

# AASR Up-date

## President's Report 1987

During the past two years there has been a steady maintenance of membership, with a final reckoning at 343 members. The most pleasing aspect of this membership is its presence in most Universities and Colleges throughout Australia. All States and Territories are represented. The maintenance reflects the early decision of A.A.S.R. not to restrict membership according to academic criteria but to allow free access to all interested in the academic study of religion. There are States with a low profile and it could be suggested that on the occasion of the Annual Conference that an appropriate campaign be mounted to attract new members.

There have been, also, certain organic developments within the Association. The most notable has been the clear emergence of the Women and Religion Caucus and its input into the last two Conferences. There is no doubt that Women and Religion is accepted as a legitimate focus of study and research and will continue to play a leading role in the Association's fortunes. The role of Religion Education continues to grow. Both of these foci could hardly have been envisaged in 1975-1976 when the Association began.

I foresee increasing problems with costs associated with annual conferences. Prices are rising and subsidies becoming

more difficult to obtain. We will need to take into account other associations and their venues and try to make economic decisions.

Next year, Australia's bicentennial, will be an opportune occasion to heighten the profile of A.A.S.R. The Charles Strong Trust has decided to highlight Aboriginal Religion with the appointment of Dr Deborah Bird Rose as the senior lecturer. The Young Australian Scholar will be Sister Majella Franzmann.

I would like to extend a gracious note of gratitude to my Executives. In particular I should mention the two Secretary/Treasurers. Penny McKibbin has been lauded on several occasions but her stalwart work placed A.A.S.R. on a firm footing. In the past twelve months Ray Harrison has given unstinted attention to continuing that tradition. I would also like to thank the Organizing Committee for this conference, particularly Max Charlesworth and Peter Fenner.

Finally, as I now leave the office of President, may I wish the new Executive and its new President, Ed Conrad, all the best and I look forward to the prospering of the Association.

— Robert B. Crotty

## From the Secretary

Thanks are expressed to members who responded to our mailing of *membership dues* notices. Members are reminded that the Association year is 1 July to 30 June.

About three-quarters of the membership is currently financial and member-

ship is stable at about 343. If you have not yet renewed your membership could you let us have your cheque right away? The Executive is anxious to refurbish its coffers in order to enable members to receive regular issues of the *REVIEW* and to speed

the successful publication of a new AASR book before the 1988 conference.

Members are asked to notify the Secretary (G.P.O. Box 621, Adelaide 5001) of *changes of address* so that we can continue to serve you efficiently.

Registration forms for the 1988 AASR Conference are now available. Further copies may be obtained from the Secretary or by contacting Dr. Edgar Conrad, Studies in Religion, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, 4067.

*The XVI Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions* is to be held in Rome in September 1990 (See details in this REVIEW). Copies of the First Circular from the Congress Committee are available from the AASR Secretary.

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting August 15, 1987, 4:00 pm

### 1. Opening Remarks

Dr. Robert Crotty, President AASR, opened the Annual Meeting and welcomed members on the occasion of the 12th Annual Conference 1987, being held at St Hilda's College, University of Melbourne.

### 2. Agenda

The agenda was approved as circulated.

### 3. Attendance

One apology was received, from Basil Moore. There were 27 members present.

### 4. Minutes of Annual Meeting 1986

The Minutes as published in AASR Bulletin November 1986, sent to all members, were acknowledged as a true record of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting held at St. Mark's College, University of Adelaide on August 16, 1986.

Moved: M. O'Donoghue

Seconded: J. Bodycombe

Carried

There were neither questions nor discussion arising out of the Minutes.

## 5. Correspondence

### a. Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools

Letter received from Hon. Secretary G. Barnes indicating that the 1988 ANZATS Conference will be in Canberra, Burgmann College, August 24-28. Subsequent annual conferences proposed were: Perth 1989, Brisbane 1990, Sydney 1991. A reply was sent from the President AASR thanking them and confirming the desire of AASR to coordinate conference dates. Following discussion, it was agreed that AASR Conference Chairpersons should be advised of these dates, and ANZATS kept informed of our conference dates.

### b. Penny McKibbin: Former Secretary-Treasurer

Letter of appreciation received from Penny McKibbin in response to the token of esteem expressed in the gift book order sent by the President on behalf of AASR members.

### c. National Museum of Australia: Canberra

A question was asked from the floor regarding correspondence in connection with the Association's brief to the above. The Secretary-Treasurer indicated that the brief had been prepared in response to advertisement for public input, and apart from a letter of acknowledgement, no further correspondence had been entered into.

### d. Other Correspondence

Two other items of correspondence being raised as separate items on the Agenda were held over for later presentation and discussion (see items 14 and 16).

## 6. Report of the President

The President reviewed his past two years in office in a Report which he then presented.

Motion for acceptance of the Report:

Moved: R. Hutch

Seconded: M. O'Donoghue

Carried

## 7. Report of the Secretary-Treasurer

Pursuant to recognition of the last Annual Meeting that the secretarial and financial roles of the Secretary-Treasurer were discrete functions, the report this year was presented in two sections.

### a. Secretarial Report

The Secretary-Treasurer distributed copies of his Report of which the following are some highlights.

Major effort was put into defining and implementing separation of the two functions. Special appreciation was expressed to Vice-President Edgar W. Conrad who attended to the financial records, and to former Secretary-Treasurer, Penny McKibbin who continued to be of service. It was noted that membership stood at 343 comprising: 284 full members, 58 student members, and 1 emeritus. There were 27 institutions as full members. The 1986 Directory showed 319 members.

Geographic distribution in June 1987 was reported as:

ACT	21
New South Wales	102
Victoria	66
Queensland	35
South Australia	70
Western Australia	23
Tasmania	4
Northern Territory	1
Abroad	21

While there were 46 new members, 23 had been removed from membership, and one reinstated, giving a net gain of 24. The problem of members who had not paid dues for 2-3 years was noted, and regret was expressed for having to eventually drop eight members. There were 31 unpaid members at fiscal year end, with one year unpaid.

Members were reminded that the official address of the Association is now: GPO Box 621, Adelaide, S.A. 5001.

Routine correspondence, processing memberships, and refining member records preoccupied the year. A brief was

submitted to the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, setting out some ideas on religious collections and exhibitions. A total of \$1,400 was received for maintaining office services in Adelaide.

Motion of acceptance of the Report:

Moved: R. Ireland

Seconded: P. McKibbin

Carried

A discussion ensued regarding the problems of overdue members and requests for special classes of membership for the retired, unemployed etc., following which a motion was put:

This meeting reaffirms the policy adopted to the present of the Secretary having discretion in determining membership in general and any concessional provisions in particular.

Moved: I. Fry

Seconded: I. Higgins

Carried

### b. Financial Report

The Vice-President, Edgar W. Conrad, presented a four page report comprising statements of income for the period August 1 to October 20, 1986, when he received the books from the former Secretary-Treasurer, and from October 21, 1986 to June 30, 1987, as well as a combined statement for the full period. A budget for the ensuing year also was included. The statements for the two above-mentioned periods were prepared by the auditors.

The financial statements indicate the following position:

Balance brought forward,	
July 31, 1986	\$14,088.53
Add Income	+ \$17,755.11
	\$31,843.64
Less Expenditure	- \$23,824.89
Balance carried forward,	\$8,018.75
July 1, 1987	

Accounts were transferred from the Satisfac Credit Union in South Australia to the Uni Credit Union in Queensland.

Discussion proceeded regarding the financial year of the Association being brought in line with normal business practice, as a result of which the following motion was put:

The fiscal year of the Association should be from July 1 to June 30.

Moved: P. McKibbin

Seconded: M. O'Donoghue

Carried

Discussion ensued on the level of dues for next year. The provision for Directory printing was explained as being reduced due to the more concise format proposed. A three part motion was then presented as follows:

The financial report including statements and budget should be accepted, and dues remain unchanged for the next fiscal year

Moved: A. Gardner

Seconded: M. Joy

Carried

### 8. Report of the Chairperson, Publications Committee

Victor C. Hayes presented a detailed 4-page report including tabulations and discussion which comprised the Report proper, monthly sales and income from sales 1986/7, and complete inventory of movement of stock and financial overview 1976/87 for the first 11 years of the publication programme.

Highlights included: sales for 1986/7 were 978 volumes for \$4,698.74. Distribution is now handled by SA Government Printer. Marketing in North America is through Meyer, Stone and Co., Indiana. The next publication will be *Aborigines and Christianity* due mid 1988. Since 1976, there have been 15,692 books produced in 16 printings at net cost of \$43,202. Over the same period the value of our program to AASR has totalled \$73,468, made up as follows:

8,525 books sold	\$35,830
2,907 free books to members	\$21,533
3,434 volumes in stock; (value)	<u>\$16,105</u>
Total:	\$73,468

Discussion revolved around the normal provision of a free book to members. It was indicated that the price of the next book would be about \$30.00 and it was projected on this occasion that a charge of say \$10.00 to members may be required, for the publication to be financially viable. A decision will be reached later.

Following expression of commendation, and without formal motion, the report was:

Carried by acclaim

A three part motion was then presented:

1. Expression of thanks to Richard Hutch and Peter Fenner for producing the AASR Bulletin.
2. Nomination of Penny McKibbin to edit the Bulletin for this year.
3. Nomination of Eric Sharpe, Norm Habel, Michael Mason, Richard Hutch, Anne Gardner, and Morny Joy to be members of the Publications Committee.

Moved: V. Hayes

Seconded: M. O'Donoghue

Carried

### 9. Report of the Chairperson, National Conference Programme Committee

The Chairperson, Max Charlesworth, presented his report. The Conference theme this year was: Faith Seeking Understanding. A total of 84 persons registered for the conference at St. Hilda's College. The conference was planned mainly for two days (Friday, Saturday) to enable interstate members to return home on Sunday. The printed programme included 55 papers. Difficulties were experienced in receiving abstracts on time. Appreciation was expressed to the seven Member Committee for their effort and support.

Without formal motion the Report was:

Adopted by acclamation

## 10. Report of Coordinator, Women and Religion Caucus

Penny McKibbin presented her report. The Caucus drawn from AASR members comprises over 50 members organised in state groups. Two newsletters were published during the year. Encouragement was given to women scholars for consideration by the Charles Strong Trust Committee. The conference 1987 section on Feminist Perspectives on Religion was organised by the Caucus. Liaison with Women's Caucuses in other academic associations continues for the sharing of common concerns and ensuring feminist viewpoints in religion are given place.

The report was accepted on motion:

Moved: M. Charlesworth  
 Seconded: A. Gardner  
 Carried

## 11. Annual Conferences

### a. Background

The President opened discussion by recalling that at the 1986 Annual Meeting decision had been deferred on whether the 1988 Conference would go by rotation to Queensland or an invitation from Western Australia would be accepted. It was noted that under the AASR Constitution the new Executive Committee following an Annual Meeting is required at year end to nominate a slate of officers for the year following, including the Chairperson, National Conference Programme Committee. The last Annual Meeting had been remiss in this regard. In consequence it was now imperative to decide on venues for both 1988 and 1989 in order that nomination and election could proceed later in this Agenda and for the new Executive Committee to prepare its nominations in due course.

### b. Conference 1988

Ed Conrad presented an invitation for the Conference to be held in Brisbane at a venue to be determined.

Discussion proceeded about a policy of coordinating Conference dates with other associations such as AMESA, AARE,

ANZATS. It was noted that the new Jewish Studies Association had already set its next conference for 10-14 August 1988 in Sydney. Questions were raised about availability of accommodation during Expo/88 in Brisbane. A motion was then presented:

The invitation to hold the AASR Annual Conference 1988 in Brisbane should be accepted, subject to liaison with other associations and consultation regarding dates.

Moved: E. Conrad  
 Seconded: I. Fry  
 Carried

### c. Conference 1989

Enid Adam reiterated the invitation of Cynthia Dixon last year to hold a conference in Perth, with particular cooperation of WACAE and Murdoch University. Following discussion a motion was presented:

The AASR Conference 1989 should be held in Perth, WA.

Moved: E. Adam  
 Seconded: R. Hutch  
 Carried

### d. General

Several aspects regarding conferences in general were suggested by members for consideration by Conference committees, including:

- possibility of charter flights being arranged
- desirability of mounting membership campaigns in the state concerned in the year or two leading up to a conference
- possibility of considering an off-shore venue in future, e.g. Singapore.

## 12. Constitutional Change

The President indicated that the issue of establishment of two officers of the Association, i.e. Secretary and Treasurer in lieu of the present Secretary-Treasurer, had been discussed by the Executive

Committee, and all members were circularised in accordance with procedures for constitutional change prescribed in the AASR constitution. A two-thirds vote of members present was required. A motion was presented:

The AASR Constitution should be amended in Articles III (2) and (3), and VIII (1), as set out in the documents dated 1 June 1987.

Moved: R. Crotty

Seconded: V. Hayes

Carried unanimously

### 13. Election of Officers for 1987/88

The Executive Committee, constituting the Nominations Committee had already circularised members with the proposed slate of officers, in its report dated June 1, 1987, in accordance with constitutional provisions.

The Report of the Nominating Committee should be adopted.

Moved: R. Crotty

Seconded: A. Gardner

Carried

The President congratulated the new officers upon their election,

President:

Edgar W. Conrad (Qld)

Vice President:

Enid L. Adam (WA)

Secretary:

Raymond O. Harrison (SA)

Treasurer:

Rod S. Bucknell (Qld)

Chairperson, National Conference

Programme Committee:

Philip C. Almond (Qld)

Chairperson, Publications Committee:

Victor C. Hayes (SA)

and noted that the following two are also ex-officio members of the Executive Committee:

Past President:

Robert D. Crotty (SA)

Past Chairperson, National Conference  
Programme Committee:

Max Charlesworth (Vic)

### 14. Condolence

The Secretary-Treasurer read a letter from next-of-kin of Miss Patricia Henderson regarding her recent death. Miss Henderson was a retired lecturer in Western Australia in Hindu and Buddhist studies and history of religions. The membership concurred that a letter of condolence be sent on behalf of AASR.

### 15. Appreciation

In recognition of service rendered, the following joint motion was presented:

This Annual Meeting expresses its appreciation to Robert Crotty, who has served as President during the past two years and to Max Charlesworth during the past year as Chairperson of the National Programme Conference Committee, and for his Committee's efforts with this successful conference.

Moved: P. McKibbin

Carried by acclaim

### 16. Other Business

The President stated that the AASR Constitution provides in Article VI for the establishment of Regional branches. In this connection the Secretary-Treasurer reviewed correspondence with Anne Gardner proposing that a regional branch should be established in Victoria, and noted that the Executive Committee had been consulted. Anne Gardner spoke to the proposal outlining the advantages flowing from the opportunity to discuss aspects of Religion Studies at a state branch level.

There was no formal motion but it was agreed that:

- the branch should be known as Victorian Regional Branch of AASR.
- the branch should continue consultation with the Executive Committee.

- funding would need to be entirely from state sources, although the AASR Secretary may be able to assist with advice and AASR brochures from time to time.

The President thanked members for their participation and closed the meeting at 6:00 pm.

— Raymond O. Harrison

## Impressions of AASR 12 Melbourne, 1987

Peter Fenner and Max Charlesworth, both of Deakin University, are to be commended for the success of their mighty effort in putting together a satisfying conference in Melbourne, August 13-16, 1987 at St. Hilda's College at the University of Melbourne. Conference goers ranged in number from fifty to one hundred and twenty at any one time, with the annual banquet attracting a large and lively congregation.

Papers presented at the meeting ranged far and wide. No fewer than fifty-five contributions were received, along with the formal plenary presentations and two symposia. The statistics are telling. They indicate that Sociology and Anthropology of Religion continue to attract the greatest interest, with papers in these areas accounting for just about 33% of all papers offered. Other areas attracted the following number of contributions:

Asian Studies	4
Islam	6
Feminist Perspectives	8
Christianity and Judaism	7
Religious Education (which usually attracts many more papers)	2
Philosophy and Methodology	6
Religion and Art	2

I would venture to say that the intellectual tone of the conference was set in the Philosophy and Methodology section on Friday morning. Others may disagree with me, believing instead that

night-time libations in a nearby pub also played their part.

President Robert Crotty opened the conference on Thursday evening and introduced the Charles Strong Lecture, "Jewish Mysticism," which was delivered by Philip Alexander of the University of Manchester. After Friday morning's philosophy and methodology papers, we realized that the conference was well and truly "off the ground." Michael O'Donoghue of the South Australian CAE was the second Charles Strong Lecturer and spoke on "Myths in World Religions" in the afternoon. This was followed by the A.A.S.R. Women and Religion Caucus. On Saturday and Sunday symposia were held. In the first, Max Charlesworth and Richard Hutch held forth on the subject, "Religious Studies: Future Directions." The second, on "Religious Studies in the Schools," included a presentation of classroom materials. Both symposia were lively, and a real innovation by the conference organizers.

The batteries that energize A.A.S.R. mythology each year were again recharged. Questions only the gods can answer ring in the minds of many: What has happened to the Sydney crowd and Eric Sharpe since 1985? — you missed a great lunch at Rosati's (Arvind, come back. A conference is just not a conference without you). What has motivated at least one outspoken member of old to reappear from La Trobe University after being out in the cold so long? How did so many

from Queensland manage to fund the trip to Melbourne? How did the bottle of whiskey come to break all over the floor of the library (to the shock of St. Hilda!)? And, would we ever go west and hold the conference in Perth?

The President for 1988 is Ed Conrad from Queensland, where the annual meeting will be held September 1-4 at Women's College, University of Queensland. Both Ed and Rod Bucknell

are the program organizers, so be in touch with either or both of them. When you come to Brisbane, give a thought to spending extra time at Expo '88. In the sunshine state, we shall be working hard on your behalf to make it great in '88!

— Richard A. Hutch  
University of Queensland

## AASR Women's Caucus News

The AASR Women's Caucus became an official group within the AASR in August 1986, being formed to support women as scholars and students of religion. The Caucus also tries to ensure that censorship and marginalization of feminist-critical perspectives occurs less frequently than in the past. It is noted however with a sense of *deja vu* that the proposed program for the next Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions in Rome in 1990 does not include any opportunity to debate gender and feminist issues nor is any space given to consideration of feminist critiques in the history of religions disciplines.

The 1987 AASR Conference did allow such space, and the section on Feminist Perspectives was a strong one. Papers covered a variety of research interests: Women's offerings in Balinese religion, An Interpretation and Analysis of Genesis 2-3, including a critique of Tribble, Feminist Hermeneutics and Religious Studies, Feminist and 'Maternal' Theologies and the Politics of Sexual Difference, Ten years (1977-87) of Anglican debate on the Ordination of Women, Australian Christianity and Feminist Imagination, and Feminist Critical Perspectives on Religion and Education. Several papers on women and religion were also given in other conference sections.

The Women's Caucus has suggested that proposals be made for possible future

AASR publications, e.g. on Australian feminist theology, and/or a collection of papers on women and religion as a broad topic.

Caucus member, Erin White, has already launched a cooperative publishing venture, the journal *Women-Church*, first published in August 1987 and 'devoted to feminist studies in religion'.

It is difficult to imagine how the growing body of scholarship in women and religion, women and philosophy, anthropology and associated studies can continue to be ignored by the academic mainstream, particularly in the history of religions. Debates on method and historical accounts of new developments in the theory and practice of religious studies have for the most part neglected the contribution of feminist scholarship — the most recent example being the added chapter and revised bibliography of the second edition of Sharpe's *Comparative Religion — A History*, in which the oft-despised study of 'new religions' has been accepted into mainstream debate, but important feminist analyses of textual materials, women's rituals and contemporary feminist spiritualities are not mentioned. Women's groups in academic associations (AAR, AASR and so on) cannot afford to retreat from the thankless task of continuing support for increasing the visibility of feminist scholarship and debate.



The AASR Women's Caucus has begun a register of women academics who will co-supervise theses and offer support and advice to women graduate students. Courses on women and religion in Universities, CAEs and other institutions have been publicized and the adequacy of religion curricula in schools is also being examined from feminist perspectives. We offer our congratulations to women scholars, Deborah Rose and Majella Franzmann on their selection as Charles Strong scholars for 1988.

We would like to thank all those AASR members, both women and men, who have recognized the importance of support for women's concerns in this very male-oriented field. Through the encouragement of the Caucus, we hope to see many more gifted women given opportunities for writing, publishing, and taking up administrative and academic responsibilities in Studies in Religion in Australia.

— Penny McKibbin

