

INTRODUCTION
THE ISLĀMIC STUDIES GROUP
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

I. HISTORY

Following the AAR annual meeting of 1972, Dr. Franklin Littell, then Chairman of the History of Christianity Section and my colleague at Temple University, Department of Religion, suggested that there is a possibility for setting up a sub-section on Muslim-Christian Encounter under the aegis of the History of Christianity Section. This sub-section would offer panels and lectures in the annual program. I welcomed the suggestion and arranged a program for the 1973 annual meeting in Chicago. The same invitation was renewed for the 1974 (Washington) meeting. Dr. Littell also advised that we must seek independent status as a program unit since his chairmanship of the section on the History of Christianity was to expire soon. At the 1974 meeting a unanimous vote was taken by the scholars present at the Islāmic sessions to apply for status as an independent program unit. An application was lodged with the AAR Executive Director for presentation to the AAR Program Committee.

The application was turned down, and we participated in the 1975 program under the aegis of "History of Christianity." At the 1975 meeting, another unanimous vote was taken and a committee elected to apply for independent status. Again, this was turned down. Although we were granted a "Consultation" status, yet our participation appeared in the program under the History of Christianity. At the 1976 meeting, a third unanimous vote was taken and the same committee reelected to apply once more for independent status. This was granted in December, 1976, and we began to operate as such. Since then, the Islāmic Studies Group participated in five annual meetings. At the request of the AAR Executive Director, the Group's participation was extended to cover the 1981 meeting at San Francisco.

In all, we have been responsible for holding
9 sessions of 1½ hours each
17 sessions of 3 hours each
2 plenary sessions of 2½ hours each.
The above-mentioned sessions involved 127 speakers and 24 sessions

chairpersons. This is exclusive of the current session, (our tenth) to be held in New York in December, 1982.

We have also held an exhibit of Islāmic Art, shown numerous films, and raised \$15,000.00 which we plan to spend on publishing three volumes of papers presented to the AAR under our auspices, to be entitled "Trialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths"; Islāmic Thought and Culture" and "Essays in Islāmic and Comparative Studies."

II. CONSTITUENCY

Since we began with no constituency among the members of the AAR, we worked very hard to promote Islāmic Studies among them. We advertised the AAR Islāmic Studies programs throughout the U.S. and Canada, and we sent out bulk mailings of 1000 or more pieces for two years. We solicited papers from our friends and acquaintances. Gradually, the responses came and they were encouraging. At any one of our meeting, we could count 40 participants, and some sessions were attended by more than 100 persons. Today, we estimate that "Islāmic Studies" is a live entity in the consciousness of at least 200 members of the AAR though not all of them attend every session.

III. METHOD AND PHILOSOPHY

Most of the papers presented under Muslim-Christian Encounter or Islāmic Studies were by special invitation. We also received a number of papers which were unsolicited. In every case, we tried to fit the offered papers into the program without jeopardizing the planned themes for sessions. However, the desire of the Steering Committee was to focus each session around a chosen topic so that speakers and audience could interact on a particular issue.

As much as possible, we tried to make the Islāmic Studies Group a mixed one, involving Muslims, Christians, Jews and others as speakers and audience. We sought to sensitize every participant that our business is scholarly and must meet the most exacting standards of scholarship; but that our discipline deals with the values, attitudes, hopes and aspirations of millions of living humans. We endeavored to make our meetings lively by looking into problems of Muslims as a living community. In our criticisms and suggestions, we sought a phenomenological approach wherever possible. Over the years, our meetings have become richer than those of the American Oriental Society where the approach is basically linguistic and/or textual, and of the Middle East Studies Association where the approach is basically strategist. We have succeeded in drawing to the AAR a number of new members from both associations as well as a number of Muslim scholars.

Over the entire period of ten years of activity (nine annual meetings) there was perfect accord between the Steering Committee and the audience. Members of the audience repeatedly expressed their approval of, and gratitude for, the programs we had prepared. Their suggestions were acted upon, and they were happy to return to the AAR meeting year after year.

IV. A NOTE ABOUT THE FUTURE

The Islāmic Studies Group has built up a small but growing and vigorous constituency. Though small by comparison to total AAR membership, this constituency is largely made of scholars who teach Islām either in one undergraduate course, or as a smaller part of an undergraduate survey course in the religions of the world. Already, a number of specialized Islāmicists have been pulled toward the AAR because of our distinctive approach to comparative study. Moreover, the papers so far presented in the field of Islāmic Studies have been of very high quality, and they are bound to improve in quality and quantity in the future. It is our considered judgment — and hence, our recommendation — that the Islāmic Studies Group be upgraded to “section” and that it be given a chance to realize this fuller development in the coming decade.

Normally, a “Group” Program unit would sit for an election of a new steering committee every five years, assuming a decision on the part of the AAR to continue same. However, the AAR Executive Director has asked the present Steering Committee to continue for one additional year. Elections will therefore be planned for the annual meeting, 1982.

Isma‘il R. al Fārūqī
Chairman
Islāmic Studies Group
American Academy of Religion
Temple University

ABSTRACT OF PROGRAMS FOR NINE YEARS

1973 (Chicago)

Status: History of Christianity: Muslim-Christian Encounter
Theme: "Muslim-Christian Encounter"
Sessions: Two 1½-hour sessions
Presiding: I.R. al Fārūqī
Speakers: Four, namely,
Ḥasan Ḥanafī
Jaroslav Stetkewycz
Lois Lamyā' al Fārūqī
W.C. Smith

1974 (Washington)

Status: History of Christianity: Muslim-Christian Encounter
Theme: "Muslim-Christian Encounter in the Age of the
Crusades"
Sessions: Two 1½-hour sessions
Presiding: I.R. al Fārūqī
Speakers: Five, namely,
M. Khalīfah Aḥmad
Don M. Randel
Jaroslav Folda
Edward A. Synan
Victor Makkari

1975 (Chicago)

Status: History of Christianity: Muslim-Christian Encounter
Themes: "Islām and Modernism"; "Islām, the University and the
AAR"
Presiding: I.R. al Fārūqī
Sessions: One 3-hour session, one 1½-hour session
Speakers: Eight, namely,
Charles J. Adams
Sāmī Hamārnah
James Waltz
Anīs Aḥmad
John L. Esposito
Willem Bijlefeld
I.R. al Fārūqī
Roderick Hindery

1976 (St. Louis)

Status: History of Christianity: Islāmic Studies Group
Theme: "Teaching Islām to Undergraduates"; "Issues in Islāmic Thought"
Sessions: Two 1½-hour sessions and one 3-hour session
Presiding: I.R. al Fārūqī
Speakers: Fourteen, namely,
William Sheppard
Jane Smith
Riffat Burki
John Esposito
Merlin Swartz
Spencer Lavan
Gary de Angelis
J.M. Pessagno
Harold Kasimow
S. Kirmānī
Anīs Aḥmad
M. Zahniser
Lois Lamyā' al Fārūqī
Harry Partin

1977 (San Francisco)

Status: AAR Program Unit: Islāmic Studies Group
Themes: "Sufism"; "Faith and Reason in Islām"; "Teaching of Islām: Methods and Problems"; "Changing Status of Women"
Sessions: Two 3-hour sessions, two 1½-hour sessions
Presiding: Harold Kasimow, J. Meric Pessagno, Anīs Aḥmad, John L. Esposito
Speakers: Twenty, namely,
Richard Martin
Isma'īl R. al Fārūqī
J.M. Pessagno
Frederic M. Denny
S.A. Nigosian
Joseph Epes Brown
Ḥāmid Algar
'Umar Fārūq 'Abdullah
John L. Esposito
Elizabeth Fernea
Houston Smith
Alan Lazaroff
Lois Lamyā' al Fārūqī
'Abdul Qādir Baig
'Ābidullah Ghāzī
Tamar Frank
Mary J. Good
Najāt Ṣanābary
Lois Beck
Midḥat Abraham

1978 (New Orleans)

Status: AAR Program Unit: Islāmic Studies Group
Theme: "Islām in North America"; "Interpretation of Scripture in Islām"; "Islām and Political Liberation"; "Worship in Islām"
Sessions: Four 3-hour sessions; one Plenary Session
Presiding: Anīs Aḥmad, J. Meric Pessagno, John L. Esposito, Harold Kasimow
Speakers: Twenty-eight, namely,
Yvonne Ḥaddād Frederic M. Denny
Gordon Newby Anīs Aḥmad
Earl H. Waugh Richard Martin
Lois Lamyā' al Fārūqī J.M. Pessagno
'Uthmān Llewellyn 'Aẓīm Nānjī
Rashīd Ḥāmid Jane I. Smith
John Sullivan Frank Gorman
Alford T. Welch Newell S. Booth
John L. Esposito Akbar Muḥammad
Muḥammad Ḥamdūn Fred R. von der Mehden
John A. Williams H.M. Federspiel
Muzzammil Ṣiddīqī Ilyās Bā-Yūnus
Harold Kasimow Victor Danner
Isma'īl R. al Fārūqī Wadī' Ḥaddād

Plus: Plenary Session
Presiding: I.R. al Fārūqī
Theme: "World Community of Islām in the West"
Speaker: Wallace D. Muḥammad, Chief Imām, World Community of Islām in the West

1979 (New York)

In cooperation with the Inter-Religious Peace Colloquium (The Muslim-Jewish-Christian Conference)
Status: AAR Program Unit: Islāmic Studies Group
Themes: "Trialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths"; "Sufism"; "Islāmic Thought"
Sessions: Five 3-hour sessions; one Plenary Session; one Luncheon
Presiding: Jane I. Smith; John L. Esposito; Harold Kasimow, J.M. Pessagno, Msgr. Joseph Gremillion
Speakers: Twenty-two, namely,
Michael Wyschogrod Victor Danner
Krister Stendahl Marilyn Waldman
Muḥammad 'Abd al Raūf Sayyid Ḥusayn Naṣr

Seymour Siegel	Howard Burkle
John Raines	Wilfred C. Smith
Isma'īl R. al Fārūqī	Frederic M. Denny
William Hickman	J.M. Pessagno
Howard M. Federspiel	'Aẓīm Nānjī
Tamar Frank	Henry Siegman
Dimitri Gutas	James Finn
Herbert Mason	Maḥmūd Awān

Plus: Plenary Session
Presiding: Isma'īl R. al Fārūqī
Theme: "Triologue of the Abrahamic Faiths"
Speaker: Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli, The Vatican
Plus: Luncheon in honor of Cardinal Pignedoli

1980 (Dallas)

Status: AAR Program Unit: Islāmic Studies Group
Theme: "The Fourteenth Centennial of Islām: Contributions Through the Centuries to the Moral, Intellectual and Beautiful Life"
Sessions: Two 3-hour sessions
Presiding: Frederic M. Denny; Jane I. Smith
Speakers: Thirteen, namely,

Yvonne Ḥaddād	J.M. Pessagno
'Alāuddīn Kharrūfah	Isma'īl R. al Fārūqī
Kristina Nelson	S. Ḥusayn Naṣr
Jafran Jones	Michel Mazzaoui
Anthony Welch	Mark Woodward
Khālīdah Salām	Noel Q. King
	Elizabeth Fernea

Plus: Exhibit of Islāmic Art comprising:
 400 mounted pictures of Islāmic art works in
 Architecture
 Ceramics
 Painting
 Calligraphy
 Metal, wood and cloth works
 300 art objects, comprising
 Textiles
 Jewelry
 Leather, ceramics and metal works
 Calligraphic Manuscripts and decorations

Carpets

3 films on Islāmic Art

(In cooperation with the Muslim Students' Association of the United States and Canada and the National Committee for the Fourteenth Centennial of Islām)

1981 (San Francisco)

Status: AAR Program Unit: Islāmic Studies Group

Themes: "Interaction between Islām and Christianity";
"Interaction between Islām and Judaism"

Sessions: Two 3-hour sessions

Presiding: Isma'īl R. al Fārūqī, Harold Kasimow

Speakers: Twelve, nameily,

J.M. Pessagno

S. Ḥusayn Naṣr

Richard B. Rose

Victor Danner

Aḥmad 'Isā

T. Patrick Burke

Helen Goldstein

William Brinner

Lois Lamyā' al Fārūqī

Norman Stillman

David Ariel

Norbert Samuelson