Book Reviews

Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999). RRP $45.00 HB. 226pp.

The problem of evil, it need hardly be said, is one of the standard topics in the philosophy of religion. In the past fifty years, philosophers have provided increasingly sophisticated restatements of the problem, while defenders of traditional theism, for their part, have formulated a range of subtle and complex responses. The field has been dominated by two proposed solutions to the problem of evil—the 'free-will defence' and the 'soul-making theodicy'—both of which have been happy to begin from premises acceptable to both atheologians and religious believers. As a consequence, the debate has proceeded with a minimalist natural theology and religious-neutral notions of goodness and evil. Perhaps the only interesting sideline to these discussions has been the emergence of a reaction against the whole business of theodicy, and the subsequent characterisation of philosophical defences of the goodness of God as either irrelevant or morally bankrupt. In *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, Marilyn McCord Adams sets out to challenge the ground rules of the existing debate and to respond to moral criticisms of the business of defending God's goodness. The result is a bold attempt to recast the problem of evil, and a refreshing new approach to the whole question of theodicy.

According to Adams, analytical philosophers have tended to regard the notion of evil as relatively unproblematic. For the most part, theodicies have focused upon two kinds of evils—moral and physical—with occasional further elaborations. These categories of evil, while they call for different strategies, are putatively religious-neutral: that is to say, their objective existence is acknowledged by all parties to the discussion. Adams suggests that in adopting such a stance, philosophers have been influenced (albeit unconsciously) by the utilitarian moral tradition with its emphasis on quantifiable pleasures and pains. As a result, discussions of the problem of evil have focused upon concrete examples of pain to the exclusion of what Adams refers to as the *symbolic* features of evil—the power of evils 'to *degrade* by being prima facie ruinous of personal meaning' (p. 207). To capture these deeper symbolic features of evil, Adams proposes a new category of evils—the 'horrendous evils' of the book's title.

'Horrendous evils' are defined as evils which give reason to doubt 'whether the participant's life could (given their inclusion in it) be good to him/her on the whole' (p. 26). Much of the book is given over to articulating this notion and to identifying the evaluative spheres in which such evils are to be relocated. Goodness and evil are to do not merely with pleasure and pain, but with the realms of purity and defilement, honour and shame, beauty and ugliness. In setting out this more robust conception of evil Adams takes aim at both consequentialist and deontological moral

perspectives, which in her view have led to a blinkered and impoverished moral vision. Thus if Bentham and his utilitarian successors were responsible for having skewed our understanding of evil in the direction of the tangible and quantifiable, Kant is no less culpable for having sundered morality from aesthetics.

The category of horrendous evils is crucial for the development of Adams' thesis. For a start, it signals her intention to take concrete evils more seriously than standard approaches, thus escaping the criticism that theodicy trivialises the reality of human suffering. At the same time, the more extreme nature of horrendous evils serves to highlight the inadequacy of the free-will defence, and to a lesser extent, soul-making theodicies. In light of the challenges posed by horrendous evils, these responses are simply not up to the task. According to Adams' analysis, one of the fundamental shortcomings of the standard analytical approach is to do with the fact that the question is framed with regard to a minimalist, classical Deity. This artificially limited view of Deity is simply inadequate to cope with the enormity of horrendous evils. In place of this classical view of the Deity, Adams proposes drawing upon the 'expanded theism' of Christian theology: 'When it comes to defeating horrendous evils, the central doctrines of Christian theology—Christology and the Trinity—have considerable explanatory power.' (p. 164). Drawing upon the broader theological resources of the Christian tradition, Adams locates her theodicy somewhere between the more traditional responses of analytical philosophers and the more radical proposals of the process theologians. As Adams herself admits, Calcedonian Christology is vital to the success of her strategy. She wishes 'to exploit the explanatory power of expanded theisms without assuming the obligation to convince atheologians of their truth' (pp. 178).

Adam's thesis is novel and thought-provoking. However it is not without problems of its own. It is difficult at times to escape the conclusion that what constitutes 'horrendous evil' is going to be somewhat culturally determined and subjective, despite Adams' stated desire for her criterion to be objective (p. 27). This element of subjectivity is an inevitable consequence of the introduction of the anthropological and aesthetic dimensions. After all, events which might constitute an unbearable defilement in a particular cultural context may not do so in another. Moreover, who is it who determines what makes life for the individual, on balance, good? Is it the individual, or is there an objective or natural standard which can be employed? This is not altogether clear. A partial response to this difficulty, and one which Adams neatly exploits, is to point out that the putatively religious-neutral sphere in which the debate is usually takes place is any case highly contested. Deep divisions between deontologists and consequentialists render controversial any claim to have identified objective moral values or their opposite, moral evils. But this is a *tu quoque* response, and does not of itself establish the desirability of the alternative. Moreover, the claim might be made that if there were no disinterested, objective measure of evil, the formal problem of evil would disappear.

Having said this, there is no doubt that the book fulfils its promise of providing a new direction for theodicy. By moving the discussion from an artificially neutral territory Adams succeeds both in taking human suffering seriously and in drawing upon the theological resources necessary to defend the goodness of God. Whether ultimately this is a philosophical exercise or a theological one, it is certainly one which those interested in the problem of evil, be they philosophers or theologians, cannot afford to ignore.

Peter Harrison
Bond University

John H. Berthrong, *Transformations of the Confucian Way,* Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1998. 250 pp. + xiv. ISBN 0-8133-2805-5 (hc), ISBN 0-8133-2804-7 (pbk).

Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism,* Cambridge University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-521-64312-0 (hc), 344 pp. + xviii. ISBN 0-521-64430-5 (pbk). A$34.95 pbk.

Scholarly studies of Chinese religions are currently appearing at an unprecedented rate, and it is a daunting challenge to keep abreast merely of the works in English. Daniel Overmyer et. al. compiled an invaluable bibliographic testimony to this industry entitled 'Chinese Religions: The State of the Field', which appeared in *The Journal of Asian Studies* in 1995 (54/1: 14-60). To appreciate the speed of academic publication since then, consider the very useful bibliographic website compiled by Philip Clart which is devoted solely to listing scholarly material on Chinese popular religion, only in Western languages and confined to pieces published since 1995 (http://web.missouri.edu/~religpc/bibliography_CPR.html). The nearly 500 titles represent only a fraction of the research that has been poured into the study of Chinese religions as a whole over the past five years.

Whether exciting or bewildering, for those of us teaching introductory courses on or including Chinese religions there is a constant concern to make the best of this new information accessible to students. Julia Ching's *Chinese Religions* (New York: Orbis 1993), though not without its faults, is the best general overview of the past decade. There is also a growing supply of good overviews of the various Chinese traditions. I am unaware of any single volume which has replaced Kenneth Ch'en's *Buddhism in China* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964) as the best introduction to the topic but as it is still a very sound study the urgency to produce a more current survey is perhaps not extreme. Daoism and Confucianism were, until recently, another matter.

The need for studies to supersede the old outlines of Daoism by scholars such as Maspero, Welch and Kaltermark has been met primarily by translations of two French texts, Kristofer Schipper's superb thematic study *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1993) and Isabelle Robinet's very authoritative *Taoism: Growth of a Religion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). While directed towards a popular market, Eva Wong's *The Shambhala Guide to Taoism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997) is much better than its title would suggest, and Julian Pas' *Historical Dictionary of Taoism* (London: Scarecrow, 1998) could be consulted as an introduction to the faith.

What, however, of Confucianism? Rodney Taylor's *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: SUNY, 1990) contains a nice collection of papers but it is not intended as a continuous narrative. The only attempts at an overview of the tradition until very recently were Herrlee Creel's woefully unbalanced *Confucius and the Chinese Way* (New York: Harper and Row, 1949) and Howard Smith's *Confucius and Confucianism* (London: Paladin, 1974) which must be used with caution. Fortunately, this situation has recently changed.

At the time of writing, Yao's *Introduction to Confucianism* has just been released while Berthrong's volume is only two years old. Both authors write on Confucianism as (at least in part) a religious tradition and both have previously written volumes on Christian-Confucian comparisons and dialogue. Their approaches are quite different, yet complementary.

Berthrong focuses upon the history of Confucianism and his chapters divide the tradition into what he sees as its six main phases. The first is the formative period and considers the teachings of Confucius and his famed Zhou dynasty interpreters, Mencius and Xunzi. The second chapter then examines how these teachings were transformed into the state cult of an empire and details the thought of Dong Zhongshu and other Han philosophers. In the third phase, Confucianism is typically portrayed as being eclipsed by Daoism and Buddhism, but Berthrong quite rightly maintains that this was an important transformative period when the 'Neo-Daoist' school of *Xuanxue* or Mysterious Learning revitalised Confucian metaphysics. The fourth chapter sees this blossoming into the Song dynasty School of Principle (*Lixue)* with Zhu Xi of course being its greatest exponent. A separate chapter is devoted to the Ming dynasty's School of Heart/Mind (*Xinxue*) of which Wang Yangming was the most famous figure. This and the preceding chapter cover what is referred to as Neo-Confucianism in the West. Following an interlude of a chapter on the spread of Confucianism to Korea and Japan (as always, Vietnam is largely ignored) the final chapter then considers Confucianism in the modern world.

In general, this is a serviceable summary of current European research on the history of Confucianism. I choose these words with care. The very extensive bibliography is entirely composed of works in Western languages, almost all in English, and the quotations from primary sources used in the text are all taken from these works. This, along with the barest of glossaries of Chinese characters is hardly likely to excite Sinologists or scholars expecting new in-depth investigation. At times the lack of direct linguistic access causes problems; for example, the famous enigmatic phrase by Zhou Dunyi *('wuji er taiji')* is met merely by offering three very different

English translations and then leaving the contradictions unresolved and unilluminated (101). On the other hand, the source bias perhaps makes it more user-friendly to the average student upon whom a list of Chinese and Japanese books and articles is wasted and who is simply seeking guidance through the voluminous literature in English on Confucianism. This is basically what Berthrong offers, and he typically covers each topic or theme by summarising one or two of the best English studies on the subject. This does not allow for a critical vantage and I never felt the interpretations to be original or profound, but it was for the most part current and reliable and provided a convenient chronicle of a history spanning two and a half millennia.

Yao also offers a history of the Confucian tradition, but in his book it is but one 50 page chapter, about a quarter of the length of Berthrong's exposition. Yao agonises excessively as to whether this history should be divided into 2, 3 or 5 phases before alighting upon the last of these options (p. 4-9). It is, in fact, the same classification Berthrong uses except that it fuses his second and third periods, joins the two 'Neo-Confucian' movements into a single development and then focuses upon the spread of Confucianism throughout Asia as a separate epoch. Berthrong's schema is perhaps a little better at capturing the pulse of Confucian history, but ultimately this is an arbitrary point.

While Berthrong's book is more successful as a chronicle of Confucian history Yao has on the whole produced the better general text. His 'Introduction' admittedly does not fill the reader with high expectations and Yao is not at his best discussing structural and methodological issues, but once he gets on with the job the exposition is clear, balanced, informed and at times insightful. Yao quite readily makes his own translations of primary sources where there is no suitable rendition available and gives the reader confidence his interpretations are well grounded in the original texts. Linguists will be pleased, though lovers of luscious English prose may not. The rather basic style is nonetheless very clear and accessible.

An Introduction to Confucianism has five chapters. The first one discusses the problematic concept of 'Confucianism,' the equally thorny issues surrounding its status as an ethical system and/or religion, and the 'Scriptures' of the tradition. The second chapter is the historical survey, which is followed by two impressive studies of the core of the Confucian way. Chapter three examines recurring themes in Confucian doctrine by looking at the nature of *tian* (heaven) as an Ultimate reality, humanity and human morality as heaven-derived phenomena, and the harmony between and within heaven and humanity as life's supreme goal. Turning from theory to practice, chapter 4 is a most welcome overview of Confucian communal ritual and private means of self-cultivation, although the final section of the chapter on the relationship between Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Christianity seems out of place. The last chapter is a very relevant look at the recent repression and current revival of Confucian thought which, depending on your disposition, will enthuse you with hope for age-old but uncannily timeless values or fill you with despair that this anachronistic old phoenix is going to require yet another burning.

These two fresh overviews will certainly help introduce a new generation to the world of Confucianism. My final point, a plea really, is raised by both authors, dismissed by Berthrong in an appended note (p. 201) and left unresolved by Yao (pp. 16-21). The plea is for an introduction to Confucianism which at last has the courage to demand the end of 'Confucianism'. The title *An Introduction to Confucianism* should be as welcome to students of religion as a new book on Islam called *An Introduction to Muhammadism,* or, better, a new book on Judaism entitled *An Introduction to Mosesism.* We long ago learned the error of our ways with Islam and, being more familiar terrain for most scholars, never made the mistake with Judaism, but Rujiao (a simple word we could all get used to) is still awaiting this courtesy.

Let me pursue the comparison. While Moses is traditionally said to be the author of the Pentateuch it would be wrong to speak of Mosesism for he was but a great prophet who was an intermediary in establishing a covenant between god and the Jewish people which is the true focus of the tradition. Likewise, while Muhammad was a vehicle of god's word, salvation is not through him but 'submission' to god *(Islam).* Only archaic Christo-centric prejudice could question such arguments. In the case of 'Confucianism' the logic should be even more compelling. Confucius was adamant, he was a transmitter not an originator (*Analects* 7:1) and the emergent cult of the Ru was based on five books he may have edited (one he possibly authored) but which had nothing to do with his beliefs, life or teachings. Only much later did the *Analects* become central to this tradition. Confucius was, of course, vital to the story, but what lies at its core is the way of the Ru. The etymology is contentious: 'weaklings', a derogatory term applied by their military opponents?; 'soft' which in a more positive way indicates they avoided physical activities so as to focus on intellectual cultivation?; 'subtle' suggesting they were associated with ritual dance and performance? Whatever it once meant (and both the term and tradition may well have preceded Confucius), *ru* came to mean a 'scholar' and it is the cultivation of the self and society through study and learning which is the quintessential feature of Rujiao. Yu's book in particular makes this clear and it would have been a major step forward to have this reflected in the title.

Tony Swain
University of Sydney

Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *Guide to the Study of Religion,* London and New York, Cassell, 2000; paperback; xii, 560 pages; ISBN 0-304-70176-9; RRP US$24.95

Of late, Cassell has been publishing consistently high quality material in the field of religion studies. This volume, like Mark C. Taylor's (ed.) *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (1998), is an attempt at producing a one-volume mini-encyclopaedia for students of religion. Such books are convenient, as they are portable where the multi-volume Mircea Eliade (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987) is not. Such books

are also informative in that the information in encyclopaedias atrophies and becomes 'dated'. The contributions in Braun and McCutcheon, like those in Taylor, reflect the increasing influence of postmodern and post-structuralist philosophy in the discipline of religion studies since the Eliade encyclopaedia was published.

Braun and McCutcheon see the distinctiveness of their volume as being that 'it would try to dish up a thoroughly anthropological study of religion' (p. xi), which would 'include the discipline of studying religion within its critical mix' (loc cit). This avowed intention has been achieved, and it is this anthropological flavour which makes the volume more successful than Taylor's effort. The structure of the volume is a 'Prologue' (Willi Braun's fairly cautious essay on the nature of religion, which covers religion in concept, religion in theory, and religion in disciplinarity), and an 'Epilogue' (Sam D. Gill's brief discussion of play). In between these are three extended investigative sections.

The first section, 'Description', contains four essays: William E. Arnal's 'Definition'; Jonathan Z. Smith's 'Classification'; Luther H. Martin's 'Comparison'; and Hans H. Penner's 'Interpretation'. Of necessity, none of these essays are very lengthy (Smith's is a mere nine pages) and the reader is frequently aware of how much is not being said about these weighty subjects. This is particularly the case in the essay on interpretation, where 'hermeneutics' (not in itself the subject of an entry) is simplified almost to the point where its meaning is lost.

Part II, 'Explanation', was for this reader the most satisfying section of the volume. Here the eighteen essays present the different methodological stances which have sought to 'explain' religion in terms of politics, sexuality, psychology and so on. Some of these categories and theories are very familiar: for example, Ronald L. Grimes on 'Ritual', Veikko Anttonen on 'Sacred' and Russell T. McCutcheon on 'Myth'; others, like Harvey W. White on 'Deprivation' and Thomas Ryba on 'Manifestation' are explorations of less frequently invoked models. All of the essays are of high quality, and only a few (Rodney Stark's analysis of 'Rationality' in particular) demand to be singled out. This section remains largely within 'classic' religion studies.

Part III, 'Location', demonstrates more the influence of contemporary philosophical currents on religion studies. The seven essays are Donald Wiebe's 'Modernism', Arthur McCalla's 'Romanticism', Johannes C. Wolfart's 'Postmodernism', Tim Murphy's 'Discourse', Bruce Lincoln's 'Culture', David Chidester's 'Colonialism', and Gary Lease's 'Ideology'. Occasionally while reading it seemed that these admirably clear expositions of very complex topics were clear only because so much had been omitted. Also, most of these essays do not say much about the way the particular construct being discussed has affected scholarship in religion - indeed Wolfart suggests that postmodernism has profoundly altered theology, but remains at the end of the century peripheral to religion studies.

The volume concludes with an eighty page bibliography which is very useful for

students and researchers alike. It must be concluded that because its scope is much greater, this volume is significantly less impressive and useful than McCutcheon's earlier *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (Cassell 1999), which due to its specific focus and collection of classic articles, was an essential addition to libraries. However, the present volume is still very worthwhile. (600)

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

Donald Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography,*
St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000.

This intriguing and compelling book stems from issues that arise out of the use of social science in Jesus studies during the past three decades. Much new light has been shed on the social world of early Christianity, specifically by sociology and cultural anthropology. However, psychology has been less in evidence than other social scientific approaches to Jesus. Capps wishes to redress such an imbalance. He argues that "a psychological point of view may be very helpful precisely at those points where scholars find themselves at an impasse" and, moreover, he believes that ". . . unsolved problems in contemporary Jesus studies center around the issue of Jesus' identity" (x). A convincing case is made for the usefulness of many sorts of psychology for studying the historical Jesus. Capps insightfully comes to grips with the central questions, "Who was Jesus?" and "What did Jesus understand himself to be about?" He skilfully draws on a wide range of current psychological thought and applies it to the study of Jesus' identity in the social and historical context of Galilee and Jerusalem. In particular, the distinction in theories of narcissism between mourning and melancholia, with the latter taking centre-stage in the book, is central.

Two thirds of the book describe the "state of the art" of scholarly portrayals of Jesus and current methods employed in the psychobiography of individuals and the psychohistory of groups. Capps describes and carefully analyses the socially attuned biblical scholarship of E.P. Sanders (Jesus as "reasonable visionary"), John P. Meier (Jesus as "atypical Jew"), John Dominic Crossan (Jesus as "religious bandit") and Marcus J. Borg (Jesus as "spirit person'). He also discusses with compelling detail the contributions that can be made to Jesus studies by psychobiography and psychohistory, drawing on the summary work on life histories and psychobiography by William McKinley Runyan. Here models of human behaviour are invoked and set side-by-side with what is known about Jesus and his world. The central focus is on the overall relationship between childhood experience and adult behaviour. Key psychological and sociological theories are identified, along with historical themes (some never before considered), that have striking power to shed light on Jesus' identity. These include cross-cultural studies of the dynamics of family conflict, shaming as a method of enforcing social compliance, the emotionology of witchcraft and the relationships between fear, anxiety and panic. In particular, Capps points to the "honor-shame ideology" evident in modern Mediterranean societies, the "patronal"

structure of most of those societies and the role played by the "peasant class" within them throughout history. The life of Jesus becomes accessible retrospectively by means of reflecting on the convergence of those three themes in terms of all that is known psychologically about them. Through the kaleidoscopic lens crafted by Capps, the many facets of family and kinship relations in the Galilee of Jesus' day are viewed with refreshing clarity, and the reader is able to appreciate the creative struggle behind the emergence of Jesus' unique human identity.

Perhaps the most novel and interesting turning point in the intellectual development of Capps' thesis about Jesus' emergent identity is his discussion of "The Hidden Years: The Fatherhood Question" (chapter 6) and "Disabling Anxiety: The Role of the Village Healer" (chapter 7). These chapters go to the heart of what it meant for Jesus to be a man in his day, and the spin-off message for men of our times is clearly evident, albeit implicit. Capps uses the psychobiographical technique of "retrodiction," or the process of reconstructing a life for which few details exist based on tracking the overall pattern, *Gestalt* or "whole-quality" that begins to emerge and make scant information cohere. Retrodiction seeks patterning that becomes central to the organisation of psychological facts, usually from early childhood. Capps readily admits that retrodiction "is especially risky . . . in the case of Jesus, where the evidence is not only scanty but also difficult to interpret" (130). Going boldly where few have ventured before, however, Capps argues that during Jesus' "hidden years," the fatherhood question is paramount.

The work of three authors who link the formation of Jesus' identity to key childhood events that are associated with the question of his father is analysed, criticised and used to make Capps' case. The authors are John W. Miller, who emphasises the death of Jesus' father, Jane Schaberg, who highlights Jesus as an illegitimate child, and Andries G. van Aarde, who stresses Jesus as a fatherless son. Although all three scholars engage in retrodiction about the fatherhood question, Capps chooses to build a retrodiction of his own on Van Aarde's work. Capps suggests that if Jesus understood himself mainly as a "fatherless son," then he showed all the signs of "longing for adoption" (153):

> ". . . much that is 'known' about the adult Jesus is consistent with the hypothesis that Jesus was illegitimate, and there is little that would contradict it. In addition, . . . the case is equally strong for the hypothesis that Joseph did not adopt Jesus as his legal son . . . It remained for 'Abba' to so accept him" (162-163).

The psychological scene was set for the distinctive social presence of Jesus the man and religious leader, who encountered God within the dynamics of his personality. Such a view accounts for "Jesus' emphasis on God as 'Abba,'" writes Capps, "and the importance of the baptismal rite of purification that he underwent as a disciple of John" (154). Jesus would later go on to express these internal dynamics in the temple in Jerusalem. Capps argues that the event in the temple is a clear and dramatic demonstration of Jesus' new identity in a nutshell.

In turning to the role of the village healer in Jesus' times, Capps follows the lead of the psychological thinker, Erik Erikson, who considers trust to be the basic source of healing. The healing power of Jesus has its source in his recognition that "he could not heal without a true attitude of trust by those who were beneficiaries of the healing" (217). Among all the healing stories contained in the New Testament, the "best cases for authenticity," writes Capps, "are those suggesting that Jesus healed the paralyzed" (Mark 2:1-12; John 5:1-9) "and the blind" (Mark 8:22-26; Mark 10:46-52) (193). Regarding stories of raising the dead, the best case is "the raising of Jairus' daughter" (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Mark 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56) (194). Foreshadowed is the importance of the "gender differences" of the paralytic and the blind, which are all male, and the person raised from the dead, who is a female. These healings of blind and paralysed men involve "physiological disturbances precipitated by psychological anxieties, which related either to matters of aggression (their own or someone else's), sexuality, or both" (211). Paralysis and blindness were reactions to male powerlessness among the peasant classes in Galilean society. Jesus' healings served to empower afflicted men by redirecting their interests beyond the powerlessness of their social position, to a new identity directed through himself to an empowering "Abba." The male lineage of such spiritual power is clear, and it spoke to Jesus in the past tense of certainty about his origins. The paralysis and blindness that eventuate from somatised anxiety are compromises, ones, however, that are based on "fear" and which often mask depression (203). By showing the power of Abba through his acts of healing, "Jesus communicated his belief that Abba would place a circle of protection" around the afflicted (203). Thus, it is possible to view Jesus "as a sort of community psychiatrist, dealing with problems that did not lend themselves to remedies designed for purely physiological maladies, if indeed there were such" (216).

Capps finally offers his own portrait of Jesus, and draws on the rich tradition of psychoanalysis to specify Jesus' unique "identity." Even though being a fatherless son triggered Jesus' search for a positive identity, his relationship with his mother now looms into prominence. Capps suggests that when the social world of Jesus' family becomes known and the centrality of Jesus as a healer is recognised, then it is possible to view Jesus' identity from a wider angle of vision: Jesus' character or worldview can be taken in and its inner logic understood. This encompassing new orientation or character stance Capps calls Jesus' "utopian-melancholic personality" (xii). He contends that the coherence of Jesus' self-identity was neither that of an "apolcalypticist" nor that of a "social reformer," which are "the two visions of him that are frequently posed against one another—but 'something else'" (xii). This "something else" refers to Capps' overall thesis that Jesus lived out a self-understanding as "son of Abba" (270). Moreover, in doing so, Jesus restored to himself an inner sense of being comforted and nurtured by a true mother, a spiritual power that spoke to him in the future tense of a Kingdom to come. Capps develops and applies recent understandings of narcissism to the likely emotional bond between Mary and her

son.

This self-understanding has two dimensions. First, there is the peasant backdrop of Jesus' life. Fatalism and utopian desires stand out. As "son of Abba" Jesus joined together a "deep fatalism," which usually "inspires peasant-style utopian thinking," a "desire" to change the world and a "hope" that such change was possible (222-231). It was precisely Jesus' "utopian illusions" that counteracted normal and pathological "boredom" amongst the peasantry, and averted self-destructive behaviour (232-233). Because utopian experiments usually fail to manage matters of aggression and sexuality within communities, the "virtue" of Jesus' 'Kingdom of God' was unique: it expressed "real desires, yet has no location and occurs without social reformist activities and blueprints" (233). On the one hand, as Luke 17:20-21 says, the Kingdom of God is neither "here" nor "there." On the other hand, "it encourages the pathologically bored to look for evidence that one's anxiety has prevented one from recognizing" (233). What Jesus recognised was his acceptance as "son of Abba." The emotional impact of his recognition transformed him into a patron or patriarch in his own right. He became the unwitting leader of a new religious movement. Jesus engaged in the "fatherlike performance" of proclaiming "all children the sons and daughters of the heavenly father," and his "refusal to see himself as unique in this regard may be the very nucleus of his identity," argues Capps (271).

The second dimension of Jesus' "son of Abba" identity is male melancholia. Melancholia is linked to a "loss of self" (Jesus' feeling of being a "fatherless son" and "longing for adoption"), which is a disturbance of normal narcissism, and to alternative religious formulations as means of addressing and overcoming melancholia. Unlike grief or mourning, which involves the loss of an object in the external world, like a loved one, the melancholic condition results from the "loss of self" (234). Capps' close reading of Freud and other theorists of narcissism leads him to link self-loss not only to Jesus' sense of abandonment, but also to maternal associations and the theme of home: "or at-homeness-a mythical place where life is safe, secure, and well nourished, where there is no reason to be anxious" (250). However, psychological analysis points deeper than that. While the male lineage of the spiritual force of being a "son of Abba" is clear, the manhood of Jesus also is linked to an inner psychological readjustment to the meaning of his mother. Beneath melancholic sadness are "reproach and rage," which arise from Jesus' "illegitimacy ... his non-adoption by his mother's husband" (250). Jesus directs his powerful anger first towards Mary for letting it all happen to begin with. Later reproach and rage are internalised: Jesus "took upon himself the blame and punishment for what his mother and natural father did to him," and by means of his baptism the "sexual pollution in which he had been conceived" was washed away (250). When Jesus affirmed himself as the "beloved son of Abba" at his baptism (Mark 1:11; Matthew 3:17; Luke 3:22), his identity shifted from "son of a nameless father" to "son of Abba," and he thereby became "legitimated" (250). The dramatic unfolding of such a realisation was soon at hand in Jerusalem at the temple. Not only would Jesus find his true father in Abba,

but also his true mother as an emotional source of inspiration and his fate.

In his effort to see Jesus "whole," Capps brings his lens of insight into strikingly clear focus when he turns to an analysis of Jesus' disturbance in the temple event. The argument here is that the act of upsetting the money changers' tables and the seats of dove sellers represents a clear and dynamic statement of the coherence of Jesus' new identity in operation. The disturbance in the temple event "integrates (Jesus') location in his family of origin, his role as healer, and his utopian-melancholic personality" (xii). Such a convergence of psychological factors was a culmination and extension of Jesus' role as "exorcist-healer" (252). "Mary's illegitimate son" was therefore "'fated' to be a 'nobody', bereft of any social identity whatsoever," had Jesus never managed to forge a new identity (252). However, he culminated his effort to "'change his fate,' which began with his own purification through the ritual cleansing in the river Jordan and continued in his exorcist-healer role, which drew on the power of 'Abba'" (252). Thus, the disturbance in the temple event was an extension of his earlier exorcism and healings. His reproach and rage were now directed at public targets, not at himself. Those public targets stood for variations of the emotions surrounding the maternal presence that he had carried within himself and regarded with ambivalence. A central theme in Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God involved a maternal dimension, and it was identified with the Jerusalem temple and subjected to exorcism and healing. Says Capps,

> Key to this vision is a man's ability *to make something of himself, to change his fate.* The mother, not the father, provides the means for this. *This* mother is not the mother of falsehood and death, but the true mother of life. *She* is the "something missing" from the life of the melancholic male, and he suffers because she has not yet materialized. Nor will she materialize until the false mother has been routed (249).

Capps points to the temple as the "false mother," and he concludes that the "Exorcism of the false mother is . . . what Jesus' disruption in the temple was most profoundly about" (249). The true mother within his identity, the legitimate partner of Abba (Mary, mother of the Christ), was thereby elicited in the healing that was associated with Jesus' actions in the temple.

This is a complex book, one that draws many loose threads together and weaves an intricate psychological tapestry. It is a *tour de force* in studies of Jesus. Capps' writing ranges creatively beyond more conventional psychobiographical and psychohistorical studies of individuals and groups by drawing together so many interesting sources and facts (for example, the high correlation between being Jewish and having flat feet, and the use of the "evil eye" in Mediterranean cultures). For its careful presentation of methodological issues alone, the book commands the contemporary scholarly scene. The book represents a quantum leap ahead of similar psychological biographies of other religious leaders, for example, the studies of Luther and Gandhi by Erik Erikson. Capps has indeed put psychology as a cultural

hermeneutic "on the map" of biblical studies. He also provides a portrait of Jesus that mirrors the lives of many men today, who undergo "self loss" time and again in the face of some feminist social critics and politically correct ideologists who, perhaps, now frequent the temple of contemporary postmodern thought.

Richard A. Hutch
University of Queensland

Carole M. Cusack and Peter Oldmeadow, eds. *This Immense Panorama: Studies in Honour of Eric J. Sharpe,* Sydney: School of Studies in Religion, The University of Sydney, 1999. 341 pages.

Like most festschrifts, this one highlights the question out of which legends are made: "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is fairest of them all?" The answer in this case is Eric J. Sharpe, who since 1997 has been Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies from the University of Sydney. The material included in this wide-ranging exercise resulted from the "inspiration" (p. v) supplied by a "farewell Symposium" (p. viii) held on November 1, 1996 to celebrate the man's retirement as Professor of Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney earlier that year. Not only did the featured guest of the Symposium gaze into the mirror, mirror on the wall; also reflected in the process of legend-making were the other participants in the event (not all of whom contributed written work to the book). Mirrored mutual admiration can be risky business, especially when it pretends to be unified scholarship. However, the diverse nature of the contributions to the collection precludes misreading the results of this inspired occasion as anything other than a celebration of assorted talents.

For example, what appears in the many facets of this mirror-like book is an eightfold organisation: "Religion and Politics," "Medieval Europe," "Jesus," "Primal Traditions and Missiology," "Indology," "Literature and Film," "Methodology and Issues in Religion" and "Appendices." The collection makes room for most contributions, including "Eric J. Sharpe's Curriculum Vitae," which was originally published in another festschrift edited in 1996 by the peripatetic scholar, Arvind Sharma, and two quite amusing poems on the study of religion by the "seasoned methodologist" (p. 340), Eric J. Sharpe himself. The event of the Symposium smacked of a classy good time. Would that all of us could have been flies on the wall as "Eric J. Sharpe . . . gave a Reply, and David Rumsey of the Conservatorium of Music gave the final presentation on Bach and the Holy Trinity in the Great Hall of the University of Sydney . . .including a performance of the Prelude and Fugue in E Flat Major, from the *Clavierubung Pt III*, . . . followed by dinner in the University Club" (p. viii).

This book is one glimpse into the academic study of religion and religions in the Australian context. It has limited use as a text for teaching and research. The papers included in the categories listed above are the following respectively: "The Disappearance of the Political in Comparative Religion: An Essay in Honour of Eric Sharpe" (Ian Weeks), "Archbishop Gough and the Sydney Philosophers: Religion,

Religious Studies, and the University" (D.W. Dockrill); "Runestones and the Conversion of Sweden" (Henrik Williams), "The Applicability of the Horton Thesis of African Conversion to the Christian Conversion of Medieval Europe" (Carole M. Cusack), "Sacral Elements of Irish Kingship" (Daniel Bray); "Method in the Study of Early Christianity" (Robert Crotty), "Jesus was a Dreadlocks: Rastafarian Images of Divinity" (R. Matthew Charet), "A Paradox: Religious Studies and the Multiplicity of Jesus Christs" (Victor C. Hayes); "Ethnicity Missiology and Indigenous Theology" (Gary Trompf), "The Concept of Revelation and the Primal Religious Tradition" (Arvind Sharma), "The Story of the Universe: A Challenge to Missiologists" (Cyril Hally); "A Misconception about the Nature of Self in Hindu Philosophy: A Comparative Critique of Sankara's Strategy and Foundationalism" (Purushottama Bilimoria), "Gandhi and 'Lead, Kindly Light'" (W. Emilsen), "Buddhist Yogacara Philosophy and Ecology" (Peter Oldmeadow); "Religion as Discourse: David Malouf's *The Conversations at Curlow Creek*" (James Tulip), "The Hero of the West" (Mark Levon Byrne), "Recovering Meaning: *Little Dorrit* As Novel and Film" (C.A. Runcie); and "D.H. Lawrence as a Theorist of Religion" (Tony Swain), "Near-Death Experiences: A Significant New Inter-Religious Phenomenon" (James Wren-Lewis), "Feminism and the Deconstruction of God's Death" (Victoria Barker). All the papers provide a glimpse of a panorama of studies in religion scholarship in Sydney at the century's end.

A panorama this collection surely is, one among others in Australia that points towards what Eric J. Sharpe called an "immense panorama" of studies in religion (p. vii; also in his *Understanding Religion*, Duckworth, 1983, p. x). That wide scope delimits (or unlimits?) "the range of phenomena which might be classified as religious and therefore available for study by students of religion" (p. vii). Well polished is the mirror, mirror on the wall. Into its gaze one easily falls. We in the profession thank Eric J. Sharpe for his work amongst us. He has provided many students and colleagues with an impetus to fashion mirrors of admiration and good will into outward looking telescopes, ones with which to view clearly the "immense panorama" of religion. As the horizon of the panorama is stretched beyond the present and beyond the life of Eric J. Sharpe, our telescope again becomes a mirror, one that reflects both the past and future of humankind writ large. From such an angle of vision (this recast "mirror, mirror on the wall"), it is possible to envision new legends all our own. Commendations go to all those persons who contributed to putting together this book of studies in honour of Eric J. Sharpe.

Richard A. Hutch
The University of Queensland

Peter R. Hobson and John S. Edwards, *Religious Education in a Pluralist Society. The Key Philosophical Issues.* Woburn Press: London, Portland, 1999, pp. xvi-184, with Index. $54.50 (cloth) and $24.50 (paper)

The issue of multiculturalism and religious pluralism is once more high on the agenda in many Western countries. Recent politico-cultural events in Europe and in Australia involving discrimination and racism have ensured that. So, again the issue of religious education in a pluralist society is raised. This book is a local one that brings together interesting debate on religious education in a pluralist society. Peter Hobson is from the UNE and John Edwards is from the Catholic Education Office in Sydney.

In many ways the book brings back bitter-sweet memories of the 1970s and the attempts to bring religious education into the public school system, with the charge being led by South Australia. The overall scenario has not changed so much. Religious education is justified by Hobson and Edwards because it fits into and indeed serves a liberal education model with its criteria of critical rationality, personal transcendence and epistemological coherence. The conclusion reads:

> When we apply the liberal education criteria to religious education, the approach in which they are best realised is one involving an *open-ended exploration of world views or philosophies of life* rather than one aiming at *education for commitment* or at mere *education about religion.* (p.161)

While the book outlines the arguments for such an inclusion of religious education in liberal education well and fluently, it does not add to the debates of the 1970s. The above statement is almost verbatim what was stated in the aims of the 1970s South Australian RE syllabus for government schools. Yet, what was then said may need to be said again.

Common philosophical objections to the inclusion of religious education in a liberal education system (scepticism, exclusivism, relativism and reductionism are examined) are found to be surmountable. Likewise the case for pluralism as a valid cultural attitude towards religion is defended. The implication derived from this philosophical case for religious education is a specific approach to the task.

A major aim of a religious studies programme based on extended pluralism would be to get people to hold whatever beliefs they reach in a non-dogmatic and flexible way. It may be argued by some that such an approach precludes a genuine religious commitment because such a commitment is a total and absolute one and would lose its force if held in this more open-ended way. While this may be true of how most religious believers have held their religious beliefs in the past (particularly in mono-faith societies), it is not, we would hold, a *necessary* feature of religious beliefs. Logically, people can hold a firm commitment to their religion while at the same time acknowledging the fact that they *may* be mistaken and could conceivably change their minds in the future. (p.59)

At this point I would like to express some hesitation. I do not think that such a *volte face* by religious adherents is possible in the short term. Elsewhere, the authors insert the following reservation.

> *Education for commitment* (also known as education in faith) may have a place within a faith community which wishes to pass on its religious beliefs and doctrines to succeeding generations. However, we have argued that in the public school system in a liberal, pluralist, multicultural society, the more open-ended and educationally-oriented approach is preferable. (p.161)

Wouldn't this be confusing to the young adult? They might participate in a course where they open-mindedly admit they may be mistaken and might change their minds and then, perhaps in the same week, be engaged in a study of commitment to the one religious truth? I have elsewhere suggested an alternative approach and, while I come to somewhat the same conclusions, I would not put the matter in these terms.

I would not place the 'education for commitment' under sufferance. I think it is an essential and indeed complementary programme of religious education. There would be one programme in the academic, school setting aimed at religious literacy (not a cold 'education about religion' but a warm appreciation of the religious dimension of humans, where 'religion' has the broadest of definitions) and another outside of the formal school setting aimed at commitment. The latter might include as subjects not only the conventional religions but also other cultural systems that intend to give the human a purchase on ultimate meaning.

I think that the inclusion of non-conventional 'religions' (eg. Marxism, the Green Movement, Humanism) might go counter to what the authors have in mind. I am prompted by the sentiment of Professor Hull in his foreword to this book.

> ...in other countries of the former Soviet Union religious education has replaced the atheistic education sponsored by the Communist states. (p. ix)

I would interpret the change (presumably from teaching about some aspects of Marxism to teaching about one or more conventional religions) as a change from education in one form of ultimate commitment to education in another form of commitment. I do not have sufficient information about the programmes in these countries to be more specific, but I would see the move as understandable given the changed historico-cultural circumstances. The clientele would require a new syllabus. In short, I think that the book needs to look to a wider definition of 'religion'.

The text then engages with a number of programs from the USA, the UK and three syllabi from Queensland, NSW and Victoria. While generally praising the attempts 'to make religious education multi-faith and non-confessional' the authors state:

> However, in most existing programmes there is one aspect that requires further development. This is the need for more stress on the subject's role in assisting the pupils' own search for meaning and the associated requirement for more attention to issues of truth status, validity, and moral acceptability of the religious beliefs under examination, especially in the senior years of study. (p. 157-158)

This is really the hub of the question. But I do not think the above is workable without the complementary programme I mentioned above. Also, without being too parochial, I would have liked the authors to have examined the aforementioned situation in South Australia where, after all, so much earlier progress was made towards integrating a non-confessional religious education course into government school education. Granted the attempt in that state has lapsed, its history has important lessons.

Still on a parochial note, since the study has been achieved in Australia and, in its selection of exemplars, has a largely Australian focus I wonder why more has not been made of Australian authors (either to critique them, debate with them, report on them). What of Basil Moore and Norman Habel (*When Religion Goes to School)*, Terry Lovat (*What is this thing called Religious Education?)* and there should be more than passing reference to Graham Rossiter.

The book is well worth the read for religious educationists. It summarises the philosophical arguments well and would be a handy text for a tertiary RE course.

Robert Crotty
University of South Australia

Seth Kunin (ed.), *Themes and Issues in Judaism*, London and New York, Cassell, 2000; paperback; viii, 306 pages; ISBN 0-304-33758-7; RRP US$24.95

This volume contains essays by six scholars in the field of Judaism, four men and two women, all of whom are ordained to the rabbinate. The methodology employed is primarily anthropological, specifically transformative structuralism, and the volume approaches Judaism as both a cultural and a religious entity. Kunin's chapter on 'Sacred Place' employs concentric circle diagrams to illustrate how sacred space is organised from the most sacred, at the centre, to the least sacred at the periphery. In the Biblical model this progression moves from the Ark of the Covenant, the tent which houses it, the enclosure around the tent, to the camp of the Israelites, and finally to the world outside. Kunin then demonstrates how categories of people fit the different levels of sacred space, and discusses the important concept of liminality in the transformation of space from profane to sacred. The final section is a series of examples of sacred spaces within Judaism, including the synagogue and the home, and the person of the Rebbe within the Hasidic community.

Alan Unterman's 'Rites of Passage' suggests that that category is not really appropriate to Judaism. However, he discusses rituals found within the lifespan (for example: naming, circumcision, bar and bat mitzvah, marriage, death, burial and mourning). Sybil Sheridan's 'Myth and History' is a useful introduction to the centrality of history for Jewish self-understanding. However, she also clarifies the interplay of myth within that historical understanding, considering the Genesis creation accounts and their Ancient Near Eastern analogues and sources. The remainder of the chapter is a brief rundown of central events in the Hebrew scriptures, with a note

on eschatological thinking.

Many of the chapters are interrelated, and Unterman's 'Sacred Writings' follows naturally on from Sheridan on history. He clearly explains the relationship between the written teachings and the oral teachings, and the way in which the written Torah (law) exists within the oral Torah. The status of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds is discussed, as is the role of the *yeshiva* (academy) in transmitting Talmudic scholarship. Jewish philosophy, and in particular the seminal contribution of Moses Maimonides (1136-1204), and Jewish Kabbalistic mysticism, are sketched at the close of the chapter.

Chapters by the other three scholars include Norman Solomon's 'Picturing God', the title of which is an interesting play on the ban against visual representations of the deity within Judaism. He considers how God is pictured in words, then comments on the visual arts and Judaism. Maimonides, mysictism and the Kabbalah are also analysed in this chapter, from a rather different perspective than that offered by Unterman. Solomon concludes with a discussion of liturgy, feminism and Judaism, and holocaust and post-holocaust theologies. The remaining chapters are Sheridan on 'Human nature and destiny', Alexandra Wright's 'Women in Judaism', Solomon's 'Attitudes to nature', Dan Cohn- Sherbrook's 'Worship', and Solomon's 'Making moral decisions'.

As can be seen from these chapter overviews, *Themes and Issues in Judaism* is very broad in scope. This could give rise to the criticism that no subject is examined in sufficient depth. However, the book is a very valuable resource for students (school and university undergraduate) and for teachers in general Studies in Religion programmes because it is very clearly written, the information contained has a high degree of accuracy, and the volume is accessibly organised by theme, with informative sub-headings and further reading lists throughout. For these reasons it is highly recommended.

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

Peter Malone (ed), 1999, *Developing an Australian Theology,*
St Paul's Publications. ISBN 1 876295 13 9 pb 287pps.

No one volume, let alone this miscellany of articles, is likely to provide a coherent and comprehensive articulation of "an Australian (Christian) theology". The aim of developing an Australian Theology is more modest than this: a contribution to the process of Australians doing theology as Australians. This aim is certainly worth affirming and the book contains some excellent individual pieces; yet, the total project is less than convincing.

Before enumerating my criticisms, I should declare my interests: professionally, I am an ethicist having worked in a secular university for nearly two decades; originally, I was theologically trained as a Protestant in the turbulent sixties. I now practise my

faith within a progressive Catholic community and have the conviction, informed by some scholarship, that a contemporary, authentic spirituality must be centred in ecotheology. I approach the review of this text looking for discussions that speak to inwardly reflective, socially concerned (probably unchurched) Australians. That quest is undoubtedly coloured by concurrently reading two other stimulating books, at least indirectly relevant to the task of developing an Australian theology: the Australian social researcher Hugh Mackay's *Turning Point(1999),* and radical Episcopalian Bishop John Shelby Spong's *Why Christianity must change or die* (1999).

My first disappointment was that, with the important exception of a few gems, the contributions were for ecclesiastically formed Australians particularly within the Roman Catholic tradition. Admittedly, some are significant contributions like Maureen Cleary's instructive analysis of various new models of governance in Catholic social ministries and the challenging reflections in Tony Kelly's critique of theology in service of the Australian church.

In addition, if we are talking about systematic theology, there is not much theology in Developing an Australian Theology though there is obviously a recurring and welcome affirmation of doing theology contextually. Pat Mullins' feminist theological view provides a convincing and substantial exposition while other contributions (from Charles Sherlock, Andrew Hamilton and Michael Whelan for instance) are sociological surveys rather than constructive theology papers.

One further disappointment: despite the back cover styling the book as an "ecumenical theology", presumably because it contains Mary Williams' essay on ecumenism and two of the fifteen contributors are non-Catholics, it is ecumenically deficient. The material to give this volume ecumenical credentials could have easily been found. Ecumenical initiatives in theological education, widespread as they are in Australia, present a likely topic, as would a review of attempts to do theology in Australia's only indigenous Christian denomination, the Uniting Church. But the disappointment on this score was more profound. Though there are intimations of the need to explore theologically beyond Christianity from a few of the authors (and I do not refer to the openness to Aboriginal spirituality which is in many chapters), I looked in vain for discussions of "deep ecumenism", the dialogue with Buddhism, Islam and other faiths which is important to increasing numbers of Australians.

Developing an Australian Theology is introduced by the editor, Peter Malone, and its fourteen chapters are grouped in five sections: "The Australian Experience", "Communicating Theology", "Perspectives", "Issues", and "Directions". Malone notes a significant difference between this collection and the earlier Discovering an Australian Theology which he co-ordinated. Whereas only three women contributed to the previous work, there are eight in this volume. Among them is Marie Louise Uhr's cogent plea for changing images of the church from " traditional asymmetric gender imagery". She writes a chapter which is wonderful testimony to the capacity of Australian female theologians to critique male dominance in ecclesiastical structures.

The need for Australian theologies to embrace Aboriginal spirituality and a connection with the land is a major theme linking most of the presentations. A graphic cover photo of Ayers rock enshrouds the text to emphasise the point. Elizabeth Pike's opening chapter and Eugene Stockton's piece in the closing section bracket the book's contents with this emphasis integral to Australia's sacred story. A dialogue of sacred stories is central to the theological methodology advanced by Father Stockton, the self-confessed bush theologian. These stories, he concludes, coming from races from all parts of Earth constitute "a rich human experience" which calls for "prophet-theologians to interpret this experience as an experience of God".

In my estimate the two rich gems within this book are by Wendy Chew and Elizabeth Hepburn, the latter a feminist treatise on ethical discernment and the former a powerful Australian statement of eco-spirituality. They certainly give full return to the reader's investment.

Liz Hepburn's outstanding essay on the feminist ethic of care and health care ethics is a thoughtful contribution to applied and professional ethics in Australia and internationally. I will enthusiastically commend it to all my students. Her paper does not have to be understood as a contribution to moral theology to receive its impact, though the author's theological commitment to ethics is evident. She aligns her contextual and virtues oriented approach within bioethics to Thomas Aquinas. It is, ironically, an approach which is implicitly, and radically, subversive of much recent Vatican moral theology.

Even more challenging to a rewrite of orthodox Christian theology is Wendy Chew's wonderful song to ecospirituality. Her appeal goes well beyond an audience inducted into ecclesiasticism and systematic theology . No doubt other contributors in the book would want to say "amen" to the centrality of ecojustice in her practical theology, though it was a little disconcerting to read the following chapter by Sandie Cornish which gave a good account of the rationale for Catholic social doctrine and then identified an agenda for the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council which omitted action to sustain Earth's environment.

Although also invoking Aquinas, Wendy Chew's real mentor is cultural historian and self-styled 'geologian', Thomas Berry. She takes Berry's principles of the universe (differentiation, interiority and communion) and applies them to eco-Australia. She is careful to claim that reframing theology through contemporary understandings of the universe opens a way in which "all the biblical truths can be understood with a new depth of meaning". There is considerable continuity between Chew's work and the final chapter by Frank Fletcher which laments that "we moderns or post-moderns have to learn to live again with myth, primal imagination" which "sustains a consciousness that the cosmos is sacramental and that there is no separation between the material and the spiritual".

All of which brings me back to Bishop Spong and Hugh Mackay. Spong is arguing convincingly for an intellectually honest Christianity without theism which embraces a pan-en-theistic approach (though he doesn't actually use the word)

incorporating immanence and transcendence. This is where Wendy Chew and Frank Fletcher at least among the authors in this book are taking us. At the same time, Hugh Mackay discerns persuasively an increasing interest in "spirituality" among Australians alongside great theological diversity and moral pluralism. A certain conclusion is suggested: a credible Australian theology will take us beyond theism and ethical absolutism, and will be grounded in the sanctity of the cosmos. And all that may be problematic for Australian churches.

In any case I move that Wendy Chew has the last word:

> We who know ourselves as the Australian church, need to listen to the Earth, our wisest teacher. We need to discover the Earth within the depths of our own being. Otherwise, any theology we come up with, no matter how elegant, will be an empty shell, in which our own hollow voices echo around and bounce off each other. On the other hand, if we take up the sublime story of the universe, if we give voice to all the voiceless ones in the natural world – air, soil and water included – if we speak for the unborn young, for the future generations of all species whose birthright our generation is so casually selling off, then the Church could become a powerful force in bringing about the healing of a distraught Earth.(p.206)

Noel Preston
Griffith University

Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980.* David Lovell Publishing.

Despite the fact that it is largely concerned with the development of a bureaucracy --its financing, formation and growth -- Anne O'Brien's book, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980* (David Lovell Publishing) is anything but dry. It tells a fascinating story of how a struggling and diverse collection of schools, (Catholic parish primary and secondary schools, and secondary schools owned by religious orders with varying degrees of independence within the Archdiocese), became a collective identity under the leadership of a Catholic Education Office. Under this leadership they were moulded into something approaching a system. On their behalf this leadership undertook the negotiations that have meant that today Catholic Schools in Victoria receive approximately eighty percent of their funding from governments at federal and state levels. *Blazing a Trail* tells the story of the rise of the Catholic Education Office of Victoria, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and the National Catholic Education Commission.

As in other Australian states, the Catholic bishops of Victoria had responded to the Education Act of 1872 with determination to keep their own schools. In the face of withdrawal of all government funding for Church schools, they sponsored male and female religious orders, mostly from Ireland but also from Europe, to run existing

schools and ultimately to develop a system of Catholic schools in Victoria. The heroic efforts of these men and women, often in situations of isolation, poverty and extraordinarily difficult educational circumstances, are known to anyone who has been involved in Catholic education in Australia. By the time of the death of Archbishop Mannix in 1963, the collection of schools administered by these orders was facing a crisis. The post war baby boom and the huge European migration to Australia after the Second World War had brought heavy burdens to this collection of schools whose staff (mostly religious) were often undertrained and diminishing in numbers, and where resources were scarce or non-existent. In the background was a Church changing drastically as a result of the Second Vatican Council and the theological developments that were beginning to emerge from its deliberations. By 1963 the Catholic education system in Victoria was collapsing. In the absence of government funding its survival was impossible.

The first trickling of financial aid into Catholic schools came from the Menzies Federal government in the form of recurrent grants for specific purposes such as science blocks and libraries. The split within the Australian Labor Party which had occurred in 1955, leading to the formation of the Democratic Labour Party and the National Civic Council, had caused deep sectarian bitterness in Australian politics, and ultimately kept Labor out of power in Australia for seventeen years. Victoria was the base for the Democratic Labor Party, and here particularly it became apparent that Government aid to Catholic schools was not only a clear necessity if these schools were not to close, but also something of a political flag. Both federally and at state level, the Liberal Party benefited from DLP preferences, and the early promise of government aid to Catholic schools that had come from the Labor party in the early 1950s was not able to be honoured by a Labor Prime Minister until the election of Whitlam in 1972.

Anne O'Brien tells her story in detail and through the eyes of an insider. Throughout most of the events detailed in the book she was executive officer to Fr Frank Martin, Director of the Catholic Education Office of Victoria, and executive secretary of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. Her use of archival material gives credibility to her account, and she draws on interviews that she has conducted with thirty-eight of the men and women who witnessed the events she describes or were closely involved in them. Her story unfolds first through the tumultuous years between 1963 and 1968 when the Church set about the task of renewal called for by the Council. This period saw the failure of early structures such as the Catholic Education Advisory Council. We are accustomed now to the ease with which clergy, religious and laity work together in Catholic education, but the turmoil of this time was coloured by a suspicion of laity and professional expertise on the part of the bishops, and ultimately, therefore, by the failure of some early initiatives.

The late sixties and early seventies saw a crisis in religious education, particularly during the time of the directorship of Father Crudden whose short time as director of

the Catholic Education Office was marked by debate about the theory and practice of "catechetics" in the years following Vatican II. This era, however, also saw the growing professionalisation of the Catholic Education Office, and the beginning of the directorship of Fr Frank Martin, who was ultimately to be the shaper and leader of the new Catholic education system in Victoria. The developments, the politics, the intrigues, the management that marked the following years, as government funding was gradually returned to independent schools, is told in detail and with the voice of an insider. The hero of the story is Fr Martin, who emerges as a visionary who has the political and negotiation skills to bring about the vision and to share it with others. He was the first director of the Catholic Education Office of Victoria and a representative of the Catholic system on the Schools Commission. The details of the controversies and negotiations leading up to the granting of block funding to Catholic schools, the role of political negotiation and interference in this and the ultimate impetus it gave for the development of the now highly effective Catholic Education Office is Anne O'Brien's story, and it is told with accuracy, despite the many complex political and territorial differences of the players.

The presence of a Catholic school system in Victoria today, of the size, scope and influence to make it capable of challenging governments and demanding a place in educational debate in Australia, is testimony to the achievements of these years and to its leaders. There is not the scope in this review to detail all of the significant events and factors in the growth of this period, for they are many and complex. However, the person who reads this book for interest and leisure as well as the student or historian who approaches it for information, will find a well-told story that is also meticulously documented. Anyone who is interested in the history of Catholic education in Victoria in this most formative period will find this book indispensable.

Some cautions are appropriate. Anne O'Brien has set out to give a history of the rise of a system and the bureaucracy that administers it, so there is little in the book of theological reflection on the nature of the Catholic school, and indeed this was clearly not her intention. There is no reflection at all on why it was so important that this system of Catholic education be maintained and strengthened, although this is implied in the passion with which the characters set about their work. Those looking for philosophical and theological treatments of the nature of Catholic education will need to go elsewhere. The treatment of religious education is sparse and what is there is disappointing. Throughout the book religious education is treated as synonymous with "catechetics". Even during the period of which the book is written, the assumption that what was going on in classroom religious education was catechetics could not be made. The experiential approach to religious education that is enshrined in the Catholic Education Office's *Guidelines for Religious Education* is treated as normative. There is no hint or acknowledgment that there may be other theories of religious education or any understanding that theory in religious education has moved on since 1980. There is no cognisance of other curriculum approaches in religious education, despite the fact that various theoretical models are proposed around Australia in various

Archdiocesan Guidelines. In Anne O'Brien's view, no worthwhile developments in the theory and practice of religious education have taken place since 1980. Current trends towards a more educational and accountable practice in religious education represent for her a return to the "conservatism" of the pre-Vatican II era, rather than the result of developments in theory and reflection on this theory in the light of practice. Those who have worked assiduously in the field of religious education theory in Victoria during the last twenty years will find this blinkered approach hard to take, but will no doubt remind themselves that after all this is not a book about religious education theory and practice.

While I acknowledge these limitations, imposed as they are by its intention, I do recommend this book to those whose interest and scholarship lies in the history of Catholic education in Victoria.

Kath Engebretson.
Australian Catholic University. St. Patrick's Campus