



SAMR NEWSLETTER



Vol. 1, Aug. 2008

Eric Orlin, editor

President's Column

Greetings to all SAMR Members!

I hope you have enjoyed a restful and yet productive summer. SAMR has been growing by leaps and bounds since our organizational meeting on January 4th of this year at the APA/AIA annual meeting in Chicago. At that meeting, we had around 40 attendees; today the Society has close to 100 members. We also have completed quite a bit of business in the short time since that meeting: the members passed the by-laws of the Society by email vote; the American Philological Association accepted our proposal to become an Affiliated Group, and we also became affiliated with the Society for Biblical Literature; a structure for payment of SAMR dues was put in place; and a website was created for the Society (<http://socamr.wikispaces.com>). On the academic front, we established an interim program committee and put out a Call for Papers for our inaugural conference in Rome on June 28, 2009. In addition, SAMR officers will represent the Society at special panels at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) in Boston in November 2008 and the international SBL meeting in Rome in July 2009. Please see articles about the SAMR conference and the SBL panels elsewhere in this newsletter.

We have some exciting plans for the future. First, we will be deciding soon on the topic for our first regular APA panel session at the Anaheim meeting in 2010. Please see the article below on how to submit suggestions for the topic. Secondly, several publishers have contacted us about producing the proceedings of our Rome conference and have also expressed interest in the possibility of a SAMR journal or monograph series on ancient Mediterranean religions. We will be discussing these possibilities at our upcoming meetings. Third, at our meeting at the SBL in Boston in November, we will try to encourage more scholars of Biblical Studies to join the Society and discuss the possibility of SAMR holding a regular paper session at the SBL in future years. Finally, at our annual business meeting at the APA/AIA in Philadelphia in

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SAMR CONFERENCE IN ROME JUNE 28, 2009

While enjoying the winter weather in Boston and Philadelphia, members of SAMR may wish to console themselves with thoughts of the upcoming inaugural meeting of the Society to be held at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. This is a one-day conference scheduled soon before the opening of the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, which will be held from June 30-July 4. SAMR members can thus use one stone for two birds—or one flight for two conferences. SAMR members who are attending the SBL conference will be able to use the SBL hotel; unfortunately SAMR members who do not attend the SBL will not be able to take advantage of this privilege and should make their own arrangements.

A Call for Papers was issued in early June and submissions are currently being received. The topic (see page 2) is deliberately wide in scope, and we hope that many of you will dig into past, present, or future work and consider making a proposal. Please note that abstracts are due by **Sept. 1, 2008**; if you have not yet sent your proposal to Barbettes, you still have a short window in which to do so.

SAMR at the SBL Boston, MA, Nov. 2008

The Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions is delighted to be co-sponsoring a three-year inquiry with the Society of Biblical Literature under the title *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue*. Centering on the SBL's 2009 international meeting in Rome (30 June – 4 July, immediately after the SAMR conference), the dialogue will kick off with a lecture and panel at the 2008 SBL annual meeting in Boston on Nov. 23.

Karl Galinsky, Floyd Cailloux Centennial Professor of Classics at the University of Texas and author of the landmark *Augustan Culture* (Princeton 1996) will initiate the cross-disciplinary conversation with an illustrated lecture titled "The Roman Cult of the Emperor: Uniter or Divider?", exploring both theory and method in the study of texts and material culture. Respondents to the lecture

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CALL FOR PAPERS, SAMR CONFERENCE IN ROME, JUNE 2008

What's Religious about Ancient Mediterranean Religions?

At the inaugural meeting of the Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions, we plan to begin our discussions by considering the ways in which the conceptual category "religion" is applicable to the study of ancient cultures. Sacrifice, prayer, pilgrimage, private and public devotion, beliefs about gods and goddesses—all of these practices and ideas seem to fall safely enough within the category of "religion." A question worth thinking about, however, is whether the boundaries of this modern category—and indeed the category itself—match up with any patterns of practice or belief held by the people we hope to understand. In other words, what did it mean to be "religious" in the ancient world? Perhaps behaviors that we might now call "religious" are better understood as falling within the realm of political acts, or as practices that delineate certain tribal or familial identities. Matching up ancient and modern ideas about this cluster of ideas and practices promises to reveal significant mismatches in our conceptual lexica where religion ancient and modern is concerned. We hope that it will also give rise to useful reflections about this inter-disciplinary project that we have initiated: what different methodological presuppositions do students of ancient Mediterranean cultures bring to the study of religious phenomena and what do we stand to learn from each other? Proposals addressing this topic and formed with reference to Mediterranean societies up through the Late Antique period are welcome.

Abstracts of 500 words should be sent to Barbetta Spaeth (bsspaeth@wm.edu) by **September 1, 2008**. Please provide abstracts within the email itself, or as attachments in MS Word format. Participants should aim for papers of approximately 30 minutes in length. While the conference will be conducted chiefly in English, the committee will also consider papers (and abstracts) presented in Italian.

TOPIC NEEDED FOR 2010 APA PANEL

The first panel session held at an APA/AIA meeting by the Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions will occur at the 2010 meeting in Anaheim. APA regulations stipulate that a Call for Papers for the 2010 meeting must be received in the APA office by **September 19, 2008**. While we were hoping to use our annual business meeting in January to discuss potential topics, the APA's schedule makes that impossible. To facilitate discussion of possible topics, we have set up a space on our wiki site for this purpose (<http://socamr.wikispaces.com>). If you have ideas or suggestions, please use that space or alternatively you may email your ideas to Barbetta or Eric. We will do our best to develop a call for papers that meets the desires of our members, and at the business meeting we will discuss arrangements for future APA/AIA meetings.

ELECTIONS COMING

Our current officers were elected to establish the organization, develop affiliations with both the APA and the SBL, to open a bank account, and to plan a conference in Rome in response to a unique opportunity to take advantage of the presence of the International SBL conference at the same time. Now we need to elect officers and a program committee according to our by-laws to administer the regular functioning of our fledgling organization. Since this is our first regular election, all offices are open: President (for a three-year term), Secretary-Treasurer (for a two-year term), and a Program Committee of three persons (with staggered terms of one, two and three years).

According to our by-laws, nominations must be supported by at least three members of the Society not from the same institution (a nominator and two seconds). It is the responsibility of the nominators to confirm the willingness of the candidate to serve if elected; self-nominations are allowed, though the nomination must still have two seconds.

Nominations should be sent to Eric Orlin (eorlin@ups.edu) by **November 1, 2008**. Voting for President and Secretary-Treasurer will occur by mail prior to the APA/AIA Meeting. Voting for the Program Committee will take place at the Business Meeting to be held in conjunction with the APA/AIA meeting in Philadelphia. According to the bylaws, proxy votes are not allowed.

President's Message (continued from page 1)

January we will be holding regular elections for SAMR officers and Program Committee members, discussing the membership fee structure for the upcoming year, and discussing the topic for our regular paper session at the APA/AIA meeting in 2011.

I would like to thank Eric Orlin, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Society; Greg Snyder, the Chair of the SAMR Rome Program Committee; Carin Green, Celia Schultz, and Kim Stratton, members of the SAMR Rome Program Committee; and Jonathan Reed of the SBL, for all their help and sage advice during this eventful first year of SAMR. I hope to see many of you in Boston, Philadelphia, or Rome during the coming year.

All the best,



Barbette Stanley Spaeth

SAMR at the SBL(continued from page 1)

include Steve Friesen (University of Texas, and author of *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, Oxford 2001), Robin Jensen (Vanderbilt University, *Face to Face: The Portrait of the Divine in Early Christianity*, Fortress 2005), James Hanges (Miami University, *Comparing Religions: Possibilities and Perils?*, Brill 2006), and SAMR president Barbette Stanley Spaeth (College of William and Mary, *The Roman Goddess Ceres*, University of Texas 1995).

The dialogue will continue at the 2009 SBL International Meeting in Rome, where Professor Galinsky will respond to several papers focusing on studying Mediterranean religions in or related to ancient Rome. And the project will conclude with a session at the November 2009 SBL conference in New Orleans, which will continue the inquiry about studying ancient Mediterranean religions—including but not exclusively early Christianity—in Rome. For exact meeting times and places, consult the SBL website at <http://www.sbl-site.org/>.

MEMBERSHIP

Your Secretary-Treasurer would like to take this opportunity to remind members to send in their dues. We have kept dues intentionally low (\$10, \$5 for students) to make membership accessible to all. The funds will be used to defray costs of the Society, especially those associated with holding meetings in conjunction with the APA/AIA and SBL; SAMR conferences will be self-supporting through registration. Only members in good standing are allowed to hold office and vote for officers, and after our initial conference in Rome only members will be allowed to deliver papers at SAMR-organized panels. You can find a Membership Form on the last page of the newsletter; send it in today!

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Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions Membership Form

Check all that apply

New membership Faculty membership (\$10 year) Change of Address
 Renewal membership Student membership (\$5 year)

Payment enclosed: \$_____ (limited to five years in advance)

Make checks (in US or foreign currency) payable to: **Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions**

Please check appropriate title: Prof. Dr. Ms. Mr. Other (Please specify)

Last Name _____ Other names _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State or Province _____

Postal Code _____ Country _____

email address (please print neatly!): _____

Please indicate to what other scholarly societies (e.g. APA, AIA, SBL, etc.) you belong:

Please indicate your main areas of interest in studying ancient religions:

MAIL TO:

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Forms may also be emailed to: eorlin@ups.edu.