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FORUM: One Hundred Years of Church History

Introduction

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It has been more than one hundred years since the American Society of Church History (ASCH) began publishing its *Papers* in 1889, followed in 1932 by the journal *Church History.* To commemorate these one hundred–plus years of publication, the History of Christianity Section of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) invited four current and past editors of *Church History* and, for an "outsider's" perspective, one historian who has not served as editor to participate in a panel discussion at the AAR's 2009 annual meeting in Montreal. We asked the panelists to look back on changes to *Church History* over time and how those changes have both mirrored and stimulated changes in the broader field of history of Christianity. We also wanted them to reflect on where they see scholarship in the field headed in the next five years or so.

Initiated at the University of Chicago in 1932, *Church History*'s first issue described the journal's aim to "represent the best scholarship which America affords in the field of the history of Christianity."[1] The addition in 1998 of the subtitle *Studies in Christianity and Culture* marked the journal's move from its original home at Chicago to Duke University. As well, the co-editors at Duke, Elizabeth A. Clark, Richard P. Heitzenrater, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Grant Wacker, wanted to move the term "church history" away from seeming "stuffy and a little old-fashioned" and to encourage more studies in Roman Catholicism, Third-World Christianity, and popular culture.[2] The subtitle, they explained, "signaled our intention to publish material that consciously tried to relate the general study of Christianity to its cultural context."[3] When the journal moved next, in 2004, to its current home at Florida State University, the new co-editors, John Corrigan and

[1]"Statement of Policy," *Church History* 1, no. 1 (March 1932): 2.
[2]"Church History Journal Redesigned," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1998, http://articles.latimes.com/1998/jul/11/local/me-2681.
[3]"Editorial Comment," *Church History* 73, no. 3 (September 2004): 471.

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Amanda Porterfield, reiterated the desire to publish research that "more fully reflect[s] the geographical spread of Christian cultures in world history."[4]

Looking back 120 years, a quick review of the first issue of the *Papers of the American Society of Church History* in fact discovers articles that seem to have anticipated these later editorial intentions, for example: Philip Schaff's "The Progress of Religious Freedom as Shown in the History of Toleration Acts," Henry Charles Lea's "Indulgences in Spain," Ernest Gushing Richardson's "The Influence of the Golden Legend on Pre-Reformation Culture History," and Samuel Macauley Jackson's "The Need of a Complete Missionary History in English." Much about church history scholarship has changed over the years, of course, but perhaps, at least for the ASCH's publications, there has been more continuity than we might have expected.

We were extremely fortunate to have two former editors and the two current editors, all esteemed scholars in their fields, agree to serve as panelists in Montreal. Richard Heitzenrater, William Kellon Quick Professor Emeritus of Church History and Wesley Studies at Duke University, specializes in John Wesley and the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition, including serving as general editor of the multi-volume *The Works of John Wesley: The Bicentennial Edition*; he is currently working on studies of Wesleyan iconography and Wesley sayings and an edition of Charles Wesley's journal letters. Hans Hillerbrand, Professor of Christian History at Duke University, has published extensively on the Reformation and history of modern Christianity, serving as editor-in-chief of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. Amanda Porterfield, Robert A. Spivey Professor of Religion at Florida State University, is a historian of American religion whose work has investigated a wide range of topics, including religion in popular culture, Native American religions, American religious thought, and healing in Christian history; her current research is on religion and politics in the early American republic. John Corrigan, Lucius Moody Bristol Distinguished Professor at Florida State University, also has published widely in American religious history; his most recent work is on the rhetoric of religious intolerance in colonial America, space and place in the study of religion, religious experience and meaninglessness, and the production of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences.

[4]"Preface," *Church History* 73, no. 4 (December 2004): 713–14.

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