a major review of university structures, Religious Studies at La Trobe University ceased to be a Division, that is an independent academic unit regarded as a nascent department, and became a university Program. The only other such program is Women's Studies. All former members of the Division were attached (or reattached in some cases) to Schools - History, Asian Studies, Philosophy. The Program retains some control over academic matters but has no independent budget and all its members are ultimately responsible to and supervised by the heads of their Schools.

The results of this change, despite protestations to the contrary by university authorities, have been predictable in a climate of financial cut-back and DEET set goals. Of the seven members of the Division in 1993, eight if the administrative assistant is included, we now have five. OSP will further reduce available numbers to three in 1996. Student numbers, especially post-graduates, have held up well, but there is little possibility of even part-time assistance in teaching these students. Low enrolment subjects regarded as essential to our program, such as Sanskrit, Latin and Ancient Greek, are especially under threat. University administrators, who seem to recognise budgetary units only, persist in telling inquirers that Religious Studies no longer exists, and address academic matters to heads of Schools rather than to the Director of the Program. With no separate office or administrative

assistant for Religious Studies, inquiries and inquirers get lost and Religious Studies secretarial assistance has become more difficult. The Program has no voice in appointments, no representative on the Faculty Board, and, for obvious political reasons, has not the same influence as Women's Studies.

The picture is not all black. Most Religious Studies subjects are now offered jointly with disciplines - History, Sociology, Asian Studies - and this has brought some increases in student numbers, especially in the Judeo-Christian stream. There is increased cooperation both in undergraduate teaching and postgraduate supervision with members of the Schools of History, Sociology, Anthropology, Asian Studies and Philosophy. In some ways the overall program is stronger than ever. Student demand for Religious Studies, partly fed by the recent introduction of VCE Religious Studies units, has remained strong. The postgraduate seminar flourishes and attracts students and staff from outside Religious Studies. Furthermore, we have had the invaluable support, as honorary Professorial Fellow, of Eric Osborn, a renowned Patristic scholar, since his retirement from the United Faculty of Theology.

It is paradoxical that the profile of Religious Studies at La Trobe University outside the university remains high while the pressure from within grows. There have been several major publications by staff members and we continue to get a steady flow of applications, inquiries and requests for talks and articles from schools and groups outside the university. My personal experience on study leave

last year in Europe and the U.S.A is a very high recognition of La Trobe Religious Studies and its staff.

But the moral would seem to be that, within the post-Dawkins Australian university, structures matter even more than they used, and the power of the purse is what really matters. We are looking forward to the publication of Greg Bailey's forthcoming work on the myth of economic rationalism as analysed in terms of the discipline of Religious Studies.

Paul Rule

Monash

Gary Bouma has been granted a personal chair in Sociology. His current research projects are: 'Buddhism and Indo-Chinese Settlement in Australia (funded by a small ARC grant); 'Japanese Religion in Australia: Zen and Mahikari (funded by a grant from The University of Kings College, London); Analysing Australia's religious institution within the Reshaping Australian Institutions Project at RSSH/ANU; and, with Philip Hughes, John Baldock and Trevor Batrouney, preparing a book on issues related to immigration and religion for the Bureau of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Population Research. Luckily he has study leave this year.

Gary Bouma

News of *Sophia*

SOPHA, the journal in philosophical theology and crosscultural philosophy of religion, celebrated its thirty-three years of existence by releasing the 100th issue in a

ceremony that at the same time honoured the journal's founding and long-term editor, Professor Max Charlesworth. The launching ceremony was held in May 1995 in the University of Melbourne (the birth-place of the journal) in the presence of the journal's well-wishers, regular local contributors, friends of Max and senior members of the Department of Philosophy. Charlesworth recalled with characteristic honour a conversation with the English philosopher, Peter Geach, on the naming of the journal. Geach ended up contributing an article to the very first issue (April 1962), along with J L Mackie and Ninian Smart.

Sophia has been commended by readers and scholars in the field for expanding its coverage of issues to the broader spectrum of the history of religions, with attention to issues of contemporary concern, including feminist theology, eco-theology and Eastern debates in philosophy of religion. Ninian Smart is the journal's international editorial advisor, Partrict Hutchings the associate editor, and Purushottama Bilimoria, the editor. Open Wisdom Publications (L.A.) assists with the production. Articles published in SOPHIA are regularly used and reprinted in anthologies overseas, or made available through the electronic database managed by the American-based Uncover Reveal network.

The current issue in press (Vol 35, no 1) includes articles and reviews that should be of interest to readers of the AASR Review. For submission and subscriptions, (individual Aus\$15 a year, corporate \$20), write to SOPHIA Editorial, PO Box 4230, Melbourne University, Victoria, 3052 (Australia). Fax: 61-(0)3-9344-4280; Email: ZSOPHIA@ ariel.its.unimelb.edu.au.

**AASR Women's Caucus
Questionnaire**

Some preliminary results....

The questionnaire was circulated to all members (178 males, 89 females). 52 members (27 males, 24 females, 1 no response) returned completed questionnaires.

Q1. Do you view the activities of the Caucus as having a positive outcome for the AASR?

YES 30; NO 2; UNSURE 18;
No Response 2

Q2. Do you have any negative response to Caucus activities?

YES 5; NO 44; No Response 3

Q3 If YES, comment.

The YES responses came from 2 males, 3 females; 2 women cited the informality of structure/process and continual returning to basics at each conference (no ongoing program), with one questioning a focus on women in the AASR which should focus on religion. The men cited the perceived imposition of views and silencing of others by the Caucus and exclusion from a conference section.

Q4 Do you think critical reflection on gender informs/transforms scholarship in (i) the Study/History of Religions as a multi-disciplinary activity?

YES 39; Qualified YES 2; NO 6;
UNSURE 3; No response 2

(ii) the courses available in Australian Universities?

YES 30; Qualified YES 4; NO 6;
UNSURE 7; No response 5

Q5 Do you think critical reflection on gender should inform/transform scholarship in this field?

YES 44; NO 4; Qualified YES 2;
UNSURE 1; No response 1

(Qualifications: that much gender studies research has no intellectual rigor or is trivial; that gender studies loses through undue emphasis)

Q6 Do you think a Women's Caucus is necessary in the AASR?

YES 37; Qualified YES 2;
NO 10; UNSURE 3

(of the 10 NO responses, 7 were from males, 3 from females.

Q7 If NO, reasons?

Caucus has been useful in past, no longer necessary because women are accepted on the Executive; it probably has hidden agenda; is divisive; scholarship is gender neutral; it is unhelpful to continue bracketing as feminist scholarship is not a separate field; why not a men's caucus as well; women already have strong profile in AASR and equal status; caucus should be temporary, other support groups are available and gender issues should be part of normal academic discussion; scholarship is scholarship.

Q8 Do you think the original goals of the Caucus need changing?

YES 3; NO 18; UNSURE 16;
No reply 15

Q9 If YES, comment?

7 comments received,
all from women:

Goals need adapting, expanding, more focussing, monitoring, more change in future. Activities commented upon: public-

ity in Universities appreciated; reservations re intervention in sexual harassment cases.

Q10 Are there any activities which you think have been neglected by the Caucus?

YES 5; NO 13; UNSURE 10;
NOT RELEVANT 13;
No Response 11

Q11 Comment?

Attention to non-Jewish, non-Christian religions, too much bias towards Christianity in gender studies, especially Christian feminist theology. More contact needed with theology/spirituality groups, more introductions/networking (some meetings unsatisfactory), more publicity for women studying, better information, attention to Australian aboriginal women by indigenous women, more post-grad support, more publicising of research by AASR women members.

Q12 Do you think there ought to be a separate conference section on Gender and Religion?

YES 30; NO 17; UNSURE 3;
No response 2

Of the NO responses, 9 from men, 8 from women....

(Qualifications noted: separate section widens the gap/marginalises; papers should be monitored for quality of scholarship; women should decide; linkup with conferences of women in theology should be explored; there should be a day or half-day for women before the formal conference; bracketing/separation bad move; integration best)

Q13 If YES, section title?

14 responses, 8 of which suggested Gender and Religion and reject Women and

Religion. Others: Gender, Sexuality and Religion (with openness to research on and representation of gay and lesbian sexuality), Gender Issues and Religion, From Whose Point of View?, Equal Opportunity, Equal Status, Feminist Perspectives on Religion, Women and Religion.

Q14 What other strategy would encourage critical reflection on understandings of gender in Religious Studies?

15 responses: 1 gender unknown, 5 male, 9 female

Summary: more focus on minority groups (for example, gays, lesbians, indigenous people); research: for example, on 'seminary' (male as ideal priest) effect on AASR members and on position of young non-paid working mothers in religious contexts; avoid divisiveness, espouse conciliation/dialogue between men and women; less seriousness and exaggeration of gender issues; develop more informed understanding (a teaching function?); gender as conference theme, assistance with publishing; improve the conference section; encourage 'scholars as scholars'; AASR to make representation to mainline churches re AASR activities including the Caucus; a wider public role for the Caucus (media); better Caucus network in each State; pinpoint activities in religious organisations which discriminate against or devalue women; women in the Caucus should be more 'rational' and 'free of political bias'; there should be special conferences for gender issues.

Q15 - 1 no response - 27 male, 24 female

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Comment:

Apart from noting that there are twice as many males as females in the AASR, I would want to draw attention to the gender-evenness (27/24) of respondents and THANK EVERYONE (19.5%) who responded. The response rate was poor and a number of conclusions are possible - some women might be more inclined to think that the bulk of their colleagues are indifferent, or assume that there is no longer an issue (see the response to 4 (i) in which many respondents think that the field is being informed/transformed by critical reflection on gender). It is possible that the majority of AASR members do not think gender needs to be an analytic category in the study of religion under any discipline.....or that previous gender blindness, misrepresentation and non-representation no longer applies.

On the other hand the vast majority of responses showed goodwill and serious grappling with feminist problems in general. The harshest critics are often women themselves, reflecting the complexity of gender relations and the importance of differences in perception and experience -response and debate are crucial. To those who feel excluded, I would want to point out that the conference section has always had male participants, either as responsive audience or presenting papers. The Caucus meeting is gender-exclusive to provide space for mutual support and is based on such truisms that in Australian religious history, women have served to exhaustion, make up the majority of public practitioners, are the central teachers of religion to children, yet have limited and contested access to sacred space and ritual leadership, little control over institutional finance and exercise very little executive power.

Further, plentiful documentation exists of Australian women's experience of exclusion, devaluation, enforced obedience to religious others' dictates concerning their reproductive health, lack of access to theological training and acknowledgement of their potential for excellence in academic contexts. 'Women' are of course not merely passive victims or a homogeneous entity, nor lacking in skill in creative resistance and the exercise of power. Feminism may look 'fragmented' and rough-cut at the present time, but this is what intellectual and practical excitement actually looks like.

The AASR Women's Caucus is not necessarily 'the' solution to any of the problematics of discrimination/ inequality/ exclusion in Religious Studies or religious traditions, and at present it does not reflect the urgency of ethical issues stimulating feminist discussion at present.

Questionnaire responses reveal that the lack of structure and a cohesive developing program and also general lack of knowledge of the goals of the Caucus may be contributing factors. There is also a pervasive thread of doubt about the value of the Caucus and also of women's scholarship, side by side with a somewhat contradictory complacency about the impact of this on the field of Religious Studies. Much more discussion is needed and it is hoped that this will take place among Caucus members by mail and meeting as soon as practicable.

We would also welcome any member's comments on the results of the questionnaire -please send to me at the address below.

Penny Magee
School of Asian Studies
La Trobe University,
Bundoora VIC 3083.

News of Members

Jim Richardson writes from Reno, Nevada that he was invited to participate in a conference in Poland in December that was quite excellent. The conference was on 'New Religions in Post-Communist Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union'. It was held at Jagellonian University in Krakow, sponsored by the Institute for

the Study of Religion. Scholars from about 14 countries attended the four day conference, and a number of excellent papers were presented. There were also representatives of a number of the 'new religions' there and the exchanges were stimulating. A book will be forthcoming presenting papers from the conference.

Australian Conferences

**The Xth David Nichol Smith Seminar
'Margins and Metropolis: Literature,
Culture and Science, 1600-1830'**

2-5 July 1996, HRC Canberra

Conveners: Dr Ian Higgins, English,

The Faculties, ANU. Tel: + 61 6 249

2708. Fax: + 61 6 249 3244. and Dr

Gillian Russell, English, The Faculties,

ANU. Tel: + 61 6 249 0489

AASR

5-7 July 1996, Christchurch NZ

Combined conference with NZ

Religious Studies Conference

Contact: Jane Simpson email:

j.simpson@phil.canterbury.ac.nz

ANZATS/ ANZSTS

7-11 July, Perth

Theme: Reconciliation - in theology
and culture

Contact: The Registrar

ANZATS/ANZSTS Conference

School of Social Sciences

Murdoch University

MURDOCH 6150

Tel: + 619 360 2651

Fax: + 619 360 1899

email: creagh@central.murdoch.edu.au

Nationalism

15-17 July, Sydney University

Convenor: Dr Dairmuid Maguire,

Department of Government University of
Sydney 2006

Tel: + 61 2 351 2082

email: Dairmuid@sue.econ.su.oz.au

**Science and Other Knowledge
Traditions**

23-27 August, Cairns

Enquiries: Humanities Research

Centre, ANU 0200

Tel: + 61 6 249 4786

Fax: + 61 6 248 0054

email: administration.hrc@anu.edu.au

**The Natural Science and the Social
Sciences, and the Colloquium on
'Enlightenment, Religion and Science
in the Long Eighteenth Century'**

6-9 September, HRC Canberra

Enquiries: HRC as above

Emotions in Social Life and Social Theory

9-11 July 1997, HRC Canberra
Enquiries: HRC as above

Identities and Convergences
Mid July 1997, Nouméa

Enquiries: HRC as above

Indigenous Rights, Political Theory and Reshaping of Institutions

August 1997, HRC Canberra
Enquiries: HRC as above

Overseas Conferences Coming Up !

**British Sociological Association
Sociology of Religion Study Group**

1-4 April 1996, Twickenham
Theme: Religion, Culture and Ideology
Contact: Dr Sarah Potter, 71a
Highbury Hill, London N5 1SX

British Sociological Association

1-4 April 1996, Reading
Theme: Worlds of the Future:
Ethnicity, Nationalism and Globalisation
Contact: Kevin Brehony, Dept of
Education Studies and Management,
University of Reading, Bulmershe Court,
Reading RG6 1HY

**Nature Religion Today: Paganism,
Shamanism, Esotericism**

9-12 April 1996, Lancaster
Contact: Prof G Samuel, Department
of Religious Studies, University of
Lancaster, Lancaster LA1 4YG; email
G.Samuell@lancaster.ac.uk

CSub = Religion and War
12 April 1996, Leiden University
Contact: Prof Dr E Vetter, Faculty of
Arts, Leiden University, PO Box 9515,
2300 RA Leiden

**XIX Denton Conference on Implicit
Religion**

10-12 May 1996, Bristol
Contact: Canon Dr Edward Bailey,
Winterbourne Rectory, Bristol BS17 1JQ

**The Gospel and Gender - Who is
Risen?**

5-7 July 1996, Dunedin
Contact: CCANZ Women's
Programme, PO Box 173, Dunedin or
Elizabeth Duke email:
elizabeth.duke@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

British Centre for Durkheimian Studies

10-12 July 1996, Oxford
Theme: Durkheim and Modern
Education Conference
Contact: W S F Pickering, Institute of
Social and Cultural Anthropology, 51
Banbury Rd, Oxford OX2 6PE

**CESNUR: Les sociétés devant le
nouveau pluralisme religieux**

14-16 August 1996, Montréal Canada
Contact: CESNUR, via Bertola 86,
10122 Torino Italy

**Understanding Religion,
Understanding Society
Association for the Sociology of
Religion**

15-17 August 1996, New York NY
Contact: Christopher G Ellison,
Department of Sociology, Burdine Hall
336, University of Texas at Austin,
Austin, Texas USA 78712-1088
Tel: + 1 512 471 1122
Fax: + 1 512 471 1748
email: cellison@jeeves.la.utexas.edu

**American Sociological Association -
Sociology of Religion section**

17-19 August 1996, New York

Contact: Dr Helen Rose Ebaugh,
Department of Sociology, University of
Houston, Houston TX 77204-3474

**13th Nordic conference in Sociology of
Religion**

15-18 August 1996, Lund University Swe-
den

Theme: Religion and Politics

Contact: Curt Dahlgren email:
Curt.Dahlgren@theol.lu.se

British Centre for Durkheimian Studies

26-29 September 1996, Oxford

Theme: Marcel Mauss Today
Conference

Contact: W S F Pickering, Institute of
Social and Cultural Anthropology, 51
Banbury Rd, Oxford OX2 6PE

**RRA 1996 Annual Meeting:
Denominational Cultures**

8-10 November 1996, Nashville USA

Contact: Fred Kniss, Department of
Sociology and Anthropology, Loyola
University Chicago, Chicago IL, USA
60626-5311

email: fkniss@luc.edu

**Society for the Scientific Study of
Religion**

8-11 November 1996, Nashville Tennes-
see

Contact: Mark Shibley, Sociology and
Anthropology, Loyola University,
Chicago, 6525 N Sheridan Rd, Chicago
IL 60626-5311

email: mshible@luc.edu

**Doing Theology in Oceania - Partners
in Conversation**

17-21 November 1996, Dunedin

Contact: Faculty of Theology,
University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin
NZ or email:

theology@gandalf.otago.ac.nz

Preceded by Women's weekend 15-17
November Email:

elizabeth.duke@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

American Anthropological Association

20-24 November, San Francisco

Contact: Stewart Guthrie, Dept of
Sociology and Anthropology, Fordham
University College at Lincoln Centre,
113W 60th St, New York NY10023
email: guthrie@mary.fordham.edu

American Academy of Religion

23-26 November 1996, New Orleans

**Religious Speech Communication
Association**

23-26 November 1996, San Diego CA

Contact: Carrie Peirce-Jones
c/ Department of Communications
238 Grehan Building
University of Kentucky
Lexington KY 40506-0042
Fax: 1-606-257-7818

**Leiden Institute for the Study of
Religions**

9-10 January 1997, Leiden

Theme: Canonisation and
Decanonisation in Religious Traditions

Contact: LISOR Conference
P B 9515

2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
Fax: 31-71-272571