

cil on the Study of Religion. Therefore I am soliciting your opinions and advice on this matter.

Do you know of the existence of honoraries in Religious Studies either on local campuses or within CSR societies that I have overlooked? Should a *national* society be established? What sorts of goals and activities are absolutely

crucial for such a society? What suggestions can you offer for actually establishing such a society? Your response to these questions—especially the first two—will be determinative of further action on this matter. Please write directly to me in care of the Department of Religious Studies, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275.

THE SOCIETIES

CSR COUNCIL ON THE STUDY OF RELIGION

IMPRESSIONS FROM WINGSPREAD Religious Studies: The State of the Art

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On 16-18 February the Council on the Study of Religion and the Institute of Religious Studies, University of Santa Barbara, California, convened a conference on "New Directions in Religious Studies" at Wingspread, the Johnson Foundation Conference Center near Racine, WI. Walter Capps, President of the CSR, offers some reflections on the conference.

L. B.

It was a time of informal inventory taking. This in itself says something not only about the tenor of the meeting, but also about the larger expectations and awarenesses that were focused there.

Religious studies is no longer in its gestation period. This is not its time of beginnings, nor an era in which developmental strategy can find support from expansionist aspirations. The days of infancy are past. And, even if they were not, the academic climate is very different now from what it was a decade ago, or even five years ago. The days when "better" meant "more" and vitality translated into "full out" have passed from the educational scene.

So, it was inventory time. And the intention of the conference was to identify needs and expectations in light of these changed conditions. The format was designed to help make "the evolution of the discipline" (to use Stephen Toulmin's phrase) a bit more self-conscious. There was some hope that ways might be found to engage the future responsibly, less as reaction to exigency and circumstance and more through reasoned pacing, deliberate cooperation, and strategic integration.

The work of the conference was prefaced by an address by Harold Cannon, Director of the Research Division of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Dr. Cannon sketched some trends within the humanities, and described the disposition of the Endowment in its grant-making capacities. William Clebsch provided an intriguing context-setter, focusing on the Renaissance origins of the humanities with particular reference to its attitude toward the study of religion.

From here it was a matter of turning to the various subject areas, broadly conceived. Gene Tucker, Wayne

Meeks, and Richard Hecht provided accounts of the status of things in studies of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. John Carman and Ninian Smart talked about the accomplishments and aspirations of scholars working within the history of religions. Catherine Albanese, John Wilson, and Jonathan Smith addressed themselves to problems and opportunities in anthropological and historical studies. Bernard Cooke, Max Stackhouse, Mary Gerhart, and James Wiggins offered impressions of current strengths and weaknesses in such areas as philosophy of religion, ethics, religion and literature, and theology (all of which were combined under "Interpretive Studies"). Bernard Spilka, Donald Capps, William D'Antonio, and M. Gerald Bradford identified trends and obstacles in social and psychological studies. And Sam Gill (Native American), Carol Christ (Women's Studies), Jerome Long (Afro/American), and Robert Ellwood (New Religions) presented viewpoints on "new areas" within the academic study of religion. This was followed by summary statements by Jaroslav Pelikan, who also moderated the discussion, Jonathan Smith, Robert Michaelsen, and myself. All of this occurred in a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, with the gracious assistance and under the tutored eyes of the Johnson Foundation, Leslie Paffrath, Henry Halsted, Kay Mauer, and staff.

An official report will be presented to the Council after the data have been digested and analyzed. The substance of the official report will be made available to the constituent societies of CSR and their members.

Unofficially, an initial impression seems to be that religious studies is "alive and well." The reports gave repeated evidence of strong, ongoing intellectual industry. The subject field seems anything but stagnant. Those working within it seem to have more to do than they can do and, in many fields, appear to be clear about what they should or would like to be doing next. Such industry has not only kept the profession resilient, but has contributed—more than its proportionate share—to the vitality of the liberal arts programs of the colleges and universities in which it occurs.

At the same time, there is growing recognition that sustainable strength does not lie in possibilities for greater expansion. There is much industry and development, but G.N.P. is not the apt model to describe it. Instead, the field seems to be seeking a more sophisticated suppleness, a larger flexibility and pliability, and access to directions not laid out in advance. In the language of recent *Daedalus* articles on changes in patterns of scholarship, the motion seems to be away from "essences," beyond "fixed structures," now via "process" to a more *atomistic* orientation.

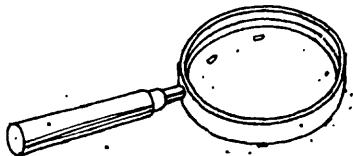
One gathers from this that religious studies, no longer in its infancy, has reached adolescence. It knows struggle, temptation, and that the future is formed rather than given. In trying to go on its own, with fewer built-in supports, it has also exhibited some waywardness. It is not yet what it could be, yet in reaching for it it has sometimes attempted to exceed its own capacities. It has fewer worlds left to discover than before, but a great many left to conquer.

Adolescence is evident too in the deliberate separations from "the fathers." The conference reports illustrated that religious studies has achieved some release from previous forms of ideological attachment and dependence. Many examples of departures and deviations from "the official ways" of doing things were offered. There is increased freedom from general theories. The authorities are neither inherited nor transmitted, but sought out, then adapted to other interests. And the general theories under most frequent discussion now seem to be imports, stemming largely from the work of such anthropologists as Douglas, Turner, and Geertz. Certainly, the concern for *veritas* remains, and in some senses is heightened, but in a gentler ideological form. Many of the moves now are ad hoc and idiosyncratic: the pathway from "fixed structures" through "process" to atomism has produced a protean style.

There are large problems, to be sure. The humanities and the social sciences, for example, are not all together in the scholarly study of religion. Persistent questions remain regarding the relation of theology to religious studies, and this continues to place confusions and obstacles in the pathway of further development. Furthermore, the advocates of the "new areas" know that the transformative powers of their disciplines are both great and threatening, making admission to full sanctionability problematic.

But the largest problems seem to be coming more from the environment than from within. We cite the present climate of the university, the "public perception" of higher education, the vocational crisis within the humanities, the need to distinguish the foci of undergraduate and graduate programs of study, the policies of funding agencies, and the sheer absence of a growth potential for enterprises dependent upon an expanding economy.

The participants in the conference were chastened by awarenesses of these sorts, yet retreated a bit from direct response. After all, this was a "needs inventory." Its content was formed by interior perception: those within the field held a mirror up to themselves. The other situation must be addressed in due time; there is no way that it can be avoided. Yet, for two days, it seemed preferable to inquire as to how the field might be strengthened from within, becoming more self-conscious regarding the resilience within itself. The hope is that this is at least one of the important ways to address the enormous challenges that lie ahead.



1977 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

The minutes of the annual business meeting will be printed in a later issue of the *Bulletin*, but certain items arising from the meeting should be called to the attention of the membership.

1. *New Officers*: The following officers were elected by mail ballot: John Meagher, *President*; Langdon Gilkey, *President-Elect*; William Clebsch, *Vice-President*; Nancy Falk, *Associate Director*.

The following were elected by the Executive Committee as delegates to the Council on the Study of Religion: Schubert Ogden (one year term); Albert Raboteau (two year term).

Charles Winquist of Chico State University was appointed Executive Director-Designate effective 1 September 1978 and will be nominated for the office of Treasurer in the 1978 election. The term of the present Executive Director ends at the 1978 Annual Meeting.

2. At the business meeting the following resolution was adopted:

Be it resolved that beginning with the 1979 Annual Meeting the American Academy of Religion not hold its Annual Meeting in any state that has not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment.

The Society of Biblical Literature adopted a similar resolution. The business meeting further instructed the Executive Committee to take certain actions with respect to the 1978 meeting in New Orleans. Among these was a request that there be a plenary session devoted to the legal, ethical and religious dimensions of the Equal Rights Amendment. Plans are being made for such a session. Also there was a request for a roommate-pool service at the New Orleans meeting so that members may reduce expenses. Implementation of this request is being studied. Finally, there was a request that AAR and SBL members be informed of how individuals may contribute to the NOW Economic Boycott Campaign. Such information may be obtained by writing to the National Organization for Women, Suite 1048, 425 Thirteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20004.

3. As most of you are aware by now, having received notices for 1978 annual dues, a change was made in the dues structure. This was necessary simply to maintain the present programs of the Academy. The graduated structure was an attempt not to price lower paid members out of the organization altogether. I stress that no record of income level will be made available in any way.

John Priest
Executive Director

ASCH

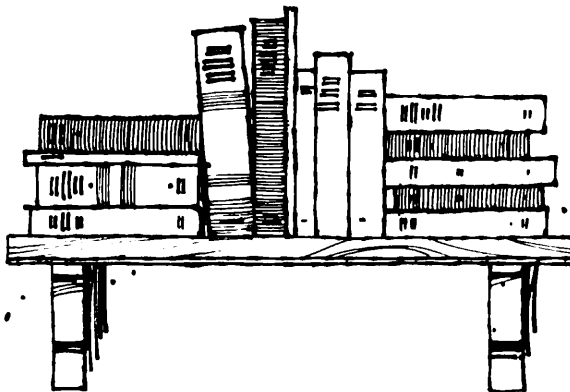
AMERICAN SOCIETY
OF CHURCH HISTORY

1979 BREWER PRIZE CONTEST

The American Society of Church History announces that its next Brewer Prize competition for a book-length manu-

CALENDAR

- 1981
- 4-7 June CTS Annual Meeting
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA
- 10-13 June CTSA Annual Meeting
Netherland Hilton Hotel, Cincinnati, OH
- 19-21 June ASM Annual Meeting
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, TX
- 22-26 June ATLA Annual Meeting
Christ Seminary—Seminech, St. Louis, MO
- 25 July-
1 August IRAS Annual Meeting
Star Island, Portsmouth, NH
- 22-25 August Catholic Biblical Association
Seattle University, Seattle, WA
- 31 August-
10 September Institute for Ecumenical Research
Strasbourg, France
- 25 September CTS/New Orleans Region
Notre Dame Seminary
New Orleans, LA
- 3 October CTS/New York-New Jersey Region
Staten Island Campus
St. John's University
- 3 October Council on the Study of Religion
Annual Meeting
Sheraton-O'Hare Hotel, Chicago, IL
- 28-30 October 16th Century Studies Conference
University of Iowa
Iowa City, IA
- 19-22 December AAR/SBL Annual Meeting
San Francisco Hilton, San Francisco, CA
- 1982
- 15-17 January SCE Annual Meeting
4-H Center, Washington, DC
- 12-13 March AAR/SBL/ASSR/ASOR/Southwestern Region
Executive Inn
Dallas, TX
- 18-20 March AAR/SBL/Southeastern Region
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL
- 25-27 March AAR/Western Region
Stanford University
- 2-3 April AAR/Midwest Region
Rockford College
Rockford, IL



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