

## Editor's Preface

In an era of iPhones and Kindles, it might seem a hazardous task to edit a print Journal. As most of our readers are aware, costs of print journalism have risen faster as subscriptions have fallen, a situation that not even the most ivory tower professor can ignore. The transitional moment was captured recently by the announcement that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, that bastion of English-language learning, would no longer be publishing a print edition. Another hoary tradition has faded. Can print format of other academic endeavours be far behind?

It is at this critical juncture that *Religious Studies and Theology* changes editors. It is with some trepidation then, that I transfer the reins to Professor Willi Braun, since one would hope to move on with confidence that the ship will continue in its clearly thriving direction. Despite the cloud that hangs over print journalism, it is likely that the future is far brighter than it appears at this moment. Indeed, readers will probably end up with several options for reading our scholarship, and that I would regard as a worthwhile and positive outcome. Rather than being cowed by what appears to be the enormity of change, I think this is a moment to expand our vision. So it is with a certain pride that we can look back and see that we have weathered many a storm and still serve an ever-expanding academic community throughout the world. Indeed it is the very global nature of our readership that convinces that Professor Braun will take the Journal to new heights. For those who do not know his work, his career path will reassure that he can handle the challenges.

Professor Braun will move into this new role one year shy of his twentieth anniversary of receiving his Ph.D. in Toronto's Graduate School for the Study of Religion. He cut his academic teeth at Bishop's University in Quebec, and then came to the interdisciplinary program in Religious Studies at the University of Alberta. He has blossomed here into a multidimensional scholar in Religious Studies, with solid achievements in the theoretical understandings of the discipline, historical discourses in early Christianity, important work in opening up the social and cultural milieu of early gospel writing, and a healthy embrace of rituals of feasting and sociability in comprehending the Jesus story. If there is one theme that prevails throughout it is that the academy needs to approach its work with far more than a dollop of humility. He sees clearly that the scholar is shaped by perspectives that skew the

data. Constantly, then, the evidence skitters around, and may reflect many different pattern of understanding. One speaks out of one's own vision and through one's confidence in a cognitive structure that is not of one own making. The objectivity often claimed by scholarship, whether it is black holes in the cosmos, or the 'authentic' message of Jesus is manipulated by components that are barely visible, mostly hidden. Confidence, then, should not lead to dogma. The academic task is to allow the many dimensions of reality to show through.

Scholars in other part of the world and in other disciplines will want to know what I would recommend they read if they are to know his work: on the editing side, I would recommend the *Guide to the Study of Religion* which he put together with Russell McCutcheon, and then the massive volume of essays honouring Chicago scholar Jonathan Z. Smith entitled *Introducing Religion: Essays in Honor of Jonathan Z. Smith*. His New Testament editing is best sampled with *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities*. For a flavour of his own style of writing and argumentation, try *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, which is firmly rooted in his doctoral work and continues to shape his concerns. For certification of this, check out "The First Shall be Last: The Gospel of Mark after the First Century" in the Pachis and Wiebe volume of 2010.

In short, under his watch, the journal, *Religious Studies and Theology* will continue to be an authoritative source for interdisciplinary studies in religion; it will continue to embrace the best of scholarship that tries to wrestle with unknowns and takes it statements with a huge grain of salt. And it likely will move to even more interaction with other ways of thinking and doing studies in religion.

Already you will have seen some of the changes, *Religious Studies and Theology* will change its name to Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion and Professor Braun already has begun to expand the board. Lest theologians worry the journal will abandon theology, never fear, the website makes clear that scholarship in theology will continue to find a central place on its pages (see webpage). It could not be otherwise in the interdisciplinary world of religious scholarship. Hence, regardless of the future of print journalism, or whether it is diversified into electronic form, the Journal, as it is affectionately known to us, will continue to push the boundaries. So more power to you, our readers, and to Professor Braun as you pursue this together.

Earle Waugh