

The votes are in. There were approximately 1500 ballots cast. However, once it was discovered that Professor Weep himself had been stuffing the ballot box with the unregistered names of deceased scholars of religion, we were forced to recount. In the end, there were only six responses. However, they were all favorable. So, Weep stays. Following is a selection of what we heard.

The Senior Editor of a major publisher (responsible for approximately 98.3 percent of all books published in our field, according to my very rough calculations) writes: "God knows we need humor in religion and theology. He himself has a marvelous sense of humor, as evidenced in the Bible." (No doubt Professor Weep will be surprised to hear his name referenced alongside the Bible, but perhaps this particular reader had in mind other canonized characters like the prophet Elisha who made a bear eat those kids who made fun of his baldness, or that guy in Acts who fell asleep listening to Paul preach and tumbled out a window.) The reader goes on to say, "Often, the opening editorial and Reed M. N. Weep are the only things I read, and I find them delightful (for the most part)," later admitting, "OK, sometimes there is a bit of satire and he gets carried away, but I can live with that." I should note that this letter came with a strict "Confidentiality notice" appended to the footer, so I may have taken the quotes out of order and slightly fudged the publishing figures so as not to put the CSSR at risk of non-compliance.

A number of readers confessed that Weep's column is the

first thing they read when the issue arrives. One referred to Weep's column as "the one article I look forward to in every issue and the one I often pass around to my colleagues who do not receive the CSSR Bulletin." Another lamented that "without [Weep's column] the academic study of religion would be such a hard, cold place." Another, who identifies himself as a long-time retiree, writes "it is often the only writing which I still understand." Yet another boldly confessed, Weep "is the reason [I] open the mailbox."

Finally, one reader wrote, "Thank you, dear editor, for your solicitation of our opinions. You will, I suspect, find an appropriate reward when comes the Parousia." I wonder what he meant by "appropriate." In any event, thank you all who wrote in, especially for allowing me to pillage your emails without giving you proper credit. By the way, you do all realize that I'm not Professor Weep, right? Really, I'm not.

Meanwhile, I would like to extend a special note of thanks to *bulletin* Associate Editor, J. E. Llewellyn, who is responsible for rounding up five of the seven articles that appear in this issue. The essays by Julius Bailey, Yvonne Chireau, and Stephen Finley were presented to the Afro-American Religious History Group at the annual meeting in Philadelphia. The theme of the section was "Unmasking the Body with Passion and without Fear." Bailey's piece explores early Methodist histories in order to investigate the rhetoric of masculinity in relation to ministerial formation. Chireau draws on African American oral histories and folklore writings that describe illness as bodily invasion to analyze the relationship of religion to sickness as a cultural construct. Finley's essay attempts to figure out why it is that Black churches have so few men in their congregations, arguing that it has much to do with the physical characteristics assigned to God and the Church. The papers by John Wilson and John Schmalzbauer were presented on separate occasions at Missouri State University, where Professor Llewellyn teaches. While Wilson's essay focuses on but one Religious Studies program/department at one state university, it likely reflects the history of many schools, departments, and programs scattered throughout the US and represented by readers of the *bulletin*. The question is whether or to what extent it continues to reflect the *current* state of the field. Schmalzbauer's essay begins with the curious fact that the same department just described by Professor Wilson is also the first anywhere to establish an endowed chair in Protestant Studies. He then takes a long hard look at the newly published *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* in an effort to define both "Protestantism" and "Post-Protestantism," and to make a case for why a better understanding of Protestantism is important for the academic study of religion in the US. Finally, Bryan Rennie's article, which leads off this issue, seeks to revive questions about Iranian influences on Judaism and earliest Christianity, and to show that the inherent difficulties of the problem do not adequately account for its neglect by scholars of religion.

Scott S. Elliott
Editor

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 © 2007 CSSR. ISSN 1060-1635.

Scott Elliott, Editor
Rick Bohannon, Associate Editor
J. E. Llewellyn, Associate Editor
Craig Martin, Associate Editor
Kirstin Munk, Associate Editor
Elias Bongmba, Managing Editor
Mary Ann Clark, Office Coordinator

All future announcements and manuscripts should be submitted to Scott Elliott, 1525 Bryn Mawr Dr., Dayton, OH 45406. 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.