

AASR Update

From the Secretary

There seems to have been a lot happening with AASR since the conference and the last REVIEW. As a result there are several matters I'd like to bring you up to date with.

The Directory

I hope that your Directory arrived safely and that you find the layout accessible. Thanks to those members who have commented on the production. I apologise profusely to Gideon Goosen and Robert Stephens who were inadvertently eaten by the computer. While all their details are on the masterfile they somehow disappeared in the merge stage.

You may be puzzled as to why the pages were printed only on one side. There are two very practical reasons. One is financial. I do not have access to a photocopier which will doubleside bulk loads and would have had to do all reverse side copies by turning pages over manually. Even given the logistics, for an animal of little brain, of such an exercise the cost of paper was far less than the possible additional time involved. I used recycled paper so the trees did not suffer twice!

The second was a bit of forward planning which should be come apparent with the arrival of this REVIEW. As I receive

new members, changes of address from present members, or remove members from the file, I am developing an update listing which will arrive with each REVIEW. You can then make all the necessary changes as you go along and have the blank sheets to add in the new members so you can maintain alpha order. Of course this will also hone your cutting and pasting skills and save any future secretary the agony of producing the Directory. The system will only work, however, if you remember to let me have relevant changes.

Membership Renewal

At the time of writing over two-thirds of members have returned their 1993/4 membership subscriptions. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I know some of you have real reasons for delaying payment: you may be waiting for details of appointments which necessitate moving; you may have been on leave; you may have lost the form. A reminder notice was sent at the end of January and hopefully the remainder of subs will have been received before you read this report.

There are sixteen members who are now two years in arrears and they will not be reading this journal if their fees have

not arrived by March. It is regrettable that members should be removed from the list but with full memberships only just covering costs we can afford to subsidise them.

New Members

Since publishing the Directory 11 new individual members and two new institutional members have joined. This is in addition to the six new members who joined as a result of the conference promotion offer. Two old members have returned to the fold. Three members have resigned and four members have been deleted as their last payment was in 1991.

The new members have come from diverse backgrounds but few are from university or institution departments. Remember you can help the association by recruiting your colleagues and your post-graduate students. If you need any information or membership forms let me know.

AASR Books

As you will have noticed from the letter accompanying the Directory the distribution of AASR books is no longer managed by South Australia State Press. Their decision to relinquish this role was taken very suddenly and we had only two weeks to make alternative arrangements. The Association owes a tremendous debt to Vic Hayes who, as always, stepped into the breach and arranged all the packaging and transportation.

There are now two distribution outlets. I am handling all orders from 6 Balfour St Wollstonecraft 2065. The remainder of stock has been located with Rainbow Book Agencies in Melbourne who specialise in small publishers and religious titles.

Rainbow have been successfully distributing CRA books and seem to be doing a fine job with AASR titles. As our books have never been actively promoted to bookshops before we have broken into a new market. I haven't done the sums yet, but we also seem to be getting a better return than the 45c/\$ State Press were paying. For the \$450 worth of books sold in October 1993 they have sent us over \$300. Anyone wanting details of Rainbow please contact me.

The response to the 'Fire Sale' was good and several of our institutional members took the opportunity to complete their REVIEW collection with back issues.

We are delighted to report that several titles are now technically out of print. These include Tony Swain's book, the book on Aboriginal Missions edited by Swain and Deborah Bird Rose, and Robin Pryor's work. There is no intention to reprint these titles. The timely decision to reprint Strehlow's *Central Australian Religion* has seen almost half the new printing sold.

REVIEW Deposits

In order to conform with publishing regulations and also to ensure the protection of issues we have placed the ARS Review on deposit at the National Library, the New South Wales State Library, the Fisher Library at Sydney University, and the NSW Parliamentary Library.

International Relations

Jamie Scott's report on the Armidale conference follows in this section. He continues to promote our closer academic relationship with Canada and I have been in

contact with their society president. They will vote on the matter at their annual meeting in 1994. The President of the Canadian Society for the Study of religion, Dr Jacques Goulet, contacted our president, Alan Black in February and we commence interchange of journals with this issue. They also extend temporary complimentary membership to any AASR members doing research in Canada. Contact me if you want details about this generous offer.

Although I have been in contact with several American groups I am still waiting for definite replies. As yet I have had nothing back from UK. Any members who would like to use their international contacts to promote reciprocal arrange-

ments with overseas groups like ours could contact me for details of what AASR is offering.

Alan Black is following up the IAHR relationship and his paper should contribute significantly to our decision at the 1994 AGM as to whether we maintain our membership in this organisation.

Conclusion

I can't think of anything else I need report to you at this stage. In case I've forgotten anything do not hesitate to let me know.

'Tricia Blombery

The Study of Religion in Canada and Australia: A Report and a Proposal

Jamie Scott

York University, Ontario

Jamie joined us at the Armidale Conference having been netted on Rowland Boer's Email drive. The notes below (with some correction of factual errors) form part of his report written in August 1993 for the Canadian Society for the Study of Religions - Editors.

In many ways the Canadian experience has much in common with the Australian experience. Both countries have dubious colonial pasts and perplexing multicultural futures. The majority of both populations have marginalised their identities, we in a handful of cities along the border with the United States, the Australians in urban centres along the largest national coastline in the world. There are differences, too, of course. We enjoy two colonial cultures, both more or less voluntary in their original immigration; the Aus-

tralian, broadly speaking, only one, and its members were not always volunteer immigrants. Also, while we like to think of ourselves as the oppressed in relation to our cousins in the south, the Australians are often seen as the oppressors by their Oceanic neighbours, particularly Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, regardless of their own protests about the Americanisation of Oz.

Today, these historical and cultural comparisons locate both Canadian and Australian scholars of religion firmly in

the midst of a number of shared concerns. In particular, it seems to me, that we and they would benefit enormously from transpacific cooperation in at least two major fields of current scholarly research and debate: aboriginal reclamation of cultural identity; and the cultural pluralism of religious observance. Without pretending to comprehensiveness, I think that each of these fields in turn suggests numerous areas for comparative study. Aboriginal studies, for example, may involve comparative research into the sacred space and sacred time of two geographically diverse groups of indigenous peoples on the one hand, and on the other hand, comparative histories of denominational missionary work. In turn, cultural pluralism invites comparative study both in terms of the internal dynamics of the several religious traditions now constituting the Canadian and Australian scenes, particularly urban landscapes, and in terms of the external dynamics between these communities, singly, and as constituencies within the national collectivity, and their cultures of origin, most interestingly perhaps, East European, Asian and Pacific-rim cultures of origin.

Doubtless, certain individuals are already investigating these areas of comparative research and other kinds of scholarly crossfertilisation, not just with colleagues in Australia, but elsewhere, too. Still, it seems to me a good idea to try to establish some more formal ties at the collective level between professional organisations in tertiary education. Such links are already well established at other levels of public and private education. On sabbatical in those parts in 1992-3, I did a little test-marketing of this idea, and met with nothing but support and encouragement from individuals and institutions. Wishing to build on these contacts, earlier

this summer I called Prof Jacques Goulet with the suggestion that I use the occasion of my presenting a paper at the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Australian Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) to open some lines of communication between the AASR and the CSSR. We agreed this idea sounded promising, and Jacques offered some immediate issues for discussion.

First, I would like to say a few words about the AASR and its activities, particularly the Conference; and then I would like to report how Jacques proposals were received, and on further initiatives suggested by members of the AASR.

Like the CSSR, the AASR has attempted to keep an arm's length between its agenda for the scholarly study of religions and the proselytising agendas of certain religious confessions, though that is not to say, of course, that any confessional interests might not be a valid topic of scholarly research and debate. The Sixteenth Annual Conference was held 1-4 July 1993 at Robb College of the University of New England - Armidale NSW, a delightful pastoral setting on the edge of the town of Armidale, and administrative and agricultural centre for northern NSW and southern Queensland. The conference was an international affair, attended principally by Australian scholars, but also by participants from Canada, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Adjacent to the AASR conference, Austin College was hosting another international gathering, a joint event under the titles, 'Religion in the Ancient World: an International Conference', and 'Conformity and Non-Conformity in Byzantium'. Participants in each conference were invited to attend one another's sessions, in a short mini-

version of the annual gathering of our own Learned Societies.

I suspect that the AASR Conference program would sound both familiar and unfamiliar: familiar in terms of methods and theories, but unfamiliar in terms of geographical and historical subject matter. The conference was divided into nine sections: Indigenous Religion; New Religious Movements; Oriental Religions; Philosophy of Religion; Religion and Education; Religion and Gender; Religion and History; Religion and Society; and, Religion, Literature and Text. Within each section, participants addressed a wide range of topics, there being 62 papers presented altogether. Space does not permit a complete overview of the proceedings, but the variety of topics from two sections give some idea of the scope of the conference. Indigenous Religions included Dr Fr Patrick Gesch (Divine Word Institute, PNG) 'Initiation of the Negrie People in Transition'; Prof Norman Habel (Religion Studies, Uni SA) 'Does the Bible Support the Claim of Land Rights for Indigenous Peoples?'; Dr Paul Rule (History, La Trobe) 'New Wine in Old Skins: Aboriginal Ritual and Christian Liturgy'; and, Vernon Turner (UNE) 'Aspects of Indigenous Beliefs in Indonesia'. Religion, Literature and Text included: Prof Jim Tulip (English and Studies in Religion, Sydney) 'Les Murray, Helen Garner and John Tranter: the Intertextuality of Contemporary Australian Literature and Religion'; Dr Purushotama Bilimoria (Humanities, Deakin) 'Salman Rushdie and the Jainist Principle of Tolerance'; Elaine Lindsay (Sydney) 'A Mystic in her Garden: Spirituality and the Fiction of Barbara Hanrahan'; and my own 'The Literature of Resistance and the Resistance of Literature: Dietrich Bon-

hoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* as Postmodern Testimony'.

Two Charles Strong Trust Lectures highlighted the program. Women and Religion was the theme for the lectures, the first of which was presented by Penny Magee (UniSA) under the title 'Divine Women: Do We Need Them?', and the second by Morny Joy (Religion, U Calgary) under the title 'Ecstatics, Eccentrics and Other Exceptional Women'. It is worth noting that Morny Joy and her lecture represented much that is good and worthwhile about this business of transpacific conversation. Australian by birth and upbringing, she has lived and taught in the United States and Canada for several years, and now serves as a Member-at-Large for CSSR. In this comparative vein, Morny's lecture focused on Hindu *bhakti* women saints and Korean shamanesses. These traditions, she argued, may be read as countercultural instances of female spirituality transcending the traditional dichotomy between patriarchal under-evaluation and feminist over-idealisation of the role and status of women's religious experience.

With respect to establishing more formal ties between CSSR and AASR, I introduced this notion at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the AASR and met with a very enthusiastic response. As mentioned, Jacques Goulet suggested three points of contact between CSSR and AASR. On the issue of their approving the change of name of the International Association for the History of Religions (AIHR) to the International Association for the Study of Religions (AISR), a change approved by CSSR this year, the AASR was a step ahead of us, having already passed such a motion last year. On the question of academic freedom, there was some discussion and sure agreement

in principle with our recently reiterated public insistence that confession not interfere with scholarly objectivity. In fact Peter Hobson and John Edwards (Social, Cultural and Curriculum Studies, and PhD student Philosophy UNE) presented a well-attended paper addressing this issue, titled 'The Ethics of Belief Debate and its Implications for Studies in Religions Programmes'. Though they almost expected increases in this sort of problem, generally, conference participants did not feel much pressure on this front. Thirdly, the AASR membership agrees that an exchange of *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* and our *Bulletin* for their own *Australian Religion Studies REVIEW* would be helpful, though it was unclear to me who would be doing the exchanging and where such items would be housed. At any rate, their *REVIEW* is a very useful publication, in so far as it contains not just scholarly articles and book reviews, but research notices and materials on teaching as well.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, the AASR membership initiated several proposals of their own, including cooperation between our associations on faculty and student exchange, on guest and visiting lecturing, and on production and dissemination of publications. In these respects, the AASR may in the appropriate circumstances operate not only

under its own flag, but with the support of the Charles Strong Trust, which funds academic research, teaching, and other scholarly activities in Religious Studies. I spoke with several members of the Trust, including Norman Habel, present Chairman of the Board of Governors. They were especially interested in the exchange of publications and joint publishing ventures in Religious Studies.

I would like to end with a personal vote of confidence that the CSSR would benefit a great deal from such cooperative associations, undertaken either independently or under the auspices of IASR. Many of the members of CSSR enjoy the annual rituals of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. But venturing beyond these predominantly North American halls into other arenas of academic debate and scholarly research, not just as individuals, but collectively, not only broadens our horizons, but also allows us to bring a whole range of important issues to the tables at which we regularly confer with our southern neighbours. Incidentally, the Australians are also extending their hands to New Zealand and other parts of Oceania, so I think we might piggyback there, too. In short these remarks are useful, and that this whole business will become a matter for official discussion and action, preferably before the next AGM of the CSSR.

An End to the History of Religions?¹

Alan W. Black

University of New England

When it was founded in Amsterdam in 1950, the organisation now known as the International Association for the History

of Religions (IAHR) was named the International Association for the Study of the History of Religions (IASHR). On the

grounds that the words 'the Study of' were pleonastic, they were dropped from the title from 1955 onwards. The formation of an ongoing organisation devoted to this field of study was preceded by a series of Congresses for the History of Religions, the first of which was held in Paris in 1900. Present at the Paris Congress were such notable scholars as the Swiss specialist on the Hebrew scriptures and on comparative religion Alfred Bertholet, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, the French Indologist and specialist in Buddhist archaeology Alfred Foucher, the French Sinologist and pioneer of Taoist studies Henri Maspero, the German Sanskritist and Buddhologist Hermann Oldenberg, the Dutch pioneer of 'the science of religion' C. P. Tiele, the English anthropologist E. B. Tylor and the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep.

Thus, from the outset, the term 'History of Religions' brought together scholars from a variety of academic disciplines, including philologists, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, classicists and orientalist of various kinds. In some of these scholars' writings were the seeds of approaches which were later developed more fully, such as the phenomenological elements in the work of Tiele and Bertholet.

The program for the Congress in Paris was divided into eight sections:

1. Religions of non-civilized peoples and of the pre-Columbian Americans.
2. Religions of the Far East.
3. Ancient Egyptian Religion.
4. Assyrian, Babylonian, Judaic and Islamic - that is, Semitic-religions.
5. Indo-Iranian religions.
6. Greco-Roman religions.
7. Nordic, Teutonic, Celtic and Slavonic religions.

8. Christianity.

Relatively little explicit attention was given to issues spanning two or more of these areas. A similar format was followed at subsequent Congresses, held in Basel 1904, Oxford 1908, Leiden 1912, Lund 1929, and Brussels 1935. At the seventh Congress, held in Amsterdam in 1950, a section on Phenomenology of Religion was added, and a Congress theme was adopted: 'Mythical-Ritual Pattern'. 'Sacred Kingship' was chosen as the thematic focus for the eighth Congress, held in Rome in 1955; a section on Psychology of Religion was also added. At Marburg in 1960 the stated focus was on 'Origins and Eschatology'. Nevertheless, as in previous Congresses, papers were presented in separately organised sections. There was little evidence that 'History of Religions' was a strongly unified field. The main thing which participants had in common was an interest in the academic study of religions and a desire to keep that study free from control by religious bodies.

The scope of History of Religions as an academic field has been a matter of continuing debate within the IAHR. For example, at the Congress in 1950, a leading Dutch theologian and phenomenologist, Gerardus van der Leeuw, stressed that History of Religions needs to draw on philosophy, archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, psychology and sociology in order to achieve a 'synthetic view'. At the Congress in 1955, advocates of phenomenological studies of religion, such as C.J. Bleeker, were criticised by some other scholars, such as Raffaele Pettazzoni, for giving insufficient attention to the historical development of religions. Whether or not this criticism was valid,

Bleeker was, from 1950 to 1970, Secretary-General of the IAHR.

At the Congress in 1960, a proposal to change the name of the organisation to the 'International Association for the Science of Religion' was defeated, mainly on the ground that 'the science of religion' includes philosophy of religion, which was said to be outside the scope of the Association. Whilst the question of the name of the Association was not formally considered again until relatively recently, various developments in the 1970s and 1980s made it almost inevitable that such a reconsideration would eventually take place.

Included among those developments was the establishment in various universities throughout the world of new departments for studies in religion. Such departments adopted a variety of titles such as 'Religious Studies', 'Religion Studies' and 'Studies in Religion'; at least in the English-speaking world, they seldom, if ever, adopted the term 'History of Religions'. Parallel to this development was the formation of new national associations in which the term 'Study of Religion(s)' was used in preference to 'History of Religions'. Examples include the Australian Association for the Study of Religions, the Canadian Society for the Study of Religions, the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, the American Society for the Study of Religion, and the Association for the Study of Religion (Southern Africa). In their respective countries, these became the national associations affiliated with the IAHR. Moreover, in 1989, the British Association for the History of Religions changed its name to the British Association for the Study of Religions.

At the IAHR Congress in Rome in 1990, the General Assembly, by a large

majority, requested the Executive Committee to explore the possibility of a change of name for the IAHR and to report on the options to the International Committee, with a view to making recommendations to the 1995 General Assembly of the Association. After discussion within the Executive Committee, a discussion paper setting out the arguments for and against a name change was prepared by Don Wiebe and Peter Antes.

The main arguments for a change of name were as follows:

1. Many of the member organisations of the IAHR do not use the locution 'History of Religions' in their title, nor is this locution often used to designate university departments. It would be desirable to have a name for the Association more in keeping with contemporary usage.
2. The phrase 'History of Religions' reflects neither the full spectrum of scholarship within the field of the academic study of religions, nor the range of academic disciplines represented among those who are members of the IAHR through membership in national member organisations.
3. The term 'History of Religions' nevertheless appears to deter some non-historians (e.g. sociologists or anthropologists) from participating in the activities of the Association, even though such persons' interest in the academic study of religion is consistent with the IAHR's primary objectives.
4. Particularly in English-speaking contexts, the term 'History of Religions' sometimes has crypto-theological overtones or undertones, largely as a result of the writings of Mircea Eliade.²

The main arguments against a change of name for the IAHR were as follows:

1. The international identity of the Association is well established in the use of

the acronym IAHR, emerging as a result of international congresses for the study of religion held since 1900.

2. A change of name would result in a loss of recognisability for the Association and would create difficulties in its relations to other institutions and in such matters as fund-raising.

3. Even if the phrase 'History of Religions' is not wholly satisfactory, there could be difficulty in finding a name which is more satisfactory and which could be appropriately translated into all the official languages of the Association.

4. A too 'inclusivist' designation could lead to a loss of the academic/scientific character of the Association and permit the acceptance of all kinds of discourse about religion, even journalistic studies of religions phenomena. Similarly, a title such as 'International Association for the Study of Religions' could provide room for theological or speculative philosophical studies, which would undermine the original intent of the Association, namely to promote empirically grounded, non-theological studies.

Following distribution of the paper setting out the arguments for and against a name change for the IAHR, various affiliated associations passed resolutions on the issue. Some, such as the Société Ernest-Renan (the French Association for the History of Religions) and the Società Italiana di Storia delle Religioni, called for the maintenance of the Association's present title. Others, such as the Australian Association for the Study of Religions, the British Association for the Study of Religions and the Canadian Society for the Study of Religions, proposed that the IAHR be renamed the International Association for the Study of Religions. Others again, such as the Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionsgeschichte, stated that they

were not opposed in principle to a change of name for the IAHR, but that any new name would need to be a real improvement; unspecified use of the word 'study' would not be acceptable, because of the fear that the academic emphasis of the Association not be sufficiently safeguarded, nor would 'religion' in the singular be acceptable, because of possible conflation with Christian theology.

Faced with these differences of opinion, the International Committee of the IAHR debated the issue at its meeting in Paris in September 1993. After considering various possibilities, the Committee finally resolved by a majority of about two to one to recommend that the name of the IAHR be changed to 'The International Association for the Academic Study of Religions' in English and 'L'Association Internationale pour l'Etude Scientifique des Religions' in French.

Under the Constitution of the IAHR, this recommendation will be presented to the General Assembly at Mexico City in August 1995 as part of the Seventeenth International Congress for the History of Religions. If, as seems likely, the name change is adopted, it will involve the replacement of a term which can be traced back to the late nineteenth century but which no longer conjures up its originally intended meaning. It will be interesting to see what consequences any name change will have for the constituent associations of the IAHR. For example, will the German association become the Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionswissenschaft?

Without pressing the metaphor too far, it is to be hoped that the demise of 'History of Religions' does not mean the end of what the pioneers in this field strove for, but rather its transformation into an ampler form.

Notes

1. In writing this article, I have drawn on the following sources of historical information: Joseph M. Kitagawa, 'Humanistic and Theological History of Religions with Special Reference to the North American Scene' *Numen*, 27 (1980): 198-221; Eric J. Sharpe, 'From Paris 1900 to Sydney 1985: An Essay in Retrospect and Prospect' in Victor C. Hayes, ed., *Identity Issues and World Religions*. Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1986, pp. 245-252; Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York:

Macmillan, 1987; Michael Pye, 'Religious Studies in Europe: Structures and Desiderata' in Klaus K. Klostermaier and Larry W. Hurtado, eds, *Religious Studies: Issues, Prospects and Proposals*, Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991, pp. 39-55; International Association for the History of Religions, *Bulletin*, 26 (September 1993) and 27 (October 1993).

2. On this point, see the remarks by Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, and also by N. Keith Clifford, 'Church History, Religious History, or the History of Religions?' in Klaus K. Klostermaier and Larry W. Hurtado, eds, *op. cit.* pp. 171-182, espec. p. 177.

