CRITERION

A Publication of the University of Chicago Divinity School
Dear Alumni and Friends —

Opening this spring issue of Criterion is the Alumna of the Year 2004 Address, delivered on April 29, 2005, in Swift Lecture Hall. Catherine Bell, the recipient of the Alumna of the Year award, looked back on how the Divinity School community influenced her and helped form who she is today.

Following is a talk that was delivered by Angela Kalhoff at a Wednesday Lunch in Swift Common Room on February 9, 2005. The essay treats the subject of the author’s research while a 2004–2005 senior research fellow in the Martin Marty Center.

The middle of the issue comprises a collection of tributes from colleagues and students of Anthony C. Yu, the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Religion and Literature in the Divinity School, who retired on June 30, 2005, after thirty-seven years of service. Some of these tributes were delivered at a conference entitled “Religion, Literature, and the Comparative Perspective,” held at Swift Hall on April 12 and 13, 2005, in Yu’s honor; other tributes arrived in the mail from those unable to attend in person. Included here are contributions from Stephanie Paulsell, Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Jonathan Z. Smith, and Dean Rosengarten.

Also included in this issue is the 2005 Franz Bibfeldt Lecture, delivered on March 30, 2005, in Swift Common Room. In the tradition of these lectures, Arthur A. Callaham, a master of divinity student, good-humoredly explores Franz Bibfeldt’s “quest for a religious middle.”

This issue concludes with a sermon by Bromleigh McCleneghan, preached on April 8, 2005, at the opening worship of the 2005 Ministry Conference, “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Contemporary Reflections on the Body.” McCleneghan, a master of divinity/public policy dual-degree student at the University of Chicago, here reflects on some of the anxieties—and joys—associated with mortality and embodiment.

My thanks to Jennifer Quijano Sax, the previous editor of Criterion. All good things about this issue are to her credit.

I hope you enjoy this issue,

Terren Ilana Wein, Editor
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I thank the Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union, the faculty of the Divinity School, and the Divinity School Alumni Council for this honor. This is an award unlike many others. While most awards confer a singular recognition for some specific achievement, this type of award is more like the “family” asking you to return for a general pat on the back, for doing well, going a tad beyond expectations—expectations that can run high simply by virtue of gentle peer competition.

Having graduated at the tail end of the glut of baby-boomer Ph.D.’s, I have kept my career expectations low—a defense mechanism that has come in handy many times. Rick Rosengarten had to convince me that this award really is given for merit and really is awarded by the Board; it did not depend on having a glass of wine with him two weeks or so before the announcement.

My own theoretical work readily analyzes events such as this in terms of the ritual role they play for the sponsoring institution: It is one of the many small ways in which institutional authority is defined and loyalty maintained. Well, I am here as a very willing participant in an arrangement of power—certainly one not above critique, but I will leave that for later. In acknowledging that not all power is in the hands of the institution, you are all forced to listen to me for a while. Since you have already given me the award, this is not a show-it-off professional speech. It is a somewhat playful personal/professional exploration. I could not resist using the occasion for my own purposes: to think about the Divinity School education I received, and how well it has enabled me to grow personally and professionally.

First, I must mention two particular debts I owe the Divinity School. As everyone knows, life as a graduate student in Swift Hall and the larger university is fraught with difficulties way beyond those of scholarly apprenticeship. By the time I left campus after six years in residence here, I was gratefully headed for Japan—and I stayed abroad for the better part of four years (I thought of it as Reagan's first term). On the other side of the world, I quickly realized how traumatized I had become when, instinctively, I put any mail from the university out on my Tokyo balcony for a few days.

The author delivered this, the Alumna of the Year 2004 Address, on April 29, 2005, in Swift Lecture Hall.
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I was not simply absorbing the cultural categories of purity and pollution to express unease with these paper ambassadors; I had to prepare myself for another, complicated stage of some unending bureaucratic saga from half a world away. Ultimately, there was the saga of my Ph.D. degree itself: I would not have been able to receive the degree if I had been on campus to commence, and I would not get it by mail for another six months—simply because an undergraduate named Katherine Bell had not returned her gym uniform.

Unable to imagine being anywhere else on earth, my relief and gratitude were quite real. Although replays of these episodes today might make one pause to consider the whole system, I cannot forget the rush of appreciation for the assistance to study myself further into debt. This is the first “debt” I want to acknowledge, while assuring you that the financial one resolved itself in the long run.

The other debt concerns one of the most determined students among the bright majors who have wanted to do graduate study in religion. Victoria Waters, or Tori, wanted the Chicago program, and when she came in 1996 you proved to be everything she hoped for. She was a girl from the empty west, where there are few churches and no religious traditions to recall; and she fell in love with the intricacies of ancient Judaism. You encouraged her, you steered her to grants for study in Jerusalem, and when she was dying of cancer in her late twenties, you were also wonderful. She and I were both doing the “cancer thing” about that time, although she shielded me from some of her relapses. She wrote about the professor who found jobs for her as she was going through chemo, and later how some people at the School were raising funds for experimental treatment that insurance could not cover. I felt responsible for sending Tori here, so when she ended up dying within this community, I was repeatedly comforted by your care and compassion. It has tightened the bond. Over the years, my student troubles froze into more or less humorous vignettes, but my gratitude for both of these acts of humanity just deepens.

IN THESE HALLS where so many have come and gone, aged, died, and, hopefully, donated liberally, I want to talk seriously. So I cannot let the whimsical title of my talk give the impression of imaginative humor to come. Asked for a title on short notice, I searched for something creative to represent a history of ambitions and realities. At hand were a book of poems by Robert Pinsky, of which I had perused only one, as well as A. R. Ammons's Garbage, which I had talked about more than I had actually read.1 I could work up “The Love Song of a Middle-Aged Academician,” but that would really require blank verse. So Wallace Stevens seemed best. Like all good poetry, his is basically obtuse with just a hint of profundity beyond one's reach. I turned to The Palm at the End of the Mind, since the title poem about the palm “beyond the last thought” gave me an immediate train of images.2 I am confident today that I can provide some of the obscurity of Wallace's lines, but I will rely on him completely for delivering any hint of profundity.

The most obvious reference for me in Stevens's imagery is the distance between chilly Chicago and balmy California, where I have spent most of my career. You can think of Swift Hall as an ivory tower, but for students it is a much more temporary place of passage. Imagine these handsome stone walls as a rather cold, gray womb from which you are ejected out into the rest of your career (using Bruce Lincoln's version of Turner's ritual image).3 You have acquired the sacred knowledge, which in all tribes is rather garbled and usually consists of lists of famous ancestors, but you have also incurred the inevitable, if subliminal, “birth trauma” that can shape aspects of your career.

Now palm trees may not be your first image of the gritty but full, career-building years that follow this rite of passage. Yet palms are scruffy, non-native interlopers that have made themselves entirely at home in the over-paved parts of California, separating the highways and the strip malls. At ground level, some species stubbornly break through tarmac, while at full height they define an unexpected dimension of visual space. It is an awkward point for demarcating earth and sky, one without the substance of a building or even a giant redwood—just a long, thin palm swaying like a giant weed. In my first year at Santa Clara I could watch the sun
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set behind a lovely stand of tall palms, distracted only by the silhouettes of roof rats endlessly running up and down their long trunks. Several times a year, the smaller palms used in conventional landscaping generate great undercoats of crimson fronds, as embarrassing a flush of vivid red as the rumps of baboons in estrus.

These qualities make the palm quite evocative of life after the Divinity School, the life of a junior professor who is also trying to “have a life” in a system that seems surprised to have to accommodate it. Of course, Stevens’s imagery just starts with a palm, and his may be the overly Tahitian-style image of postcolonial nostalgia. The palm beyond the last thought introduces a number of other scenes: a strange bird with a non-human song and a realization about where happiness does not come from. With these, Stevens evokes mere being. Aside from their exoticism, these elements also apply surprising well to the effort to thrive both as an employed scholar and a person.

So, disabused of any expectations of humor to come, let me lay out the first nugget of substance I have to say, namely, that after twenty-five years of it, the life of the scholarly intellectual must involve a willingness to engage in the public debate, even if the repetitive issues do not promise to get one anywhere. Yet, in the long run, it is the human distance one must traverse that makes the routines, successes, and disappointments into something of the journey we wanted when we began.

III

I ARRIVED HERE IN 1975, at the tail end of the “old” Chicago: Mircea Eliade was still teaching, with most of us sitting on the floor at his feet in the gloom of evening seminars at McCormick Theological Seminary; Jonathan Z. Smith was walking the boards in fine dramatic style before any of the current mellowness settled in; Joseph Kitagawa played the inscrutable Zen master with his advisees for a few years (thereafter he was apt to reach over to straighten one’s collar); Langdon and Sonia Gilkey came to student parties; everyone raved about David Tracy; Frank Reynolds hovered behind the more difficult personalities, determined to hold the History of Religions program together; and then, luckily before I left, Wendy Doniger arrived, and nothing in HR, or the lingering men’s club atmosphere of the Divinity School, was ever quite the same. Students interminably discussed comparison and methodology with a growing anxiety about the lack of ground gained. There were no computers; copying was still a matter of luck, or connections, with the machines at Regenstein.

Although the seeds were long planted, back then no one would ever have dreamed of a time like ours when religion is so visibly, vocally, or violently active around the world, even while the study of religion is so doubted, dismissed, or denied by the more outspoken theorists. There is more appreciation now than ever before of the importance of religion across increasingly well-trodden disciplinary boundaries. Yet some of our most interesting thinkers have argued that the field is a house of cards and we should let it fall. At first, they picked up the old theme of the impossibility of defining religion, then all the problems with the terminology we use, or used to use; finally, there were calls to end any distinct disciplinary structure in the academy. It amuses me to no end that careers are made in the field that these opinions would undo. Early on, Smith made the very dramatic, and nearly overboard, observation that “religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study.” Soon we had Russell McCutcheon’s Manufacturing Religion, Timothy Fitzgerald’s The Ideology of Religious Studies, and Daniel Dubuisson’s The Western Construction of Religion, to name a few widely known studies. Yet of course, only a few people have taken such extreme positions, and even then the titles of their books bark much louder than the contents actually bite. Yet they have a daunting effect.

I am not forgetting that I am talking at Swift Hall, where responsiveness to the state of religion in the world has been immediate, profuse, and provocative, from the international leadership of Martin Marty’s projects to Bruce Lincoln’s highly individual reflections. Yet where is Swift Hall in the debates auguring the theoretical implosion or vacuity of religious studies? You must assume the debates will blow over, while the issues are too marginal, or central, for public engagement.

When I returned to the American Academy of Religion national conference after just a few years away, I was surprised not only by the gap between the self-doubting field and the unquestioned vitality of religion in the world, but also by where academic certainty was proclaiming itself— to banquet rooms full of adoring young acolytes as well as the unhappily flummoxed older set, like myself. The study of religion has

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always been something of a magnet for professional self-doubt; now it seems we can wallow and watch great certainty extolled from two directions—from the leaders of the Religious Right who have found true religion, and from the theorists of new sciences who have found the true explanation of religion. Scientific explanation has returned in several forms. Colleagues have been quick to see this new “naturalism” as a function of the vacuum left by the receding tide of postmodern excesses. That may be. However, using the cast of characters dominant in the area in which I work, I would like to take a brief look at two approaches currently strutting their stuff. They provide interesting reflections.

First, there are the cognitive theorists, a mix of sociobiologists, evolutionary neurobiologists, psychologists, and others who have worked with colleagues in religious studies. One of the earlier figures, Pascal Boyer, clearly adopts the old modernist stance by arguing that the real reasons people engage religion have nothing to do with their own understanding of their activities; “only with the help of psychological experiments, anthropological comparisons and evolutionary considerations” will the underlying processes become clear. The last is a neat list of the explanation systems Boyer is willing to draw upon, often willy-nilly. Robert McCauley and Tom Lawson, on the one hand, and Ilkka Pyysäinen, on the other, each claim to be launching a new science of religion, but they are not the same at all. At times, McCauley and Lawson, in particular, appear completely ignorant of all the preceding work in this area; nonetheless, there is something new here, even for those well versed in the history of science and religion. The emergence of evolutionary biology and momentum to use the new neurological tools within cognitive psychology is generating fresh attempts to account for the dynamics of specific clusters of emotion-image-idea-and-practice thought distinctive of religion. The work of Harvey Whitehouse, Roy Rappaport, and David Wilson also pursue three different approaches, each a far cry from Walter Burkert’s Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions, which is representative of religious studies in this area. Although Burkert’s book came out in 1996, the argument is one that Eliade would have approved of.

The new naturalism theories are really as varied as the people behind them. Some theorists are provocative and accessible, and colleagues are using them. Others are so impenetrable that no one is actually using their theories, but that does not diminish their stature, especially with young scholars. Among the accessible ones, there are cognitivists more nuanced than Boyer, such as the anthropologist Whitehouse and the religion scholar Pyysäinen, who are likely to work off the basic texts of religious studies. Although they routinely, and courteously, refer to the need for dialog with other approaches, so far they explain themselves to religion scholars—and we discuss them—but the desired dialog remains elusive, as does evidence that the naturalists read us.

I remember the difficulties we Divinity School students had when anthropology or area studies professors would make, in passing, some cutting remark about our field’s promotion of religion at the expense of true scholarship. The late Valerio Valeri of the anthropology department, a fine scholar, was invited to a History of Religions Club meeting one evening. He shyly but firmly began by stating in about three sentences that he did not understand how our field could rationally and—for Valeri—honorary claim to exist, since its object, religion, was essentially unreal and its cultural constructions too various. We were dumbfounded, to say the least, and limped through the charade of a very short meeting.

It is one of the “sins of omission” that still shames me at night that I did not at least try, even as a diffident second-year student, to have a go at it with him. Even then it was obvious to me that the “essential reality” of the anthropological focus on “culture” (even “man,” as many textbooks were still putting it) would be a good starting point. I believe Valeri later apologized for his aggressive stance, and diplomatically retracted some of the blanket generalization of his critique. But that has not relieved me of the “I should have saids.” It was my first lesson, and I was to have others, that it is professionally more responsible to speak up even though you know that you will be embarrassed by having half the facts wrong or by a clever retort at which even your friends will laugh. There are ways of handling both situations, even to one’s advantage; but not having learned them yet, I simply began to hate the way my own fear of embarrassment silenced me. The incident, widely discussed in the History of Religions section, did not result in any great effort to practice how to dialog with colleagues of such persuasions. Rather, we turned
They shame me into being a better scholar and taking more seriously what I don’t like.

inward, talking just to one another—colleagues whose shared assumptions made us feel safe.

There is another group whose certainty dominates the study of religion—the rational choice theorists, often a more interesting group to me than the cognitive theorists, mostly because of the outspoken, too-clever-by-half Rodney Stark, but also due to the attraction of rational choice economic theory in the current political environment.” While Stark is constantly evolving, he began his career as an interesting sociological reductionist. I remember a conversation I had with him years ago when he agreed with, and even expanded on, my humorous accusation that all sociologists, in the end, are simply looking for that one perfect indice, like the brand of soap the family buys. Ideally, this one factor would accurately predict everything else about them. A colleague in economics at Santa Clara University, Laurence Iannaccone, a former student of Chicago’s Gary Becker, would soon decisively shape Stark’s evolution by converting him to rational choice economics.

I realized Stark had moved on again, however, when I saw the title of his book *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (2000).” Faith? Human side? Stark? The book begins with an impressive summary of the post-Enlightenment history of the study of religion that makes some interesting points, and a few wildly unexpected ones as well. Among the latter, for example, Stark argues that every description of the religion of primitive peoples from the seventeenth century into the twentieth was understood by everyone primarily as an attack on European theism. In other words, the notion of the “primitive” throughout its history—whether in Frazier-style “it’s been reported” accounts or Malinowski-style “real encounters in far off places”—served as a deliberate device with which all scholars worked to undermine Christianity simply by describing primitive practices that paralleled those of the churches.

Stark uses this tale of scholarly bias to argue that a truly objective sociology of religion could not be written until it included believing scholars. He praises early organizations, notably of Catholic sociologists, for showing more methodological purity than was ever recognized in their time. Then Stark makes another startling jump by concluding that only sociologists of his training are able to be objective scholars. Interested neither in discrediting religion nor advancing a “religion of science,” his is the professional disinterest that begets true empathy. While the empathy argument and the swipe at those who would make a religion of science are directed at the cognitive theorists, Stark wants to discredit others as well—most of us in this room, in fact. Indeed, we are explicitly ruled out as objective scholars. We who look like friends of religion, Stark argues, have purged definitions of religion of all references to the supernatural in order to promote recognition of “the sacred.” This enables us to claim to be scholars while pursuing our real obsession, which is “ridding students of belief,” such as the truth of the Bible, the divinity of Jesus, and the record of the church as anything but an “unending ‘history of atrocities’.”” I always have to hand it to Stark for going over the top and for an insight or two on the way.

It is not clear in Stark’s analysis why religion scholars like ourselves might be so obsessed with destroying belief, but he does put his finger on a real tension in our training and what we do with it. One might describe it like this: Usually coming from religious traditions and subsequently finding that what we had believed is not in fact the historical case, traumatized or not, we also elect to teach young students various authoritative corrections to their mistaken beliefs, with little concern for the state of confusion they are left in.” After all, they will get used to it, just as we did, won’t they? Stark suggests that religious studies scholars are apt to use a personal state of confused noncommittal affection for “good” religion as the basis for objectivity, perhaps with an added touch of vague endorsement, if that is required by the institution at which one is employed.

At least Stark is always worth reading. I am less sure what to make of the cognitivists, who really are hard to group together. I read some of the earlier studies very carefully and even published a judicious evaluation of several, but now I tend to jump on good review articles before deciding what is worth reading next.” Although many colleagues, as I said, dismiss the confident naturalism of the cognitivists as a temporary post-pomo, “let a hundred weeds bloom” phenomenon, others are more receptive. They shame me into being a better scholar and taking more seriously what I don’t like. I joined forces with a cohort of Divinity School alums,
There is a small personal puzzle for me in all this.

to be more exact, and we have met regularly to sort out what is valuable for each of our research interests. Since one of them is favorably inclined and another intelligently opposed, and we all read different things, the conversations are everything one could ever want in terms of thrashing out the knottier issues until there is some satisfying degree of clarity in one or two places at least. In this setting, we have even discussed the “why” behind what we are interested in, and its relation to our training here. We have not uncovered any trauma-induced obsessions to unnerve those we teach—just more evidence of the fundamental integration of the personal and the professional. With these friends I turn inward, of course, retreating to a cozy group with whom it is easy to talk because we share so much—just what worried me about the reaction to our meeting with Professor Valeri. Still, this turning inward has been a real resource in helping me to be a player in a larger, shifting conversation about religion.

IV

IT SEEMS TO ME that one of the reasons the cognitive and rational choice theorists speak out with such certainty is simple: their steadfast refusal to question their categories. Religion, belief, culture, mind—they know what these words mean, even as they explore their contents, and they are not concerned to question those meanings. In religious studies, however, both the original comparative enterprise itself, as well as the literary and philosophical movements of the last fifty years, made us sensitive to contestable meanings and the very real historicity of our terms as constructs that serve larger projects. We are able to appreciate cultural biases too large to identify easily, such as the myth of the consistent rationality of science or the extent to which the economic logic of supply-and-demand capitalism can explain culture as individual choices driven by the logic of self-interest.

Whether these new scientific movements are simply a dressier reprise of eklaren and verstehen, it is clear that of all the rhetorical polarities—instrumental versus expressive, cognitive versus performative—explanation versus understanding appears to be the most perennial of philosophies. Supposedly the empiricists and positivists have a firm grasp on external reality, in contrast to linguistic analysts and postmodernists who are thought to find internal reality too fundamental, and slippery, that the external can be nothing but the internal in another form.

There is a small personal puzzle for me in all this. In a recent handbook on current developments in the field of sociology, Robert Bellah, writing on ritual, sketches out a number of the new naturalist accounts for the development of religion as an adaptive mechanism in human evolution.” Yet he ends his article by discussing my work, suggesting that my challenge to the way the term ritual has been used in the field is inherently threatening, nearly nihilistic. And I had thought with “ritualization” I was saving both the term and the common sense reality behind it! After discussing a number of reductive theories, it is odd that Bellah worried about the skepticism he thought he saw in mine. “Healthy skepticism about [terms in social science] is always in order,” he writes, “but that does not mean that they cannot refer to real features of the real world. I have argued that ritual is not only real, but, in agreement with Rappaport, that it is ‘humanity’s basic social act,’ a position that, though contestable, has a great deal of evidence in its favor.”

I suspect Bellah found the naturalist explanations that he reviewed to be positive contributions because, not challenging the terminology, their conclusions, however radical, appear to leave the real world intact. Ritual is ritual; religion is religion. My early analysis of how the meaning of ritual slips around in the arguments of Durkheim, Turner, and Geertz never suggested ritual practices do not exist. I did go on to suggest that the social understanding of what counts as ritual can slip around in real life—but the reality of ritual activity is not put in doubt. Clearly Bellah prefers Roy Rappaport’s rather strained speculative argument in which all sorts of nouns are given concrete existence and capital letters, but he is uncomfortable with a discussion of how ritual actually takes form, that is, how it plays out in real circumstances, not just in an exemplary instance, as if such a discussion were to menace his sense of stable terminology.

It is another example of how current theories have broken all the unspoken rules we were taught as students. Rappaport’s undeniably fascinating work was given rave reviews for what is, essentially, an elaborate analysis of the creation of “the Holy.” It leaves no theory out in describing an evolutionary process by which human beings, generating the Holy out of
the union of the Sacred and the Numinous, create humanity by the concomitant act of acquiescence to it. This is not Eliade's sacred, but it is indebted to it and to Rudolph Otto's Das Heilige. I never expected to see the sacred created in current anthropological literature (what would Valeri or even Stark say?). There is yet more irony in the thousand-page study, The Sociology of Philosophies, by Randall Collins, which is also a type of project unseen since Eliade's day. Collins provides a global analysis of intellectual change by comparing the major developments in human thought—philosophies to religions, west to east, ancient times to the current day—making the book into an enormous de facto comparative study of the religions of the world. Using a canvas as large as anything Eliade envisioned, Collins is also looking for universal patterns, specifically the way knowledge is socially created. He argues that his method can do more than most social or historical accounts by explaining why some ideas are better than others—that is, more enduring as good ideas, not just as social reflections. Early in his career Eliade also argued for a logic behind the symbolism of Christianity that enabled it to win out over the other historical options, although his later "history" of religious ideas was more circumspect.

Collins's book reminds me of an incident in my first few days on campus when mention of coming to study with Eliade was greeted with a let-me-give-you-some-advice retort to the effect that "Eliade is out, done, kaput. An embarrassment, actually, but we all love the old fellow. Best to focus on your language work." Stunned and chastened, I did not resist the message of particularism, which was reinforced as we chose areas on which to focus and formulated issues of our own to explore, discovering the relative safety conferred by being the only one around who knew anything about a very specific subject. We learned to focus tightly and it was a necessary lesson. We needed to know religious phenomena in their own terms and contexts. Yet we abandoned the larger canvas that made us feel too vulnerable.

V

At times "theory" seems to be a noisy carousel: What goes around, with tinny music blaring, comes around, playing the same song again and again. At other times it is also an amateur boxing match: Whether you intended it or not, you are in a ring and someone really big wants to start punching. Academic etiquette does allow you to return to your seat, and nod thoughtfully at the challenges and insults. But as my step-son, a jazz musician in the competitive world of New York City, gently puts it, "sometimes you just have to show your chops"—not merely to get respect, mind you, but to grab the opportunity of playing together, each reacting to the other, to push the improvisation into creating something musically new and exciting. Collins opens his long study with the specific statement that "intellectual life is first of all conflict and disagreement, which are the fundamental practices of networked groups—contests to test and revise ideas, win over allies, and, becoming famous, gain an historical advantage." I would call this a theory of theory as "adaptive if ludic pugilism." Although it entails the scholarly equivalent of bruises and knockouts, such challenges are fundamental to intellectual activity as dynamic, interactive social engagement. It is not the lonely, romantic garret where the author is writing the definitive study of religion (or ritual); rather, it is a zoo of a conference where the chaos nearly overpowers the creativity. For the large questions, challengers will usually have the least in common to start with. So, if we want to have a public impact in these days of boisterous religious activity, religious studies scholars will have to start reclaiming more of the conference agenda for the larger questions, and the type of frustrating yet ultimately productive engagement they should produce. We do not need another panel portraying the goddess in slides of South Indian puja worship, or another panel of five or more cognitive theorists who speak so long to so many that no debate can be carried out in an orderly fashion.

I suppose one of the conclusions I am suggesting is this: Appreciating the ludic makes the idea of sparring more interesting and productive, and that sparring is indeed what we should be doing with theory. Our field's inward tendency to examine our categories, our historiography, is a real contribution, but it needs to contribute to a larger conversation about religion. We cannot get too comfortable looking inward, merely deconstructing the field to the point that we have little left to say to anyone beyond our tight circle.

It does surprise me that I entered Swift Hall typically shy, and relied on its safe environment as much as anyone; yet
I emerged with skills that made me more than ready for seminar sparring (developed, I think, by dealing with faculty). In the years that followed I consciously honed those skills by watching others. I heard that Chicago had a reputation for being rather cutthroat and, while I would readily garnish this reputation with more examples of daily blood sport, I never thought we were really different. Well, maybe different enough. My style certainly posed an interesting problem in California.

There was an occasion early in my appointment to the Santa Clara faculty when I thought nothing of (showing off?) dismembering the basic logic of a particular presenter’s argument within the first five minutes of discussion—more than aided, I might add, by two other Chicago colleagues. Together we even lopped off all the limbs of the dead horse on the table. Finally we stopped to notice that the other dozen or so faculty were staring at us in horror, while the visiting presenter looked like he was going to cry. Later, under a constant barrage of wisecracks characterizing the style of the Chicago contingent, I got the message. And it was not a bad one. I learned to be more patient waiting for others to put their thoughts together, but mostly to take the measure of the ability of the speaker to respond to challenges, and more often than not to turn challenges into inquiries as to the speaker’s intent or suggestions for strengthening the next version of the paper. I think the so-called Chicago contingent demonstrated the critical-analytic thinking that was soon to be the rage in undergraduate education. Yet the Californians taught me to keep the exchange more productive and humane.

Another, more serious aspect of the theoretical enterprise slowly became clear to me in the aftermath of two serious illnesses. After the worst had passed, I had the pieces of my life to pick up, and they could not go back into the old arrangement. In the process of trying to assemble them this way and then that, I felt forced to acknowledge something any scholar would take very hard: that, in reality, thought, or any particular idea, is not going to get to the bottom of anything. The theories will come and go, repeat and revise, enclose and disclose. Ideas built on top of other ideas, and not one of them will get to the heart of what I have hoped to understand. What’s left? The life lived? What does it mean to be if being eludes the cogito, if it cannot be thought? If not amenable to thought and explanation, does being matter? Of course, but mattering without having anything to do with explaining itself?

For a scholar to realize that her scholarship will not ultimately be of any decisive help in understanding the pieces of her own life is to incur a severe disorientation. Then why all this we do here in Swift Hall? It is fine, fun, and plausible revenue, but its explaining, interpreting, and creative sparring will get at only the easy part. For me, the hardest part to put back together had to do with the meaningfulness of this career given the limits I experienced. It took a while, but those limits are now rather freeing. They may at least make me a more adventurous scholar. Now I know, anyway, just what my scholarly career can return and what it cannot.

When I came to the Divinity School to study religion as a human phenomenon, I was a disappointed philosophy major. We did not associate philosophy with “dead white males” yet in those days, but I came away feeling edified, if empty-handed. I did not particularly appreciate one person’s prescriptive study of what or how we should think in order to do it properly. I wanted to know how real people did it—constructed meaning—and that pointed, I thought, more to religion than anywhere else. I had read Eliade’s Cosmos and History in high school, and it helped reshape my whole direction. In college I had two religion professors in succession who had graduated from the Divinity School, both demonstrating how to ask tough analytical questions that did not forget real experience for the sake of a system: Michael McCrossin and Franklin Gamwell. So I decided on Chicago and a few more debts.

Now, at a sort of halfway point in my career, I am ready to go back to my earliest questions—which are still salient questions for me. To ask how people make sense of their lives is to ask more pointedly about belief, authoritative patterns, cosmology, coherence, and motivation. And it is also to take seriously the staples of religion as it has been manifested for so long: as expressing the desire for physical healing, the goal of wellbeing (if not material wealth), and the fertility of the earth and family. These are the questions I am pursuing now. As for my endorsement of “ludic pugilism,” I can say I am not in the game for the pleasure of embarrassment,
... the humanity of small kindnesses always reminds one quite clearly of another mode of life.

although even that gets easier. I am lured by the possibility of carving out a way of saying things that captures an intellectual unease, or brings to fruit an incipient consensus, or simply sharpens the options that can be taken back to interpretive endeavors. That is also part of the attraction for me in continuing to define an academic program in religious studies, where we have evolving social needs for different terminology and analyses.

The Divinity School trained me well to reflect theoretically; my earliest questions kept me open to the importance of a larger engagement. I do not want to place at the door of Swift Hall any responsibility for my conviction as to the limits of the mind’s ability to explain very much for us. Most of my professors appeared to believe that they should be able to pull it off — and that may be why some of them appeared to be disappointed and hard on themselves. I wanted to learn from them, but for the most part not be like them. And in that way, I must admit Swift Hall probably did plant the seeds of doubt that the life of the mind could do what I unconsciously hoped it would.

The faculty and staff also had another sort of influence, I think. Within the jungle of egos, expectations, rivalries, and self-doubt running riot between here and Regenstein, the humanity of small kindnesses always reminds one quite clearly of another mode of life. Yet from that perspective, a thought might sneak in: Given all the books, words, ideas, and human efforts, are there not too many of these things for any one of them to matter, matter as in opening the mind, getting to the end of it?

I am very grateful for the opportunity to think through something of how this community helped to form who I am today. I have been very frank in identifying shortcomings in the Chicago experience, alongside its appreciated strengths. I have taxed your patience with the lack of a clear thesis — but I am not sure I need one for this type of talk. Yet the opportunity to give this talk has been a truly wonderful reward.

Thank you. ❖

Endnotes

4. In volume two of the Martin Marty Center's occasional papers series, “The Chicago Forum on Pedagogy and the Study of Religion” (Chicago: University of Chicago Divinity School, 2005). 18, and on a bulletin board in Swift Hall, I saw evidence that students are still being taught the pros and cons involved in the “comparisons of religions.” Oh dear! The world has moved on.
5. The strong market for intelligent books for a popular readership, borne out by the success of Karen Armstrong, among others, suggests that the wider discussion of religion is not confined to the Left Behind series.

Endnotes continue on page 38
In this talk, I will address one aspect of this question: the relationship between religion and public goods. The following two passages from Ehrenhalt’s book will serve as a useful starting point for the discussion. I chose them because they are set in a location that may be familiar to many of us in this room:

Our first visit is to St. Nicholas of Tolentine parish, an enclave of white working-class Catholics toward the southwestern edge of the city. . . . A Chicago neighborhood, as late as the 1950s, was a place in which people lived their lives more or less in public, in full view of their neighbors. . . . To live in a bungalow in St. Nick’s parish was to live in a place where the walls of one’s house did not constitute boundaries, where social life was conducted on the front stoop and in the alley, and where, even inside the house, four or five children in a three-bedroom home made privacy a rare commodity. . . . The parishioners of St. Nick’s lived their lives not only through the church but through its subsidiary organizations, the Holy Name Society, the Altar and Rosary—engines of mass neighborhood participation that brought five hundred or more residents of a single neighborhood to pancake breakfasts at seven o’clock on a weekday morning.

At the core of St. Nick’s parish life was, of course, the Holy Mass. But there was another strong pillar—the school.

Even those in the neighborhood who felt less than comfortable with parish life . . . sent their children to the St. Nick’s parish elementary school. . . . Tuition

In his book *The Lost City: Discovering the Forgotten Virtues of Community in the Chicago of the 1950s*, Alan Ehrenhalt describes the Chicago of half a century ago. His critical discussion takes up issues as controversial as freedom of choice then and now, authoritarianism, and the changing role of the private and the public. This latter issue touches on the subject of my research this year as a senior fellow in the Martin Marty Center: the notion of public goods and whether or not they should exist.

The author delivered this essay on February 9, 2005, at a Wednesday Lunch in Swift Common Room.
... there is a difference between the reasonable expectation of receiving a service and a possibly random act of mercy.

at St. Nick’s was virtually free. Each family paid two dollars a month and that covered as many children as the parents wanted to send. Those two dollars bought the educational services of eighteen nuns whose classrooms each contained more than fifty students. To look at a photograph of a St. Nick’s classroom in those days is to confront an endless sea of faces, so many that it almost seems like trick photography. The vastness is only accentuated by the uniformity of their appearance: white blouse with red tie and Peter Pan collar for the girls, light blue long-sleeved shirt and navy blue tie for the boys. A child who showed up out of uniform was sent home for the day. . . . Every Friday, most of the children of St. Nick’s went to confession, where they admitted disobeying parents, fighting with siblings, using bad words, lying about their homework, occasionally lifting something from a store on Sixty-third Street. . . . And every Sunday morning, at nine o’clock, they would arrive for mass and sit together with members of their school class rather than with their families.¹

One might mourn the loss of an age in which public goods were embedded in the security of parishes, like St. Nick’s, and a well-ordered lifecycle; or one may applaud this phenomenon as a gain in terms of liberty and freedom. To me, two things are apparent: First, a situation in which not only the school but also kindergartens, care institutions, the hospital, and maybe even public places are under the control of one and the same institution—in the community described by Ehrenhalt, the Catholic Church, although one could just as easily envision a state monopoly—endangers individual freedom. Pluralism, in terms of institutional differentiation and thus also individual freedom, is a much better option. Second, there is a difference between the reasonable expectation of receiving a service and a possibly random act of mercy. The certainty of being entitled to the equal distribution of basic services and options is a valuable achievement.¹

Today, I wish to discuss the complicated partnership between religion and public goods. I must start with a proviso: I am not sure that anyone is really in a position to define the term religion adequately; however, since I address it in a specified context, I trust this does not constitute an insurmountable problem. As for “public goods” I understand these to be non-exclusive goods that should be available to all citizens. The first step in relating these items to religion is to acknowledge that their complicated partnership is part of a larger picture.

Context: Public Goods and Processes of Secularization

It has long been proclaimed that religion is losing its public function in Western societies, that secularism has become the order of the day, even though there is controversy as to what this word really means. Previously, the religious realm was the all-encompassing reality, and the secular realm belonged within it. Today, the secular realm is the all-encompassing reality, and the religious realm struggles to find its place within it. There is no doubt that Western societies have undergone processes of differentiation. Not very long ago, many predicted the decline and marginalization of religion in the modern world. Today, such voices are more moderate. Instead of embracing the final stage of what the Enlightenment had promised but not yet accomplished, they acknowledge a diverse and perhaps even bewildering picture. Current debates over the public role of religion are part of the struggle to redefine the role religion plays in the modern world.

The moderate proponents of secularism support the notion of public goods, without denying that religious institutions have played, and still play, an important role in developing and sustaining them. To tell the story of public goods adequately, it is essential to investigate the various forms of cooperation between both religious and non-religious institutions. Care for the poorest and neediest members of society has always been part of the religious endeavor to enhance the common good. However, it is easy to overlook the fact that the involvement of religious institutions in public goods goes far beyond that: Religious institutions advocate for education, healthcare, nurseries, hospitals, and even for infrastructure and environmental goods.¹ Religious relief agencies are telling examples, not of a decline of this trend, but of an ambitious international agenda.
Religion’s support of public goods is part of its self-defined public role. While there is no doubt about this, there is no reason to conclude that public goods and religion enjoy a harmonious relationship. A closer look reveals that public goods provide occasions for clashes over the role of religion and the alleged demands of secularism. Disputes and legal battles over head scarves in public schools in France, crosses in classrooms in southern Germany, and school prayer in the U.S. are only recent examples. It would not be an overstatement to claim that public goods are like focal points in which the contradictory forces of plural societies play out and, from time to time, explode.

How should the complicated partnership between religion and public goods be understood? What options are available for evaluating the current situation? And what are the conditions for a reasonable pluralism in modern societies? These are just some of the big questions related to public goods and religion. Unfortunately, I cannot provide answers to them in this paper. Instead, I will highlight three aspects of the problem that, in my view, merit further consideration. First, I will present a brief history of public goods in Europe; then I will turn to two problems related to debates in political philosophy: what I call the “neutrality-of-supply” problem and the “clashes-over-values” problem.

A Brief History of Health Care and Education in Europe

A sketch of the history of selected public goods in Europe may help us understand the issues at stake in my inquiry. Roughly speaking, the emergence of health care and education in Europe is marked by four stages. The first stage occurred in the middle ages, when education and care for the poor were tied closely to monasteries. Hospitals attached to monasteries and parishes had many functions. They provided refuge for the homeless, the aged, and orphans; they also distributed alms for the poor and for travellers. Guilds and fraternities similarly engaged in good deeds and alms. This stage of religious engagement for the poor cannot be understood without relating it to the overall attitude toward poverty at the time. Poverty was not considered a result of individual failure, but rather an invitation by God to do good deeds. Good deeds, in turn, could ensure access to heaven. In this stage, then, investing in care was an expression of religiously motivated solidarity with the poor. The Franciscans and Dominicans not only showed solidarity with the poor, they also celebrated them.

This situation changed when the Black Death came to Europe in the 1340s. In Nuremberg and Cologne, begging was henceforth forbidden. Poverty and misery reached a level that could not be addressed by former means. In the fourteenth century, municipalities such as Barcelona and Valencia started providing subsidies for churches; taxes were levied on the poor in Sweden and Paris, while in Turin, one could publicly enlist for charity. At this second stage in our history of public goods, the picture of cooperation in provision emerges. In the sixteenth century, the increase both in population and in poverty reinforced the fear of mass riots. Governments and municipalities stepped in to prevent the worst.

The third stage in the history of welfare goods in Europe resulted from an enormous growth of private initiatives and charities, as well as from more systematic approaches by the state. One precondition for concentrated state intervention was territorial consolidation. States such as Spain, England, and France became stronger by ruling these territories—a process that finally led to the modern nation state. Although different states exhibited different priorities, public education and public aid were high among them. Already in 1601 in England, the poor had access to aid, while free education came only in the nineteenth century. In Prussia and France, by contrast, free education preceded relief for the poor. With growing state intervention, private giving also increased. The eighteenth century became the century of philanthropic organizations.

It is impossible here to portray the diversity of these developments. There were numerous societies that focused not only on relief for the poor, but that also strived to reform prisons, improve schools, care for juvenile delinquents, teach programs for better housekeeping (the School of Cookery in London, for example), and train nurses. Care for the needy included public housing programs and welfare programs for infants. The historian William B. Cohen has concluded that “there was often interaction between private and public spheres in providing aid for the poor, and it is impossible to separate the two.”
Public goods have to be offered not on neutral grounds, but on noble grounds.

There were also numerous societies that focused on different social aims. Their motives and reasons for engaging in social issues were as diverse as those of the institutions providing public goods. Philanthropy, as understood in the time of the Enlightenment, was a social act intended to improve society as a whole. One proclaimed aim of the revolutionaries in France was to eradicate poverty. States were interested in social peace, and the churches regarded solving the social issue as an intrinsically valuable endeavour.

The fourth stage of the development of public good in Europe is the rise of the welfare state. By the end of the nineteenth century, people began to realize that state intervention was necessary to temper the consequences of industrialization. Research in the social cause led to stunning insights about the gravity of the problem. Simultaneously, governments became increasingly interested in alleviating the conditions of the poor. Combined with a growing optimism about the human ability to transform the environment and the formation of social movement, the groundwork was laid for the extensive welfare states of the second half of the twentieth century. Philanthropy and charity organizations either supplement state efforts through established institutions of care and education or respond to still unresolved social issues and needs.

If one steps back from the current situation for a moment and looks at this history of select public goods in Europe, two things need to be emphasized: First, in Europe some public goods have evolved out of a religious context. This process has been shaped by many factors. The condition of state institutions, the degree of the effectiveness of administrative institutions, the readiness of different institutions to cooperate for a common purpose have all been as important as motivations resulting from political goals and social ideals. So, in fact, this history is much less secular and much less uniform than we might have imagined.

Second, as for secularization, the growing gap between state and churches was a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the emergence of public goods in their current form. This gap simultaneously allowed for forces that could counterbalance the influence of the political establishment. The history of schools and education is a good example of how regimes promoting public goods depend on a balance of different forces—more specifically on a balance that works against neglect as well as against usurpation of public goods by one or another institution.

The “Neutrality-of-Supply” Problem

These reflections have already raised the problems one has to address in the context of political philosophy. The first is the “neutrality-of-supply” problem. It stems from two observations: On the one hand, public goods can be used to facilitate particular value systems and worldviews. On the other hand, as public goods, they have to be open to all citizens. I cannot address the full range of problems raised in recent debates over faith-based initiatives and political liberalism. Instead, let me suggest one line of thought that is informed by the historical approach.

It is an illusion to think that provision for public goods can ever be fully neutral. Neither state institutions, nor religious bodies, nor voluntary associations are free from particular motives and value commitments—be they stability, support for the workforce, respect for the dignity of human beings, or a humane vision of a good earthly life. The crucial point is not a distinction between value-free and value-committed motives, but rather whether or not the commitment is for social values and for a life of dignity. To evaluate whether or not institutions should be involved in the supply of public goods, one has to ask for what reasons and motives these institutions support public goods. In addition, one needs a framework that explains the role of public goods in modern societies and clarifies notions of basic rights and legitimacy. Inclusive goods can be offered for all kinds of reasons and individuals can voluntarily participate in them. Public goods have to be offered not on neutral grounds, but on noble grounds.

The “Clashes-over-Values” Problem

I still have to address the second problem I have cited: that of “clashes over values.” Public goods have to serve all citizens. Citizens, however, have different value systems. What can be done about the conflicts that inevitably arise in this situation?
values can be contextualized and embedded in broader notions of worth.

Political liberals have tried to convince us that the only reasonable solution is either as much neutrality as possible or a retreat into a background culture. The illusion upon which this proposal is built is comparable to that underlying ideas of neutral supply. Instead, public goods are saturated with ideas of valuable life prospects. Public goods are called goods because of their inherent worth. They cannot be established without a coherent and accepted view of what constitutes the worth of these goods and whether they should be supported by public means. If notions of worth are distinguished from value commitments, and if values are expressed in a way that is not offensive to others and compatible with a common understanding of the good in question, there is no reason to exclude the expression of values from public goods. In my view, public goods even offer the chance to learn tolerance, because values can be contextualized and embedded in broader notions of worth.

Instead of focusing on clashes, it is necessary to facilitate public debate about the inherent worth of goods as diverse as infrastructure, the environment, education, science, health care, and public spaces. Needless to say, religious institutions have an important role to play in this discourse.

Endnotes

2. Ibid., 127–28.
3. These thoughts are in line with arguments I make in a study I am presently working on that deals with public goods as subjects of justice and democratic concerns, tentatively entitled “Public Goods in Contemporary Political Philosophy.”
8. Ibid., 399.
9. According to Cohen’s account, the leading classes in England engaged in philanthropy. Already in the midst of the sixteenth century, 72 percent of the English merchant class was giving to charity (ibid., 392).
10. Ibid., 408.
11. Ibid., 398.
12. Ibid., 396.
On April 12 and 13, 2005, scholars, students, and friends of Professor Yu convened in Swift Hall for a conference entitled “Religion, Literature, and the Comparative Perspective,” honoring Yu's life and work. Tributes were also read at a Wednesday Lunch gathering. A selection is presented here.

Stephanie Paulsell

Dear Tony — I am so sorry I can’t be present for your conference and celebration, and I am grateful to the dean for allowing me to send a message to you. I feel very far from home today, and I think of you and your students gathered in the Common Room with love and longing.

Here are some things I remember with joy:

The first class I took at the Divinity School was, of course, your Introduction to Religion and Literature. You asked us to write five-page papers on key essays in the field and read them out loud to the class. Somehow, I found myself giving the first presentation, on Barbara Lewalski’s Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Lyric. Afterwards, I asked if you would be willing to critique it in writing, which you kindly agreed to do, handing it back to me a few days later almost completely rewritten. Looking at the paper now, I know I did not realize as a student what a gift you had given me.

On June 30, 2005, Anthony C. Yu, the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Religion and Literature in the Divinity School, retired from teaching, after thirty-seven years of service on the University of Chicago’s faculty. Yu received his B.A. from Houghton College in 1960, his S.T.B. from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1963, and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1969. Yu held associated appointments in the Departments of Comparative Literature, East Asian Languages and Civilizations, and English Language and Literature, and the Committee on Social Thought.

On April 12 and 13, 2005, scholars, students, and friends of Professor Yu convened in Swift Hall for a conference entitled “Religion, Literature, and the Comparative Perspective,” honoring Yu’s life and work. Tributes were also read at a Wednesday Lunch gathering. A selection is presented here.
To this day, when I sit down to write, you are the reader I most hope to please.

You took the time not only to critique my ideas but also to offer elegant solutions to the problem of my sentences. “You have very good ideas,” you wrote at the end of the paper, “but you must be more careful in the way you express them.” You taught me from the very beginning of my studies that learning to express one’s ideas with clarity and grace was as important as the ideas themselves—indeed, inseparable from them. Your insistence on the relationship between meaning and expression came to seem to me central to the practice of religion and literature. To this day, when I sit down to write, you are the reader I most hope to please.

Another very vivid memory for me is hearing you deliver a lecture on “Fiction and History” when you were appointed to the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professorship. I remember hours of conversation afterwards with Sue Hill (who was beginning her own brilliant work on the relationship between George Eliot, the novelist, and Mary Ann Evans, the translator, at the time). You had so complicated our notions of both fiction and history, and we sat over many a meal, unspooling the endless implications of your work for our own. We felt so lucky to be your students, so fortunate to be a part of the school of thought forming around you, to be challenged by you to deepen both the historical and theoretical dimensions of our work, and always, always to be led by our love of what we read.

There is so much else to say—not least about the gracious hospitality with which you and Priscilla opened your home and your table and your hearts to your students. Looking back, I can see that you were teaching us how to cultivate an intellectual life marked by friendship. You are the teacher I aspire to be. You have given me so much, and I am so very grateful.

With love and deepest respect,
Your devoted student, Stephanie

Nathan A. Scott, Jr.

Dear Dean Rosengarten — My wife, Charlotte, and I do greatly wish that we could be on hand for the celebration of Tony Yu’s great career in Swift Hall, for he and Priscilla are among our closest and dearest friends. But Charlotte suffered a very severe heart attack this past winter and is still too weak to undertake long-distance travel—which means that I cannot permit myself to be away from her for more than an hour or so, this being the first time in the fifty-eight years of our marriage that we’ve had to reckon with such a state of affairs.

I trust, however, that the two days being given over to the commemoration of Tony’s years in the Divinity School will be something really splendid, for his presence in Swift Hall over nearly forty years has been something quite extraordinary. His modesty may prompt the less discerning to miscalculate his stature, but his having been asked to join four other faculties—the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, the
Department of Comparative Literature, the Committee on Social Thought, and the Department of English—represents a truly astonishing measure of his gifts. The range of his publications does not, of course, match what we confront in the career of Mircea Eliade, but the range of his scholarship more clearly approximates Eliade’s achievement, I think, than the achievement of anyone else who has worked in Swift Hall over the past fifty years. So he thoroughly deserves the kind of salute that you’re planning.

Sincerely, Nathan A. Scott, Jr.

Jonathan Z. Smith

I have known, enjoyed, and admired Tony Yu since we first arrived at Swift Hall, some thirty-seven years ago, as part of that uncommonly diverse entering class of faculty for many years collectively referred to by our elder dons as the “gang of four.” As an entering class, we were created by Jerry Brauer, but largely enabled by Joe Kitagawa as we began to find our own, and finally quite different, voices.

All of Tony’s unimaginable labors at mastering the complex Chinese literature on “nourishing the vital force” have not brought any of us that fabled elixir; but if we have not achieved equivalence with cranes, we have grown and we have matured, together.

Tony was the only one of us “young ‘uns” to join one of the Divinity School’s conjunctive fields—Religion and Literature—in which the ampersand played more heavy-lifting roles than the third person of the Trinity. It was immediately clear that, for Tony, the project that animated the field was not best understood as a salvage operation, the recovery of religion in literature, connected with that secular theory of revelation fostered by the then still regnant New Criticism, but rather one that focused on a critical exploration of the two privileged endeavors—religion, literature—as historically related parallel modes of human labor, thoughtfulness, and imagination, both of which entailed not only overlapping content and animating questions but also the development of what he termed “parallel or mutually influential” modes of interpretation—not just text, but also commentary. What is more, Tony works on a global scale; his work is persistently comparative (as this conference correctly foregrounds by its title) and equally attentive both to similarity and difference, as was already strikingly evident in his 1983 paper, “Two Literary Examples of Religious Pilgrimage,” on Dante’s Commedia and The Journey to the West. Indeed, some of his comparisons appear so effortless that they all but conceal both the labors of extraordinary learning and the judicious discriminations that undergird them.

From what I remember of our earliest conversations on oral formulaic poetry—in which Tony ranged readily between Greek, Old English, and biblical examples—as well as in his growing confidence in including Chinese materials, Tony compared texts to texts, traditions to traditions, interpretative
“Excellent. Let’s get to work, but first let me tell you how this is really going to proceed.”

strategies to interpretative strategies. Not unlike David Tracy, another member of our entering class, Tony expanded our definition of “classic” to include a wider horizon of cultures—an act of cosmopolitanism rather than of universalism—as well as being inclusive both of texts of criticism (I think here, for example, of the almost talismanic role Erich Auerbach has played throughout Tony’s writings) and of theory (including, in the last few years, Max Weber as an implied conversation partner).

Tony has a fascination, which I share, with Christian typological exegesis—the notion that correspondences cannot be merely accidental—and with related philological and hermeneutical phenomena, ranging from wordplay, puns, and homophones (let alone Chinese homophones with different inflection) to what Tony terms the “highly speculative eccentricities of ideography.” So he will understand my delight in recalling, for this occasion, e.e. cummings’s poem on Louis Untermeyer, which provides a precise reverse type to Tony:

mr. u will not be missed
who as an anthologist
sold the many on the few
not excluding mr. u

Unlike cummings’s “mr. u,” our Mr. Yu is persistently self-effacing before any literary or cultural object of his attention. He works to elucidate, to illuminate that object. In his writings, he uses the first person sparingly, largely confined to the bottom of the page, for expressing instances of interpretative or translational uncertainty as well as for registering gentle demurrals from the studies of others.

I have learned much from Tony in our years of conversation, and, what is more, I have enjoyed him. I delight in his rich sense of humor, and I treasure his capacity for indignation. The latter is always aroused out of those institutional commitments that he holds most dear: the academy taken as a whole, the scholarly vocation, and this University in particular as an exemplar of that enterprise. Tony has been a model citizen of both the academy and this University. He has played a variety of leading roles in national and international fora, as well as in the councils of the University; he and Priscilla have been extraordinarily generous supporters of this University as well as being instrumental in garnering the support of others.

That list of academic appointments appended to Tony’s name demonstrates his joyful appropriation of the freedom of this University as extolled by his colleague and former dean, the late Jock Weintraub—“the freedom to follow one’s mind wherever it takes you.” I wish Tony well as he moves into the statutory condition of retirement. I look forward to continuing the process of learning from him, wherever his mind next takes him.

For these and so many other things, thank you, Tony.

Richard A. Rosengarten

I am also a student of Tony’s, and I would like to add a few words by way of testimonial to those we have already heard. My association with Tony has been the most important, and one of the most rewarding, of my intellectual life. It is also accompanied, on this occasion, by a chronological version of “the bends”: I realized last night that I am today six years older than Tony was when I first met him in the autumn of 1980.

Twenty-five happy years of association can, and in this case decidedly does, carry with it many wonderful stories. My best stories about Tony take place around his office, where for me at least he was at his absolute best as, by turns, Inspirer, Prodder, Demander, and Rewarder. It was the architecture of that office, though, that remains in memory. I remember especially well my initial visit to the Divinity School, as a
. . . teacher, advisor, mentor, colleague, friend.

prospective student in April 1980. After greeting me warmly, Tony beckoned me to a couch that, when I sat in it, left my center of gravity approximately one half foot above the ground. He, by contrast, ascended to a throne that seemed five feet above, the effect of which was to reverse our natural statures and any innate advantage that might have afforded me.

The story doesn't end there. Flash forward to the happy day, in May 1985, when I completed my qualifying examination. Tony ceremoniously brought me to his office for the obligatory post-oral briefing, and waved me into a chair that—I promise you—I had never before seen in his office. It was raised significantly higher off the floor, if not quite at Tony’s level. I still looked up, but I was closer. And today, as dean, when I visit Tony in his office the chairs are similar but I still seem somehow to sit slightly below him. And that seems appropriate.

Then there was the classroom. My favorite Tony Yu moment concerns his seminar on recent literary theory and hermeneutics in spring 1981. Prior to the opening session the room was packed with about forty students. Tony entered and his face fell at the sight of the teeming masses yearning for theory. He took his seat, and proceeded to explain that the course would be especially demanding: weekly presentations on the lengthy assigned readings in the form of New York Review of Books-style essays; a final paper on a second text of unambiguously publishable quality; and a very high, regular level of class participation. “I won’t keep you for questions and discussion,” he concluded, rising and leaving the room, “since I know all of you will want to get to the library immediately and start reading.” Again flash forward, this time to the following week, with seven of us around the table in the same room. Tony entered, saw the greatly reduced group, beamed, and said, “Excellent. Let’s get to work, but first let me tell you how this is really going to proceed.”

Finally, there was the home, and in this context I remember not just Tony but, of course, Priscilla as well. It is significant on its own terms that I and so many others have been guests in their home, first on Park Place and now on Clark Street, many times. What always strikes me most forcibly is the remarkable combination of utter warmth and high style that characterizes the Yus in their home: They are graceful and gracious hosts, ever generous and considerate. It was a source of amusement to several of my peers that Tony would cajole me to have more wine: “After all,” he would say, “you are a man of stature, and a Fielding scholar, to boot. You have standards to uphold.”

Several people in these past two days have remarked with approbation upon the extensive and principled nature of your myriad appointments throughout the University, Tony. At the same time, those titles have had as their complement a set of terms robustly invoked in association with you: teacher, advisor, mentor, colleague, friend. It is the final and best testimony to the deep affection all of us at the University feel for you that there is not one person in this room whose relationship with you can be captured by invoking only one of those terms. Thank you.

Endnotes FOR JONATHAN Z. SMITH

4. Yu, Journey to the West, 1:34.
Distinguished members of the faculty, honored guests, colleagues, and friends: It is indeed both an honor and a privilege to have been invited to add my reflections to this afternoon's festivities. I must admit, however, that when our beloved convener, Mandy Burton, first approached me about giving this lecture, I was a little surprised. Having only been acquainted with this circle of intellectuals for just over a year, I was unsure about what methods were used to select qualified candidates, and how,

I, in turn, was chosen to speak from among that group of luminaries. Mandy, however, allayed my fears, first by suggesting that there was, actually, no formal process for selection, and further that you, like most of the Episcopalian congregations that I’ve served, are just here for dinner and not the show.

As I pored over the quaint and curious volume of largely forgotten Bibfeldt lore, I began to understand what it must be like to be a Ph.D. candidate—that is, I couldn’t escape the thought that all of the good ideas have already been taken. Most of the modern methods of the academy have already been applied to the life and works of Franz Bibfeldt, and my social identity as the white, male poster child for the patriarchal hegemony of modernity precluded any attempt at a postmodern or standpoint analysis.

This feeling of anxiety was compounded when I failed to gain access to the Bibfeldt material in the Regenstein Library’s Special Collections. No one at the desk would take my inquiry seriously, because there is a nasty rumor floating around about M.Div.’s and their iconoclastic refusal properly to venerate primary texts. Evidently, the archivists have not dealt with too many Anglicans before and were unaware that we are fully capable of literary idolatry, as anyone who has ever celebrated the Feast of Saint John Donne (March 31) will tell you.

Stymied, I retreated to the one place on this campus where a man can be a man and relieve himself from the weight of academic pressures: the men’s washroom in the basement of Swift Hall. Yes, it was right below this very spot that I sought refuge from my trials and tribulations, hoping against hope that my subterranean vantage point would

The author delivered this essay, the 2005 Franz Bibfeldt Lecture, on March 30, 2005, in Swift Common Room.
He was never wrong, at least in his own mind.

Somehow put me in a ready position to receive some of the wisdom of these hollowed halls—wisdom that, many students will affirm, flows not heavenward, but in a decidedly different direction.

So, I sat alone in the middle stall and, suddenly, I received a revelation. There among the various graffiti on the back of the door, I saw the answer. Now, what struck me most about this particular graffito was not simply that it did not contain the standard ethnic slurs or sexual vulgarities that I have always been surprised to find in the graffiti of an institution like the University of Chicago, nor that it was obviously written in fountain pen and an educated script uncommon among most vandals. What really amazed me was that it seemed to speak directly to me: Bibfeldt war Rechts.

Turning quickly, in my mind, to that little bit of German that remained from my foreign exchange experience nearly a decade ago, I translated this pearl of wisdom: “Bibfeldt was right.” Of course, Bibfeldt was right! But right about what? Certainly this graffitic premise was something of a tautology, because Bibfeldt was right about so many things—in fact, as a theologian, he probably suffered from that curse of all theologians: He was never wrong, at least in his own mind.

Convinced that my stall epiphany was something of a divine suggestion for the topic of today’s lecture, I raced home, pondering the possible meaning of this message. Somewhere around 53rd and Woodlawn, it dawned upon me, however, that I may have been misreading the graffito. German, you see—and in particular the Niedersachsisch dialect of Bibfeldt’s youth—is not characterized by the same prevalence of homonyms as Modern English. Thus the author of our graffito did not intend to talk about the correctness of Franz Bibfeldt—that would have been Bibfeldt war Richtig—but rather about the political leanings of our patron. Bibfeldt was Right—that is to say, right of center, conservative, or even right wing.

Heresy!—I thought. Though it has been stated before that Franz Bibfeldt is equally as conservative a theologian as he is liberal, claiming that any serious theologian would align himself with the power politics of the political Right would be tantamount to anathema. Phrases like “right wing” and “Religious Right” are terms of derision in our community, reserved for pseudo-theologians, biblical hacks, and, worst of all, televangelists. They are most certainly never used to describe those thoughtful pillars of academia who dedicate their “life of the mind” to the service of the “public church.”

Far from bursting my bubble, however, this lexographical revelation pointed the way to my novel contribution to Bibfeldt studies. You see, I am fairly confident that I am the first registered Republican to give a talk in this forum in recent memory. And if that is not the case, I am 100 percent confident that I am the only Republican from the state of Maryland to be given an audience in Hyde Park—or should I say “Obama Park”—in the past year.

Further, understanding the conservative political application of Bibfeldt’s thought is central to the whole project of Bibfeldt studies. If we are to uphold Herr Bibfeldt as the “theologian for our times” and remain true to the old Spanish proverb that graces his family coat of arms—“I dance to the tune that is played”—then we must come to terms with at least the possibility that Bibfeldtian thought influences, or is influenced by (if there really is a difference between the two), our contemporary, conservative political ethos.

In what follows, I offer three examples from the Bibfeldtian corpus that I hope will demonstrate the ways in which Franz Bibfeldt’s thought has been adopted by political conservatives. Subsequently, I will turn to the question of Franz’s role in the practice of politics. Finally, I will look to the future of Bibfeldtian political theory.

In his 1948 book, A Pragmatist Paraphrase of Selected Sayings of Jesus, Franz Bibfeldt outlines a unique exegetical process that he calls “reverse-ism.” “Reverse-ism operates as follows,” he explains: “Any suggested saying that is too hard to understand or to follow is to be understood to mean the opposite of what it literally says.” He goes on to offer a number of statements taken from the Sermon on the Mount and reinterpreted through this pragmatic hermeneutical lens.

53 Blessed are the rich in money, for they can build bigger and better churches. Who cares about the Kingdom of God?

55 Blessed are the ambitious, for they shall eventually own the Earth.
Conversely, righteousness would be reckoned at a lower rate of penance to the elect . . .

5:8 Blessed are those whose external appearance and behavior are impeccable, for they shall look nice when they see God.

It should be obvious to even the most casual observer that these very understandings form the core of conservative dogma in the post-Kennedy era. Constitutional law, welfare reform, and civil rights legislation from Nixon to George W. Bush can be given a biblical foundation if we seek to understand Jesus’ intention by assuming he meant the opposite of what he said.

Bibfeldt’s influence on the theologico-political identity of the United States is not, however, limited to a redefined understanding of jurisprudence. It has also had an impact on the fiscal policy of our nation.

In 1978, as a sign of trans-alpine goodwill, Franz Bibfeldt was invited, by the students and faculty of the Université de Franche-Comté, to give a lecture celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber. Bibfeldt’s speech, entitled “Ich, Vous et Du: The Theological Economics of a Bi-polar Deity,” announced that, in order to compensate for a sharp downturn in the population of heaven during the administration of the more liberal person of the godhead, grace would no longer be distributed freely to all. Conversely, righteousness would be reckoned at a lower rate of penance to the elect, in the hope that they would, in turn, revitalize the theological economy by offering salvation to those of their fellow men who—because of their upbringing, or because they were unwilling to repent—had fallen into a state of damnation. While such a message meant very little to its original French audience—for whom even the mention of terms such as sin, repentance, and grace spoke of the favoring of a particular religious tradition over and against the religious égalité of the Republic—it was a big hit with the trickle-down economists of the 1980s who were seeking a quasi-religious foundation for their thoughts that would enamor them to the burgeoning Religious Right. The effects of this “Vous-Du” economics, however, were not as forecasted.

Perhaps the most striking influence that Bibfeldtian thought has had on the contemporary political posture of the United States has been in the realm of foreign policy. Though he is not usually considered one of the great Just War thinkers of the last century, it cannot be denied that, for a certain portion of his life, Bibfeldt was preemptive.

It is rumored that during the middle decades of the last century Franz Bibfeldt became painfully aware of the problems that his dissertation study on the year zero had begun to cause in his personal life. Realizing that it was neither becoming nor prudent for a theologian of his prominent stature to be perpetually late for social and academic engagements, he began to make a conscious effort to be early, even to the point of preparing lectures for unannounced conferences that he presumed he would be invited to.

The most famous of these preemptive talks was prepared in 1953, in anticipation of the Second Vatican Council. Franz believed that his vast knowledge of earliest Christianity would warrant his being invited to speak as part of the plenary on the Holy Eucharist. For this potential engagement, he prepared an impressive presentation that he hoped would both shock and awe his audience. It was entitled “In Search of Weapons of Mass Destruction: Rooting out Memorialist Language in the Latin Rite.”

Sadly, the paper did not win the hearts and minds of the Romans in quite the way in which Franz had hoped. It was, however, picked up by and slated for presentation at the Vatican II Fringe Festival, held in Avignon later that year, and then circulated in a seven-city “off-off-Vatican” tour of lesser theological conferences on the continent and abroad. But I digress.

As convincing as the above arguments may or may not have been, it would be illogical for me simply to point to the ways in which conservative politicians have employed Bibfeldt’s thought and thus affirm the premise that Bibfeldt was, himself, politically conservative. No. In order to get to the bottom of this, we must explore Bibfeldt’s political practice and ask the pragmatic question that I hope will be seen adorning the bumper stickers and bracelets of Middle America in preparation for the 2006 midterm elections: “HWBV, or How Would Bibfeldt Vote?”

That’s easy. The answer is: He wouldn’t, or at least he hasn’t and he probably won’t. His lack of American citizenship notwithstanding, the simple fact is that Bibfeldt refuses to participate meaningfully in the political process.
This refusal places him squarely within a growing segment of the American political spectrum...
And thus we find ourselves back where we began . . .

he critiqued his own critique of the aforementioned work of Kierkegaard by publishing his landmark *Both/And and/or Either/Or*. These speedy and often nested loops of criticism can be compared to the wider cultural phenomenon of the calls for coaching and quarterback changes immediately following the Bears’ first home loss of the season, and the odd way in which Capri pants keep coming in and going out of style.

While some may suggest that these examples of quick and complicated critique simply prove that both Bibfeldt and the members of the Religious Middle are fickle and contrary, I tend to think that they are representative of a deep esprit de corps within the ranks of the Middle. They can be compared to a swarm of Socratic gadflies who, in the words of Franz Bibfeldt, “are inevitably aroused whenever theological or political *horsegeschichte* flows down from on high!”

And thus we find ourselves back where we began: beneath the piles of wisdom in the men’s washroom in the basement of Swift Hall. In light of the progress, or regress, that we have made here today, I propose that the Bibfeldt Foundation issue a grant for the refurbishing of the door of the middle stall and the correction of the graffito that served as my point of embarkation. I suggest that the new graffito read not *Bibfeldt war Rechts!*—Bibfeldt was right!—but *Bibfeldt ist die Mittel*—that is, Bibfeldt is the middle—a slogan that not only speaks to the political truths about Bibfeldt that we have uncovered here today, but also has the potential—through the addition of another “s”—to open up new vistas onto the study of his approach to chocolate sandwich cookies. But alas, this exploration must be saved for another day.

I thank you for your time. ✠

Endnote

1. While much of what is written here is simply a figment of my imagination, I must attribute this little gem—and the entire discourse on the *Pragmatic Paraphrase*—to Joseph L. Price’s “The Quest for the Historical Bibfeldt,” which was lovingly included in the 1994 collection of Bibfeldtia that circulated under the title *The Unrelieved Paradox*. 
One sunny day last summer, I arrived late at the hospital where I was completing a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, and was told to join my group in Pathology, where they were observing an autopsy.

“Autopsy?” I thought to myself. This was not exactly the way I had expected the day to start, but I’ll admit, I was curious. Though I’m not a big fan of shows like Crime Scene Investigation, I do like science. I like to see how everything fits together: muscles, organs, bones. We are complex beings, we humans.

The subject was an older woman. Though she was in her eighties, her death had come as a surprise to her family—hence the autopsy. The woman lay naked on a table, her face covered with a towel. Her chest cavity was open, and I was astounded by how empty it looked. The woman’s organs had already been removed, and they sat on the far side of the table, where one of the three pathologists in the room was examining them. The woman was so small—no doubt a factor of both old age and death.

The room was full of smells: intestinal fluid, bone dust, plastic gloves, seven student chaplains sweating profusely. It was full of sounds as well: a drill, a camera, voices muffled behind masks, chaplains telling bad jokes to mask their discomfort.

To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.” And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:16–19, NRSV)
We were voyeurs, and we knew it. I wasn’t queasy or particularly uncomfortable, but it felt curious to be observing this body so closely and intimately. I had no connection to this woman, and yet I saw more of her insides than she had ever seen. I felt like a trespasser.

As one of the pathologists cut away the woman’s hair and began to drill into her skull, something struck me in the core of my being. I was examining this woman’s biological self, devoid of humanity. I couldn’t help noticing how her liver resembled that of a cow, how the underside of her skin resembled that of a chicken.

My former roommate is a Ph.D. student in Anatomy here at the University of Chicago, and he and I used to argue all the time about what distinguishes us from “the beasts.” He contends that there is no difference. I wonder now if my frustration with his argument stemmed less from my concern for the need to be differentiated from “lower” life forms and more about my wanting to assert that there is something about our embodied existence that matters—something that warrants treating our fellow humans better than the way we treat animals. Looking at the body on the table, I felt desperate for faith, and an equally visceral need to believe that we are more than mere shells, mere anatomical beings. However, in that moment, the evidence seemed weak.

What are these bodies, these homes we inhabit for a short time on earth? Are they, as this morning’s scripture from Genesis suggests, the means by which we experience God’s curse of fallen humanity? Our bodies will know pain, sweat, desire, hunger, and finally death. From dust we were made and to dust we shall return.

This is a stark picture of human reality, and yet, particularly for those of us who engage in the work of pastoral care, it often seems far too real to bear. Members of congregations and communities and families seek us out with stories of infidelity, life-threatening illness, sexual assault, depression, deprivation, oppression, harassment, violence, despair. Indeed, this picture of broken humanity has held a central place in the theological history of the church. We are fallen, almost cursed by our creator. Our bodies are often dens of sin—from lust to gluttony—and victims of subjugation. We stand in need of redemption, and maybe of some ascetic discipline for good measure. This is, I am sad to say, the sort of vision Christians are known for.

But we have another image of bodies—as created good by a loving God. We hear the words of Psalm 139 and are filled with hope: “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.” Such is the attitude adopted by Christian sexuality education curricula in recent years, as well as by many in Christian communities of same-gender-loving people. Our bodies ought not be a source of shame and degradation, but rather a source of wonder in which we may rightfully delight.

This theological commitment claims our place in the garden of God’s good creation, whereas the stark picture of human reality firmly reminds us that human existence is lived outside paradise; we have left the garden, and it is often unclear whether baptism, faith, or good works will be sufficient to return us to our innocence and bliss.

It is difficult to leave this passage from Genesis by the wayside, for contained within its three short verses are the themes of today’s conference: Desire—in conjunction with childbirth, marriage, and unequal power relationships; Brokenness—in terms of hunger and ceaseless toil, sweat, and pain; and, finally, Finitude—our days as embodied selves here on earth are limited, and yet our bodies have the potential to bring such joy, pleasure, and wonder.

It is no accident that babies examine their feet and hands so closely—as we develop over time we learn that our bodies, our limbs, represent both the limits of our selves and the means by which we make things happen in the world. People who wear glasses, earrings, or long hair may be particularly
When our bodies, our basic unit of measure for human society, can be trusted, why not trust the world?

aware of the wonder and innocent obliviousness of an infant first discovering her hands and their strength.

I am, as we sometimes say around here, in the process of “becoming married,” and it is with great joy, pleasure, and wonder that I am coming to know the body of my fiancé, Josh. Now, with my father in the congregation today, let me assure you that I have something very specific in mind here. Josh is a dancer—not a professional, but more of a club kid, who knows that the only way to keep your integrity on a dance floor is to go all out. When Josh dances around the kitchen to the radio, he is at ease, trusting, willing to make a fool of himself, hitting every beat, using every limb. As for me, kitchen dancing is the only time I depart from my more standard public dance, defined in most social circles as that of the “awkward teenager.” That dance entails a sort of bounce, and a lot of hands behind the back and playing with my hair.

In public, I have, whenever possible, taken to dancing with small children, because they are so much fun and they mask my total lack of skill. Often they have not learned that their bodies are cursed, something to be ashamed of. They are in tune with their flailing limbs; they know that dancing is a source of joy; they are “in the groove.” Their freedom of movement evidences a basic, early faith—the faith we require to explore the world and our place in it.

As we age, we change, and it becomes much harder to trust the world and our bodies in it. I come from a piling family—where sisters pile on the couch, in the car, on the floor, on the bed—due both to space restraints and the assurance of love and good humor such physical proximity manifests. Our faith as young children is not simply natural and unavoidable; it is a response to finding a world that supports and affirms our existence. When our bodies, our basic unit of measure for human society, can be trusted, why not trust the world? Why not trust the divine? Surely we can confess that our bodies are wonderfully made? Surely we can praise God’s wonderful works?

But what if we find that our bodies cannot be trusted? What if we expect that we shall have health, or children, or invincibility, or great beauty, and we find that we do not? How much more difficult is it to find hope and faith in the glory of God’s good creation when the bodies of others cause us harm? What becomes of our vision of ourselves when we learn that our bodies are vulnerable? What becomes of our vision of the human body when we see one gutted on a table?

For too long, Christians have dichotomized body and soul, the goodness of creation and the broken, finite, and uncontrollable nature of humanity. Our church secretary said to me yesterday, in one of her many profound insights: “I’ve always thought of our selves much like the Trinity: Body, Mind, and Soul—just like the divine, but somehow different, integrally connected, flowing into and out of each other, indivisible.”

Today, we step back from this notion of dichotomy, for it has trapped us, limiting our ability to serve and grow. We, the conference organizers, assert that there is no one vision of the human body, no clear-cut, decisive scriptural witness, unless it is one of profound ambiguity. We assert, further, that we can come to a better understanding of ourselves, our bodies, and our worlds through the stories of human experience, from a variety of communities and a variety of disciplines.

As today’s preacher, I have my own assertion to make. I confess a Christ who became subject to this incomprehensible, vulnerable, glorious existence of ours, took all it could throw at him, and nonetheless claimed the victory of New Life, New Birth—the triumph of love even over death. Your preacher is a good Methodist who almost three weeks ago in church stood and sang the words of Charles Wesley in full confidence of faith: “Made like him, like him we rise.”

That day in Pathology I was shaken. What I saw lying before me on that table made me question who we are and what we are made of. Here was a shell, once a woman. But after noticing the body’s seeming emptiness, I couldn’t help noticing one more thing: pink toenails and a wedding ring.

Amen.

MICHAEL JOSEPH BROWN, M.Div. 1994, Ph.D. 1998, was awarded tenure after six years of teaching and scholarship in both the Candler School of Theology and the Graduate Division of Religion at Emory University. In the past year, Brown has published two books: The Lord's Prayer through North African Eyes: A Window into Early Christianity (T&T Clark International, January 2005), which looks at the influence social location has on the development of practices of piety, in this case specifically the Lord's Prayer as presented in the Gospel of Matthew; and Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship (Trinity Press International, November 2004), which documents the history and development of African American and Afrocentric biblical interpretation, from its origin as a corrective to the biases manifest in Eurocentric scholarship to the flourishing of Afrocentric criticism as a distinctive interpretive method. The latter book was nominated for the prestigious Grawemeyer Award. Brown also contributed an essay entitled “Constructing a Doctrine for the Ecclesia Militans” to the book Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic (Palgrave, December 2004). Brown's essay examines the early Christian construction of the doctrine of sexuality by looking specifically at Clement of Alexandria’s treatise on marriage and sexuality, Stromata III.

HERMAN F. GREENE, M.Th. 1969, M.Div. 1998, president of the Center for Ecozoic Studies, was appointed executive director of the International Process Network, an international association for Whitehead and other process scholars, in May 2004. He also completed his D.Min. at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, in May 2004.

RON HAMMERLE, D.Min. 1969, was recently recruited to help lead Motorola's international healthcare initiative, bringing nearly thirty years of healthcare management and marketing experience to a Fortune 100 company. In June, he spoke to two churches in Southwest Florida on “Medical Ethics with a Florida Twist” and “What the New York Times and Harvard Business School Learned about Church Growth.”
J. ALBERT HARRILL, M.A. 1989, Ph.D. 1993, associate professor of religious studies at Indiana University, published *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Fortress Press, 2005), a study arguing that early Christians thought about slaves through conventional stereotypes familiar from ancient philosophy, handbook literature, and comedy, which also leads into investigations of the use of the New Testament in the nineteenth-century American slave controversy. Harrill has also been named director of the Program in Ancient Studies at Indiana.

REV. THERESA HERMAN, M.Div. 1985, was hired in March 2005 as the first employed massage therapist at Allina Hospice and Palliative Care, the largest hospice organization in Minnesota.

ROBERT KELLER, B.D. 1961, M.A. 1962, Ph.D. 1967, professor emeritus at Western Washington University, was appointed, for the third time, an Inquiring Mind Speaker at Humanities Washington, formerly known as Washington Commission for the Humanities, a nonprofit organization and public foundation affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Keller has been active in state and local politics, mountaineering, and kayaking since retiring from Western Washington University in 1994. He is the author of four books, including *American Indians and National Parks* (1998) and the award-winning local bestseller *Whatcom Places* (1997). When not living in Germany’s Black Forest region, Keller has been a community columnist for the Bellingham Herald and has initiated major outreach and fundraising programs for the Whatcom Land Trust. In 2004 he received the Environmental Hero award from RE Sources, a nonprofit environmental education organization, and in 2005 he received Bellingham Food Cooperative’s Cooperator of the Year award.

PETER J. MEHL, M.A. 1983, Ph.D. 1989, published *Thinking through Kierkegaard: Existential Identity in a Pluralistic World* (University of Illinois Press, 2005). It examines Kierkegaard’s more psychological writings in light of contemporary thought about selfhood by such authors as Alasdair MacIntyre, Jeffrey Stout, Owen Flanagan, and Charles Taylor. Mehl was promoted to full professor of philosophy and religion in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Central Arkansas in 2003. He currently serves as associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts at that institution.

ROBERT G. MILLER, M.A. 1968, Ph.D. 1974, professor of sociology at Baker University, was invited to lecture at an Oxford University roundtable. The title of his presentation was “Make Room for All Religious Symbols in Public Places.”

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For information on alumni giving and volunteering opportunities, please contact Molly Bartlett, associate dean for external relations, at 773-702-8248 or mbartlett@uchicago.edu.

TED PETERS, M.A. 1970, Ph.D., 1973, professor of systematic theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, has been appointed to the “Scientific and Medical Standards and Accountability Working Group” of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (known as Proposition 71). He is author of Playing God? Genetic Determinism and Human Freedom (Routledge, rev. ed., 2002), and Evolution from Creation to New Creation (Abingdon 2003), coauthored with Martinez Hewlett, won the Templeton Book of Distinction Award for 2005.

PARKER ROSSMAN, B.D. 1944, is the author of three online, ongoing book-length volumes on the future of higher education—volume 1: The Future of Higher (Lifelong) Education and Virtual Space; volume 2: Research On Global Crises, Still Primitive; and volume 3: Future Learning and Teaching. This learning resource project can be accessed at http://ecolecon.missouri.edu/globalresearch/. It is currently being translated into Chinese.


SCOTT D. SEAY, M.A. 1992, since graduating from the Divinity School, earned an M.Div. and another M.A., and this past December a Ph.D. in the history of religions in America from Vanderbilt University. After teaching at Ashland University in Ohio for the past three years, this past year also serving as interim senior minister of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Ashland, Seay has accepted a position as assistant professor of Church history at Christian
Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, which begins this fall. He is completing a book on the election preaching of the New Divinity Men that will be published later this year.

EMILIE M. TOWNES, M.A. 1977, D.Min. 1982, was awarded a Henry Luce III Fellowship in Theology for 2005–2006, and accepted a new position as professor of African American studies in religion and theology at Yale Divinity School, with a joint appointment in the Department of African American Studies.

JEFFREY A. TRUMBOWER, M.A. 1984, Ph.D. 1989, professor of religious studies at Saint Michael’s College in Colchester, Vermont, was appointed dean of the college at Saint Michael’s, effective July 1, 2005. As the college’s sole academic dean, he will be responsible for faculty development and evaluation, as well as curriculum college-wide.


Losses


LEONARD JOHN SCOTT, M.A. 1966, died of cancer on August 13, 2004, at his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Len received clinical training and certification in Client-Centered Psychotherapy at the Counseling and Psychological Research Center at the University of Chicago Department of Psychology (1964–66), and through a post-graduate program in Gestalt Concepts and Methods with the Gestalt Institute of West Michigan (certificate 1978). Len’s work from 1969 until his retirement in 2000 was at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, first as the Psychological and Religious Counselor in the Office of Ethics and Religion and then as Acting Director of that office. From 1978 to 2000 he was a Senior Counselor in the Office of Counseling Services at the University. As Liaison for Ethics and Religion in the Office of the Dean of Students (1993–2000), he assisted both organized campus religious groups of all faiths and campus-related clergy. He was twice honored by the University’s Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns for his support to that community. He leaves a daughter, Linda, in Phoenix; a son, David, in San Francisco; and his wife, Joan, who resides in Ann Arbor.

REV. DR. HELEN F. SPAULDING, M.A. 1943, died earlier this year. She was born and raised in Pontiac, Illinois, going on to attend the University of Illinois, where she graduated in 1930 at the top of her class in journalism. She went on to study religious education at the Divinity School, and was ordained in the Disciples of Christ Church in 1931. The Rev. Dr. Spaulding spent her career in service to the church and Christian ministry, and was deeply concerned about issues of peace and justice. She was particularly involved in Christian youth programs and worked tirelessly throughout her life to improve the place of women in church and society. She authored two books: Youth Look at the Church (1952) and Evaluation and Christian Education (1960). A recipient of numerous honors throughout her career, she received the University of Chicago’s Fellowship Award and an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from Eureka College in 1996.

An intrepid traveler, the Rev. Dr. Spaulding visited eighty-four countries around the globe. At age 87, she spent twenty-two days aboard a train from England to China, where she attended an international conference on women.


16. While Stark does not say this, his analysis suggests that religion scholars are, like the UFO cult left stranded by “mistakes” in their rendezvous arrangements, subject to a particular form of cognitive dissonance. The traumatized take up the cause of teaching that which traumatized them in order to legitimate it. See the classic discussion by Leon Festinger in A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1957) or When Prophecy Fails, with Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota, 1956).

17. See “Ritual (Further Considerations)” in Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd rev. ed., vol. 11, ed. Lindsey Jones (New York: Macmillan, 2005), 7848–46. I have been told, and must agree, that either one of the books on ritual by Robert McCauley and Tom Lawson makes my first book on ritual seem as lucid as a Betty Crocker cooking recipe—how can one not be grateful to them?

18. My thanks to Diane Jonte-Pace, Ann Taves, and Kelly Bulkeley for many good sessions, notably the one discussing a draft of this talk.


20. Bellah, 44.


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