
INSTITUTE of
ADVANCED
THEOLOGY
Newsletter

Fall 2002 Volume 2, Issue 2



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



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear fellow members,

Conflict and violence have imposed themselves on us, uninvited fellow-travelers on what we thought was a journey towards peace when we first designed the April conference. Habits developed during the Cold War leave us badly prepared to cope with these companions, and they often claim they have joined us out of religious convictions.

During the Cold War, contention between market capitalism and state socialism was so epic, it seemed to supersede religious difference. Yet both sides exploited those differences when it suited them. Their tactics betrayed the recognition that ignoring religions is unwise. Now we know to our cost that a policy of ignorance promotes religious opposition, often in a reactionary form.

That is only half the price of ignorance. The other half is that religions themselves have developed strategies to resolve conflict, whether among practitioners or in relation to outsiders. Attempts at resolving conflict that ignore those deeply ingrained strategies are not likely to address practitioners at the emotional level at which faith moves them.

Ten years ago, Professor Jacob Neusner and I undertook a comparison of Judaism and Christianity that was designed to address their profound differences as well as commonality. Within the Institute of Advanced Theology, we have broadened that approach to include analyses of other global faiths, especially Islam.

Our focus is less on what religions *are* than on what they *do* in relation to one another. We are moving beyond conventional scholarship, because we seek to map interfaces among communities. We often learn of those interfaces when they turn violent, but they can also instruct us in protocols of peace.

Nothing that has happened in the past year does anything but strengthen New York's example of peaceful religious diversity. Yet this example can only be followed when we move beyond an attitude of more general tolerance. What is needed is critical appreciation, with an acknowledgment of difference. Where it concerns assessing conflict, scholars of religion need to recognize their own limits. We seem better at explaining theories of peace than at analyzing how our traditions have inflicted harm. Conflict resolution has emerged as a field of acknowledged expertise, and from professionals we can learn of the impact of religious teachings, often inadvertent and unintentional. Mapping the interfaces among religions unites scholars and practitioners of religion together with practitioners of peace, especially those whose vocation is diplomatic.

People have asked me what I anticipated coming out of our April conference. Could there be a prospect of peace? This was not a place to pass on political convictions, which we all have opportunities to express elsewhere. In any case, the pragmatics of peace seem to elude attempts to specify them too early. We did not emerge with a plan or a single prospect. But we did listen attentively for perspectives that make for peace, as they were shaped by the expertise of those who analyze conflict and by the skill of those who study religions. We will continue to learn what we can and to share such wisdom as we discern in ourselves. To my mind, doing so counts as success. ■

Bruce D. Chilton

INSTITUTE of ADVANCED THEOLOGY

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BRUCE CHILTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEWSLETTER EDITED BY NANCY LEONARD



A CHAT WITH THE CHAIR

To our friends:

On November 19th this year's annual Consultation of Scholars will continue our first century explorations. This in-gathering of specialists in biblical history will commence with a special event—the only public one at the conference—where we will have an opportunity to hear one of the consultation participants. The subject this year focuses more on archaeology than in past meetings, and we feel privileged to have Dr. Rami Arav, director of the Bethsaida Excavation Project, speak to us on the subject of "Bethsaida from David to Jesus."

Dr. Arav will cover the 15-year project of excavating this 3000-year-old city. The meeting will be held in the Weis Cinema of the Bertelsmann Campus Center, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

All members and prospective members are welcome. Please feel free to bring friends who you feel would be interested in the mission of the Institute.

On another note, this newsletter is being underwritten by the Crohn Family Foundation. I hope that in the future other members will join me in sponsoring this worthy endeavor. For example a gift \$250, will support the mailing of one issue of the newsletter that reaches over 350 people.

With many thanks for your continued help,

FRANK L. CLOON
Chairman of the Board

News of the Institute

NEW THEOLOGY COURSE OFFERED AT BARD, FALL 2002

Religious Foundations of Western Civilization is a new course for students at Bard College. It surveys the principal points in the formation of the West at which religion (mainly Christianity, but also Judaism and Islam) defined the social order and influenced the shape of the culture. Among the points are the conception of the state as distinct from the church and politics from religion; the idea of holy war (Crusades/Jihad); the notion of the cathedral as a 1000-year project of an entire community; the Protestant Reformation; the Catholic Reformation; the Enlightenment and the intellectual critique of religion; and contemporary aspects of the West that are defined by, or in response to, religious belief and behavior. Public events for members include lectures and films. Leon Botstein, president of the College, will speak on the topic, "From Church to the Concert Hall," on the secularization of music. Students in the course will read William MacNeill's *The Rise of the West*.

—Jacob Neusner, Research Professor of Religion and Theology

If you are interested in taking the entire course (not just attending the public events), contact the Continuing Studies Program at **845-758-7508**. The fee for the 2-credit course is \$692; and \$416 to audit it. There is a \$30 registration fee in addition to the tuition.

CONFERENCE GRANT

The Institute for Research on Unlimited Love: Altruism, Compassion, and Service of Case Western Reserve Medical School, supported by the Templeton Foundation, has awarded the Institute of Advanced Theology **\$25,000** for the planning and implementation of a conference, *Altruism in*

Religious Perspective: The Place of Altruistic Conduct in the Religious Perspective: The Place of Altruistic Conduct in the Religious Systems of World Religions. The conference is scheduled for November 2004.

BARD'S JEWISH-MUSLIM SACRED SPACE

WITH KOSHER/HALAL KITCHEN OPENED IN THE SPRING

We live in a community where you can easily know at least one person who practices each of the global religions. Bard College is not unique in that, but it is unusual to find all that diversity in an environment as intimate as ours. The Chaplaincy has sought to make religions transparent to one another, so that each one is better appreciated and everyone learns better how to be appreciated.

Islam and Judaism both have distinctive dietary perspectives, and secularists have sometimes been intolerant of them. Appreciating these habits of eating is basic to both religions. Opening this facility marks an important step for Bard College. We acknowledge that critical pluralism is more than a matter of shutting our eyes to difference. And because Jewish and Muslim students take this action together, we prophesy peace to an age torn by war.

—Remarks at the dedication of the center by Bruce Chilton

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRUCE CHILTON

In May, Bruce Chilton gave two area book signings in relation to the release of *Rabbi Jesus* in paperback. On Wednesday, May 17 he was at Oblong Books and Records in Rhinebeck; and on Thursday, May 30, he spoke on the topic, *The Galilee of Jesus & His Brothers*, at the Woodstock Reformed Church, followed by a book signing at Mirabai Bookstore.

This fall, Miriam's Well is sponsoring a retreat, "Healing Ourselves and our World," at Mount St. Alphonsus Monastery in Esopus, September 20, through September 22. Rev. Chilton will speak Friday evening on "Therapeutic Arts of Rabbi Jesus," author Thomas Moore will speak Saturday morning and afternoon on the topic, "Healing Ourselves and Our World," and Alexandra Kennedy will speak Saturday evening and Sunday on "Facing Loss." For further information and fees, contact Miriam's Well at 845-246-5805, e-mail info@miriamswell.com, or visit their website www.miriamswell.com.

In the fall, Rev. Chilton will be giving a series of lectures on "Biography of the Bible" on Monday evenings at the House of the Redeemer in Manhattan. The lectures will be held on October 14, 21 and 28, and November 4, 11 and 18, and will begin at 6:00 p.m. The cost is \$120. For further information contact the House of the Redeemer at 212-289-0399; e-mail: info@houseoftheredeemer.org; or visit the website houseoftheredeemer.org. Address: 7 East 95th St., New York, NY 10128.

SENIOR FELLOW, JACOB NEUSNER

Three Faiths, One God: The Formative Faith and Practice

of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, by Jacob Neusner, Bruce Chilton, and William Graham (dean of Harvard Divinity School) will be published by Brill in hardcover in November (paperback in March). From the publisher: "If Moses,

Jesus, and the Prophet Muhammad were to meet, what would they tell one another about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam? Three of today's leading scholars explore the topics such a conversation might entail in this comparative study of the three monotheistic faiths."



Jacob Neusner's book *Judaism: An Introduction*, will be available in September from Penquin Paperbacks. From the publisher: "In this fresh introduction to Judaism, eminent scholar Jacob Neusner rejects the traditional 'Sinai to Golders Green' approach, and instead begins by showing how Judaism is seen today in the world around us. Focusing on the religion as it forms the lives of real people, Judaism emerges as full of diversity and vitality. A lively, readable resource for students of Judaism and religious studies." And

The Encyclopedia of Judaism: Supplement I, edited by Neusner, Alan J. Avery Peck, and William Scott Green, will be released in November by Brill. ■

MEMBERS' VIEWS

The Institute would like to thank the members who wrote the following essays for fellow members. If you are interested in submitting an essay, please e-mail iat@bard.edu or call the office at 845-758-7279.

LENTEN LECTURE SERIES 2002

St. Paul — Before he was Paul, Before he was a Saint

The series of five lecture/luncheons in Lent 2002 (February and March) was a salient event in the IAT offerings this year. Entitled "St. Paul in

Tarsus and Jerusalem" the talks brought listeners into the time, historically and spiritually, in which Saul of Tarsus began his inspired life.

Rev. Chilton left no stone unturned in describing the motley culture of Tarsus, featuring in part the lavish Hellenistic god-festivals. Union with the Divine was the theme; surely this influenced Saul as a young boy. In his early 20's he was well educated, making the journey to Jerusalem to study with the Pharisees, to become one, to get to the truth, to be. The Jerusalem years are a study in themselves. Saul emerged a zealot.

All of this was told with the authentic detail of Rev. Chilton's lifetime of study. Irreverent and humorous asides on Saul's mannerisms made the evolving Saul real and present. The presentation was a critically clinical account of a complex man.

Alas, the end of the fifth lecture was a cliffhanger. It brought us to Saul on the road to Damascus, leaving the story of Paul, the theologian, to next year's series. If you missed this one, be sure you're on the mailing list for next year's. It is not to be missed.

—Marguerite Hayes, Red Hook

◆ Note: The series on St. Paul continues this fall, beginning September 18th.

APRIL CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK CITY

A dialogue among cultures and religions could not be timelier. Although history has been fraught with wars, aggression and suffering, it would seem the stakes are higher today. Our resources would be more plentiful if we would only realize it and apply them. The April conference at Union Theological Seminary was one important application of resources. Rich in heritage, cultural analysis, and diverse theology—panels of scholars, philosophers, university presidents and UN delegates shared their expertise with warmth and commitment to a common goal.

Representatives of cultures as diverse as Egypt, South America and Iran, Africa, the US, China, and Afghanistan presented their own traditions' approach. Union Theological Seminary (itself committed to multicultural convergence) and President Hough graciously hosted the conference. In a venue of collegiate gothic architecture almost 200 people listened attentively, discussed, then dined together on salmon, artichoke salad and crème caramel, to note a morsel of the offerings.

Bruce Chilton and the program committee invested their time and talent to pull together accomplished, diverse leaders committed to peace. As panel chair, Rev. Chilton's sense of humor contributed to an atmosphere of familiarity and ease, while engaged in a profound mission. His own presentation on the transitional nature of the form of this world, and a divinely imbued authority on earth, left me with an increased sense of responsibility and renewed perspective.

The program was replete with provocative topics; it was hard to choose which to attend. I planned to leave some panels midway and enter others, but did not, instead relied on lively discussions at mealtime to fill in what I had missed. Voltaire, Sartre, Kafka, and Homer came into the discussions. Two compositions for the trombone were performed, written by an Australian woman grieving over the suffering in an Iraqi village: they spoke to the cultural transcendence of art.

President Roach of the International Association of University Presidents, whose 600 members are in 100 countries, noted that education transcends politics and partisanship; and that doctrine can divide while service can unite. Ambassador Farhadi of Afghanistan observed that only one seventh of all Muslims are Arabic. John Anton of the University of South Florida, observed how religion transcends the boundaries of nations and applied science. Charles R. Paul, of the Latter Day Saints, suggested that we engage inevitable conflicts with humility and love.

I came away richer, better able to address conflicts that arise on a personal and local front. Thank you to all. ■

—Kathi Wolchok, Red Hook

MEDITATIONS, SELF-REFLECTIONS, AND THERAPY:

SACRED AND PERSONAL

The conference took place on a cool and rainy weekend in June at Bard College. While it was cool outside our spirits were warmed by heated discussions and inspiring presentations.

Personally I attended the plenary panel and listened to Rev. Bruce Chilton's view of the Visio Dei as the center of experience during the early church including Origen's concepts contained in his writings. As Origen was part of the orthodox tradition he emphasized this vision of God as central for meditation and prayer, also found in the Philokalia (love of beauty). Ezekiel's vision of the fiery chariot forms a unique experience of God as a moving miracle. In conclusion, in Chilton's view, Origen represents the transition of the vision of the chariot to a philosophical vision. John Anton (University of

South Florida) elaborated on the concept of meditation within the context of Greek philosophy including Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus. As I understood it, meditation was conceived as the intensive thinking on a thing in place in order to recapture the original vision of beauty and good before the final flight of the soul. Intelligence needed to be supplemented by imagination, only then could the soul experience ecstasy. Oliver Leaman (University of Kentucky) spoke on meditation in the Jewish tradition. He presented the view that Judaism is more outer oriented than contemplative. The Torah provides rules of behavior and specific prayers for different times. The Kabbalah bridged the seeming gap between our and God's world. But basically meditation is a mental process as the Hebrew Bible is a physical text with references of God's existence in the ordinary world.

The Roundtable Discussion on Meditation in Christianity and Judaism brought a spontaneous response by Natan Margalit (Bard College) and Ellen Weaver (Woodstock Jewish Congregation) who shared views of an ongoing tradition of meditation, through chants and walking, that led to visions.

The consensus seemed to be that in our times the search for a personal experience has become more prevalent but can be accomplished in different ways. Rev. Ken Jetto (St. Paul's Lutheran Church) suggested that a prayer focused on Christ or the cross could lead to personally knowing God. Rev. Chilton pointed to the interplay of focusing and emptying the mind and heart. My own practical advice, in response to a question from the audience, was to use breath as the main tool to achieve a slowing down of mental and physical activities in order to arrive at immediate, as well as long term benefits, maybe even visions.

After a delicious and mostly (by ignoring the cookies and carrot cake) healthy dinner we had options to attend a Zen Buddhist meditation or a panel on Neoplatonism. I opted for the latter and heard fascinating accounts by John Finamore (University of Iowa), Sara Rappe (University of Michigan) and Greg Shaw (Stonehill College). The next day I followed the Zen meditation led by the excellent teacher, Tatjana von Prittwitz (Zen Mountain Monastery, Mt. Tremper) and attended the panel on Philosophy, Depth Psychology, and Religions. Some of these presentations were very focused, while others were, from my perspective, too general an overview. They were interesting, but did not always seem to relate to meditation.

Overall the conference was well organized and a good learning experience. My personal regret is that some panels overlapped and that I was not able to hear some of the presentations from the distinguished Asian participants. ■

—Liso Starrett, Millbrook

For further information and practice in meditation, members are welcome to attend regular meditation sessions. **Zen Buddhist** sessions at Bard College are led by Tatjana Myoko von Prittwitz, a student of the Zen Mountain Monastery, call 845-758-7598 or e-mail gaffron@bard.edu for location and times. **Tibetan Buddhist** sessions are held on Monday evenings at 5:30 p.m., at Kagyu Pende Kunchab, 1268 River Road in Annandale, 845-758-3781. Ellen Weaver gives instruction in **Jewish meditative** techniques. Call her at 845-679-9706 or e-mail ElleWeaver@aol.com.

FALL 2002 EVENTS

Wednesdays, September 18 through October 16

Luncheon Lectures

"St. Paul: from Jerusalem to Antioch." A luncheon lecture series, given by Rev. Dr. Bruce Chilton. In the year 35 CE, a Pharisee named Saul departed Jerusalem, having been converted to a movement that venerated Jesus as a teacher whom God had raised from the dead. The purpose of the lectures is to understand how and why Paul framed this theology. Discussion led by members of the Red Hook Ministerium follows each lecture. Lunch provided. **Advance registration requested, \$10 donation (\$7 for Institute members) for each session. 12:00 Noon.**

September 26, Thursday

Lecture

"The Peacemaking Christian in the Warmaking State." Catholic priest, social activist, and poet Daniel Berrigan, S.J. Presented by the Chaplaincy, Religion Program, and the Institute of Advanced Theology at Bard. **6:30 p.m.**

September through December

Wednesday Evening Lecture Series

Religious Foundations of Western Civilization

A lecture/dialogue series with the Rev. Dr. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, Research Professor of Religion and Theology.

September 11, "The Christian State: Its Ramifications through History"; **October 2**, "The Christian Society, the Judaic Counterpart";

November 6, "The Intellectual Challenge to the Religious Order and the Response of the Christian Intellect"; **December 3**, Screening of Carl Dreyer's *Ordet* (Weis Cinema, 7:00 p.m.) and **December 4**, "From Sacred Narrative to Secular Story. Carl Dreyer's *Ordet*: A Religious Vision in a Skeptic's Medium," with John Pruitt, associate professor of film;

December 11, "Art and Faith: The Secularization of Music," with Leon Botstein, president of the College and Leon Levy Professor in the Arts and Humanities; and **December 18**, "Is Christianity at War with Islam?" with Emil Homerin, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Rochester, and Professors Chilton and Neusner. **6:30 p.m.**

**ALL PROGRAMS WILL BE IN THE MULTIPURPOSE ROOM
OF THE BERTELSMANN CAMPUS CENTER,
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED**

If you wish to purchase **video or audio tapes** of prior IAT lectures, visit the website www.christchurch-redhook.org/chilton.htm, e-mail rcartier@hvc.rr.com, or call 845-758-1591.

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January 2003 – December 2003

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Basic Membership.....\$30.00

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 - Discount admission to IAT events
- Your contribution is fully tax-deductible.*

Patron Member.....\$100.00

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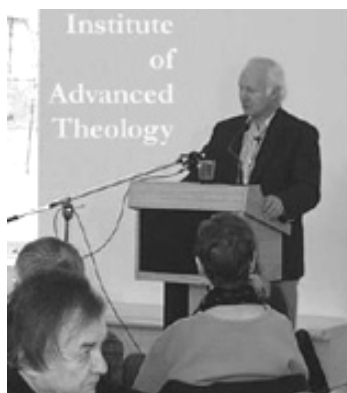
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Don't miss the new
Fall Luncheon Lecture series
on **Wednesdays**
beginning **September 18, at 12 noon**

For reservations, call the IAT office at
845-758-7279
e-mail iat@bard.edu
or visit the website www.bard.edu/iat



*Spring 2002 Lenten Lecture Series
with the Rev. Dr. Bruce Chilton*

Photos by Fred Cartier

**AN INVITATION TO MEMBERS FOR
A SPECIAL INSTITUTE LECTURE ON NOVEMBER 19
BETHSAIDA FROM DAVID TO JESUS
PRESENTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 2002 CONSULTATION:
JERUSALEM AFTER JESUS: 30 – 60 C.E.**

On **Tuesday, November 19, at 7:30 p.m.** in the Weis Cinema of the Bertelsmann Campus Center, Dr. Rami Arav, director of the Bethsaida Excavation Project, will provide a survey of the major archaeological discoveries made in the 15 years of excavation at Bethsaida. This city was founded in the 10th century BCE as the capital of the kingdom of Geshur, which was neighboring to the kingdom of Israel. The city was built on a basalt hill descending to the Sea of Galilee, surrounded by a thick and strong city wall and equipped with a very strong monumental city gate. This city, ceded in the 9th century BCE to the Arameans of Damascus, was soon rebuilt in a grand scale.



A century and quarter later Bethsaida was destroyed by the Assyrian king Tiglat Pileser III (732 B.C.E). After a long period of decline it flourished again in the period starting with the conquest of Alexander the Great. In the first century B.C.E. it was conquered by Alexander Jannaeus and was made Jewish. In the first century C.E. Philip the son of Herod the Great granted it civic rights and renamed it Julias after Julia-Livia the wife of Augustus. Philip erected at Bethsaida-Julias a small temple dedicated to the Roman Imperial Cult.

Members of the Institute, and those wishing to learn more about membership, are invited to attend this slide lecture. ■

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