

Sacred Space, Sacred Thread

Seminary professor presents during interfaith dialogue

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Roy Gane presents in the Seminary Chapel on the topic of "Exploring the Origins of the Pentateuch" during a conference last spring. (Photo by Brian Tagalog)

By: Chris McLean-Wheeler

In November, [Roy Gane](#), professor of Hebrew Bible and ancient Near-Eastern languages at the [Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University](#), was one of the guest speakers at a global conference at the [University of Southern California](#) (Los Angeles). The conference featured presenters of many religions, including Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity, with formal responses and panel discussions following the many presentations given by the attendees. Two Adventists presented; in addition to Gane, Ross Winkle of [Pacific Union College](#) also presented.

"Sacred Space, Sacred Thread" addressed questions regarding the locales and clothing important to various faiths, and how these elements and people interact with the modern world.

Gane's lecture, "Theology Enshrined in the Israelite Sanctuary," discussed the layout, architecture and furnishings of the sanctuary, as well as their connotations.

"The purpose was to share perspectives on sacred temple spaces, including architecture, holy objects and priestly garments in different religious traditions," remarks Gane. "There is no sacred space on

earth for New Testament Christianity, but Christians are to look by faith to Christ's ministry in God's heavenly temple."

[Margaret Barker](#), a British theologian, delivered the keynote address. She has done extensive research on the history of sacred clothing and how it relates to biblical references. An exhibit of her work was shown at the [Los Angeles Temple Visitors' Center](#) and USC's Fishbowl prior to the conference.

"The conference was rich in information and stimulating insights regarding temple infrastructures and theological concepts associated with them," comments Gane, "including observations of similarities and differences between temples belonging to various religions throughout history."

Many of the speakers discussed the significance of places of worship, including temples, mosques, cathedrals, synagogues and churches, and the meaning behind the vestments of many religions.

"The conference speakers emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue, the universal search for peace, the urgency to protect religious thought, the meaning of holy, individual sacredness and how the world's religions, while uniquely diverse, share many interconnected threads," Gane explains. "Another emphasis at the conference was how the increasingly secular world views these religious traditions, whether that be with derision or otherwise."

At least a dozen religious traditions were represented at the free conference, which was also live-streamed to 1,200 viewers in ten countries: Canada, Colombia, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Tanzania, the UK and the US. The [John A. Widtsoe Foundation](#) co-sponsored the event, along with USC's [Office of Religious Life](#). Other sponsors included the [Academy for Temple Studies](#), [Our Savior Parish USC Caruso Catholic Center](#), the [California Missionary Baptist State Convention](#), The Los Angeles Greek Orthodox Community, the USC Latter-day Saint Student Association and the Los Angeles Institute of Religion.

"The historic threads of many faith traditions were brought together to help the scholars and audience understand the mosaic that religious life creates in the community," comments [Larry Eastland](#), chairman and president of the John A. Widtsoe Foundation. "Taken together, they are a force for good, compassion and support not just to their members, but to the community as a whole."

"It was a great honor to host this conference at the University of Southern California," says [Varun Soni](#), USC's dean of Religious Life. "There's no better place to bring together scholars and religious leaders to discuss our shared and aspirational beliefs and practices than the city of [Los Angeles](#), the most religiously diverse city in the world."

Related Links

- [Announcement](#) of Roy Gane speaking for the conference
- [A report on the conference](#) mentions Andrews University
- More about [the Seminary](#) at Andrews

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