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Pieter Bruegel, Fall of Icarus 1558

A vehicle for ferrying news and view among members and contacts of the
New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions

Joseph Bulbulia (Victoria University) & Will Sweetman (Otago University)
Produced by The Religious Studies Programme, Victoria University of
Wellington
PO 600
Wellington New Zealand
Email: joseph.bulbulia@vuw.ac.nz

New Faculty

Art Buehler



Art Buehler, a scholar of transregional sufi networks and the transmission of Islamic revivalist ideas, is senior editor of the *Journal of the History of Sufism*. He began his career teaching Arabic in Yemen for the British Council. After five years in the Arab world he entered the History of Religions Program at Harvard University specialising in South Asian Islam under the tutelage of the late Annemarie Schimmel. His subsequent two books are the result of four years of fieldwork in Indo-Pakistan

Chris Marshall



Chris' specialities include the study of New Testament theology and ethics, peace theology and practice, and restorative justice - both theory and practice.

He is also an expert in the study of contemporary Anabaptist theology.

Michael Radich



Michael Radich was born in Dargaville (perhaps better known as “the Paris of Kaipara Electorate”). He studied clarinet performance and then composition at the University of Auckland, graduating with a B.Mus, and then spent three years in Shanghai, Nanjing and Taiwan before returning to Auckland to complete an M.A. in Chinese studies. He then went to Japan on the J.E.T. Programme, for which he worked as a “Coordinator of International Relations” in the Matsumoto Regional Office of the Nagano Prefectural Government. In between coordinating international relations from that alpine hub of world diplomacy he was seconded to the 1998 Winter Olympics, where he worked in the International Broadcast Centre as a translator and interpreter, and on one occasion only narrowly avoided having to shake the hand of Juan Antonio Samaranch. He spent a year as a freelance translator in 1999-2000, and during that time his major project was a book-length translation of *Rakan no seishinbunseki* by Kazushige Shingu of Kyoto University, which was finally published in 2004 through Gakujū as *Being Irrational: Lacan, the Objet a, and the Golden Mean*.

From 2000-2005 Michael was at Harvard, where he pursued a PhD in Chinese Buddhism under Robert Gimello; he now pursues the same degree from a distance, having recently had the astonishing good fortune to be appointed Junior Lecturer in Buddhism at Victoria. Pending the say-so of various mundane powers and the intercession of some supramundane, he intends to graduate from Harvard, perhaps also from a distance, in 2007. His dissertation will comprise a full and annotated translation of *Shiba kong lun* or “The Discourse on Eighteen [Kinds of] Emptiness” by Param,rtha

(499-569), accompanied by a detailed analysis of that work in the context of Param,rtha's broader corpus and his doctrinal system, and the intellectual milieu in which Param,rtha moved. Through this analysis, Michael hopes to address broad questions pertaining to the putative "Sinification" of Buddhism and general features of Indian and Chinese thought and religion in a comparative perspective; he also hopes to make the study a test case for a methodology of intellectual-doctrinal history more interdisciplinary, and reflecting a more polythetic model of intellectual-historical causality, than those that have hitherto often been applied in the fields of Chinese religions and ideas.

Michael is married to Amanda Jack, who is freshly trained as a psychosynthesis counselor and is hoping to set herself up in private practice in Wellington. They have two daughters, Kelsey, age 10, and Lauren, age 5. When he is not burrowing through opaque texts and piles of dictionaries or spending time with his family (i.e. once in a blue moon), Michael sporadically writes poems and does cryptic crosswords.

Will Sweetman



Will Sweetman was born in Aarhus Denmark and studied in the UK, taking a B.A. in Religious Studies and Philosophy at Lancaster, and an M.Phil. in Philosophy of Religion at Cambridge. An interest in the history of the study of religion, sparked by one of Michael Pye's courses at Lancaster, was deepened by the culture shock arising from the very different approach taken to the study of religion at Cambridge. Examining the emergence and status of Religious Studies as a discipline distinct from Theology was one aim of Will's doctoral research on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century

European scholarship on Indian religions. Another was considering the role of this scholarship in Enlightenment debates on religion and especially the mutually-constitutive development of the concepts 'religion' and Hinduism'.

It was once said of David Frost that he was a man who had "risen without trace". Will comes to New Zealand having held posts in the Departments of Religious Studies at Middlesex University and at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, both of which closed following his departure. Will takes refuge in David Hume: "experience only teaches us, how one event constantly follows another; without instructing us in the secret connexion, which binds them together, and renders them inseparable."

In 2003-2004 Will spent a year working in the archives of the Francke Foundations in Germany on an outstanding early missionary scholar of Hinduism, the Lutheran Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1862-1719). Exposure to German academic writing provided new strategies for packing sub-clauses into Will's already impressively congested prose.

At Otago, Will's teaching is mostly on Hinduism and Buddhism in South and South-East Asia. In addition to introductory courses on these traditions, his other papers address the theme of the body, Western understanding of Asian religions, and religion in South India.

When not working Will is most often to be found on, or occasionally in, the Otago harbour. A monument to Will's vanity exists at <http://sweetman.orcon.net.nz>

Chris van der Krogt



Christopher van der Krogt took up a position as Lecturer in Religious Studies within the School of History, Philosophy, and Politics in 2002 after being Head of the Student Learning Centre for the previous two years. He had earlier taught Religious Studies at Victoria University and History at Massey. Chris originally studied at the University of Canterbury and taught in secondary schools for several years before completing a doctorate at Massey.

His MA thesis concerned the theory and practice of *jihad* in early Islam, and his doctoral thesis explored the place of the Catholic Church in New Zealand society during the interwar years. While most of his publications have developed out of the latter project, this seems to be a good time to reactivate his interest in *jihad*. Since taking up his current position, Chris has taught an introductory course on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as well as courses on New Zealand Religious History, Theories of Religion, Ancient Religions, Religious Writings (Scriptures), and Islam.

Douglas Osto was formerly a Teaching Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, where he taught courses on theories and methods in the study of religions, religious philosophies of India, religions of Southeast Asia and Buddhist monasticism. He received his PhD in the Study of Religions from SOAS in 2004. His prior degrees include a Master of Arts in Asian Languages and Literature from the University of Washington, and a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard University. Dr Osto's primary research interests are Mahayana

Buddhism, Buddhism in South Asia, narrative theory and gender studies. Currently, he is teaching the papers 'Religions of India' and 'Women and Religions' at Massey.

NEWS

CANTERBURY

Religious Studies at University of Canterbury is currently awaiting the result of being one of a number of programmes in the College of Arts targeted for voluntary redundancy. With the College of Arts facing a budget deficit, an earlier round of voluntary redundancies occurred towards the end of 2005. It was with deep regret and sadness that we learned that our colleague Prof. Paul Harrison had decided to take voluntary redundancy and pursue new scholarship and family opportunities in the United States. We wish Paul, Irene and John all the best for their future in the USA (initially in Los Angeles) and wish to state that Canterbury University and Religious Studies both here and nationally cannot afford to lose such a respected scholar, colleague and friend to us all. Paul taught in Religious Studies at Canterbury for over twenty years. He was a valued and respected member of the wider university community and kept Religious Studies going through some difficult times. He is sorely missed. As to the future, Paul's departure has not kept us from being a targetted programme. We will know in the next couple of months what exactly the future holds for Religious Studies here, in a time where it increasingly seems that the future of academic programmes is determined by the choices of 18-20 year-old students and their parents. In an attempt to cover Paul's absence and offer more 100-level courses we all have an increased teaching load this year and will offer two new 100-level courses as special topics; one on 'Islam today' and the other on 'Religion and Terrorism'. We are also offering a new 200-level course on 'rethinking religion' which is attracting interest from the students. Somewhat ironically, 2006 looks like having the best Honours numbers for Rels for many years...

Mike Grimshaw

michael.grimshaw@canterbury.ac.nz

MASSEY

There has been a complete change of staff in the Religious Studies programme over the last few years. The retirement of Peter Donovan (December 1999) and then of Brian Colless (December 2001) left Bronwyn Elsmore as the only staff member by the beginning of 2002 until the appointment of Christopher van der Krogt in April that year. Bronwyn retired from the university at the beginning of 2005, and a position in Asian religions was advertised. The successful applicant was Douglas Osto, who arrived just in time to teach two courses in semester 2.

With a declining student population in the region, an increasing proportion of Humanities enrolments are extramural. This is particularly true of Religious Studies, but summer semester courses have proved an especially popular option over the past three years.

Christ van der Krogt
C.J.vanderKrogt@massey.ac.nz

OTAGO

The RELS programme at Otago is in good heart. We are currently advertising as I hope you all know – for a new lecturer or senior lecturer to replace Elizabeth Isichei. After much discussion, we decided to advertise for a position in Asian Religions, to complement what Will Sweetman is already doing. We would be delighted to find an enthusiastic scholar of either East Asian or Southeast Asian religions (and we understand the latter broadly enough to include Islam). So if you know of such a person, pass on the news! In the course of that discussion, Will drew up an excellent paper, summarising the development of what we now call “Religious Studies” and vigorously defending its value. (Not that this was under attack – other Departments are very supportive – but as George W. Bush would say, you can’t beat a preemptive strike.) Elizabeth herself is about to publish a book of poetry, with a book launch at the University Bookshop pending. The collection is entitled *Stoptide* and is published by Steele Roberts. Apparently she has a new career lined up, to replace her work on the religions of Africa. Mind you, she also published *The Religious Traditions of Africa: A History* with Praeger at the end of last year and is half way through another academic book. So she is not yet a fulltime poet, if such a thing exists. Perhaps the poetry will be supplementing rather than replacing the academic works. Greg Dawes continues to have a foot in two

camps, teaching Religious Studies in one semester and the Philosophy of Religion in the other. His philosophical musings are slowly taking a (slightly) more disciplined form as he completes a PhD in that subject, provisionally entitled *Could Religious Explanations Explain?* (You know it's a philosophy title because it sounds as though a word is missing. "Explain what?" "Anything, really!") He shamelessly uses REELS 101 to advertise PHIL 210 and PHIL 210 to advertise REELS 101. But why not? Our university administrators would no doubt call it "synergy." But our most significant news is that Will has just taken charge of a new dog (I accidentally wrote "a new god" – how appropriate!), a Rhodesian ridgeback rejoicing in the name of Langalibalele. The original Langalibalele was apparently a Zulu general whom the British, being unable to pronounce his name, used to refer to as "Longbelly." Elizabeth shouldn't have any problem with the name, but the rest of us might have to follow the British example. (Elizabeth has just emailed me to protest that Rhodesian ridgebacks are matriarchal. The gender wars are apparently not over yet.)

Greg Dawes

Gregory.dawes@xtra.co.nz

VICTORIA

2005 was a big year for Religious Studies at Victoria with three new staff settling in (Art Buehler, Micxhael Radich and Chris Marshall) a conference here (on religion and identity in Malaysia and New Zealand), two promotions (Joe Bulbulia to SL and Rick Weiss over the L bar). Marion Maddox published *God under Howard* and Paul Morris (with Dolores Janiewski) *New Rights New Zealand: Myths, Moralities and Markets*. Jim Veitch finally had a well-earned sabbatical spending time at the Jesus Seminar and in Indonesia. The universal drop in revenue has impacted on the whole University with restraints on spending that will continue into 2006. Religious Studies EFTS were maintained for 2005 and so far - it's early days yet - look good for 2006 with a number of new scholarship Ph.D. research students and excellent enrolments at the Honours level. We hope to be able to advertise a position later this year for someone to teach the Christain tradition and religion in New Zealand.

Paul Morris

Paul.Morris@vuw.ac.nz

WAIKATO

There has been a name change for the department which, happily, brings RS back into the picture: the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, is now the home of RS at Waikato. We continue to hold our own with enrolments (could always do with more ...) and fortunately did rather well on the Faculty PBRF rankings.

For myself, I have spent the Michaelmas term last year at the Graduate Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham where I was invited to teach a course in Christian-Muslim Relations. While over here I gave a paper at the 12th Conference of the International Society for Religion, Literature and Culture held at the University of Uppsala, and I have given two papers (including one in German!) to the Christian-Muslim Theological Forum in Stuttgart, and one at a graduate seminar for Birmingham - on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations in Germany, a field of interest I have recently gotten into. (I gained a BA in German from Waikato this year).

Also during my time in the UK I have finished my latest book, to be published shortly by Ashgate, entitled 'The Challenge of Islam: Encounters in Interfaith Dialogue'.

My time away from NZ happily fell under the category of 'Special Leave': I look forward to a return to the UK for the northern 2005-2006 academic year on sabbatical leave where I have been offered a Visiting Research Fellowship to Ripon College, Cuddesdon, at Oxford.

Doug Pratt

Douglas Pratt

dpratt@waikato.ac.nz

Other news:

Bill Shepard, in "retirement", continues his research on Sayyid Qutb, the radical Egyptian Islamist, whose work has to some extent inspired the recent crop of Islamic "terrorists" as well as many who are more moderate, as well as research on more general topics. In the last couple of years the following translations and articles have been published (I don't think these have been mentioned in Yana).

Sayyid Qutb, *A Child from the Village*, edited, translated and with an Introduction by John Calvert and William Shepard. Syracuse, N.Y., U.S.A.: Syracuse University Press, 2004. (ISBN 0-8156-0805-5) An autobiographical work with a lot of interesting information about the village in which Qutb was raised and its customs.

"A Selection of Texts from Zilal", translated by W. Shepard, in Olivier Carré, *Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), trans. from the French by Carol Artigues and revised by W. Shepard (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 270-341. *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* is a multi-volume Qur'an commentary by Qutb.

Norman Simms

nsimms@waikato.ac.nz

Book Notices

Elizabeth Isichei's latest book, *The Religious Traditions of Africa; A History*, was published by Prager in November 2004.

From Bill Shepard: Sayyid Qutb, *A Child from the Village*, edited, translated and with an Introduction by John Calvert and William Shepard. Syracuse, N.Y., U.S.A.: Syracuse University Press, 2004. (ISBN 0-8156-0805-5) An autobiographical work with a lot of interesting information about the village in which Qutb was raised and its customs.

Also from Bill: "A Selection of Texts from Zilal", translated by W. Shepard, in Olivier Carré, *Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), trans. from the French by Carol Artigues and revised by W. Shepard (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 270-341. *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* is a multi-volume Qur'an commentary by Qutb.

Reviews

Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality; The Corporate Takeover of Religion*, (London & NY: Routledge, 2005). ISBN: 0-415-30209-9.

Why, if the term [spirituality] is so vague and ambiguous, is it proving so popular? The reason is that the term spirituality has now become the 'brand-label' for the search for meaning, values, transcendence, hope and connectedness in 'advanced capitalist' societies. The notion operates by compartmentalising questions of human values into an identifiable market space.¹

Jeremy Carrette and Richard King's *Selling Spirituality* should be prerequisite reading for all those embarking on studies of spirituality in the

¹ Carrette and King, p.32.

West. It provides a welcome antidote to the legion of works concerned simply with documenting or describing the disparity of emerging phenomena, instead being concerned with “how discourses of spirituality operate in the contemporary socio-economic world.”² Specifically, Carrette and King delineate the subservience of contemporary forms of spirituality to neoliberalism (neoliberalism aptly set out as the increased commodification of all spheres of life, complimented with a demarcation of economics from the social and the political). They show how various contemporary forms of spirituality, for all their apparent diversity, exist within relatively narrow socio-economic parameters, and exist in a way that largely fails to offer a critique of, or resistance to, neoliberalism and its effects.

Carrette and King begin with a careful genealogy of the term ‘spirituality’. They trace the term’s late nineteenth-century emergence in the West alongside the arrival of renown oriental figures such Swami Vivekananda from India, Anagarika Dharmapala from Sri Lanka, and D.T Suzuki from Japan; its association with American psychologists such as William James and Abraham Maslow after World War Two; and its increased application to figures in religious history (Loyola Igantius, John Calvin, Teilhard de Chardin) from the fifties to the eighties. This is all framed within the more general privatisation of religious experience that has proceeded since the Enlightenment. More particularly, however, Carrette and King posit a decisive break within this genealogy. They argue that a more aggressive “takeover” occurred in the last twenty or thirty years—a takeover that captured this wider shift for the promotion of more specific neoliberal agendas. There has been nothing short of a “tailoring of those individual spiritualities to fit the needs of the corporate business culture in its demand for an efficient, productive and *pacified* workforce.”³

This is where the hegemonic function of spirituality emerges. Spirituality, in all its incarnations, is found to offer the supplement of *meaningfulness* to an disillusioned Western workforce (and numerous specific examples are here provided). It provides a type of meaning that enables an otherwise meaningless existence—as the corporate worker—to be continued. Just as the yoga advertisements familiarly assert that yoga will ‘reduce stress’, and thereby actually allows the participant to continue an otherwise unsustainable environment, so too with spirituality more generally. Marx’s opiate is found to have reincarnated in contemporary discourses of spirituality, which effectively dull their adherents into accepting their increasingly oppressive material conditions.

² Carrette and King, p.1.

³ Carrette and King, p.29.

Within these broad parameters, the remainder of Carrette and King's work proceed to show how forms of spirituality imported into the West have been substantially transformed and distorted in the process. Buddhism, Confucianism, and other forms of Eastern Spirituality are found not to be naturally individualistic or apolitical (or at least not in the ways they are presented as being), but rather have become so through their importation. They are found to have undergone a "reorganisation... in the terms set by psychology,"⁴ and been "privatised for a western market society that is orientated towards the individual as *consumer* and society as *market*."⁵ While Carrette and King specifically focus on a couple of more famous examples (the Barefoot doctor, Deepak Chopra), they carefully extend these trends wider. While on one level they have a concern with specific abuses—or cases where individuals have distorted and marketed Eastern spirituality to their own advantage—they also continuously draw attention to a colonisation that is taking place on a cultural level.

Selling Spirituality is unapologetically polemic and ideological in its tone, but not at the expense of a thorough and compelling reading of its subject. The book has methodological breadth, and by Carrette and King's own admission incorporates "insights from cultural and social theory, the history of psychology, the study of Asian philosophies, postcolonial theory and... the politics of knowledge."⁶ The often quirky examples and astute insights give it a dynamic and easy-to-follow style. While most of the examples are drawn specifically from the "Asian wisdom traditions" its implications are far broader. It poses searching questions of all that now resides under the term 'spirituality'—for the new-age, paganism, Goddess spiritualities, the occult, indigenous spiritual revivals, and new religious traditions. Its critique extends to those who use the rhetoric of spirituality from within the established religious traditions—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—and also to those without (or who claim for themselves a spirituality while rejecting religion per se).

When all is said and done, Carrette and King's conclusion takes a surprisingly optimistic turn. They are not merely seeking to reject all forms of spirituality, but rather restore it—reintroduce its social and political dimensions. Insofar that religious and spiritual traditions exceed their Western appropriations (including the now common *spiritual* renderings of Christianity and other Western religions), insofar as they have been fundamentally misread and distorted, the traditions themselves remain a potential resource for resistance to the corporate takeover. By their own words spirituality "may yet prove our best hope for resisting the capitalist

⁴ Carrette and King, p.86.

⁵ Carrette and King, p.122.

⁶ Carrette and King, *Selling Spirituality; The Corporate Takeover of Religion*, p.ix.

excesses of neoliberalism and developing a sense of solidarity and global citizenship in an increasingly precarious world.”⁷

Mike Mawson

An Interview with Bronwyn Elsmore (July 2005)



YANA: So why did you retire early?

Bronwyn: I heard from my daughter this morning that it is freezing in NZ – the desert road is snowbound and even in Auckland her cats won't go outside. Here I am, sitting on a deck in Fiji, clad in a sarong and contemplating a leisurely day. More than that -- a leisurely three months ahead in this fashion. Need I say more?

There are several reasons I could give, but they can be summarized by the increasing feeling that it was time for me to move on. Though most of the time I was in my position at Massey it was a rewarding and pleasurable

⁷ Carrette and King, p.182.

experience, there are other parts of life to be explored and enjoyed. I decided the break should be a complete one, so have moved on physically from Palmerston North. Wintering in Fiji is the first step.

It's all feeling pretty good!!

YANA: We're all jealous. Does scholarship figure anywhere in your plans?

Bronwyn: At this stage I'm keeping an open mind on that. My next book should be out around April and I have a publisher talking to me about other projects.

YANA: I wonder whether Victoria can somehow claim PBRF credit for these projects? At any rate, tell us about the book coming out in March.

Bronwyn: *Religionz - A Guide to Religions in New Zealand*, Bronwyn Elsmore, Reed, March 2006

Religionz is intended as a guide to the variety of religions in this country for people with little knowledge of religions. In the "Main Entries" section, 500-word explanations for seventy religions, Adidam to Zoroastrian, give an introduction to each. Many more groups are included in a further section of "short entries". The book includes a glossary and index.

YANA: Any final words?

Bronwyn: Having a productive time in the Auckland theatre scene, and mentoring 50 wannabe writers.