
Søren Kierkegaard comes to Melbourne

Philip Harvey

Joint Theological Library, Parkville

The Joint Theological Library (JTL) in Parkville, Victoria, has received the very handsome donation of a research level collection on the great Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard. Known as The Kierkegaard Malantschuk Memorial Collection, it has been the resource of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Unit of the University of Tasmania. (Gregor Malantschuk was one of the preeminent writers on Kierkegaard in the 20th century.)

The Collection was single-handedly brought together by Dr Julia Watkin, who recently retired from teaching philosophy full-time at the University. Dr Watkin is one of the world's leading authorities on Søren Kierkegaard, author of many books and articles on the subject, and editor of the International Kierkegaard Newsletter (IKN), now an online publication. (See www.utas.edu.au/docs/humsoc/kierkegaard/newsletters.html) Her two most recent titles are the introductory *Kierkegaard* (G. Chapman, 1997; Continuum 2001) and her magnificent reference work *Historical dictionary of Kierkegaard's philosophy* (Scarecrow, 2001).

It was an enquiry to Dr Watkin about the current status of the IKN that led to prolonged email correspondence, which included her concerns about the ultimate destiny of The Kierkegaard Malantschuk Collection, not least because over the years the collection had been increased by gifts from several sources. These include the IDE Institute in Denmark, The Queen Margrethe and Prince Henrik Foundation and several Kierkegaard scholars (Grethe Kjær, Robert L. and Sylvia Walsh Perkins, Alastair McKinnon, William McDonald, Craig Hinkson), who donated books, dissertations and resources.

The suggestion that JTL would be an appropriate home was met with great

interest. Kierkegaard is always a buying area for the Library, which already has considerable holdings in the subject. Friendly negotiations ensued and shortly before Christmas 2003, forty boxes of Kierkegaard arrived at the doorstep. Overnight JTL became the largest library of Kierkegaard material in Australia.

Students, researchers and scholars will find here a Kierkegaard collection the equal of any in the world. (The notable exceptions to this claim are some Danish collections, as well as the large Howard V. and Edna H. Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, USA.)

Serious interest in Søren Kierkegaard, his theology and ideas, goes from strength to strength. Dr Watkin herself gives an excellent summation of his current standing in the Introduction to her Dictionary (p. 1):

It is likely that if Søren Kierkegaard had written in a major language and in a straightforward manner, his name would have achieved international significance even in his own time. Today, he is acclaimed all over the world as an important philosopher, religious thinker, psychologist, and literary figure. He is studied by people of many cultures, viewpoints, and disciplines, all of whom find that Kierkegaard has something essential to say about life or about their particular discipline. Kierkegaard called himself nothing more than a Digter or "creative writer". He made it clear he was entirely without divine or human authority to support his insights, he refused to label himself a Christian, and (despite a long university education spanning a wide range of subjects) he never held a position. Yet, he is now recognized as a genius who penetrated deeply into human psychology*contd. over*

and spirituality, a man whose literary profundity alone would be sufficient to secure him international recognition. For many, he is the Shakespeare of Denmark.

The collection can be described as roughly one half Danish and one half English. Primary source materials include the collected works in Danish and many editions of individual titles, as well as the Princeton University Press Writings series in English and translations in many hands of the works.

It was decided to begin cataloguing the secondary sources first, both critical and biographical. These include a wealth of literature produced in Scandinavia generally and an exceptionally good coverage of English language publications, including a set of the International Kierkegaard Commentary series. The reference materials include a comprehensive range of bibliographies.

Special mention must be made of Dr Watkin's accumulation of dictionaries.

Two Danish dictionaries from Kierkegaard's own time (Molbech and Meyer) are vital for those reaching after Kierkegaardian usages. There is also a complete set of *Ordbog over det danske Sprog* (1919-1956), sometimes known as the Great Danish Dictionary; the writer is cited throughout the dictionary where he has made original and specific uses of words, Kierkegaard being one of the masters of Danish language. Serials in the collection include a complete run of *Kierkegaardiana* (1955-), possibly the only one publicly available in this part of the world, as well as its predecessor, *Meddelelser* of the Soren Kierkegaard Society in Copenhagen.

Amongst its other riches, the Collection contains the works of other Danish writers of the period who knew Kierkegaard or were influential in Danish cultural and philosophical life. There has been a concerted effort to acquire works that describe the broad panorama of what has come to be called Golden Age Denmark.

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SA CHAPTER—Annual report 2003

The February meeting was hosted by Jan Barwick at Tabor College. The group discussed current activities in member libraries, Val Canty reported on the editing and production of the newsletter. Office bearers were elected: Susan Melhuish—President, Jan Barwick—Secretary for another year.

The second meeting on 15th May was held at the Adelaide theological Library where conference matters were discussed, newsletter reports, editorial support and contributions sought. Members also viewed a display put together by the ACD library staff in honour of John Wesley's 300th birthday.

The August meeting convened at the State Library where a tour and talk about preservation, microfilming and archiving was given by Lindy Bohmsen and Peter Zajicek from the conservation section. Coffee was enjoyed in the Art Gallery afterwards.

The final meeting of the year was held at the House of Prayer for All Nations on 18th November and hosted by Pauline Redman, who welcomed new members and talked about the history and resources. Christmas dinner was celebrated at the nearby Aldgate Pump Hotel.

Formal meetings of the SA chapter have provided the opportunity for members to touch base, network and provide friendship and support among the group.

Susan Melhuish