

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Presidential Report-1985
R. Larry Shelton

The Wesleyan Theological Society celebrated its twentieth anniversary in the fall of 1984, with its annual meeting which held at Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta. This date coincided with the bicentennial of American Methodism, and provided an excellent opportunity for dialogue among the various strands of Wesleyanism. It is clear that WTS is reaching maturity as a scholarly theological society, and is doing theological work that is being recognized and commended even beyond the Wesleyan Movement.

The 1984 meeting at Candler was significant not only for its dialogue with major United Methodist theologians and Wesley scholars such as Albert Outler and Ted Runyon, but for its excellent contributions to Wesleyan theology. The program focused on the theme "The Wesleyan Heritage in America," and looked at the issues of a Wesleyan theological method, Wesleyan theology in the American context, and Wesleyan spirituality. Important contributions were made to the understanding of Wesleyan theology and the theology of experience in American holiness theology in persons such as Phoebe Palmer and Thomas Upham.

Dr. Ted Runyon, Professor of Systematic Theology, Candler School of Theology, most graciously hosted the society and contributed many important insights on the relevance of Wesleyan theology today.

The officers elected were H. Ray Dunning, President-elect; William N. Arnett, Secretary-Treasurer; Alex R.G. Deasley, Editor; Donald W. Dayton, Promotional Secretary; and Alan Coppedge, Membership Committee.

In April, I presented the annual WTS report to the Christian Holiness Association in Bethany, Oklahoma. Also, I conducted the WTS seminar for CHA on the topic, "The Holy Spirit and Hope."

I have also been in correspondence with Brother Jeffrey Gros concerning the WTS representation at the Commission on Faith and Order conference to evaluate the document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. This conference will be held in Chicago, April 2-4, 1986.

Other correspondence with the presidents of several colleges has involved invitations for WTS to hold future meetings in various locations during the next several years.

Also, the arrangements have been made with Asbury Theological Seminary Provost, Melvin E. Dieter, for Continuing Education Units to be earned for participation in the proceedings of WTS. This will enable pastors to utilize the WTS programs as a part of their continuing education and professional development plans.

The long-standing interest in holding regional WTS conferences will be addressed as Western Evangelical Seminary hosts a regional conference of WTS in the Northwest on November 13. It is hoped that other regional conferences will also be developed to stimulate the work of Wesleyan theology.

The year has been a transitional one with William Arnett very ably assuming the difficult task of Secretary-Treasurer. This was a post held by Wayned Caldwell for many years, and he performed a monumental job with too little recognition. Alex Deasley has continued to work very thoroughly as editor, even though faced with continuing problems related to the injuries suffered by both him and his wife in a serious automobile accident last winter. Donald Dayton has continued to call attention to the work of WTS in all sorts of unexpected and useful contexts. The work Ray Dunning has put into the program for this year certainly is reflected in the excellent quality of the current program. On behalf of the society, I express our appreciation for the selfless work of these leaders. May I also express the thanks of the Executive Committee for the work you have done as members in representing the society in many important ways. Let us continue to develop Wesleyan theology.

Respectfully submitted, R. Larry Shelton, President