

## **PRESENTATION**

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This issue of *Religiologiques* is publishing several contributions that were presented at the meeting of the AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION (Eastern International Region)<sup>2</sup> which was held at the Université du Québec à Montréal from the 22nd to 24th of April 1994. That was — it must be pointed out — the first time that the A.A.R. held a conference in Quebec. In order to highlight this first, *Religiologiques* has therefore wanted to devote one of its issues to some of the works stemming from this important scientific event.

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<sup>2</sup> The American Academy of Religion is a scholarly society and a professional organization which counts more than 6,000 members in North America, all actively involved in the teaching and/or the research of the religious sciences. A general congress takes place each year, in the course of which the members group themselves in specialized sections in order to share the results of their research. The A.A.R. is also divided into regions. Each one of these "regions" — there are ten at this time — meets each year as well. These conferences assembling a lesser number of participants makes it easier for those involved to exchange ideas on diverse questions and to share their work. Quebec, for its part, forms part of the Eastern International Region, which includes equally the north of Pennsylvania, the state of New York (except for the city of New York), and Ontario. These "regional" conferences very frequently also welcome researchers from other "regions".

The primary motivation of organizing this colloquium was to create tighter bonds between Quebec and American researchers active in the domain of religious studies. Force is in effect to recognize that both groups all too often ignore each other's respective work. Thus, the goal of this meeting was to offer American researchers as well as their Quebec colleagues — and English-speaking Canadian researchers — the opportunity for a greater awareness of the scientific orientations, of the methods, as well as the trends developed in this domain of research that traverse the different cultural traditions.

Four principle themes were reserved for this meeting: They are found in the four sections of this issue. First, by reason of this "*première québécoise*" (first meeting in Quebec) and the occasion of the 25th anniversary of UQAM, one will understand without difficulty that the theme of *Religious Phenomenon in Quebec* had been held. Furthermore, an equal priority was given to contributions touching on the question of *Pedagogy in Religious Studies*, the domain of *Comparative studies of Religion* — or *Religiology* —, as well as the dimensions or religious aspects of *Contemporary Ecological Problematics*.

So, the first four articles of this issue all deal with Quebec. In the first, Gregory Baum analyzes the debate which took place within the Quebec Catholic Church regarding the choice of the sociological theory which would be most able to aid in interpreting the phenomenon of secularization and the role henceforth played by religion in society. The article of David Seljak, also following a sociological approach, discusses the place and power of the Quebec Catholic Church in referring to the powerful economic elites and the politics which controlled the process of modernization in contemporary Quebec. Monique Dumais, for her part, tries to bring to light the new methodological dimensions ensuing from the research on women in the domain of Quebec religion since 1970. Michel Despland analyses, from rich iconographic material, the role of writing in the implantation of religion in French Canada. To this first series of articles can be attached that one of Michel Gardaz which allows us to better understand Quebec

religiological heritage by a look back at and a presentation of the diverse stages of development of Religious Studies in France in the nineteenth century.

The second grouping of texts falls under the theme of *pedagogy* and, more precisely, of the *pedagogy of religion*. The article of Charles Kannengiesser presents, initially, a pedagogical method elaborated principally for a course on the origins of Christianity, but could also be applied to most of the courses in Religious Studies. This method considers the religious metamorphosis of Quebec in the wake of the Tranquil Revolution. James E. Gibson carries on the pedagogical theme in suggesting a framework of open education of all theological postulates (Christian or other), which does not necessarily imply the absence of objectivity in the instructors, any more than a commitment of the instructors to a specific faith condemns them to prejudicial pedagogical biases. In the article that follows, Mary N. MacDonald turns our attention to a precise question: the tendency to consider — pejoratively — the rituals of non-Western peoples (here, in the case of the Melanesians) as "magic" whereas those of Judaism or of Christianity, for example, are for their part considered as "religious". Her argumentation, taken in the largest sense, forces us to question the pedagogical utilization of purely Western categories and the impact of their imposition on other traditions.

The theme of the third group could, without a doubt, well enough illustrate the concerns of Mary MacDonald. The expression "comparative religion", particularly popular in the English-speaking population of North America, has, in fact, served essentially to mark a distinction in relation to Christian theology. Thus, a person active in this field of study was able to take interest in one (single) particular tradition in a phenomenological, sociological, philological, or other perspective, without, however, establishing the least parallel with other traditions. One can wonder where the "comparison" was being found! In proposing the utilization of the term *religiology*, the pioneers of the Department of Religious Studies of UQAM had

also had in mind the plan of scientific and *comparative* studies of the religious phenomenon in its entirety. And so, it is this diversity of phenomenon which appears in the following articles.

Thus, for example, Lomer Pilote looks to retrace the religious dimensions — or the crypto-religious — present in the *Alcoholics Anonymous* movement. Philip Jenkins, for his part, is interested in the ideological struggle against religious liberalism, a struggle undertaken by certain Christian Fundamentalist formations of Great Britain versus the members of new religious groups accused of "Satanic practices". Lyne Marie Larocque, in an entirely different context, studies the Islamic conception of rape and its impact on the Bosnian population since the debut of the tragic conflict which tore apart ex-Yugoslavia. Simon Moon brings to light the inherent paradox in the Zen tradition of Korean Buddhism in the importance attributed to sacred texts. Finally, Francis Brassard and Charles J. Sabatino are both interested in the rapport between Buddhism and Christianity; the first in searching to see the means used by one tradition or the other in order to integrate some beliefs and some foreign practices into their original institution, the second in studying the Buddhist notion of *dependant origination* — or co-arising — and in trying to see its possible impact on Christian theological dualism.

The fourth and final theme chosen: that of ecology and its religious dimensions. The environmental crisis has become the object of important contemporary reflection which spans the political, ethical, and, of late, the religious. In the scope of this reflection, the specific role of the human "calling" in the universe — and in relation to the solution of ecological problems — has become a central preoccupation. In this respect, Anna Case-Winters turns her attention to the dichotomous conceptualization of Christian theology, and demonstrates how this has been able to contribute to an extreme exploitation of the environment. The transformation of that dichotomy into a "pan-entheism" would offer, according to the author, a better model of interaction while still respecting the integrity of the "creation". From her side, Mary Kay Nealen is of the opinion that a vision more or less dualistic

could still solve our environmental problems as well as a "reconciliation and a providential collaboration" between the human efforts and divine being established.

At first glance distanced from the theme of ecology, Dane R. Gordon treats the parable of the Good Samaritan in a broader perspective and turns it into an ecological issue by re-asking the question of Luke 10:29: "But who is my neighbour?" The implicit presupposition contained in the Biblical conception of the term is that each individual is our neighbour. Nevertheless, Gordon ponders over the possibility of going beyond the single "persons". He questions as well the implications of a new definition of this concept which would also include, among others, the trees and...the crocodiles! In the article that follows, Philip L. Tite examines the cultural parallels between the ancient Roman concept of peace (*pax*) and that which emerges from the New Testament. On a different note, but still very typical of contemporary ecological preoccupations, Stephen Scharper concludes this issue in presenting that famous "Gaïa hypothesis" which one often hears spoken of in circles interested in ecological and environmental reflection. He attempts, moreover, to see how this "hypothesis" could contribute to the elaboration of a political theology of the environment, based essentially on human actions and responsibilities.

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*Religiologiques* wished to publish the majority of the contributions in this issue in the original language in which they were presented at the meeting of the A.A.R. To the benefit of the readers, however, and in order to contribute itself to the growth of the ties between North American researchers, *Religiologiques* has also wished to accompany each article with a substantial summary in "the other" language.

