
AASR Update

From the President

The 1990 Conference was held at the Australian National University in Canberra. It was chaired by Tony Johns whose organisation and list of invited speakers was excellent. Unfortunately 'the best laid plans' were led astray for the second year in a row by members of the aviation industry: a lightning strike in support of the refuellers in Perth coincided with the start of our Conference preventing the presence of the majority of our members from places further flung than Melbourne and Sydney. These people were greatly missed by those of us who did manage to attend and we hope to see them next year at the Conference in Sydney (as long as the aviation industry does not go for a hat-trick!)

The AGM was well attended, considering the number of people present at the Conference, and the Minutes will be printed in the next Review. I would like to draw your attention to several matters in them though. There was a majority vote to change the time of the annual Conference from the September break to the mid-year one in July (item no 3b) and this decision will be followed in future. Unfortunately, as far as 1991 was concerned, it proved impossible to implement, as the only week in July when Garry Trompf, the Chairman for the Sydney Conference,

was able to book accommodation, was the week the Australian Association of Jewish Studies had booked their conference in Melbourne. There is not a large overlap in membership of the two associations but, I am President of the AASR and Secretary of the AAJS and Rachael Kohn, of Sydney, had agreed to assist Garry Trompf in organising our Conference and she is Vice-President of the AAJS! The impossibility of Rachael and me being in two places at one time led to an Executive decision to hold our Conference, once again, in the mid-Semester break in September or October. It seemed reasonable that we should cede rather than the AAJS, as their Conference organisation was in advance of ours.

A decision was taken that the Journal of Religious History, who had requested a joint conference with us, be invited to organise their meeting to partially overlap with ours in Sydney. Unfortunately they have decided not to proceed.

Mavis Rose and Rod Bucknell, Secretary and Treasurer respectively, resigned their posts. On behalf of us all, I should like to thank them for the work they have done. Unfortunately no-one was willing to step into their shoes and it must be recognised that both posts are onerous ones. The essential nature of the

posts, though, dictated that Mavis and Rod had to be replaced and accordingly an honorarium was offered. The outcome is that Tricia Blombery and Bill Jobling are now Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, with Peter Bentley doing the day to day work for \$15-00 per hour.

The 1992 Conference will be held in Melbourne on 12-17 July in conjunction with the Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion and several other Australian and New Zealand Associations. This International Conference is a very exciting prospect. The SBL/AAR will be visiting Australia for the first time and bringing with them many 'top names' in the field. The Call for Papers is printed elsewhere in this Review and I call to your attention the closing date for proposals which is September 1991. Three of our members -

Norm Habel, Ed Conrad and myself - are part of the Joint Committee organising this Conference and it is thanks to Norm's initiative that the SBL/AAR are coming to Australia. A fourth member, Greg Bailey, is likely to be added to the Committee in the near future.

Last, but not least, it was with great sadness that I learnt of the recent death of John Scullion, one time member of this Association. John's erudition and dedication to the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible was highly respected throughout the international academic community and yet we in Melbourne were fortunate to have him living amongst us. John also was very willing to share his knowledge and to encourage younger scholars. He will be missed indeed.

Anne E Gardner

From the Secretary

I'm pleased to report that the plan to pay Peter Bentley on an hourly rate to attend to the day-to-day tasks of Secretary and Treasurer has made my job considerably easier. Also as Peter spends fewer than two hours a week it is not proving a significant drain on Association resources.

The present membership stands at 344 with 10 new members in the last three months. Most are fully paid up which leaves us in a very healthy financial position. For the 106 people who have not paid their dues this may be your last REVIEW! Reminder notices are enclosed and we would appreciate your returns as soon as possible.

The books are closed on the Canberra Conference and I report on Tony John's

behalf that forty-eight people participated and twenty-six papers were presented. Despite the instability and disappointment caused by the air-refuellers strike, the conference was able to return the cash advance and a profit of \$870.67. On your behalf I would like to formally thank Tony, and his efficient and cheerful secretary Pattie, for the time and effort they put into the organisation.

Plans for this year's conference in Sydney are well under way and you should all have received a registration brochure with this REVIEW. Garry Trompf has accepted the task of Convenor and has the extremely able and experienced assistance of Jim Tulip and Rachael Kohn in performing his task. Garry assures me that

this year's conference will be really special but that depends on all the membership taking part. I look forward to seeing you at St John's College and hearing from you well in advance.

A final note for those of you who have been waiting on backcopies of the REVIEW. Vic Hayes, who has the stock, is back from overseas leave and we hope soon, with his assistance to be able to meet your requests.

AASR Publication Committee Report

*Victor Hayes
September 1990*

Sales for Nine Months: 1 October 1989 - 30 June 1990

Detail

GP = Government Printer; VH = Vic Hayes; MS = Meyer Stone

	Sold by GP		Sold by VH		Sold by MS		Totals	
Pryor	4	14.32	-	-	-	-	4	14.32
Swain	59	290.87	3	19.30	-	-	62	310.17
Identity Issues	2	18.41	3	34.00	12	162.2	17	214.61
Brennan	1	2.23	-	-	-	-	1	2.23
Habel	2	9.86	-	-	-	-	2	9.86
Mason	19	136.42	3	17.97	-	-	22	154.39
Experience	4	17.92	3	15.00	5	21.23	12	54.15
Dowdy	2	8.96	-	-	-	-	2	8.96
Irwin	124	443.92	3	17.00	-	-	127	460.92
Swain & Rose	151	2035.48	31	687.20	-	-	182	2722.68
Totals	368	2978.39	46	790.48	17	183.43	431	3952.29

Note 1 The Swain and Rose volume continues to do well. 923 volumes of the 1250 printed had been distributed by June 30, 1990. The book has had splendid reviews.

Note 2 Summary of Operations 1976-1990

Since 1976 we have produced 16,942 books at a net cost to AASR of \$57,646

The Value of our programme to AASR may be assessed as \$91,917

This Value is made up of:	2,777 Free books to members, valued at	\$21,208.00
	200 copies each of 2 Journals	\$ 1,375.00
	Sales of 10,648	\$55,280.00
	Value of stock (2,214 volumes)	\$14,054.00
	Total	\$91,911.00

Note 3 Almost all of our publications pay for themselves in terms of sales.

Note 4 Several titles are now out of print. It would be appropriate to reprint the Strehlow volume (with a new cover design) and the Irwin volume.

Alone in the Crowd: Reflections on the Canberra Conference

Why do university faculty and other researchers go to professional meetings, anyway? If you look at the typical programme of these gatherings, what people experience once they get there is just another parade of 'scholarly' papers talking about the same thing they're supposed to be dealing with in the office back home. I understand that the general idea is to engage in scholarly discourse in an environment of mutual edification.

My experience of going to meetings suggests that many (most?) people go to these conventions for reasons different from pure scholarship. Some just seem to want to get out of town for a few days. Others find meetings a chance to get together with friends of longstanding. Some come to get feedback on papers, true; but some of these people seem equally interested in simply strutting their stuff. It must be especially painful for them to get all that criticism that sometimes comes along.

My own interest for attending the Canberra meeting was another common one - to meet people, in this case sociologists

with interests similar to mine. I've learned that if I am to avoid fatal mistakes in understanding research in someone else's country, I'd better try to pick their brains and take what they say to heart (that is if they don't destroy too many of my sacred cows). There was no preliminary programme for use in seeing who was going to be there, but not to worry - I'd find them after I arrived. What a shock upon getting the programme at registration! Somebody gave a war, and nobody came! I didn't even need one hand to count the other social scientists on the programme. And that couldn't even be attributed to the refuellers' strike.

What to do? Look for alternatives. One thought was to get away and take advantage of the other attractions of the area. I'd never been to Canberra before. But, alas the guy I'd come up with had absconded with the car. (Did he know something ahead of time that I didn't know?) Trapped! I just had to attend some sessions; I couldn't get out of it. But which ones? Exegesis of religious texts - please, no. Patterns of mysticism in the

most recent Eastern cult? Systematic theology? Where were the real analyses of the important religious systems - like surveys of Moonies, Catholics, and Baptists? None. Time I learned.

So what happened? Well, in those sessions I met a lot of nice people. They were very cordial. A few of them kept asking me questions about things I was quite unfamiliar with, that in spite of the fact that I kept saying I didn't really know, but we could speculate about it. Very flattering! They didn't realise that I didn't know much about the papers they had presented; they were polite to me anyway. Or maybe they did know that I didn't know, and that was why they were so polite to me. In any case, I was able to pick up on a few things, e.g. that a mystic is not necessarily a survey respondent who lives in a town in coastal Connecticut.

Saturday afternoon I got a chance to chat with two of the four social scientists there. I walked into their room, and I discovered that they were compiling statistical data for me, i.e. background information that would be helpful in my

research. How very generous! Then one of them offered me her car so I could drive around and take in some of the town. Supremely thoughtful. Anxious to explore a bit, I drove off campus and headed for the sights. Then.... you guessed it - rain! Back to the conference.

Some of those nice people even came to hear my paper.! After the presentation they asked intelligent questions about it. They seemed to follow and understand mine far better than I was able to follow theirs. Before I could probe those responses to check out their validity, the conference was over. My fellow traveller whisked me away from the campus, and I was on my way back to Melbourne. I hope I get to attend another AASR Conference. It would be nice to renew acquaintances with some of those people who were so accepting of me. It would be even nicer if some more social scientists showed up too!

*Edward C. Lehman, Jr.
Visiting Professor
Monash University*

News from the International Association for the History of Religions

*From the Report of the Secretary General
September 1990*

One of the most important tasks of the General Assembly will be the affiliation of recently founded associations from various parts of the world. Seven new applications for affiliation are to be considered:

- Within the last two years intensive correspondence and conversations led to

the point where it was possible to publish the statutes of a restructured Chinese Association for the Study of Religion. On this basis it is hoped that the formal affiliation of the Chinese association can now be effected.

- A recently formed Indonesian Society for the Comparative Study of

Religion, centred in Yogyakarta, has applied for affiliation.

- An application has been received from the recently formed Association Latinoamericana para los estudios de la Religiones. A scientific review, *Religiones Latinoamericanas*, with an annual bibliography issue is also about to be launched by this group, with long-term financial support via the participation of the IAHR in the UNESCO-based Council for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies.

- The fourth major region in which new developments are in progress is the Soviet Union. *Sovietskaya Assatsiatsiya Religii* has sought affiliation with the IAHR.

- At its most recent meeting (Marburg 1988) the International Committee passed a recommendation that the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR) should be affiliated. Although United States participation (via the AASR) has always been significant, this new association will open the membership to a wider circle of specialists in the study of religion than was possible hitherto.

- In accordance with the political trend in Canada there has also been formed a

Société Québécoise pour l'Etude de la Religion which has applied for affiliation. This application still has to be considered.

- The relaxed political situation in Eastern Europe has also borne fruit in other ways to the IAHR. The Czechoslovak Association for the Study of Religion was founded last year and also seeks affiliation. Also, the Hungarian association has been revitalised under new leadership.

The newly formed associations will continue to need support in various ways, especially from those strong and reliable member groups which run their affairs well, pay their subscriptions, keep their lists of members up-to-date, publish their rules and hold elections, and maintain a good flow of information among their members about the activities of the IAHR.

As to the future diversification of the IAHR, there is considerable interest in Africa south of the Sahara. A regional conference is proposed for Zimbabwe. It is regrettable, considering its religious culture and the many splendid scholars it has produced, that as yet there is no organised association in India.

The 1992 International Congress

Including the AASR Conference 1992

As you may have heard some of us have been pushing to get the International Society of Biblical Literature to meet in Australia and leave the confines of Europe. We are happy to announce that our efforts have been rewarded and that from July 12 - 17 an International Congress will be held in Melbourne, probably

at the World Congress Centre. The Congress Joint Committee will include most of the associations in Australia concerned with biblical and theological studies; the Australian and New Zealand Association for Theological Schools, the Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies, the Catholic Biblical Association

of Australia, the New Zealand Association of Theological Schools, the Australian Association for Religious Education, our AASR, and the International SBL and the American Academy of Religion.

Accordingly this will be the largest gathering of scholars in Bible, Theology and religion ever to be held in Australia. We expect more than 500 to attend and the number could be as high as 800.

It is important that you consider plans to participate now and your readiness to give a paper. The call for papers is included elsewhere in this Review. We need as wide a range of Australian scholars participating as possible to put Australia on the map in the academic study of religion and theology.

We are also interested in obtaining the names of scholars from abroad whom you would like to see involved in the Congress. If you have key people you would like to see come please send me their names so that I can forward them to Kent Richards, the Executive Secretary.

If there are any special study groups, publications or other contributions which you feel might enhance the Congress please contact me or write Dr Kent Richards directly. Later there will also be a secretariat set up in Australia to handle the administration of the Congress.

Norman Habel

Note: Call for papers on p.49. N.B. Date for submission is September 1991.

