

Each of the five papers featured in this issue were presented to the Critical Theory and Biblical Interpretation Section at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Singapore last summer. The contributors hail from Australia, South Africa, Norway, and the United States. The papers represent explorations into the implications and consequences of recent theoretical and methodological shifts in the field of biblical studies.

Anne Elvey's paper situates itself at the intersection between ecotheology and Kristeva's conceptualization of intertextuality in order to consider the materiality of the biblical text and its relationship to the earth as the "material ground" of the text. Queer theory meets postcolonial studies in Jeremy Punt's investigation of some ways in which the two theories relate to one another in their destabilization of certain configurations of identity and subjectivity, which in turn leads to a number of interesting possibilities for fresh readings of the biblical text vis-à-vis things like gender and sexuality. Jeremy Barrier, a graduate student at Brite Divinity School, uses postcolonial theory to analyze Paul's use of *stigmata* and the rhetoric of slavery as the framework for his own self-identity in his letter to the Galatians. As with all of the papers in this issue, Barrier's interest has less to do with understanding Paul, Galatians, or the backdrop of the Roman Empire than with a critical consideration of the methodology itself, particularly how best to define postcolonial biblical criticism. On the topic of definition, scholars who specialize in the gospels

know that issues of genre have been a matter of endless debate. Geoff Webb is one of very few biblical critics addressing the genre of Mark's gospel through the theoretical lens of Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin. Webb's comparisons between the Gospel of Mark, ancient novelistic literature, and menippean satire, along with his use of Bakhtin concept of "genre-memory," provide a potentially quite fruitful way to think critically about the issue of genre without reducing it to mere mimesis. Finally, the conversation moves beyond the customary boundaries of biblical studies and into the area of Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Kari Storstein Haug evaluates the reflections of the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, whose "two-languages" hermeneutic attempted to read both Buddhist scriptures and the sacred texts of other religions (including the Bible) in order to articulate points of convergence.

I invite interested readers to submit proposals of four to six papers that together engage a particular topic from different angles, or that reflect diverse engagements with contemporary developments in a specific area of the field. Conference presentations are especially ideal, due in large part to their length and the manner in which they have been crafted for public lecture.

As I think about future issues, a number of other topics have come to mind that I would like to see discussed in the *bulletin* if there are those of you out there who might be inclined to write about them. First, I would like to hear about departments that are either growing, collapsing (or have already done so), or that are experiencing some other sort of fundamental change to their structure (e.g., moving from a minor to a major, adding a concentration or a graduate program, recovering from a failed coup-de-tat that left the department dived into north and south campus alliances, etc.). Specifically, I would like to hear your thoughts on what it is about the field of Religious Studies itself, and about current aspects of the world around us, that has led to these changes within the walls of your particular institution.

Second, I would like to hear from graduate students (or from individuals who have recently taken their degree) in the study of religion: what is your *professional* take on the field from where you currently sit? Is the discipline ripe for change? Are we on the verge of big things? Or are you desperately wondering how to creatively translate your degree in Religious Studies into a set of marketable skills suitable to the middle management fast track at the local rotisserie chicken joint? In addition to learning about "religion" and "religions," we have all spent a good deal of time learning about the history of the field and the mechanics of our discipline. If there is one thing that should have become clear by now, it is that the debates over what we study and how we should go about studying it are far from settled. What, in your judgment, accounts for this predicament? What will (or should) the field look like a decade from now when you are directing your advisees?

Third, in speaking with a number of graduate students who read the *bulletin*, it has come to my attention that they would benefit from more articles offering very practical advice on

bulletin

of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion (USPS 841720) is published in February, April, September, and November by the Council on the Study of Religion, Inc. Publisher's headquarters and office of publication are located at the CSSR Executive Office, Rice University, P.O. Box 1892, MS-156, Houston, TX 77251-1892 (Phone 713-348-5721; Fax 713-348-5725; e-mail cssr@rice.edu). Annual subscriptions, Individual US \$30.00; Institutions US \$80.00; Student/Retired US \$20.00. Back issues, \$10.00 per copy. Copyright © 2006 CSSR. ISSN 1060-1635.

Scott Elliott, Editor
J. E. Llewellyn, Associate Editor
Elias Bongmba, Managing Editor

All future announcements and manuscripts should be submitted to Scott Elliott, Drew University, P.O. Box 802, CM 1934, Madison, NJ 07940. Copy regarding CSSR constituent societies must be submitted by or with the approval of the person(s) authorized by the society concerned. All correspondence regarding subscriptions, address changes, and advertising should be sent to the CSSR Executive Office at the above address.

The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion is a federation of learned societies in religion interested in enhancing coordination of the field as a whole; it seeks to initiate, coordinate, and implement projects to strengthen and advance scholarship and teaching and to support the activities of constituent societies and of their executive offices and officers.

Deadlines for submitting copy for the *bulletin* are as follows:

February issue—December 1
April issue—February 1
September issue—July 1
November issue—September 1

how to get through graduate school, land a meaningful job, and succeed in the field. Do you have any advice you would like to share with hungry young minds? Is there anything you would have done differently if you had known better? What tips would you offer for getting through comprehensive exams, working as a teaching assistant, completing the dissertation, presenting conference papers, getting published, crafting a CV, performing well at a job interview, designing a syllabus,

or balancing the demands of home and career? Reed M. N. Weep has taken the first step. In this issue, he offers us some wise counsel on the simple task of grading papers. Although, I am sure it goes without saying that his recommendations fit best under the category of what *not* to do.

Scott S. Elliott
Editor