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# Introduction

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At the end of the millennium, the world's religions find themselves in closer contact than ever before. As in the past, this contact is not always blessed, but can still provoke tension if not outright bloodshed and atrocities. As in the past, religious identity is all-too-often used as a way of distinguishing us from them, and of establishing already enshrined political and ethnic divisions. The crusades of the last millennial-turn may be behind us; genocide, often in the name of religious difference, is not. Now that peace looms in Northern Ireland, glimmers despite setbacks in Israel, and may yet emerge out of the rubble of Kosovo, one hopes that the dreadful lessons of the twentieth century may be finally taken to heart.

Once again, *ARC* is committed to an exploration of the diversity of the religious traditions of the world. Last year's felicitous merger with *Religious Traditions* has intensified this commitment, while providing *ARC* with a greater international reach (now including nineteen countries on five continents).

Our lead article comes from Brian Victoria, who raised eyebrows and interests with his acclaimed book *Zen at War* (1997), an uncompromising analysis of the role of Zen Buddhist leaders and laypersons in the spread of Japanese nationalism and militarism previous to and during WWII. In his contribution to *ARC*, "The Zen of Assassination," Victoria continues on a similar theme, this time examining two specific cases of "Zen Assassination" during the immediate pre-war years. It becomes clear, as the author notes, that the role of Zen "values" in this context is an issue that can no longer be ignored.

In "The Role of Reason in Aquinas and Calvin," Jim Kanaris develops the ways in which reason was used by these two figureheads of divergent Christian traditions, pointing the way, via Canadian philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan, to a possible rapprochement between Catholic and Reformed epistemologies. Daniel Breslauer takes an "eclectic approach" towards the study of Jewish ritual, invoking the major players in twentieth-century Jewish thought in order to expound upon their widely divergent approaches to a single Hasidic tale. Randall Scott, in "The Music of the Mantra," wants to lead us to an appreciation of "emotional enlightenment"; his article raises the possibility of a scholarly bias towards a purely rational understanding of the mantra in esoteric Buddhism. In "How to Approach a

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Strange Manuscript," Michael Gilmour uses a nineteenth-century work of Canadian fiction to present a "novel" approach to the study of ancient scripture. Gereon Kopf's "Alterity and Nothingness" looks closely at the work of Kyoto School *doyen* Nishida Kitarō, specifically Nishida's analysis and understanding of 'I and Thou.'

The final two articles and the first address are concerned with the burgeoning (if inaptly named) field of "comparative religions." Vanessa Sasson examines two ancient texts—*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the Jewish *Tractate Mourning*—expounding upon the similarities beyond the superficial differences in the way each tradition approaches the passage through and beyond death. In the first of this year's addresses, Dean Barry Levy presents an intra-Abrahamic look at the Hebrew Bible, following up and deepening a theme pursued by Jon Levenson in his Birks Lectures of 1998. In the second, we are pleased to include, for the first time in print, the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions," a document prepared by McGill's Arvind Sharma in consultation with other scholars and declared at a 1998 conference commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." And finally, in the same spirit of tolerance and agreement, I humbly include a piece written by myself, an experiment of creative non-fiction which uses the voices of four contemporaneous figures in mediaeval Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism in order to develop some universal themes of interreligious dialogue. Scott Kline has compiled a number of book reviews which, as always, reflect the depth and diversity of the contemporary study of religion.

I would like to express millennial thanks to a number of people without whom this journal would not have seen the light of day: Rose Lenkov, Peggy Roger, and Samieun Khan, for their help in diverse matters of production, Scott Kline, for his efforts as Book Review Editor, Brett Anningston for his diligence as Business Manager, and the members of the Editorial Committee for their keen eyes. One person in particular deserves not only the appreciation of ARC but of the Faculty of Religious Studies as a whole, having been, as it were, the "straw that stirs the drink" for the past fifteen years. I would like to dedicate this 1999 issue of ARC to Marina Costain. In commemoration of Marina's long-time commitment to the Faculty, we are pleased to include, for the first time, a colour insert in ARC: a reproduction of a painting done by resident ARC-artist and FRS alumnus Kim Smiley. We wish Marina all the best in her retirement. And to everyone else, a prosperous and peaceful new millennium.

James Mark Shields

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