



WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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A FELLOWSHIP OF WESLEYAN HOLINESS SCHOLARS  
ESTABLISHED IN 1965

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From: George Lyons  
Date: April 8, 1993  
Re: Agenda Items for WTS Executive Committee Meeting 4/20/93

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My major responsibility as First Vice President is to plan the program for our annual meeting in November. Attached to this memo is a list of the individuals who have proposed papers (arranged in alphabetical order), their academic credentials, current assignment, a brief summary of their proposal, and an occasional personal evaluation. In those instances in which individuals proposed more than one topic I have included both and noted their preferences, if they expressed one.

Please, be prepared to offer your input as to how I should proceed from here. Do you know anything about these individuals that I may not? Are there some individuals or topics that we would do well to avoid? Are there other potential presenters or topics that we should pursue? Do you have any suggestions for potential moderators?

There are several innovations I would like to try at this year's meeting. I am willing to risk failure, if you are. These ideas may not work. But I think they are worth trying. What do you think?

1. I would like to commit two to three hours of meeting time (a morning or afternoon) to concurrent sessions. We could have several interest areas (say, Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical), each with papers being presented simultaneously (as at AAR and SBL). If we had four locations with three twenty-five-minute papers presented in each location at forty-five or sixty minute intervals, we could have as many as twelve papers delivered and discussed within the space of two and one-half or three hours. By having set times, people with diverse interests could choose from the cafeteria of possible papers. There are at least two advantages to be gained from this approach.

First, we would broaden our base of participation and interest considerably. More people may attend the conference for both

reasons. Some institutions pay conference expenses only for those whose names appear on the program. Simultaneous sessions would allow us to double the usual number of participants. A greater number of topics may attract a more diverse audience to hear the papers. This may help compensate for the loss of the draw names like Thomas Oden or John Howard Yoder as keynote speakers provided us, but at a reduced cost to us. Second, it would be possible in the interest areas to present papers that are less general and presume a specialist's knowledge, which might be too esoteric for a plenary session. You will note that four of the proposals deal with recent "theologians of hope" -- Moltmann and Pannenberg, which would make for a natural grouping.

We could begin with this experiment modestly, by having only two or three locations or only two papers in each interest area. With the number of proposals we have this year -- sixteen to date, with two more promised, I think we can pull it off. Some of the papers might not be as strong as others, but this happens even when we have only plenary sessions. Frankly, I am disappointed that there are so few proposals dealing with the biblical material, but this is probably due to the small place we usually give to such papers. If you would give me permission to do so, I think I could do some arm twisting to get some biblical colleagues to come up with appropriate proposals to make up for the current lack. Only one of the present proposals has an explicitly practical / pastoral focus, but we might also be able to overcome that.

2. I will ask all presenters to have copies of their papers (in print and on floppy disk) in my hands by (say) October 15. On the meeting announcement form, I could ask those who plan to attend to indicate their interest in purchasing copies of papers to be picked up at the meeting (or we could take another route; see my suggestion later in this memo). Some will want to buy copies to help them decide which session to attend; others, to find out what happened in a session they could not attend; still, others to have an immediate record of the meeting without the years' delay involved in the publication process. We could also offer copies to those who cannot attend. We should set the figure at an amount that would adequately cover the cost of duplication, unsold copies, postage, and return some profit to the WTS.

This innovation would allow us to solve several longstanding problems. First, practically speaking, it would save us from further embarrassment about our publication schedule. A preliminary version of all papers would be available immediately. Second, it would allow us to be more selective in the papers we do eventually publish. Third, it would help overcome the problems endemic in oral presentations, since printed versions of every paper would be available at the meeting.

Beyond my concerns related to planning our November meeting I would like to raise several issues related to the health and well-being of the Society. I am not ready to make these in the form of resolutions, although I may do so in the course of our conference-call April 20. This brief discussion will help you know where I am coming from.

1. The secretarial services provided us by the CHA Office Manager (at a cost of about fifteen percent of our annual income) have been totally inadequate. Allow me to cite two examples. My membership letter requesting desperately needed dues, dated February 1993, did not arrive here until April 6. The second call for papers, duplicated and sent to the CHA office early in February complete with pre-printed labels, did not arrive in the hands of the addressees until April 6 or later. The deadline I had set on the call for responses was March 31. Four people have called since asking if they could still submit a proposal. This is no way to manage an office.

My secretary could have prepared the call for papers in a single afternoon. In fact she did duplicate the call, attach labels, and stuff all the envelopes I had on the same day I gave her the copy. And I share her services with eight other professors. I could have mailed the two-hundred copies on February 6, with the only additional expense to the WTS being the difference between the bulk rate and first class postage.

We should immediately drop our arrangement with the CHA for secretarial services. It would be much less expensive and a lot more efficient to have the officers make use of the services provided by their institutions, get reimbursed by the treasurer for postage and printing expenses, and give a token honorarium to each secretary involved each year. Because the offices are rotated among various institutions it would never be a long-term burden to any school or secretary. The officers would then assume personal responsibility for the timely fulfillment of their responsibilities; I do not like being embarrassed by the ineptness or inattention to time constraints of a secretary thousands of miles away. If my secretary here gets rushed for time and cannot do a task I assign her, I simply do it myself. It is impossible to make this adjustment given the present arrangement with a secretary in Wilmore. Don will be even farther away next year.

2. This is not intended as a reflection on the quality of our journals edited by Paul. They have been nothing short of first rate. But we must stop talking about catching up on the publication of our journal and do it now. If that means arranging for an interim, acting editor, so be it. In the interests of the Society we must catch up to within no more than one year of the date of the meeting whose papers the journal contains.

There is **no good excuse** for not doing so other than budget constraints (see my third concern). If authors request more time to revise their papers, the editor must say No, if

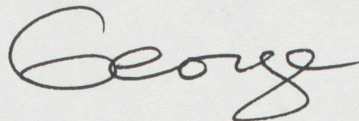
this courtesy would put us behind schedule. If the personal affairs of the editor prevent him from fulfilling his constitutionally mandated responsibilities, he ought to offer his resignation and allow the Executive Committee to make alternate arrangements. If the papers are not ready for publication when they reach the editor, they should not be published. We may need to institute a style sheet and refereeing process for all papers and expect their authors to assume full responsibility for bringing their papers into proper form and assuring that sources, page numbers, etc. are correct. The editor does not have time to redo sloppy work. If a spot check shows that a paper is obviously not in perfect form, it should be returned to the author and not published unless and until it is. We must be able to tell our members that any delays in publication are the fault of would be authors, not the editor.

3. This is not intended as a negative reflection on past members of the Executive Committee. We are now enjoying the fruits of their effective leadership of the Society. Nevertheless, we have been totally unrealistic in our budget projections during the past several years. The difference between our projected and actual income has been of the magnitude of about forty percent. This makes budget projections virtually worthless. We have been running the Society as if we were the U.S. government. The problem is: we do not have the privilege to print more money nor the assets to float a loan. We must "get real." Because reality has consistently fallen far short of projections, we are in a budget crunch. In order to get back on track financially, we should:
  - a. Get on schedule with the *Journal*. Members are more likely to pay their dues if they have a reasonable expectation of getting what they pay for.
  - b. Raise membership fees for full (and associate) members to \$20, for students to \$10 effective January 1994. To encourage members to catch up for back dues and pay 1994 dues early we could keep the current rates in effect until January. This would probably help generate some much needed capital and solve the liquidity problem that may complicate payment for printing several numbers of the *Journal* in the same year.
  - c. Charge a registration fee for all who attend the annual meeting, members and non-members. A part of this should go to the host school to help defray the cost of shuttle service and refreshments for breaks. We could set the fee at a price sufficient to cover the cost of duplicating papers and include them in the registration packet. If we were to have as many as twenty papers presented and each were as long as twenty pages, the NNC Print Shop (for the sake of example) could provide copies of these for less than \$8 per person. It is unlikely that we will have as many as twenty papers, that they will be this long, or that a commercial printer could not beat NNC's price. A \$10 registration fee is not

unreasonable -- a third that for most professional society meetings. Whatever balance we generate could be well used by the Society.

- d. Reconsider our longstanding policy of keeping back issues of the *Journal* in print forever. On the contrary, make a concerted effort to sell as many back issues as possible and keep only numbers that are less than five years old. Most of our oldest issues are now largely of only archival value.
  - e. Project a realistic budget for 1993-94, one that accurately reflects our experience in recent years. It would be wonderful if our actual income was better than our budget for a change.
4. We need to clean our membership roles, removing inactive members, and produce a new membership application form that reflects our changes in types of membership and that is more aesthetically pleasing -- laser fonts, etc. All members -- current and new -- should complete the new form with updated information.

George Lyons, First Vice President



Enclosure: Paper Proposals to Date