

Perth Conference Opening Address

Lillian Hadley

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Western Australia on behalf of the Heads of Churches, who represent all the Churches in Western Australia. It is always a pleasure to have a Conference come to Perth and I am pleased to welcome members of ANZTLA today.

You, no doubt, feel you have travelled a long way to meet with your colleagues here. If you are feeling a little tired from your journey, and I am sure you are, then spare a thought for those of us, who while at home in Perth, usually travel great distances to be with you. Your meeting together this year is tinged with sadness as your thoughts turn to your Founding President Trevor Zweck who died so recently and so unexpectedly. Your prayers I am sure are with his family at this time of their loss. It will be a tribute to him if you get real benefit from your time together.

Perhaps because of our isolation, and Perth is the most isolated capital city in the world, we always hope that when visitors come they will share our pleasure, and so we hope you have an enjoyable and rewarding time with us.

Less than two weeks ago the Uniting Church in WA held its annual Synod. We concentrate on different parts of the Church's work in different years. This year we were looking at the educational side of our Church's work. We looked at the work of schools and Colleges, at the educational and teaching aspects of parish life, and particularly at the work of our Theological Hall, not just the training of candidates for ordination, but the work of continuing education and lay education.

In the Uniting Church we value particularly the work of the 'scholarly interpreters'. Section 11 of our Basis of Union states:

The Uniting Church acknowledges that God has never left the Church without faithful and scholarly interpreters of Scripture, or without those who have reflected deeply upon, and acted trustingly in obedience to, God's living Word. In particular the Uniting Church enters into the inheritance of literary, historical and scientific enquiry which has characterised recent centuries, and gives thanks for the knowledge of God's way with humanity which are open to an informed faith. The Uniting Church lives within a world-wide fellowship of Churches in which it will learn to sharpen its understanding of the will and purpose of God by contact with contemporary thought. Within that fellowship the Uniting Church also stands in relation to contemporary societies in ways which will help it to understand its own nature and mission. The Uniting Church thanks God for the continuing witness and service of evangelist, of scholar, of prophet and of martyr. It prays that it may be ready when occasion demands to confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds.

It seems to me that it is essential for our current 'scholarly interpreters' to have easy access to the scholarly interpreters both of the past and the present. The access needs also to be to scholarly works from right across the world. And it seems self evident to me that it is through theological libraries that this access can be developed and maintained.

While those who teach and engage in research may be regarded amongst today's scholarly interpreters there are many others interested in theology who need libraries.

In Western Australia the theological library available to Uniting Church members has been integrated into the theological collection at Murdoch University. This library is available not only to staff and those in training for ministry, but also to a wide variety of students and others who want to become more literate on religious and theological matters. I am sure you all have a similarly wide spectrum of people you serve.

I notice that the theme of this year's conference is *Tradition and Technology*. Tradition is so important in religious thought. In a world changing as rapidly as ours it is very reassuring to be upheld by a long tradition. And yet we cannot turn our minds away from the incredible advances in technology over recent years. To find the appropriate balance between tradition and technology is vital for all in our society today. Some religious groups react to technological and other change with a return to fundamentalism they see as traditional. Many in the community respond by rejecting all traditional forms of religion.

In this conference you will be looking at this challenge in your own field of endeavour. You will need to take what is most useful and valuable in technology while not discarding what is vital in the tradition. The challenge for all of us involved in any way in religious organisations is to find ways of using technology as a tool while never forgetting the people we exist to serve. It will be an interesting challenge at this conference to find the right balance and to remain relevant.

Finally, those of us closely linked to the wider work of the church are aware of the tight financial constraints being imposed these days. This must be very frustrating for librarians when so many new works are being produced and so many exciting technologies become available. The only way to continue to provide excellent service is to continue to pool resources and to share information and professional knowledge. It remains vital therefore that the close working relations which have been forged by this association over the past 11 years be preserved and further developed in the future.

And so it gives me great pleasure to declare this the Eleventh Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association open.

Lillian Hadley is the Past Moderator of the Uniting Church in Western Australia

The Trevor Zweck Award Honorary Life Membership

Nominations are invited for the above awards and should be submitted in writing to the Executive of ANZTLA by March 31, 1997.

Nominees for the **Trevor Zweck Award** should have made a significant contribution to the development of theological libraries in Australia or New Zealand in any way during the previous twelve months.

Nominees for the **Honorary Life Membership** should have made a significant contribution to theological libraries in Australia or New Zealand over a period of years.

Nominees for either award need not be librarians. The awards will be conferred at the Annual Conference.