

# bulletin

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## FIRST IMPRESSIONS —AND SECOND THOUGHTS

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I admit that I did not quite know what I would be getting into when Bill Clebsch telephoned, asking me to lead a project on "professional development" under the sponsorship of the CSR. Bill is an old friend and, what is worse, a fellow Californian. Besides, he possesses persuasive and winning ways. I found the project intriguing and myself vulnerable. After due deliberation I accepted.

That was about a year and a half ago. I know a little more now.

The opportunity to succeed Norman Wagner as chief executive officer of the CSR came in due process, primarily, I believe, because those guiding the work of the Council placed professional development as their primary long-range objective. I succumbed to this invitation too, though not without considerable resistance and reservation. My colleagues know that I have never been much of a professional-society person. I have even wondered about their overall worth.

I mention these factors to assure the reader that I accepted the position partly out of a sense of curiosity. Mostly that, I believe. I do not think that I have empire-building pretensions. And, if I did, this would not be the way to exercise them. However, neither is my attitude one of condescension. I believe the work of the CSR to be important. I find its accomplishments to be very impressive, particularly given the short period of time it has been in existence. I am

honored by the confidence my colleagues have placed in me. And I have pledged to do what I can, in cooperation with a long list of loyal and talented co-workers throughout North America, to further these efforts.

I have come into the situation with an open mind, I trust. My involvement in the work of professional societies has been neither long nor extensive. I served for a full term on the Research and Publication Committee of the American Academy of Religion, and for a number of years I kept close track of the work of the Council of Graduate Studies in Religion (which is not a member society of the CSR). Also, I am familiar with the history of some of the member organizations, and I have read many of the relevant documents pertaining to the founding of the Council. The establishment of the CSR—almost ten years ago—made eminent sense to me then, as it does now. It seems appropriate to have an "umbrella agency" within the field of religious studies, if only to register and sort out interests and problems common to the established professional societies. Such a forum, it seems, should be of assistance in furthering such common interests and resolving and/or clarifying mutual problems. And, from time to time, on specific occasions, when the situation warrants, the constituent societies should be able to present a united front. For such purposes was the Council founded, all of it in recognition of the fragile and embryonic character of the subject-field most of us call "religious studies."

At the same time, I have never felt that the professional societies are the most important constitutive units within the field of religious studies. I have tended instead to regard the departments this way, my assumption being that it is through programs of studies in the colleges, universities, and professional schools that creativity and expanding self-consciousness are nurtured. By contrast, professional societies seem primarily to provide occasions for collegial contact and cooperation, whether formal, through seminars and reading of papers, or informal. But their work is of a different order from the efforts that are expended within the library and classroom. By "library and classroom" I refer to the normative context of learning, including such components as curricular design, research, experimentation, writing, and the reciprocal relationships that are conceived (and sometimes effected) between religious studies teachers and scholars and their counterparts within related areas in the humanities and social sciences. Again, the contrast does not diminish the work of the professional societies. It should not downgrade their manifest contributions to the formation of

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the discipline. It is simply to indicate that, in my view, departments and programs own a primary place of which the professional societies must be supportive. It is within this primary context that the subject-field is given definition and future.

Perhaps the analogy is to political party work, and to the difference between politics and statesmanship. Professional societies, like political parties, cannot and do not exist for themselves. To be sure, many statespersons are politicians, and almost all statespersons are members and supporters of a political party. Similarly, most scholars in religious studies belong to at least one professional society, and some to many (even though most have a favorite). But in all of our minds there is a clear understanding of the difference between the two. To contrast statesmanship and politics is neither to diminish nor to subordinate either one. Both have a place, but the places are distinctive. Each can be supportive of the other.

Significantly, the Council, existing at the behest of its constituent societies, is auxiliary in a compound way. I mention all of this simply to show that my initial reflections on the subject have involved a search for analogs. I have engaged in this search to avoid misrepresentations, to set expectations realistically. I suspect that I have cited an analog that pertains only in theory or construct and that there is a truer analog, a working functional equivalent. I refer to the example of the National Council of Churches, transformed, of course, by the context within which the CSR functions. I would not be anxious about this, necessarily, were it not for the fact that the analog is prompted by an awareness that the CSR came into being within a somewhat delicate atmosphere. From one side, the Council has no true life apart from that secured for it by its members. On the other side, it owns the capacity to become something of its own. Both situations pertain simultaneously. Thus, there is a perpetual possibility of discrepancy between the CSR's self-definition and the definitions attributed to it by its constituent societies. Thus, it will be our task to keep the balance, to avoid the paralyses which follow from the exercise of divisive, sectarian interests.

My disposition is to cultivate those projects which belong uniquely to the CSR. In addition to the services requested of the CSR by its constituent societies, such projects are those which represent religious studies in comprehensive terms. This is not to suggest that the CSR owns a unique right to all ventures of this sort. It is rather to enunciate a policy that the CSR will give lower priority to the more particular "special-interest" projects. Such policy ought to leave ample room for everyone. My personal pledge is that the CSR will not intrude (unless invited) into areas in which others have taken the initiative. My request is that others will allow the CSR sufficient freedom to pursue such goals as have been attributed and assigned to it by those who requested its establishment and on occasion invite its assistance.

Given the nature of the Council, together with the charter devised for it by its constituent professional societies, certain fundamental objectives are both unique and appropriate:

(1) Since religious studies is a new subject of academic interest, its future must be stabilized. The CSR ought to be able to play a significant role in this respect. It can identify and approach issues of large or significant common concern. It can call attention to areas of need and significant lacunae. It can strengthen the establishment of an academic field still emerging.

(2) There are occasions when the profession should present, as it were, a united front. There are times when responses ought to be formulated in court situations regarding the legality of the academic study of religion in state- and federal supported education. I refer also to the need to engage in research projects from the vantage point of the discipline as a whole, and not simply as a single institution or from within the interests of an individual scholar. The CSR ought to be able to provide significant leadership in this regard, though without ever signifying that it possesses an exclusive right or responsibility.

(3) There are interrelationships to be worked out with professional societies in religious studies in other countries, with professional societies in other subjects and fields in North America, and with learned societies in the social sciences and the humanities on this continent and abroad. Such relationships should be of increasing assistance both to the field and to the profession as they find their future. The Council ought to be in a position to act on behalf of its constituent societies to further these interrelationships, for purposes of mutual benefit.

In all of these areas, the Council can provide encouragement, leadership, and, I trust, effective instrumentation.

In support of these objectives, there are several ventures I request the Council to initiate immediately:

(1) We are seeking someone from within the profession to monitor federal legislation which might affect religious studies. We are particularly interested in issues pertaining to the legality of what we do. But we want to include legislation affecting scholarship and fellowship opportunities, opportunities for grants-in-aid, and any other policy decisions that might be of significance to the future of the discipline and the profession.

(2) In future issues of the *Bulletin* we intend to "show-case" selected departments or programs of study. We think it would be instructive for persons within the profession to become aware of the uniquenesses of certain programs and to become acquainted with their histories. Our preliminary inquiries indicate that there is more innovation, variety, and idiosyncrasy involved in the establishment of these programs than one would suspect. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the distinctive curricular models exhibit a certain typology. It will be interesting to watch for variables. I am intrigued by the possibility of cross-fertilization.

(3) Under interests of professional development, we will be asking certain leaders or distinguished scholars within the field to identify the significant directions in which religious studies is moving. Such descriptions will include interpretations of current and future needs. We want these interpretative descriptions to apply to religious studies as a whole, as well as to certain sub-fields and disciplines within the field.

These are starters. Such starter-ventures should create their own momentum and will doubtless stimulate addi-

tional projects of like-minded nature. One of the earliest products may be a gradual transformation of the *CSR Bulletin* into a periodical displaying some of the features of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, oriented, of course, to the interests of religious studies. Undergirding such ventures is our not unfounded hope that a large research project—on “research needs within religious studies”—will be supported by an extra-mural funding agency. The goal throughout is to give guidance and lend resourcefulness to religious studies in realizing its proper future.

The projects already underway will be continued and supported. These include publication of the *Bulletin*, *TOIL*, and *Religious Studies Review*. All three of these publications respond to obvious needs and have been received with gratitude and enthusiasm by the constituency. In addition, the various sub-committees of the Council have been at

work on appropriate related projects. Some of these are almost ready to be announced. Others remain in the planning stage. And, most significantly, the valuable services provided by the CSR office at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, will be continued without interruption, under the able direction of Harold Remus.

All of this is largely volunteer work. Because this is its nature, I request your help both in suggesting what the CSR ought to be doing and in volunteering your own talents and training. Please write to me, to Douglas Sturm, the CSR Chairman, to Harold Remus, or to any member of the Executive Committee. We want to be responsive to expressed need.

The work of the Council is corporate and cooperative through and through. My primary goal is to amplify the corporate reality through all that the Council undertakes.

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## THE SOCIETIES

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### AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

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#### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

St. Louis, Missouri, 30 October 1976

President Preston Williams called the meeting to order at 5:10 P.M.

It was moved, seconded, and passed that the minutes of the 1975 Annual Business Meeting of the AAR be approved.

##### A. Council on the Study of Religion

Wayne Meeks reported on behalf of himself and Margaret Farley, AAR delegates to the Council on the Study of Religion (CSR).

It was moved, seconded, and passed that the CSR report be received.

Preston Williams reported the decision of the Executive Committee (Exec Comm) that Margaret Farley's term as CSR delegate be extended one year. Two new CSR delegates will be elected next year. The Exec Comm will propose a bylaw change to effect such an election. The Executive Director (Exec Dir) will provide continuity from the present delegation to the next.

##### B. Committee on Research and Publications

John Priest, speaking on behalf of Giles Gunn who was ill, called attention to several matters in the Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Research and Publications (R & P). Clarification of cost accounting procedures and bylaw changes with regard to R & P membership are aimed at reducing the financial difficulties of the publication program.

John Pemberton will serve in place of Jane Dempsey Douglas as chairperson of the subcommittee to review the Studies in Religion monograph series.

Funding for the Religion and the Arts series has been deleted for the fiscal year 1976-77, and all other series have been put on hold for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The report of the editor of the *JAAR* was available for

distribution. There were no questions regarding the change in *JAAR* format.

It was moved, seconded, and passed that the R & P Report be received.

##### C. Program Committee

John Priest reported that the Program Committee would meet 31 October and again in early December. He called for suggestions regarding the multiplication, overlap, and confusion among program units at the Annual Meeting (AM). In the discussion that followed small groups were affirmed and mistakes in the printed program of the AM were noted.

##### D. Executive Director's Report

At the invitation of the Exec Dir the following comments were made from the floor: more interview room space is needed at the AM; program unit chairpersons should check with one another to avoid overlap; despite program unit autonomy, Section chairpersons should coordinate efforts to avoid overlap; efforts by the Exec Dir to halt financial erosion in the AAR are to be commended.

The Exec Dir reported that the Exec Comm had effected a change in responsibilities for planning the 1977 AM.

##### E. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer (Treas) explained the shortfall in dues in terms of a late second billing, pointed out that the publications budget is the heart of the financial problem, and commented on the meaning of “net worth.”

In the discussion that followed the Treas explained that this year's exceptions to the Exec Comm's decision to discontinue the practice of preprinted papers for the AM were based on commitments made prior to that decision. There was general agreement that dues should not be raised this year, but efforts should be made to collect AM registration fees from all persons who attend the meetings. It was also stated that persons who read papers at the AM should be members of the AAR. In discussing publication expenses at Scholars Press (SP) it was pointed out that of the 58 SP titles 17 have been under the auspices of the AAR, that SP makes no warehousing charge, and that book sales to libraries are to be encouraged.

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# EDITORIAL

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**I**N THIS ISSUE Walter Capps, the new president of the CSR, gives us a glimpse of some of the forces at work in the CSR and spells out in modest fashion the fundamental objectives he envisages for the Council. His enthusiasm and curiosity are contagious and have led me to share a few first impressions as editor of the *Bulletin*.

The work that goes on at the Executive Office in Waterloo piques the curiosity in much the same way as do those technicians in the crime laboratories on many TV programs who transform the least piece of evidence into a formidable array of statistics and neatly detailed reports. We take their work and end-product for granted, without knowing the problems encountered behind the scenes.

In spite of the bustle of activity at the office in Waterloo (it handles quite a variety of tasks), the production of the *Bulletin* generally manages to run smoothly. Much of the work is beyond the call of duty, done during late hours, and without extra reimbursement. Those who work in Waterloo are selflessly dedicated to bringing out the *Bulletin*, trying to meet deadlines, coordinating efforts of the various persons involved in editing, production of type and ads, and supplying of mailing lists—to say nothing of coping with last-minute additions and changes.

## bulletin

of the Council on the Study of Religion is published in February, April, June, October, and December by the Council on the Study of Religion. Publisher's headquarters are located at the CSR Executive Office, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5. Office of publication is located at the Catholic Biblical Association, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Annual subscription, \$4.00. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing office. Complete sets of back issues are available from the CSR Executive Office (ISSN 0002-7170).

Leonard J. Biallas, Editor

Material for inclusion and all manuscripts should be submitted to the editor at Quincy College, Quincy, IL 62301 (217-224-4139). All correspondence concerning subscriptions and address changes should be sent directly to **CSR Executive Office, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5**. The Council on the Study of Religion is a federation of learned societies in religion interested in developing greater coordination of the field as a whole. It seeks to initiate, coordinate and implement projects designed to strengthen and advance scholarship and teaching.

The constituent members of the CSR are:

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION  
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS  
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CHURCH HISTORY  
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MISSIOLOGY  
AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS AND RESEARCHERS  
IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION  
CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
COLLEGE THEOLOGY SOCIETY  
SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE  
SOCIETY FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

They (and the editor) have to be particularly proficient at stick-handling around the problems caused by the mail system. Tight purse-strings require that the *Bulletin* move through the mails as inexpensively and yet as expeditiously as possible. Even allowing for a necessary delay of several weeks at the printer, each issue of the *Bulletin* (13,500 copies) has generally managed to arrive on the desks of members of the constituent societies of the Council less than two months after the deadline for news copy. With the editor now located about one week's mail away from the CSR Office, however, it may be necessary to advance the deadlines for submission of copy. In the meantime, cooperation in meeting the present deadlines is of great help to everyone.

The problems of deadlines and the postal system do affect the content of the *Bulletin* to some extent. The content of the articles and reports has to be geared to this two-month time lapse. Accordingly, the imperative in the *Bulletin* is not haste, but communication—communication of events, breakthroughs, and ongoing developments that do not wither overnight. The information presented has to be central, not marginal, in order to offset the problems imposed by the time lapse.

Of the many implications involved here, I would mention just one. In attempting to foster as much cross-fertilization as possible between the various areas of religious studies, the *Bulletin* publishes the programs and titles of papers of as many of the regional sections of the constituent societies as possible. Some of these titles appear in print before the papers are presented, others after. Hopefully the substantive value of these papers is sufficient to make it worth the readers' while to write the authors for copies—as many of you have done in the past—long after the paper has been given. In this instance the *Bulletin* serves as a catalyst, enabling various members from disparate subfields to communicate with one another and providing an awareness of the developments in the discipline of religious studies as a whole. At the same time it goes without saying that common courtesy demands that each person send along at least the postage, if not the envelope, in mutual requests for papers. It would be a pity if this kind of cross-fertilization were stifled for lack of a few stamps, which is to say it's not a problem that can't be licked.

Leonard J. Biallas

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The deadlines for submitting copy for the *Bulletin* are as follows:

February issue	December 20
April issue	February 20
June issue	April 20
October issue	August 20
December issue	October 20

Deadlines for copy for *TOIL* are the first day of the month in which the issue is published: February, April, July, October, December.

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