

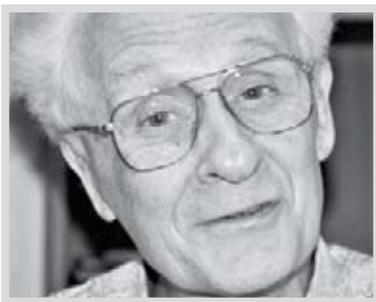
# THEOLOGY TODAY

A Newsletter from the Institute of Anglican Studies at St George's Cathedral, Perth  
~ committed to building up a well-informed and thinking Anglican Community.

ISSUE 3 ~ MARCH 2010

## AUSTRALIA AT THE CROSSROADS

Politicians have been busy postulating whether the doubling or even tripling of the population in Australia would be achievable by the middle of the twenty-first century. The Prime Minister is anticipating a population of 35 million by 2050. Whatever the numbers, the trend is upward, and with the increase comes change in cultural and religious patterns.



*Franz Magnis-Suseno*

*"We must show deep, honest respect towards the faith of others."*

The changes have already been dramatic. In the 1800s European settlers brought their traditional churches to Australia, including the Church of England, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Lutheran and Baptist churches. Australian society became predominantly Anglo Celtic, 40 percent being Anglican.

By 2001 the Anglican share of the Christian population had dropped to 21 percent, and five percent were following non Christian religions. The future trend is clear in that 82 percent of the population in 2001 identified themselves as Christian, but only 60 percent of 18-24 year olds did so.

All this poses an enormous challenge to Christians, who have a responsibility to recognise the intrinsic worth of every human being. To respect another person is to respect that person's religious faith and their right to embrace it.

In Western Australia last year, leaders of the main religious communities were convened by the Council of Churches of Western Australia. They discussed with representatives of government the values that religious leaders wanted to see exemplified in government schools.

To the surprise of many present, the meeting concluded that the values looked for would be accepted wholeheartedly by every faith tradition. Everyone present was challenged to discern what was unique in one's own religious tradition, and the commonalities between traditions.

It is with this in mind that the Institute for Anglican Studies is convening a series of gatherings in May and June, when spokespersons for the great world religions will talk about their own religious tradition, what is distinctive about it and what they see is held in common with Christianity.

While acknowledging the evangelism that is very much part of the Perth Diocesan Mission Plan, the aim is to encourage respect for one another and a willingness to work together for the betterment of Australian society.

The Parliament of World Religions held in Melbourne late last year highlighted these concerns. On the one hand there were Christians present holding huge banners advertising their belief that Jesus is the only way to God.

At the same time there were other Christian voices – not least, that of a Jesuit professor in Indonesia, Franz Magnis-Suseno, who had this to say:

*"We must show deep, honest respect towards the faith of others. Their faith may not be my faith. But since I know that the Absolute that I adore in my faith is infinitely greater than my own understanding, I gladly and humbly acknowledge that God's spirit embraces those of other faiths."*

Other discussions included the need to end war and violence by developing compassion among the followers of all world religions. The Dalai Lama put it all very succinctly: "There'll be no peace without compassion, and no compassion without finding the stillness within."

Some Jewish leaders were promoting a "network of spiritual progressives" to challenge what they saw as the anti-religious and anti-spiritual biases within the prevailing liberal culture. They may be on to something.

*The Right Reverend Brian Kyme, Director, Institute of Anglican Studies*



# PROFESSOR KEITH WARD UNDER ATTACK

Simon Heans, British philosopher and parish priest in Rochester diocese, UK, has taken issue with Keith Ward's latest book, *Why There Almost Certainly is a God*.

In *New Directions* (December 2009), Heans objects to Ward's treatment of the five arguments of St Thomas Aquinas for the existence of God, which were accepted uncritically by earlier scholars.

Keith Ward admits that he has reformulated traditional arguments, but believes this is sympathetic to Aquinas' intentions. Ward claims to be something of an idealist in the very broad sense of accepting consciousness or mind as the fundamental reality. The theoretical uncertainty implied seems to worry Simon Heans, but Keith Ward challenges Richard Dawkins for *having* certainty.

In *The New Atheists*, a 2009 lecture at St George's Cathedral here in Perth, Western Australia, Keith Ward summarised his position by claiming that Christians believe there is, in the self-revelation of God in Jesus, a continuing conscious life in which evil will be mitigated and transfigured by being included in an overwhelmingly greater good. The Christian God, Ward claims, is not simply a supreme cosmic mind, but also a suffering and loving saviour to whom the human heart can be surrendered in grateful love.

*The New Atheists* is available in booklet format from St George's Cathedral, 38 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000 – (618) 9325 5766 – info@perthcathedral.org. You can also listen to or download the lecture at [www.perthcathedral.org](http://www.perthcathedral.org) in the Education/Spirituality section under Podcasts and Texts.



## THE DARWIN DEBATE CONTINUES

Meanwhile in the antipodes theologians continue to debate in the wake of last year's Darwin anniversaries. At St Paul's College in the University of Sydney a symposium was held late last year on 'Charles Darwin and The Church'.

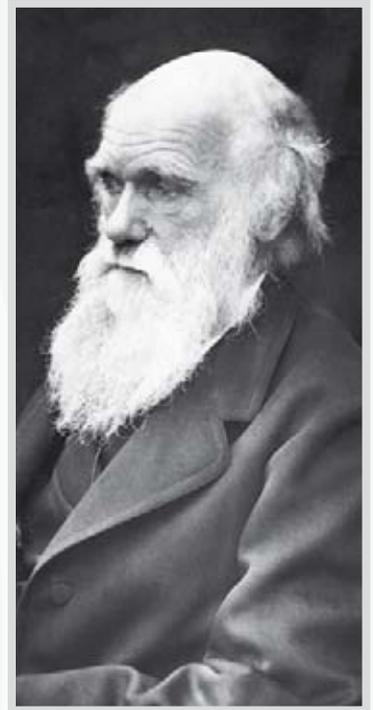
Professor John McDowell of Newcastle outlined the history of events since the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859, recording the militant opposition of Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford and then the gradual acceptance of many of Darwin's ideas both in Britain and on the Continent.

Opposition, however, was to rear its head when fundamentalist groups pressured the government in America to have Darwin's theories suppressed. The American doctrine of separating Church and State (or Religion and Politics) may well have played a role in this. Some argued that Darwin's thinking was scientific rather than theological, so that the theories Darwin proposed about the origins and evolution of life were religious questions and not intellectual concerns.

In retrospect, it may be that Darwin's theory was a final nail in the coffin of the so-called argument from design. Maybe in the contemporary scene, Richard Dawkins' anthropomorphism is really behind the times. "Who," Nicholas Lash asks, "believes in Dawkins' God anyway?" The theological value of Darwinism lies in its role in the interrogation of the creation myths of Genesis, chapters I and II.

John Gascoigne, Professor of History at the University of New South Wales, went on to contrast the book of God's world with the book of God's word. In 1860, Archbishop William Temple of Canterbury argued there is a harmony between the two. Darwinism, Gascoigne argued, does not lead inevitably to agnosticism.

The Reverend John Beer, Senior Fellow of St Paul's College, quoted F D Maurice to demonstrate how Darwinism made Christian socialism possible. The world, in his view, was at the time evolving towards socialism. He referred to those epoch-making publications, *Essays and Reviews* (1860) and *Lux Mundi* (1889), showing how the stage was set for scholars like Charles Gore to argue that one could hold to a doctrine of creation and a theory of evolution at one and the same time. In passing, John Beer pointed out that a theory of the evolution of man, though widely believed to be implied in Darwin's work, was not specifically referred to.



*Charles Darwin remains a subject of debate*

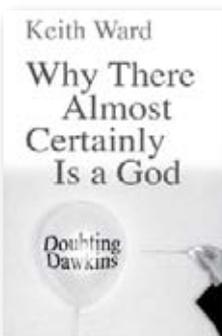
Bishop Tom Frame, author of *Evolution in the Antipodes*, pointed out to participants that the room in which they were meeting at St Paul's College was the very place where Charles Darwin once explained his research to scholars in the colony. Frame reminded his hearers that Bishop Charles Perry of Melbourne, in his attacks on ritualism, literalism and modernism, singled out Darwin for condemnation and especially for the notion of 'natural selection'. Despite this, Frame was able to establish that while Darwin's conclusions needed interpretation, the colonial churches were not, for the most part, against *The Origin of Species* in principle.

Three brief papers by Steven Ames, Scott Cowdell and Neil Ormerod sought to establish that God could have used a 'Darwin style' evolutionary process to bring life into existence, and that the evolutionary principle could be applied to the evolution of ideas. Sister Iliia Delio of Washington Theological Union, in her lecture at St George's Cathedral last year, postulated Jesus as the end point of evolution towards the perfection that is God's will for us. There is hope for the creation and there is hope for the creatures too.

The Sydney symposium ended with the first of a new series of Kenneth Cable Lectures, in which Dr Ivan Head, Warden of St Paul's, challenged his audience to grasp the notion that John Henry Newman's belief in the dynamic of change and continuity was profound and in harmony with the Darwinian perspective.

## REVIEWS

*Why There Almost Certainly Is a God, by Keith Ward (Lion Books, Oxford 2009)*



This is a play on words found at the head of Chapter 4 of Professor Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* – 'Why There Almost Certainly Is Not a God'.

Professor Keith Ward believes Dawkins' passion gets the better of him and he consequently descends into stereotyping, pastiche and mockery.

According to Ward, Dawkins' arguments are thus flawed.

A galaxy of philosophers and several scientists agree – including John Polkinghorne, Russell Stannard and Bernard Carr.

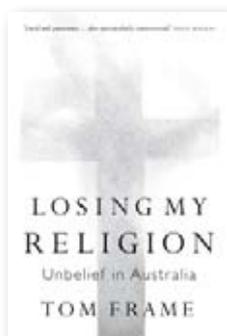
Richard Dawkins claims no theologian has produced a response to his arguments. He should try this one for size.

*Losing My Religion – Unbelief in Australia, by Tom Frame (University of New South Wales Press, Sydney 2009)*

Noting that religions in Australia are multiplying and diversifying, Bishop Tom Frame, currently Director of St Mark's in Canberra and Professor of Theology at Charles Sturt University, takes us a step further.

He suggests many Australians are giving up religion, especially Christianity, altogether. Frame tackles the big question: Why is it that a quarter of the population has no declared religion?

Our good friend Hugh Mackay believes this book is spectacularly controversial – and that it is a beautiful blend of history, theology and sociology.



*Journal of Anglican Studies, Vol 7 (Cambridge University Press, November 2009): www.journals.cambridge.org/ast*



The articles in this issue of the journal form a collection of responses to the Lambeth Conference of 2008 and explore the possibilities of maintaining Communion and the future of the much debated Covenant.

But like all good journals, a highlight is the section containing book reviews. Of particular note are reviews by three Australians (Jeffrey Driver, Charles Sherlock and Ray Cleary) on the place of the Anglican

Church in the wider scene and the chances of success of the Anglican Covenant to preserve unity.

The editor of the journal, Dr Bruce Kay, does not leave us in any doubt about his position. This journal is essential reading.

## READERS' OPINIONS

The Editor welcomes feedback, however critical, on articles published in *Theology Today*. One letter will be chosen and responded to in each forthcoming issue.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### ANGLICAN ADJECTIVES – A FOUR-WEEK LENT COURSE

Wednesdays 5.15pm–6.15pm from 3 March; repeated Mondays, 4.15–5.15pm from 8 March

This year's Lent programme from St George's Cathedral Institute of Anglican Studies examines the Anglican tradition through a series of four adjectives: "liturgical", "inclusive", "reasonable" and "pastoral".

#### 3 MARCH: "Liturgical" – The Reverend Dr David Wood

The ideal of Common Prayer encapsulates the best of language and of the arts accompanying sound theology.

#### 10 MARCH: "Inclusive" – The Right Reverend Brian Kyme

The Anglican Church is catholic and reformed. We test our faith against the Canon of Scripture in the light of Scripture and Reason.

#### 17 MARCH: "Reasonable" – The Very Reverend Dr John Shepherd

Human wisdom and enquiry are utilised in a continuing attempt to define, interpret and formulate our beliefs. The Anglican Church encourages questions.

#### 24 MARCH: "Pastoral" – The Reverend Canon Tony Murray-Feist

The Church proclaims the Good News (Gospel) that God cares. This is done through preaching and translating words into action in caring for the community. This is part of our tradition.

Held on four Wednesdays and repeated on four Mondays through March, the programme is designed for laypeople with a keen interest in Anglicanism.

All are welcome. While encouraged to attend all four sessions in the course, participants are also welcome to attend single sessions.

Venue: The Friends' Room, Lower Burt Memorial Hall  
38A St Georges Terrace, Perth (Wednesdays)

Anglican Church Office, 2nd Floor, Law Chambers,  
Cathedral Square, Perth (Mondays)

Entry: \$10.00 per session (\$7.50 concession)

Further information: [info@perthcathedral.org](mailto:info@perthcathedral.org) (08) 9325 5766

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORLD RELIGIONS – A SERIES OF FOUR LECTURES

Wednesdays 7.30pm–9.00pm from 26 May

On four consecutive Wednesday evenings, a series of descriptive lectures on the major world religions will be delivered by an expert in each faith. Each lecture will be followed by comment on the differences and commonalities between that particular faith and Christianity.



The aim is to begin to discern possible ways of joint service to the Australian community.

26 MAY: Hinduism

2 JUNE: Buddhism

9 JUNE: Islam

16 JUNE: Judaism

Venue: St George's Cathedral, 38 St Georges Terrace, Perth

Entry: \$15.00 per lecture (\$10.00 concession)

Further information: [info@perthcathedral.org](mailto:info@perthcathedral.org) (08) 9325 5766

## SPRING AT THE CATHEDRAL

5 – 22 August

Spring 2010 will feature the Reverend Dr Jane Shaw of New College Oxford and the Reverend Dr Paula Gooder, Canon Theologian of Birmingham Cathedral.



Jane Shaw

Dr Jane Shaw is Dean of Divinity, Chaplain and Fellow of New College, Oxford. She is Reader in Church History, lectures on 19th-century Christian thought and practice, and directs a research project on modern prophecy movements. She is also an honorary canon of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford and Canon Theologian of Salisbury Cathedral.

Ordained in the Church of England, she read history as an undergraduate at Oxford and then lived for eight years in the USA where she was active in the Episcopal Church. She has a PhD in history from the University of California at Berkeley and a Master of Divinity from Harvard University.

Her publications include *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (Yale UP 2006). In 2005, Dr Shaw received the Doctor of Divinity honoris causa in recognition of her contribution to feminist theology and the Anglican tradition worldwide.

Dr Paula Gooder is a freelance writer and lecturer in Biblical Studies. Her research areas are the writings of Paul the Apostle (with a particular focus on 2 Corinthians), New Testament interpretation and the development of ministry in the New Testament period.



Paula Gooder

She is Canon Theologian of Birmingham Cathedral, Visiting Lecturer at King's College, London, Associate Lecturer at St Mellitus College, London, an Honorary Lecturer at the University of Birmingham and Senior Research Scholar at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham. She is a Reader in the Church of England and a member of General Synod.

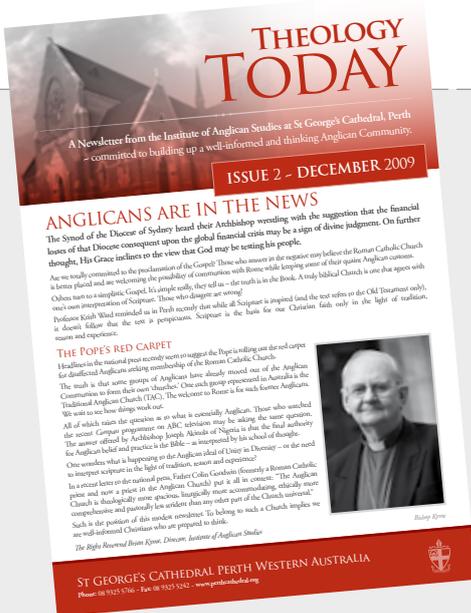
## EFM AT THE CATHEDRAL

Education for Ministry (EFM) is a course designed for people of the Church.

“Ministry” refers to a person's life as a follower of Christ. It means being equipped to understand, share and reflect on our faith and to live our daily lives doing what we are called to do.

The programme takes four years to complete, but commitment is for only one year at a time. EFM group meetings (seminars), limited to ten participants, are for 2.5 hours each, with a commitment of 32 weeks over a 12-month period.

Further information is available from Bishop Brian Kyme (08 9325 5766) or the Reverend Greg Davies (08 9384 9959).



## SUBSCRIBE TO THEOLOGY TODAY

*St George's Cathedral Institute of Anglican Studies exists to help Anglicans become informed and thoughtful members of our Anglican Communion. We are a people on a journey.*

*Bishop Brian Kyme*

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