The Study Conference itself was preceded by a semi-official meeting of the Executive Board of the I.A.H.R. in the University of Strasbourg on September 17th 1964. Although this meeting could not take official measures, certain decisions had to be taken. First of all the I.A.H.R. had to replace the Honorary Treasurer, Dr. W. A. Rijk (Netherlands). During the gathering of the Executive Board Dr. Rijk received an official document, in which the Association's gratitude for his work during the last fifteen years was expressed. During the next meeting of the Executive Board Dr. H. J. van Lier (Netherlands) will be appointed to the treasurership. Secondly the Executive Board approved of Professor Bleeker's proposal to promote Dr. L. J. R. Ort (up to now Assistant to the Secretary General) to Deputy Secretary General of the I.A.H.R. in order to enable him to deal with certain questions on his own responsibility.

In the third place two new national groups were provisionally affiliated to the I.A.H.R.: the Austrian and the Finnish Association for the History of Religions. The representatives of these two groups will take their seats in the Executive Board during the next official meeting.

Moreover the Executive Board discussed the publications of the I.A.H.R., viz. NUMEN, supplements to NUMEN, and the Bibliography. Attention was paid to the future Congresses (particularly to the next Congress of the I.A.H.R. in Claremont, California, 1965) and to our relation to UNESCO.

Finally the Executive Board provisionally affiliated a non-national group, viz. the Anthropos-Institut, Switzerland.

The Study Conference was attended by 72 scholars. The intention of this Conference was formulated during the Marburg Congress in 1960: to enable European scholars to meet each other in Europe between 1960 and 1970, as the Congress in 1965 will most likely not be attended by many historians of religion from Europe. This meant that the Strasbourg Study Conference was more or less an experimental undertaking. The list of participants proved, however, that the experiment was going to be successful. Entries came from the following countries: Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and U.S.A.
Another most important characteristic of the Study Conference was the intention to reach a certain scientific level. In order to secure this level the Secretariat of the I.A.H.R. invited the scholars who were to read a paper during the Study Conference. As a result of this effort 28 lectures on the general theme “The Rites of Initiation” were delivered.

Here we should also touch upon the fruitful cooperation between the Secretariat in Amsterdam and the Strasbourg Organizing Committee. Especially the continuous activities of Professor Dr. M. Simon and his secretary, Mrs. Bockel, should be recorded. Thanks to these mutual efforts the Study Conference of the I.A.H.R. was successfully opened in the evening of September 17th 1964.

The Opening Ceremony took place in the Salle Pasteur of the University of Strasbourg. The participants were welcomed by Professor Simon, who also spoke on behalf of the Mayor of the City of Strasbourg, and of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Strasbourg. The President of the I.A.H.R., Professor Dr. G. Widengren, officially opened the Study Conference. He expressed his sincere wishes for the success of the Conference. Next Professor Bleeker was called upon to speak. His talk replaced the general lecture by Professor Dr. M. Eliade (U.S.A.), who was unfortunately prevented from coming by an unexpected illness. Professor Bleeker dealt with the general theme, about which he made a number of introductory remarks. He handled the subject in a phenomenological way, and also gave certain examples of rites of initiation. At the end of the Opening Ceremony Dr. Ort announced some alterations in the programme.

During the following reception the advantages of a rather limited number of participants became manifest. It was a very good opportunity to meet each other. Thus, from the very beginning contacts between the participants were very lively. Under these circumstances the scholars from sixteen countries were able to discuss their common points of interest.

On Friday September 18th the Conference met in two sections in the morning. Section I discussed three papers. Dr. M. Vereno (Austria) read his paper about “Einweihung und spirituelle Nachfolge”. Dr. M. Mehauden (Belgium) dealt with “Le secret central de l'initiation aux mystères d'Eleusis”. Dr. E. Mendelsohn (England) called attention to “Initiation and the paradox of power: a sociological interpretation”. This section was presided by Professor Dr. K. Kerényi (Switzerland). Section II also heard three lectures. Prof. Dr. S. G. F. Brandon (England) described “The time factor in Primitive Christian Baptism”. Dr. R. A. Barclay (England) attempted to answer the question “New Testament Baptism — an external or internal rite?”. Prof. Dr. L. E. Keck (U.S.A.) reviewed “Christian gnostic interpretations of John the Baptist”. Prof. Dr. M. Simon (France) was in the chair.