
Newslink

State Notes

From Victoria

Religious Studies at La Trobe University : Update

At the present time the Division of Religious Studies at La Trobe University has six full time members of staff and has just acquired a full-time tutor. Since the last report on the Division which appeared in Vol. I no. 1 of the REVIEW (April 1988), Dr Chris Bartley has left and been replaced by Dr Eli Franco, who was trained in Tel Aviv and Nanterre. His specialist areas are Buddhist Epistemology and Philosophy. Dr Joe Hoffmann has also left and Dr Greg Horsley, with a BA from Sydney and PhD from Macquarie, has taken his place. Greg's specialist area is Greek inscriptions of the Graeco Roman period which he uses to illuminate the background to Christianity. The new tutor is Mr David Sim, who did his undergraduate training in Religious Studies and an MA at La Trobe and has

completed a little over two years of a PhD at London University under Professor Stanton. David's speciality is the Eschatology of Matthew's Gospel. In addition to these staff changes Dr Paul Rule, the present chairman, has become a full-time member of the Division, as has Dr Eli Franco - all in all a healthy expansion which was justified by our increased student numbers.

Some new courses have been offered, including Hellenistic Greek III and Latin which is being introduced for the first time this year. It is hoped that we will be able to offer an MA by coursework, in addition to an MA by thesis, in the near future and to extend our offering of Women in Religion.

Anne E Gardner

Notes from New Zealand

edited from the Yana newsletter

The next NZASR Conference will be at Massey University, 23-26 August 1991 - (See the report on the 1989 NZASR in this issue).

An International Theological Symposium is being planned for 13-18 May 1991 in Dunedin. The Symposium is entitled 'Christ and Context: the Confrontation between Gospel and Culture'. The main speakers include Fr Gustavo Gutierrez (Peru), Professor Jurgen Moltmann, Frau Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel, Professor Johannes Metz (West Germany), Professor John de Gruchy (South Africa), and Dr Janet Martin Soskice (U.K.).

** [Several of these internationally known speakers will be available before and after the Symposium. Australian Departments of Religion interested in enquiring about possible visits to Australia are invited to contact:

Mr Hilary D Regan, Chairperson
International Theological Symposium
c/- University Extension
University of Otago
PO Box 56 DUNEDIN, NZ]

News from ...

The University of Waikato... 1990 sees the commencement of a Waikato University Diploma in Religious Studies. It is aimed at graduates who wish to add another string to their bow.

The University of Otago... Dr Douglas Campbell has recently taken up his appointment in the area of 'Western Religions' - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - his special interest is in apocalyptic and Pauline studies.

The Victoria University of Wellington... has instituted two new courses: Religion in New Zealand and Religious Issues (values and ethics). Jim Veitch will be on leave from November 1990 to May 1991. He will deliver the Reid Lectures at Westminster College, Cambridge before going on to Israel for 4-6 weeks' intensive research. Lecture tours to India (Kapil Tiwari) and to Jordan, Sinai, Israel, the Seven Churches of Asia (Turkey) and the underground churches of Cappadocia (Jim Veitch) are being planned for December 1990/January 1991. Elizabeth Isichei recently gave papers on 'Religious Identity in the Art of Colin McCahon' and 'Religious Change among the Anaguta', as well as several one-day workshops entitled 'In Search of the Goddess' and 'Traditional Art and Architecture in Africa'.

NZASR Conference Report

The sixth biennial conference of the New Zealand Association for the Study of Religion was held at the University of Waikato during August, 1989. A large group of overseas scholars attended. Visitors were welcomed from America, Africa, Australia, Israel, Fiji, Britain and South East Asia.

Within the conference programme there were a number of thematic groupings of papers, together with the usual range of more general topics. These included a focus on Judaism and Jewish Studies; methodological issues; feminism; fundamentalism; and the Pacific, especially Fiji.

Timetabling allowed for members of the public to attend key open lectures and plenary sessions which were extra to the more specialised papers available to the conference attendees. Of particular interest was an evening Salman Rushdie panel "The Sword and the Pen" organised in conjunction with the University's Continuing Education department. Also, the screening, in conjunction with Film Studies, of Vincent Ward's film VIGIL, followed by a discussion of its religious iconography, generated much interest.

Special guest speakers included Lloyd Geering, Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies, Victoria University;

Paul Morris from the University of Lancaster; Harold Turner, formerly of Aberdeen and Birmingham's Centre for New Religious Movements; Philip Noss of the Alliance Biblique du Cameroun; Edith Lubetski from Yeshiva University, New York; and the Reverend Pa'ula Niukula of the Methodist Church in Fiji.

The conference has been assessed "a rounded and rounding success" from Waikato's point of view. By attracting a good contingent of overseas participants the NZASR can confidently lay claim to truly international status for its conferences. And it was evident that considerable interest in the development of Religious Studies at the University of Waikato has been engendered.

Papers from the Jewish studies section of the conference are to be issued this year as Volume 2 in the Waikato Studies in Religion series under the title "Encounters with Judaism: Jewish Studies in a non-Jewish World". Pre-publication order forms are obtainable from the Religious Studies department, University of Waikato.

*Douglas Pratt
University of Waikato*

Steady As She Goes On The Sea Of Faith

(a) Correction

In "Conferences Residue from Lancaster and Leicester" (ARS REVIEW 2:2, August 1989, pp. 54-56) I reported, impressionistically, on a couple of Conferences I attended in the UK during July 1989. One was the Sea of Faith Conference Number 2. (The chief Radical Christian focus and intellectual stimulus for the Network known as Sea of Faith may be found in the words and works of Don Cupitt.) Near the end of my report, working from my notes, I included the following paragraph which ascribed certain sentiments to Don Cupitt, using quotation marks, thus:

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". (p.56)

I have now been provided with the transcript of the taped record of Cupitt's lecture which shows the official version of the last two sentences above to be as follows:

"Our secular friends commonly see us merely as symptoms, casualties of the decay of Christendom. We have got a very long way to go before we can persuade them that a new reformed Christianity is actually in sight, and is going to be important to them."

I have also been advised that John Bowker was not at Sea of Faith 2. That is perfectly true. He was at the Lancaster Conference. What I said was that he "could have been at either conference" (p.55). And what I would now

add is that Bowker's message about the possibility of seeing religions as bad things ("licensed insanities") could be programmed in at any number of conferences on religions.

(b) Statement of Intent

Sea of Faith Newsletter No. 5 (November 1989) reports that on October 28, 1989, sixteen people (constituting a Policy and Task-setting Council) met at Loughborough University and "unanimously agreed and adopted" the following Statement of Intent:

"Sea Of Faith is a network for exploring and promoting religious faith as a human creation."

(c) Transcripts

Ronald Pearse, the Honorary Secretary of the Sea of Faith Conference Organising Sub-Committee, will send a Transcript of Lectures from the Conference known as Sea of Faith 2 "to anyone seriously interested" in return for One Pound Sterling towards the postage. Ronald Pearse's address is 45 Middleton Place, Loughborough, England LE11 2BY. The document is 35 pages long and contains lectures by Loyal D Rue, Ann L Loades, Scott Cowdell, Douglas Davies and Don Cupitt.

(d) Next time

Sea of Faith 3 will be held at the University of Leicester: 31 July - 2 August, 1990. All inquiries may be directed to Ronald Pearse (address above).

Victor C Hayes

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
in association with the
centre for the Study of Cultural Values

Announcement and call for papers for the Conference:

RELIGION AND THE RESURGENCE OF CAPITALISM

to be held in Lancaster University 14-17 July 1991

The last two decades have witnessed an extraordinary resurgence of world capitalism. Marxist ideology is apparently discredited; socialism is collapsing; a socio-cultural and ethical void has appeared in which religion is renewed and diverse forms may be of fateful significance. The Conference *Religion and the Resurgence of Capitalism* will approach this world crisis from an interreligious and interdisciplinary standpoint. The Conference will have the following sectors:

- i) **Religion and Capitalism - a Mutual Resurgence? -**
Historical, economic, sociological and anthropological evaluations of the role of religion(s) and religious minorities in industrial and "post-industrial" society: religion, fundamentalism and modernity - towards framing the arguments.
- ii) **Riding the Tiger? - Capitalism and Theology-** A comparative review of theological, ethical and religious responses to the theory and practice of resurgent capitalism, seen, for example, in the extension of the market, the commodification of culture and social relations, the renewal of economic individualism and the social policies of the New Right.
- iii) **Religion and the Demise of Socialism-** Investigation and clarification of the role of religion(s) in the new "capitalist revolution" and the correlative transformation of culture and society in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union: case studies and empirical data.
- iv) **World Religions and International Capitalism-** A review of changes in the organisation, behaviour and belief of world religions seen in representative contexts under the economic and socio-cultural impact and uneven global distribution of renewed capitalism(s).
- v) **An Ecological Eschaton? - Religion between Capitalism and Constraint -** What kinds of response are world religions likely to make to the inescapable tension between demands for economic growth and the coming "ecological crisis"?

Consultants and/or participants include: James Beckford (Warwick), Henry Clark (Southern California), Ernest Gellner (Cambridge), Jaroslav Krejci (Lancaster), Emil Poulat (Paris), Michael Pye (Marburg), Ole Riis (Aarhus), Ninian Smart (Santa Barbara), Janos Szanto (Budapest), Kenneth Thompson (OU).

Organiser: Dr Richard H. Roberts, Reckitt Research Fellow, Department of Religious Studies, Lancaster University, Lancaster, GB LA1 4YG, England. Tel (0524) 65201 Extn 2429.

A Woman Iconographer of Maadi, Cairo

In March 1989 I had the privilege of attending a meeting of Orthodox women in Cairo, Egypt to plan the next Orthodox Women's Consultation to be held in Crete, in January 1990. Many images remain in my memory of the women I met, the churches and monasteries visited and indeed the whole atmosphere of a teeming city reflecting great poverty and wealth and full of the sound of the call to prayer from the minarets and bells calling to Divine Liturgy. I have a lasting and detailed memory of a visit to a tiny studio of Coptic Orthodox woman Iconographer, Jacqueline Ann Ascot of Maadi near Cairo.

The Coptic Orthodox Monastery and Church of Virgin Mary-Adawia, built on a spot marking one of the places where Joseph and Mary and the child Jesus rested after fleeing into Egypt from Palestine, is being faithfully restored by clergy and congregation. The church is on the banks of the Nile and surrounded by a wall built by the Romans. Jacqueline Ann Ascot was a student of art history at Oxford University in England and a member of the Anglican church. She was drawn to the Coptic art form and continued her studies for her PhD on early Coptic iconography and changes through to present day. During her research she studied Arabic and Copt languages, in which she is now highly competent in spoken and written form.

Her research brought her to Egypt and in direct contact with the Coptic Orthodox Church. She was chrismated into the Church and her spiritual father and adviser is His Holiness, Pope Shanouda III. Ms Ascot is an outstanding scholar and is recognized by the

church as an iconographer committed to restoring the true Coptic art form in Church icons.

Dr. Ascot's work at present is the restoration of the Church of the Virgin Mary at Maadi. During preceding centuries European influence in Egypt has affected the style of icon painting, and the unique Coptic art form of the early church has slowly deteriorated. Many smaller Coptic Orthodox Churches use European catholic paintings and prints for their icons, neglecting their own icon heritage. They accept the true Coptic icon as being in the past and therefore belonging in the old museums, churches and monasteries.

The art of Coptic iconography is not as severely restricted in style as in the Greek or Russian tradition. Coptic icons are recognized by the eyes through which it is said 'one sees heaven'. Coptic icons distinguish themselves by their 'sweetness, piety and humility'. Coptic painters avoid representing scenes of torture of saints and martyrs as well as representations of the fear of the Day of Judgement. Dr. Ascot is married and has three children, all of whom are Coptic Orthodox, speak Arabic and already learning to paint icons. She is a teacher and both monks and nuns from the desert monasteries attend her studio for lessons on the early art form of Coptic icons.

*Extract from 'Voices
From the Silence',
Vol 1 No 2, February 1990'*

*Leonie B. Liveris
Executive Officer
ACC Commission on
Status of Women*