

# Newslink

## State Notes

### From Western Australia

The Department of Religious Studies at WACAE is the official host for this year's annual AASR Conference in Perth, and so it is appropriate to provide details of our relatively new and developing programme.

The Western Australian College of Advanced Education is one of Australia's larger multi-campus tertiary institutions with around 13,000 students. The 1980's have been a period of growth, amalgamations, and preparation for the future. The College hopes soon to be redesignated as the University of Perth.

The Department of Religious Studies is part of the School of Community and Language Studies, and is at present based on the historic Claremont campus. However, we expect soon to move to Mount Lawley campus in north Perth. While the Department still retains its original and important role within the teacher education programme, and provides for other specifically vocational needs, its new mainstream course in the study of religion is the BA Major, available both for local and external students.

A BA Major in Religious Studies requires twelve from the following units (minors and other patterns are also available):

- Year 1 :
- The Human Search for Meaning
  - Religious Development
  - Interpretation of Sacred Texts
  - Foundations of Christian Belief

- Year 2 :
- The Buddhist Tradition
  - Contemporary Religious Movements
  - Myth, Ritual and Culture
  - Methods in the Study of Religion
  - Judaism

- Year 3 :
- The Islamic World
  - Religion, Society and Politics
  - Research Project
  - The Hindu Tradition
  - Women in Religious Traditions
  - Religion and Children's Literature

An Honours year is also offered.

At postgraduate level the Department runs a stream in the Master of Education, and a number of theses are already underway. However, the exciting news is that we expect to launch a two-year MA in Religious Studies, by both coursework and thesis, from 1990.

The proposed core units are as follows:

- Religious Experience
- Contemporary Religious Thought
- Advanced Study in Christian and/or Buddhist Thought.

It is intended to offer more options when the programme is established and demand can be determined.

In many ways this year's annual conference in Perth is an opportunity to celebrate the Department's growth to maturity, and to mark its emergence on the national scene. While we are ably aided

and abetted by a number of part-time and sessional staff, the Department now has four permanent specialists:

*Dr Cynthia Dixon:* Cynthia is a trained clinical psychologist and teacher. Her research interests focus on the nature of religious development, pastoral care and the role of women in religious traditions. Despite onerous duties as Head of Department, she recently completed her doctorate from Murdoch University.

*Dr Iain Gardner:* Iain came to Western Australia from the University of Kent at Canterbury where he lectured in Hellenistic and early Christian religion and philosophy. His research interests are in Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and the nature of esoteric traditions in western religion. The Australian National Library has recently published his *Coptic Theological Papyri II*

*Dr Noel Kentish:* Noel is a trained teacher and a minister of the Uniting Church. A graduate of the University of Queensland, he came to WA after doctoral studies at Columbia University. His research interests are in the fields of literature, philosophy and education.

*Dr Martin Wiltshire:* Martin graduated from, and subsequently taught at the University of Lancaster. Prior to coming to Australia he was Head of Religious Studies at Liverpool Polytechnic. He is co-ordinator of the new Bachelor of Arts and contributes in the areas of Indian religions and Methodology. His book *Ascetic Figures Before and in Early Buddhism* is shortly to be published by Mouton.

We look forward to meeting you in Perth this September.

— Iain Gardner  
WACAE

## From the University of Queensland

Professor Francis I. Andersen, the inaugural professor of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, will retire from this position on August 31, 1989. However, Frank will not retire from active teaching and research. Frank and his wife Lois have accepted a joint teaching position at New College in Berkeley, California. Frank continues to have many research projects in progress. In California he will be in close contact with Dean Forbes and Noel Freedman — two colleagues with whom he has worked closely on recent publications. It was during Frank's tenure that the Department developed a solid record of research and post-graduate teaching. All of us will miss Frank's presence and will find it odd when we come to the office on Saturdays and Sunday or in the late evening and early morning not to find Frank at his desk or in front of his computer screen. We wish Frank and Lois much enjoyment and professional fulfillment in their new appointment.

The Department has moved offices from the Hartley-Teakle building to the Forgan-Smith building, the original building on the St Lucia site. We are pleased with the move. Now located on the "Great Court" at the centre of campus, we are neighbors with other Humanities departments. Staff offices are considerably larger and the parquet floors and cathedral ceilings provide "a touch of class" missing in the orange linoleum floors and asbestos ceilings of our former abode.

The post-graduate programme continues to flourish. In 1988 five Ph.D. theses were submitted and subsequently accepted for the degree:

J. Yates, "The Eternal Life': On the Nature and Necessity of the Timelessness of God"

M. Davidson "Angels at Qumran: A Comparative Study of 1 Enoch 1-36, 72-108

and Sectarian Writings"

P. Bishop "An Archeology of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing, and the Creation of Sacred Space"

P. Harrison " 'Religion' and Religions in British Thought: Lord Herbert to Hume"

G. Jenks "The Origins and Development of the Antichrist Myth"

We are pleased to say that all of these new PhDs have found lecturing positions in theological colleges, colleges of advanced education, and universities. Peter Harrison, who will take up a new position as Assistant Professor at the new Bond University on the Gold Coast, has had his dissertation accepted for publication by Cambridge University Press. There are currently 16 Ph.D. students formally enrolled and three students who will enrol either this year or early in the next. In addition there are three M.A. and 16 M. Litt. Stud. students.

A new M.A. (Studies in Theology) degree will be offered from the beginning in 1990. This degree will consist of 140 credit points of course work and a 40 credit points (25,000-30,000 word) thesis. The course can be completed full-time in two years or part-time in four years. The new M.A. is designed to cater for those in the Queensland community with theological interests. It will have a two-fold purpose:

- a. to provide a structured context in which theological professionals and others can deepen their understanding of contemporary trends in modern theological and religious thought;
- b. to provide, from the wider resources of the University as a whole, a context in which candidates for the degree may broaden their understanding of contemporary Australian society, and the role of religion in the modern world.

The subjects to be offered in this new course are:

Religion in the Greco-Roman Empire  
New Testament Theologies

Reading the Bible as Literature  
Feminist Approaches to the Bible  
Incarnation in Modern Christian Thought

The Christian Tradition in U.S.A. and Australia

Christianity and Contemporary Moral Issues

Death and Religion

Ethics and the Professions

The Divine and the World's Religions

Mysticism in Religion

Religion in Education

New Religious Movements

Religion in China

Religion and Personal Transformation

Religion and Mass Communication

Thesis

The Department is also currently making plans to introduce an M.A. (Studies in Religion) course work degree beginning in 1991. This degree will be designed to meet the needs of teachers in the public schools. The study of religion recently was accepted officially as a board subject for the secondary school and in 1991 religion is listed as a priority area by the Education Department. Anyone interested in pursuing post-graduate studies in the department of Studies in Religion should contact Dr Edgar W. Conrad, Director of Post-Graduate Studies, Department of Studies in Religion, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Qld 4067.

Currently the undergraduate offerings are being revised, and in 1990 eight new subjects will be offered.

Death and Dying

Meaning and Values in Public and Professional Life

Mysticism in the World's Religions

Japanese Religion

Religion and the Therapies

Religions in the Greco-Roman World

The Bible and Literacy Theory

Faculty staff continue to be actively engaged in research. In fact, in the last number of years the department has been the most productive research department

(relative to its size) within the Humanities at the University of Queensland. Dr Hutch's research continues on assorted topics, the chief of which is methodology in biographical studies. He is also involved in a research project concerned with the 'Movement for the Ordination of Women'. Dr Ian Gillman and Professor Hans-Joachim Klimkeit of Bonn University are working jointly on a book, *Christians in Asia before da Gama*. Dr Conrad, who recently returned from a Study Leave in the U.S.A. has completed a manuscript titled *Reading the Book of Isaiah*. Dr Bucknell is carrying out research in the area of Buddhist Meditation and the Study of Mystical Experience and is preparing a *Chinese-English Dictionary of Polyphonic Characters* for publication. Dr Lattke returned from a Study Leave in Augsburg, West Germany after attending a number of International Conferences. He is currently preparing a monograph on hymnology from Homer to Isadore. Dr Almond, Head of the Department, has just been appointed to another five year term in that position. His current research project is "A History of Hell in Enlightenment England." Dr Reat is readying a book on world theology for publication by Cambridge University Press and is currently working on projects on the history of Buddhism in South East Asia and on Indian Psychology.

— Edgar W. Conrad  
University of Queensland

## From the University of Sydney

### Visiting Chinese scholar to the Department of Religious Studies

Sun Shanling, who lectures in Religious Studies at the Southwest Institute for Nationalities, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China, has been sent by her country to Australia to do research for one year (Aug.

1989-Aug. 1990). She is a visiting scholar with the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney.

She studied in the Department of Religious Studies at the Graduate school of the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences from 1978-1981 and majored in Christianity, with special emphasis on China's Mission History.

She was awarded her M.A. degree in 1982. Her dissertation, "Two Ways of Missionary work in China (1860-1900)" is a comparative study of different methods the missionaries used and the various influences they had on China.

Since graduating, she has lectured in Religious Studies, giving lectures on "An Introduction to Christianity". Her Institute offers an M.A. degree programme in Religious Studies with particular emphasis on the religions of the minority nationalities in southwest China, such as: Yi, Qiang, Miao and Tibetan peoples.

Co-operating with her husband, an associate professor of the English language in the same institute, Ms. Sun has worked on some translations from English into Chinese in recent years. The books they translated are: *A History of the Christian Church* by Williston Walker; *Theology and Metaphysics* by James Richmond, and others.

In China at present an increasing number of young people want to know more about Christianity. This has occurred since the country began its "open-door" policy.

Having been born into the Chinese culture and having majored in Christianity, Sun Shanling's continuing interest is in the comparative study of the religions of China and the West. She is at present researching some aspects of this subject under the guidance of members of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney.

— Sun Shanling  
University of Sydney

## Notes from New Zealand

A new course will be offered at the University of Canterbury in 1990. It is entitled *Religion Society and Power* and will look at four issues: religion and ideology, religion and nationalism, religion and women, and religion, land and ecology.

Victoria University is offering a new course in Women in Religion. See the *Courses and Curriculum* section in this issue for details. The University of Otago is also offering a new course in Women and Religion at second year level. It will cover four major religions — Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam.

### Staff movements

Massey's vacant lectureship has been filled by *Dr Bronwyn Elsmore*, who commenced her duties on campus in mid-April. Bronwyn shared her years in religious studies between Massey (BA and MPhil), and Victoria [BA(Hons) and PhD] and has also taught extension courses for Waikato, as well as undertaking a good deal of free-lance writing. A special empathy with extramural students is one of the many strengths she will be contributing to the Massey team.

*Diane Proudfoot* who has been appointed to a lectureship in Philosophy at the University of Canterbury, will be arriving in NZ shortly. Her teaching responsibilities will include the philosophy of religion. At the end of August, *William Sax* will arrive to take up a lectureship in Religious Studies at Canterbury. He took a BA degree at the University of Washington, followed by an MA and PhD from the University of Chicago. Currently Dr Sax is a post-doctoral fellow at Harvard. Trained as a cultural anthropologist, he has had considerable field experience in India and has a wide range of language skills.

The new position established at the University of Otago, a third lectureship with emphasis on Islam and Judaism, has now been filled with the appointment of *Douglas Campbell*. Originally a student at Otago who majored in Political Studies, including Religious Studies, he was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship for graduate study, now nearing completion in the field of Religious Studies at the University of Toronto. He will be returning to New Zealand in late August and will be able to attend the Religious Studies Conference at Hamilton before moving down to Dunedin.

Some readers of the ARS REVIEW will know of Albert Moore's illness. He hopes to return to academic duties about the end of June and we wish him as speedy and complete recovery as possible.

### New Materials and Resources

The University of Canterbury has acquired the IASWR microfiche edition of the Derge edition of the Tibetan *Kanjur* (1730 fiches in all) and a microfiche edition of the *Cone Tanjur* (2226 fiches) is on order and should arrive soon. Canterbury's holdings in the area of Tibetan religion have been significantly increased in recent years.

Bill Shepard (Canterbury) has gathered a very good collection of videotapes on aspects of Islam, and Lynne Alice (Canterbury) has prepared a study guide for a series of 10 seminar sessions on recent feminist methodology in the study of religion. The study guide has been developed as a result of Lynne's thesis preparation. Contact her for a copy if you are interested.

### Recently completed theses

Scott Bigelow. . . 'Dark Grace: A Lunar Pilgrimage' — illustrates and explores the link between 'madness' and religious experience.

Andrew Plant. . . 'Ushas: The Life and Death of a Goddess' addresses itself to the riddle of the disappearance of the goddess Ushas (Dawn), the most important female deity of the Rgveda, but in post-Vedic times a virtual nonentity in the Hindu pantheon.

Toni Huber. . . 'A Pilgrimage to La-phyi: a Study of Sacred and Historical Geography in South-Western Tibet' — this thesis draws on fieldwork in the Himalayas and the author's translations from the Tibetan.

### Recent Publications

Colin Brown — 'Church, Culture and Identity; the New Zealand Experience' in

*Culture and Identity in New Zealand*. edited by David Novitz and Bill Willmott, Wellington: GP Books, 1989.

Jane Simpson — 'Women and Asceticism in the fourth century: a question of interpretation'. *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 15, no 1, June 1988.

Bronwyn Elsmore — *Mana From Heaven: a Century of Maori Prophets in New Zealand* (recently launched in Wellington).

### New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions Conference

This conference was held at the University of Waikato, 21-25 August. ARS REVIEW readers should have a report from this conference in the next issue.

— Excerpts from the latest issue of *The Yana*, (Editor, Colin Brown, University of Canterbury, Christchurch 1, New Zealand)

## Charles Strong Trust Lectures — 1989

Our international Charles Strong Trust Lecturer for 1989 was Dr Martin Marty, Professor of the History of Modern Christianity at the University of Chicago. He is the author of more than 40 books and well known as senior editor of the *Christian Century* for many years. He is currently working on a 5-year study of world Fundamentalism as a project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He toured several cities of Australia in June-July under the auspices of the Trust and the Fulbright Foundation. His topics were: "The Rise of Fundamentalism" and "What do Fundamentalists Fear?" His written paper for circulation as a Trust Lecture to members will be forthcoming later this year or early next year. It is entitled "Fundamentalisms Compared."

The Strong Trust Lecturers at the AASR Conference in Perth will be Dr Rod

Bucknell and Dr Patricia Sherwood. Dr Sherwood is the Junior Scholar; she has been lecturing at WACAE and the Bunbury Institute of Advanced Education. Her background is in Anthropology, Education and Women's Studies. Her topic will be on New Religious Movements in WA.

Dr Rod Bucknell is a lecturer at the University of Queensland in Religion Studies and Chinese languages. From 1966-73 he lived and conducted field research in India and Thailand into Buddhism and meditative practices. He is the author of numerous articles and a major book on Buddhism. His topic for the Trust Lecture will be Buddhist Mysticism.

— Norman Habel  
Chairman Strong Trust

## Martin Marty in Adelaide: June 1989

As the visit of the overseas Charles Strong lecturer for this year did not include Perth, I decided to cross the Nullarbor to my hometown Adelaide to hear that celebrated scholar, theologian, historian and journalist, Professor Martin E. Marty from the University of Chicago. I am so pleased that I did.

Marty was welcomed at an informal lunch at the Underdale campus of the South Australian College of Advanced Education. There he spoke about his five year research project on fundamentalism, but was also interested to learn about the teaching of Religious Studies and also about fundamentalist schools in the Australian community.

The Charles Strong Lecture, *Fundamentalism in the World Today*, was given at the City campus of SACAE to a packed audience. With a three million dollar grant from the Academy of Sciences in the U.S., Martin Marty is directing research in thirteen types of fundamentalism, only three of these being Christian. Other forms are found in Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Confucian religious traditions, and also in Science.

Marty contrasted the moderate 1950s with their global world view, inclusive symbolism of the World Council of Churches, dreams of enlightenment, empathy and good will, with the 1980s. The dreams of the earlier age had not materialised. Instead, religious absolutism with hard edges had developed, interests had become divergent and protective ingathering separated people. Marty's approach, taken from Spinoza, is neither to laugh nor cry, but to try to understand. Although fundamentalists resist study or comparison, Marty sees their importance to be so great that they must be described.

All types of fundamentalism are different, but Marty proposes a helpful

hypothesis regarding the rise of fundamentalist movements:

1. A prior condition of conservatism must exist: people living undisturbed within their culture, finding their identity in group bonding and sharing their world view.

2. A perceived threat is felt through television, missionary activity or modernization. Through education and communication, these influences pose a threat to the group's original world view through pressure of change.

3. Fear of those who adapt within the group. Modernists become the enemy and practices and policies with which the group does not agree are purged.

4. Selective retrieval is used to ward off modernity. Pressure groups form, and distance themselves from others: in Christianity, issues such as the virgin birth and inerrancy of the Bible, and in Islam, the interpretation of Islamic law, become very important to the identity of the group.

5. Policy changes may be introduced, and support groups form around loci of political power within the group.

In the West, Marty sees fundamentalists as anti-modern. Religion, an impassioned aspect of life, is not likely to die out but to strengthen. Marty concluded cheerfully, pointing out the advantages of fundamentalist thinking, as traditional values are protected and people are challenged to have another look at their beliefs and commitment. In his friendly and exuberant way, Marty assured his audience that we do not know enough of the future to be pessimistic!

At the Lutheran Seminary in Adelaide, Marty spoke of trends in theology in America, where the last thirty years have seen a de Europeanisation of thinking and enterprise. The 'east-west' exchange needed to be complemented by a 'north-south' axis to include new theological

developments, such as liberation and post-modern theologies, evangelism and the emergence of new giants of Christian perspective like Mother Teresa.

In a time of community despair, Marty perceives the need to take advantage of the growth of Religious Studies Departments in Universities and stress specialist theological studies and interpretation of texts. Hermeneutics, he believes, invokes not only the world behind the texts, but includes also the world in front of them, unsettling though this may be, e.g. in the interpretation of the New Testament parables for today.

With wit and good humour, Marty responded to students' questions. When encouraged, he delighted everyone with the story of his invention years ago of a remarkable fictitious theologian, whose

exploits are still preserved in folklore and who is still commemorated with awards in his name.

Finally, at St Stephen's Lutheran Church, Marty preached a sermon on Paul's admonition to 'put on Christ', linking this with the Christian born-again experience and daily commitment to Christ, regardless of the cost.

As the words of Marty linger on through extensive media coverage, we remember him and Harriet, his wife, for the understanding and inspiration their visit brought. Thank you, Norman Habel and the Charles Strong Trust for arranging this historic event.

— Enid Adam  
Perth

## Conference Report

### Building understanding and respect between people of diverse religions and beliefs

(Second international conference on the implementation of the 1981 U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Warsaw, Poland, May 1989).

Homer Jack, former head of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, first set me on the trail of discovery to the NGO activists who lobbied for the passing of the 1981 U.N. Declaration. They celebrated it with an interfaith service where they read the Declaration's articles like a liturgy, and rang the U.N. Peace Bell.

The international conferences which have been held in Minnesota (1986), Warsaw (1989) and will be held in Pune, India (1991) are steps in the next wave of action by NGOs, educational and government institutions to implement the Declaration. Hopefully, the projects that are developed in law, education, arts and

development will lead to its greater status in customary law, building on the extraordinary consensus with which the Declaration was passed after twenty years of patient labour, in 1981.

May 1989 was an exciting time to be in Poland. In Krakow's Wawel Castle, there is a remarkable ceiling. From its coffered squares, carved and painted heads of Polish men and women lean out to watch their king doing business with foreign envoys below. They watched the man who watched the interests of the Polish people. Among them can be distinguished religious and ethnic minorities; the gypsy, the Jew, the Muslim. Safely, symbolically,

confined to the ceiling.

Poles have come down from the ceiling. Solidarity-backed candidates have been voted into the Senate and communist candidates ruled out of the lower house. The elections followed the passing of laws resolving the relationship between church and state.

The person I was invited to introduce in the Conference was the lead of the lay Catholic movement in Poland, Andrzej Stelmachowski, whose subject was a Catholic perspective on the Declaration. Not only has he been elected to the Senate as a member of Solidarity's civic committee, but he now acts as Speaker in the Senate. He went between the Catholic Church and Polish Government to develop the laws which restored the Catholic Church's former status and privileges, and he mediated at the Round Table discussions which led to the legalising of Solidarity.

An adept peace-maker, he poured oil on troubled waters in the conference discussion group I led. When our search for strategies to implement the Declaration bogged down in argument, and a stubborn Marxist glared at a young woman angrily pleading for us to share the inner light of peace, Stelmachowski deftly moved us away from conflict. We had a minute's silence before arguing fiercely once again, this time to some effect. Our major recommendation to the conference was for the World Federation of United Nations Associations to support the formation of local alliances to implement the

Declaration by speaking out on specific human rights violations, assisting in resolving problems in community relations for new minority groups, and helping minor groups establish their places of religious observance.

Majority-minority relationships were much on the mind of eastern European conference participants. Stelmachowski said that the majority had a duty to provide a framework within which minorities could practise their own ways of life. But the religious minorities in eastern bloc countries are cautious about the latest developments which have resulted in better relationships between the majority Catholic Church in Hungary and Poland and the governments in those countries. Minorities have to use the majority church as a broker if the state abolishes its ministry of religious affairs. This has already happened in Hungary and may happen too in the Soviet Union and Poland. Minorities have preferred strict separation of church and state because they get direct access to the state.

In Poland, a compensating factor to the renewed status of the Catholic Church must be the new law which is intended to protect freedom of religion or belief. It is drafted in the generous terms of the Declaration (the first such in the world) and seems to me to have as good a chance of working in today's Poland as any.

— Juliet Sheen,  
Special Projects Officer  
N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Board

## Conferences Residue from Lancaster and Leicester

Two conferences in two weeks and what remains? Memories. Scribbles in a note pad. Much of it, when re-read, eminently forgettable. Still, after assiduous panning, there is a residue. It represents what I lastingly "heard" during two live-in Conferences in England in the Summer of '89. No speaker, of course, should be blamed for my report of any of it.

### I

The first conference was at Lancaster, July 17-21, 1989. The occasion was the 20th Anniversary of the SHAP Working Party on World Religions in Education (SHAP is a village in the Lakes District where it all started. It is not an acronym for Smart, Hinnells And Parrinder, or any other group of founding parents.) The Conference Theme was "Freedom and Authority in Religions and Religious Education".

Ninian Smart, after the Anniversary dinner: Global education requires plural education and anyone who denies it is an idiot and there are many idiots in England. There are few places in the world where there are not plural societies. Nationalism in education doesn't work any more. The principles for the study of religion are the same everywhere.

So what's good for SHAP is good for every country. British SHAP has made a creative contribution to the study of religions in schools and now should go into all the world with its stuff. First, perhaps, an Hawaiian SHAP, or a Royal Canadian Mounted SHAP but eventually a World SHAP.

Smart is a kind of "Alistair Cook from Lancaster", and was in his best after-dinner mood, even when he spoke after breakfast. He moves to the University of California (Santa Barbara) as full Professor in January 1990. Understandably he thinks

"the future is California, a funny place, a hyped-up version of what exists elsewhere".

In California you can find a Sikh with a shamrock in his turban. Or a Zen Center (in Los Angeles) where 80 per cent of the members are Jews. Or you can buy a handbook on how to get married (although no-one gets married except ex-priests). People can do what they want. Experiments in science and living go on side by side. Who's afraid of ex-communication? Why should an Episcopalian always be an Episcopalian? At the moment Smart is a Buddhist-Episcopalian. He thinks we should teach Creationism in schools but include all other theories and it will shrink to miniscule size.

Hugo Gryn, Chief Rabbi at the West London Synagogue, actually spoke on the Conference Theme. Authority in Judaism, he said, is the authority of the Word of God. God speaks and Adam hears, God speaks and Amos goes, God speaks and Moses obeys. But there is always an element of doubt: is it really Him?

Calling me "chief" rabbi, said Gryn, is nonsense. A rabbi's ordination simply declares "by his learning he is qualified to give an opinion". And it was Gryn's opinion that if, in Israel, you are a vegetarian, do not drive a car, and are either not married or happily married, you will never need a rabbi. At least not the kind of rabbi who rushes into a room crying "Ask me a question, I have the most fantastic answer".

Also addressing the Theme was Zaki Badawi, Principal of Muslim College, London. Muslims, he said, submit to God. God is the authority. He would not be pleased with Jews figuring things out for themselves. Islam has a boundary defined by what it prohibits, not by what it commands. The strength of the Muslims'

ethical system springs from the strength of the legal system. Understandably, the scholars of Islam decided that the thieving of books by scholars was not theft.

John Hull, seriously: In theology we learn we are creatures, in RE we learn we are creators (surely the reverse is also true). Today only one form of authority is compelling, the authority of human poverty and human wretchedness ... Moral-thinking is now Justice-reasoning. See how Sharon Parks corrects James Fowler for whom the individual moral hero is male. Hi-ho and so-long to the Lone Ranger.

From selective listening to some Continental speakers, I gathered that in the Netherlands the reason RE starts with the Religions of China is because every Dutch town has a Chinese restaurant ... France has no place for RE in schools (except in the Eastern provinces) ... Belgium has seven types of RE and the Churches decide content ... The Smart Six is known to almost all Syllabus curriculum writers ... RE texts now have pictures of the Ayatollah ... Frank Whaling (Religious Studies, Edinburgh) set out to find Freedom and Authority in Hinduism. When last seen he was at a sacred place taking a holy dip.

## II

The second conference was "Sea of Faith II" at the University of Leicester, July 25-27, 1989. It focussed on the controversial work of Don Cupitt, Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. About 140 attended, mostly lay church members struggling with their Christian faith or lack of it.

The three chief "enemies" or stumbling blocks for Cupitt and the conference attendees are (1) theological realism (2) dogmatic theology and (3) ecclesiastical (hierarchical, patriarchal) power structures. Cupitt's books (he's written fifteen) attack all three, looking for a Christianity without them. Cupitt refers to his position as "Radical Christianity", calls

himself a radical Christian, and stays on in the Church and priesthood because for him "athiest priest" is not a contradiction.

The discussion group I attended was called "Why church, ex-church, non-church". "There is a great void when you come out of the church", said one. "I've just left the church, after having attended all my life", said another, "and I don't miss it". A third: "We buried my friend to the Trout Quintet and the parson left out the Christian stuff." Then a fourth reported "When I visit my sister who is a Methodist fundamentalist I have to tell her that I am not going with her to church as I have always done when I visit her on weekends because I am not going to any church anymore. And when she wants to know why, I have to tell her that I just don't believe it anymore, and it's hard because she doesn't understand.

Scott Cowdell (our man from Queensland's Studies in Religion), in his address, mentioned that there are three sacred fluids (Ink, Semen, and Wine) and declared that Ayatollahs and Popes have nothing to gain from reading Wittgenstein.

"Once the priest mounts the steps he is doing a kind of seance", said another speaker. "We human beings are magnificent animals who have come all the way from the caves to watch television."

Back in my Discussion Group, after a lecture, she said: "He had a cheek to do that to us!" and he said "It was all drivell", and she said "He was on an ego-trip", and he said "Drivel, all drivell." Later there was a formal vote of thanks to this lecturer and I noticed all the members of my discussion group participating warmly in the prolonged applause.

John Bowker, Cambridge (who could have been at either conference) thinks that "religions are bad news, but they are bad news only because they are such good news". He spoke of "licensed insanities" which do bad things when associated with political power. Religions threaten the future of human life because they hold that

there are more important things to do than live. It's about time we took religions seriously. Neither the USA nor Russia seriously believe that there are people who seriously believe. That's bad news. The USA could not understand Islam in Iran. It is un-American to say that religion is more than a private arrangement with God. That's bad news too. Religions have boundaries, and therefore feel insecure, which leads to border disputes and thus to terrorism. Meanwhile we stress the good news and neglect the bad news. "I am a complete pessimist" says Bowker, who wants a centre dedicated to taking religion seriously.

Ann Loades, feminist theologian at Durham, doesn't like any of the twelve men in her Department introducing her as "my delightful colleague". She thinks Mrs Thatcher is supremely feminist in the way she disables her cabinet. She thinks confrontation has its uses: it lets anger out. Did John Bowker have Ann in mind when

he marvelled at "the emphatic refusal of women to give up religion?"

On the last day Don Cupitt confessed (sadly, prematurely?) to his own radical Christians: "Others see us as decayed Christians. It will be a long time before we can say something worth listening to."

On the other hand, Don gave himself completely to the people at the conference. Tall, rangy, smiling face, chiselled features, no tie, cuffs of his dress-shirt open, light-blue jeans, white woolly sox, sandals; all a little larger than life. He offered anyone a lift back to Cambridge in his car "so we can get some more talking done". After all, he insists, "everything is language, language all the way down".

(Still, I wonder: perhaps there is something that speaks louder than words.)

—Victor C. Hayes  
SACAE  
Sturt Campus

## Eighth Annual Conference of the Association for Baha'i Studies

The Eighth Annual Conference of the Association for Baha'i Studies was held at Flinders University, March 24-27, 1989. Papers were presented in open sections, special interest groups, and at a one-day symposium, "Women and an Ever Advancing Civilization", from which a monograph is forthcoming. This conference, like past Baha'i Studies Conferences, brought together a mixture of academics, public servants, students, professionals and non-professionals, to hear presentations on a variety of topics.

Papers in the open section included Hooshang Jahangiri, "A study of human values and peace: a psychological perspective"; Nasim Mavaaddat, "The Significance of suffering"; Arvid Yaganegi & Rod Markham, "An analysis of the response of the rulers and learned to the

proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh"; Ros Gabriel, "No nobler deed than this: the Baha'i community and women with young children"; Jean Phillips, "Communication, co-operation and caring"; Ruth Park, "The role of the artist in art in past, present and future societies"; and David Chittleborough, "Women and the Universal House of Justice".

At the Women's symposium the speakers included My Van Tran, "The Position of Women in Traditional Vietnam"; Tessa Scrine, "Women and Power"; Graham Hassall "Hilda Brooks and the Australian Baha'i Community"; Sharyn Roach, "Women in the Legal Profession"; Morad Farshid & Colleen Dawes, "Patriarchy: dead or alive? Where do we go from here?"; and Helen Perkins, "Women, Development and Peace". In

previous years, the conferences have included either visual or performing arts, and this year Mojgan Khadem, a student at the Australian Film and Television School, screened two short films, one a documentary on race relations, and another, "The valley of Search", inspired by a passage from Bahá'í scripture.

There are three basic facets to Bahá'í scholarship. The first concerns study of Bahá'í scripture as theological inquiry, the second concerns analysis of the ramifications of Bahá'í teaching, laws, and principles; while the third concerns the phenomenal investigation of Bahá'í communities - historically, anthropologically, sociologically, etc.

The Association for Bahá'í Studies has

recently published a monograph (64pp), *Integration and Cultural Diversity*, which presents an initial analysis of resettlement in Australia by several hundred Iranian Bahá'ís, as well as the integration into the Bahá'í community of Aboriginals in North-west Western Australia.

The Association's 1990 conference is to be held in Perth, at Murdoch University, 13-16 April, and will explore religious perspectives on environmental issues. Information concerning the Association for Bahá'í Studies can be obtained from The Secretary, PO Box 381, Willetton, Western Australia, 6155.

— Graham Hassall,  
Australian National University

## Aboriginal Spirituality: Is God a Whitefella?

In May of next year a major national Aboriginal conference will be held in the environs of Adelaide. The conference is being organized by the University of Sydney's Department of Religious Studies, but all speakers will be Aborigines. The conference proceedings, supplemented by other material, are to be subsequently published.

The conference was the joint initiative of Garry Trompf and myself. The AASR's volume, which I co-edited, on *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions* was almost exclusively on academic work. While this gave it a sense of discussive continuity I was very aware that a complementary work presenting Aboriginal views was a high priority. Reviewers, such as Stan Davey in *Land Rights News*, have also pointed out that "A logical second volume will be another collection; of Aboriginal writers, to present their perceptions and experience", Garry's edited volume *The Gospel is Not Western : Black Theologies from the Southwest Pacific* provides one model of how such a second

volume might be produced, as it is based on a conference held in Coorparoo, Brisbane, in 1981. On that occasion three Aboriginal (and one Torres Strait Islander) papers were presented. A major all-Aboriginal collection on contemporary Aboriginal spirituality has never before been attempted.

The University has provided a grant to establish a secretariat and Irene Ulman has taken on the demanding responsibility of co-ordinating the negotiating phase of the conference. Our first step was to establish a planning committee with a strong core of broadly representative Aboriginal members as well as others with access to those institutions and individuals with whom we will be liaising. The members of the planning committee are:

### A. Aboriginal Members

- Joyce Dukes — Co-ordinator, Pittuma Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Centre
- Anne Gray — Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
- Charles Harris — President, Uniting

Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Ruth Whitbourne — Pittuma

Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Centre  
Patrick Dodson — Chairman, Central  
Land Council, Alice Springs

Djinyini Gondarra — Moderator,  
Uniting Church, N.T.

Rrurrumbu Dhurukay — Uniting  
Aboriginal and Islander Christian  
Congress, Darwin

Garry Lee — Anthropologist,  
Australian National University

Arthur Malcolm — Anglican Bishop,  
Yarrabah, North Queensland

Bob Randall — Singer, songwriter,  
Aboriginal Education Liaison  
Officer, Canberra

Len Watson — Minister, Uniting  
Church, Hobart

Maureen Watson — Poet, Activist,  
Townsville

#### B. Non-Aboriginal Members

Robert Bos — Minister, Uniting Church;  
Liaison Officer, Nungalinga  
College, Queensland

Don Carrington — Director, Institute  
for Mission, NSW

Eugene Stockton — Priest-Assistant,  
Aboriginal Catholic Ministry

Barry Tunks — Vice-Rector, St. John's  
College, University of Sydney

Fred Wandmaker — Vicar, the Parish of  
East Malvern, Victoria

Ray Williamson — Executive Secretary,  
NSW Ecumenical Council

Deborah Bird Rose — Anthropologist,  
Australian National University

#### C. Members from the Department of Religious Studies University of Sydney

Garry Trompf — Associate Professor,  
Head of Department

Tony Swain — Lecturer

Irene Ulman — Assistant Researcher

The Planning committee has met on two occasions to date and has established policies on a range of seemingly unproblematic but in fact very delicate issues. Conference titles, locations for the

gathering, matters of form and content can easily have unintended and unwanted implications. Some resolutions are:

- The tentative title "Aboriginal Spirituality : Is God a Whitefella?" is to be adopted as it is broad ranging, and though having a theistic tone to its sub-title, does not establish false dichotomies between 'Christian' and 'Aboriginal' spirituality. "Christianity" is a word off-putting to many Aborigines, even those who are Christians! (This itself is an important religious and political issue).
- The conference should not intrude upon Aboriginal communities privacy, nor be held in a dauntingly large city, nor be located in a region symbolic of White political oppression (sorry about that, Canberra readers). Adelaide, or the environs of Adelaide, has been chosen as it is as comfortable and neutral as any place and has a strong Aboriginal population who can be consulted in the details of planning.
- The conference is not to be a formal gathering, and whilst papers will be presented the proceedings should be sensitive to the many mediums of expression commonly adopted by Aborigines. Poetry, story, song, dance and art definitely will be welcome. Smaller workshops will also replace larger groups for much of the conference.
- Attendance at the conference will be open to all people. The possibility of a 'closed' conference was briefly mooted and summarily rejected. In the words of one Aboriginal planning committee member: "What's the point of saying it if the Whites don't bloody well listen!"
- The proceedings are to be recorded and given as wide a media coverage as possible. A published account of the conference, supplemented by views of other Aborigines who could not attend, is a high priority. It has been emphasised that this is not an opportunity for Aborigines to discover

their own spiritual beliefs (a condescending notion at best), but a chance for them to reach the wide audience they deserve and, perhaps, more importantly, for others to hear of spiritual traditions which could enrich Australia and, indeed, the world.

We are currently awaiting responses to several applications for financial

assistance. The total cost could be as high as \$100,000 and we are hoping that half of this figure will be provided by various government and church bodies. The remainder will of necessity be met by local organisations sponsoring participants.

— *Tony Swain*  
*University of Sydney*



ANNOUNCING AN IMPORTANT  
NEW PUBLICATION

**MENORAH: AUSTRALIAN  
JOURNAL OF  
JEWISH STUDIES**

**Menorah**, a twice-yearly publication, is the official journal of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies. It has as its subject the entire sweep of Jewish history and civilization and is the only journal in Australia that offers original Australian scholarship relating to Judaism and the Jews. The contributions come from many disciplines and touch on a wide range of subjects, but there is naturally a particular emphasis on the Australian Jewish experience, and nine articles in Vols 1 and 2 have dealt with such themes as the Jewish identity of Australian children of Holocaust survivors; the results of an Australian opinion poll relating to general attitudes to Jews and to other major ethnic minorities; Catholic-Jewish and Communist-Jewish relations in Australia; and many other issues.

To receive Vol 3 (1989) of **Menorah: Australian Journal of Jewish Studies**, contact the Editor, Dr Evan M. Zuesse, Religion Studies, South Australian College of Advanced Education, Underdale SA 5032.