
Newslink

State Notes

From New South Wales

University of Sydney

The Religious Studies Department at Sydney has consolidated despite difficult times. We are about to make an appointment to an externally-funded fractional lectureship in the History of the Gnostic Tradition. The study of classically-oriented Indology has received a boost with Dr Michael Comans being jointly funded by Religious Studies and Indian Studies.

Staff have been heavily involved in conferences. Rachael Kohn has played a key role in organising two conferences for the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs and the Australian Association for Jewish Students. Garry Trompf and Tony Swain, with the able secretarial help of Jani Klotz, set up the national black theology conference on Aboriginal Spirituality at Victor Harbour.

The Department has two visiting scholars from the People's Republic of China, Associate Professor Zhu Daiqiang and Ms Sun Shanling, both from the Institute of Nationalities, Schesuan Province. Two honorary associates complete their terms this year: the Rev. Assoc Prof. John Moses from Modern History at

the University of Queensland, working on trade union theory in Europe pre-Solidarity; and Dr John Gascoigne, History University of New South Wales, working on the relation between religion and science from Newton to Darwin, particularly Joseph Banks. Emeritus Prof. Charles Birch, a visiting lecturer in the Department, was awarded this year the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. He introduced 'process theology' in the course on the philosophy of time and history taught jointly by Garry Trompf and Alex Klotz.

Staff have also been lucky with grants. With grants received Bill Jobling is completing his massive archaeological reports on Western Arabian inscriptions and iconography. Tony Swain received a University Research Grant for the Aboriginal Conference. Garry Trompf has started an Australian Research Council project to complete volume 2 of *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought*. Members of the Department have also had several new works published which will be listed in the next ARS REVIEW.

Further afield, Professor Lawrie Brown of the Department of Psychology

in the University of New South Wales has successfully inaugurated a new international journal in the psychology of religion. Negotiations are under way for a member of the editorial board, Dr Kathleen O'Connor, to begin teaching a course in Psychology of Religion at Sydney. Don Wodarz of the Columban Fathers at Turrumurra is chairing the committee to produce the *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies*.

The Religious Studies Department remains unattached within the Arts Faculty. The possibility of colluding with Archaeology and Classics has not disappeared; it is more likely that a School in the Study of Religion, involving Divinity and other programs, as well as Religious Studies, will be formed.

Sydney looks forward to hosting the 1991 AASR Conference, hopefully together with the Association for the Journal of Religious History (currently based in Sydney's Department of History).

*Garry Trompf and Eric Sharpe
Religious Studies*

Catholic College of Education Sydney Mount Saint Mary Campus

The big news is the Australian Catholic University (ACU) which comes into existence on 1 January 1991. It will be an amalgamation of four existing colleges: Catholic College of Education Sydney, Institute of Catholic Education Melbourne, McAuley College Brisbane and Signadou College of Education Canberra. Faculties proposed are: Education, Arts, Social Sciences, Business, and Theology. The first Chancellor is to be Cardinal Edward Clancy.

Professor Mary Boys of Boston College will be in Australia in September giving lectures and workshops around the country. For further information contact Carmelita Martin, CEO, 1st floor, Berala Arcade, Woodburn Road, Berala 2141.

Gideon Goosen has recently completed a study of the attitudes of young Catholics towards the Church and churches.

Gideon Goosen

From Queensland

University of Queensland

The Department of Studies in Religion at UQ has substantially expanded its postgraduate studies program. A new M.A. (Studies in Theology), consisting mainly of course-work but also including a small-scale thesis, began this year. It has got off to a good start, with an enrolment of twenty-five students. Another new course-work masters degree, the M.A. (Studies in Religion), will begin in 1991. And

there are two further additions for 1991: Postgraduate Diplomas in Studies in Religion and in Studies in Theology.

Numbers of candidates for the research M.A. and the Ph.D. continue high (fifteen Ph.D.'s this year), ensuring that we maintain our status as the department with the largest post-graduate program in the Humanities group at UQ.

The Department continues to be active in research and publication. Details of the

published works will appear in the supplement to the next REVIEW.

In addition, two of Michael Lattke's recently successful Ph.D. students have had their theses accepted for publication: Majella Franzmann's *An Analysis of the Poetical Structure and Formation of the Odes of Solomon*, accepted by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, and Elaine Wainwright's *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew*, accepted by W. de Gruyter.

Some staff members will be away on Special Studies Programs in the near future. Richard Hutch will spend the second semester of 1990 at the Department of History, University of Massachusetts, Rod Bucknell will spend the first semester of 1991 working on a book on the interpretation of Buddhist doctrine, and Ian Gillman will spend the same period mainly in Germany pursuing his research on Christians in Asia.

Roderick S. Bucknell

From Victoria

Deakin

The section of Religious Studies has completed a major in Religious Studies Open Campus program. The latest offering is Religious Systems (study of traditions in a comparative perspective, 2nd year), comprising 'sacred space' in Aboriginal Religion and Islam (2 books); 'Self and its Destiny' in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity (3 books).

Deakin now provides opportunities for graduates from other institutions to pursue BLitt (Hons and Pass) programs in the off campus mode (2-3 years part-time); study material is supplied leading to a research thesis on a negotiated topic.

Max Charlesworth is retiring as Professor of Philosophy and *de facto* of Religious Studies at the end of 1990. He has recently been active in research on issues surrounding surrogacy and IVF. Ian Weeks is compiling data on church history in Australia. Fabian Hutchinson, a part-time tutor, is soon to undertake an eight-week period of archival work in Tonga at the invitation of its king.

Purusottama Bilimoria is organising an Asian and Comparative Philosophy Conference in September and will be attending the VIIIth World Sanskrit Conference in Vienna in August and the International History of Religions Congress in Rome in September. Peter Fenner is currently on secondment to Bond University where he is teaching courses on Zen Buddhism and East-West Psychology. He has been replaced temporarily by Carol Cusack, Department of Religious Studies, University of Sydney, who is working on pre-Christian English and early European paganism, and Peter Oldmeadow, South and West Asian Studies, ANU, who is currently completing a thesis on the *Bodhicaryavatara*.

University of Melbourne

Peter Koepping, Baldwin Spencer Professor of Anthropology has recently returned from Germany where he spent much of his study leave in archival research on the History of Lutheranism. In the framework of a symposium on

'Richard Wagner and the Creation of Modern Myth', organised by Professor Borchmeyer of Germanic and Theatre Studies, Heidelberg, Peter gave a paper on the figure of Loki in Germanic mythology, and its change through Wagner's Ring Cycle. At the International Conference on Peace and Religious Dialogue held in Japan, Peter read a paper on the possibility of dialogue between believers and scholars of religion.

Elizabeth Koepping read a paper on the ethnic identity of German Lutherans in South Australia at a conference at the Germanic Museum in Nuernberg.

Anthropology at Melbourne now includes a larger segment in cross-cultural studies in religious anthropology: in particular a thematic key unit for second and third year students called 'The Structure of Myth and Ritual Processes'.

The current lunch-time addresses of the ecumenical chaplain, John Bobycomb, entitled 'In the Image of a Smiling God' are to be published.

Monash

The teaching of Religious Studies at Monash is advancing well under the direction and inspiration of Gary Bouma, Sociology and Ian Mabbett, History. A one-year course for second year students, designed as an introduction to comparative religious study, was begun in 1989 and in 1990 has about fifty students. Religious Studies has just been approved as an area of studies within the Arts Faculty and students can now complete a minor sequence consisting of the above subject and a range of later year subjects offered in various departments. There are active proposals for courses on religion and Jun-

gian psychology, the study of sacred texts, and on religion and medical ethics.

The possibility of establishing a new centre of Religious Studies in the University is presently under discussion and discussions about co-operative courses being taught by Monash and the Melbourne College of Divinity are now under way.

Gary Bouma has obtained a University Grant to assist in the production of *A Yearbook for Australian Churches* in conjunction with the staff of the Christian Research Association.

La Trobe Religious Studies

Student enrolments are slightly down on last year but continue to flourish. About fifteen post-graduate students are enrolled, mainly working in Judeo-Christian or Indian religion.

John Painter is attending (July) New Testament conferences in Europe. Eli Franco has just returned from nine months as a research fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin where he was working on Mahayana Buddhist literature. Anne Gardner is presently on leave and attending the ANZATS Conference in Brisbane and a Jewish Studies Conference in Sydney. Greg Bailey is on leave and will be attending the VIIIth Sanskrit Conference in Vienna in August, the International History of Religions Congress in Rome in September, and will deliver a paper to the Department of South Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley in October. Greg Horsley recently returned from a study trip to England and Turkey. The fifth volume of his *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity Vol. 5 Linguistic Essays* has just been published. Paul Rule will be attending a conference in Louvain

in September on 19th Century Christian Missions in China. David Sim our new tutor in Religious Studies, will be attending the AASR Conference in Canberra.

The Division will be sponsoring a one-day seminar organised on 'Inscriptions of Ephesus' to be held in April 1991.

For the first half of 1990 Penny McKibbin, SACEA, has been a visiting research fellow in the department. Penny has given lectures in a number of courses and presented a staff seminar called 'Disputing the Sacred. Feminist Theory and Cultural Practice'. She will be attending the International History of Religions Conference in Rome among other academic pursuits.

La Trobe Sociology

Rowan Ireland and Paul Rule are working on a chapter on Catholicism for Alan Black's new collection to be published by Allen and Unwin. Rowan has had his work on religion and politics in Brazil accepted by the University of Pittsburg Press.

PhD student and Catholic priest, Bob Wilkinson has just returned from Paris where he has been studying Alain Touraine's ideas in relation to the Catholic Church.

*Greg Bailey
La Trobe
John Bobycomb
Melbourne*

From Western Australia

This Winter the WA branch of ANZSTS, assisted by other local sponsoring bodies, has conducted a series of functions around the theme: Sociological Perspectives on Jesus and the Early Church. Audiences have enjoyed a number of lectures by eminent international speakers: Professor Sean Freyne; Baerbel von Wartenberg-Potter; and Howard Kee. At the present time of writing we still eagerly await (11 August) a one-day conference with Professor Edwin Judge of Macquarie University, and other scholars, to be held at Murdoch. Professor Judge's topic is: 'A Radical Jesus but a Conservative Paul?'

Meanwhile the department of Religious Studies at WACEA looks forward to a culmination of several years (often frantic!) expansion and development. 1991 will see us take up new

premises on the Mount Lawley Campus in north Perth under a new university designation (which is still the matter of much debate). The successful launch of our post-graduate courses during the past year has seen twenty-seven students enrolled at Master's level, and Religion has now been designated as the third discipline in this Institute to be made available at PhD level. As a result of such expansion we are pleased to welcome (July) a fifth full-time lecturer: Peter Bedford. While Peter earlier held a tutorship at Macquarie, he comes to us from doctoral work at the University of Chicago, department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. The subject of his thesis is: *Temple and Community in Achaemenid Judah*.

The number of academic appointments in the broad field of religion is also

strengthened by the welcome return of Michael Levine from California, where he has been lecturing in Religious Studies, to take up an appointment in the

department of Philosophy at the University of Western Australia.

Iain Gardner
WACEA

Notes from New Zealand

From The Yana

University of Canterbury

Toni Huber and Paul Harrison conducted an extremely successful four week study tour of the People's Republic of China, and Tibet in April-May this year. Two tours are planned for 1991, one to China and one to Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan. The new course being offered for the first time by the Department of Religious Studies - Religion, Society and Power - has attracted large student numbers.

University of Waikato

Doug Pratt is organising a study tour of South East Asia, particularly Malaysia and Thailand, in November-December 1990. The tour will visit significant monasteries, temples and mosques. Dr Pinit Ratanakul, Director of Religious

Studies at Mahidol University, Bangkok will be contributing to the program. Estimated cost is c.\$NZ2500. People interested in joining the tour could contact Doug for further details. Fax: 0011 6471 562 158.

Conferences

Ninth New Zealand Asian Studies Conference

Dates: 19-21 August 1991
Venue: University of Waikato

New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions

7th biennial conference

Dates: 23-26 August 1991
Venue: Massey University, Palmerston North
Contact: Conference Office Ph: 0011 6463 69099 eat 8268.

From The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

In 1988 the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand formed a Research Group to work on the information becoming available from the NZ Values Study and other smaller research projects. The Group has produced two resource book-

lets based on the Values Study - *What New Zealanders Believe* and *Attitudes and Life-styles* - which are part of the Ephesus Series.

Information about research activities are available from the convenor, the Rev.

Margaret Martin, 180 Windsor Road, Auckland 7, New Zealand.

Project Ephesus is a related project seeking practical methods of linking religion and the New Zealand culture. A third book in the Ephesus series contains an essay by Ian Harris, Director of Communications for the Presbyterian Church entitled 'Earthing our faith in the twenty-

first century' and on by Jim Veitch for Victoria University, Wellington on 'The Church and the New Era'.

Further information on Project Ephesus is available from Ian Harris, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, Box 9049, Wellington, New Zealand.

Margaret Martin

Overseas News

Death of a Major Scholar of Religion A Tribute to Roy Wallis

Professor Roy Wallis, Professor of Sociology since 1977 at the Queen's University, Belfast, died tragically in May of this year, at the age of forty-five. He had been appointed to his chair at the age of thirty-two, and in the last three years has also served as Pro-Vice Chancellor of his University.

His first book *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (1976), was one of the most intellectually robust monographs ever to appear about a social movement and at once established Wallis as a major sociologist of religion. His challenging work on moral crusades which appeared in a second book *Salvation and Protest* (1979), overturned with apparent ease the old thesis of moral protest as an expression of status defence, whilst his analysis of the organisational evolution of Scientology and Christian Science was pioneer thinking in regard to sect formation.

His redefinition of the concept of the cult superseded earlier unrigorous for-

mulations, whilst his analysis of proclivity for schism in political and religious groups was both original and of enduring significance. In subsequent works he brought new perspectives to the study of charisma and collective action, and an acute analysis of the appeal and form of new religious movements. His corpus of three books and a fourth of joint authorship, together with three edited works (to which he made extensive contributions of his own) represents in quality as well as in quantity, the output of a major scholar.

Relishing intellectual dispute, he engaged in some notable arguments with other sociologists in the pages of the major journals. His death is a sad loss to the discipline of sociology and to his colleagues and University.

*Bryan Wilson
Oxford*

From the Association for the Sociology of Religion - America.

William H. Swatos Jr has been elected Secretary of the Religious Research Association.

This Association seeks to further the understanding of the role of religion in contemporary life. The RRA, incorporated under laws of the State of New York, has in its membership social scientists (including sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists), church researchers and planners,

theologians, teachers, administrators, clergy, editors, city planners, market researchers, religious educators, and other researchers from numerous nations. It publishes the Review of Religious Research.

Bill Swatos is Associate Professor of Sociology at Northern Illinois University and ordained in the Episcopal Church. He also edits *Sociological Analysis: A Journal in the Sociology of Religion*.

Conference Reports

British Sociological Association Study Group on Religion

The annual conference of the British Sociological Association Study Group on Religion was held in Lincoln, UK, 2-5 April 1990. About half of the papers were related to the designated theme, 'The Sociology of Ecumenism', and I am acting as editor for a book which it is hoped will include these papers. In addition, there were sessions on the Hillsborough football tragedy, religion and demography, religion in East Europe, research in progress, and panel discussions on two recent books: Robin Gill, *Competing Convictions* and Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*. Discussion at the conference was lively and generally constructive.

The retiring chairman, Eileen Barker, was thanked not only for her work in that

capacity but also for all she had contributed to the Study Group since its inception. Mike Hornsby-Smith was elected as chairman; Grace Davie and Alan Aldridge were re-elected as convenor and treasurer respectively.

The Study Group's 1990 Register of Members has recently been published. This contains useful information on research in progress, members' recent publications, and forthcoming conferences in Britain and elsewhere. For further information on the Study Group, write to The Convenor, Dr Grace Davie, Sociology Department, University of Exeter, Exeter, EX4 4RJ, England.

*Alan Black
University of New England.*

*A National Conference on Aboriginal Spirituality
and Perceptions of Christianity*

From 2-6 August, 1990, 'Aboriginal Spirituality: Past.Present.Future' was held at Victor Harbour, South Australia. This first national conference was a landmark in the history of Aboriginal expressions of spirituality. Not only did it draw together a diversity of Aboriginal people from throughout Australia, but these voices united in their desire to find expression for their own diverse and distinct spirituality.

It was a conference which challenged complacent conceptions which in the past have constructed images of a static and passive society yielding to the cultural, social, and ideological influences of the colonising society. This conference created an arena where Aboriginal people were expressing their spirituality through various forms, such as music, poetry, painting, film and papers, incorporating reflections on the impact of Christianity on their culture and how they are drawing on their own tradition to redefine what the missionaries brought with them.

The conference participants represented a diversity of experiences, perceptions, and aspirations on a personal, community, denominational, and organisational level. The major papers reflected these differences with Galarwuy Yunupingu, Chairman of the Northern Lands Council, opening the conference by expressing the integral spiritual connections Aboriginal people have with the land. The Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra, executive officer of the Northern Regional Council of Congress (of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress) brought the conference to a close by stating how im-

portant it is to make the gospel relevant to Aboriginal people through the appropriate use of language, symbols, stories, and worship.

Other papers at the conference were based on topics such as: the importance of spirituality as a sense of Being (Cynthia Rowan, University College of Central Queensland); spirituality as story telling, and an oral tradition which is being colonised by the imposition of the written word (Christine Morris, University of Queensland); and, the need to create an indigenous church in Australia which reflects the structures, needs, and aspirations of the Aboriginal community (the Reverend Charles Harris, former president, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress).

In keeping with the title of the conference most papers and workshops revolved around themes which incorporated the issues of past, present, future. The cultural expression of Aboriginal spirituality through creative means was realised in performances by a number of Aboriginal groups. What united any differences which existed between people were the common visions and aspirations they held for the future.

The conference was important at many different levels. Individually an environment was created where people could share and communicate their deepest feelings, concerns and hopes. Denominationally, the conference brought together for the first time Aboriginal people with Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church and Lutheran backgrounds. An ecumenical spirit was strengthened as representatives explored their common threads and goals

in aims at creating a truly indigenous Aboriginal church.

The overwhelming response people had to this conference was reflected in the unanimous decision to continue dealing with the major issues at state conferences over the next six months and presenting themselves as a unified voice at the

World Council of Churches meeting in Canberra in February 1991.

Aboriginal Spirituality:
Past.Present.Future was only a beginning!

Jani Klotz
Secretariat, Aboriginal Conference
Planning Committee

Conference Report: International Islamic Conference
Kuala Lumpur, June 25-29 1990

The first contact I recall having with Islam was travelling on a ship, the MV Kuala Lumpur, in the days when it spent half the year plying pilgrims from Malaysia to Mecca, and the other half ferrying school children and tourists around the Pacific. I was one of a party of school-boys who slept in the bow quarters which were permanently set up in dormitories for the Muslim pilgrim trade. Little did I know that, years later, I would be visiting the city after which the vessel was named to attend a conference on Islam.

The International Conference on Islamic Civilisation, under the auspices of the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the Islamic division of the Prime Minister's department, was quite a grand affair and a most informative and worthwhile event for a non-muslim Kiwi to attend.

Indeed I found myself a triple minority - one of only a handful of Westerners, the only representative from New Zealand, and thus the only non-muslim New Zealander.

The conference was very revealing and stimulating. There were speakers, both Muslim and non-muslim, from many parts of the world. Many issues were addressed but the underlying theme was the

issue of whither Islam in the contemporary world. The question of Islamic civilisation and western modernity was tackled by a number of speakers who gave both an insightful critique of modern secularised mentality and cultural norms, and also some penetrating self-reflective analysis of Islam in relation to that.

Although there was a measure of understandable self-congratulation and pride there were also, for example, clear calls to reassert fundamental principles of tolerance of minorities and those who are different, of social justice and equality, and living out the ethics of compassion and caring concern for the environment.

Of particular concern was the issue of how Islam is perceived in the West. The image of Middle Eastern fanatics screaming 'Allahu Akbar' (God is Great) as they detonate bombs or fire rockets is about as fair a representation of the Islamic community as IRA terrorism is of Roman Catholicism.

The point that Muslim Arabs, for example, constitute but ten percent of the Islamic community was underscored. Middle Eastern fanaticism and extremism looms large in the media but represents but a minority perspective within the world-wide Islamic community.

Muslims at the conference were challenged to combat, by education and example, the stereotypical images promoted by Western media and the entertainment empire. The realisation, that with the thawing of East-West relations, Hollywood, and the American media in general, are latching on to Islam as the new 'bad guy' was a point of particular concern. And it was not just the Muslims themselves who were making such observations. Three American (themselves non-muslim) specialists in Islamic Studies also voiced their concern at this trend. One spoke of an occasion whilst flying when a woman seated next to him, on seeing he was reading a book about Islam, declared her prejudice that she was a Christian and 'they are the enemy'. She spent the rest of the flight with her back turned!

Political turmoil and controversy, though not to be underestimated, have tended to cloud the Western vision of Islam as a religious community.

The same speaker recounted how, on another flight, he was seated next to an Egyptian Muslim. At a point in the conversation the Egyptian asked to be excused but indicated that he did not wish to leave his seat. Instead he quietly went about his prayers. Upon finishing, the American, commenting that when flying a Muslim obviously could not make use of a prayer mat and undertake the set of prayer-actions, asked if the Egyptian gentleman had any idea of the direction of Mecca. The Egyptian replied he had no idea were Mecca was whilst he was flying 'but God knows I am sincere'.

Women at the conference were mostly veiled, of course, and all were seated to one side of the conference hall. Such segregation was not, however, to be construed as silencing. I was particularly im-

pressed by the incisive comments and sharp questions that the Muslim women put to the male speakers. The ongoing battle against an ingrained paternalism was obvious.

The only main address given by a woman - a black American convert who has a PhD in Islamic Studies - was not only impressive for its erudition. It was prefaced by a statement that Muslim women scholars look to the time when they will be invited to speak at such conferences on topics other than the place of women in Islam.

The Islamic tradition declares in favour of the equality of men and women. The point that previous modes of delivery of that equality are no longer effective in contemporary society seemed to evoke the same sorts of reactions and responses as parallel points made by and for women in other religious traditions!

Indeed it seems to me that although the focus is different, and the authority sources are of course unique, there was evidence of a number of points of parallelism, or what I think of as 'dynamic equivalence', between Islam and Christianity, and also between Islam and Judaism. The lesson I came back to New Zealand with is that perhaps the way through the obvious political and cultural differences could yet be found by attending more closely to the arena of religious dynamics.

My being approached by a number of Muslim scholars working in Kuala Lumpur who wished to engage in such a dialogical fashion certainly seemed to reinforce this view. Perhaps the journeyings of a schoolboy will yet result in a pilgrimage of sorts.

Doug Pratt
University of Waikato

Conferences Coming Up!

Twelfth Australasian Victorian Studies Association Brisbane, February 1991

Theme: 'The Victorians and History'

Keynote Speaker: Professor John Sutherland, California Institute of Technology

Dates: 6-10 February, 1990

Venue: St John's College, University of Queensland.

Call for Papers

Offers of papers for this conference are now invited. In addition to sessions on history and literature, it is expected that at least one whole session will be devoted to each of the following disciplines: architecture, art history, music, and religion.

Preference will be given to papers relevant to the conference theme, but the choice will not necessarily be restricted to such.

Papers may be of 20, 30, or 40 minutes' duration, and submitted to Professor Peter Edwards, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Humanities), Room 502, Michie Building, University of Queensland 4072. Those who have papers accepted will be requested to supply an abstract by 31 October.

Registration forms will be available from July.

News from the British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group Register

British Association for the Study of Religions - Day Conference and AGM

Date: 27 October 1990

Venue: College Hall, University of London, Malet Street

This day meeting will include a report of the International Association for the History of Religions XVI Congress in Rome and the first BASR Annual Lecture to be given by Prof. Stewart Sutherland.

Contact: Dr Peter Moore, Darwin College, University of Kent, Canterbury.

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) - 1990 Annual Meeting

Dates: 9-11 November 1990

Venue: Virginia Beach, Resort and Conference Centre

Theme: Varieties of Religious Research: Reconsidering Theoretical and Applied Religious Research

Contact: MS Lorraine d'Antonio (Business Manager ASR, RRA, SSSR), Marist Hall (Room 108), Catholic University of America, Washington DC 20064

**Religious Research Association
1990 Annual Meeting**

Dates: 9-11 November

Venue: Virginia Beach, Resort and Conference Centre

Theme: Religion, the Individual, and Society

Contact: as SSSR

BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group - 1991 Conference

Dates: 8-11 April 1991
 Venue: Edward King House, Lincoln
 Theme: Religion and Social Justice
 Convenor: Dr Grace Davie, Department
 of Sociology, Amory Building, Rennes
 Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ
 Local organiser: Canon Rex Davis, The
 Subdeanery, Lincoln, LN2 1PX

**Network for the Study of Implicit
 Religion - Denton Conference**

Dates: 10-12 May 1991
 Venue: Denton Hall, Ilkley, nr. Bradford
 Contact: Edward Bailey, The Rectory, 58
 High Street, Winterbourne, Bristol

**Lancaster University
 Department of Religious Studies
 in association with the
 Centre for the Study of Cultural Values**

Dates: 14-17 July 1991
 Venue: Lancaster University
 Theme: Religion and the Resurgence of
 Capitalism. (For details of sessions and
 speakers, see *ARS REVIEW* Vol 2, no2
 p81
 Contact: Dr Richard H. Roberts, Reckitt
 Research Fellow, Department of religious
 studies, Lancaster University, Lancaster,
 LA1 4YG, England

**Societe Internationale de Sociologie
 des Religions/ International Society for
 the Sociology of Religion (SISR/ISSR)
 Conference**

Dates: 19-23 August 1991
 Venue: Maynooth, Ireland

Theme: Religion and the Economic Order
 Contact: Enzo Pace (Secretary General
 SISR), via Andreini 12, 35100 Padova,
 Italy

**Association for the Sociology of
 Religion (ASR) -1991 Annual Con-
 ference**

Dates: 20-23 August 1991
 Venue: Cincinnati, Ohio
 Contact: see SSSR above

**Society for the Scientific Study of
 Religion - 1991 Annual Meeting**

Dates: 8-10 November 1991
 Venue: Pittsburgh, PA
 Contact: see SSSR above

**Religious Research Association
 1991 Annual Meeting**

Dates: 8-10 November 1991
 Contact: see SSSR above

**BSA Sociology Study Group
 British Association for the Study of
 Religions - Joint Conference**

Dates: 8-11 April 1992 (provisional)
 Venue: St Mary's College, Strawberry
 Hill, Twickenham
 Theme: Religion in the Common
 European Home
 Contact: Dr Grace Davie as above or Dr
 Kim Knott, Department of Theology and
 Religious Studies, The University, Leeds,
 LS2 9JT

Religious Groups

The Action Group for Religious Liberty

The AGRL was formed over three years ago to pursue a number of courses of action for the protection of religious freedom within Australia.

Contrary to a common misconception, our Australian Constitution assumes religious liberty but it does not guarantee it. It has been seen, especially in recent months, that minority religious groups have come under attack from different sources and these attacks are detected as being symptomatic of a trend which could lead to the restriction of liberties for all.

With these occurrences in mind the group has a wide range of objectives which are as follows:

The long term attempt to develop accurate knowledge in the community about the beliefs and practices of religious groups.

The monitoring of the media for instances of negative stereotyping, prejudice, and contravention of ethical standards in reporting on religious groups.

The monitoring of legislation and the implementation of law to detect any discrimination against particular religious

groups and any restrictions of religious liberty.

Over the past two years the pursuit of these objectives has involved:

Correspondence with the media about specific instances of inaccurate and unjust reporting.

The education of the members of the group itself to the beliefs and practices of the older and newer religious groups.

Attempts to encourage dialogue between religious groups.

It is to be noted that the group does not seek to propagate any particular religion but rather to defend the rights of persons to the full exercise of religious freedom within the due limits of civility.

The group produces a biannual newsletter, the *AGRL Review*. All correspondence can be sent either to the editor c/o GPO Box 549D Melbourne 3001.

Membership enquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, the Rev. John McMillan at the above address or telephone (03) 555 1035.

Update on Near-Death Experiences Australian Society has Low Key Launch

Replies received to public notices about the possibility of starting an Australian Branch of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS - see *ARS REVIEW* Vol 2, No 1) revealed that the main interest was in having some kind of organisation through which people who have actually had

NDE's or similar experiences can meet each other, and sympathetic professionals, for 'mutual society, help, and comfort' in coming to terms with the consequent life-changes and value-shifts without being pressured to support any particular faith or philosophy.

A substantial number of the respondents expressed a firm wish to avoid heavy media exposure, at least in the early days, even though the need is recognised, over the longer term, for publicity to increase general awareness of these very important phenomena and to educate both the health and counselling professionals on the one hand, and clergy and religious groups on the other, about the solid research now being done in this field by psychologists and medical scientists in various countries.

So AUSTRALIANDS has been given a deliberately low key launch, and while membership is open not only to actual experiencers but also to everyone with a serious interest in the subject, would-be

members are asked to sign a pledge not to use information obtained from membership to make propaganda for any religious or spiritual movement, or for any kind of commercial advertising.

A newsletter is being published on an occasional basis, and one of its functions is to make known the availability here of publications or other resource material from IANDS-USA, IANDS-UK, IANDS-France and other published sources. Enquiries about joining should be addressed to the co-ordinator Ron Chester, PO Box 32, Cessnock 2343. Please mention this article.

John Wren-Lewis



SA

sociological analysis

a journal in the sociology of religion

Published by the Association for the
Sociology of Religion

Editor: William H. Swatos, Jr., 1500 7th Avenue,
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