

AASR Up-Date

From the President

Department of Studies in Religion,
University of Queensland, St Lucia,
Queensland 4067

August 9

Dear Colleagues,

I am looking forward to meeting many of you at the Fourteenth Annual Conference to be held in Perth, September 27-30. This is my last year of tenure as President of the AASR. For those who will not attend the conference, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to all of you for your support during the past two years.

There are several matters I want to bring to the attention of members. At the last AGM in Brisbane a motion was unanimously passed that "the AASR, as a member association, requests the IAHR to ensure that adequate provision for the feminist critique of religious issues be made in the forthcoming IAHR congresses." I informed the IAHR of this position taken by our Society and received a response from Professor Michael Pye, the Secretary-General of the IAHR. I do not think that the reply satisfies the concerns expressed at the AGM. We will need to consider the IAHR response to our motion at the next AGM. For your information I am requesting that a copy of Professor Pye's letter and the letter I wrote in reply be published in AASR Update.

A number of members of our Association have approached me about our continued affiliation with the IAHR.

Some concerns were related to the issue of the IAHR's response to repeated requests for a section on feminist critique of religious issues. Others questioned the benefits we receive as a member of this organization. Of course, membership in the IAHR facilitates contact with societies in other countries and enables the AASR to have influence on this larger organization. I would be grateful if members would write to me to express their views on this matter. Our relationship with the IAHR is strained, and in reassessing our affiliation with this organization it is important that all relevant information be gathered and members' views canvassed.

At the last meeting of the AGM I suggested that we should consider staging a conference sometime in the future in Asia, and I asked for members to write to me to express their views on this matter. I would be grateful for feedback from the society concerning the timing, the place and any other relevant information. If such a conference is held in the future, it is important that we begin now the process of 'thinking it through'.

Penny McKibbin has written to me to inform me that because of study leave plans next year, it will be necessary for her to resign as editor of the ARS Review. Penny's work on the Review has been outstanding, and her initiative in establishing the Review has provided the Association with a valuable means of disseminating information. Penny has offered to help on the first issue of the Review to be published in 1990. At this

point in time no new successor has been named. This is an issue that the Executive will need to consider with urgency when it meets in Perth.

Finally I want to announce the nominations of officers for the coming year. These names will be offered as the suggestion of the present Executive acting as a nominating committee at the next AGM where the opportunity will be given for other nominations from the floor. The nominations are:

PRESIDENT: Anne Gardner

Lecturer, La Trobe University

VICE-PRESIDENT: Greg Bailey

Senior Lecturer, La Trobe University

SECRETARY: Mavis Rose

Ph.D. Candidate, University of Queensland

TREASURER: Rod Bucknell

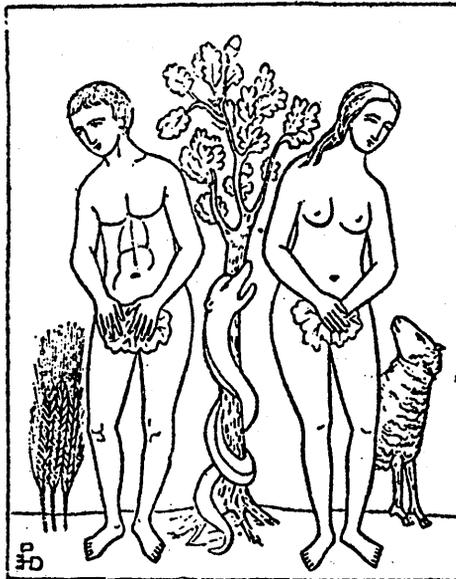
Lecturer, University of Queensland

EDITOR, AASR PUBLICATIONS:

Victor Hayes Senior Lecturer, S.A.C.A.E.

Enid Adam and Scott Cowdell are retiring this year as Vice-President and Secretary of the Association. Enid has given excellent support on the Executive and has worked very hard in the plans to stage the annual conference in Perth this year. Scott has worked diligently as secretary. He is now completing a new directory of members. I wish the best to the new officers to be elected in Perth and look forward to serving with them on the Executive as the immediate past President. Cordially,

Ed Conrad



IAHR Secretary-General's response to AASR's AGM motion . . .

Dr Edgar W. Conrad
 President AASR
 Studies in Religion
 University of Queensland
 St Lucia, Q 4067
 Australia

3550 Marburg/Lahn 02.12.1988

Dear Dr Conrad,

Professor Schimmel has passed on your letter of 6th October 1988 containing the motion passed at the Australian AGM for further attention. I note that the motion was passed unanimously and realise that the concern for an adequate approach to this matter has been felt for quite some time in the AASR. Moreover it is a matter of interest in quite a few other countries too. On this background I see absolutely no difficulty in bringing the motion to the attention of those planning future congresses, as you request in your letter. This will be done via a notice in the IAHR BULLETIN and by individual communications to those currently organising conferences.

Your members may feel however that this is not an adequate response and therefore I will allow myself a few further remarks and suggestions which may be helpful.

1. Many of these who have been active in IAHR organisations and conferences would take the view, I feel sure, that the IAHR is not really intended to be a forum for religious issues. As its names implies, the nature of the discipline is historical and, as commonly understood, also comparative or even systematic. Thus it is not theological, nor political, nor even religious. If dissatisfied see next.

2. On the other hand every human or social science is subject to the formative influences of the time, and therefore it may be very appropriate for current method and theory to be overhauled from a particular, critical standpoint, eg the feminist. This would amount to a critique, not of 'religious issues', but of the discipline as practised. As I understand it all IAHR conferences at least from 1975 onwards have had methodological and theoretical sections in which such matters could be raised by women or men who are *bona fide* scholars in our field. The forthcoming congress in Rome lends itself to this since the overall theme is the concept 'religion' itself, especially as used in our discipline.
3. It could be thought to be more effective for those who have feminist issues at heart to take part in a wide range of sections in the normal way, rather than to have a special section labelled 'feminist critique' or similar. I do not consider that the feminist critique should be marginalised by being pushed into a siding of its own.
4. In some quarters I have already suggested that someone who has the time and appropriate library facilities might prepare a select bibliography of a) works by women in the history of religions (broadly conceived) and/or b) works, whether by women or not, which have a bearing on the view of our discipline as this is affected, in this way or that, by gender.
5. As an association we might look around for a sponsor to fund a quinquennial prize for the best work in

the field of the history of religions written by a younger woman scholar.

6. While realising that Australia and Britain are in some ways far apart, it may be of interest to members of the AASR to learn that the next annual conference of the BAHR will be held in Oxford (Sept 22-24, 1989) on the theme of 'Gender'.

I hope these remarks will show that the point is taken, even though not every committee (for reasons entirely honourable) may not (sic) necessarily agree on the same recipe for action. With all best wishes,

Michael Pye



AASR President's Reply . . .

Department of Studies in Religion
University of Queensland
St Lucia, Queensland 4067
August 9, 1989

Professor Michael Pye
Secretary-General
University of Marburg FB11
FG Religionswissenschaft
Liebigstrasse 37
3550 Marburg
WEST GERMANY

Dear Professor Pye,

I have returned recently from Study Leave and am only now catching up on the correspondence on my desk. Let me respond to your comments regarding the unanimous motion passed by the 1988 AASR conference:

The AASR, as a member association, requests the IAHR to ensure that adequate provision for the feminist critique of religious issues be made in forthcoming IAHR congresses.

Let me say that the unanimous decision means that the AASR is quite serious about this matter. It is our concern that more than 'lip service' be given to the important role of feminist critique in the contemporary human sciences. The feminist voice has been systematically silenced in the past, and it is our concern, now that it is speaking out, that provisions be made that it be systematically heard.

To imply that the IAHR is an historical and comparative discipline and therefore

is objective and apolitical is rather naive. It is quite obvious in post-modern thought that all thought is necessarily subjective. It is the failure to recognise this point that makes it difficult for many to see that the disciplines as they have been developed are "men's studies", to allude to a recent book on this issue by Dale Spender.

You imply that feminist critique is something that can be dealt with adequately in methodological sections and that to create a section called "feminist critique" is a way of marginalizing it. I disagree. To have a special section on feminist criticism is to ensure that the proper affirmative action is taken so that the feminist voice is heard. To continue with the same sections in the conference without modification is indeed the way to marginalize feminist critique.

Methodological assumptions in the human sciences are changing and feminist critique is one of the important forces suggesting such a change. Not to highlight this voice in our endeavours as an organization is to relegate to the sidelines an important voice suggesting change. Feminist critique is not just a voice for women but a significant voice for all of us engaged in the search of what it means to be human.

I will bring your letter and my response to the attention of our Annual General Meeting in September.
Sincerely,

Dr Edgar W. Conrad
President — AASR

The AASR Vice-President's Reply . . .

Professor Michael Pye
 Secretary-General IAHR
 University of Marburg FBII
 FG Religionswissenschaft
 Liebigstrasse 37
 3550 MARBURG
 WEST GERMANY

Dear Professor Pye,

Dr Conrad has passed on to me your recent correspondence regarding the request of the AASR to the IAHR to ensure that adequate provision is made for the feminist critique of religious issues at the forthcoming IAHR Congresses. I strongly support Dr Conrad's comments and add my own. As I have been closely involved in both the establishment of a conference section on Women in Religion and the formation of a Women's Caucus within the AASR, I am well aware of the benefits that both of these innovations have brought, not only to women scholars but also to the increasingly well-balanced nature of the AASR in general.

As the place of women's critique of religion has been accepted, it has in no way created a feminine separatist movement at AASR Conferences. Rather it has been the means of self-identification of women and of their particular contribution to the study of religion. This has strengthened the relatively new development of feminist critique and raised many people's awareness of the wealth of current scholarship in this area.

It has also offered to men a new perspective in religious enquiry.

Far from marginalising women we have discovered that recognition and presentation of women's scholarship has encouraged further research in that area, a re-examination of male-dominated approaches of the past and a very healthy forum for debate.

The acceptance of our stand by male members of AASR is indicated by the unanimous support given to the resolution passed on to you.

The development of a women's section has not resulted in the withdrawal of women and their contributions from other areas of interest. It has given them more confidence for a wider engagement.

I believe that our Australian experience is relevant to other organisations involved in the study of religion. Historically, the emergence of a feminist critique of religion must be regarded as one of the major developments of twentieth century religious scholarship.

It is my hope that the forthcoming conference of the BAHHR with its theme of 'gender' will establish in that organisation a distinct women's section which will share the benefits we have experienced in Australia.

With my best wishes,
 Your sincerely,

Enid Adam,
 Vice-President, AASR

From the Secretary

We look forward to the impending conference and, for many, a first visit to Perth.

The AGM there will see some movement among the powers that be, including my disappearance from the job of Secretary, for PhD reasons.

Thank you for returning forms for the new Members' Directory. It should be

mailed around the time of the Conference. Do keep paying your dues however — 76 out of 349 members are still behind in their payments.

Lastly, let me say thank you for your support and wish the new Executive well.

— *Scott Cowdell (Rev'd)*
Secretary AASR

From the Treasurer

As the Preliminary Statement (below) indicates, our financial situation continues to be satisfactory. Our balance at 30 June 1989 was over \$12,000, which is \$1000 up on last year, and \$500 above the budget estimate.

Such a large working balance is essential. We have to allow for the occasional big expense for book production, with some delay before recovering it through book sales. At one point during the year our balance dropped below \$700.

Receipts from membership fees are up by more than \$3000 on last year, as a result

of the 50% increase in the annual rates (now \$30 for full paying members and \$15 for students). As intended, this increase has largely offset the increased costs associated with producing the REVIEW. (Incidentally, it is evident that the REVIEW was a major incentive to new members joining the Association).

As usual, about 20% of members are a year or more behind with their fee payments, which reduces our balance by about \$2500. Members who are among this 20%, please take note and do the right thing.

AASR

Preliminary Statement of Income and Expenditure for the Period 1 July 1988 to 30 June 1988

Balance brought forward 1 July 1988

Uni Credit Union account	\$11,259.49	
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Add Income

Membership fees	8173.20	
Book sales	12,295.68	
Publication Assistance Grant	1500.00	
1988 Conference surplus	1478.18	
Interest: Uni Credit Union	<u>589.57</u>	

24036.63

\$35,296.12

Less Expenditure

Postage and Secretarial costs	946.69	
Taxes and bank charges	30.45	
REVIEW production costs	6752.95	
Book production costs	14,443.74	
IAHR affiliation	200.00	
1987 Conference Costs	84.70	
1989 Conference advance	<u>600.00</u>	

23,068.53

Balance carried forward 1 July 1989

Uni Credit Union access account	2227.59	
Uni Credit Union cashable deposit	<u>10,000.00</u>	

\$12,227.59

—Rod Bucknell
8 August 1989

AASR Annual Conference 1989

27th - 30th September, 1989

St. Thomas More College, University of Western Australia

Planning for this year's conference is now in its final stages, so here is a taste of all the good things in store!

Many participants intend to combine their AASR activities with attendance at one of the other conferences being held in the same week at the University of Western Australia. This opportunity provides an extra incentive for interstate visitors to make the trip west.

For early arrivals on SUNDAY there will be an excursion to the extraordinary Spanish Benedictine monastery at New Norcia.

MONDAY and TUESDAY, UWA becomes the focus of attention as conferences begin:

The twelfth joint annual conferences of The Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools and The Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies.

The Australian Anthropological Society national conference.

The AASR Conference team will be at St. Thomas More College on the Tuesday evening to prepare for our start on the Wednesday, and to welcome arrivals.

WEDNESDAY 27th SEPTEMBER

8.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.: An excursion to three of the nine Buddhist groups in the Perth area.

4.00 - 6.00 p.m.: AASR Registration

7.30 p.m.: Official Welcome, Rabbi Coleman.

8.00 p.m.: Charles Strong Lecture. Dr.

Rod Bucknell (U. Queensland).

'Buddhist meditation and the Study of Mystical Experience'.

9.30 p.m.: Wine and Cheese evening.

THURSDAY 28th SEPTEMBER

Sectional papers will run through the morning and afternoon.

4.00 - 5.30 p.m.: Charles Strong 'Young Australian Scholar' Lecture. Dr. Patricia Sherwood (WACAE) 'Gurus from the East. Catalysts for Change'.

8.00 p.m.: The ANZATS/STS Conference invite us to attend a lecture by their key speaker Professor Gene Tucker (Emory University, Georgia).

FRIDAY 29th SEPTEMBER

Sectional papers will run through the morning and afternoon. 4.00 p.m. AASR annual general meeting.

7.30 p.m. Conference Dinner in Perth.

SATURDAY 30th SEPTEMBER

9.00 - 5.00 p.m : Forum on Spirituality.

A special feature of this year's conference will be the forum on spirituality in contemporary Western Australia. The aim is to explore the nature and diversity of spiritual life both formal and informal. The event will be an open ended inquiry that will highlight the depth and range of engagements in a way that is

not usually apparent. While the forum will provide 'local interest' for eastern states visitors, an important goal is to break down some of the barriers between academics and practitioners.

The day will be divided into three sessions with selected panels prepared to speak and debate from a variety of perspectives, including the academic, the pastoral and the private.

The list of invited speakers has now been finalised, and I can assure you that this is an event not to be missed!

This total programme promises an excellent week for all participants. The W.A. team are full of enthusiasm and determined both to enjoy it and to ensure that the Conference is a success. So the message is clear: we hope that you can be here and make it a truly national conference to remember.

As a further inducement I append a provisional list of papers to be timetabled on the Thursday and Friday:

VISITING LECTURE: Professor Malcolm Jeeves (St. Andrews) Provisional time: 9.00 a.m. Thursday

'The Impact of Recent Developments in Psychology and Neuroscience on Traditional Christian Views of Human Nature.'

SECTIONAL PAPERS:

Enid Adam (U. Queensland): 'Does religion unite more than culture divides?'

Nado Aveling (Murdoch): 'Feminist Theology, for women only?' (Workshop).

Greg Bailey (La Trobe): 'On the Semiotics of the Prostitute in Early Buddhism'

Alan Black (New England): 'The Sociology of Religion in Australia: An Appraisal'

Gary Bouma (Monash): 'Religious Affiliation and the Development of Dutch Ethnic Identity in Australia'.

Ed. Conrad (U. Queensland): 'On Reading the Book of Isaiah.'

Cynthia Dixon (WACAE): 'The Phenomenon of Belief: An attempt to study this dimension in a group of older adolescents.'

El. Franco (La Trobe): 'From Debate to inference.'

Anne Gardner (La Trobe): 'Daniel 8:1-2; Keynote to the following vision.'

Iain Gardner (WACAE) 'On the History and Utility of the term 'Gnosticism'.

Rex Gardner (Durham): 'The Cult of King Oswald as Saint.'

Josephine Griffiths (WA): 'Women's Spirituality in a Christian Context: A Decade of Change'.

Norman Habel (SACAE): 'God, The First of the Wise.'

Graham Hassall (NSW): 'Religious Change in the Pacific Islands 1945-1985'.

Ian Higgins (Wesley, Vic): 'Can the Teaching of World Religions in Colleges with a liberal Christian Tradition become 'faith formation' in an inclusivist quasi-religion?'

Amzad Hossain (Deakin): 'Philosophy of the Bauls of Bengal.'

Philip Hughes (Christian Research Assoc.): 'Types of Religiosity'.

Richard Hutch (U Queensland) 'Religion as depicted in *The Bulletin*, 1968 - 1988'.

Richard Hutch (U. Queensland): 'When the Uncanny Screw Turns'.

Roderick Lacey (Aquinas, Vic.) 'Exchange at the Crossroads: Evolution and Meaning of a Method for the Telling of Lives'.

M. Levine (U.W.A.): 'Divine Unity and Superfluous Synonymity'.

Geoffrey Lilburne (WA): 'Religious and Scientific Views of Space: Aboriginal Dreaming and Our Own'.

Penny McKibbin (SACAE): 'Disputing

the Sacred and Deconstructing Ultimacy:
Must it be a Custody Battle?

Val Noone (La Trobe): 'Eros, Zeitgeist
and the Holy Spirit: Melbourne Catholics
1968'.

Susan Noune (Curtin): 'A meditation of
television's portrayal of reality.'

Gordon Parmenter (Murdoch): 'A
Critical Look at Physics-Mysticism
Parallelism.'

Douglas Pratt (Waikato, N.Z.): 'World' in
World Religions: Metaphysical
perspectives on physical environment.'

K. Preisendanz (Free University, Berlin):
'On some optical problems in Indian
philosophical texts.'

William Shepard (Canterbury, N.Z.):
'Salman Rushdie: Spokesman for a silent
minority?'

Paul Stange (Murdoch):
'Conceptualising Religious Change in
Contemporary South-East Asia'.

Tony Swain (U. Sydney): 'Mother Earth:
A White Man's Best Myth.'

J.L. Taylor (Macquarie): 'Buddhist
'cults' and the Socio-Political Order in
Thailand'.

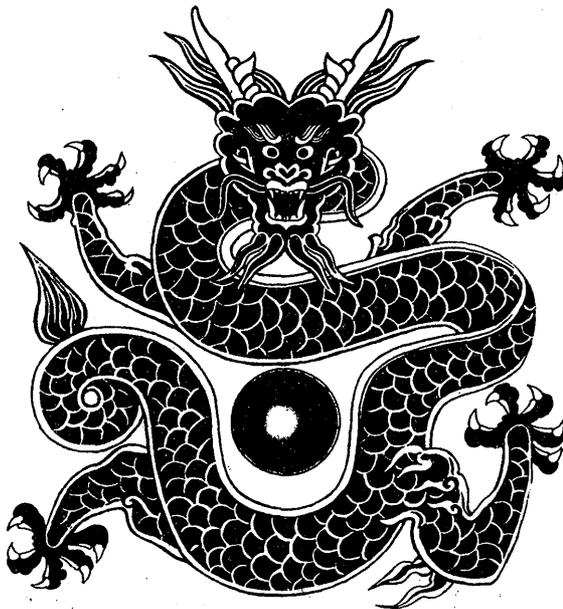
Charles Wallach (WA): 'The State of
Judaism today with special reference to
Perth'.

Robin Weston (ABC, NSW):
'International Debt, Ecology and Sin'.

A book of abstracts will be available at
Registration.

A final note: the University of Western
Australia campus is both beautifully and
centrally situated on the Swan river.
Transport is straightforward, but if you do
have any problems, questions, or wish
extra help in some way please do not
hesitate to contact me.

— Iain Gardner,
Claremont Campus
W.A.C.A.E.
P.O. Box 224
Claremont 6010
Telephone (09) 383 0333



Highlights of the Perth AASR conference

Forum on Spirituality in Contemporary WA

Is Perth really a "City of Light" and what could that mean? Do sandgroppers inhabit a panel-van culture; are they lost in a hedonism of beaches, boats and barbecues? Do the demands of work for survival in an increasingly materialistic society overshadow to the extent of repressing other values? In what ways do the people of WA express, cultivate and maintain commitment to moral, ethical, religious and mystical dimensions? How do the social movements which centre on peace, morality or the environment act as a vehicle for spiritual impulses? What is the condition of established religions in WA?

In conjunction with the conference of the Australian Association for the Study of Religions there will be a one day forum probing for the spiritual pulse of Perth.

"Spirituality" is present not only within the lives of those active in formal religious communities but also among informal groups and beyond them in upspoken ways in private lives.

The Forum will explore the varieties, faces and nature of spirituality in contemporary WA through open, reflective and collective inquiry.

All those attending the Religious Studies, Theology and Anthropology Conferences are invited and will receive details of the program when they register in Perth. Special invitations will be extended to a wide range of selected Western Australians active in the "religious" and "spiritual" spheres. The morning session of the forum will centre on spirituality within identified religious communities; after lunch we will probe the often tacit, hidden or inner aspects of "everyday spirituality". Each session will be introduced through short statements by prominent local activists and commentators, then opened by the moderator for general discussion and exploration of perspectives.

10am-4 pm Saturday, September 30, 1989 at Saint Thomas More College, Nedlands

Excursions

Two excursions have been planned as part of the conference.

Please book these in advance.

Spanish Benedictine Monastery, New Norcia September 24 (mid morning commencement)

We will take you to a piece of old Spain in the bush at New Norcia, 132 km NE of Perth. New Norcia was established as the home of the Benedictine order by the missionary priest Dom Rosendo Salvado in 1846. The monastery has a treasure house of rare books and documents in its library. It is also renowned for its gallery which houses an extraordinary collection of religious art. For those with an interest in architecture you will be pleasantly rewarded. The monks are totally self-sufficient and they have their own mill to grind home grown grain used to bake their own bread.

Lunch will be available at the New Norcia hotel, an example of Spanish grandeur that complements the monastery.

Buddhist Excursion September 27 (early morning commencement)

We will take you to three of the nine Buddhist groups in the Perth area. Our first stop will be the Bodhinyana Monastery at Serpentine located in the picturesque hills south of Perth. This is unique, being the one Theravadin Sangha in Australia where nuns and monks train and are ordained under the guidance of Ajahn Jagaro. From there we will travel to the International Meditation Centre at Mahogany Creek. Burmese Vipassana meditation retreats are held here monthly. The centre has a small but beautiful Light of the Dhamma Pagoda with a golden spire. The final stop will be at the new Vietnamese Mahayana Temple in Northbridge in the inner city. This is the spiritual home of Perth's 2000 Vietnamese Buddhists. Here the people will welcome you and serve one of their vegetarian lunches; an unforgettable experience.

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