

ANZATS
THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND
ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS
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WHAT A CONFERENCE!

Mix together for 5 days, John Meier, Hugh MacKay, Fiona Wood, David Clines, Caroline Osiek, Veronica Brady, Rowan Strong, Peter Carnley, the Perth Undergraduate Choral Society and 54 other presented papers by Australian, New Zealand, American, South African and English scholars and you have a very heady brew! Such was the recent ANZATS/ANZSTS Conference in Perth which attracted near record numbers (160). With a wonderful rhythm to the conference program provided by the local organising committee led by Bill Loader and the excellent facilities of Trinity College we were very well catered for in every possible way.

Keynote speaker, John P Meier, well-known Biblical scholar from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, each day led an attentive audience through the textual intricacies of the quest for the historical Jesus. Prof Meier's rigorous attention to detail, his clarity and humour kept us coming back for more. In addition to the main theme of Biblical Studies, presentations of Australasian Spirituality, Ethics at the Margins of Life, Imperialism and Religion, Religion and Morality and a moving address by Prof Fiona Wood (Australian of the Year) stimulated debate among the 160 participants. The Perth Undergraduate Choral Society, led by conductor David Getting, entertained us at a reception at Murdoch University.

All agreed that it was one of the best conferences for a long time.

NEXT CONFERENCE CANBERRA 2007

The next ANZATS/ANZSTS Conference will be held in Canberra in 2007. It will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the founding of St Mark's National Theological Centre. Exact dates, theme and speaker will be announced later this year. There will be no regular ANZATS/ANZSTS Conference in 2006.

In 2008 the Conference will be held in Auckland and be part of the International Meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature.

2ND PRINCIPALS' CONFERENCE 2006

Following the success of the first Heads of Colleges Conference in Melbourne last year a second such conference will be held in Brisbane at the Riverglenn Conference Centre 21-23 September 2006.

HOW IS THE ANZATS COUNCIL CHOSEN?

New Zealand and each Australian State have a representative on the Council of ANZATS. Originally these persons were elected by each regional Chapter of ANZATS but as these Chapters evolved into Colleges of Divinity/Theology and sometimes University Schools of Theology the separate existence of Chapters all but ceased. Only Queensland and NZ continue a form of association outside some form of consortia arrangement. The question arose therefore as to whether Council Membership might be better based on Consortia representation.

After all, most (87%) theological colleges in Australia and NZ are in some form of Consortia. The proposal generated a lively discussion at the Annual General Meeting which came to a very clear consensus that regional representation, as at present, would better serve the purposes of member Colleges than representation through consortia. How that regional representation is selected is the next decision, given that the constitution assumes the continued existence of Chapters.

Any ideas? Email secretary@anzats.edu.au

FAREWELL

Four outgoing leaders in theological education were recognised at the recent conference.

Rev Dr Sarah Mitchell leaves her position as Principal of the United Theological College in Sydney after 10 years to become the Minister of Knox Presbyterian Church, Dunedin.

Rev Dr John Wright retires from the position as Dean of the College of the Southern Cross (St John's College) Auckland after 7 years there and many years teaching Biblical Studies in Australia.

Rev Prof Bill Loader retires from the position as Principal of the Perth Theological Hall after 27 years of teaching in Perth, and before that at Trinity Methodist College (St John's College) Auckland. Bill will continue at Murdoch University School of Theology, mainly in a research capacity.

Dr John Fanshawe retires because of ill health after four years as Dean of the Brisbane College of Theology.

We wish them well.

COUNCIL ISSUES

At the recent Council meeting members raised issues they believed were current in theological education. What follows is a brief summary of some of the points raised.

- The pressure to pursue a more general rather than a focussed theological curriculum. The fact that a majority of students are not aiming for a full time church vocation has significantly altered the curriculum. Is this to the benefit or the detriment of the Church?
- The diminishment of the time given to theological education for ministry. In some cases this was seven years, in many colleges four years but now three seems to be the norm.
- Accreditation has many benefits but does it mean that the government or a bureaucracy is now our master, not the discipline of theology nor the church?
- Does the contemporary Church want an educated or formatted ministry or simply a management-oriented leadership?
- Why is there not a more public role taken by theologians of all disciplines? Issues of public morality cry out for more than sound bites. We should see more of each other on the opinion pages of major newspapers.
- Inter-religious dialogue is an increasing necessity. We need to convince our church 'masters' of this and seek their support.

FEE-HELP

Most Australian member colleges of ANZATS now have FEE-HELP available to their students, in most cases through membership of consortia. This income contingent loan scheme seems to have pumped in over \$A10 million to students and colleges in this its first year of operation.

New Zealand Colleges have a longer history of receiving government funds in one form or another and a most interesting paper on the issue was given at the recent conference by Dr Tim Meadowcroft "The Hidden Costs of State Funded Theological Education". Tim may be contacted at TimM@tyndale.ac.nz

NEW MEMBER

Harvest West Bible College, Perth WA, was received as a member of ANZATS at the recent AGM. Following the reception of a report from the Membership Commission appointed by the Executive members at the AGM personally welcomed the Principal of Harvest West, Ashley Crane. Another application for membership is currently being processed.