



Dear Program Unit Chairs,

First of all, as you enter the complex season of program selection, I want to thank you in advance for what I know first hand is a complicated and intense project. The crafting of the program is in your hands, and every year, as thousands of scholars work hundreds of hours on this, I am so proud of the AAR and you, as leaders. I am Laurie Zoloth, President Elect, and I am writing today about a very long term plan—not the 2013 meeting, but the 2014 San Diego meeting, the one that I will chair. I have selected a theme for the meeting: *Climate Change and the Coming Global Crisis—Religions and Responses*.

Let me explain why. I am an ethicist, and I focus on bioethics and health care justice. I have come to consider the crisis of climate change, which is a result of an increase of human production and consumption of carbon the most salient scientific reality of the last 30 years. The global change in climate will create conditions of increasing desperation, especially for the poorest on our world. People who depend primarily on marginal soil and conditions for agriculture, island or coastal countries, and the global south are at particular risk. But for everyone, as we have seen in the last few years, more erratic weather, more dangerous storms, droughts and floods will destabilize societies and economies. Health care concerns, epidemics and famine, tend to follow severe climate change, and again, fall disproportionately on the poorest. I believe that everyone has a role to play as we try to understand, change, and respond to a warming world, but I believe that scholars, who are in full and early possession of fact, with opportunities to articulate positions and policies, have a role specific duty to act now. This is for two reasons.

First, there is a descriptive task. As many of you know and teach, religion's texts, traditions, narratives, laws, rituals, and community practices are a rich source for response to the crisis, and provide a long history of thought about the relationship between humans and the living environment, and of the way that the poor, most especially, need to be considered in our

response. It is our scholarly duty, I would argue, that we bring forward a scholarship from a wide set of traditions that may suggest a meaningful set of actions in response to an unprecedented and shared crisis.

Second, there is a normative task. How ought scholars of religious studies behave, meet and live in the world? How do our theoretical concerns influence our academy? Our university, or community of worship? Our annual meeting?

Finally, do you wish to be more vividly engaged? Do you have special expertise in the topic and would you, or your AAR group want to play a leadership role at the meeting?

For such a task, we will need the widest set of responses—and that is why I am asking that in thinking about the year after next, you consider thinking in advance about this theme. Who would you want to hear speak about these issues? Do you wish to think about this year's choice in relationship to the next set of plans? Are there long term projects or grants you might wish to begin within the communities you represent that need a longer time to come to fruition, that might be presented in two years? What resources do you need to learn more about the issue of climate change and global warming?

In Chicago, at our AAR program committee meeting, there was deep enthusiasm for this theme, and your colleagues suggested I write early, before you made choices for this year, about the long game of 2014 planning. That is why I am writing now, and will write again in the future, to remind you of the theme and to ask for your help. I want the AAR to be an international resource and a leading voice in public policy and academic research. Please join me in planning for this vision.

Sincerely,

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