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## Reports & News

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## REPORTS & NEWS

### *Society for Hindu-Christian Studies News*

#### **1997 Annual General Meeting**

Friday, 21 November 1997

7:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.: [Location TBA; See AAR/SBL Program.]

7:00-8:45 p.m.: Presentation and Discussion

**John B. Carman**, Harvard University  
"Extending the Christian Doctrine of the Logos to Interpret Hindu Bhakti"

**William Cenkner**, The Catholic University of America, Respondent,  
**Vasudha Narayanan**, University of Florida, Respondent **Lance E. Nelson**, University of San Diego, Moderator.

[For copies of Prof. Carman's paper (after 1 Oct.), send USD 3.00 by check payable to Kay Jordan (address below).

8:45 p.m.: Social Hour

Saturday, 22 November 1997

9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. [Location TBA, see AAR/SBL Program]

9:00-10:30 a.m.: Panel Discussion of **Francis X. Clooney's** *Seeing Through Texts: Doing Theology among the Srivaisnavas of South India*, recipient of the Society's "Best Book in Hindu-Christian Studies, 1994-96" Award.

Presentation of Award and Moderator: **Vasudha Narayanan**, University of Florida. Comments: **Harold Coward**, University of Victoria; **T. S. Rukmani**, Concordia University; **M. Thomas Thangaraj**, Emory University. Response: **Francis X. Clooney**, S. J., Boston College

10:30-11:30 a.m.: Annual Business Meeting

Both parts of the meeting are open to all who are interested. For further information, contact Kay Jordan, Philosophy & Religious Studies, Radford University, Radford, VA

24142-69438, tel: 540- 831-5899, e-mail: kjordan@runet.edu; or visit the Society's web site at [www.acusd.edu/theo/hcs-1](http://www.acusd.edu/theo/hcs-1).

#### **1994-96 Book Award**

The Book Award Committee of the Society for Hindu Christian Studies is happy to announce that **Francis X. Clooney**, S.J.'s *Seeing Through Texts: Doing Theology among the Srivaisnavas of South India* has been selected for the Society's "Best Book in Hindu-Christian Studies, 1994-96" Award. The award will be presented to Professor Clooney on November 22 at the Society's 1997 Annual Meeting in San Francisco, which will also feature a panel discussion of the book (see above for details).

William Cenkner  
Chair of the Book Award  
Committee

#### **Report on the 1996 Annual General Meeting**

The 1996 annual meeting of the Society was held on 23 November in New Orleans. The discussion topic was "The Hindu Experience in North America as a Context for Hindu-Christian Studies". Presenters were Raymond Williams (Wabash College) on the experience of Hindus who have come to North America, and Sri Tamal Krishna Goswami (Perkins School of Theology) on the experience of North Americans of non-Hindu background who have become Hindus.

Officers elected for two year terms at the business meeting include Vasudha Narayanan, President; Lance Nelson, Vice-President; Anantanand Rambachan,

Treasurer. Kay Jordan was elected Secretary for a three year term. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., is Past-President; Board members are John B. Carman, Bradley Malkovsky, Rachel McDermott, Kana Mitra, K. L. Seshagiri Rao, Tinu Ruparell, Tamal Krishna Goswami, and Thomas Thangaraj.

William Cenkner chairs the book awards committee. Ten books were being considered for the first award to be given in 1997.

### **Society Web Site and E-mail List Established**

The Society for Hindu-Christian Studies now has a web site managed by the Society's vice-president, Lance Nelson, using the University of San Diego computer system. The site can be reached at the following address: <http://www.acusd.edu/theo/hcs-l>

The Society's web site will provide easy access for members and the general Internet public to information about membership in the Society, the *Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin*, our annual meeting program, and other activities. There is also a page for "Hindu-Christian Studies Links", containing references to other sites that may be of

interest to members and subscribers. (If you know of any good links that would be appropriate, please forward the URLs to the list manager.)

The web site also provides information on HCS-L, the society's new e-mail list. The HCS-L mailing list has been set up to provide a forum in which persons trained in disciplines relating to Hindu-Christian studies may exchange ideas and information across the Internet on matters pertaining to their academic interests, research, and teaching. The list currently has about 60 subscribers.

HCS-L is a private mailing list, which means that the list is not open to the general Internet public. Subscriptions are restricted to members of the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies and other subscribers to the *Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin*. Exceptions will be considered only in special circumstances. This policy is intended to help ensure that the discussion remains as much as possible on an informed, scholarly level.

For further information on the HCS-L, please visit the Society's web site or contact Lance Nelson at [lnelson@acusd.edu](mailto:lnelson@acusd.edu).

## ***Other News***

### **NAINConnect'97 at University of South Carolina**

Hindu-Christian dialogue operates within a wider setting of discourse between various religions. A case in point is Columbia, South Carolina. The local interfaith group, Partners in Dialogue, was inaugurated in 1992 with a conference numbering some 500 persons, in anticipation of the Centennial of the Parliament of Religions. It has continued in a rather unique way, being sponsored by an academic unit, the Department of Religious Studies at the University of South Carolina. Dr Carl Evans, Chair of the Department, is also Director of Partners. From the start, the lively Hindu community,

numbering some 500 families with an active temple, have demonstrated their belief in a larger spiritual unity by their strong participation in Partners in Dialogue. Christianity, clearly the most populous faith community, is well represented, but other participant groups on the Steering Committee include Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Unitarianism, and the Bahá'ís.

The vital participation of the Hindu community in Partners in Dialogue was one factor in the decision of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) to hold its annual meeting, NAINConnect '97, at the University of South Carolina from 7 to 10 August. It is important for the local group to

have wider connections, and we are glad to be able to host this event, which met last year in Dallas, and will meet next year in Edmonton.

The Hindu community has also given great impetus to a major research project, the production of the *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. The first planning meeting of this project was held in Columbia in 1988, and now the central offices have moved here. Dr K. L. Seshagiri Rao, Chief Editor of the *Encyclopedia*, is in residence in Columbia. Dr Kaushal Sinha, a local orthopedic surgeon, is its CEO, and others from the Hindu community and the University are very deeply involved. Again, the Department of Religious Studies and the University have helped to provide space and resources for this venture housed at the University. Sponsorship of this research initiative by the Department is undertaken in the belief that our deeper understanding of any religious tradition may promote enlightened dialogue between many such traditions.

Columbia has established international interfaith connections in several ways. Dr Rao has been for some years co-editor of the journal now called *World Faiths Encounter*, of the World Congress of Faiths, based primarily in England. Dr Rao, and Dr Hal French of the Department are also international consultants for the International Interfaith Centre in Oxford, England. Marcus Braybrooke, one of the trustees of the Centre, was the keynote speaker for the first meeting of Partners in Dialogue in Columbia, and will serve again in that role for the NAINConnect'97 here in August, 1997.

In each of these situations, locally, in North America, and internationally, the Hindu and Christian communities have helped to stimulate awareness of their own need for dialogue, and to engage in wider possibilities for interfaith dialogue.

Dr Hal French  
University of South Carolina

### **The Destiny of the Soul, A Vaisnava-Christian Conference.**

Nineteen people (ten Vaisnava and nine Christian) participated in a conference on the Destiny of the Soul held at the Cathedral Conference Center in East Freeport, Freetown, MA, 20-21 September 1996

Dialogue among the participants centred on five topics: metaphysical and epistemological aspects of the questions of the soul's destiny; linguistic issues; social relevance; spiritual beliefs; and issues related to death. The schedule also included periods of shared worship.

A report on the conference by Francis X. Clooney along with text of the opening papers on the conference theme "the destiny of the soul", by Klaus Klostermaier and Tamil Krishna Goswami, is contained in *ISKCON Communications Journal*, Vol. 4, No.2, pp.71-94.

### **Hindu-Christian Workshop**

*Issues in Hindu-Christian Relations* is a 61-page report of the workshop organized by the National Council of Churches in India, Madurai Kamraj University, and the World Council of Churches, held during October 1995, the International Year of Tolerance.

The workshop attracted 40 participants (five of whom were women), divided almost equally between Hindus and Christians.

The growing tension between Hindu and Christian communities was the key issue that provoked frank and insightful discussion. Other presentations summarized in the report include those dealing with claims of the uniqueness of a particular religion, the problem of conversion, the avatar-incarnation distinction, the equality of religions, and religion as a political tool.

A joint statement outlines the hopes and challenges that emerged during the workshop and lists a number of guiding principles for Hindus and Christians as they pursue dialogue and interreligious understanding at the levels of school, college, university, village, town and city,

and at the national level.

The report, compiled by Abraham Oommen, and A. Pushparajan, is published by Unit-1, National Council of Churches in India, Post Box No. 205, Civil Lines, Nagpur 440001.

### **Friends of Bede Griffiths Meet**

The Friends of Bede Griffiths hosted a mini-conference as part of the International Congress of Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, on 9 May 1997.

Papers were given on "Oxford Friendships, Friendships of a Lifetime", by Shirley Du Boulay, Oxford; "The Meaning of Monastic Friendship and Interreligious Dialogue", by James Fredericks, Loyola-Marymount; and "Bede and the Theology of the Future", by Wayne Teasdale. Respondent was Roger Corless of Duke University. A lively discussion followed.

A service of Vespers following the rite of Santivanam was held in the evening at the Cathedral Church of Christ the King.

Enquiries regarding future events by the Friends of Bede Griffiths may be directed to Nicholas Groves, 604 Judson Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202, Tel. +1 847 492 1275.

### **Hindu Diaspora Conference**

An international conference on the Hindu Diaspora is planned for 22-23 August 1997 at Concordia University, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Keynote speaker is Dr E. C. G. Sadrashan.

The wide range of topics to be covered include: Hindu women and the Diaspora, Diaspora identity in theory and practice, religion and culture of the Hindu West and the Western Hindu, Diaspora temples, Diaspora ritual and religious practice, and the world-wide Diaspora.

For information and registration, contact the International Conference on the Hindu Diaspora, Department of Religion, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd West, Montréal, Québec H3G 1M8, Canada; Tel. +1 514 848 2065; Fax +1 514 848 4541.

### **New Study of Hindu Ecological Concerns**

Ecological concerns in Hindu India is the subject of a book soon to be published by SUNY Press and edited by Lance Nelson, Religious Studies, University of San Diego. Contributors will address theological and textual perspectives as well as issues of practical concern in modern-day India.