

The Conference on Faith and History

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Aristotle was the first person to link the term faith (*pistis*) with historical inquiry. Cicero carried the term into Latin as *fides* and linked it directly to *historia*. Tacitus, in one of his important historiographical asides, reported that he relied on “faithful authorities.” Further developing the link between faith and history were New Testament authors and early Christian bishops, who, because of their insistence on a factual history of Jesus that included astonishing events such as the resurrection, had much incentive to study the rules of evidence and the secure transfer of information. Eusebius pushed the discipline of history forward as the master of extensive quotation and hearsay chains, both oral and written.

The Christian concern for historical confidence, although having its ups and downs, has long been a boon to the discipline of history. Modern historiographers such as Arnaldo Momigliano and Anthony Grafton have explored the complex role of Christian faith in the long-term construction of our modern discipline. We in the Conference on Faith and History are chartered to uphold, study, and improve this relationship. We are not a church history society although we are often interested in church and religious history. Our members come from all the various fields of the modern profession. We are also not a historical theory society although we are often interested in theory. Our members are practitioners of the art of history who keep an eye on the influence of Christian faith. We are also interested in how Christian faith has a role in our lives as professionals, as writers, as teachers, and as colleagues. Our members work at large, public, universities and small, Christian, liberal arts colleges. At every

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level of the modern knowledge industry, and in all the diverse duties within the industry, we believe our Christian perspective has a place at the table.

The roots of our organization go back into the mid 1960s when some young professors decided to organize. The leaders were Richard Millett (Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville), Robert Clouse (Indiana State University), Robert Linder (Kansas State University) and Richard Pierard (Indiana State University). On December 29, 1966 at the AHA convention in New York City an informal caucus took place in the hotel room of Harry Rosenberg (Colorado State University). By the fall of 1968 Robert Linder had become the founding editor of our journal, *Fides et Historia*, and Richard Pierard had begun his more than three decades of service as secretary-treasurer. In 1969 the CFH rolls included 212 charter members.

In September of 1970 the first official election named Robert Frykenberg (University of Wisconsin, Madison) president of CFH. He wanted to do two things: 1) Get CFH properly recognized as an affiliate of the American Historical Association. 2) "Determine whether CFH was to be a smaller, more elite research-oriented society for advanced Christian studies or a more broadly based society reaching out to any and all." As for the first, the AHA did, in due course, welcome CFH an affiliate society, but only after Frykenberg calmed some rough waters created by one of our members who wrote "a scathing and somewhat insultingly phrased letter to AHA officers." As for the second, the determination of direction was never made. CFH has supported the work of influential member-researchers such as Frykenberg, Edwin Yamauchi, George Marsden, Nathan Hatch, and Mark Noll while, at the same time, it has embraced members focused on teaching at small liberal arts colleges along with offering supportive programs for graduate students and undergraduates.

Forty-some years later, the Conference on Faith and History is thriving. Many books are being published by a younger generation of members. Our journal, *Fides et Historia*, is in its forty-second volume and is collected in 269 libraries including 48 international libraries. The journal is indexed in all the appropriate indexes. Electronic, full-text, access has begun with Gale and will be expanded soon by other companies providing electronic access. Over the years, the journal has published much that fulfills President Frykenberg's hope for excellent

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research. On the other hand, it has also served as a forum for pedagogical support, book reviews, and review essays.

Every year the CFH offers a breakfast reception and session at the AHA conference. This year in San Diego, five of our younger members, who have each written recent books, offered a panel discussing methodological issues in the study of “Community, Identity, and Vocation of Laity in Medieval and Early Modern Christianity.” On even numbered years, CFH offers a fall meeting usually attended by a couple hundred members and another hundred undergraduates who present papers at a parallel student conference. October 6-9, 2010 we will meet at George Fox University in Oregon. The theme is “The Search for Peace, Justice, and Equality.” Last summer, representatives of CFH were in San Jose, Costa Rica negotiating partnerships with Latin American organizations for the purpose of creating long-term relationships and promoting a conference at the University of Mexico in 2011.

Huntington University in Indiana houses our home office. Wheaton College in Illinois holds our archives. Membership is just \$30 a year. Undergraduates are \$20. Graduate student memberships are free. Contact us at: <http://www.huntington.edu/cfh/> Graduate student members can also visit <http://cfhgradstudents.com/default.aspx>