

Wesleyan Theological Society

Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting

Southern Nazarene University
Bethany, Oklahoma

Report of the President

March 5, 1999

Due to the Society's decision to alter the time of our yearly conference from November to March, the most recent "annual" meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society was held sixteen months ago. The thirty-third annual meeting convened at Mount Vernon Nazarene College in Mount Vernon, Ohio, on November 7-8, 1997, and was presided over by Wesley Tracy. More than one hundred and seventy-five people attended the meeting on the theme "Facing the Future: Wesleyan Holiness Theological Resources for the Twenty-First Century." Clark Pinnock of McMaster Divinity School was the keynote speaker. Plenary addresses were delivered by Randy Maddox, Donald Dayton, Elizabeth Mullen, Robert Wall, and Joel Green. William Greathouse received the Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition, a publishers' forum was held and fourteen papers were presented in concurrent sessions.

During my term as President, I have been privileged to preside over two called meetings of the Society--a special meeting held at the Church of God School of Theology in Cleveland, Tennessee, and our regular meeting held here at Southern Nazarene University.

The occasion of the special meeting was a joint conference sponsored by our Society and the Society for Pentecostal Studies, held in March 1998. This historic occasion began with a worship service in which two distinguished elder statesmen of our respective traditions received Lifetime Achievement Awards: David A. Seamands and K. Hollis Gause. Nearly five hundred people attended the meeting. Forty-nine sessions were held and fifty-one papers presented. By every mark, it was a wonderful conference. Our thanks goes to the planning committee, and especially to its chairperson, William Faupel. At the WTS business meeting held in Cleveland, it was decided to hold another joint conference with the SPS in 2003.

The program for this year's annual WTS meeting has been ably chaired by First Vice President Albert Truesdale, who has worked diligently to prepare a fine schedule. I want to thank Al for an excellent selection of papers and a very interesting conference.

Regarding the other WTS officers, Second Vice President Steven McCormick has plans well underway for the thirty-fifth annual meeting of the WTS, to be held next March at Azusa Pacific University. Promotional Secretary Steven Lennox has worked to develop institutional liaisons with various schools in the Holiness tradition. Particular appreciation must be extended to William Kostlevy, who skillfully manages the affairs of the Society, and to Barry Callen and his editorial committee, who continue to publish a superb, high-quality journal.

Several matters need to be brought to the attention of Society members. First, it seems an appropriate time for our Society to begin to honor those who publish significant books in fields of study related to Wesleyan Holiness themes. Thus, the Executive Committee proposes to establish an annual book award named in memory of two of our most esteemed colleagues, Timothy L. Smith and Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, both of whom took seriously the importance of quality scholarship in the Wesleyan Holiness tradition.

Second, I would like to report on the great success of our first reception held at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature. The reception--approved at our 1998 business meeting and co-sponsored by the SPS--was very well-attended and attracted a number of persons who were not members of our Society, hopefully encouraging their membership. I anticipate that we will want to sponsor this reception in future years. Besides providing another venue for our mutual interaction and support, it offers an opportunity for good publicity for the Society.

Two other issues dealt with during my tenure of office have been the development of a firm schedule of upcoming meeting locations and the increased inclusion of varied Wesleyan Holiness people in the membership and programs of the Society.

Regarding the former issue, I would like to inform the Society that we have secured invitations from the following institutions to hold WTS annual meetings over the next five years: Southern Nazarene University, Oklahoma (present meeting, 1999); Azusa Pacific University, California (2000); Indiana Wesleyan University (2001); Hobe Sound Bible College, Florida (2002); Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky (2003); and Roberts Wesleyan College, New York (2004). In putting together this schedule, I have tried to insure a broad geographical spread for the location of our meetings as well as the sponsorship of institutions from a wide range of Wesleyan Holiness denominations.

Regarding the latter issue--the development of an expanded and more inclusive membership--I am pleased to report significant progress, though I am convinced that our work on this subject has only just begun. Holiness women scholars have been encouraged to become more involved in the Society. Initial discussions have begun with leaders of the Church of Christ, Holiness (an African-American Holiness denomination). Contact has also been made with sixteen graduate students in the U.S. who belong to the Korean Holiness Church, as well as with the Presidents of two Korean Holiness Bible Colleges (one in New York City and one in southern California). Invitations have been extended to these persons to join the Society and to attend our meetings. Some of the Korean Holiness students are here this year due to a modest scholarship which the Society approved at the Cleveland meeting; we anticipate even greater Korean Holiness participation when we meet in California next year. I trust that we will maintain our support for this scholarship in order to encourage broader student involvement at our meetings.

My hope is that this effort at further inclusion will continue unabated. We have in place the mechanism for a committee that will carry on this work on behalf of the Society. In this regard, it is perhaps most important that current members of the Society take seriously their roles as identifiers of potential members and as mentors of younger scholars.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the Society, and especially the Executive Committee, for the privilege of serving with you. We have a remarkable academic society, one in which serious scholarship is combined with warm collegiality and a fervent faith in Christ, certainly an uncommon combination today.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas M. Strong