DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS—

Opening this spring 2003 issue of Criterion is a lecture by Bishop Thomas J. Curry on religion and the First Amendment, delivered in Swift Lecture Hall on March 14, 2003. Bishop Curry is the author of The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment (Oxford University Press, 1986) and, most recently, Farewell to Christendom: The Future of Church and State in America (Oxford University Press, 2001). His work frees the First Amendment from the web of judicial and scholarly misinterpretation in which it has become enmeshed and offers a new paradigm for the understanding and exploration of religious liberty.

Following Bishop Curry’s lecture is a spring Wednesday lunch talk by Joseph L. Price, Professor of Religious Studies at Whittier College and President of the Divinity School’s Alumni Council, which considers baseball affiliation stories as conversion narratives.

The issue proceeds with two sets of tributes. The first honors Don Browning, who retired in December 2001 after thirty-five years of service on the Divinity School faculty. It includes speeches by Kristine A. Culp, Bernard McGinn, W. Clark Gilpin, and Elizabeth Marquardt, delivered at the concluding reception of the April 24–25 conference in Professor Browning’s honor, “Norm and Description: Their Relation in Practical Theology, Ethics, and the Social Sciences.” Joining Professor Browning in the Divinity School’s elite club of emeriti this spring were Anne Carr and Bernard McGinn, both of whom were honored at their own retirement celebrations, as well as Joel Kraemer, who will be honored at a conference next spring. Tributes from these events will appear in future issues of Criterion.

The second set of tributes mourns the loss of Mark Krupnick, Professor Emeritus of Religion and Literature in the Divinity School, who succumbed to ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) on March 29, 2003. It includes speeches by Bruce Lincoln and Wendy Doniger, delivered at Professor Krupnick’s funeral service, held in Bond Chapel on April 6, 2003.

Concluding the issue is a sermon by Dean of Rockefeller Chapel Alison Boden, delivered at the wedding of Tanya Luhrmann and Richard P. Saller in Bond Chapel on January 4, 2003. The couple teaches on the faculty of the University of Chicago; Professor Saller also serves as the University’s Provost.

I hope you enjoy this issue,

JENNIFER QUIJANO SAX, Editor
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The greatness, uniqueness, and exceptionalism of the American achievement in religious liberty derive from the fact that the Framers of the Constitution and those who enacted the First Amendment refused to make theological statements about Church and State. Indeed, insofar as they dealt with religious liberty within the meaning of the Constitution, they identified it by the absence of such statements. I will maintain this evening that current disputes and confusion surrounding the history and application of this great American achievement of religious liberty stem precisely from the habit of turning the First Amendment into a theological statement. [This talk refers only to the religion provision of the Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”]

Although Americans at the time of the formation of the Constitution believed that it followed from self-evident truths, and although it was devised to achieve the exalted values of liberty, justice, and domestic tranquility, it did not require citizens to embrace those or any other beliefs. The Constitution prohibited test oaths, thus rejecting the notion that full citizenship should be based on conformity to any creed. It has been so successful because it relies on the people to promote voluntarily the values and attitudes the Framers knew would be essential to sustain the new Republic.

For the first time in history, Americans took the risk of organizing an independent nation with no requirement that its citizens adhere to some belief, or at least engage in some unifying religious activity concerning a belief, e.g., swearing oaths or participating in religious ceremonies.

In doing so, America broke with Christendom; but it also broke with most of its own past. I use the word “most” because Americans were not flying completely blind. In their midst, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, and, above all, Pennsylvania had long prospered without an established religion, although all had used test oaths as a means of excluding Catholics, atheists, or non-Christians from full citizenship.

In America, religious liberty is a negative liberty, in the sense that the Constitution does not and cannot define it. Religious liberty within the meaning of the Constitution is achieved when government absents itself from—and refrains from exercising any power or jurisdiction over—religious belief or practice, thus leaving citizens free to define positively the substance of religious liberty for their own lives. As far as the Constitution is concerned, religious liberty—the free exercise of religion—results from the absence of government definition, control, or interference in religious matters.

In the context of 1789, this approach was astonishing, radical, and bold, and it remains so in 2003. However, from 1789 to our own time, this concept of the free exercise of religion has never been understood fully, accepted fully, or implemented fully.

In 1789, Americans abandoned Christendom in theory and in law, but they by no means abandoned it completely in
CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS, OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.
practice, in thought, or in habits of mind. By Christendom, I mean the system of cooperation between Church and State—between the sacred and secular powers—that embraces the totality of people's lives—secular, religious, and cultural—and that came into being after Constantine legalized Christianity early in the fourth century. After the enactment of the Constitution, Americans by and large continued to believe there was a proper way to live one's life—apart from simply obeying the secular laws—and that government should uphold, in the most broad-minded and tolerant fashion, a cultural-religious way of life they saw as essentially American. And government—on both state and federal levels—did just that.

The federal government proclaimed days of prayer and fasting and appointed chaplains to its own legislative bodies, as well as to the armed forces. The states enacted Sunday laws and made provisions for the proper religious-cultural instruction of children that involved Bible reading, prayers, and hymns acceptable to the majority of Americans. Thus, although the Constitution was silent as to religious requirements, Americans—with the assistance of government—nonetheless implemented them. Professor Martin Marty and others have shown that this informal establishment of religion—a patchwork of legislation dealing with Sabbath behavior and Bible reading in school, laws that people at that time considered as much social as religious—produced in nineteenth-century America a de facto establishment of religion even more effective than the de jure establishment in England at the time.

This de facto establishment continued to project the religious and cultural outlook of a majority of Americans in the decades following the ratification of the Constitution. They did not see it as oppressive, and it was not meant to be so. Rather, it was the outgrowth of non-denominational Protestantism, whose adherents believed it necessary to the maintenance of a civilized society and the liberties they had achieved. As a result, however, the fact that the nation had proclaimed a government that relied on no religious system and made no theological statement grew increasingly at odds with the reality of nineteenth-century America.

Returning now to the formation of the government: while I hold that government proclaimed no theology or religious belief, it is nevertheless clear to me that these contributed in a major way to its formation.

In 1965, Professor Mark DeWolfe Howe, in an elegant and important book, The Garden and the Wilderness: Religion and Government in American Constitutional History, took the U.S. Supreme Court to task for interpreting the First Amendment in a purely Jeffersonian way, i.e., in a secularist sense that was hostile to religion. In Howe's words, “The evangelical principle of separation endorsed a host of favoring tributes to faith—tributes so substantive that they have produced in the aggregate what may be described as a de facto establishment of religion.” Thus he argued that because Christians had influenced the formation of the First Amendment, it had therefore to be read in a theological fashion, or from the point of view of the evangelical theology that had contributed so much to it.

I will argue that Protestant Evangelicals, in the broad sense—groups, including Quakers, that arose out of the Puritan Movement in England and wanted to reform it—made a major contribution, perhaps the dominant one, to the emergence of religious liberty as enshrined in the Constitution. I will also argue, however, that even though those same Evangelicals contributed so greatly to the formation of the First Amendment, it is not a statement of evangelical religious principles and should not be read that way.

When Professor Howe wrote of the "evangelical principle of separation" in the passage I just quoted, he was referring to Roger Williams's imagery of a wall separating the "garden" of the Church from the "wilderness" of the world:

When they have opened a gap in the hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world, God hath ever broke down the wall itself, removed the candlestick, and made His garden a wilderness, as at this day.

The problem with the argument or assumption that the First Amendment somehow embodies this "wall of separation" is that, at the time of the passage of the Amendment, virtually
no one was familiar with it. Roger Williams was an extraordinary man whose writings—composed in the mid-1600s—are still inspiring, but they had little effect on America, much less on the formation of the Constitution. Williams published all his books dealing with persecution and religious liberty in England; he published a controversy with Quakers in America. His arguments, so dear to modern America, were directed to an English audience. By the eighteenth century, his works had disappeared from America, and we can be reasonably certain that no one involved in the enactment of the First Amendment, including the citizens in the states that ratified it, had ever heard of Roger Williams, let alone read his writings.

I emphasize this point in order to make a comment on modern historical writing on the topic of Church and State. Numerous books about Williams have been published, and he has been invoked innumerable times in attempts to explain the First Amendment. Historically, however, he was unknown in America. His books did not appear in American catalogues, and he had no influence on the Amendment. Moreover, I believe the fact that he is quoted so frequently indicates why the history of American Church-State relations is in such disrepute.

Commentators, including judges and scholars, have engaged—as the Roger Williams example illustrates—in a post hoc, ergo propter hoc, kind of reasoning. However, if history is to play a useful role, we must do more than this. For example, it is not enough simply to find evidence to support a position, unless one can demonstrate reasonably that such evidence had some influence in the development of religious liberty or the formation of the First Amendment. That historians and legal scholars could make so much of Williams without connecting him with any actual historical development in America symbolizes the failure of modern American scholarship that has contributed to the confusion that characterizes present-day interpretation of the historical background of the First Amendment.

However, even if Roger Williams did not exercise much influence on the emergence of religious liberty in America, the evangelical movement—of which he was a part—certainly did. But participants in that movement never used or even discussed his image of a “wall of separation” between the garden of the Church and the wilderness of the world. The evangelical thrust for religious liberty arose out of the deep conviction that only God and the Spirit could provide true conversion and reform, and that State interference would lead only to persecution and to the manipulation of religion for secular, political purposes. They wanted religion to be free so that it could permeate and influence society.

That evangelical spirit had influenced the formation of four colonies—Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. The growth and prosperity of Pennsylvania, especially, demonstrated that a society could flourish without the security of an established religion. The conviction that instead of declining, religion would prosper if government refrained from establishing it may well have been the principal impetus for the new federal government’s limiting itself to specified secular functions.

In any event, the new federal government included no theological statement. It forbade tests oaths and limited itself to what was secular, and the First Amendment restated and reinforced that understanding. However, at the time of the formation of the Constitution—and for three or four decades thereafter—some Americans, especially in New England, continued to believe that without government backing for religion, society itself would disintegrate and their numbers would shrink progressively.

It is important to keep in mind that the First Amendment is a statement of power not given: “Congress shall make no law . . .” Thus the First Amendment does not create or guarantee the right to religious liberty. Rather, it is a reminder that such liberty and guarantee already exist by way of natural right. The first and primary guarantee of the Amendment is that government will not interfere with that natural right, that—for the purposes of this talk—it will refrain from making theological statements.

The modern controversy that has engulfed discussion of the historical meaning of the First Amendment dates back to the decision in the Everson case in 1947. In that controversy, one of the mainstay arguments advanced by opponents of
the decision is that the position I have just taken, i.e., that the federal government has no power to make theological statements or involve itself in religious matters, flies in the face of the historical experience of the United States in the decades following the enactment of the Bill of Rights. I agree. The facts are not in dispute. Subsequent to the enactment of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, presidents, senators, congressmen, and candidates for office repeatedly invoked God and made religious pronouncements, and government continued to support religion in a multitude of ways.

How does one cope with this anomaly? Does the practice of the times following the enactment of the Constitution, particularly the practice of those who participated in that enactment process, become normative for interpretation of the Constitution and/or the First Amendment?

My response to that question is no. We do not look to the practice of the time as normative for what we mean by the statement in the Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal,” or for how we are to deal with minorities, or with women. Nor do we seek out past practices to ascertain what the objectives mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution—justice, domestic tranquility, the common defense, the general welfare, or the blessings of liberty—mean for us in our time. Rather, I believe that the principle embodied in the First Amendment—that government has no power or jurisdiction in religious matters—was enunciated within a particular historical context that shaped and limited people’s understanding of it. Within our own different historical and cultural context, we, too, have to endeavor to recover and apply that principle in a way that results in maximum liberty and promotes the common welfare.

Although Americans, in the years from 1789 to 1791, adopted the radical principle that government has no power in religion, their cultural understanding and experience limited the application of that principle. They applied it in those areas of Church and State that particularly engaged them, and that had been clarified in their understanding by the experience of conflict, specifically religious persecution and the financial support of churches and ministers by way of public taxation. Those topics—especially taxation for religion—were realities that troubled America. Having solved them, the vast majority of Americans saw no other existing obstacles to religious liberty. In a largely homogeneously Protestant nation, few people could even imagine, let alone challenge, practices that others would view negatively as religious and sectarian. For most, such practices were part and parcel of the common coin of civilized living.

Despite having made a very public proclamation that their new government was powerless in religion, that there was no proper American way of being religious, Americans proceeded to assume there was indeed an “American” way. They came to believe what Professor Howe would argue almost two centuries later: that since American religious liberty had largely emerged out of American religious evangelism, the Amendment had to be read in the context of the theology of that evangelism—that absent State support of the religion that created it, religious freedom would wither and die. Hence they did not see the de facto establishment of religion they created (a modern description, not theirs)—one based on a common cultural-religious experience, democratic or congregational churches, a shared interpretation of history, common religious devotions, and Bible reading—as religiously oppressive, but rather as the context necessary for the preservation of the religious liberty they had brought into being.

Only conflict could broaden Americans’ understanding of religious liberty and clarify the meaning of the First Amendment for a more pluralistic, diverse America. And conflict soon came—by way of Catholic immigrants, who, by the 1820s, began to arrive in significant numbers. Coming from a different worldview, a different religious experience, and a different interpretation of history, Catholic immigrants experienced America’s prevailing religious-cultural system as coercive and religiously oppressive. As a result of the clashes that followed upon their continuing arrival throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, America would abandon much of its de facto establishment of religion.

This long conflict—often, but by no means always, manifested in its most intense form in the public schools—led to two major developments.
First, it led to the evolution of a country and a government much more secular than the ones Catholic immigrants had experienced when they first began to arrive. This secularization took place in the public schools, in the way people observed the Sabbath, and generally in the culture of the nation. I have argued that the coming of Catholic immigrants transformed America and made it more open to the diversity of immigrants who would arrive in waves in the nineteenth century and up until the First World War.

This development, however, coincided with a deepening conviction on the part of the dominant American culture that religious freedom was in danger. It arose from the belief that religious liberty was the product of Protestantism, and that its survival depended on that religion. To those who thought in these terms, the coming of what they perceived as veritable hordes of Catholics and foreigners threatened American liberties—and particularly American religious liberty. The more Catholics altered the religious and cultural status quo, the more they demonstrated that there was no American way of being religious, and the more their critics were convinced that the religion and theology on which the Constitution and the First Amendment depended were being eroded.

The conviction that since Protestantism had contributed so much to the Constitution and religious liberty it was essential to both and was embedded in the First Amendment—i.e., that America and Protestantism were somehow connected—entered deeply into the minds and attitudes of Americans in the nineteenth century. Indeed, as late as 1998, Professor Phillip E. Hammond of the University of California at Santa Barbara could write that “protestantized religious faith . . . lies behind the Constitution. It is a faith more in process than in substance, but a discernible substance is nonetheless there” (With Liberty for All: Freedom of Religion in the United States, xv).

In 1971, Justice William O. Douglas exemplified the persistence of this thinking from the nineteenth century when he described Catholic schools as follows:

Their purpose is not so much to educate, but to indoctrinate and train, not to teach Scripture truths and Americanism, but to make loyal Roman Catholics. The children are regimented, and are told what to wear, what to do, and what to think. (http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=403&invol=602)

Douglas’s statement captures an attitude and way of thinking that prevailed in nineteenth-century America. It equates Scripture truths with Americanism and contrasts both with “loyal Roman Catholics” who, according to that definition, cannot be true Americans. Catholics came to be seen as regimented foot soldiers, intent on imposing on the country a Church that would destroy American liberties. This belief provided renewed vigor to the revival of the notion of separation of Church and State. In his recent, superb study, Separation of Church and State, Professor Philip Hamburger of the University of Chicago Law School has added profoundly to our understanding of Church and State and the development of that term.

In fact, for much of nineteenth-century America, the separation of Church and State came to mean the separation and isolation of the Catholic Church, so that the true American religion—what Douglas referred to as “Bible truths and Americanism”—could prosper. Contemporary Americans rightly believed that evangelical Protestantism had contributed immensely to the emergence of religious liberty. However, the presence among them of large numbers of Catholics also convinced them that religious liberty would survive only if the State upheld and protected the theology and religious practice that had led to the creation of that freedom. The Church that was to be “separated” was the Catholic Church, so that what they thought of as the religion and theology necessary to religious freedom—what they regarded as ecumenical and not really amounting to a Church—could flourish and be sustained by government. Thus did the rallying cry “Separation of Church and State” come to be an utterly theological statement.

The “wall of separation” was enshrined in constitutional interpretation by the Supreme Court in 1947, when Justice Black wrote: “In the words of Jefferson, the clause against
The First Amendment . . . is a warning to government to confine itself to the secular spheres to which it has been assigned.

Establishment of religion by law was intended to erect a wall of separation between Church and State. The theology underpinning this phrase has changed over the years, but what has not changed is that the concept of the separation of Church and State is essentially religious and theological.

Whether written by Roger Williams or Thomas Jefferson, the phrase is, of course, profoundly and specifically theological. (Jefferson defined religion as “a matter which lies solely between man and his God.”) It adheres to a religion of dualism, a strict dichotomy between what is religious and what is secular, and it endows government with the power to define and impose the boundary between the two. It represents a quasi-Manichean, dualistic approach to life and reality. It envisages not a limited government, but an all-powerful one that can divide up the totality of human life, that can erect a barrier cutting through people’s lives and the life of society, assigning Church to one side of the barrier and telling people that, within the sphere defined by the State, they can freely exercise their religion.

America created a secular government—limited, as Thomas Jefferson also said, to civil matters—with power over part of the secular world. To argue that a secular government has power to determine the scope and sphere of the Church is to give the government religious and theological authority. To claim that what is secular is not religious and that what is religious is not secular is to adhere to a particular theology and view of religion.

For example, the existence of religious or parochial schools flies in the face of the notion of the separation of Church and State. In setting up religious schools, the Church engages in a religious activity, one that it sees as an essential part of its mission and one that is thoroughly religious. On its part, the State accepts this activity as secular, as performing a public service and fulfilling a mandated State requirement—the education of children. This can happen because the government does not impose a theology—a way of thinking. As distinct from countries that do impose a theology or ideology, America does not impose a belief system on education. It looks for overt acts—the ability to read and write. Whether students acquire that ability by studying religious materials or non-religious materials is immaterial to the State.

In America, churches use public—State—parks to carry out religious ceremonies; religious organizations carry out government contracts to perform social services; believers use the public street to evangelize; Church and State intersect in innumerable other ways. The First Amendment is not about separating Church and State, about organizing the totality of society and consigning different human activities to realms defined by government. Rather, it is a warning to government to confine itself to the secular spheres to which it has been assigned. It says nothing about the Church, except that government may not use its jurisdiction to make theological statements or to promote or enforce religious belief or action.

How can government refrain from interfering in what it is forbidden to define? Within the meaning of the Constitution, the free exercise of religion lacks substance—government cannot define it. Free exercise of religion is “what happens” when the State limits itself to the powers assigned to it. Within the meaning of the Constitution, free exercise is not the right to choose our religion freely. That is a “natural right,” anterior to government and never surrendered to it.
The First Amendment is a guarantee that government will confine itself to its own limited and specified powers, and by doing so, the people will be free to define for themselves the substance of religious freedom.

Our modern problem arises from the fact that government—the Supreme Court especially—has determined that the free exercise of religion is something guaranteed by government, that courts are to define and protect. As a result, understanding of the First Amendment is in utter disarray. Because judges assume themselves to be the protectors of religious liberty—rather than a threat to it, as the Amendment proclaims—they assume that they are the judges of what that religious liberty consists of. Thus they read the Amendment as containing substantive theological statements, of which there are currently two major contending theological interpretations.

First is the one I have been referring to: The interpretation of the First Amendment as creating a “wall of separation between Church and State” is based on a very definite theology. Repeatedly, the justices who support that interpretation have stated: “We have staked the very existence of our country on the faith that complete separation between state and religion is best for the state and best for religion” (Everson, McCollum, Torcaso). The statement that the State and religion should be completely separate leads to the conclusion that government is not merely forbidden to promote or decide religious matters, but that it is to ensure that no religious activity whatsoever is to take place within its realm. All religious activities, even if only engaged in freely by individuals, are to be confined behind a wall of government’s making. That interpretation would mean that not only could government not promote prayer or Bible reading in public schools, but also that students themselves could not engage in voluntary prayer or any religious activity in public schools, because those schools belong to the realm of the State, from which religion is separated.

Opponents of the “wall of separation” imagery advance the second theological position. They see that interpretation—correctly—as using the power of government to impose such a belief, a “faith,” as the Court has said, a theology on individuals and society. Justice Kennedy has opposed what he referred to as the “relentless extirpation of all contact between government and religion” (County of Allegheny). Unfortunately, however, this group would impose another theological approach, one that would re-impose a form of Christendom. Its proponents would endow government with the power to sponsor non-coercive, non-denominational religion, with themselves, of course, as judges of the essentially religious question of what is non-coercive and what is non-denominational.

The solution to endowing government with power to banish all religion from the sphere of the State is not to endow that same State with power to create a State-sponsored religion.

Although I oppose both theological interpretations of the First Amendment, I am focusing on the “wall of separation” interpretation because the theology associated with it has come to dominate all judicial thinking, even that of those who opposed the image of the “wall.”

The actual “wall of separation” image is no longer much invoked by the Court, and, as an image, it has fallen on harder times in judicial circles, although not in scholarly writing or journalism. The fact that no one can define or
describe that metaphor does present those who use it with a certain difficulty. However, even if the figure of speech itself has fallen on harder times, the system of theology it represents is still very much in effect. Indeed, I argue that it has captured even those who are most opposed to the actual term.

The fundamental propositions that make up the theology associated with the “wall of separation” metaphor can be found in the Everson decision that equated it with the First Amendment. The decision put forth three fundamentally theological propositions.

First, the Court decided that the subject of the First Amendment was “aid” to religion, that it prohibits government from aiding or impeding religion. The result of this proposition is to render the justices experts in religious matters. Whereas the Amendment is a reminder to government to confine itself to its own limited, secular authority, deciding what aids or hinders religion, rather than what is secular, has become the focus of the justices’ concern, i.e., a religious question has become their primary focus. It makes them—rather than religious believers—arbiters of what aids or hinders religion, a decision the First Amendment guarantees they will not make.

Second, if judges are to determine what aids or hinders religion, they must assure themselves of their own fairness and impartiality. Thus they proclaim themselves to be neutral and assign themselves power to judge what is religiously neutral, i.e., to take over from religious believers the ability to determine the consequences of secular laws for religious organizations. All the justices equally accept this system of theology. In the recent Zellman case, wherein the Supreme Court upheld Cleveland’s voucher program, the opinions used the words “neutral” or “neutrality” with regard to religion seventy times.

The result is that instead of being confined and limited, this theology of neutrality in religion presumes omniscience and omnicompetence on the part of the Court. In a country of such religious diversity as the United States, there may be no law that some group of believers will not find either helpful or hindering. Certainly, one that provides for vouchers for private and religious schools is a good example. The free exercise of religion is a guarantee that believers are to decide what is religiously neutral, what assists or hinders their religion. How religious groups define their schools will determine how they evaluate the effect of vouchers upon them. The role of the Court, on the other hand, is to determine whether a law is secular and within the limited and specified powers of government, i.e., whether it will involve government in making religious judgments and decisions. Whether it will help or hinder religion is a religious issue, one reserved for believers and protected from government interference and second-guessing by the First Amendment.

The third proposition is the one I quoted earlier that states: “We have staked the very existence of our country on the faith that complete separation between state and religion is best for the state and best for religion.” With that, we come full circle back to the argument that the First Amendment is a theological statement, that not only did evangelical theology or some other theology contribute to its passage, but that the Amendment itself incorporates and propagates a theology, i.e., what is best for religion. This would mean that government proclaims what is in the interest of religion, and legislators and judges, not religious believers, make the theological assessment of what is best for religion.

This determination of the State to proclaim a faith about what is best for the Church brings us back to where I began—the fact that the Constitution requires no belief, no faith, no theology. Yet, despite the clarity and force with which this is stated in the Constitution, in the proclamation against test oaths in the First, Ninth, and Tenth Amendments, Americans have always found it difficult to abandon an official theology, to accept that, in the United States, there is no proper or required way of being religious.

Nineteenth-century Catholic immigrants faced the challenge of proving they could be truly American without subscribing to the theology, customs, and practices their opponents told them they had to accept. By resisting that theology, they clarified, deepened, and broadened the great
Protestant heritage of religious liberty, and, in the process, transformed the nation.

Catholic historians and others who write of Catholicism in America have generally been unable to grasp this history, because they have, to a considerable extent, internalized the attitudes of the critics of Catholicism. Catholic historical scholarship exhibits a good deal of evidence of the Stockholm Syndrome—the identification of hostages with their captors. Although Catholic immigrants fiercely resisted the idea that there was a particularly American way of being religious, Catholic historians have spent their energies searching for “American Catholicism” and asking if Catholicism has really become American. Collectively, their activity amounts to the question, “Are we there yet?”

For example, they tend to see what they perceive as a truly American Catholicism that was emerging around 1800 as having been inundated by the hordes of Catholic immigrants. They are inclined to interpret the failure of what is called the Trustee movement in Catholicism in nineteenth-century America as a failure to democratize Catholicism. In reality, that movement represented an attempt to impose on Catholicism one of the principal tenets of the de facto establishment of the time—that the only proper way for churches to be in America was congregational. [My opposition here is not to church participation by its members but to Whig history.]

The controversy over a movement known as Americanism, which was condemned by the Vatican but which historians claim no one ever adhered to, has assumed an enormous role in Catholic scholarship. In general, the focus of that scholarship has been on how Catholics adapted, adjusted, and were assimilated into American life and culture. It is a tacit admission that although Catholics transformed America in practice, historians have accepted the theology of their critics, i.e., that there is an American way of being religious, that the First Amendment is a theological statement, and that Catholics need to adjust to that American theology.

The way out of the present confusion in thinking about Church and State lies in returning to the abandonment of the First Amendment as a theological statement. We can celebrate Roger Williams, William Penn, and the wonderful influence and achievement of evangelical Protestantism and still say that the Constitution does not incorporate any theology. As the Supreme Court explained so well in its 1943 Flag Salute decision:

We think the action of the local authorities in compelling the flag salute and pledge transcends constitutional limitations on their power and invades the sphere of intellect and spirit which it is the purpose of the First Amendment to our Constitution to reserve from all official control.

The sphere of intellect and spirit is beyond government adjudication, and that sphere embraces what assists or hinders religion, what is religiously neutral, and what is best for religion. Members of government, including judges, are to confine themselves to determining what is secular and within their competence, and the First Amendment is a proclamation that when they do so, the people will be able to exercise their natural right to enjoy the free exercise of religion, free of government interference and theology. □
About a decade ago, Sports Illustrated editor Ron Fimrite contacted several distinguished authors, many of whom had been awarded Pulitzer Prizes and other noteworthy literary awards, and asked them to write about how they had become such avid baseball fans. In part, what fascinated Fimrite was the observation that the authors were so taken by the sport that baseball images or heroes often seeped into their literary works, even shaping their literary worlds. In his introduction to Birth of a Fan, Fimrite notes that “baseball did not merely transform these writers into terminal fans; it also heightened their awareness of a larger world, introduced them to a life beyond childhood.” Simply and theologically put, baseball facilitates a devout fan’s rite of passage from the world of childhood playgrounds to the ekklesia of new relationships, an always-imminent realm that overflows with hope and promise. If you don’t believe me, just ask Cubs fans.

Fimrite’s description of the transformative power of baseball—of its pervasive effect and enduring influence—corresponds to the phenomenon of conversion and its articulation in personal narratives that have characterized many eras and aspects of American life, ranging from the spiritual accounts of colonial Puritans to the emancipation narratives of African-American slaves, to the protests against patriarchal structures by feminists, to the testimonies of evangelical devotees. In continuity with these significant American life-changing narratives, the baseball affiliation stories manifest thematic and stylistic similarity to the sub-genre of spiritual autobiography that includes spiritual diaries, conversion narratives, and personal testimonies.

In his examination of conversion narratives in early American Protestantism, Rodger Payne reflects on “the morphology of conversion” for Puritans, Congregationalists, and converts during the Great Awakening. During the initial period of American revivalism, the discourse of Evangelicals about conversion helped to generate a democratic form of religious authority and to establish “a new vernacular literature of conversion narratives and spiritual autobiographies.” The significance and characteristics of conversion have been identified clearly throughout Paul’s epistles, and they have been summarized succinctly by Jonathan Edwards. Conversion, he noted, strongly implies and signifies a change of nature: such as being born again; becoming new creatures; rising from the dead; being renewed in the spirit of the mind; dying to sin, and living to righteousness; putting off the old man, and putting on the new man; and being made partakers of the divine nature. . . . They that are truly converted are new men, new creatures; new, not only within, but without; they are sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul and body; old things are passed away, all things are become new."

Professor Price delivered this talk on April 30, 2003, at a Wednesday Lunch in Swift Common Room.
By suggesting that the birth of a fan is a conversion, I accept the premise that fandom is a kind of faith.

Although the experience of conversion is significant, it becomes transformative as it is remembered and articulated in such a way that the reconstructed narration of the event shapes one’s identity and provides a foundation for hope and personal growth. As Payne concludes about the early American conversion experiences, “only the experience of conversion empowered—and compelled—the convert to speak of conversion. Further, the experience of conversion itself became a product of the narrative through which it was given form, structure, and meaning.”

A similar process of shaping experience through stories characterizes reflective baseball fans. Drawing from the depths of childhood memories and the intensity of adult passion for baseball, the authors in Fimrite’s volume construct their affiliation narratives in such a way that renders form, structure, and meaning to their lives. Not surprisingly, Fimrite’s contributors repeatedly connect their early love of baseball with a desire to learn more about the game, especially its terms and its teams, its players and its rules. As children, they consumed the sports pages in newspapers, devouring reports and features about the best and worst teams and their favorite players. Then, learning to dissect box scores of games, they began to (re)create games by reconstructing innings—by narrating at-bats, hits, runs, and putouts. That early fascination with baseball accounts led them increasingly to other sections of the newspaper, to libraries for books, and finally to paper and pen for writing themselves.

Although we might occasionally expect these sorts of memories and reflections to come from intellectuals who love the game, we might not expect their consistent perspective and tone, both of which align these reflections with the sub-genre of autobiography known as “conversion narratives.” It is here—with the idea that the birth of a fan is a sort of conversion—that I want to focus our attention. By suggesting that the birth of a fan is a conversion, I accept the premise that fandom is a kind of faith, as argued by Christopher H. Evans and others in the recent collection The Faith of Fifty Million: Baseball, Religion, and American Culture.

First, however, I must confess my own fanaticism and faithfulness. Given the reading of others’ accounts as “conversion narratives,” it should not be too surprising that I describe my attraction to baseball in religious terms. On October 9, 1956, I sat in my home in Jackson, Mississippi, and read the lead story in the sports section of the Jackson Clarion-Ledger. As a new baseball fan, I read about Don Larsen’s perfect game on the previous day. As a preacher’s kid, I understood reality in terms of the sermons that I heard at least three times a week from my father’s pulpit and more often from my mother’s kitchen perch. I sensed somehow that baseball would be big for me, and so I established allegiance that very moment for theological reasons: If I were to be a baseball fan, then surely I must admire and seek perfection. For the first time in World Series play, I read, perfection had been realized. Perfection had become manifest at Yankee Stadium, the “House that Ruth Built.” That description itself is somehow as evocative for me as the mention of similarly mythic and distant Solomon’s Temple. The day before my newspaper reading, a Yankees pitcher performed a unique feat, hurling a perfect game at the time of baseball season’s final judgment—the World Series. I then confessed that I would love the Yankees, something that young Southern Baptists are not wont to do. And so I have followed them faithfully for more than forty years, even when Ross
Moschitto and Roger Repoz roamed the outfield wilderness as anticipated successors to the perfect 7 himself, St. Mickey Mantle.

OK. So, I’m obsessed. I’m incurably a Yankees fan. Given my nurture within a religious household and given my own career as a theologian, it is not too surprising that I describe my own experience of faithful following of the Yankees in religious terms. To adapt Luther’s succinct testimony at Worms, “Here I cheer. I cannot do otherwise.” I might also add that in the spirit of religious protest so crucial to Protestant traditions, my two sons have converted to heretical sects, or at least impotent ones—the Cubs and the Red Sox!

But what about other fans? Does their following also resemble or manifest the characteristics of faith?

Two theological reasons seem to make sense about the expressions of devotion that sports fans exhibit with regard to their favorite teams, whether they be my personal recollections and interpretation or the memories and analyses recorded by the authors in Fimrite’s collection. The more obvious one, to which we will return, is that fans often invest their allegiance with a sense of ultimacy. Their fervor reveals their faith. According to Frank Deford—the Sports Illustrated writer who first suggested that if Karl Marx had lived in the twentieth century, he would have opined that sports is the opiate of the people—the very love of baseball develops out of being a fan: “No matter how much you might play baseball as a boy [or girl], no matter how much you might chuck the old horsehide around,” Deford avers, “nobody ever comes to baseball without coming through the love of a baseball club.”

The other theological reason has to do with the ways that sports have often provided the symbols and sites for rites of passage that, in previous generations, cultures, and traditions, had often been associated with religious rituals and myths. A couple of years after the strike-shortened season of ’94, Steven Stark, a former columnist for the Boston Globe, affirmed that baseball is back, and he identified this phenomenon well. “Like Billy Crystal’s character in City Slickers,” he observed, “baseball fanatics often use the sport to supply the sacred family experiences [that] religion once provided. Instead of a bar mitzvah or confirmation, seeing Mickey Mantle bat or playing catch with Dad become the seminal experiences of life.”

That was certainly the case for my “Baptist bar mitzvah.” To celebrate my early adolescent birthday in the summer of 1961, my family planned a father-son journey to give me the chance to see the Yankees play. The pilgrimage, which provided a chance for me to bond with my father as an emerging adolescent, an adult fan in the eyes of the true faith, yielded baseball memories that now take on mythic proportions. The religious significance of the trip itself was also shaped by its pilgrimage character. To minimize cost, the trip was planned to coincide with a family vacation within a day’s drive of Chicago, which was the nearest American League city to my home town. Also like a pilgrimage, our trip had to overcome personal difficulties (my raging intestinal flu that almost prevented our departure) and social obstacles (intimidation by small gangs of urban kids near Comiskey Park). Finally, the trip required sacrifice, driving late into the night on two-lane highways and staying in a cramped room downtown in an alien city. For a pre-adolescent Southern boy, the world of the YMCA hotel on Wabash, adjacent to the South-Side loop of the “El,” seemed like Ninevah.

Of course, my father and I did attend two games, and we witnessed heroes of demigod status accomplish mythic feats: In a losing cause on Friday night, Mantle hit a home run batting right-handed, and the following afternoon, Maris hit one of his sixty-one round-trippers that year. The Saturday game also featured Elston Howard hitting one over the roof of the left-field stands, Maris throwing out Louie Aparicio at home on an attempted sacrifice fly in the bottom of the eighth, and Bob Cerv pinch-hitting a game-tying homer in the top of the ninth. In ten innings, the Yankees won 9-8. Maslow would call the event a peak experience, Tillich might have called it kairos, but I simply thought of it as heaven. Even now, the scorecard from the game, the popcorn megaphone from the concession stands, and a photograph of me waving a Yankees pennant in our box seats that afternoon enjoy relic status on a shelf in my study.
Several of the authors who provide “conversion narratives” for Fimrite’s volume remark on the significance of family for their early fan activity. In particular, Pulitzer Prize winner J. Anthony Lukas identifies ways in which his fondness for the Yankees helped to connect him to a larger, more stable world. Lukas had won the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction for his humane portrayal of race relations in Boston in his 1986 contemporary history, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families*. And Jonathan Yardley, the noted literary critic for the *Washington Post*, who previously had been a writer for *Sports Illustrated*, reflects perceptively on the construction and continuity of family myth about the early, formative days of being a fan. Like the writers of conversion narratives in recognized religions, Lukas, Yardley, and Doris Kearns Goodwin identify a transformative event or period, connect it to family life, and indicate how their love of the game and their devotion to a single team oriented a new engagement with, and understanding of, the world.

Anthony Lukas recalls how the darker world of his mother’s manic depression lurked beneath the apparent success and stability of his family life. Initially, his father appeared to be prospering as a lawyer in Manhattan, while his mother supervised the elegant renovation of a farmhouse on six wooded acres in White Plains. But beneath this profile of contentment lay the darker worlds of his mother’s illness and his family’s dysfunction. Eventually, she committed suicide, and subsequently, his father abused alcohol and suffered a bout with tuberculosis. It is with “little wonder then,” he writes,

> that I retreated whenever possible into that other world [of imaginary playmates], where bumblebee princes soared to the stars. I was in search of a realm which made more sense than this one, a place in which beauty and virtue and talent were rewarded not by pain and death, but by the love and approbation they deserved.

> It was then that I found baseball.¹⁰

For Lukas, baseball liberated; baseball redeemed. Like converts to religious communities and traditions, Lukas had experienced the desolation of his own world, seeking deliverance from his destitute state and refuge in the new world, a promised land, a hope-filled world of joy and victory where stability prevailed and justice reigned. Such a remote, transcendent world could be perceived through listening to the radio broadcasts of games of the great Yankees. “To millions of Americans,” Lukas continues,

> the Yanks were arrogant . . . spoilers who squeezed all innocent joy from the game. But to an anxious youth still shaken by the implosion of his ordered world, the masterful Yanks were vastly reassuring. If I couldn’t control my environment, they surely dominated theirs. And by some alchemy of fandom, their triumphs were mine as well.¹¹

In a way akin to a new Christian’s experience of hope and security in the Kingdom of God, Lukas found the victorious world of DiMaggio and Dickey, of Gordon and Keller, to be the realm of deliverance that enabled the living-out of routines and combating of pain in the everyday world.

The Yankees made other contributions to Lukas’s salvation by providing a sense of community, of personal continuity. “Not surprisingly,” he concludes,

> what I missed most in those years was the very notion of family, the ingathering of Lukases each night in that comfortable old house, the sense that people that I loved and who loved me were there at the close of each day, no matter how I’d fared on the history quiz or how many goals I’d blown in soccer practice. . . . Before long the Yankees became my surrogate family.¹²

A fan’s identification with his or her favorite team as family indicates a rebirth that is remarkably similar to a convert’s identification with his or her new brothers and sisters in Christ. This surrogate family is, as Annie succinctly affirmed in *Bull Durham*, “the Church of Baseball.” More than merely the sense of the sacred that one gets at a fabled stadium or baseball shrine, the Church of Baseball is fundamentally the community of like-minded believers.
In her memoir about growing up on Long Island in the baseball-rich New York of the mid-twentieth century, Doris Kearns Goodwin also reflects on the bonding potential of baseball. When she was only six years old, she met eight-year-old Johnny, a devoted Dodgers fan who knew even more about the Dodgers than she did. “It was my first introduction,” she recalls, to the invisible community of baseball, which now, for the first time, was extended beyond my street in Rockville Centre, to the town of Mineola, where Johnny lived. In years to come, I would find that the lovers of the Dodgers, and, indeed, of baseball, shared common ground, reaching across generations and different social stations dispersed across the country.13

Additionally, there is “nothing [that] inspires camaraderie,” she notes, “like sharing a victory not only of a game, but of a season.” This sense of camaraderie that grows out of the social anti-structure or “communitas”14 is also manifest during ritual occasions at the ballpark, when, for instance, fans sing “Take Me out to the Ballpark” during the seventh-inning stretch, when they clap and stomp in unison to rattle the opposing pitcher or urge on the home-team hitter, when they implore the charm of the rally monkey at Anaheim, and when they join the chorus at Comiskey Park, singing: “Nah, nah, nah, nah. Nah, nah, nah, nah. Hey, hey, goodbye.” The penchant for baseball allegiance to provide such a communal connection transcends the particularity of ballparks and games. For throughout her travels, even now as an adult, Goodwin encounters Brooklyn Dodgers fans across the country who immediately bond and share a true believer’s faith with her as they revel in their memories of, and devotion to, “da Bums” of Brooklyn.

The establishment of affiliation with a particular team, she remembers, was passed on from father to child, like one’s religion, “with the crucial moments in a team’s history repeated like the liturgy of a church service.”15 The challenge to her childhood friendships, in fact, seemed to have been threatened more by Lainie Lubar’s fondness for the Yankees than by the Kearnses’ religious differences with the Lubars. Lainie was so devoted to the Yankees that she would argue the superiority of the diminutive and wily Billy Martin as the premier second baseman, much to the dismay and discomfort of Doris, who “idolized,” as she puts it, the fleet and powerful Jackie Robinson. Following the Yankees’ defeat of the Dodgers in the ’49 World Series, she recalls, her relationship with Elaine suffered for weeks. It was then, too, that Doris first understood the agony, power, and hope of the Dodger fan’s refrain, “Wait till next year,” echoing the eternal religious affirmation from the Lubars’ household, “Next year, in Jerusalem.”

Although she likens the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church to the cycles of a baseball season, nowhere does Goodwin identify the conflation of the sporting and spiritual more thoroughly than in her consternation over celebrating her First Holy Communion. As she prepared for her first confession, she suffered guilt from the malice that she had wished on the Dodgers’ arch-rivals—the Giants—and she suffered guilt from the quandary about wanting to see Roy Campanella in a speaking appearance at a local Episcopal church. Devoted wholeheartedly to the Roman Catholic Church and the authority of the pope, Doris worried about the papal proscription against setting foot in a non-Roman Catholic church. Her fears were only partly relieved, she recalls, when her father assured her that the Catholic Church’s prohibition pertained to participating in a religious service rather than attending a lecture by a baseball player. However, following her rapturous experience of meeting a baseball hero and hearing him speak, in a somewhat squeaky voice that belied the power of his baseball prowess, she returned home to a bedtime anxiety that only nuns can induce. Their warnings, she writes, tumbled through my head, convincing me that I had traded the life of my everlasting soul for the joy of one glorious night when I held Roy Campanella’s strong hand in a forbidden church. Jumping out of bed, I got down on my knees and repeated every prayer I could remember, in the hope that each would wipe away part of the stain that the Episcopal church had left on my soul.16

Days thereafter, she confessed her shortcomings to an understanding priest who heard her admit that every night she had also wished that harm would come to Robin Roberts and Richie Ashburn, Enos Slaughter and Phil Rizzuto, and Alvin Dark and Allie Reynolds. She desired that the players would suffer temporary injuries in order to permit the Dodgers a first world championship.

“But how would you feel knowing that the victory wasn’t really deserved,” the priest asked, “knowing that if your rivals had been healthy your team might not have won? I promise you it wouldn’t feel anywhere near as good as if you won in the proper way. Now, let me tell you a secret. I love the Dodgers just as much as you do, but I believe they will win the World Series someday fairly and squarely. You don’t need to wish harm on others to make it happen.”17

For her penance, the priest assigned young Doris to “say two Hail Marys, three Our Fathers, and . . . a special prayer for the Dodgers.” About her experience, Goodwin concluded: “My First Confession, received by a baseball-loving priest, had left me closer to my church than ever before.”18

The celebration of family relationships is certainly one of the dimensions of baseball’s religious power. In the simple act of Fathers Playing Catch with Sons, recalling Donald Hall’s poetic title, we find “a momentary grace of order” that lends joy and affection to otherwise tedious and separate lives.20 The “momentary grace of order” that baseball offers is one that adheres to rules. As Gil Renard, the pathological Giants fan portrayed by Robert DeNiro in The Fan (1986), puts it: “Baseball is better than life. It’s fair.” The celebration of family relationships also manifests the testimonial character of writing about baseball. So keen were the stories of baseball and its significance to her relationship with her father that Goodwin vividly recalls the transformation afforded by the first night game at Ebbets Field: “I was sitting by my father’s side, five years before I was born,” she asserts, “when the lights were turned on for the first time at Ebbets Field, the crowd gasping and then cheering as the summer night was transformed into startling day.” So intense was their relationship through baseball that she believed that her father’s “love of baseball would be forever unfulfilled” if she did not recount a missed game to him, play by play, inning by inning.21

Although the mind might exaggerate or transmute actual baseball events when remembering childhood activities with one’s physical family, Jonathan Yardley recognizes the mythic impact of family baseball outings. “Memory is fallible and mine more so than most. But does it matter?” he muses. “Are the specifics all that important? I think not. The indisputable and central fact is that this unlikely process [of loving baseball] started in this unlikely place. . . .” Yardley recalls his youthful enthusiasm in the summer of 1948, when his father took him by train to New York to see a doubleheader between the Yankees and the St. Louis Browns. The
trip, he now figures, must have required a major paternal
sacrifice because of his father’s full indifference to—if not
thorough abhorrence of—baseball itself. “At least I
think it was a doubleheader,” Yardley continues.

It must have been a doubleheader because my . . .
private mythology insists upon it—insists that my
father, who so hated sports, so loved his son—that he
was willing to sit through two whole baseball games
in order to make him happy.

What if it was just a single
game? What if we stayed
only five innings? What
shabby raw material would
I then have been given from
which to fabricate what has
become one of the central
legends of my life?

I’d rather not know. I’ve
resisted all impulses to search
out the occasion in the newspa-
per files of seasons past.22

What is at work for Yardley?
Among other things, he mani-
fests the orientation of converts
who write about their experi-
ences. “There is an urgent need
among them,” Peter Dorsey
asserts about autobiographers
reflecting on their conversion
experiences, “to justify their ori-
entations to the world, not just as they were at the time of
writing, but as they had been and would be.”23 In addition to
his use of conversion rhetoric, Yardley also employs language
about the father loving his son so much that he would suffer
that which is reprehensible. The image and language here
surely resonate with the language of the Johanine gospel. Fur-
thermore, the impulse to place faith in the legends of childhood
memory and meaning resounds with the theological effort
to maintain faith in the simple stories of a religious tradition
rather than the critical analysis of texts and the deconstruc-
tion of charter myths.

Even if baseball did not actually prompt such a sacrifice
from his father, Yardley has oriented his life around the firm
conviction—even if legend—that his father loved him so
much that he would endure his disdain for baseball not only
by taking young Jonathan on the train to Yankee Stadium,
but also by sitting through a full day of baseball with him. As
Yardley draws a conclusion to
his mythic memory, he invokes
more explicit religious language:

But my father, having
helped give me this [base-
ball experience], then
took it away. He accepted
a new job, running a
school for girls in South-
side, Virginia, and sud-
denly I was three hundred
miles from the nearest
big-league ballpark, not
to mention five hundred
miles from Yankee Sta-
dium [itself]. I had barely
received true baptism as a
fan, and now I was excom-
municated.24

Whether accurately recalling
actual events or fusing mean-
ing and hope with nuggets of
fact, baseball memories can exert this formative power in
orienting life. In this regard, Robert Creamer, another of
the authors featured in Fimrite’s collection, does not care
about the accuracy of his recollection of his first game at
the Polo Grounds, an afternoon that featured a double-
header against the Giants and Dodgers. “I can’t remember
if one team swept both games or if the doubleheader was
split,” he concedes.

Continued on page 37
On April 24–25, a conference was held to honor the scholarship and teaching of Don Browning, the Alexander Campbell Professor Emeritus of Ethics and Social Sciences in the Divinity School and Director of the Lilly Project on Religion, Culture and Family, who retired in December 2001, after thirty-five years of service on the faculty. The conference convened colleagues, former students, and friends to discuss the topic “Norm and Description: Their Relation in Practical Theology, Ethics, and the Social Sciences.”

Papers were delivered by Robert Fuller (Southern Illinois University), Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Vanderbilt University Divinity School), Jean Bethke Elshtain (University of Chicago Divinity School), and Johannes van der Ven (University of Nijmegen). The event concluded with a panel discussion, moderated by Ian Evison (The Alban Institute), with Kathleen Cahalan (Saint John’s University School of Theology/Seminary), Pamela Couture (Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School), Volney Gay (Vanderbilt University), Cynthia Lindner (University of Chicago Divinity School), John Wall (Rutgers University), and Don Browning.

The speeches printed below were delivered at the two conference receptions held to honor Professor Browning. The first reception took place on Thursday evening at Disciples Divinity House (DDH), featuring a special tribute by the House’s dean, Kris Culp, and the presentation of a special “Festschrift”: the Browning Family Fund. The second reception took place on Friday evening at the Divinity School, featuring tributes by Divinity School colleagues Bernard McGinn and W. Clark Gilpin, and former M.Div. student Elizabeth Marquardt, among others.

— KRISTINE A. CULP —

Forty-seven years ago and about this time of year, Don Spencer Browning accepted an invitation to become a Disciples Divinity House Scholar and study at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Little did he know, he would never really leave the place again.

Within the next decade, Don received three degrees—the B.D., the A.M., and the Ph.D.—was ordained, married Carol Kohl, and began teaching at the Divinity School. [His older sister, Carolyn, calls him “a dynamo of energy and ideas.” I believe Don himself called this “generativity.”] It was the sixties; the world was changing; and he and his fellow DDH comrades were ready to make a difference.

By the early eighties, when I arrived here as a Ph.D. student and House Scholar, Don Browning had already made a difference. The Moral Context of Pastoral Care, the Fortress Press series Theology and Pastoral Care, co-editing Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, among other contributions, helped to define the fields of pastoral care and of religion and psychological studies—contributions that this superb conference can only begin to recognize.

At DDH, Don had stepped into the breach of a two-year
vacancy in the deanship after the death of William Barnett Blakemore. Under Don’s leadership, the dialectic between university and church was enlivened, and he not only took up the mantle of deanship, but also the mantles of student and board recruitment and fundraising. Work of the students he recruited is evident around us today at this conference, at the Divinity School, at Disciples House, and elsewhere. Gifts he helped to encourage and arrange are still coming to fruition. Carol Browning was then the organist for DDH’s Chapel of the Holy Grail and at University Church. The couple was everywhere. Theologians have a word for this: we call it omnipresence.

We were inclined to make other attributions to Dean Browning, for instance, omnipotence, or at least some measure thereof. There were tales of deanly intervention that afforded near miraculous reconsiderations of student status, bringing persons back from the brink. Ph.D. students, in general, believed that one of the surest predictors of life beyond the degree was whether one was a Browning student.

Omniscience is suggested by the breadth and depth of Don’s scholarly contributions. At DDH, we had another sign of it: a portrait of Don Browning. The portrait, now on the side wall, used to hang at the far end of the room. No matter which door you entered, his gaze was already fixed upon you. And when you walked across the room, his eyes never seemed to leave you. There wasn’t much at the Disciples Divinity House or elsewhere that escaped Don’s attention.

Before we become captivated with notions of deity, and begin to imagine Don and Carol as King and Queen of Heaven, I will stop. Don himself would never claim as his own these attributes of deity—omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience. Don and Carol never pretended to be co-consorts ruling their subjects; they’ve always been first among fellow citizens. Moreover, Don’s too much Chicago School, too much a pragmatist, too much a hermeneut, too much a Christian humanist to ascribe omni-attributes to any person or deity.

Some revisionist attributes are more adequate to Don-ity. Citizenship. Collegiality. Scholarship. Mentorship. Stewardship and care. Benevolence. Wisdom and insight. Generativity. These attributes of Don-ity have infused our lives and shaped our work. And, in fact, from them we have known something of life that exceeds our own lives, of power that transforms our own, and of knowledge that redounds to surpassing wisdom. Don and Carol, we are profoundly grateful.

Actually, we wanted to do a little more than to thank you. We wanted to help ensure that the attributes you have taught about and lived come around to new generations of students. We decided to build the Browning Family Fund as a way of honoring and extending your work. The contributions have been pouring in from DDH trustees, friends, and alumni, and from other students and colleagues. To date, 127 individuals or couples have contributed almost $13,000 to the Browning Fund. Call the effort a sort of enduring Festschrift, a collection offered by many to honor the contributions of another. And so, on behalf of all of the writers of the Browning Fund Festschrift, we honor and celebrate you.

— BERNARD MCGINN —

When Dean Rosengarten asked me to say something in honor of Don Browning on the occasion of the festivities marking his retirement, I was only too happy to acquiesce. The Dean said to me, “I know you’ve been friends for many years, and, after all, your career at the Divinity School has paralleled his.” “Wait a minute,” I thought, “I can’t be that old.” After all, Don was already a distinguished and tenured faculty member when I arrived in 1969. He also did his graduate studies here. Just for the record, Don arrived at Swift Hall in 1956, took his B.D. in 1959, his Ph.D. in 1964, and returned to teach here in 1965, after a brief stint at Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma. So you can see the vast age difference between us.

For years, I can remember Don wondering whether he was better described as the youngest of the old faculty, or the oldest of the young faculty, that is, people of my generation. Now this may seem like a distinction without a difference. To most of you here today, we both seem pretty old—after
When one thinks of Don’s contribution to the study of religion, I think the first reaction, if not exactly “shock and awe,” is certainly an admiring wonder.

Religion and psychology, however, forms only one side of Don’s contribution to the study of religion. From the start of his academic career, he has also been deeply involved in religious ethics and pastoral care, to use the title of his 1983 book from Fortress Press. During the 1980s and 1990s, this side of Don’s scholarship focused increasingly on the issue of the emerging discipline of practical theology. Don’s 1991 book, A Fundamental Practical Theology, was one of the seminal works in spelling out the necessity for a soundly based and critical practical theology. The influence of this work, both in North America and in Europe, has rightly given Don an international reputation second to none in the area of practical theology. During the past decade, under the sponsorship of the Lilly Endowment’s Religion, Culture and Family Project, Don’s investigation of the role of religious ethics and practical theology in the culture wars of our time has produced a further stream of rich publications, both from his own pen and under his editorship.

Now there are many here who can speak more fully and more exactly about Don’s contributions as a scholar of religion. Some of them have spoken of it during the past two days. My words are primarily those of a colleague and friend. From this perspective, I think it is helpful to return to the issue of Don’s many years of service. It has always seemed to me that one of the great blessings of the Divinity School in the decades I have known it has been the remarkable
continuity of a faculty distinguished for scholarship, yes, but also notable for its consistency and dedication to the School and its students. It is no secret that Don’s many accomplishments and his stature in theology and religious studies led to his being wooed over the years by a number of prestigious schools with offers which, if not exactly beyond the dreams of avarice, to quote Doctor Johnson, were at least sufficiently tempting for the average divine. We are fortunate that Don resisted these temptations—those siren songs wafting in from the east and south—and that he continued to devote his energy and learning to the Divinity School.

Former students and friends have already given ample testimony to Don’s gifts as teacher and mentor over his decades at Swift Hall. Speaking for his colleagues, the side of his many contributions that stands out in my mind is the judiciousness, the wisdom, and dedication he has brought to our common endeavors over the decades. Don is one of those unflappable people that every institution needs both in good times and during times when crises and contentions arise. On many occasions, too many to try to recall here, when confusion or debate arose over what seemed like novel problems, Don would be the one to remind us, “We have been here before.” At other times, when new insights were really called for and hard work was required to translate plans into practice, Don was always both wise and energetic. This kind of contribution is not just an issue of institutional memory, though that helps. Fundamentally, it is a question of personality and character—the steadiness, the perspicacity, the generosity, and the dedication that cannot really be taught in books or lectures, but that can be shared for the enrichment of all.

When we praise Don Browning and thank him for all that he has brought to the Divinity School over the years, we can only do so in the awareness that we are not thanking Don alone—we are thanking Don and Carol. The two have always functioned as a team, not only in their personal relations with students, colleagues, and friends, but also increasingly in their professional concerns in recent years, as the series of joint articles they have written for the Christian Century demonstrates. While Swift Hall will be the poorer in future years without their day-to-day presence, we hope that they won’t go far away and that they will continue to be active among us. This we do know—our memories of all they have given us will remain rich. So please join me in saluting Don and Carol on this happy occasion, thanking them for their years of unstinting dedication, generous hospitality, and, especially, for their warm friendship.

— W. CLARK GILPIN —

To quote the philosopher of pragmatism John Dewey, “That was an experience.” In saying this, Dewey was not directly referring to an encounter with Don Browning. Instead, Dewey employed this commonplace expression in order to launch an analysis of art in his great book of 1934, Art as Experience. But to my mind, Dewey’s interpretation of art beautifully renders the central intellectual contribution of Don Browning to this Divinity School, to Disciples Divinity House, to the University of Chicago, and to international scholarship in theology and religion. Thus, if the following brief and inadequate remarks were to have a title, it would be “The Artistry of Don Browning.”

According to Dewey, the continuous flow of our daily experience is largely unattended to and uncomposed—even inchoate—marked by distraction, dispersal, and interruption. In contrast to such experience, Dewey observes that “we have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences. . . . Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is an experience.” The cultural labor of the artist—whether painter, musician, or writer—focuses attention on some feature of experience in order to clarify and intensify the “traits that belong to every normally complete experience,” and thereby to reorder the wider flow of experience. Dewey’s conception of the artistic process is
fully consonant with the task that Don assigns to practical reason in his 1991 book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*. Practical reason, Don argues, is “a broad-scale interpretive and reinterpretive process,” whose aim is “the reconstruction of experience. When inherited interpretations and practices seem to be breaking down, practical reason tries to reconstruct both its picture of the world and its more concrete practices.”

Dewey identifies three features of this artistic reconstruction of experience that aptly identify Don Browning’s contributions to scholarship and our common life. First, Don has engaged in the art of practical theological reflection with a sense that it is naturally and necessarily interdisciplinary, because its origin and operation are in experience, bringing theology into intimate association “with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing, and achievement.” As Dewey says of a philosophy of the fine arts, its task is “to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They are the earth in one of its manifest operations.”

Just as geologists explore the implications of this interrelation for a theory of the earth, so similarly do those who seek a theory of art or of religion.

Second, Dewey identifies the craftsmanship of the artist with the “capacity to work a vague idea and emotion over into terms of some definite medium” in a way that creatively assimilates “meanings from the background of past experiences” and gives them “new life and soul through having to meet a new situation.” The way in which Don’s work has recreated the discipline of practical theology out of an inchoate collection of ministerial practices is only one instance of his artistic craftsmanship in theological reflection.

Third, Dewey emphasizes that the production of art is a dynamic process of creative perception, one that involves shaping and reshaping the medium until it has grown to completion. In this process, says Dewey, “the artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest.” And Dewey then immediately follows with his most important point. The great artist enlists the collaboration of those who see the artist’s work, such that “the beholder” must also pass through this process of creative perception “according to his [or her] point of view and interest.” Hence, perhaps the greatest testimony to the artistry of Don Browning has been the energy and vision by which he has made theological scholarship a dynamic and collaborative process of creative perception: the art of great teaching; the art of forming complex, collaborative research projects; and, by no means least, the art of being friend and colleague. For that reason, we have all so often departed a conversation with Don Browning saying, “That was an experience.”

ENDNOTES

4. Ibid., 75, 60.
5. Ibid., 54.

— ELIZABETH MARQUARDT —

*Why did you get an M.Div.?* I’m sometimes asked. Depending on who asks the question, I may be more or less truthful in my answer. As most of you know, the general public thinks everybody who goes to divinity school intends to be a minister someday—while we know the truth! And, indeed, I was one of those people who came to divinity school for diffuse, intangible reasons. I wanted to study the big ideas. I wanted to find a community of support and critique for my writing. Most of all, after several years bumping around in the work force, I wanted to be in a setting where I would find people I could respect and from whom I could learn.
Little did I know how fully these hopes would be realized. I met many wonderful people while I was at this school, some of whom are in this room. But the person who consistently put me in touch with what were, for me, the biggest ideas; the person who gave me a framework that pushed my writing in new directions; and one of the people who came to be someone I deeply admire and respect, is the subject of our honor today.

M.Div. students come and go in three years. We don’t generally publish. We don’t generally take up important positions in academia. Many of us do go into ministry in some form or another, doing important work that may or may not be recognized by everybody else. But, as I sat in Don Browning’s classes— I believe I had at least four with him—and as I interned on his path-breaking Religion, Culture and Family Project, I never felt distinguished from the Ph.D. students who sat around me. Don Browning embodied the Divinity School at its best: he felt a clear commitment to the ministry program and its students; he treated all students with utmost dignity and a twinkling charm; he is extraordinarily accomplished in his field—fields, really—but clearly saw the work of teaching, and teaching of all students, as an equal, if not greater, part of his vocation.

We students, you know, are like little spies. We’re always watching our professors, even when they think they’re off duty. We love seeing them out in the neighborhood, to see how they play tennis or what they buy for dinner at the grocery store, but, most of all, we love to be invited to their homes! As everyone here knows, Don and Carol Browning are eminent, gracious Hyde Parkers. Generations of students have cozied up in their house, had a glass of wine and a wonderful meal, and talked about the big ideas and their lives. Surely, it must be hard, at times, to muster concern for hundreds, if not thousands, of students who pass through your classroom and living room. Maybe, at times, they got the whole house ready for a dinner and felt a twinge of tiredness as the doorbell rang for the first of many times that evening. If so, of course, they never showed it.

When we crossed the threshold of the Brownings’ home, or Don Browning’s classroom, we could always trust that we would be welcomed. Don Browning gave us his best, and by doing so he brought out the best in us—our best thinking, our best writing, our best intentions. His career at the Divinity School may be drawing to a close—though certainly his career itself shows no signs of slowing down—but the way he shaped several generations of students will continue to have influence for generations to come. Don and Carol, please accept our gratitude, and our love. ☺
Mark Krupnick, Professor Emeritus of Religion and Literature in the Divinity School, the Department of English Language and Literature, and the Committee on Jewish Studies, passed away on March 29, 2003, at the age of 63 from ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease).

Mark Krupnick was a literary critic whose research and teaching focused on modern American literature, particularly Jewish-American writing, and twentieth-century literary theory and criticism.

He was the author of Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism, a study of the most distinguished of the “New York Intellectuals”—the group of literary and political critics, most of them Jewish, who rose to national prominence in the 1940s and 1950s. He also edited Displacement: Derrida and After, which represented his other major research interest, theories of textual interpretation, which held an especially important place in American literary studies from the 1960s on.

In addition to his book-length studies, Mark Krupnick wrote almost two hundred essays, reviews, articles, and op-ed pieces about such varied topics as his detestation of SUVs and the sale of donor eggs for the making of babies. He also wrote about death and dying in his last years. His work appeared in specialist journals, general-interest magazines, and newspapers in England, New York, and Chicago. A new book, which he finished three weeks prior to his passing, is in press at the University of Wisconsin. It is titled Jewish Writing and “The Deep Places of the Imagination,” and will include essays on Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, and Geoffrey Hartman, as well as figures associated with Partisan Review and Commentary in the middle years of the past century.

Mark Krupnick’s career took him to many different scenes. During his undergraduate studies at Harvard University, he took a two-year absence in 1958 to work an assortment of jobs, including handicapping horse races for the New York Post. He returned to Harvard in 1960 and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in American History and Literature. After three years in the doctoral program in English at Brandeis University, he won a Fulbright award and spent 1965–6 studying at the University of Cambridge in England. He returned to the United States for his first full-time teaching job at Smith College, moving, after a year, to Boston University, where he spent five years. In 1972–3, he received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to study psychoanalytic theory at the Hampstead Child-Therapy Center in London, which was then directed by Sigmund Freud’s daughter, Anna. He remained in England a second year as Visiting Lecturer in the Department of American Studies at the University of Keele in Staffordshire. In 1974, he returned to the United States as Assistant Professor in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, moving, in 1987, to the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he became the Acting Head of the English Department two years later. In 1990, he was appointed to the faculty of the University of Chicago Divinity School.

Mark Krupnick is survived by his wife, Dr. Jean K. Carney, and his son, Joseph Carney Krupnick, both of
I... was attracted to his easy manner, quirky humor, and general lack of pretentiousness.

whom live in Chicago. His mother, Betty, lives with his younger sister Elyse Krupnick in Mountain View, California, and another younger sister, Dr. Janice Krupnick Suzman, in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Instead of flowers, mourners are asked to contribute to the Mark Krupnick Memorial Library. Funds will go to building a library of books in English that will assist the students of Professor Wang Xiaolu at the University of Chingdu in China. (Professor Xiaolu was a student in one of Mark Krupnick’s National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars.) Donations may be addressed to: The Mark Krupnick Memorial Library Fund, 55 East Washington Street, #1219, Chicago, Illinois 60602.

Bruce Lincoln

I took a liking to Mark from the first time I met him. We shared some things in our respective life histories that made for a certain affinity, but I also was attracted to his easy manner, quirky humor, and general lack of pretentiousness. Over time, our friendship deepened, as did my admiration for him, and I’ll have more to say about how and why this happened. For the moment, however, let me also mention that I appreciated Mark’s love of literature and the way books wove in and out of his conversation. So for him, let me start by evoking a classic scene from a classic work as something of a literary preamble to my remarks this afternoon.

In Book 9 of the Iliad, there is one of the epic’s most poignant and significant scenes. Akhilles, greatest hero of the Greeks, has withdrawn from combat, having thrown a fit over his treatment by Agamemnon, commander in chief of the Greek forces, and a decidedly lesser person. Deprived of Akhilles, the Greeks are put at a military disadvantage, and—what is more—the supreme god, Zeus, having taken his side, has shifted the tide of battle in favor of the Trojans, to teach Agamemnon a lesson. Chastened and seeing the error of his ways, the latter decides to send ambassadors to make amends with the sulking Akhilles. For this delicate task, he chooses the wisest, most noble, and most eloquent of his lieutenants, and he authorizes them to proffer gifts and honor of unprecedented nature to the great warrior, acknowledging their dependence on his strength to save the Greeks from disaster.

All this follows the “plan of Zeus” (Dios boulê), and the god also wishes the embassy to succeed. In the course of things, however, it will go awry, Akhilles’ pride and anger being too great to be overcome at this stage of the narrative. Before Book 9 concludes, he will rage at the ambassadors, refuse their gifts and counsel, abuse them and the man who sent them. As a result, the war will continue and countless Greeks will go to their deaths, including Patroklos, his dearest friend. The dramatic encounter begins softly, however, with great delicacy, as the ambassadors make their way to Akhilles’ tent and find him there, playing the lyre to himself and singing the fame of great warriors (klea andrôn).

The scene is filled with both pathos and irony, for poet and warrior are meant to form a symbiotic pair. The latter provides material to the former, by way of the deeds he performs, while the poet reciprocates this gift by conferring “undying fame” (kleos aphthitos) through his song on those whose courage, accomplishments, and métier regularly make them die young. Having withdrawn from battle, Akhilles has renounced this fate. At this stage of the story, he has chosen one of the two alternative destinies foretold for him: a long and happy, but anonymous, life—instead of the other: a short and glorious existence, crowned with undying fame. As such, he no longer supplies poets with deeds to celebrate and immortalize. No longer a fit object of song, he is left to become a singer himself and to celebrate the great accomplishments of others: those who remain true heroes. Later, of course, he will rejoin the fight. He will kill, be killed, anguish and cause anguish, thereby winning his undying fame and supplying the substance of Homeric verse. But never again will he himself sing. One can have only one or the other.

The problem Mark wrestled with in much of his scholarship is related to the themes that emerge in this telling piece of Greek literature. It offers, however, a somewhat different take on the relations between art and life, between heroic experience and its fictive representations. The theme he
explored was the emergence of Jewish fiction in the United States: the way a people not accustomed to committing their life stories to writing, nor to thinking their lives particularly heroic, came to view their experiences, quirks, reflections, and vicissitudes as holding real interest for themselves and others, while developing a language and a genre that would make such experiences not only available, but memorable and moving.

Mark pondered the way American Jews made themselves into authors and characters alike: protagonists of their own stories. Not epic heroes, perhaps, but rich, three-dimensional figures in narratives that mixed comedy, angst, longing, confusion, playfulness, wit, sorrow, and wisdom. Heroism in such stories often came chiefly with endurance, and self-celebration mingled frequently with self-deprecation or darker sentiments still.

One gets a sense of the young Mark as the would-be hero of his own life story—the talented, ambitious Jewish kid from Newark, who made it to Harvard on intelligence and moxie, then stepped back to sample the bohemian riches of Greenwich Village before going back to Harvard again. Here and later, the relation between life and literature went in both directions, as material from books suggested episodes and experiences to be actively pursued, as when he planned vacations to explore Wordsworth country, or to follow Melville’s travels through the South Seas.

It was not just his own life he was concerned to bring into relation with written texts. His interest in writing obituaries for authors and critics he knew and studied was another expression of this same desire—converting their lives into his texts and going so far as to produce a deeply perceptive essay explicating the nature and significance of the obituary genre, and finally drafting a shrewd, revealing, and forthright obituary for himself.

The voice in that last obituary is as fascinating as the material it recounts: affectionate, but scrupulous, charming for its intimacy, warmth, good humor, and whimsy. One hardly gets the sense that Mark thought of himself as a heroic protagonist or the author of epic drama. If anything, I suspect he saw himself as an urbane and witty occasional critic, a clever and intriguing character in a comedy of manners, short story, or soap opera, perhaps, or conceivable in a narrative of paratactic structure (a term he taught me in the class we offered together, and defined as a story of episodic nature, in which “it’s just one goddam thing after another”).

Yet, notwithstanding his modesty and sly irony, in the last years of his life, Mark faced down an adversary more formidable and terrifying than any Akhilles encountered, and he did so with stunning courage and extraordinary resolve. What is more, he wrote and talked freely and honestly about his situation and struggle—about the ravages of ALS, the prospect of inevitable and imminent death; about loneliness and fear; about love, devotion, longing, and fragility. Throughout, he spoke with insight, clarity, and freedom from self-deception, showing humor, anger, compassion, and regret: the full range of human emotions.

My sense is that in practice, and not simply in words or abstraction, Mark resolved the issue he set for himself as a scholar, demonstrating how one can live a life worth narrating. In living—and describing—a life that reaches what he, following Lionel Trilling, came to call “The Deep Places of the Imagination,” indeed, the deep places of the soul, Mark also transcended the problem posed in Book 9 of the Iliad, for he effectively combined the roles of heroic combatant and singer of tales, Akhilles and Homer alike.

Continued on page 38
Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us; and his love is perfected in us.

I JOHN 4:7–12

Love does not come to everyone. How fortunate are we to whom it does come, and even come again. How blessed are we, how blessed are you, Richard and Tanya, not because all will now be well, but because all—whatever becomes or befalls you—will be enriched by the love that you share, will be shared by the love that enjoins you. Love doesn’t make everything all right, but, if lived out fully, love does make everything more bearable, and that is a blessing indeed.

For those of us blessed with love comes the mandate to fulfill “works of love” (that’s Kierkegaard’s phrase) with the whole of our lives. We are to make all that we do a response to our love for each other, and a mirror of the love of the Holy One, who, as the Apostle wrote, “first loved us.” Love is the furthest thing from self-indulgence! It’s a calling to extend ourselves beyond the circle of our own feeling for our beloved and to love equally the whole hurting world, not just in sentimental word but in audacious deed. If we love one another, we live it out with all of our being: in our working and in our resting, in our leisure and in our toil, in our solitude and in our over-extended craziness, we love the people and the world around us. Indeed, it was to a very ordinary group of people that Jesus said, “You are the light of the world!” Anyone who loves proclaims the same thing to all who are near every moment of the day. “Make many acts of love,” wrote St. Teresa of Jesus, “for they set the soul on fire and make it gentle.” What a perfect description of holy love—one that simultaneously burns its subjects, sets them alight, makes them never more alive and crackling with desire and passion and fervor, all the while making them tender and understanding and compassionate, not just toward the object of their love, but toward all humanity and creation. To love another person is to join the human family in a new and indescribably more intense way. It is not to seclude oneself but to participate all the more wholeheartedly. No wonder van Gogh had to conclude, “The best way to know God is to love many things.”

I’ve said that love makes life’s vagaries more bearable, but love is likewise a thing, even a burden, to be borne. William Blake wrote, “And we are put on Earth a little
space, that we may learn to bear the beams of love.” And love is, indeed, a yoke upon the shoulders at times, in the hospital room, in any room alone, when it is unrequited, when it faces an impasse, when it is deserted, or when it stands at the graveside. We are put on earth by the God who is love to learn to bear love in its fullness and in its absence, to learn to bear it and keep returning it no matter what the present and future may hold. We are put on earth to bear the burden of being loved—loved by God, loved by our parents, loved by our beloved, loved by our children, loved by one whom we do not love in return, loved by communities we embrace and/or resent, loved in spite of ourselves. We bear the crossbeams of the love we never asked for but are yet servant to, the love we never asked to receive and yet to which we must grant a response. We love and we are loved, and if we are graced indeed, we learn to bear the crossbeams of them both.

God is love, the First Letter of John boldly proclaims. That is as bizarre a news dispatch today as it was almost two thousand years ago (really, how could I pass up an opportunity to refer to the ancient world?). As David Tracy has noted, the ancient Greeks and Romans knew (and many today agree) that intelligence is the central attribute of the Divine, not love. God must be Pure Intelligence (think Aristotle); God must be the Good, even the Good beyond Being (think The Republic and many Platonists since). God is love? Agape is the cornerstone of the Divine?

Unthinkable to the ancient Greeks and Romans, and to many today who need but a millisecond to recall in harsh detail the more excruciating aspects of human living and dying. God is love? Yes—when our lives are lovely and when they are not, because in love we truly glimpse the heart of the Divine, the love that will not let us go, the holiness that comes to life most vividly when we live out our love for one another—eros, philio, agape.

Richard and Tanya, may the God who is love pour out abundant blessings upon you. May God nurture you in a community of lovers of God and wisdom and justice; may God teach you the patience of undeserved forgiveness; may God bring you to old age rejoicing in love’s winter more fully than in its springtime; and may you never, ever forget to be thankful for all that God has done for you.

Amen.
BERNARD V. BRADY, M.A. 1983, Ph.D. 1988, Professor of Theology and Director of the Honors Program at the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, is the author of a newly published book, *Christian Love: How Christians through the Ages Have Understood Love* (Georgetown University Press). The book examines key writings and thinkers in the Christian tradition on the nature of Christian love; topics include the Bible, St. Augustine, medieval mystics, courtly love, St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources, including Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., Pope John Paul, as well as several contemporary theologians.

DAVID CARRASCO, Ph.D. 1977, Neil L. Rudenstine Professor of the Study of Latin America at Harvard University, was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in May 2003.

ANA K. GOBLEDALE (NÉE DALE), M.A. 1977, was commissioned by Global Ministries, a covenant ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, USA, to serve as Professor of Practical Ministry at Churches of Christ Theological College in Mulgrave, Victoria (Australia), for a two-year term, accompanied by her husband, Tod, and son, Mandlenkosi.

REV. BUD HECKMAN, M.Div. 1994, has been selected to serve as Executive Director of the United States Conference of Religions for Peace at the Church Center for the United Nations, where he has been working as a consultant for the past year.

WESLEY V. HROMATKO, who took courses at the Divinity School as a student registered through Meadville/Lombard in the fall of 1969 and the spring of 1973, has published “Footnotes to Plato: A Response to Neville Buch’s ‘Preliminary Conclusions in Search of Philosophical Grounds for Contemporary Unitarian Identity’” in *Journal of Liberal Religion* 4, no. 1 (winter 2003). For an online version of this article, see www.meadville.edu/jlr.htm. He also published “John Adams” in *Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography*—a project of the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society—which can be found online at www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/ Mr. Hromatko’s previously published entries, “Sylvia Plath” and “Bertrand Russell,” are listed in the Dictionary’s peace and antiwar list.

JOEL S. KAMINSKY, M.A. 1984, Ph.D. 1993, has been granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of Religion and Biblical Literature at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

HUBERT G. LOCKE, B.D. 1959, is serving as Acting President of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, while the president is on sabbatical. His book, *Searching for God in Godforsaken Times and Places: Reflections on the Holocaust, Racism and Death*, was published by Eerdmans in April 2003.


ALUMNI NEWS
CHARLES S. J. WHITE, Ph.D. 1964, retired as Chair and Professor of Philosophy and Religion in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at American University in Washington, D.C. In the Michaelmas (fall) term, 2002, he was Tamal Krishna Goswami Fellow and Visiting Professor at the Centre for Vaishnava and Hindu Studies at the University of Oxford, where he delivered seven lectures in the Faculty of Theology under the general title “Hindu Saints and Poets: Examples and Perspectives.” He also gave a seminar for members of the Centre and the librarians of the Indian and Oriental collections of the Bodleian Library, entitled “Vaishnava Literature Conservation Project.” In connection with the seminar, he has prepared A Catalogue of Vaishnava Literature: Microfilms in the Adyar Library, the Bodleian Library and the American University Library, which will be published by Motilal Banarsidass in Delhi, India, in 2003. The libraries mentioned in the title are the repositories of microfilm copies of rare books and manuscripts of the Vaishnava tradition that Mr. White collected in India as Principal Investigator, under a grant from the Smithsonian Institution. The Catalogue is intended to assist in access to the collection for scholarly research. This spring, Mr. White was Emeritus-in-Residence at American University.

CLAIRE WOLFTEICH, D.Min. 1993, Ph.D. 1997, was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation at Boston University School of Theology. She also published Navigating New Terrain: Work and Women’s Spiritual Lives (Paulist Press, 2002).

LOSSES

MARGARET MARIE BOSLEY (NÉE DAHLSTROM), passed away on April 8 at the age of ninety-five in Manahawkin, New Jersey. She pursued graduate studies at the Divinity School in the 1930s, along with her late husband, Harold A. Bosley, a United Methodist minister. They spent their careers serving churches in Baltimore; Evanston, Illinois; and New York City; and students at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls and at Duke University Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. They retired to their summer home on Long Beach Island, New Jersey, in 1974. Harold passed away a year later. Ms. Bosley served as a member of United Methodist Women, was an associate member of the First United Methodist Church in Beach Haven Terrace, and was a member of Christ Church United Methodist in New York City. She is survived by three sons, one daughter, one sister, ten grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

CRITERION relies on your participation in keeping the Divinity School up to date on alumni professional accomplishments. Please email us at jquitano@uchicago.edu or complete and mail us the “Alumni News Information” form at the back of this issue.

You may also update your contact information in the University’s online directory, which can be accessed from the Divinity School’s website at http://divinity.uchicago.edu/alumni/alumni.html.

For information on alumni giving and volunteering opportunities, please contact Molly Bartlett, Associate Dean for External Relations, at 773-702-8248 or mbartlet@uchicago.edu.
It didn't seem to matter. I wasn't rooting for either the Giants or the Dodgers. All I was doing was absorbing the wonder of major league baseball, inning after inning, sucking in details that have never left me. I think I am correct in saying that I adored—not loved, but adored, as though they were gods—every man on the altar of that field.

I didn't realize how sacred they were to me until just a year or two ago...25

For Creamer, like Yardley, the impressions heightened by reconstructed memory often assume the character of charter myths for a tradition—personal, familial, and communal—and they begin to exhibit the sense of ultimacy that distinguishes true faith. For faith, as theologian Paul Tillich consistently averred, is the state of being ultimately concerned. It is more than the affirmation of dogmas that might defy logic, experience, or scientific reasoning. It is more than “true belief,” as popular philosopher Eric Hoffer was wont to say several decades ago. Faith is, instead, that condition of orienting life centrifugally toward the dominant concern that has grasped one's being so tightly that wriggling and struggling cannot budge one from its grasp.

It is accurate to classify the baseball fandom of Anthony Lukas and Jonathan Yardley and Doris Kearns Goodwin, as well as myself and hundreds of others who have written about their love of baseball, as an expression of faith. And it thus becomes more intriguing and enlightening to read the accounts of their affiliation with, and devotion to, specific teams as being conversion narratives. Their stories take on the character of testimony. They manifest the passionate apology for non-rational devotion. And it is in this vein of devotion that Yardley concludes his own confession:

If God in [all] mysterious wisdom has chosen you to be a baseball fan, you can't just walk away from it whenever you decide to get “serious.” You're stuck for life. And me, I'm not complaining.26

Nor me.

Amen. ☐

ENDNOTES

4. Payne, 11.
7. Of course, Luther's testimony was uttered with prophetic fervor as he appealed to the authority of Scripture. Cf. Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (New York: New American Library, 1950), 144. By quipping here, however, I do not mean to imply that my stance is nearly as profound as his, nor is the risk in my utterance even remotely akin to the danger that he encountered as the result of his testimony.
8. Frank Deford, “Coming to Baseball... but Not Necessarily Being Loved Back,” in Fimrite, 68.
9. Steven Stark, “White American Males Get Religion in 9 Innings.” (Full bibliographic data are unavailable. Several years ago, a colleague handed me a photocopy of the article, which seems to have come from a newspaper, although searches of the Boston Globe, USA Today, and InfoWeb have not turned up references.)
11. Ibid., 153.
12. Ibid., 154.
15. Goodwin, 61.
16. Ibid., 96.
17. Ibid., 108.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 51.
22. Yardley, 199.
In the life he lived and committed to text, Mark showed real nobility, as marked by the courage, grace, and integrity with which he faced and described extremities of the mortal condition. It remains for us to express gratitude and wonder, and to pay tribute to the memory of Mark Krupnick—friend, colleague, teacher, scholar, reader, writer, father, husband, son, brother, teller—and hero—of excellent stories, and general, overall mensch. — WENDY DONIGER —

Mark and I didn’t become friends right away. At first we were just colleagues, but close colleagues—two New York Jews, we few, we happy few, once more into the Midwestern Protestant breach. From the start, I appreciated his elegance and a sensibility more European than American, a genuine decency and consideration. He was a gentle man, and a gentleman.

Mark had a unique take on the Divinity School. He wrote, in an article damming all contemporary English departments (with a graceful exception to our own): “I was at ease teaching literature in a religious studies setting because there was no pressure at the Divinity School to reduce literature to the circumstances of ‘material culture.’” I felt that way, too, and was so happy to have him as an ally in the culture wars. He sent me what he wrote, and we would meet to talk about our work. Sometimes we met on his turf—Jewish-American novels, to which I was as addicted as he was—and I learned so much from him, from his insights into why people hated Philip Roth (he had said things about the Jews that other Jews felt should be kept a family secret) and why Saul Bellow felt no scruples putting into his novels secrets about Jews felt should be kept a family secret) and why Saul Bellow felt no scruples putting into his novels secrets about his friends. Mark always had the inside track on Jewish novels, and he wrote beautifully. I loved what he wrote about Philip Roth in one of his last articles: “Impassioned rhetoric in literature always carries a risk. It may be a sign, as Yeats warned, of an author’s using his will to do the work more appropriately done by the imagination. Still, I have to admit to being exhilarated by the energy and intelligence of Roth’s counter-rage as directed against the fanaticism of his novel’s hate-filled ideologues.” This could stand well as a comment on Mark’s own writing, too.

But Mark was just as insightful about my work as he was about his own. His extraordinary literary taste, his true eye for narrative in all forms, his interest in writing as much as in scholarship, all of this made him a sharp and appreciative reader; with a kind of boyish enthusiasm, he rushed in where Indologists feared to tread, and gave me priceless feedback. He published an article of mine in an issue of the Journal of Religion that he edited, and it was the most helpful editorial response that I ever had from anyone; it totally changed the way I wrote the whole book of which that article was an early sounding. How I will miss talking with him.

At first, we seldom talked about our personal lives, until one day, he told me how desperately worried he was about Jeannie; she was in danger, in intensive care, and he could talk of nothing else. It was then that I learned how absolutely head-over-heels madly in love with her he was, like a newlywed on a honeymoon, and I really noticed him, for the first time, as a human being, and began to learn how rare a bird he was. I was also deeply impressed by the fabulous mink coat that he bought for Jeannie to express his inexpressible joy at her recovery. This was an interesting man. And so we became friends, as well as colleagues.

Our personal friendship deepened dramatically and precipitously once again, when we knew that he was dying. Then we made new efforts to spend more time together. The knowledge of how limited that time was produced a heightened awareness of what Thornton Wilder (whom Mark always regarded as rather sickly sweet) reminded us of in Our Town: people forget how wonderful even an ordinary day is. Mark didn’t need that reminder; he always knew how precious life was, always seized the day. But he did suddenly write a great deal more at the end of his life; working under a deadline, as he said, focuses the mind wonderfully. Indeed, knowing that he was going to die really didn’t change him, but that was the extraordinary thing—that he remained himself even under the onslaught of that brutal and merciless disease. All of his qualities came out even stronger as he was dying: his courage, his humor (often very black humor indeed), his blunt refusal to call a spade anything but a spade; he never flinched in discussing what was happening to him, his blunt refusal to call a spade anything but a spade; he never flinched in discussing what was happening to him, never looked away when death stared him in the eyes. And his final writings speak with a damn-the-torpedoes directness that perhaps only that final freedom can license. Fighting a rear-guard action against a diabolical enemy, losing one battle after another—the ability to eat, to speak, to walk—after each new beating he would return to the fight more determined than ever, and he and Jeannie and Joseph would pick themselves up off the ground and devise some new way to go forward again—and they would go on, with banners flying. As I talked with Joseph on that last day, and we spilled out to one another the things about Mark that we had always cherished most and already missed so sharply, Joseph said to me: “He was authentic.” No one could say anything better than that.
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