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Lead Essay

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From July 27th through August 2nd, 2002, the Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture (ISRC), Payap University hosted a major international conference on the theme, "Religion and Globalization." Over two hundred participants from some 31 nations took part in what is generally agreed to have been a major event in international religious studies. The list of plenary speakers and panels is an impressive one, and some of the individual papers presented are of real value and interest.

This issue of *HeRB* will focus on the conference. In place of the usual two articles by yours truly, readers will find the four papers presented at the plenary panel discussion on "Globalization & Vocation: Four Persons, Four Directions," which I had the honor to chair. There follows my own personal response to the conference, which includes a critical look at various presentations and themes. As is always the case with *HeRB*, this essay is very much a personal one, and it has to be kept in mind that in a conference of this magnitude no one person could take in more than a small fraction of what went on. Finally, some of the "Short Items" in this issue also come from the conference.

As is the nature of the beast, the Payap conference on religion and globalization was at once exciting and tedious, insightful and banal, too much and not enough. On the whole, however, the conference certainly provided a great deal of food for thought. The ISRC Director, John Butt, his staff, and the conference organizing committees are to be commended and thanked for their efforts. I would also like to add a personal note of thanks to Drs. Don Swearer, Parichart Suwanbubbha, Philip Hughes, and to Thra'mu Esther Danpongpee for their participation in the panel on personal responses to globalization and for allowing me to share their papers with the readers of *HeRB*. Don is the Charles & Harriet Cox McDowell Professor of Religion at Swarthmore College; Ach. Parichart is a Lecturer in the Comparative Religion and Ethical Studies Program, Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahidol University; Philip is the founding Director of the Christian Research Association, Australia; and Thra'mu Esther is a Staff Researcher with the Office of History, Church of Christ in Thailand. Their papers are presented here in the order in which they spoke at the conference.

Herb Swanson
Ban Dok Daeng
September 2003

Articles

Globalization & Religious Vocation: A Response

Don Swearer

Herb Swanson didn't provide the panelists with a specific "road map" for this event, but he did suggest that we should address the questions of how globalization shapes our work, or how we see our work as a response to globalization. There were two parts to his charge, "our work," and "globalization," so I intend first to share with you something of "my work" and then step back and ask whether or not it has anything to do with globalization.

My career has been as a teacher of Asian and comparative religions at the undergraduate college level with a special focus on Buddhism, especially the Theravada traditions of South and Southeast Asia. Many of my students have been captivated by Asian cultures and religions, and have found their life's work in this area; some as university professors, others in government service (Bea Camp, a former student, will become the American Consul in Chiang Mai next year), and even a few, I might add, have become Buddhist monks (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, is the abbot of Wat Mettaaram, Valley Center, California, and a productive scholar) I should hasten to add that my students have also become Christian ministers and Jewish Rabbis!

I would like to believe that being students in my classes in Asian and comparative religions helped them to achieve a lasting interest in cultural traditions other than their own, and an empathy for peoples of other ethnicities and religions--in the terminology of postmodernism, those who represent "otherness." I hope that my students learn to appreciate, respect, and even admire differences, rather than being oblivious to or fearing them because those who are different from us seem foreign.. At the same time, it is my fervent wish that my students not only come to appreciate the integrity of difference, but also discover commonalities among those differences and realize that ultimately, beneath our separate ethnicities, religions, cultural backgrounds, and histories, we share a common humanity. Not everyone likes McDonald's hamburgers, but I know no one who doesn't desire love and respect, even though the qualities of love and respect may be expressed in quite different ways in different cultures. Americans shake hands; the French embrace; the Thai wai but these are all forms of greeting. By the way, legend has it that the American handshake developed in the wild West as proof that you weren't holding a gun. These days, it seems we've forgotten that piece of our legendary history!

One of the ways students learn to attain what I call a "global perspective,"-one that embraces both difference and similarity-is through comparative study. Comparative study runs the risk of glossing over differences-"all religions are alike"-or ignoring similarities-"my religion is the truth and all other religions are untruth." Let me give you an example of comparative study in global perspective. I teach an honors seminar in comparative religious ethics called, "Religious Belief and Moral Action." The course focuses on what I refer to as "moral exemplars" in different religious and cultural traditions, for example, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thich Nhat Hanh. The course studies them in their particular historical contexts-the period

of emergent Indian nationalism, the civil rights movement in America, the Vietnam War and international socially engaged Buddhism. Although the historical, religious, and cultural contexts are very different, these "moral exemplars" all embrace the principles of love and compassion, justice, and non-violence.

I cannot guarantee, of course, that all of my students graduate from Swarthmore with a degree in world, rather simply American or Western, citizenship. Such a cosmopolitan self-understanding requires that one attain factual understanding in both breadth and depth, but also qualitative insight that is difficult to teach. I try to bring into the classroom something of the "flavor" (Thai, *rot*) of other cultures and religious traditions so that my students attain a multi-dimensional understanding of, say, the Buddhist Traditions of Asia, one of the subject matters I teach. Unfortunately, university education has become so specialized and one-dimensional that too often our graduates know "more and more about less and less," and lack a broad understanding of what it means to be truly human with aspirations beyond a mere technical expertise or acquiring a handful of advanced degrees that will lead to fame, success, and wealth.

My interest in Asia and Buddhism did not result from academic study but was a consequence of living in Bangkok for two and half years from 1957-60 where I was an instructor at Bangkok Christian College, appointed as a Fraternal Worker by the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. During my last year in Bangkok I also taught English at Mahachulalongkorn University for Buddhist monks. I even had a short television career as an English language instructor on a program which, by an odd coincidence, was produced by Rak Rapong, better known to the Thais in the audience at Phra Bodhirak, the founder of the Santi Asok movement. (So far as I know, this coincidence had nothing to do with Bodhirak's decision to leave the entertainment industry and become a monk!!)

On the eve of my return to the United States my students at Mahachula presented me with several books authored by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu who in the 1950's had already established a reputation as one of Thai Buddhism's most distinctive interpreters of Buddhadhamma. The Mahachula monks could not have foreseen-or perhaps they did-that this *dhamma* gift was to become one of the turning points in my spiritual and professional journey. After reading these books my feeling of spiritual kinship with Buddhadasa was as overpowering as when I immersed myself in the Apostle Paul's New Testament letters and the writings of Dietrich Bonhoffer when I was a high school student, or read St. Augustine and Soren Kierkegaard in college, and was challenged to think critically about comparative religions by Mircea Eliade as a young graduate student. A consistent focus of my professional life has been an on-going interest in Buddhadasa that has resulted in two books of translations and several articles about his provocative interpretations of Buddhist thought and practice.

Upon my return to America I completed seminary and then graduate studies in the history of religions and began my teaching career, first at Oberlin College in Ohio, and subsequently at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. During these thirty-eight years I have had the good fortune to spend several research leaves in Asia, primarily in Thailand but also Sri Lanka and Japan. Residencies of several months in Chiang Mai have made an indelible and lasting impression on my wife and two children and instilled in them a global, cross-cultural perspective. In fact, my

son, a marine biologist, now makes his home in Melbourne, Australia, and is on the faculty at Melbourne University.

I have been truly blessed over the years to have had the privilege of working with many Asian colleagues as mentors and friends. While in Sri Lanka in 1967 I was mentored by the Buddhist philosopher, K.N. Jayatilleke, and the German monk, Nyanaponika Thera, my first meditation teacher; and, later in Japan by Eshin Nishimura and Bando Shojun at Hanazona and Otani Buddhist Universities. Subsequently, I invited them to co-teach January term courses with me at Oberlin College. It was during this 1967-68 sabbatical leave year that I made the acquaintance of S. Sivaraksa, and it was Acharn Sulak who took me to Suan Mokh to meet Buddhadasa Bhikkhu for the first time. Over the years my life has intersected with Sulak's so often that the only explanation must be karmic synchronicity! Most recently we invited him to Swarthmore College as the Lang Visiting Professor of Social Change for the Fall term, 2002. Other Thai friends, colleagues, and mentors who have figured prominently in my professional and personal life are so numerous that I can mention only a few. I have known, and admired, Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto) almost as long as Acharn Sulak, and it was my great honor to have arranged for him to be a guest professor at Swarthmore College and also at Harvard where we were both in residence at the Center for the Study of World Religions. The late Singkha Wannasai of Lamphun introduced me to much of what I know about northern Thai Buddhism and traditions, and also filled a personal void left by my father's death when I was a young man of twenty. I have often turned to Mani Phayomyong, emeritus professor, Chiang Mai University, for help in translating northern Thai texts and for his extensive knowledge of northern Thai culture. Sommai Premchit has been a friend and professional colleague *par excellence*. Acharn Sommai spent a Fulbright year at Swarthmore College with his family, and we have co-authored several articles and books including *The Legend of Queen Cama*, and the *Sacred Mountains of Northern Thailand and Their Legends* in collaboration with Phaitun Dokbuakaew. For the past two years I have worked closely with Herb Swanson on a project called "Christian Identity in Buddhist Thailand." Herb heads the Department of History of the Church of Christ in Thailand, has amassed an invaluable archive of material on the history of the Protestant church in northern Thailand, and even recently received an award from his home village his lasting contributions to Ban Dok Daeng. Finally, I should mention Acharn Saeng Chandrangam whose wisdom is matched by his compassion, and whose association with the Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture makes Buddhist-Christian dialogue a reality rather than a theory.

You may be wondering what this litany of mentors, colleagues, and friends has to do with "my work" and globalization. I see it as a graphic illustration of the obvious fact that my work has occurred in a global context that in an earlier age would have been difficult if not impossible. Bangkok Christian College where I taught for over two years was a product of the late nineteenth century missionary movement that contributed to the modernization of Siam at the time it was emerging as a nation-state, and Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University came out of the same state-building impulse. My religious self-understanding has been challenged and transformed, deparochialized and globalized through my encounters with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Phra Dhammapitaka, and S. Sivaraksa; and, my teaching and scholarly work has been continuously broadened and enriched by the opportunities I've had to live and study in Asia--an on-going

cross-cultural experience greatly expedited by the technologies we associate with globalization ranging from modern jet travel to the internet.

But globalization has affected me in another way, also directly related to the time I've spent in Thailand over the years. When I came to Chiang Mai the view of Doi Suthep was unobstructed by condominiums, and the scenery along the Chiang Mai-Lamphun road, still lined with giant Yang trees now "ordained" with saffron sashes, was dominated by rice paddies. There wasn't a Seven-Eleven or a Swenson's to be seen nor was there an Airport Plaza Shopping Mall, and *wat* and other religious edifices still outnumbered banks and service stations-but, there was also no Rama Hospital, or Payap University, and the government was controlled by the military. The impact of globalization on Thailand and around the world has challenged me to shift the focus of my study of Buddhism and other religions to the area of social ethics, as the seminar to which I referred earlier illustrates. I have found the socially engaged Buddhism movement a challenge both personally and as a scholar, and my forthcoming book on sacred mountain traditions in northern Thailand explores this subject not as a cultural artifact but as a basis for an environmental ethic.

Several years ago, the American environmentalist, Bill McKibben wrote a book entitled, *The End of Nature*. He demonstrated that if the nations of the world don't dramatically curtail carbon dioxide emissions, nature as we have known it for hundreds and thousands of years would be altered in ways unprecedented in human history. The global environmental crisis to which McKibben points is matched today by a host of other global crises. I believe that today's globalized world challenges all of us-ractioneers and scholars alike-to find in the religious traditions to which we are committed and which we study, resources to address the pressing issues of our time-war and violence, civil and human rights, the exploitation of women and children, poverty and the increasing gap between rich and poor, AIDS and other pandemic diseases, the depletion of natural resources, the preservation and conservation of natural habitats, the destruction of local cultures, and the commodification of value-to name only a few. In this mutual undertaking of which this conference is an example, we shall come to a new appreciation of the uniqueness of our particular faith-traditions but also of the universal principles of love and justice that underlie them. I believe this to be a moral imperative that we ignore at our own peril and the peril of the world.

My Religious Vocation and Globalization

Parichart Suwanbubbha

What is my religious vocation?

My understanding of a word 'vocation' is that it is related to 'a person's occupation, profession, or trade, in brief, how a living is made'. (Elmen, 1990, 684) If the word has nonreligious connotations, my vocation is objectively the effort of 'teaching about Buddhism and Christianity.' I was born in a Thai Theravada Buddhist family. My father was a (professional) monk (This kind of ordination is for having a chance to study dhamma and those who take it

usually spend a longer time ordained than do monks as it is a Thai custom of Thai men that they remain monks for as little ass months,15 days or even 7 days) before he married. Buddhism is then not a strange discipline for me to get used to. When I started working at comparative religion, my university needed a local staff person to teach Christianity, and I was supported by both kind Thai and American professors in my studies at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and in the University of Chicago. It may be said that I had ‘the call’ to learn about Christianity systematically, not ‘the call’ to become the member of a church.

On the one hand, my vocation is as a lecturer in the comparative religion of Buddhism and Christianity; on the other hand, for my own religious vocation, I try to be an engaged Buddhist and involve myself with dialogical activity to promote interfaith understanding and cooperation especially between Buddhism and Christianity.

My Religious Vocation and Various Faces of 'Globalization'

Certainly, it is true that my religious vocation is affected by globalization. I consider the term ‘globalization' to be neutral, that is, it is not good or bad in itself. Its meaning depends on how people apply the term to their own circumstances and benefit. In other words, the uses of the term globalization can be both positive and negative. Therefore we will do best to consider it ‘as it is,' and not merely reject or accept it totally. As all of us know, **one obvious face of globalization is that of 'liberator,'** which is considered as positive because globalization provides people with more conveniences, comfort, and even a higher standard of living. (The classification of globalization in this article is adapted from the classification of technology as liberator, as therat and as instrument of power by lan G. Barbour.Please see the reference at the end of this article). Applying this aspect to my teaching, it is more comfortable and easier to search for information through internet and through an e-library (our future plan). Any student can do the same as well. The advanced technology in globalization then reminds me that in my roles as a lecturer I should not any longer behave as a mediator who passes informative knowledge to students. Students themselves who work hard and love to involve themselves in the process of learning need not depend on my information because they can search for 'What is Christianity? Who is Jesus Christ? What did the Buddha teach? and so on for themselves. I had better encourage them to analyze, to have 'a critical interpretation,' and to integrate their learning into their daily life. In other words, there are two messages from this optimistic aspect of globalization in religious teaching. That is,

1. The changing role of student and teacher should encourage students to engage in critical thinking and apply knowledge to create other new bodies of knowledge. For example, in learning about 'stewardship' in Christianity students should be able to apply what they learn as 'an ethics of stewardship' for reducing the environmental crisis. The student's learning will not involve simply explanations about the commandments of God. Then we should love God and neighbor and that's it! Put in anther way, they should not only learn what Christianity is but also how Christian teaching will respond to other related concepts and to current problems.

2. The content of teaching should be selected to be suitable to the context of students. I realize that this may be true as well for Buddhist monks and Christian missionaries and that both need to preach and teach people in accordance with their personal and social context. For example, at

Mahidol University, we have a class on 'integrated humanity' for first year medical, dentist, pharmacy and medical technician under-graduate students. We use a team teaching approach that includes various subjects in humanities such as philosophy and religion. Christianity is one religion that is included in this class. Frankly speaking, teaching religion in a big class of more than 100 students is quite difficult, and teaching about Christianity when the majority of students are Buddhists is even more challenging. However, I try to introduce them to Christianity by persuading them to appreciate the value of any religion. We also have two methodologies in studying religion, that is the subjective method and objective one. In our class room, we will use an objective methodology to learn what Christians believe, which may sound different from our Buddhist traditions-such as the ideas of Virgin Mary, Jesus' miracles, and the event of Jesus' resurrection.

Then, as I teach about Christianity, I take the opportunity to apply the second face of **globalization as threat** in which globalization seems to emphasize material values more than human ones. That is, globalization usually goes hand in hand with the progress of technology. ''When the technological mentality is dominant, people are viewed and treated like objects.'' (Barbour 1980, 43) My emphasis is that every one, whether rich or poor, Chinese or Thai, man or woman, happy or from a broken family share the same 'human dignity.' In a large class room like I teach in, students themselves can realize that there are, as previously mentioned, many shades of difference; therefore, it is not 'a day dream' that we can attract their intention to consider ways in which they can develop positive thinking in order to increase their sense of human value and their self confidence. That is, in the classroom I teach them that human beings are created in the image of God which means that the ‘personhood' of each person is valuable and sanctified, each one has their own autonomous and individual identity. Theoretically speaking, every individual should be secure in her or his human dignity despite all of their diverse physical and social limitations. This approach attempts to rid the students of whatever inferiority complex they may have. When they themselves are assured that they are able to create self-esteem and confidence in light of religious teaching, they will appreciate the value of religion. They will then be able to apply the concept of human dignity to the life of every patient that these students will be involved with in the future after their graduation. They should see that each patient has the same equal value and accept the fullness of their human dignity whether they are poor and under-privileged or high society patients in the expensive rooms. These two types of patients are supposed to be treated to the best of their ability in accordance with the code of professional ethics and without concern for social status. Furthermore, the understanding of personhood as understood in the concept of the "image of God" will also be important for my students in cases that they may have to deal with controversial medical ethical situations such as euthanasia, family planning and abortion, including the patients' rights in the future.

In order to assure the students even more and to relate the idea of the equality of human dignity to the majority Buddhist students in the class, we also use Buddhist teachings to support the concept of human dignity. Buddhism states that human beings can be trained and developed in all walks of life only if they have the intention (cetana) to learn and develop themselves. (Phra Dhammapitaka 1999, 13) This means that Buddhism puts human beings at the center; we are equally able to have 'human-centered development' because Buddhist liberation will be done through our own individual action, work, effort (kamma), and insight meditation. Therefore

whatever bad and undesired situations people experience in life will hardly bear fruit as far as people keep producing more good kammic actions.

In the face of the threat of globalization, as described above, we need to emphasize human values more than a materialistic mentality. In this way, we really hope that there will be responsible and efficient medical workers and doctors who will treat patients as 'human beings.'

To repeat, I think that the best way to teach ethics and religion to teenaged students should be to start by highlighting the themes that are close to their life, the meaning and value of life, how to improve their life, how to increase self-confidence. Then we will be surprised that even students in the science disciplines express their enjoyment and eagerness to learn more about the spiritual dimension of life. I consider this opportunity to introduce religious studies to students as a way to address the crisis resulting from globalization. I should add that the negative impact of globalization as threat also appears on the agenda of the United Nations in the concept of 'human security' which refers to 'the need that people should be able to lead their lives without having their survival threatened or their dignity impaired.' (Ogata 2002, 23)

Personally speaking, the dehumanizing impact of globalized structures also reminds me of other issues I want my students to be aware of. Domestic violence toward women, sexual exploitation and prostitution, child abuse, terrorism and war, are all more or less derived from treating human beings as objects. Therefore my religious vocation needs to start with the concept of personhood, the meaning of life and human dignity.

The last face of globalization I would like to consider is **as an instrument of power**which is another negative aspect of globalization. It is widely known that globalization provides us with unlimited information and the circulation of money that is more rapid than ever before. The free exchange of goods and money affects both the consumer life style of so-called secular students and spiritual life of monk students. Some students apply materialistic values even to their concepts of making merit. In most classes we talk at length about how to be smart in merit making without using money. In a class on 'human relations and self development' for environmental and natural resource sciences undergraduate students, my students have shared with me stories from their field study trips to demonstrate how to preserve and recycle unwanted garbage. We try to analyze how they feel after they finished assisting villagers. They said they were happy and proud of their actions, which provided a good chance for me to emphasize the proper concept of making merit, one that can be fulfilled by giving useful advice to the poor villagers and by showing care for those who cannot gain a livelihood in the market. They also better understood the lesson of globalization as an instrument of power that increases the power of those who are already powerful. We all agree that "globalization should serve above all the people. Globalization with a human face should be people-centered and based on the following objectives and values: sustainable development enabling a life in dignity for all; global responsibility and solidarity; social justice and inclusion, human rights". (Holtz 2000, www.sidint.org)

Consequently, globalization as an instrument of power, more or less, has an impact on our Thai social structures in the form of institutional power over persons. One opportunity I have to address this issue is when I teach classes for monks at both Buddhist universities. As a woman lecturer, I must have the courage to point out some of the struggles in the religious life of Mae Chee (nuns, lay women in white, not considered as ordained) and Bhikkhunis (female monks , not accepted officially by the Thai monk community) to monk students, who are all men. (In this article, I use a term 'female monk' for *bhikkhuni*, anun for *mae chee*). Since Thai society is 'a very hierarchical status and power-oriented structured society' (Komin 1979, 20) men are normatively superior to females. Traditionally, male monks have a better chance in the religious dimension than ordained women. In general, most Thai women support Buddhism by making merit. While at present there are more women taking part in teaching meditation to people and even to monks, there are still many women who desire and are ready to be in the religious sphere but must still struggle for a proper religious status. They experience what may be called religious and social injustice and a violation of women's rights. Frankly speaking, it is a very sensitive and complicated issue, one that involves monastic rules, the long-held traditional feeling of Thai people, and the global concept of human rights. I realize that a complete change and total acceptance of women as female monks may be beyond what the public can accept. However, I find that it is necessary to reconsider how we treat and ignore these women who struggle to have a meaningful place in the religious space. By the sharing of existing power, I would like to encourage developments that will improve the religious females' situation. In applying Hegel's dialectic method, the situation may be like this:

Thesis: Thai religious women need to be developed in accordance with a concept of feminism.

Antithesis: This development should not ignore cultural, social and religious values of Thai society.

Synthesis: Any changes and development should be based on 'the Buddhist Feminism of the Middle Path which is a joyful appreciation of the 'equal value' of men and women's action (*kamma*) instead of the old stereotype of gender roles. 'Equality is that what women do should be regarded as of equal value as what men do.' (Gross 1996,24). This synthesis means:

1. the realization of the interconnectedness (paticcasamuppada) and mutual support for both *bhikkhus and* bhikkhunis including *mae chees*. All of them should be allowed sufficient participation in decision-making concerning any changes and developments.

2. mindfulness and wisdom in translating the understanding of Buddhist teaching into proper action. We need to distinguish and not to confuse the 'Buddhist eternal principle' (according to Buddhist scriptures, women are able to attain the highest goal of religious life the same as men. Buddhism treats men and women equally) with its 'social and cultural context and expression' (Thai women cannot be ordained as female monks) and then reinterpret the teaching in accordance with *dhammavinaya* (teachings and monastic rules) for the inclusion of women as well.

3. loving-kindness (metta) to both *bhikkhus* and *bkikkhunis* including *mae chees*. This women's movement does not aim at causing people to dislike each other. It is, rather, an effort to seek more opportunity for and be aware of including women more fully in the religious sphere. Any harsh and unskillful actions are not welcome, otherwise women as victims will become doers who perform the next violence against those seeking liberation.

This may not be the best solution for the abuse of hierarchical power towards Thai religious women, but at least it is an effort to share the problems and remind my monk students of possible changes that can take place in their awareness of attitudes and proper actions towards women.

A Course on Dialogue

Above all, the influence of globalization on my religious vocation is in the concept of 'dialogue.' That is to say, as we all know, globalization connects people around the world with easy communication and with goods and services. The more globalization is related to the 'globe', the more 'locality' is called for. I agree with this statement. As a result, globalization really draws me closer to 'dialogue'. That is, globalization actually encourages us to pay attention indirectly to the various cultures, various languages, and various religions. The more we find ourselves caught up in the diversity of cultures, of languages and of religions in the global village due to globalization, the more we are encouraged to support our local cultures, our dialects and our own religion. In the process of dialogue, although we open our hearts to listen to the different beliefs of our partners (= the global), we also need to declare our own religious identity (= the local). Myself, I have learnt and taught about Christianity but whenever I enter into the process of dialogue, I share my belief as a Buddhist. In practice, I have been teaching a class on 'inter-religious dialogue' for graduated students at Mahidol and Assumption Universities. From time to time, I introduce the same subject at Mahachula and Mahamonkut Buddhist Universities. Teaching about dialogue is very challenging for me. Some of my monk students are eager to hear and judge whether I teach this class on behalf of Christianity or not. Owing to their previous experience, the concept of 'dialogue' is related to the concept of 'conversion.' In fact, the principle of dialogue is a form of the systematic study of religion. It is OK. to have 'win-win conversion' (Chia 2001, 181). Such "conversion" means that I try to share with my Christian partner why my belief is most valuable and try to persuade him or her to agree with me, then that person may learn, grow and change his or her understanding about my belief. (Swidler 1987,6) At the same time, my Christian partner will do the same. In other words, 'just as one hopes to convert the other, one is also open to being converted by the other'. (Chia 2001, 181) I think the word "conversion," however, has a problematic meaning for Thai people due to previous negative experiences. We may be afraid of the type of dialogue that aims at 'winning over' (Chia 2001, 181) as the primary purpose of doing dialogue. Therefore the influences of globalization really has an affect on my religious vocation, which leads me to be careful in introducing this concept to my Thai students as I seek to prove to them that ‘inter-religious' dialogue is able to increase our spiritual growth, understanding, and mutual cooperation in this pluralistic world.

Engaged Buddhism and Liberation Theology

At this point, I would like to emphasize that although globalization has an impact on shaping the strategy of my religious vocation, I believe that human beings can redirect and control globalization. It depends on how much we can use 'wisdom' to reconsider, reformulate, and reinterpret religious teaching so as to transform it into action. In this way, people will realize the value of the religious dimension in the context of the growth of technology and the spread of globalization all over the world. At least, when I consider the roles of socially engaged Buddhists and activist liberation theologians in Christianity, I realize that they share common characteristics and that both are necessary in the present global context. That is, the concept of engaged Buddhism will consider that 'wisdom is not authentic unless expressed in action,' (Kraft 1999,11). Therefore, when individuals carry out a "service-based" practice, they are also exercising "mindfulness-based" practice as well. One should consider and be aware of the existing suffering of people, such as the poor, abused women and children, and the under-privileged including nature itself. Then one can sympathize with and identify oneself with the suffering world and take action to reduce such problems. (Christopher 2000, 8) Involvement in external, social work means one needs patience, devotion, and self-detachment. This is the great test, namely to purify the mind, which is considered as inner work. In Christianity, liberation theology also focuses on 'life experience; then the social analysis of that experience (seeing); thereafter, a theological reflection on that experience under the light of the Scriptures (judging); and afterward, planning a praxis directed toward the transformation of the shared experience (acting), which leads to a new experience worthy of further analysis.' (Maduro 1992, 290) By being able to apply religious teaching and practice to respond to existing global situations such as suffering and oppression, one will realize the value of religion, and then one will use religion to redirect globalization instead.

Personally speaking, I think my obvious duty is to provide my students with the complete details about globalization and inform them about the roles of religion in responding to the growth of globalization. Giving enough information, one will prevent 'moha ' (delusion) which is a root of suffering and misery in community. Although globalization reinforces my religious vocation, I still believe that I have to apply its influences to shape my proper religious work as an instructor in comparative Buddhism and Christianity and as a laywoman practitioner involved in inter-religious dialogue.

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Globalization and Ministry with the Karen

Esther Danpongpee

In my understanding, globalization means making the whole world over into one place. It means unifying the world. The reason I say this is because of the present condition of the world as reflected in the news, which is a world suffering under the oppression of one global system. Just as globalization has had a tremendous impact on our world today, so too have we Karen, as a local people, experienced that impact a great deal. Still, we can agree that globalization has both a positive and a negative effect on our lives. I would like to invite you to look at both the positive and negative consequences of globalization on the Karen and how we carry out ministry with the Karen.

What Globalization Means for Me

On the one hand, there are many advantages to globalization. We Karen live mostly in the mountains and hill regions of Burma and Thailand as an isolated and poor people. Because of globalization, we have the opportunity to communicate with other people and to improve our lives, thinking, and understanding. Trips, for example, that used to take us three or five days walking now take only three to five hours driving. So, it is much easier for us to visit each other and keep up our relationships with each other and encourage each other. Our churches can communicate with each other more easily since we no longer have to walk everywhere as we had to do before.

Because globalization makes transportation easier, we local people have opportunities to go out, and at the same time people from the outside can always come to meet us. In the same way, as transportation has improved we also have more conveniences, especially electricity. This means that in many ways life in the mountains and hills has become easier. With electricity, moreover, comes television, videos, and the telephone. Through television, mountain people have a chance

to know more about what is happening in the world, the world's situation. We can learn many new things, have new ideas, and improve some parts of our lives.

On the other hand, we can see that there are many negative consequences of globalization as well. When we have so many conveniences, some of us-including our young people-become lazy. Everything is too easy, too convenient for them. They do not use their strongest qualities, their strength, energy, and intelligence. They no longer think about doing things for themselves. Most Karen young people today do not know how to use Karen materials and tools that are still commonly used by our older people. More than this, we have seen that most Karen people in northern Thailand today cannot read and write their own language very well. Because of globalization, the Karen people have more relationships with others and more education. They have to deal with many other cultures. This leads them to imitate others and to forget who they are as Karen. Some even look down on their own culture and traditions.

Especially in our Karen churches in Thailand today, we have to face these problems, and we urgently need to find ways to revive and awaken the consciousness of our church members. If we look at how the Karen are living in other countries, especially in Burma, we see how much they are struggling to maintain our culture and traditions. They try in every way possible and have committed themselves to both maintaining Karen culture and improving it.

So, when I look at the situation we Karen face here in Thailand, I feel very sad and deeply concerned. I don't mean that when we commit ourselves to maintaining and improving our own culture we have to look down on or hate the cultures of others. We should show respect for other people's cultures and traditions and even be willing to use them. But, at the same time, we must know ourselves and give value to our own culture and traditions too. We must no look down on what is ours. But, because of globalization we do look down on what is Karen. The wrong principles and the wrong values are sweeping over our Karen people today.

In fact, the Karen people have their own theology, their own understanding of God. But in this time of globalization, they have thrown that theology away and taken the theology of others as their own. When the Karen try to make the theology of other's their own, however, they lose touch with themselves and who they are. What saddens me even more deeply is that even those who come among us calling themselves Christian missionaries use our culture and people for material gain. In my home area of Musikee, personal business and money-making is in the background of a large Christian development project. It hurts me deeply to see such individuals use the poor "in the name of Jesus" to increase their own wealth and power.

Not the least of our problems as Karen Christians in today's global environment is the way Thai and global culture washes over our people and the church. The educated church leaders and members of the Karen churches in Thailand, especially, have to be careful about the influence of Thai and global culture. Because they struggle in every way for the growth and development of their churches, they sometimes will follow the blueprints for church growth of other peoples and nations until they forget themselves and lose their identity as Karen. They are very happy and proud with their success, but the result of their borrowing too much from others is that the Karen-ness of the churches is gradually lost. Thai-ness is replacing it. Such people still wear

Karen dress when they go to church, but most of the church's program is in the Thai language and uses Thai forms.

Most of the Karen in Thailand today speak a mixture of Karen and Thai. They do not know or understand "pure" Karen. They think our language is so poor that we do not have suitable words for what they want to say, but that is not true. Karen is a very rich language and has many beautiful and valuable words and idioms.

Since globalization has arrived, most of the Karen try to modernize and "Thai-ize" their way of living, for example, in the styles of their homes and furnishings, the food they eat, the way they dress, and even the games they play. Speaking as a Karen, I find these things unpleasant. They do not replace the things we are losing. Originally, for example, the Karen were a people known for their hospitality, but now in the age of globalization Karen hospitality has grown dim. It is not as clearly seen as before.

When we look back on the history of the Karen, we can see clearly that originally the Karen as a tribe were an honest, righteous, faithful, and honorable people. They loved peace, silence, and the simple life, and they had no love of fighting. Why, today, do the Karen have to fight? Why are our lives a struggle? The reason it is now essential for the Karen to fight is because they are oppressed so much that they are now forced to do things they do not want to do. When I visit my Karen brothers and sisters in the refugee camps in Mae La District on the Burma border and see and hear about their actual situation, it is so painful for me that I cannot stop my tears from flowing. It is painful for me and for all Karens.

I would like to share with you a poem written by a Karen refugee brother, the Rev. Dr. Simon, that reflects the real conditions of the refugees. This is his living testimony:

They call us a displaced people,
But praise God; we are not misplaced.
They say they see no hope for our future,
But praise God; our future is as bright as the promise of God.
They see they say the life of our people is misery,
But praise God; our life is a mystery.
For what they say is what they see,
And what they see is temporal.
But ours is the eternal,
All because we put ourselves,
In the hands of God we trust.

My Ministry in the Age of Globalization

As I am a poor Karen woman-poor in education, in strength, in wealth, in quality-how can I help my people, who experience globalization as if it were a mountainous wave? Other than pray to God to rescue them, sometimes it seems that I can do nothing. But, I can try to do even a little, and the things I'm doing include the following:

Firstly, I have been doing research in the history of the Karen churches in northern Thailand. In our history, we rediscover who we are, and I can tell you that the Karen churches of Thailand are hungry to know their past. But, I don't do this research just by myself. I am trying to encourage church leaders and members to do their own research so that they may come to know their past for themselves-so they can keep the good and valuable things, see their own needs and weaknesses and correct them, and so they can find out for themselves ways to free themselves from the oppression they face today.

Secondly, I have worked with a local committee in my own church to arrange five-day "church & culture" camps held during the October holidays. The purpose of these camps, attended by children and young people, is to awaken the consciousness of Karen youths and children and to give attention to the revival of our culture. During these camps, we train them how to use traditional culture for their life now. We encourage them to wear traditional dress. We prohibit the use of any language except Karen. We teach them how to cook Karen food. We teach them Karen music, songs, and anthems and how to play traditional musical instruments. They learn herb lore, traditional games, and crafts such as cloth weaving and basket making. During the camp, everyone studies Karen literacy and Karen history, and it brings me real joy to see how willing and excited our children and young people are to take part in all of these activities. Last year over one hundred participated, not counting the many adults involved, and this coming October we plan to hold an even larger camp for other Karen churches from our area.

Thirdly, I have been involved in discovering a Karen Christian theology and have led two consultations with pastors and local church leaders on Karen theology. Our hope is to preserve the many beautiful traditional beliefs of the Karen and hand them on to the next generation. During these consultations, we studied Karen folklore, poetry, stories, proverbs, riddles, and oral religious traditions to see how they can contribute to our expression of the Christian faith. We have, as they say, been learning to "read the Bible with Karen eyes." The participants have shown real interest, and they have asked us to do more consultations with a larger audience. This coming November I hope to visit Karen communities in Burma that still practice the traditional Karen religion, called *moluebala*, without influence from either Buddhism or Christianity. I want to learn more from them about how we Karen have worshipped God for many, many centuries. In rediscovering Karen theology, I see that we will be able to regain our culture and theology in the churches so that a faith that is truly Christian, truly Karen may come back to life again.

These are a few of the small things I am doing for our Karen people in northern Thailand today. We are facing a "mountainous wave of globalization," and I hope and pray that these activities can help in a small way to save the Karen from the impact of globalization. I'm not sure how much they will gain from this work, but I believe it is better to do a few small things than to give up and do nothing. Thank you.

Ministry and Globalisation in Australia

Philip Hughes

My home is in Australia. But it has not always been that way. I was born in London. Back in the early 60s, my parents decided to immigrate to Australia. The major reason for the decision was the Cold War. They had been active in the peace movement and were very anxious about the tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the fact that Britain had so many American military bases located in it, making it an inevitable target if nuclear war did become a reality. They thought that Australia would be a little safer. They had no knowledge of the American military bases also present there!

Thus, we joined the millions of people around the globe who are on the move, looking for safety and security, looking for a better life. We were among the fortunate ones, welcomed by Australia, rather than those who have recently tried to immigrate and found themselves placed in desert prisons and shut away for years behind miles of barred wire. My father had a job to go to in Australia. Our family was welcomed by a local church which found us a place to stay until we could choose our own, stocking our cupboards with food and inviting us into their homes.

The flow of immigrants and refugees is part of the patterns of globalisation. Of all the people who currently live in Australia, about one person in three was born overseas. Most others have been there only two or three generations at most. Only one person in fifty identifies themselves as Aboriginal.

The settlement of Europeans in Australia, which occurred first in 1788, can be seen as being a consequence of the European desire to map the globe and to build controlling influences around it — early forms of globalisation.

The 19th century in Australia was a period in which Australia saw the influx of migrants from all over the world, bringing with them many of the world's religions. Following the discovery of gold in 1851, tens of thousands of Chinese joined the Europeans on the gold fields, hoping to strike lucky. A few of Chinese Daoist and Buddhist temples built in the days of the Gold Rushes still exist. Not long after, Indians began arriving. Many of them became hawkers, moving around the huge country, selling cloth, soap and other products to the widely scattered farmers and miners. Afghan Moslems arrived in the latter part of the 19th century with camels. They opened up the out-back areas of Australia, providing transport and cartage for the outback communities. They built the first mosques in Australia, two of which survive — one in Broken Hill and another in Adelaide.

At the same time, indigenous people continued to practice their own spiritual practices where they were able. The treatment of the indigenous people by the Europeans is a very sad story and a major blight on the last 200 years of European history. Europeans failed to recognise the reality of Aboriginal law, spirituality, morality. In fact, they failed to recognise them as fully

human. And many were exterminated like vermin. The point remains, however, that despite the prejudices and ethno-centrism of the early settlers, they found themselves in multi-cultural and multi-faith society, as a result of globalisation of exploration and immigrant movements as people looked for an income.

The Australian Federal government, as distinct from the governments of the various States around Australia, was created in 1901. One of the first acts of the Federal government was to virtually ban immigration from non-English speaking countries by requiring that all immigrants pass tests in the English language before they were allowed to enter the country. Many of the non-English speaking immigrant communities dwindled. Many Chinese, Indians and Afghans went home and their communities virtually disappeared from the Australian scene. For more than 50 years, the White Australia policy, as it was called, maintained the dominance of British-born Europeans.

The scene began to change following World War II as Australia opened its doors to new waves of immigrants. The first wave of immigration following World War II was from Europe. Large numbers of immigrants arrived from Britain, Germany and Holland. Other large groups arrived from Italy and Greece in southern European, and from Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe. Melbourne, where I live, is now described as one of the largest Greek cities in the world apart from Athens with a quarter of a million people from Greece living there. There are even more people of Italian background.

A second wave of immigration began in the late 1960s from the Middle East, following the civil war in Lebanon and war with Israel. Lebanese Christians followed by Lebanese Moslems began arriving. Then others came from other parts of the Middle East: many thousands from Turkey, some from Syria. There is even an Assyrian community in Australia. It was the Moslems from Lebanon and Turkey who began to build mosques around Australia. There are now mosques and significant Moslem communities in all major Australian cities.

Immigrants from Vietnam began arriving in Australia in the late 1970s following the war in Vietnam. Among them were many Catholics from the south. Again, large number of Buddhists also came from Vietnam. There are currently about 175,000 people in Australia who speak Vietnamese at home.

In the 1980s, the immigration laws changed again. Australia began encouraging wealthy business people from all over the world to come to Australia. Tens of thousands of wealthy business Chinese arrived from Hong Kong and other parts of China. So Chinese is now one of the most dominant languages in Australia apart from English. Tens of thousands of wealthy Indians arrived.

Each group has brought its own religious heritage. In the last thirty years, there has been a flurry of building of Buddhist temples of all kinds — Chinese, Thai, Cambodian, Korean - Hindu temples, Sikh temples and Islamic mosques. All the major religions of the world now have a significant presence in Australia, from the Baha'is to the Zoroastrians. I was interested to see a program on the television a year ago about a Hmong community — one of the tribal groups

living in these hills in the Chiang Mai area - practising its own ancient animistic practices in Australia.

The global flow of immigration has directly contributed to the context of ministry. Globalisation of the media, of business and academia, of sport and other forms of culture, and most recently of terrorism has added to the very strong sense that we live in a multi-cultural and multi-faith environment. Australians travel. Every year, hundreds of thousands go overseas — many for pleasure, others for business or academic pursuits.

Ordained as a Christian minister 25 years ago, I was aware that the church had to change to respond to the changes occurring in the Australian environment and in its culture. But how should the church change? And what should not be changed in order for the church to remain the church over against the culture?

I felt that I could think through this issue most effectively if I examined what had happened to the church in a cultural context quite different from my own. I was also keen to learn more of the Asian context in which I saw Australia to be located geographically, if not culturally. Hence, after some study of sociology and anthropology back in England, I came to Thailand in 1979 to look at the expression of the Christian faith here in the context of the Buddhist culture. I lived and worked here in Chiang Mai for 3 years, completing my doctoral studies here through the McGilvary Faculty of Theology. That experience has certainly helped to prepare me for ministry and further research in the Australian context.

For a large part of my life, I have had two jobs. I have worked half-time as the minister of a church, and half-time in research for the churches of Australia. In both occupations, the inter-faith and global context has been significant.

My last church in Melbourne where I was the minister for 9 years was relatively mono-cultural: mostly people with a Scottish Presbyterian ancestry. But, we did have a few people from other cultures who came into the life of the church, people from Korea, Singapore, Hungary, South Africa and other places. Ministry involved finding ways in which those people could be affirmed and their different cultures appreciated.

Inter-faith marriages have become increasingly common. I myself have been involved in marrying a couple in which one was Moslem and the other Christian, and another couple in which the husband was Buddhist and the wife Christian. In those services we have discussed issues of faith, how children should be raised, and how each can be sensitive to and supportive of the faith of the other person. In the case of the Moslem — Christian wedding, there were separate Moslem and Christian ceremonies. In the Christian ceremony which I conducted, I tried to be sensitive to the language, the beliefs and the culture of the Moslem partner. These inter-faith marriages have also meant some interchange with the parents, thinking with them welcoming people of other faiths into their families.

Since 1985, I have worked half time for a research organisation established to serve the churches of Australia. The Christian Research Association is responsible to a board made up of representatives of all the major denominations: Catholic, Anglican, Uniting, Baptist, Salvation

Army, Assemblies of God, Seventh-day Adventists. Our mandate is to provide the churches with information about Australian culture and particularly about the nature and place of religion in the Australian culture. The themes of immigration, multiculturalism and the multi-faith context have arisen frequently in our research.

A few years ago, a government research agency called for tenders to put together a series of books on the major religious groups in Australia — 8 Christian groups, plus Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. We won the tender. We worked with Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu people to write the books. I edited the series.

Each book sought to describe, as objectively, but sensitively as possible, the history, beliefs and forms of organisation of each of these religious communities. The government published the series of 12 books between 1995 and 1996. The major purpose was to provide a resource so that government bodies could find information about the various religious communities with whom they have to work. They have been used in the government. But it was found that the schools made most use of this series — for they are facing the challenge of preparing students to live in a multi-faith, global world. Hence, the Christian Research Association took it upon itself to re-prepare the material more appropriately for schools. We re-wrote all the books and added the equivalent of another 30 of them, covering a total of 170 different Christian denominations and religious groups. We added a lot of photographs, of video of worship in each of the major groups, and we put it all on a CD-Rom. We have sold several thousand copies of that CD-Rom and are currently revising it with more recent statistical data and up-to-date information. Many schools and universities have it on their networks so that students can access the information.

At a deeper level, the rapid increases in globalisation have contributed to what has been described as the development of a post-traditional society in Australia. Partly because of the multi-culturalism present in Australian society and partly because of the awareness of the great range of options in different cultures around the globe, people in Australia are picking and choosing among these options as they put their lives together.

Many Australians eat ethnic food most weeks. My daughter's favourite food is Indian. My son prefers Japanese, or Mongolian. Both have many friends of different ethnic backgrounds. My daughter is preparing for her 18th birthday party in two week's time. Of her friends, two are Vietnamese, one is part Sri Lankan, another is Greek, another has a German background. She has no close friends born of parents who were themselves born in Australia. Many of her friends have traveled overseas themselves, several on student exchanges, preparing them to be citizens not just of Australia, but of the world.

Within this multi-faith context, In something of a similar way, people are putting their own spiritual journeys together drawing on a wide range of resources. Many are trying Hindu forms of yoga or Buddhist forms of meditation. They are trying the New Age resources. And sometimes they also go to church. Religion is no longer predominantly something cultural, or a product of the community in which one grows up. Rather, younger people are putting their own lives together, as individuals, drawing on a wide range of resources.

At the same time, there are many who have little interest in any form of religion and ignore religious resources of every kind. One of the impacts of globalisation is that religion has become something very individual, even personal, rather than cultural and communal. As individuals they will take something out of a particular faith is they see it to be helpful. They will try yoga as a practice, but it does not mean that they accept the religious basis of yoga. They may try some meditation, they do not necessarily take to heart the teaching about the 'cool heart' that accompanies it.

The very understanding of truth has changed — at least partly under the impact of globalisation. Most young Australians see truth, at least to some extent, as 'what works'. Truth is not contained in any one religion. Indeed, around two thirds of all Australians explicitly affirm that most religions and philosophy contain some truth.

Even in terms of church attendance, there is a greater tendency than ever before for people to try something out, and if it works for them that is fine. If not, they move on to try something else. In a five year period, we have calculated that there is approximately a 50 per cent turnover in Pentecostal churches in Australia. Within 5 years, half of all those attending have gone and another group have arrived. And there are more attending Pentecostal churches than any other kind in Australia, apart from Catholic churches.

What this means for ministry is that one cannot assume that the children of church-attending parents will attend church themselves. The Sunday School system and the Catholic school systems whereby the churches have tried to hand on the faith to the children of church attenders have not been working. There is a huge drop-out rate. Most children who reach their teenagers years claim their own right to make decisions about whether they will attend a church or not, or what they will believe, and the majority of them decide that they will not have much to do with the churches at all.

This means that ministry has to be very much oriented to people's needs and interests. There are all sorts of new forms of ministry developing around Australia, seeking to make contact with people, and perhaps then putting the challenges of faith and worship before them. We have to function in the context where every individual believes they have the right to make their own decisions. Hence, the Catholics are trying groups such as 'spiritual in the pub', developing discussion groups on religious and spiritual issues which take place over a meal in a pub or restaurant. The Protestants prefer cafes and coffee houses, and there are quite a few 'churches' which take place in cafes. Some are looking are connecting with people through welfare or educational activities.

In my own church, we have explored different approaches to faith. We have had several sessions of Sunday evening discussions and advertised them widely through radio, newspapers, schools and other means. One Sunday evening series I organised a series of seminars exploring other faiths. I invited people from various religions to teach us something about their faiths. One seminar was addressed by a Hindu, another by a Jew, a third by a Moslem and a fourth by a Buddhist. About 70 people attended — most of them not from our own church. Some were keen to think through the relevance of other religions to their own spiritual journeys. Others were

more interested in understanding the faith of others. Ministry must be targeted at the individual, putting options before individuals and allowing them to make their personal choices.

There are some people, however, for whom the choices that become apparent in globalisation are overwhelming. People do not know what to believe or what to think. They find this situation very insecure. They want a set of answers. They want something they can hold on to in a world which appears very fluid.

There has been an increase in the numbers of people attracted to the groups who offer a single set of answers, groups which say 'this is what you should believe'. While only half the number of younger people under 30 attend church compared with the numbers people over 60, those younger people, on the whole, are much more conservative in their views than the older people. A recent survey of church attenders found that around three-quarters of them said they took the Bible literally, compared with only half of older attenders.

Globalisation appears to be dividing the church with the liberal and conservative sectors moving further apart and with greater extremes of opinions found in both camps. The terrorist events of September 11th in America in which several Australians died, and then in Bali in which 88 Australians were killed, have heightened anxiety and strengthened the arm of the conservative camp — not only in the churches, but at the national level. Australians have become more inward looking and protective. Unfortunately, the government has encouraged such attitudes knowing that they help its election chances. The government won the last Federal election on the basis that it was more effective in keeping out refugees who were seeking to come to Australia illegally ... and who could be terrorists!

One of the large research projects on which I am now working is on the culture of insecurity in the Australian context, and how spirituality relates to this culture.

The sense of insecurity may have a long-term tendency to increase the interest in those groups offering a full set of ready-made answers. There are some indications however that others want to learn more about their neighbours. They want to learn how to live with them. The churches can provide a very valuable role in these processes, helping people to understand their own faith and other faiths. They can encourage openness to others, and provide opportunities for dialogue with people of other faiths. I believe strongly that it is only as we learn to live with each other in a global environment will we survive.

Thoughts on the Conference on Religion & Globalization

Herb Swanson

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to share personal observations and thoughts concerning Payap University's Conference on Religion & Globalization. Some of what follows is

celebratory and positive, some of it is more critical and less enthusiastic. There were high points to this conference that inspired and challenged the participants, and there were also moments that left me, at least, troubled; but, in any event, the Payap conference was an important one-a rich opportunity to learn-and worthy of reflection. In the course of formulating my own reactions to the conference, I benefited greatly from daily discussions with our house guest for the week and my good friend, Dr. Philip Hughes and comments on an earlier draft by Dr. Don Swearer, another good friend who is no stranger to the readers of *HeRB*; but, the views expressed here are my own, based on the sessions I attended and the people I came into contact with during the week.

Globalization: Definitions & Strategies

Unfortunately, I did not hear Don Swearer's keynote address. The text of his address, which I did have an opportunity to read before he delivered it, indicates that Don presented a balanced, insightful reading of globalization, helpfully demonstrating how global forces impact religion through the example of Buddhism and Protestant Christianity in Thailand. (See "A Keynote" in this issue of HeRB for a brief excerpt from the address). This was one of a relatively few instances in which conference speakers consciously sought to see globalization from a local perspective. Evidently, the question and answer period was not as balanced, and the conference began with a decidedly negative view of globalization. The question of whether the conference would place a positive, neutral, mixed, or negative value on globalization was, obviously, one of the central issues facing it.

A crucial moment in the conference's collective consideration of how to judge globalization came in an exchange after the plenary presentation by Dharma Master Hsin Tao, from Taiwan, who spoke in Chinese but had an excellent translator. The Dharma Master presented the first of the plenary speeches, on Monday, and in that speech he argued that we should not look on globalization in absolute terms as being either good or evil. Globalization presents us, he suggested, with a set of choices that we must each make. He told the assembly that people of faith should not waste their time with anti-globalization movements and should develop instead a concept of positive, beneficial globalization consisting of the deepest human and religious values. Such globalization would focus on a conceptualizing a harmonious global community, and the work of the world's religions is to create just such a world community. Religion, he argued, should function as an antidote to the more negative, evil side of globalization.

The crucial moment came when one of the participants from Iran responded with an observation-question, which asserted that "globalization" really means "globalism," which actually means "Westernism," which means "Americanism." Globalization is not a neutral term, he argued, but rather an ideological one. He then asked the Dharma Master in what sense we need to fight against the hidden ideologies of globalization. The Dharma Master responded immediately that there is no use to finger pointing and blame making. People of faith must be aware of their own inner attitudes and must accept globalization as it is if they want to then respond to it effectively and positively. The Dharma Master repeatedly urged the importance of taking a pragmatic approach, which he seemed to think begins with a balanced, non-combative attitude towards

globalization. He did see some aspects of globalization as being the moral and social equivalent of a disease, and religion again is the antidote-but a positive, effective, practical one.

In this exchange, the conference heard proposals for two very different approaches to globalization. One treats globalization as an evil moral phenomenon and believes that people of faith must fight it. The other point of view argues that globalization is a neutral phenomenon that the religious must first embrace and then, where necessary, transform it. As the days went on, the conference clearly and collectively accepted the pragmatic, intentionally balanced attitude of the Dharma Master, and while speakers presented any number of negative assessments of globalization, they generally did so in the same "balanced" manner as the Dharma Master.

This collective "decision" to treat globalization as neither essentially good or evil reflected the largely moderately conservative tone of the conference throughout. Although self-consciously liberal and dialogical, the conference generally failed to articulate new directions for religious praxis. Some of the Asian Buddhist speakers, like the Dharma Master himself, seemed to be proposing a restoration of primitive Buddhism as the answer to the challenge of globalization. Western Christians and Western Buddhists seemed largely committed to interfaith dialogue as the hope of the future, even though one plenary speaker, as will be seen below, argued from year's of experience with dialogue that traditional interfaith dialogue has not led to greater understanding between the world's religions.

Recent research from Europe, Britain, and Australia suggests, meanwhile, that religious reformation and dialogue are not adequate responses to changes taking place in global religiosity. Philip Hughes, in his paper on religion and social capital in the global context, noted that there two key religious reactions to globalization are emerging. One is the "fundamentalist" reaction, which retreats into closed religious traditions described by clear, absolute boundaries. The second reaction is the growing number of people who mix and match pieces of various religions into a personal religion, a "buffet" attitude. The speakers and participants in the conference, with a few notable individual exceptions, did not address either of these trends in any direct way.

Two Who Did

It would not be fair, however, to say that the speakers and participants failed entirely to address the key challenges globalization poses for religion today. In strikingly different and yet highly effective ways, two of the plenary speakers articulated cogent religious responses to globalization. They are Dr. Wesley Ariarajah, a professor at Drew University, and the Rev. John Spong, a retired bishop of the Episcopal Church. For me personally and for many other participants, Dr. Ariarajah's presentation was the high point of the conference. Bishop Spong, meanwhile, provided the conference with a little drama as well as plenty of zest and spice. This is not to say that other plenary speakers and panels had nothing to offer. They did. I was particularly taken with the panel presentation of Dr. Vasudha Narayanan on American Hinduism and Dr. Chandra Mustafa's excellent address on the issues of globalization from an Islamic perspective. Spong and Ariarajah, however, deserve particular attention.

Dr. Ariarajah spoke on the topic, "Religious Diversity and Interfaith Relations in a Global Age." His remarks were directly relevant to the conference's theme, well-delivered, and broke new ground even for those who have expertise in the study of globalization. Where Bishop Spong injected vim and fire into the proceedings, Dr. Ariarajah offered a cogent analysis of where we are and where we have to go when it comes to globalization.

Dr. Ariarajah prefaced his speech by observing that humanity is biologically global, a species that can adapt itself to many different environments. Globalization, thus, has been a human reality since the beginning of the human race and remains so today, in an accelerated version that is ambiguously both "good" and "bad." After emphasizing the importance of globalization to the contemporary world community, he went on to observe that religion has long played an important role in processes of globalization, especially because most religions have a universalizing component that fosters a global sense. Dr. Ariarajah then argued that globalization today presents several challenges to the world's religions. Positively, it is dissolving the hard and fast boundaries between religious communities in a number of ways, and many people have begun to draw on elements from several religions to form their own personal faith, a phenomenon he calls "multiple religious belonging." On the other hand, negatively, globalization threatens the world's culture and religious diversity, attacks certain religious values, and destroys local communal identities including religious identities. There is a negative universalizing tendency in globalization that the various religious traditions feel they must resist.

This dual nature of globalization, both positive and negative, has a number of important implications for interfaith relations according to Dr. Ariarajah. First, hard won experience in the global context has shown that interfaith dialogue does not in and of itself lead to a better world. He said that those engaged in dialogue have been "cured of our innocence" about what dialogue can accomplish; interfaith relations are very complex, and just meeting and talking does not build strong interfaith relationships in a deeper sense. Second, globalization teaches us the importance of communal identities. Religious conflict is between communities, not individuals, and in our contemporary situation religious communities are frequently being motivated to hate each other and riot violently against each other. Those engaged in interfaith dialogue to date have not considered how to bring communities into dialogue and have not considered the need for new tools to achieve communal dialogue. Third, those taking part in interfaith dialogue need to see the dialogical process as not being confined to "religion" alone. Asians have long understood that "religion" involves all of life; the idea of something distinctively called "religion" was invented by Europeans to deal with their historic conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Dr. Ariarajah called on us to reject this European view of religion and to understand, furthermore, that there is no such things as essential religions. There is no "Islam" or "Buddhism," but only a multiplicity of particular faiths within each of the world's religions. Interfaith dialogue, in any event, must deal with life issues-such as the environment, poverty, justice-if it is to be fruitful. Fourth, religion today has returned from the margins to the center of public, political discourse, which means that religious traditions themselves must discover a positive attitude towards religious plurality and diversity. They must also work out a holistic vision for healing the world.

Dr. Ariarajah summarized his remarks by calling on all peoples of faith to allow something new to arise in terms of our relations with each other, something that is life-giving. He argued that no one religious tradition by itself has the resources to bring this new "thing" to life. If the world is to be healed and made whole, all the world's religions need to work together to that end.

In the question and answer period, one person asked, "What about fundamentalism?" Dr. Ariarajah responded that in our world today there are two general religious reactions to globalization. One he styled a "positive negative" reaction that sees globalization as a danger to global diversity and seeks to preserve diversity and the quality of human life by working together in a positive unity that does not destroy particularity. This is the reaction we want. The other religious reaction to globalization he termed a "negative negative" reaction, which he described as being based on fear of diversity and the religious other. Those who display this reaction seek to destroy diversity by turning everyone into people who think and believe like they do. They are intolerant fundamentalists, and however successful they may be in the short term they have no future. Speaking in Christian terms, Ariarajah urged that achieving an understanding of the value of plurality in religious faith is a pastoral task.

Another participant asked Dr. Ariarajah about the Christian belief that Christ is the only way to salvation. By way of an answer, he spoke briefly to the early Christian experience of Roman persecution and of tension with Judaism, which forced the church to aggressively declare the uniqueness of Christ In our own age, he observed, Christians need to continue to affirm that Christ is Lord but also to see that the declaration of that lordship does not negate other faith systems. Christians need to move, that is, beyond the conditioning of their early historical experience as they confront a radically globalized world.

In response to other questions, Dr. Ariarajah declared that liberal Christians must take a vocal, proactive public role knowing full well that we will never be the majority voice. He argued that the future of the Christian church depends on its ability to build good relations with peoples of other faiths. He observed that in Asia truth is not a single thing; it is many, multitudinous. For this reason, Asians have long emphasized harmony rather than unity. Christian intolerance, he reasoned, was born out of the European philosophical intolerance of plurality (one is "right": many is "wrong"), and Christians today have to learn tolerance and the beauty of plurality.

Dr. Ariarajah spoke simply, directly, and movingly. He challenged us to think communally rather than individually, realistically rather than theoretically, holistically and pluralistically rather than exclusivistically. He also called on us to rethink the boundaries of what we mean by religion and to come out from behind our philosophical barriers to share in the task of peacemaking with our sisters and brothers of many faiths. He was calling particularly on Christians to cease to depend on parochial attitudes towards the world, ones that fear plurality and press for domination. His presentation was excellent in every sense of the word.

Dr. Ariarajah challenged those who share a liberal, ecumenical vision of religion to take bold, public stands for that vision; we must not leave the public arena in the sole hands of the anti-liberals and fundamentalists. Bishop Spong has taken up that challenge and responded to it with a will. For many years now, he has engaged in a highly-publicized assault on the Christian right, taking its adherents to task for their failure to understand and communicate the Christian faith

truthfully and relevantly. The bishop's strong personality and strong words stir people up. I confess that my first impression of Bishop Spong was more than a little negative. Much of what he says is not new, although he tries to make it sound new. Some of his "historical" interpretations of the Bible are over-stated and simply cannot be substantiated. He seems to relish aggressive, one-sided statements of opinion. Finally, in this conference Spong was outside of his usual embattled American Christian context, and at least some of what he said was not relevant to most of those participating in the conference.

The thing that I did not realize and should have is that Spong is publicizing liberal ideas that have hitherto been largely hidden away in academic books, articles, and symposia. He stated, for example, that the Christian understanding of Christ's divinity has been socially constructed by the church over the centuries and the earliest generations of "Christians" did not at first think of him as divine. Scholars have tossed such ideas back and forth for a long time, but when stated baldly and boldly where the world can hear it such sentiments are scandalous to some-and soothing spiritual medicine to others. It took a fascinating exchange during the question and answer period to teach me a better appreciation for Spong's role and importance.

After his presentation, one woman stood up and began to offer comments from a conservative Christian perspective to the effect that she felt personally ill-judged by the bishop's presentation. Spong immediately and bluntly interrupted her with a long, rather condescending explanation of something he thought she misunderstood. She then tried to proceed with her statement and again ran afoul of a long interruption, during which Spong virtually labeled her as a "person with a problem." A third attempt on her part to make a point met with yet another interruption, and finally she gave up but not without a parting shot that suggested that Spong himself might have a few psychological problems. At first blush, Spong seemed rude and showed a striking failure to listen, particularly in the context of a conference dedicated to interfaith understanding.

Yet, sitting two or three rows in front of me there was a young woman who, half-way through the rather brittle liberal versus conservative exchange of opinions, began to raise her hand. Eventually, she got up and went to the nearest microphone, and when Spong finally called for another question her hand shot up and she spoke immediately. She was clearly agitated, and-on the verge of tears-she thanked Spong. She explained that she has long been disaffected from the Christian faith. She acknowledges herself to be what Bishop Spong calls a "Christian in exile," and she said that his work has allowed her to reexamine and reclaim the Christian faith as her own. She still feels that she is a Christian in exile, but she avowed that because of Spong she again thought of herself as a Christian. Her remarks recalled the brief thanks a gay Christian woman had given to Spong earlier in the conference, telling him how important his strong stand for gay rights in the church was to her.

Bishops are pastors, and right there in the midst of that conference Bishop Spong gave pastoral consolation to two American women. He enabled one's participation in the life of the church and brought reconciliation to the other's sense of alienation from the faith. Thinking back now, it is clear that Spong has a great deal of experience with conservative criticism and sees no point in trying to dialogue with the right. In his exchanges with the conservative individual, he was not talking to her at all. He knew that nothing he could say would change her mind and he certainly

was not about to change his. Rather, he was speaking to the Christians in exile, those who have lost heart with the organized church, and those who believe "outside the walls" of the traditional religiosity. In the course of this conference, he was the only speaker that I heard who actually spoke (and healed) across the boundary between organized religion and those people of faith who are not connected to institutional religion.

The professor and the bishop, taken together, provided a remarkable mini-clinic on possible tactics for liberal, ecumenical responses to globalization. First, such responses have to be bold and addressed to the larger world. It is a waste of time, for example, to carry on with in-house interfaith dialogue between ecumenicals, be they Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist. Liberal, ecumenical perspectives on Scripture and faith, meanwhile, cannot be hidden away in learned treatise and journals. There is an ecumenical, liberal reading of the Good News, and it must be shared more widely, boldly, and wisely than it is today. Second, in Asia, at least, new approaches to interfaith relations are required, ones that emphasize communities rather than individuals. In the West, finally, the ecumenical faithful must also look beyond denominational and institutional boundaries and reach out to the "faithful-in-exile" as well as the many, many millions who are not interested in institutional religion and/or consider it to be a silly, useless, old-fashioned game.

Democratic Spirituality

Dr. Ariarajah and Bishop Spong pointed to possible ways for people of faith to respond to globalization. They recommended greater, more politically and socially relevant interfaith cooperation in communal peacemaking and more bold, creative attempts to communicate with people of no faith or of strictly personal, non-traditional faiths. Both of their presentations sparked a responsive cord in most of the participants, which reflected a shared sense of what can best be called a "democratic spirituality." No one at the Payap conference actually spoke about the spiritual nature of democratic values, but those values and that spirituality suffused the conference.

Democratic spirituality manifested itself in a number of ways. During the question and answer period for the panel on "Religion and the Media in a Global Age," one of those taking part asserted that "we are all equal" in the midst of a statement regarding spirituality. Implied in the speaker's words was an assumed, virtually unconscious link between the democratic value of equality and religious spirituality. In his plenary speech on the need for reform of the Buddhist monkhood in Thailand, Phra Paisal Visalo, argued that monks still lived too much apart from society, and, thus, one of the necessary reforms that is needed is for Thai monks to develop closer ties to the people. Chandra Mustafa, a Malaysian Muslim, speaking on the topic of "Religion and Society in a Global Age" spiced his remarks with numerous allusions to the democratic values of inclusiveness, accommodation, and emancipation of the powerless, esp. women. At one point he virtually equated the religious struggle of our times with the struggle against patriarchy, racism, injustice, inequality, and imperialism. One of the most striking examples of democratized spirituality was provided by a panelist, Dr. Vasudha Narayanan. She described the development of Hinduism in the United States and told a delightful little story about how one American temple decided which gods it would include in the local pantheon by

holding an election. She said that the temple choose this method as a conscious way to "be American." In this conference, then, when participants spoke about the spiritual values of their respective faith traditions they frequently drew on a democratic vocabulary to express themselves.

It is hardly surprising, I suppose, to find participants from several nations, faiths, and languages sharing in the values, hopes, and aspirations of democracy. Even though so often honored in the breach, democratic self-government is one of the most cherished ideals of much of the world. It is seen as the cure for many ills and a source of hope for the world's poor. The American historical experience offers a fascinating parallel and, perhaps, a cautionary note about simply equating religious spirituality with a particular form of government. In the wake of the American Revolution, American Christians, particularly evangelical Protestants, appropriated and even helped promote American republican values and attitudes, which values eschewed the gentrified, established religion of the American colonies. It is clear, on the one hand, that a relevant religious faith in post-Revolutionary America had to be republican in its sentiments. It is also clear, on the other hand, that by the early twentieth century, republican spirituality had so blended religious faith and political patriotism that national loyalty had become equated with "being a good Christian."

In the early twenty-first century, it is probably inevitable that vital religiosity will frequently express itself in the rhythms of democracy, but it seems to me that we should beware of a close identification of any political ideology with the life of faith. The will of the people is not the will of God. Jesus and the Hebrew prophets repeatedly opposed the "common wisdom" of their day, sometimes with lethal consequences. It is not that identifying democracy with Islamic, Buddhist, and Christian spirituality is "wrong," so much as that we should be carefully self-aware in our use of political vocabulary. Otherwise, it can easily become an ideological idol of human fashioning.

Voices Not Heard

In many ways, the Payap conference provided a remarkable forum for a diversity of perspectives. It still may be said, nonetheless, that in the main the preponderance of speakers represented an ecumenical combination of liberal Christian, reform Buddhist, and moderate Islamic voices. Fundamentalists were not heard from nor was there any regret at their absence. Identifiably conservative perspectives were all but missing as well, and again the participants collectively did not show any remorse in not hearing from self-conscious conservatives. While there is a need for serious dialogue across the religious ideologies of the right and the left, the Payap conference was not designed for such dialogue and was not the place for it.

There were other voices, however, that were also largely missing or very muted to our loss. Obviously, no one conference can encompass every perspective and include every viewpoint that it "should," but our conference would have been enriched by some of those who were absent. There was no input from Africa (three Nigerian participants were denied visas to enter Thailand) or Latin America. Hindus were hardly in evidence, and Catholic voices were only occasionally in evidence in spite of the vast Catholic membership globally. Still, it is to be expected that a conference held in Chiang Mai is not likely to hear a great deal from Latin America or Africa,

and while we would have benefited a larger, more substantial Catholic representation one conference really cannot include everybody.

Personally, however, I do regret the general absence of two other voices that I feel would have added substantially to our deliberations; they are the perspective and contributions from tribal peoples, of which northern Thailand has a rich variety, and of postmodern Europeans. It was Dharma Master Hsin Tao who called my attention to the absence of tribal peoples in his comment to the conference that they are the ones who best exemplify the values and life ways of "positive globalization" and who should be models for the rest of us. He cited the Hopi, a Native American tribe, as an example of a people who live at peace with their environment and exemplify a holistic relationship with their natural and social worlds. Far from being "primitives," they set a path, a direction the world will do well to follow. The destruction of tribal traditional ways of living is a tragic loss of wisdom for the whole world. The Dharma Master, I think, was correct in these observations, and so far as I could tell there was only one tribal speaker, Thra'mu Esther Danpongpi, at this conference. Thra'mu Esther spoke for only fifteen minutes as a part of a panel, but even in that short time she was able to convey the pain and distress of tribal peoples in Southeast Asia.

The low point of the Payap conference, for me personally, came during the question and answer period after a plenary panel on interfaith dialogue. A French participant stood up and explained that he is a man of personal faith, which he described as eclectic, postmodern, and non-institutional. He noted that although France is nominally a Catholic country the vast majority of its citizens are, like him, raised apart from the church. Do postmoderns from Europe, he asked, have a place in the dialogue process? "Do you plan to dialogue with postmodern Europeans?" This could have been a fine moment of dialogue across the boundaries of faith that divide us into institutional and non-institutional people of faith. It could have been. The panelists gave what can only be described as a luke-warm response during which one them actually said that "our" concern in the conference is not "with you" but with trying to dialogue across institutional religious boundaries. It is clear that the panelists did not know how to respond to this man and had never thought about ways to talk about faith issues with non-institutional religious people. A person of personal but not institutional faith asked the institutionalists, "Do you want to talk?" and institutional religion answered, "No, not now." It would not be fair to load too much on this unprogrammed and unexpected moment; had the panelists had a bit of time to think about their response, I am confident that they would have responded in a more open way. But, one small opportunity to see the non-institutional, non-traditional faithful as a legitimate, even exciting partner in dialogue was lost, and we were the poorer for the loss.

Tripping Over the Essence of Religion

One of the things, it seems to me, that we are being called upon to do is seriously rethink what is meant by "religion." While the Payap conference did involve at least some attempts to define globalization, it seemed that the participants thought that the definition of "religion" is already clear. By "religion," we meant Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. We did not mean the traditional faiths of tribal peoples, and we did not include in our assumed definition the anti-institutional religiosity of modern Europe. By religion, that is, the conference largely meant the

great World Religions, so-called. In a dictionary sense, this definition is a correct one; the second definition my computer dictionary gives for religion is that it is "a particular institutionalized or personal system of beliefs and practices relating to the divine." Significantly, however, the first definition it gives is that religion is "people's beliefs and opinions concerning the existence, nature, and worship of a deity or deities, and divine involvement in the universe and human life." (Encarta World English Dictionary 1999 Microsoft Corporation). Both of these definitions emphasize what people believe and both definitions look upon religion as being, above all else, plural and personal.

The speakers and participants in the Payap conference, collectively, articulated a more complex and contradictory view of religion that, at times, formally acknowledged that religion is plural and that it is impossible to speak meaningfully about Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam as actual unitary realities. There are many Hinduisms, many Islams. Yet, time and again, speakers and panelists spoke of each religion as if it is a single entity, a unitary reality that can be adequately encompassed in a sentence or a paragraph.

I felt particularly aware of the contradiction between essential and pluralistic views of religion in the closing address of Dr. Michael von Brueck. In that address, von Brueck discussed the "Buddhist" historical understanding of justice and how it squares with the more Western, contemporary understandings contained in many international statements on justice. He treated Buddhism as a single religion, a single religious category. Yet, later in the presentation he went on to argue that all religions are in and of themselves highly pluralistic. That is to say, early on von Brueck discussed an essentialized, unitary, single entity called "Buddhism" as if it were a historical reality; but then, later in his address, he himself argued that in effect there is no such singular entity. There is no such thing as "Buddhism": there are only "Buddhisms." The contradiction seems clear, and von Brueck was not the only participant in the conference by any means guilty of it; indeed, in fairness to him, his address was not about the issue of essentialism and particularity at all. Most of those of us who addressed the conference, in any event, generally spoke as if there is a single category called "Christianity" and another one called "Islam" and still another one termed "Buddhism." Yet, several speakers, like von Brueck, also stated that there is no one central essence to each of the different faiths. I heard only one speaker, Carool Kersten on the panel entitled, "Islam, Social Justice, and Globalization," who clearly objected to the tendency of the conference to essentialize the world's religions.

In both his presentation and during the question and answer period that followed, he warned against the fallacies of making broad generalizations regarding Islam. He repeated his warning against essentializing Islam during the question and answer period in direct response to the tone of the exchanges going on during the period, which were making generalizations about a unitary "Islam" that he took to be rash and incorrect.

The danger, to be clear on the matter, is that when we speak about "Islam" or "Hinduism" as unitary entities we create something that does not and never did exist for the convenience of our own arguments and expressions of attitude. By using such false constructions, we think we understand things that we do not understand. False understanding has the very nasty tendency of encouraging faulty praxis. Among other things, essentializing the world's religions leads to a

false definition of religion that can shut us off from key trends in modern religious expression, as was seen in the failure to respond positvely to the European postmodernist offer to dialogue. It is, furthermore, only a short step from speaking about "Islam" collectively to speaking about "Muslims" as if they are also a collective entity, and then it is just one more short step to deciding how Muslims think, act, and are in their essence. Such collective-speak about Islam and Muslims actually does take place and is a major stumbling block to the quest for international peace.

This is not to accuse the Payap conference participants, of which I was one, with taking part in a nefarious plot against global religions or of having done something "bad." Consciously most of the participants seem to have agreed with the emerging awareness of the plurality of religions and the massive individuality and complexity of reality itself. It is to say that of us those who seek to express a post-Enlightenment consciousness still fall back, from time to time, into Enlightenment patterns of thinking and speaking; and while intellectual consistency isn't always a necessity-or even that important most of the time-in this case consistency of expression and thought is wiser and more likely to encourage peaceable encounters with other peoples of other faiths.

Parting Thoughts

The Conference on Religion and Globalization held at Payap University from July 27th through August 2nd, 2003, was one of the most intense and demanding conferences I've ever attended. Technically, it went very well. The food was good. The facilities provided by the university are excellent. Some of the speakers and panelists were outstanding, as were a few of the individual papers I heard delivered. The days were long, however, and there was so much to hear that no one could take it all in. In retrospect, it might have been better to have reduced the number of papers presented and put some of the plenary panels head to head, leaving time for small group discussions and more time for rest. Some, at least, felt that the conference lacked direction and that discussion periods in smaller groups might have been one way to encourage a direction to emerge. But, that's in retrospect.

As it was, the Payap conference provided a great deal of fuel for thought. It allowed the participants to "listen in" on the thinking of key religious thinkers from several faith traditions. There were some dramatic moments of tension. There was, as well, far more to the conference than I've been able to include here, including especially consideration of women's and of international justice issues. There were, as well, many interesting personal conversations over lunch, at the coffee breaks, and at other times. The final kunthok dinner on Friday evening was a memorable event. And I am particularly grateful to the conference organizers for including our panel of religious vocations and globalization.

Short Items

A Key Note

In his key note address to the Conference on Religion & Globalization, Dr. Don Swearer provided the conference with a brief tour of the respective roles of Thai Buddhism and Thai Protestant Christianity in globalization in Thailand. In noting that both have themselves been shaped by globalizing forces as well, he concluded, "However, while religious identities are forged within the crucible of history and culture, they cannot be reduced to these contexts. The normative principles of a religious faith test and challenge each and every contextual status quo and guide us through the maze of our moral dilemmas."

Don then closed his remarks with what amounted to both a challenge and a blessing. He said, "In the final analysis then, globalization in the deepest religious sense cannot be reduced to economic and political factors or the accidents of history. Therefore, as we join together at this Religion and Globalization conference let us affirm the following: the inter-becoming of all life forms. In mindful awareness of this truth, let us embrace the imperative to act empathetically and compassionately towards all beings; and, within the interdependent world we all inhabit, irregardless of our religious, ethnic, or political identities, let us commit ourselves to be agents of justice, equality, peace, reconciliation, and non-violence." Amen.

Verbal Dialogue Vetoed

Who said it and when she or he said it during the Conference on Religion & Globalization, I don't remember. I do remember the words. "Interfaith dialogue reflects a very Western Christian preoccupation with words."

Sulak's Christian Upbringing & His Charge to Christians

Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa is one of Thailand's leading, perhaps most notorious social critics and was a now-and-again participant in the Conference on Religion & Globalization. Educated in Catholic schools, he said to the conference, "I was brought up in a Christian culture." In light of his experience with Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, he also stated that, "Christianity here in Thailand should be more Asian, more Thai, and it should show more respect for Thai culture."

How to Become a Hindu

In her presentation on American Hinduism, Dr. Vasudha Narayanan described one website dedicated to Hinduism in the United States. The website includes a link that is labeled, simply, "Click here to become a Hindu."

Declining Church Membership in Canada

The *ENI Bulletin* for 28 May 2003 reports that, "Canada's latest census report shows that the numbers of traditional Christians have dropped and that traditionally Eastern religions, especially Islam, have made substantial gains due to the country's low birth rate and its immigration profile." (p. 21). The number of Catholics, according to the 1991 and 2001 censuses dropped by 2% from 45% of the population in 1991 to 43% in 2001. All Protestants declined from 35% to 29% of the population. Muslims, by contrast, more than doubled in the number of adherents and now make up about 2% of the population of Canada. The numbers of Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists grew by more than 80% and collectively amount to about 1% of the population. What seems particularly surprising is that according to the Interfaith Secretary of the United Church of Canada (UCC), who is extensively quoted in this news item, Pentecostal membership in Canada dropped by 15% in comparison to the UCC's decline of 8.2%. (p. 22). The article points out that Asian religious adherence is increasing mostly through immigration and that, by the same token, Canadian Catholicism has benefitted from large numbers of immigrants.

These figures recall Andrew Walls' description of the massive global Christian demographic shift that continues to take place by which Christianity is declining in numbers in Western nations, such as Canada, while rapidly growing in Asia and Africa. (see the review of Walls' article in *HeRB 1*). These Canadian figures, moreover, stand in contrast to the continued, strong growth of the Church of Christ in Thailand (see my article in *HeRB 3*), which reminds us that the CCT is a part of (and, for the time being, a beneficiary of) this global trend.

Turning Heathens into Outsiders

Protestant missionaries in Siam, until the 1920s, habitually referred to Thai Buddhists as "heathens" and believed that they lived in moral darkness. The terms heathen, heathenism, and their cognates are thickly scattered through the missionary record. It is interesting thus to note, that the Thai church has not taken the word heathen over into Thai; translating the word into to Thai is itself awkward since there is no readily understandable comprarable term in Thai. One has to explain the meaning, usually at length. Thai Christianity dispensed with those explanations and, instead, reformulated the idea of heathenism by calling of people of other faiths *khon nok*, meaning "outsiders."

This reconfiguration of heathens as outsiders provides a glimpse of how contextualization of the Christian religion in Thailand has played out historically. The word "heathen" is an abstract ethical and theological term. The concept of "outsider" is communal, relational. As actually used by missionaries and by converts, the two terms function in the same way. Each is a boundary term designating who is outside the Christian pale. The European term, however, focuses on an idea while the Thai focuses on a relationship. According to the European way of thinking, heathens are those who do not believe in God; according to the Thai way of thinking, outsiders are those who do not share Christian loyalty to God.

West Asia

There is nothing original in this note, which simply repeats a suggestion that has been bandied about for many years but has never taken hold. The suggestion is that everyone except Europeans stop using the terms "Middle East" and "Near East" to refer to western Asia. Habitually referring to the geographical region that lies east of the Mediterranean Sea as "western Asia" or "West Asia" makes sense in two ways. First, it is geographically correct in the same way as "southeast Asia" or "East Asia." Second, the terms "western Asia" and West Asia," are value free and neutral, while the older name, "Middle East" and "Near East," are laden with a great deal of Crusader era baggage comprising European fear of and prejudices against Arabs and Muslims.

If Europeans themselves want to call western Asia the "Middle East" or "Near East" and can ignore the mental baggage in the process, so be it. For them, after all, western Asia really is the Middle East. For the rest of us, however, it seems silly to go on talking about a region of Asia as if it were an extension of Europe. Viewed from Thailand, after all, western Asia is actually the "Middle West," while from a Western Hemisphere perspective, it is the "Far East."

Seventh Day Adventist Statistics for 2000

The Seventh Day Adventist Church Yearbook for 2001 gives the following membership statistics for the year 2000:

World:	47,543 churches	11,336,023 members
Southern Asia-Pacific Division:	5,457 churches	1,139,584 members
South East Asia Union:	286 churches	65,665 members
Thailand Mission:	37 churches	11,836 members

News & Notes

The Billy Graham Center Holdings Related to Thailand

The Billy Graham Center Archives houses a variety of materials related to the church in Thailand, materials that are difficult to include in the Christianity in Thailand Bibliography on this website. Holdings relevant to Thailand include, for example, the Records of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship's US Home Council (Collection 215), Committee to Assist Ministry Overseas (Collection 091), the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (Collection 165), Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization (Collection 046), Papers of McGavran, Donald Anderson and Mary Elizabeth (Howard Collection 178), World Evangelical Fellowship (Collection 338), Fellowship Foundation (Collection 459), and several collections of individual papers and individual oral history interviews from missionaries in Thailand. In addition, the archives has 551 reels of microfilm of the Records of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Collection 261), which includes records from its 19th century Siam Mission. The following website address will take you to the Center Archives' home page: http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/archhp1.html. Email may be addressed to: bgcarc@wheaton.edu.

T. L. Osborn: a Research Note

HeRB 6 contains an article on the early history of Pentecostalism in Thailand, which article notes that the Rev. T. L. (Tommy Lee) Osborn's revival in Bangkok in 1956 was a key moment in Thailand Pentecostal history. The event itself has received far less attention "in the literature" than it deserves. While at the Yale Divinity School Library this last summer, I spent a couple of hours searching various online catalogs concerning Osborn and found a couple of avenues for pursuing further research into his relationship to the church in Thailand that are of potential value.

WorldCat (a.k.a. OCLC) contains a number of entries for books written by Osborn and his wife, Daisy. It turns out that the Oral Roberts University library contains quite a number of his older books and some more recent ones as well. Among those books is a set entitled *Faith Library in 23 Volumes: 20th Century Legacy of Apostolic Evangelism; Autobiographical Anthology* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: OSFO International, 2000). The ORU catalog indicates that volumes 2 and 3 probably contain material relevant to the Osborn crusade in Bangkok.

Osborn was only 33 when he led that crusade and is still alive today. Inevitably, he has a website, www.osborn.org. The website includes a listing of current publications written by the Osborns that are available for purchase.

Osborn has also been related, somehow, to a number of somewhat obscure periodicals: *Voice of Healing*, *The Voice of Faith*, and *Native Evangelism*. Finally, the *New International Dictionary*

of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements contains a biographical entry with a brief bibliography for "Osborn, Tommy Lee."

The 4th International Lausanne Researchers' Conference

HeRB is particularly pleased to share with its readers the announcement of the 4th Lausanne Conference for church-based researchers. The 4th Conference will be held on 10-14 April 2005 (yes, 2005) at the Miramare Hotel, Limassol, Cyprus. Some readers will remember that the Office of History had the privilege of serving as the Local Committee for the 3rd Conference, held in Chiang Mai in September 2001. As was true of the 3rd Conference, the Cyprus event is being organized by Dr. Peter Brierley and the staff of the Christian Research Association, Britain. In spite of the "Lausanne" tag, these research conferences bring together a diversity of voices, experiences, and insights.

For more details and the Booking Form, contact The Christian Research Association, 4 Foots Cray Road, Lethal, London SE9 2TZ, UK. Or visit the CRA website: www.christian-research.org.uk. The CRA's email address is admin@christian-research.org.uk.

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www.aljazeerah.info& www.politicsandscience.org

Some time ago, the western Asian news service, Al Jazeerah, tried to start up an English-language website, only to have that site attacked and sabotaged to keep it off the Web. In recent months, Al Jazeerah has finally made an unobtrusive and successful second attempt to open an English-language site, www.aljazeerah.info. HeRB recommends this site to any of its readers who are seeking alternative sources of world news. This is not to endorse all of the views expressed on the Al Jazeerah site; rather, Al Jazeerah is important because it gives voice to a wide range of opinions, wider than we normally receive from the Western media.

Scientists and some liberal political leaders in the United States, meanwhile, have become increasingly alarmed at the ways in which the Bush Government misuses science to further its own right-wing political agenda. Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) has posted on the Web a forty-page report entitled "Politics and Science in the Bush Administration," which was prepared by the minority staff of the House Government Reform Committee's special investigations division. If you are interested, that report can be found at www.politicsandscience.org. It is to be updated periodically as new instances of administration abuses of science come to light.

PTCA Call for Papers

The Programme for Theology & Cultures in Asia (PTCA) has re-issued its call for papers on the topic of "Religious Fundamentalism and Its Challenges to Doing Theology in Asia" for a consultation to be held in Taiwan at an as yet unspecified date in July 2004. This topic was originally to be considered at a consultation scheduled for July-August 2003, but that consultation was cancelled because of the SARS epidemic. Those who are interested in

submitting a paper or otherwise attending the PTCA 2004 consultation should contact either the Dean of PTCA, Dr. Nam-Soon Kang at nshoffnung@yahoo.com or the PTCA Programme Coordinator, Dr. Simon Kwan at smkwan@cuhk.edu.hk.

McFarland Family Papers at Berkeley: A Brief Description

The University of California at Berkeley contains a collection of materials entitled "The McFarland Family Papers," a small but apparently rich source for the history of Protestant missions in Siam that is also relevant to the study of Thai history more generally. That collection was recently processed by Ms. Leslie Woodhouse, a graduate student at Berkeley, who has kindly provided me with an electronic copy of the finding aid for the collection. What follows is a brief description of the collection based on that finding aid and further information provided by Ms. Woodhouse.

The McFarland Papers are contained in three boxes. Box 1 contains bound copies of the Siam Repository vols. 1 (1869), 4 (1872), 5 (1873), and 6 (1874) as well as copies of the Siam Directory: for 1883, 1884, 1885, and 1886. Box 1 also contains photographs of Dr. Samuel R. House, notebooks with contents relevant to Bertha Blount McFarland, Laura Olmstead Eakin, and John A. Eakin, as well as a few published works and other photographs. Box 2 contains a small treasure trove of photographs listed in the following series: Angkor Group, ca. 1878; Angkor & Cambodia, ca. 1928; Various People, Families, Occupations; Urban Life: Canals, Streets, Boats, Markets, etc; Rural Life: Agriculture, Forestry, Labor, Housing; Life in Bangkok, 1870 - 1900 & 1901-1950; Early Missionary Photos; Various Travels; Mission Buildings; People of the Missions; McFarland Reminington; Various Royal Ceremonies; Library of Prince Damrong; Funeral of Queen Saowapa; Coronation of Vajiravudh; Cremation of Chulalongkorn, vol. I and vol. II. Box 3 contains two sets of photos and materials listed as: McFarland Family Photos & Info and Blount Family Photos & Info. Box 4 contains a large, ledger-size volume used as a family scrapbook, which includes various ephemera ranging from family photos to news clippings to invitations to local (and some royal) events.

Ms. Woodhouse adds the further note that the collection is or soon will undergo extensive conservation by Berkeley's Bancroft Library and will probably not be available for research purposes again until 2005. Many of the collections photographs, however, have been digitized and are accessible on a CD-ROM. For further information, interested researchers should contact Virginia Shih, the Southeast Asia librarian, at the South & SE Asia Library at UC Berkeley. Her email address is vshih@library.berkeley.edu, Woodhouse writes that she too will be happy to respond to inquires about the McFarland Family Papers. Readers can contact her at lesliew@uclink.berkeley.edu.

Book Review

Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. 1978. Reprinted with a New Afterword, London: Penguin Books, 1995.

Said's scholarly, passionate book, *Orientalism*, is a seminal work for a wide range of fields in the humanities and social sciences. It has changed the way many scholars think about their fields and, more importantly, their attitudes towards the people they study. The book has also sparked an immense debate about Western, particularly European, academic culture and its relationship to non-Western peoples, a debate that has continued down to the present. Many even credit *Orientalism* with having given birth to the field of post-colonial studies. More to the point here, it is a book that is of significant value in helping us to reflect on the study of the churches of Thailand.

The purpose of this review is to introduce the reader to Said's *Orientalism*. Those who are conversant with the book and the subsequent debate that erupted around it will probably find little new here. My sense is, however, that Said's work has had little influence on Christian scholars and students, particularly those engaged in the study of Christian missions. Hence this review of a book published 25 years ago!

Edward W. Said is an articulate, erudite scholar who writes with depth and clarity and uses even postmodern jargon profoundly. He is insightful. He is also both a Palestinian Arab (born to a Christian family) and an American citizen who feels very deeply the prejudices most Americans and Europeans have against the Arab people and against Islam. He believes that the West fundamentally, often maliciously persists in misunderstanding and mistreating the Arabs and other Asians, and *Orientalism* is thus a demand for justice, an exposition of prejudice and oppression. The book focuses on the idea of Orientalism, which Said defines as being a Western, especially European, scholarly tradition regarding the peoples of Asia, "the Orientals." As a scholarly tradition, Orientalism reflects the main currents in Western cognition since its earliest modern beginnings in the 14th century. It has to do with how Europeans know the truth, especially the truth about Orientals. To put the matter briefly and more superficially than Said does himself, Orientalism encompasses a traditional body of false knowledge about Orientals based on Western Christian notions of the non-Christian, non-Western Other including an intensely self-serving dualistic distinction between supposedly progressive, dynamic, moral, Christian European civilization and backwards, static, immoral, non-Christian Orientals. As a scholarly tradition, Said argues, Orientalism represents the collective "wisdom" of many centuries of study of Orientals by European scholars and has in latter days assumed the status of unquestionable, unchanging truth.

Said makes his case by conducting his readers on a tour of the writings of Western orientalists, beginning briefly with ancient times and working his way down to the present. While Said claims that his portrait of Orientalism as a "discourse" is relevant to all Western thinking about all

Asians, he limits his study to the scholarly traditions of French, British, and, more lately, American orientalists. He also focuses almost exclusively on Western knowledge, so-called, of the Arabs and Islam. Said carries out his analysis of Orientalism, in part, by borrowing Michel Foucault's concept of "discourse" and applying it to orientalists. He argues that Western orientalist discourse has over the centuries "constructed" a picture, an image of the Oriental that has little or nothing to do with western Asian realities. Said calls this construction a "mythic discourse," one that pervades nearly all Western thinking about the Arab Middle East.

Western Orientalism, Said argues, defines Orientals as being an unprogressive and backward people. It makes no distinctions between Arab states, tribes, communities, or individuals. An Arab is an Arab is an Arab, a people who are supposedly ignorant especially of themselves. It is thus the self-assigned task of the orientalist to define Orientals not only for Euro-American scholars and diplomats but also for Orientals themselves. Orientalism draws on a static, traditional body of knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation of Western orientalists virtually since the fourteenth century. that traditional wisdom about claims that Orientals are emotional, not rational. They are not trustworthy. They have no legitimate scholarly traditions of their own, nor can they rule themselves justly or wisely.

Said himself summarizes Orientalism as consisting of four dogmas. First, he states that Orientalism is premised on the "fact" that there is an "absolute and systematic difference" between the rational, superior West and the undeveloped, inferior Orient. Second, orientalists prefer their traditional knowledge of the Orient, which is taken from classical texts, to contemporary study of Asia. Third, orientalists treat the Orient as a single, unchanging phenomenon that can be best described by "a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary." This vocabulary is taken by orientalists to be scientific. Finally, Orientalism assumes that the Orient is dangerous and has to be controlled. Orientalism is a body of invented knowledge, in sum, that is in and of itself an academic form of control that also facilitates actual political and military control over western Asia. (pages 300-301).

The last of Said's four dogmas concerning Orientalism is a crucial one. The book is far, far from being simply an academic exercise. It is, rather, a scholar's declaration of opposition to a system of knowledge that has underwritten European and more recently American political and military domination of the Arab world. Said identifies Orientalism with the Israeli occupation of Palestine. He sees it as the source of ignorance that allowed Britain and France to establish their colonies in western Asia (a.k.a. "the Middle East") and that, today, encourages the Western nations, particularly the United States, to support Israel. Thus, he writes, "The nexus of knowledge and power creating 'the Oriental' and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter." He goes on, "Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent," but it seems otherwise to Said. Society and "literary culture" have to be studied together, and what Said hoped to accomplish in writing *Orientalism* is to contribute to our understanding of how Orientalism's literature and body of knowledge have assisted in the cultural domination of the Orient by the West. (pages 27-28).

A book of this scope, depth, and fervor is inevitably flawed. Dr. George Landow of Brown University has summarized the main points of *Orientalism's* critics on his website ([no longer available]). Agreeing that the book is a seminal work, Landow still contends that it is based on shoddy scholarship, focuses too narrowly on the Arab portion of the Orient, is biased and one-sided, ignores women's issues, and is too sweeping in its condemnation of all Western knowledge and scholarly study of the Orient. The book also fails to see that Asians treat the West in much the same way as the West treats Orientals.

Some critics argue that *Orientalism* betrays a fundamental, damaging ambivalence concerning the relationship of orientalist discourse to the "real" Orient. At points, Said seems to think (following Foucault) that "the Orient" exists only in orientalist discourse; it is nothing more than a self-serving, self-gratifying myth made up ("constructed") by European scholarship for its own ends. There is no such thing as a "real Orient." Yet, at other points Said claims that Orientalism as a body of false knowledge has blinded the orientalists to the real nature of the Orient, strongly implying that there is a real Orient. While many of his more sophisticated critics are upset by the fact that Said sometimes treats the Orient as a reality and sometimes as merely a matter of discourse, the more important point is that Said has himself fallen victim to the habit of treating both the Orient and orientalists as single entities. He speaks of the Orient, even though he contends that there is no such thing as a single, timeless Orient-there is only a multitude of Orients. He himself treats the European tradition of orientalist discourse as if it is a single, unified, unchanging discourse rather than a complex body of shifting, changing discourses. Critics also point out that Orientalism has in some cases had a positive reflexive impact on the West itself, citing German Orientalism as a particular example. They also argue that Asians have played an important role in accepting, perpetuating, and influencing the course of Orientalism.

Orientalism, as a result, ignited an ongoing debate that has contributed a great deal to our understanding of how East and West have related to each other and created each other over the course of history down to the present. Said may have been wrong in the particulars, but he was right in the main; and both his being right and being wrong have provided the impetus for rethinking all manner of things that needed rethinking. When one considers all of the learned books and articles that are published each year, it is rare indeed that one book could have such an impact.

It is troubling, therefore, to discover that Said's Orientalism has had little impact on Christian academics including, most particularly, the academic study of the foreign missionary movement. Whatever the weaknesses of Said's presentation, Orientalism contains a number of significant insights that help us to better understand the ways in which Western missionary "discourse," often in unintentional dialogue with their converts, "constructed" the "native" church. Discourse, in this sense, includes missionary behavior as well as missionary words. Said himself indicates in several places that the discourse of Orientalism has some of its roots in Christian thinking. He argues, for example, that Orientalism grew out of a "set of structures from the past," which were "naturalized, modernized, and laicized substitutes for (or versions of) Christian supernaturalism." (page 122). He states that Orientalism retained a "peculiarly polemical religious attitude it had from the beginning." (page 260, emphasis in the original). In other places, he writes somewhat gingerly of Orientalism's religious background, never specifically

indicting traditional Christian thinking about the non-Christian Other as a source of Orientalism but, now and again, pointing in that general direction. Surely, it is worth more than a pause for Christian scholars to look at the history of the church and consider the extent to which the church has participated in and even fostered Orientalism. Such reflection should keep in mind that, in spite of Said, not all Orientalisms are necessarily evil and oppressive and that orientalists have at times also had a more positive influence on Western thinking about the Orient. Christian theologians, social scientists, historians, and missiologists would do well, in this light, to study more closely the nature of historical and contemporary Christian discourses about people of other faiths and places to discern the relationship of those discourses to Orientalism.

Bringing the matter home to Christianity in Thailand, Said challenges us to look, first, at the ways in which missionary "discourse" (words and behavior) has historically "constructed" the Thai church. How, that is, did missionary values, attitudes, and prejudices influence the founding and early history of the churches of Thailand? To what extent was that discourse similar to Said's Orientalism? What role did the first generations of converts have in translating missionary discourse into Thai (and Karen, Lahu, Chinese, etc.) ecclesiastical discourse? How did they modify and change the missionary discourse as they adapted it to the societies and cultures of Thailand? My sense is that missionary discourse was very much like the Orientalism described by Said, but we must also keep in mind the corrections Said's critics have made of his discourse and not treat missionary discourses as just one timeless, relentlessly oppressive entity.

When viewed from the distance of twenty-five years since *Orientalism* was first published, the consensus of many (most?) scholars is that Said's description of Orientalism and its consequences is much more correct than mistaken. Even where mistaken, it is still challenging and useful. It would seem only judicious for Christian scholarship to engage in its own debate on Said, taking into account the rich treasury of commentary that has collected itself around Orientalism.

On a more personal note, one of the things that I find most appealing about Said's critique of Western systems of knowledge regarding non-Western peoples is the depth of feeling and of self that Said invested in Orientalism. He uses the language of scholarship with an uncommon passion to judge supposedly dispassionate, neutral, objective European scholarly discourse about the Other. The feeling, the passion, the self-investment does not detract from his arguments in the least but, rather, lends them a power than goes beyond being merely articulate. The book has integrity. It is principled. It is a call for, a demand for justice and compassion. Most importantly, it brings Western academia to account for the way it talks about the Other and uses that talk from behind the scenes to sustain oppressive international political structures and military campaigns of suppression. While it is true, as some critics note, that Said makes the same points over and over throughout the book, it is the depth of feeling and the call for justice and compassion that sustain the reader and carries him through to the last page.

Passion is an important ingredient in good scholarship. It motivates the scholar and keeps her burning the midnight oil. It inspires new thoughts, new perspectives. Passion should not be equated with self-interested scholarship that is politically or theologically biased for a self-

serving cause. Scholarly passion is about caring, dedication, and investing all that one has in "getting it right" as best one can. Scholars must, of course, be aware of their passion and try to keep it focused on the goal of telling the story or interpreting the data fairly, but a scholar without passion is a tasteless non-entity. It is the passion in *Orientalism* that makes it a great book and a good (scholarly) read.