

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue, my first as the editor of *Literature and Belief*, represents the range of religious and spiritual insight that has made our journal a unique academic home for more than forty years. From the early High-Church Anglicanism of George Herbert; the Southern-American Catholicism of Walker Percy; the biblical themes of Tennessee Williams; the progressive Protestant spirit of Rebecca Harding Davis and William Dean Howells; the mystical visions of Mary Rankin and the defiant Christian hospitality of one Theresa Corbett of Newfoundland, readers will here discover illuminating scholarship on figures familiar and new. Striking, original poetry and prose also grace these pages, along with new critical contexts for understanding a milestone achievement in Jewish Holocaust studies, and the developing tradition—and possible futures—of Mormon letters. I'm grateful to each of our contributors for their talents and their patience as this issue has come together.

Amid the permanence of excellent contributions to our journal, some changes correspond to my appointment as editor. Our new home is the Faith and Imagination Institute, which I will also lead. Since the fall of 1980 *Literature and Belief* has been the flagship publication of the Center for the Study of Christian Values in Literature, when both journal and center were founded at Brigham Young University in the College of Humanities. Over the course of more than forty years, the center and the journal have served, reciprocally, to pursue an insight from Henry James cited in the founding document, namely, that “the moral element” is not something that can be “put into and kept out of a work of art . . . as if it were a colored fluid kept in a big-labelled bottle in some mysterious intellectual closet”—for James, “morality . . . is in reality simply a part of the essential richness of inspiration.”<sup>1</sup> The journal and the Faith and Imagination Institute will continue along the path of the former center and in the spirit of

<sup>1</sup>See *French Poets and Novelists*, London, 1878, pp. 81–82.

James's observation, seeking to amplify morality, inspiration, belief, and value as integral rather than decorative, and as vital rather than incidental dimensions of art.

Over the years, an ecumenical aim of the former center's charter, "to encourage the reading and writing of quality literature that presents Christian values and themes," has come to feel inadequate to subsequent developments in the life of the center and the journal. We have formed lasting partnerships with scholars of Jewish literature, for instance, as recently exemplified in Victoria Aarons's terrific guest-edited issue on "Jewish Comics and Graphic Novels" (*LB* 40.2 & 41.1). We also increasingly publish articles and foresee special issues devoted to literatures of non-Christian faith traditions such as Islam or Buddhism, along with indigenous spiritualities, mysticism, and spiritually inflected writing outside of any denominational concern. Going forward as the Faith and Imagination Institute, we hope to represent the work we are doing and the horizon ahead more inclusively. For continuity, we will retain the title of *Literature and Belief*.

As we look to the future, I wish to express my deep gratitude to past directors of the Center for the Study of Christian Values in Literature, whose devotion and talents maintained this enterprise over the decades. I'm grateful that Lance Larsen continues as poetry editor, and that our production editor, Jane Brady, continues with the journal and the work of the Faith and Imagination Institute. I welcome Matthew Wickman as associate editor of the journal and associate director of our new institute. I especially want to acknowledge my predecessor, Daniel K. Muhlestein, who has entered retirement most happily. He leaves behind him a generous legacy at Brigham Young University, where he is fondly remembered as a gifted, beloved teacher and mentor, an intelligent, perceptive scholar, and a wise, encouraging editor. I miss him. And I hope in the coming years to do credit to his example here.

—Edward S. Cutler