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ARS Review Editorial Spring 2001 Issue

By the time readers receive their copy of this Issue of the ARS Review, events in the United States and the Middle East will no doubt still be uppermost in our collective concerns. While these events appear to have very little impact on our own lives here in Australia, without doubt the causes of terrorism and its dreadful outcomes can be found in global economic and political systems of which we are deeply involved. As religionists, we have a special responsibility, not only in the current crisis, but in on-going global issues and concerns, to provide expert knowledge and comment on world religions, their theologies and particular cultural representations. We are in a position to speak as experts and to counteract some of the non-informed and often bigoted commentary that is being voiced in public forums. I am thinking particularly of Islamic religion and cultures, and the ways in which it has been portrayed both in relation to the international crisis and the Australian refugee crisis. As a response to this, AASR released a press statement following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, in an effort to reduce the 'othering' of Islamic people and their beliefs, and restore some perspective to the issue. But not only Islam is in need of analysis and explanation, so also is Christianity and the ways in which Western nations utilise Christian rhetoric to justify and advance particular political solutions and ideologies. The ARS Review would like to encourage essays of any length that address in particular the themes of religious militancy and globalisation, religion and post-nationalism, and religious fundamentalism. We are hoping to publish a special section in the next issue of the Review around these themes. In doing so, we want to encourage as much analysis as possible on current, contemporary events and issues.

The AASR Executive also wish to flag with our readers and members substantial changes to the Review. Both membership and subscriptions have been falling for some time, and we need to consider the future of the journal and the Association. In particular, we are currently negotiating a new publisher for the journal, are trialling a new cover and are looking at a new name for the Review. We very much welcome your ideas about what the Review should look like and how we can make it more accessible and relevant to the interested public, while at the same time maintaining its historical integrity. We are in a unique position here: there is an urgent need for critical analysis of contemporary religion, and this journal could be a site for excellence in scholarship and debate. The challenge is - how do we do this?

Lastly, you may not be aware that since August, AASR has an Email List operating providing members with up to date information and information sharing. If you wish to join the list, please send an email to the AASR Vice-President, Adam Possamai, who will connect you (a.possamai@uws.edu.au).

We look forward to hearing from you

Kathleen McPhillips
Editor, ARS Review