

CTS CONVENTION REPORT

Report of the Sixty-First Annual Convention of the College Theology Society, May 28–31, 2015

Two hundred and eight registered participants gathered for the 2015 CTS Annual Convention at the University of Portland, Oregon, in conjunction with the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (NABPR). The convention theme was “An Unexpected Wilderness: Seeking God on a Changing Planet,” the title of the forthcoming annual volume being edited by Colleen Carpenter of St. Catherine University (Minnesota). “As environmental problems have multiplied and deepened,” read the “Call for Papers,” “theologians have begun to explore questions related to how we ought to treat the world around us; how we are spiritually connected to the world around us; and how the (religious) stories we tell about the land, the water, and the air we breathe affect not only our behavior towards the Earth but our understanding of the holy.” During the five Sectional Meeting sessions, ninety-four paper presentations, seven panels, three focused discussions, and a film presentation responded to this theme, organized by nineteen CTS sections, one consultation, and the coordinators of five special sessions. The three plenary addresses were “Resilience: Virtue in the ‘Unexpected Wilderness,’” by Agnes Brazal (St. Vincent School of Theology, Philippines); “Fireflies, Wood Ticks, and Gloria the Two-Legged Cat: Wonders in the Wilderness,” by Brent Olson (independent scholar, Minnesota); and “Ecologies of Uncertainty: Climate and Theology,” by Catherine Keller (Drew University, New Jersey). Prior to the opening session of the convention, attendees could choose to participate in an excursion to the Bonneville Dam.

The CTS Women’s Caucus met on Thursday afternoon. The opening social on Thursday evening (as well as that prior to the awards banquet on Saturday) was graciously provided by the University of Portland’s Offices of the President, Provost, and Dean of Arts and Sciences.

At the Saturday evening banquet, Mary Kate Birge, chair of the Awards Committee, presented the award for Best Book Published in Theology in 2014 to Robert Masson for *Without Metaphor, No Saving God: Theology after Cognitive Linguistics* (Leuven: Peeters Press). The award for Best Article Published in Theology in 2014 was shared by the authors of two

articles, Bernard P. Prusak for “Explaining Eucharistic ‘Real Presence’: Moving beyond a Medieval Conundrum” (*Theological Studies* 72, no. 2 [Fall 2014]) and Jennifer Reed-Bouley and Eric Kyle for “Challenging Racism and White Privilege in Undergraduate Theology Contexts: Teaching and Learning Strategies for Maximizing the Promise of Community Service-Learning” (*Theology & Religion* 18, no. 1 [January 2015]). The Presidential Award was presented by President Bill Portier to William J. Collinge (Mount St. Mary’s University, Emmitsburg, Maryland) “for his Extraordinary Service to the College Theology Society, to the Profession, and to the Cause of Justice and Peace.”

President Portier opened the annual business meeting on Saturday afternoon with several items of note from the activities of the board over the past year:

- At the dialogue meeting with the US bishops’ Doctrine Committee, CTS past president Sandra Yocum gave a well-received presentation on the pastoral care of divorced and remarried people. Fr. Peter Ryan, SJ, the bishops’ new theological adviser, announced that these conversations will now take place only biannually, and distributed a four-page document from the Doctrine Committee, inviting theologians to dialogue on the relationship between theology and evangelization.
- The society now has a redesigned website, thanks to the efforts of board members Reid Locklin and Andrew Getz.
- To complement the society’s long-standing awards for scholarship, an award for teaching, named for the late Monika Hellwig, has been established. The newly revised constitution of the society will include mention of this award among the regular functions of the society. Award decisions will be made by a new Committee on Teaching and Learning, which will solicit self-nominations from CTS members (including the submission of relevant teaching materials) via the society’s website.

Vice President Maureen O’Connell thanked outgoing board members, as well as members of the Nominations and Awards Committees, for their service to the society, and welcomed new board members Charlie Camosy and Karen Enriquez, and new Vice President Bill Clark. O’Connell also noted that three regional organizations have held meetings during the past year, in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Boston.

The vice president’s report concluded with a motion, on behalf of the board, that the society accept the amendments to the constitution that have been prepared over the past year by Chair and Editor of Research and

Publications Bill Collinge and board member Pat Lynch, in cooperation with the whole board. Bill Collinge then presented the revisions in detail. Of particular note are the following:

- There will no longer be separate bylaws, but rather the revised constitution and a policy manual.
- The new documents will clarify the status of associate members, who have a vote in the society but cannot stand for election themselves.
- The offices of president-elect and past president will be added, so that persons elected president of the society will serve on the board for one year before and one year after their two years as president. In order to implement this new structure, President Portier will remain in office for a third year, while a new president-elect serves her/his first year on the board.
- The office of executive director of digital media will be established.
- The following procedure will be followed for nominations prior to regular elections: the vice president will present a list of members who have consented to run for office (compiled using suggestions gathered from post-convention evaluation forms). The order in which these potential nominees are to be contacted will be determined by the board, using criteria including potential nominees' record of convention attendance and service to the society, their particular competencies, the number of nominations received, and the overall inclusivity of the nominee list. The nominees will then be contacted in the agreed order by the vice president until an appropriate number of available candidates has been identified (generally two per office). The finalized list of candidates will then be sent to the secretary by December 31, who will in turn notify the board.

Following the presentation of these revisions, the meeting voted to adopt the proposed changes.

Secretary Nick Rademacher noted that overall membership is up, with 387 current dues-paying members. Nick attributed this increase to the efficiency of the new website, about which he addressed several questions from the floor. Treasurer Brian Flanagan reported that, because of particular cost-cutting efforts and, again, the efficiency of the new website, operating expenses this year were paid entirely from operating income, producing a surplus of \$5,411 at end of 2014. The new Fr. Gerard S. Sloyan Annual Fund, which has achieved about 50 percent of its goal, has also assisted this improved financial situation. The fall campaign for the fund will include outreach to former members, and to chairs of departments and named chairs around the country.

Executive Director of National Conventions David Gentry-Akin reported on the current and upcoming meetings. The 2015 Convention at the University of Portland had 208 registrations, considered very good for a West Coast location. Members present expressed their thanks to local coordinator, Carol Dempsey. The following details of upcoming conventions were noted:

- 2016: Rockhurst University, Kansas City, Missouri; local coordinator, Glen Young; theme, "Liturgy plus Power"; volume editors, Brian Flanagan and Johann Vento; plenary speakers, Bruce Morrill, Susan Ross, and Ricky Manalo.
- 2017: Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island; local coordinator, Jayme Hennessey; theme, "American Catholicism in the 21st Century: Crossroads, Crisis, or Renewal?"; volume editors, Benjamin Peters and Nicholas Rademacher.
- 2018: St. Catherine University, St. Paul, Minnesota; local coordinator, Colleen Carpenter; theme, "Global Catholicism" (precise title to be specified); volume editor, Cyril Orji.
- 2019: West Coast location, possibly San Diego.

Bill Collinge reported on the annual volumes. The 2014 volume, *God Has Begun a Great Work in Us*, edited by Jason King and Shannon Schrein, is now available. Guidelines and submission dates were noted for the 2015 volume, edited by Colleen Carpenter, and a call was made for reviewers of manuscripts. A reprint of the very popular 2004 volume (*New Horizons in Theology*, ed. Terrence Tilley) is under way.

Editor of *Horizons*, Tony Godzieba, reported that Elena Procaro-Foley will assume the editorship in January 2016. Christine Bucher is the new editorial assistant. The book review editors are Colleen Carpenter and Chris McMahon. Total circulation, beyond regular members of the society, is now 2,599. The recent association with Cambridge University Press has given *Horizons* a worldwide reach and increased royalties in line with predictions made by Cambridge when the contract was signed.

Past-President Sandra Yocum offered thanks both to Dave Gentry-Akin for another successful convention and to Tony Godzieba for his years of work on *Horizons*.

WILLIAM CLARK, SJ (CTS Vice President)
College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA