



SAMR NEWSLETTER



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Nancy Evans, editor

President's Column

Greetings to all SAMR Members!

SAMR has had an exciting last six months, with a total of seven sessions in international conferences and a change in leadership as the year begins. Jeffrey Brodd has completed four deeply committed and energetic years as SAMR's president: under his leadership the organization has grown in numbers and strengthened its transatlantic presence with membership in the International Association for the History of Religion. At a personal level, Jeff has consistently supported innovative new ideas from all corners. Long-time SAMR members aptly characterized the Society as a 'vortex of positive energy.' Jeffrey's leadership has been essential in ensuring this tone, and I'm confident I speak for all of us when I thank him for the generosity and energy he has given to the Society.

The Society had a great showing in Erfurt this past August. At the World Congress of the International Association for the History, SAMR organized two sessions devoted to "Religion on the Ground," exploring the social, material and experiential realities of religion for non-elites in the ancient world. This theme drew together papers exploring domestic and maritime religion, healing and votive practices, earliest Olympia and late antique epitaphs; warm thanks to Amy Yandek, Sissel Undheim, Mattias Brand, Amelia Brown, András Patay-Horvath, and Georgia Petridou for their fine papers, and to Esther Eidinow for her thoughtful and thought-provoking response. A third session brought together Frederick Brenk, Celia Schultz and Darja Erker to review Jörg Rüpke's *From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religions in the Roman Imperial Period* (Oxford University Press 2014).

The format of a panel review is emerging as a productive hallmark for SAMR, as it draws together engaged audiences and integrated papers; we look forward to continuing to develop this in upcoming meetings. This was our format for one of three panels at the SBL meetings in Atlanta in October. Here we reviewed *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, edited by former SAMR president Barbette Spaeth, with panelists Jeffrey Brodd, Eric Orlin, Daniel Ullucci, and Heidi Wendt, and responses from Barbette Spaeth and

(continued on page 4)

In this Issue

- **President's Column**
- **Update on Palermo**
- **SAMR CALLS for PAPERS**
- **Announcements**

Update on Palermo: June 2016

A preliminary program and abstracts for the conference *Religious Convergence in the Ancient Mediterranean* taking place in Palermo in June are now available on the conference website at <http://www.palermo2016.net/program.html>.

Sandra Blakely and Billie Jean Collins are organizing the conference.

Due to an overwhelming response to the call for papers, and in order to accommodate as many papers as possible, we have extended the conference to a full four days. We will begin Thursday morning, June 23 and continue through Sunday morning, June 26. We are organizing a field trip to Mozia for Sunday afternoon for those attendees who would like to experience an archaeological site that reflects the spirit of the conference's theme of religious convergence.

Conference attendees are responsible for making their own housing arrangements. You can find information on [registration](#) and nearby [hotels](#) on the <http://www.palermo2016.net> website. All attendees must register for the meeting before June 15. Registration opens 1 April. The cost of registration is €125 /\$135 (students €60 /\$65) and includes the opening night reception and coffee breaks as well as lunch on Friday and Saturday. The dinner on Saturday evening and the field trip are separate expenses. We will post those costs as soon as they are available. We look forward to seeing you in Palermo this summer!

SAMR CALL for PAPERS

SBL Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, November 19-22, 2016

Teaching Ancient Mediterranean Religions

Teaching about ancient Mediterranean religions occurs in a wide variety of course settings at different colleges, universities, and seminaries. This paper session seeks to explore this variety by considering different pedagogical models, presenting innovative techniques, and sharing best practices.

The Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions invites scholars and students of the religions of the ancient Mediterranean world, including Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Near Eastern religions, as well as early Christianity and Judaism, to submit abstracts that address the teaching of ancient Mediterranean religions. Potential topics include, but are not limited to: categorization and organization of subject matter; effective texts and instructional materials; notable uses of new technologies; the pros and cons of engaging students at all levels in the study of theory; and the interconnection of ancient Mediterranean religions with related subjects (e.g. History, Philosophy, Hebrew Bible, Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism, Christian origins, Late Antiquity and Islamic origins).

Proposals should be submitted electronically through the SBL website. The deadline is **Tuesday, 1 March, 2016**. You must be a member of the SBL or seek a waiver in order to deliver a paper. Papers should last between 15 and 20 minutes. Abstracts should contain a title and a word count, but should not have any information regarding the identity of the submitter. All abstracts will be reviewed anonymously. Please direct all queries to SAMR at socamr@gmail.com.

SAMR CALL for PAPERS

SCS/AIA Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada, January 5-8, 2017

Roman Religion and Augustan Poetry

For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, research on Roman religion excluded any serious consideration of Latin poetry. Scholarly consensus located 'real' Roman religion in practices, rather than in myths or beliefs, and in the traditions that supposedly antedated Greek and other non-Italic influences. Consequently, scholars either mined particular texts for nuggets of 'factual' information about specific festivals and practices (Ovid's *Fasti* in particular) or they simply dismissed it as something extraneous to 'real' Roman religion.

In recent decades, this simple either-or approach has been challenged from two directions. On the one hand, literary analysis of these texts has shown that we cannot take the works of such complex and sophisticated writers as simple 'evidence' for actual practices. On the other hand, scholars who advocate for a more inclusive and complex notion of what constituted Roman religion have argued that the reflections in these texts about human interactions with the divine are as much a part of Roman religion as the rituals that they describe.

The Society of Ancient Mediterranean Religions invites scholars and students of Latin poetry and Roman religion to submit abstracts that address one aspect of the varied interrelations between religion and Augustan poetry. Such aspects might include (but are not limited to):

- poetry as exegesis of or commentary on particular religious practices
- poetry as a vehicle for reflections on proper relations between the divine and human spheres
- poetry as an expression of the religious worldview of the author

We also welcome papers on the role of ancient grammarians and other Late Antique commentators in shaping modern scholarship on religion in Augustan poetry, as well as new approaches to their use as sources for religion in the early Empire.

Abstracts should be submitted by email attachment as .doc or .docx files to socamr@gmail.com and should be from 500-600 words in length for a paper to last between 15 to 20 minutes. Abstracts should contain a title and a word count, but should not have any information regarding the identity of the submitter. For further information about abstract format, please see the SCS Program Guide. The deadline for submission of abstracts is **Tuesday, March 1, 2016**, and all abstracts for papers will be reviewed anonymously. Please direct all queries to SAMR at socamr@gmail.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Papers

The Mysteries of Mithras and other Mystic Cults in the Roman World

Symposium Peregrinum 2016, Tarquinia

Thursday, June 16—Sunday, June 19, 2016

Research on Mithras, Cybele, Isis, Serapis and other foreign gods within the Roman world is still ongoing and necessary. We barely know how these cults were shaped, what their aims were, how and why they firmly took root in the Roman world. Formerly known as “Oriental cults” or “Mystery cults”, they could more appropriately be identified as “foreign cults”, which was a Roman concept, and which allows a broader approach to the problem. Starting from the 3rd century BC “foreign” referred to all of Italy, and no longer merely to the area outside Rome, as we learn from the repression of foreign elements of the Bacchanalia, which affected the whole of Italy. The occasion for a new conference on this topic arises from the recent discovery of new monuments of Mithras in Tarquinia, Veii, Rome and Ostia, which could allow new research on Italian Mithraism.

Old and new discoveries of temples to Cybele could give impulse, moreover, to research the cultic connections with Isis or Mithras (see, for example, the cases of Ostia and Mainz). Interactions between other oriental cults are also rarely studied, or are their relations with the imperial ideology or specific interactions between foreign cults and Christianity. We will also welcome discussions of a better definition of the relationships between what was mysteric and what was not.

Hotel accommodations will cost, for a double room, about €100 for two people (breakfast and dinner included); a single room will cost somewhat more. Registration will be 40 € per person, which will cover buffets and coffee breaks, excursion by bus to Vulci (possibly another trip as well to Cerveteri or another archaeological site), and a visit to the Etruscan necropolis and the archaeological museum of Tarquinia, where the new room for the statue of Mithras will probably be installed during the conference.

We hereby invite proposals for panels and individual papers on these and related topics. They should be submitted to Patricia A. Johnston (johnston@brandeis.edu) no later than March 1, 2016. All paper proposals will be peer-reviewed, and the decisions will be communicated by March 15, 2016. Panel session proposals will be reviewed as soon as they are received, and these proposers will receive notification within 30 days. Abstracts (written in English) for individual papers should not exceed 400 words; abstracts for panels should not exceed 600 words. Presentations should be in English. If that is not possible, ample materials should be distributed to all attendees to facilitate discussion after each talk.

The conference organizers are: Attilio Mastrocinque (Università di Verona) (attilio.mastrocinque@univr.it), László Tákács (Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Budapest) (takacs.laszlo@btk.ppke.hu), and Patricia A. Johnston (Brandeis University, Waltham, MA) (johnston@brandeis.edu).

Religion Before “Religion”

October 14 and 15, 2016

Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine

The purpose of this colloquium is to bring together scholars of the ancient world to discuss not only the “what” (i.e., What is religion?) or the how (i.e., How do we theorize religion?), but rather the complex relationship between the two: that is, how do we examine our sources with a view both to evidence for the kinds of social practices that would today be described as religious activities, and also to the formation of discrete ways of talking or thinking about such practices among particular ancient peoples, at certain times, and in certain places. To that end, the overarching aims of the symposium are twofold, and participants will be invited to address one or both of the following topics: First, we will discuss how to define religion practices and understandings involving gods and similar beings that were widespread in the Greco-Roman world, and with a view to pre-Christian writings that sought to impose normative schemes upon these practices. Then, we will consider why and how Christians and Jews gave rise to entities that resemble “religions” in a more modern sense, largely through efforts of mutual differentiation and institutionalization. The potential yields of this line of inquiry would be to demonstrate the relevance of antiquity for understanding the history of the modern category of religion, while also drawing the study of ancient evidence into the wider academic study of religion. Scholars of antiquity do not simply have a history to bring to bear on the discipline of religious studies; they have much to say on matters of methodology and theoretical investigation, not least because the history of religion and the methods and theories used to illuminate history and theory that are not simply complementary but, in fact, dependent upon each other. Their role is all the more valuable to the wider academic study of religion since the origins of at least two modern religions trace to this period of study. Thus, we are poised to speak to a major shift in how “religion” was conceived. Organized by Professors Todd S. Berzon (Religion) and Dallas Denery (History)

President's Message (continued from page 1)

Kimberly Stratton. A second session, *New Approaches in Social Sciences and the Study of Ancient Religion*, explored the Queen of Heaven in the Iron age Mediterranean (Megan Daniels), a hybrid agency in Hellenistic Judaism (Sung Soo Hong), the language of brotherhood in ancient Mediterranean groups (Carmen Palmer), and methodological approaches to orthodoxy and heresy (David Jorgensen). In our third session, three papers explored healing cults in the Mediterranean world, with papers on non-healing rituals at the Asklepeion of Epidaurus (Stephen Ahearne-Kroll), cultic change in the Corinthian Asklepeion in the Greek to Roman periods (Barbette Spaeth), and weakness and imperfection in Early Christian healing practices (Pieter Botha). Gerhard van den Heever and the SBL Greco-Roman Religions Section has continued to offer great support to SAMR's panels: our warmest thanks go out to them as always.

The year's paper sessions concluded with a panel at the AIA/SCS joint annual meetings in San Francisco, with four papers on theism and related categories in the study of ancient religions. Presenters focused on themes of invective (Jaclyn Neel), Imperial cult (Jacob Latham), healing emperors (Trevor Luke) and pagan monotheism (Frederick Brenk).

The year ahead promises a great lineup of conferences and conference sessions, with a conference in Palermo in June, scholarly panels planned for Toronto next January, and new pedagogy panels proposed for SBL and in the works for the Classical Association of the Middle West and South. *Religious Convergence in the Ancient Mediterranean* will convene in Palermo in June: please see the update on page 1 for details on the conference and registration. We are very pleased to announce the CFP for a panel at the SCS/AIA for Toronto, 2017, on *Roman Religion and Augustan Poetry*. The focus on poetry as a vehicle for exploring religion represents a new avenue for the Society; a second new avenue is opening in the form of pedagogical panels. Please note the CFP for *Teaching Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, to be held at the SBL meetings in San Antonio. We look forward to conversations from teachers of all religions, including Hebrew Bible, Judaism, Christianity, Late Antiquity and Islam as well as Greek and Roman. A panel focused on teaching Greek and Roman religions is also in the works for the Classical Association of the Middle West and South Southern Section, to be held

in Atlanta October 27-29: please keep your eye on the website for details. Our CFP deadlines for SCS/AIA as well as for SBL are March 1: please mark your calendars if you would like to submit an abstract!

All of these panels, conferences and colloquia reflect the exceptional efforts and generosity of Nancy Evans, SAMR's Secretary-Treasurer, and the Program Committee, James Rives, Paul Dilley, and Paul Eastman. On behalf of the Society, I offer great thanks all of these individuals, who have done so much to make this year's event a series of successes. Among the very good notes for the year ahead is that Amelia Brown has accepted an invitation to join the program committee, stepping into Paul Eastman's place as he completes his term. Amelia is a Senior Lecturer in Greek History and Language at the University of Queensland in Australia: she was a terrific contributor to our Erfurt colloquium, and we look forward to having her come on board. Finally, it is a great honor to start serving as SAMR's president: these are the colleagues who make professional organizations a pleasure. I look forward to working with everyone in the year ahead.

With best wishes,



Sandy Blakely, President
Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions

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(<http://samreligions.org/>)

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