
INSTITUTE of ADVANCED THEOLOGY

Newsletter
Winter 2002



*Collaborative scholarship,
bringing together religious
leaders,
believers, and those who are
simply curious, in a shared
enterprise of enlightened learning*



Credit: Tania Barricklo

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear fellow members,

September 11, 2001 brought responses from this country and around the world, which could scarcely have been predicted the day before. A generous and active sympathy, a greater attention to safety, a concern for justice and the preservation of life, all remind us that the field of history need not be left to forces of destruction and terror.

Many religious leaders have been a part of this response, and I am personally grateful for the fellowship and support of clergy in many parts of the world. But at the same time, an urgent task remains to be undertaken. We have been told that "true" Islam does not support terrorism, just as we have been assured that "true" Catholicism and Protestantism are no part of the problem in Northern Ireland, that a "real" Hindu or Buddhist would not participate in the violence that Sri Lanka sees on a regular basis, and that Judaism as such does not sanction assassination. Yet the fact remains that terrorists commonly claim religious motives, and that they deploy the resources of their religions to achieve their ends.

Apologetics will not resolve this sickness. If it is true that misinterpretations of the world's great religions lie behind much of the violence we face, than those misinterpretations must be unmasked. The work of the Institute of Advanced Theology began with the comparison of Christianity and Judaism, and that will continue to be a vital focus. But we have already heard a fine lecture on Islam and Platonism by Professor Parviz Morewedge, and I hope that the extension of our public program will widen the comparative task further.

As I write this letter, discussion with Union Theological Seminary for the development of a joint program of degrees is continuing. Nothing could be of greater service just now than to bring the clergy of the world's faiths together for joint, comparative study, and to challenge them to find the resources within their own traditions to correct the tendencies of violence which each of them has tolerated. It has long been apparent that religion can breed violence: now that fact is unmistakable, and demands an intelligent response.

This newsletter comes to you at a time of great uncertainty. But within that environment, I believe it is clear that the work of our Institute represents the prospect of the kind of peaceful, informed pluralism among religions which societies around the world need. Events planned for 2002 are designed for the renewal and extension of our membership. I hope they might also be an occasion to discover the resources we all need to respond to the atrocity of September 11 with the power of human hope.



Members of the 2001 Consultation on James

Top row (left to right): Jacob Neusner, Wiard Popkes, Peter Davids, Ithamar Gruenwald, and Frank Crohn

Bottom Row (left to right): John Painter, Marianne Sawicki, and Bruce Chilton

A CHAT WITH THE CHAIR

It seems difficult to believe November 2001 was our fourth official IAT-sponsored Consultation on James. We started with a meeting in Orlando (which was great for me because I then lived in Florida), then moved to Cambridge for the second meeting, and then on to Nashville for the third. The reason for all this moving around is that we, in those years, attached ourselves to the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), which is a national forum of diverse scholars, meeting annually to discuss all aspects of religion.

In these instances, we met at the same site as the SBL and preceded their giant meetings with a small gathering of scholars (usually seven) of our own to investigate a particular aspect of religion in the first century. Each participant was carefully selected on the basis of familiarity with the subject, and presented and reported on a paper assigned them by our Executive Director, Bruce Chilton. Each presentation was then followed by a discussion by the entire group of scholars. These meetings tend to be very intense and focused and are confined only to those involved in the overall Consultation. However, this year was different as the Consultation was held at Bard.

The keynote speaker for the public part of the Consultation was John Painter. He is a world-renowned lecturer on New Testament subjects, and his book, *Just James*, published in the past year, is one of the few volumes to focus on James (another is *The Brother of Jesus*, which is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter and is the current book available to patron members). As you know, James is of particular interest to us at the IAT. We enjoyed seeing many of the membership at John's lecture and encourage all current members to attend such events. We look forward to your continued presence at IAT events and value your membership

Frank T. Crohn

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BRUCE CHILTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEWSLETTER EDITED BY NANCY LEONARD



**THE BROTHER OF JESUS
PUBLISHED IN NOVEMBER**

The Institute of Advanced Theology and the local community united last November to celebrate the publication of a long-awaited book. *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* (Westminster John Knox Press) is the first popular volume based on an Institute-sponsored Consultation. The editors, Bard Professors Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, presided over book signings at the Merritt Bookstores in Red Hook and Millbrook on February 2nd and 3rd of this year. Another signing especially for friends of the IAT was held on February 13th with a reception for Karl P. Donfried, the Elizabeth A. Woodson Professor of Religion and Literature at Smith College, who visited Bard to give a lecture on James entitled "James and Paul in Jerusalem."

The Brother of Jesus is a groundbreaking collection. In the time between Jesus's resurrection and James's death, James the Just was the most prominent and widely respected leader in Christendom. In *The Brother of Jesus*, eight renowned scholars address such issues as the Jewish context of the early Church, the person of James, his literary message and mission, James and Jesus, and James in relation to Peter and Paul.

"During the 1997 IAT conference, 'The Missing Jesus—Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament,' Institute scholars realized that James, the brother of Jesus, was virtually ignored in biblical scholarship—although he was revered among both Jews and Jesus's followers—so we began the 'Consultation on James,'" according to IAT director Chilton. The first publication to emerge from the Consultation, *James the Just and Christian Origins* (Brill, 1999), was edited by Chilton and Craig Evans.

According to Professor Lewis R. Donelson of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. "The authors in *The Brother of Jesus* raise up in a creative and forceful way the voices of so-called 'Jewish Christianity,' especially as it was centered in the figure of James. This makes this volume a major contribution to any discussion of Christian origins."

Contributors to *The Brother of Jesus* include John Painter, Professor of Theology at St. Mark's National Theological Centre, Charles Sturt University, Australia; Peter H. Davids, author of *A Commentary on James* and Director of Studies the Schloss Mittersill Study Centre, Austria; Wiard Popkes, Professor of New Testament at Hamburg University, Germany; Richard Bauckham, Professor of New Testament Studies and Bishop Wardlaw Professor at the University of Saint Andrews, Scotland; Craig Evans, Director of the Graduate Program in biblical studies at Trinity Western University, Canada; and Robert Price, Professor of Biblical Criticism at the Center for Inquiry Institute, New York



Credit: Anne Hall

Jacob Neusner will have a new book published in late summer by Penguin/Putnam, entitled, *Judaism: An Introduction*. This book will narrate the story of Judaism by its chapters, as they intersect with the practice of the faith in everyday life. First comes the life of home and family, then the social order of corporate community, its law and theology, the whole retelling Scripture's story. The modulations of the story in modern times, the inclusion into the story of the women of the community, the condition of the Judaic story today— all these subjects of intense contemporary interest find their place in proportion and in balance.

2001 INSTITUTE EVENTS

THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OF RABBI JESUS

This summer a workshop series was held at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation entitled "The Spiritual Practices of Rabbi Jesus." Led by the Reverend Dr. Linda Anderson and Ellen Weaver, MSW, the series focused upon the ideas of cleansing and purity both in Jesus' time and in the present. Participants considered the

Jewish understandings of cleansing and purity, Jesus' contributions and modifications to them, and then, through experiential practices, attempted to incorporate them into their own current religious understandings. Meditations upon the Hebrew letters for Yahweh (YHWH), immersion rituals (not literal, however), chanting, and guided visualizations filled the sessions.

The workshop was well attended and Bruce Chilton was kind enough to visit during the final meeting and speak with the group.

The Rev. Dr. Linda Anderson

FALL 2001 LECTURE-DIALOGUE SERIES

The Institute of Advanced Theology at Bard College held a series of public lecture-dialogues on three topics last. "The Politics of Faith" on October 4; "Ethics and Sanctification" on Thursday, October 25; and "Ethics and Salvation" on December 6. The events presented by Professor Jacob Neusner and the Reverend Dr. Bruce Chilton, who were joined on the third occasion by Jonathan Brockopp, Assistant Professor of religion and a specialist on Islam.

How do the origins of Judaism and the origin of Christianity relate to one another? One popular conception is that they are parallel and invite direct comparisons. Professors Neusner, Chilton, and Brockopp challenged that picture, arguing that the histories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam do not run parallel but intersect. Paradoxically, where they do intersect, they profoundly disagree.

This may seem surprising, because Judaism and Christianity took shape during the first four centuries of the Common Era under conditions of subordination within the Roman Empire. Both drew on the inheritance of ancient Israel. Beyond that, however, their formative histories are not directly comparable. One started where the other ended. One moved out of politics as the other moved in. One abandoned history as a way of organizing experience, while the other felt compelled to pioneer a new conception of history in order to explain the present age. The lecture series was designed to investigate this complex and often fraught relationship within its historical setting.

SPRING AND SUMMER 2002 IAT EVENTS

LENTEN LECTURE SERIES, February 20 through March 20

"St Paul in Tarsus and Jerusalem" is the topic of this year's series that focuses on Paul's native Tarsus (in present day Turkey) as a formative influence on his life and teaching, and analyzes his earliest experience in Jerusalem as a Pharisee. Both these aspects of Paul's background will be featured to help understand his conviction that he personally encountered Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead. Presented by the Rev. Dr. Bruce Chilton with discussions led by the Red Hook Ministerium. Lunch provided. Noon in the multipurpose room of the Bertelsmann Campus Center. Donation of \$7 (\$5 for members).

CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK CITY, April 20 and 21

"Conflict Resolution: A Dialogue Among Cultures and Religions" is a conference cosponsored by the Institute and Global Publications with the participation of many of the missions of the United Nations. Advance registration and fee required (with a discount for Institute members). To be held at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

CONFERENCE AT BARD COLLEGE, June 14 to 16

"Meditation in the Religious Traditions" is a conference that will explore the history and practice of meditation in the world's religious traditions. Advance registration and fee required (with a discount for Institute members).

For further information on these events, call the Institute office at 845-758-7279 or e-mail iat@bard.edu

**TRAVELS OF BRUCE CHILTON :
LOOKING FOR PAUL IN ANTIOCH OF ASIA MINOR**

I stood on a cliff, overlooking the excavated colonia in Asia Minor the Romans called "Antioch" after its Persian founder. Two things struck me. The first was that I could endure temperatures above 110 degrees, and even put one foot in front of the other. The other was that the Romans had come a long way inland into present-day Turkey. The city had already been developed during the Hellenistic period, but when the Romans made it their own after the first century BCE, the place was restructured comprehensively.

The theater was adapted, a grid plan was employed to lay out streets, magnificent aqueducts fed water into a huge fountain, and a Roman officer paid for a beautiful bath complex, the best preserved from the period I have ever visited. The huge Temple I was standing over had been hewn into the cliff by the Persians to celebrate their dominance; the Romans rededicated it to the divine Emperor, Augustus. Imperial opportunism did not stand on pride.



Road & Shops

And all this was a good investment opportunity for the Romans. The colonia lay near a range of mountains that protected it from the north, and the coastal escarpment to the south made the area the pivot of a natural line of trade between east and west. Much less sensible, at first sight, is Paul's presence there. Physically, getting to Antioch from Cyprus required a crossing to the port of Antalya on the coast of Asia Minor, and a journey north along the Aksu River. On this trek of some one hundred twenty miles, he and his companions (including Barnabas) did not even stop and stay at Perga, a much more beautifully constructed city which was in a period of development that would see some of the most exquisite sculptures I have ever studied.

Before he even set out on his journey, Paul's decision to go to Antioch had caused contention. He and Barnabas had been accompanied on Cyprus by John Mark, Barnabas' relative and the son of a prominent woman in Jesus' movement in Jerusalem (see Colossians 4:10 and Acts 12:12). When John Mark learned of the intention to travel into the interior of Asia Minor, he separated from Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem (see Acts 13:13). Interestingly, when Paul and Barnabas eventually came back from this journey to their host city in Syria (also called Antioch), they confronted a challenge about their teaching and practice from Peter and teachers who had come recently from Jerusalem (Galatians 2:11-21).

Both what they did in Antioch of Asia Minor and where they had done it raised critical problems for many practitioners of Jesus' teaching. Jesus himself had directed his activity to Israel, in both a territorial and an ethnic sense. The inclusion of non-Jews within God's kingdom that he predicted was to occur by their being incorporated within Israel, not by eliminating the idea of God's choice of Israel. Subsequent to

the resurrection, teachers such as Peter put into practice the idea that non-Jews, by baptism, could enjoy the benefits that came to Israel by means of Jesus. But in Antioch of Asia Minor Paul crafted a radical claim, that everyone who believed in Jesus—whether Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free—was a child of Abraham, an Israelite (so Galatians 3:28-29).

It is one thing to develop a radical thought, another to put it into practice. What brought Paul to make his move just now, in the year 42 or 43 CE? That it was a conscious move on his part is clearly suggested by the book of Acts, which says that on Cyprus, prior to his venture into Antioch of Asia Minor, Paul met a Roman official named Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7). This noble is known from an inscription in Rome, naming L. Sergius Paulus, which has long been known of. Why after meeting Sergius Paulus does Paul go to Asia Minor? And why from this point does Acts start to call the apostle "Paul" rather than "Saul"?

The excavations at Antioch have yielded buildings that are more impressive and serviceable than they are elegant. The beauty of Perge, Ephesus, and Aphrodisias makes Antioch a poor cousin by comparison, and it is no mystery why tour buses are scarcer in the vicinity than the Turkish Ministry of Tourism would like. But the museum in Yalvac, the nearby modern city, houses the many inscriptions found at Antioch, where local worthies saw to it that their names were inscribed in memory of their good deeds, sponsorships of sacrifices and fetes, and endowment of buildings. Seeing these inscriptions confirms the impression of the city's architecture: status-seeking is more evident than taste.



Inscription of Sergius Paulus

But whatever one thinks of the inscriptions aesthetically, their historical significance is plain, especially in one respect: the name of L. Sergius Paulus crops up repeatedly, and in the correct period. The significance of these inscriptions for identifying the Sergius Paulus of Acts was suggested to me during the summer by scholars at Macquarie

University in Australia, and their findings first appeared in a public forum one year earlier. I was greatly helped during the expedition by Rosalind Kearsley, in particular, in the identification and dating of such material.

But although the identity of Sergius Paulus had been recognized recently, its significance for the development of Paul's itinerary has not been appreciated. Here a greater sense of cultural context enables us to see Paul accepting not only the benefaction, but also the name, of a Roman official in order to seek converts on fresh ground, far from territorial Israel or the historic settlements of the Jewish Diaspora. There were indeed Jews in Antioch, but their proportion of the population was such that it was clear they were not to be the principal target of the journey. From the outset, Paul proposed to do something new in Antioch, and he took a new name to do so. John Mark, and later the leaders in Jerusalem around James, correctly saw how radical a move he wanted to make.

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**REFLECTIONS OF A MEMBER:
TRANSFORMED BY PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS
AND UNLIKELY EPIPHANIES**

My first reaction to the 9/11 tragedy was — how can I help? As a hospital chaplain, I felt that this was my field where I could offer specialized services appropriate to the situation. At first I thought of being useful in the emergency rooms of hospitals to which I was connected. But this idea could not be realized because sadly, there were no survivors. Then I learned about the Family Assistance Center at Pier 94, and I went through the Red Cross organized training by a SAIR Chaplain to be cleared for work as a chaplain.

In the days that first followed 9/11, the general desire to help was so pervasive that to my great astonishment even hardboiled taxi drivers offered free rides to families and Red Cross volunteers. They also liked to talk about their own experiences on "that day". These conversations proved soothing and helpful, not only to the drivers but also to myself. I felt, as so often in hospital chaplaincy, that when two humans open their souls to each other, very often God's grace emerges and plays out miracles.

Back at the pier, we were easily identifiable as Chaplains by the clearly marked vests that we wore. When families arrived, members of several disciplines stood by and waited for an opportunity to be useful without stepping on each other in eagerness. After a few days we relaxed and made and received referrals as needed. While we all were still under the effect of the tremendous happenings we put on our professional faces and tried to help by listening, opening our hearts and helping the traumatized families cope with the unimaginable losses in their lives. Many admitted they needed to stay in control, to get on with filling in forms and finding the right agencies for support. Others needed to "go to pieces" for a while. The privacy of a booth in the "silent area" proved just right for that purpose.



There was the young woman from London, engaged to a young man with whom she lived; he had come to New York on business - never to return. His mother had taken over the handling of all the agency requests; the young woman felt totally left out, with no legal rights, just emotional emptiness. I listened and held her when she could not stop sobbing. After a long while she regrouped; after I offered a meditation, she exuberantly swung her arms around me and said "Oh, how I needed this, thank you, thank you."

I sensed, especially for family members from out of town, that spending time with a designated stranger may have been the only time to allow themselves to be touched at the raw nerve of that recent wound. How could anyone be prepared for this? As a member of the helping professions, I had to ask each time to find the inner strength and the right approach to be helpful, to comfort and point towards healing, at least as a possibility for the future. And often, I sensed how the veil of protective numbness lifted, while I tried to hold God's gentle grace, until it fell again.

A father walking with his teenage son approached me; despite his son's gestures to the contrary, he persuaded his son to follow us to a private booth. It soon became clear that they were unable to communicate over the death of the boy's mother, from whom the father had been divorced. After many gentle questions and examples of other people, the boy finally allowed himself to open up and acknowledge his pain and loneliness. We were all moved and the father was able to say consoling words that were actually acknowledged by his son. It was quite moving; we held hands and meditated on God's presence, mercy and compassion.

Each encounter was different and required a different approach. On my own I could not have managed, but I learned to improvise by relying on divine guidance. To my own astonishment, it worked; it proved helpful to the individual family members, and energized me through the many hours each day that I spent there

Liso Starrett, Millbrook NY

You may read the entire essay on the Institute website www.bard.edu/iat

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