

## THE CATO VISITOR AND TRUST

Daniel Smith-Christopher is Professor of Theological Studies and Director of Peace Studies, Loyola Marymount University, LA. Daniel has a doctorate from Oxford University, England, in Old Testament Studies. An active member of the Society of Friends (Quakers), he served for two years in volunteer peace research in Israel / Palestine from 1986 to 1988, and maintains an active interest in peace issues, particularly the Middle East.

Daniel has particular interest in how cultural and ethnic backgrounds influence the reading and interpretation of Biblical texts.

He has published 18 scholarly articles and eight books.

Daniel will also, through the generosity of the Trustees, be available to a number of Synods and the National Conference of the UAICC over June and July.

The generous support of the Cato Trust is funding Daniel to be with us. The Cato Trust has a long history of assisting the Methodist and now Uniting Church Assembly to have access to gifted scholars and leaders from across the world. Below is a brief history of Frederick Cato and the Trust he established.

Terence Corkin  
Assembly General Secretary

### FREDERICK JOHN CATO 1858-1935

Fred Cato was born in a tent on the goldfields of Stawell, a town in the Wimmera District of the State of Victoria. His father Edward had little success as a goldminer, and the family continued to live in a tent during Fred's early years, Edward managing to sustain his family as a part-time carpenter. Fred showed early aptitude for learning, encouraged by his mother, and after leaving school, attended night classes at the Mechanic's Institute and became an assistant school teacher.

On becoming an accredited teacher Fred travelled to New Zealand in 1879 and taught in three schools, the last in Invercargill where he met fellow teacher and daughter of a local Presbyterian minister, Fanny Bethune, whom he was later to marry. He returned to Australia in 1882 at the invitation of his cousin Edwin Moran, to work in his grocery store. When Fred became a partner soon after in the business to be called Moran and Cato's he determined to set aside a proportion of his weekly salary for charitable purposes. Moran and Cato's flourished with stores throughout Victoria, and Fred became known in the local press as a 'merchant prince' while continuing to set aside the same proportion of his income 'for good works.'

This commitment to philanthropy, arising from a deeper commitment to Christ whom he had come to know within the Wesleyan Methodist community, was remarkable both in amount and extent. His biographer notes that he gave to every public hospital in Victoria and his generosity made possible the founding of Epworth Hospital in 1923 (now the largest not-for-profit hospital in Australia.) On his last birthday he gave the largest sum ever received by one of Melbourne's major charities, the Lord Mayor's Hospital Fund. He financed stained-glass windows in Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London. He gave large sums to build church, hospital and mission houses, and to pay the salaries of missionaries, in places as far apart as the Sudan, India, Fiji, New Guinea and Arnhem Land. Every Methodist educational institution in Melbourne (primary, secondary and tertiary) received scholarships, buildings or large monetary gifts during his lifetime, and continue as beneficiaries.

To ensure that these works would continue, he established in 1928 the F.J.Cato Charitable Fund for 'the advancement of education and religion, the relief of sickness and poverty, and other charitable purposes beneficial to the community.' The Fund still exists, and its Trustees annually disburse funds especially to those whose needs are not met by Government or other welfare funding.

It was the same commitment to education and religion that led to his setting up, in 1932, the Cato Lectureship. Its three stated purposes were: the promotion and enhancement of religion and/or education; the presentation of material of interest to the general body of church members; the goodwill and friendly relations between Methodist or related churches in Australia and other countries. It was stipulated that the Lecturer was to come from overseas, and the Lecture to be given within the proceedings of the triennial Methodist General Conference (or, he had the foresight to state, any

Church with which the Methodist Church in Australia might merge.) It was customary, in addition, for the Lecturer to tour around the Australian States, speaking and preaching in various contexts, with the visit lasting overall from six to eight weeks. Notable scholars have been Cato Lecturers, and their Lectures published - Newton Flew, Harold Roberts, C.K. Barrett, Gordon Rupp to name a few from Methodist days, Leander Keck, C.S. Song, Ivor Jones since Union.

Three developments in recent years have impinged on the original intention of the Lectureship:

First, especially since the 1960s, many more overseas scholars have been coming to Australia, and Australian scholars have spent time overseas, so that the unique contribution of the Cato Lecturer has diminished.

Second, it is no longer possible for scholars to spend as much time in Australia, and engagements beyond the Assembly have been confined to some theological colleges.

Third, the Assembly programme has become much tighter, and a separate session within the Assembly for a Lecture has not been deemed possible.

With this in view, the Cato Trust agreed that the funds it set aside could appropriately be used for a *Cato Visitor*, who would contribute in a significant way to the Assembly other than by giving a Lecture. Gabriel Daly, an Augustinian priest and Lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin, fulfilled this role admirably in Perth. He spoke within the Christian Unity committee's presentation, a special feature of the Assembly, provided input during other Assembly discussions, and spoke at some ecumenical gatherings.

The Cato Trustees warmly welcome the plan to have the Bible Studies at the 2006 Assembly given by the Cato Visitor, and to provide the agreed funding.

Norman Young (Rev. Professor)  
Chair, F J Cato Charitable Trust

Notes:

References to Cato's biography are to

Ann Blainey *If God Prospers Me, a portrait of Frederick John Cato* (Melbourne, 1990)

In a longer biographical article, much more could be said about Cato's role as a leading Methodist layman, e.g. that he played a crucial part in bringing the four Australian Methodist churches into union in 1902, (which was not to occur in the UK until some 30 years later) and in that year was the Australian representative at the British Wesleyan Conference.