

ANZATS NEWSLETTER

August 2004

The Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools

President: Rev Dr Chris Mostert; Secretary: Rev Dr Harold Pidwell

Special points of interest:

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HISTORIC HEADS OF COLLEGES CONFERENCE

No one could deny that this conference at Queens College, University of Melbourne, at the beginning of July was a truly rich and an outstandingly rewarding experience. All of the papers were both intellectually stimulating and highly practical. It would have been impossible for anyone to have returned to his/her constituency without being charged, focused and renewed. Back now in my own office I still feel slightly challenged by the tasks before me: but I have a fresh vision and, I hope, a better understanding of my role.

The conference was advertised as one where principals would share their experiences and visions, discuss accountabilities, and talk about ways of managing and empowering people. At first it sounded as if it could be slightly tedious with themes such as 'Staying, Standing and Moving Forward', 'Serving Multiple Masters', or 'Keeping the Balance: Scholar, Pastor and Administrator'. However, these papers proved to be inspirational.

If it were in my power I would insist on a complete rerun of the entire program with mandatory attendance by ALL those who missed the first occasion, but who still wish to be considered as principals. The conspicuous absence of representatives from certain institutions is most regrettable. This was a conference that should not have been missed.

Nevertheless, there were 40 in all who participated. Of course, not all were Principals of Theological Colleges in the traditional sense. The group was augmented by other senior administrators, by the Heads of Theology Faculties at Auckland and Otago, and by the Deans of several theological consortia: ACTh, MCD and SCD.

The key note speaker was Dr Dan Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS). I was aware of him previously only as a writer: he had authored several journal articles and co-authored *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Seminaries* (OUP 1997). But as a speaker he was equally outstanding. As one colleague remarked to me: 'The conference could hardly fail, with someone like Dan Aleshire there to give strong (but gentle) leadership. I thought he was remarkably helpful to us.'

Those of us who have been called to positions of leadership need to share our experiences with others, to hear of new ways of doing things and to be encouraged. When the next conference on supporting and developing leadership in theological education is announced, I trust that I will only be overtaken in registering by those persons who sadly missed this one.

Raymond Nobbs

Dean, Sydney College of Divinity

CONFERENCE 2004

This year's ANZATS / ANZSTS (Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools / Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies) Conference was held at Queens College from the 5th to the 9th of July, with the theme "The Glory of God: Humanity Fully Alive". As the theme implies, this year's focus was on Orthodox theology. The two keynote speakers were Bishop Hilarion Alfayev of Podolsk (Russian Orthodox Bishop of Vienna and Austria) and The Very Rev Paul Nadim Tarazi (Professor of Old Testament at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, New York). Local speakers included Revd Prof. Eric Osborne (speaking on Irenaeus: Theology in Four Moves), Revd Prof. Dorothy Lee (speaking on 'On the Holy Mountain': The Transfiguration in New Testament Theology), Revd Dr Adam Cooper (speaking on '*Homo vivens, homo continens*: Marriage and 'the garments of skin' in Irenaeus and the Greek Fathers), Dr Rosalie Hudson (speaking on Dementia and personhood: a living death or alive in God) and Dr Noel Rowe (speaking on The Angel did not draw attention to himself: poetry, theology and emptiness).

Shorter papers were also presented by some of the participants, with a wide range of fields and topics represented (including children's rights in reference to war, cultural and historical studies, ecumenical proposals, theological interpretation, exploration of the conference theme, theological studies, biblical studies, iconography, human 'conversation', ordination and sexuality, and post metaphysical phenomenology). The achievements of two professors were celebrated during the conference, with Revd. Prof. Dorothy Lee winning the Australian Theological Forum best book prize for *Flesh and Glory: Symbol, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Crossroad, 2002) and Revd. Prof. Chris Mostert receiving high praise for his work, with *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (Continuum, 2002) receiving high commendation. Other notable aspects of the conference included a visit to the Romanian Church in Queensbury Street, a display of Icons and printed material related to orthodoxy provided by the Joint Theological Library, orthodox vespers, morning and evening prayers, and, of course, great fellowship. The conference ran very smoothly and we received some lovely comments in regard to the conference being a 'happy' experience, especially for our many orthodox sisters and brothers who attended. While a couple of the conference papers were less than entirely edifying, overall it was a wonderful ecumenical experience, one in which, no doubt, many will remember with gladness.

Mark John Crees

CONFERENCE 2005

Next year's conference will be held in Perth from the 4th to the 8th July on the theme, "The Peril of Christianising Jesus: Faith, Culture and Conflict" with John P. Meier as the key-note speaker. Details are available on the website

<http://www.anzats.edu.au/conference> or www.soc.murdoch.edu.au/anzats/2005.htm

WOCATI IN FIJI

The WOCATI executive met recently in Suva Fiji, July 20-25, hosted most generously by SPATS (South Pacific Association of Theological Schools). Last year when the executive met in Melbourne, hosted by ANZATS, they visited several of the Colleges of MCD, and as that proved to be a useful and informative experience Rev. Tevita Banivanua, General Secretary of SPATS and a member of the executive arranged for them to visit some theological centres in Suva also.

At the Pacific Theological College, an ecumenical institution, they heard of the challenges involved in managing an Extension Programme for students scattered over remote islands, such as assignments sometimes taking a month to get up-river before they can even be posted off to Suva! They heard of the struggle theologians have to do theology in a way that honours local culture, for example holding in tension the conviction that healing and reconciliation need to take place not in isolation but within the community, with justice being done to the individual. As the faculty struggle to do theology in this authentic way they are striving also to put this into practice themselves as an ecumenical faculty within an ecumenical college.

The executive also visited the Pacific Regional Seminary, a Catholic College. Interestingly, it was not the faculty there but people from other colleges who talked about the way culture was being honoured in the liturgy at this seminary.

The third centre visited was the Methodist Davuilevu Theological College, the principal of which, Rev. Tuidilakila Waqairatu, is a graduate of the MCD through the UFT. Here the lavish hospitality experienced everywhere reached new heights with a meal that can only be described as sumptuous!

At each place visited it was obvious that the member colleges of SPATS, one of the founding members of WOCATI, appreciate being part of a much larger organisation and are beginning to recognise WOCATI as providing a meeting space for the discussion of questions raised locally that have theological relevance cross-culturally. The major problem was that in each place the conversation was just warming up as it was time to move on! The major advantage for the executive was that the ideas and insights gained from these encounters are feeding into the preparation for the fourth general Congress which will take place, probably in Jamaica, in 2007. The topic for the Congress is yet to be decided, but in the next executive meeting there will hopefully be a further refinement of the discussion of the interdependence of theological education and the churches in the *missio dei*. Kathleen Williams RSM

NAME AND STAFF CHANGES

Alistair Macrae has been appointed Principal of the Centre for Theology and Ministry in Melbourne to replace Peter Matheson who retires at the end of this year. Also retiring are David Price, Principal of the Bible College of Victoria and Hudson Deane, National Principal of the Bible College of NZ.

The Anglican Institute of Theology and Religious Education in Perth is now the John Wollaston Theological College and Luther Seminary in Adelaide is now Australian Lutheran College.