
Introduction

I opened last year's introduction with some hopeful remarks about the prospects of world peace in the new millennium. Subsequent events have yet to prove my optimism as anything but wishful thinking: more troubles in Kashmir and renewed violence in Northern Ireland, to name just a few more glaring examples, have brought the joyful 31 December celebrations of global unity crashing down to earth. Indeed, the thesis presented by Samuel Huntington in his now-classic *Clash of Civilizations*—that not only are we about to witness renewed and intensified global and regional conflicts, but these conflicts will increasingly centre around and be motivated by religious faith—seems to be closer to the truth. Yet, as Harvey Cox and others have noted, Huntington misses several important factors about the “resurgence” of religious belief and the politics of religious identity throughout the contemporary world. For one, “civilizations” like the “West” are increasingly made up of *diverse* religious traditions—and this is no less true of Asian countries such as Indonesia. Second, and perhaps more significantly, Huntington downplays the impact of “value colonization”—the thesis that “consumer culture” is reshaping (for better or, many would say, for worse) the world order and may have an incalculable effect on cultural identification and political struggles within and between nations. While the specific effects of globalization are hard to predict, it is hard not to factor this process into the equation. Indeed, the clash (or accommodation) between religion(s) and globalization may be the real event of the coming decades.

As has been our mandate in recent years, this year's official Y2K ARC is committed to fomenting understanding of the world religions in an increasingly international and pluralistic context. Our lead article is adapted from Professor Alan J. Torrance's inaugural Dr. G. Campbell Wadsworth Memorial Lectures, given at the Faculty of Religious Studies in the Spring of 1999. “Is Calvin a Friend of the University: Calvin, Academia, and the Reconciled Mind” attempts to deal with, among other things, the problem of the use (or abuse?) of Calvinist theology by the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa to

justify and support apartheid. Noting the diverse uses of Calvin in other historical cases, such as the debate in wartime Germany between Barth and Brunner, Torrance asks “Will the real John Calvin please stand up”? After taking a critical look at some of the major competing epistemological theories of contemporary philosophers of religion, Torrance concludes that, yes, indeed, Calvin is academia’s much-needed friend. Torrance’s article segues nicely into several other pieces in this year’s *ARC*, which I will get to below (for the sake of diversity, the editors have opted to separate articles on similar themes or traditions).

Our second article comes from prominent Sorbonne Indologist Charles Malamoud. “The Sacrificial Scene: Remarks on the Rivalry Between Myth and Ritual in Vedic India,” as the title indicates, is an account of the nature of ritual and specifically the complex and ill-understood interrelation between ritual and myth in the India of the Vedas. In “The Measure of Justice: The Language of Limit as Key to Simone Weil’s Political Philosophy,” Scott McLoughlin Marratto and Larry Schmidt investigate the question of key terms like *consent*, *attention*, and *obligation* in the political thought of the modern mystic and activist Simone Weil.

Russell Daye follows up nicely on Torrance by turning our attention back towards South Africa and the contemporary post-apartheid context, in which words like “truth” and “reconciliation” begin to resonate with new meaning and importance. Using the work of Paul Ricoeur, Daye seeks to extend theoretical conceptions of truth, identity, and God into the very concrete realm of post-apartheid South Africa. René Paquin of the Université du Montreal reopens the historical debate (or rather, lack of debate) about Calvin and theocracy in sixteenth-century Geneva. Paquin is concerned to dispel the historical commonplace surrounding Calvin’s role in the political machinations of the era; namely, that the French Reformer was a kind of Khomeini figure, directing society at will and freely orchestrating events like the Servetus Affair. Our final article comes from Richard Thompson. His piece, “Reading Beyond the Text, Part I: Poetics, Rhetoric, and Religious Texts from the Greco-Roman World,” the first in a two-part submission to *ARC*, is concerned with identifying Greco-Roman literary conventions which shaped the writing and reception of early Christian texts.

We are pleased to announce a new section in this year's *ARC*. "Discipline in Dialogue" is an open forum for discussion of issues concerning method, theory and pedagogy in the field of religious studies. This section was born out of a recent AAR Eastern International Region discussion on "The Role of the Public Intellectual," organized by my co-editor Philip Tite. We are especially pleased to inaugurate the section with pieces by Russell McCutcheon, whose infamous 1997 *JAAR* piece on similar matters caused a convulsion in religious studies circles, and Susan Henking, whose focus on gender and the public intellectual provides a highly topical and important perspective on the issue.

Finally, before handing over the reins of *ARC* to Philip Tite, I would like to say a few words about the moniker of our fine journal. The name *ARC* has been a matter of some disputation for almost a decade now: whither its origins? should it be retained? and, most pressingly, *what does it mean?* The short answer to the last question is simple: no one knows. The original intention behind the naming process is lost in the mists of time (it was, after all, the 1970s). One can speculate, however. It could be short for the suitably spiritual, yet non-exclusivist "arc of the heavens" (more mellifluous in the French term for rainbow: *arc-en-ciel*). Some have whimsically suggested a link to the Maid of Orléans (and thus a covert Catholic undercurrent to our work), others an analogy with the all-encompassing boat of Noah (with unpursued implications for those "not on the raft"), our resident philosophers raise the potential link to the so-called "hermeneutical arc" which informs much contemporary interpretation, while more pragmatic (and prosaic) types insist that it simply means "Annual Religious Criticism." Personally, I feel that the best answer may still be the first: no one knows. That's why I in my tenure as Editor-in-chief have decided to retain the name *ARC*, despite the many revisionists who have wanted something a little more descriptive. I can only hope my own intransigence is carried on by Phil and future editors. After all, what's religion without a little mystery?

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James Mark Shields

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