

# CIRCA

News *from* the University of Chicago Divinity School

A CARDINAL MOMENT OF “COGNITIVE DISSONANCE” IN MY EDUCATION—an experience in which a settled truth was demonstrably rendered to be a faulty assumption—was the occasion when I learned from a social scientist of considerable standing that his survey research proved that humans lie more often, and more egregiously, about money than they do about sex. (I was much younger when I learned this.) Recent events have more than once recalled that lesson.

Why do we invest so much of our sense of value in finance, given the cost to such fundamental human values as telling the truth?

So far as I can see, no social institution is immune to this tendency. To avoid any implied pointing of the finger, I can do no better than to quote my cherished colleague, former Divinity School Dean Clark Gilpin, who once remarked that if the University of Chicago is the intellectual Garden of Eden, money is its serpent. Our international malaise is not merely a function of Wall Street; it imbues, albeit less systematically, Main Street. The all-consuming thirst for profit has been aided and abetted by the idea that in profit resides what is truly of value—that if we make a profit, we will have what we truly want. Such is the logic that the bigger the profit, the more of what we want will we have. I see no better explanation for the byzantine paths of speculation that we engineered and that failed to deliver their promised value. No less a financial luminary than Alan Greenspan experienced his own cognitive dissonance in this regard, as honorably expressed in his congressional testimony that noted his surprise at the market’s failure to correct itself.

Theologian Paul Tillich wrote acutely about such instances of dissonance, most trenchantly in two short books, *The Courage to Be* and *The Dynamics of Faith*. Tillich stipulated that human life is characterized by the hypothesis of an “ultimate concern,” a value beyond all other values that orients all of human life. Tillich identified multiple such hypotheses in human history. He also observed that any hypothesis that did not stipulate an object that was truly transcendent doomed to despair those who placed their faith in it. For Tillich, money was an enduring example of a doomed ultimate concern. In contrast, Tillich argued that belief in God afforded transcendence and, in turn, genuine hope.

My presentation of Tillich’s thought necessarily telescopes its complexity, but on one point I must elaborate. Tillich regarded faith as consisting in trust, and as a matter of

## Letter from the Dean



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constant reflection and even revision. The most reliable road to the desperation of a failed ultimate concern—which Tillich did not hesitate to describe as idolatry—was to formulate one’s concern as beyond scrutiny.

Our world is not Tillich’s, and this is emphatically not a call for a return to a world that no longer exists. But I am persuaded that the human thirst for value always risks cooptation by false gods. As we feel this thirst, perhaps especially as we perceive the need to slake it endlessly, the Pantheon of the Marketplace beckons and we are prone to answer. Recent events suggest that even the most ingenious acts of worship cannot sustain this particular idolatry, or provide what human living and flourishing most needs.

It is interesting to note that Tillich had an unlikely predecessor in the father of modern economics, Adam Smith. Perhaps a cultural moment of cognitive dissonance is reflected in the fact, not widely acknowledged, that before Smith composed *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) he penned what is arguably his greatest work, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759). In this earlier essay, Smith developed a psychology of sympathy that would regulate the human tendency to self-interest by cultivating regard for others. In this context, Smith first invoked his famous idea of the “invisible hand,” his formulation for the greater good that was engendered by common acts of enlightened self-interest. Smith is regarded as the father of modern economics for the *Wealth of Nations* and its theories about market efficiency and labor. But none of that made sense, at least to Smith, apart from his ideas about how human persons ought to live and be with others in the world.

Smith’s thought finally contrasts with Tillich’s: Smith believed that to serve Mammon was to serve God; while Tillich would at a minimum reverse the order of precedence. For our part in this new century, both thinkers remind us of the untenability of any theory of value that does not take recourse to some stipulation that transcends the material. Only then can the common weal serve justice and peace, and ensure that moments of cognitive dissonance are the province of youth and naivete. ▢

Richard A. Rosengarten, *Dean*

# Ellwood Named Alumnus of the Year

The Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union has named Robert Ellwood the Divinity School's Alumnus of the Year for 2009. Ellwood was a professor of world religions at the University of Southern California for thirty years, from 1967 until his retirement in 1997. He served as Chairman of the Religion Department there, and received the USC Faculty Lifetime Achievement Award and Distinguished Emeritus Award in 2002.

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The author of *The Politics of Myth: A Study of C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell*, Ellwood has written over twenty-five books, ranging from textbooks in religious studies (including *Many Peoples, Many Faiths*, a popular world religion textbook, and *Intro-*

*ducing Japanese Religion*) to books of religious history (*The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace*, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening*, *Cycles of Faith*, and *Islands of the Dawn*, among others) to inspirational books written from a theosophical perspective.

Born in Normal, Illinois, in 1933, Ellwood was educated at the University of Colorado, Berkeley Divinity School at Yale in New Haven, Connecticut, and the University of

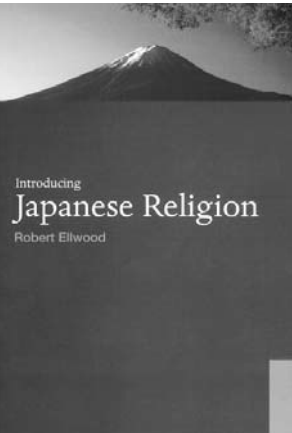
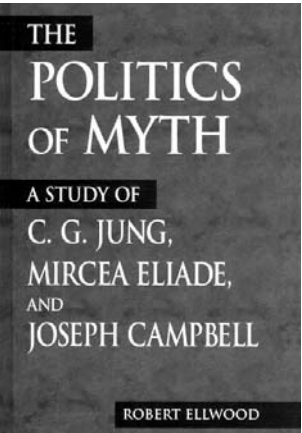


Chicago Divinity School. He received his Ph.D. in History of Religions at Chicago in 1967. He has also served as an Episcopal priest and a chaplain in the U.S. Navy.

Ellwood now lives in Ojai, California, and has two grown children: Richard, a teacher at Besant Hill School in Ojai, and Fay Ellen, a graduate student at the Claremont Graduate University in California.

The Alumnus of the Year award recognizes outstanding achievement by graduates of the Divinity School, and has been awarded annually since 1947. Past recipients include Peter Paris, Rebecca Chopp, R. Scott Appleby, and William LaFleur.

Ellwood will deliver his Alumnus of the Year address, "The Mythology of Evil," on Thursday, April 30, 2009, at 4:00 p.m. in Swift Lecture Hall. A reception will follow. Please watch our website for details.



## Jean-Luc Marion Elected to Académie française

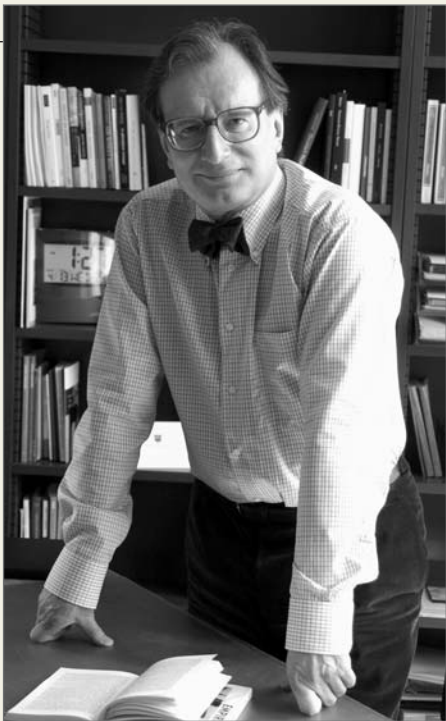
On Thursday, Nov. 6, Jean-Luc Marion, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion and Theology, was elected to succeed the former Cardinal of Paris as a member of the ultra elite Académie française, known in France as "Les Immortels."

Perhaps best known internationally as the official authority on the French language, the Académie française, founded in 1635 by Cardinal Richelieu, is a living Hall of Fame of French thinkers. Because the official seal of the Académie française bears the motto: "to immortality," and because members are elected for life, the forty members are known as "les immortels." Marion, who was elected

on the first ballot, fills a space that only became available after former member and Cardinal of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger, died in August 2007.

Marion, who also teaches at the Sorbonne, has authored a diverse range of work that has greatly influenced modern philosophy and theology. He is among the best-known living philosophers in France and is widely regarded as one of the leading Catholic thinkers of modern times. "This splendid recognition of Jean-Luc Marion accentuates his brilliant contributions to our understanding of Descartes," said Dean Richard Rosengarten. "In doing so, it highlights the remarkable range of his scholarship, which includes foundational work in both the history of philosophy and in the newly developing and very promising field of the interface of philosophy and theology."

Members of the Académie have included



numerous politicians, lawyers, scientists, historians, philosophers, senior Roman Catholic clergymen, five French heads of state and numerous writers, including Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo and Voltaire. □



# Faculty News and Notes



## Visiting Faculty

**Azzan Yadin** is Associate Professor of the History of Jewish Studies. An assistant professor in the the Department of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University, Professor Yadin’s research focuses on early rabbinic legal interpretation (midrash halakhah), particularly the relationship between midrash and non-interpretive legal traditions in Tannaitic literature. His first book, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) explores the Rabbi Ishmael hermeneutic within the religious landscape of Second Temple and post-Temple literature. The result is a series of connections between these rabbinic texts and Wisdom literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Church Fathers, leading to a rethinking of the origins of rabbinic midrash. In addition to his work in rabbinics, Professor Yadin has written on the cultural and intellectual context of Jewish literature and translated a number of books into Hebrew. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and the Graduate Theological Union.

**Shimshon Zelniker** is Visiting Professor of Israel Studies. The retired Director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, where he served in that role from 1997 until 2007, Dr. Zelniker teaches political science; his research work focuses on civil society formation and democracy in the Third World and in Israel; on Liberation theories and violence, and on aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He taught at the University of California, Los Angeles



(1984–1992), Claremont Graduate School and served as Head of the Department of Social Science at Beit Berl College in Israel (1985–1996).

Dr. Zelniker has served as Special Adviser to Prime Minister Shimon Peres (1982–1990) and as Chairman of the Israeli Center for Foreign Policy Options (1984–1991). Between 1984 and 1995 Dr. Zelniker founded and directed a nationwide, South African project for anti-apartheid local government and civic leadership training program for Black leaders. This Project was adopted by the Palestinian Political Prisoners’ Association on the West Bank and Gaza and was successfully carried out by Dr. Zelniker and later the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute from 1995 to 2001.

He has published *Cooperation Between Israel and Egypt: Positions and Trends; The Superpowers and the Horn of Africa; Generations, Locations, Identities: Contemporary Perspectives on Society and Culture in Israel* (edited with H. Herzog and T. Kohavi, in Hebrew); and *The Exception and The State of Emergency* (forthcoming).

He received his B.A. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and his Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles.

## Development Staff Addition

**Sarah LaBarre** joined the Divinity School staff as Assistant Director of Development on September 29, 2008.

A native of Urbana, Illinois and self-identified “faculty brat,” Sarah earned a B.A. in French at Carleton College, and an M.S. in Foundations of Education at Florida State University. Her studies paved the way to an eclectic set of work experiences both in the U.S. and abroad: most recently, Sarah served as Operations Manager and subsequently



Development and Communications Manager for the Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement. She lived overseas from 2003 to 2006, first as a Foreign Service Officer in the Dominican Republic and then as a private citizen in Nicaragua. She previously held programmatic and administrative positions at the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education, Education Development Center, UNESCO, Harvard–MIT Health Sciences and Technology Division, and the World Bank.

Her responsibilities at the Divinity School will include overseeing the Annual Fund and the Visiting Committee, as well as identifying new vehicles for engaging alumni in the life of the School on a regular basis.

## New Faculty Title

This year a Divinity School faculty member received a new title. **Kristine A. Culp** is now Dean of Disciples Divinity House and Associate Professor of Theology in the Divinity School.

## Smith Delivers SBL Address

On November 22, 2008, Jonathan Z. Smith, the Robert O. Anderson Distinguished Service Professor of the Humanities, delivered the presidential address, entitled “Religion and the Bible,” at the Society of Biblical Literature’s annual meeting in Boston. Professor Smith was elected by the members of the SBL and served as president in 2008 and as vice president in 2007. His presidential address will be published in the upcoming SBL journal. An audio file will also be available on the SBL website in January.

Previous SBL presidents with Divinity School affiliations have included Hans Dieter Betz, the Shailer Mathews Professor Emeritus of New Testament in the Divinity School;

Norman Perrin; and William Rainey Harper.

Professor Smith is a historian of religion whose research has focused on such wide-ranging subjects as ritual theory, Hellenistic religions, nineteenth-century Maori cults, and the notorious events of Jonestown, Guyana. His works include *Map Is Not Territory; Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown; To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, and *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*. □



# Winter and Spring Events



For calendar updates, please consult the Divinity School’s website at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu>. Access the most up-to-date events information, sign up for our events listserve (“At the Divinity School”), and get current news. Please see p.7 for detailed information on upcoming Marty Center conferences.

## EVENTS WINTER AND SPRING QUARTERS INCLUDE

### Border Crossing Series

Now in its second of three years, the Border Crossing Project continues its work of connecting ministry and doctoral students around discussions of vocation. Three public conferences will explore the intersections and divergences of clergy and teachers’ intellectual interests and professional pursuits.

See <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/events/lilly/> for more information.



### Alumnus of the Year Lecture and Reception

**Thursday, April 30** A public lecture by Robert Ellwood, Ph.D. 1967, the Divinity School’s Alumnus of the Year for 2009, with a reception to follow. See page 2 for more information.

#### January 23, 2009

##### Resisting Mission: Redefining Engagement

Keynote address by Lamin Sanneh  
D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity  
and Professor of History, Yale Divinity School

#### Tuesday, February 3, noon

##### Lunch Discussion

Lunch discussion of pedagogy and vocation with Lucy Pick, Director of Undergraduate Studies and Senior Lecturer in the History of Christianity.

#### Tuesday, March 3, noon

##### Lunch Discussion

Lunch discussion of pedagogy and vocation with Joseph Blosser, doctoral student in ethics and member of the teaching team for “Arts of Ministry: Preaching.”

#### Fifth Annual Ministry Conference

### From the Ends of the Earth: Christianity and the 21st Century

#### Friday and Saturday, May 1–2

10:00 a.m.–5 p.m., Swift Lecture Hall

Christianity is no longer a religion dominated by the West. It is estimated that by 2050, at least four-fifths of the world’s Christians will be of non-European descent. The implications of such statistics require focused attention as we move into the 21st century. With this conference we hope to address issues that arise from contemporary transformations in Christianity. How is the coincidence of the post-colony with the failures of nationalism influencing new forms of Christian leadership? How, in turn, do developing practices of Christian organization demand and resist new approaches to cooperation and unity? Finally, how do these things influence and even produce new self-understandings for Christians in America?

While building on important efforts of social scientists and missiologists, the conference will approach these topics with specifically ministerial and ecclesiological lenses. This conference seeks to help deepen understanding of certain realities and potential futures of being Christian around the world for ministers, students and lay-persons as well as professional academics and to equip the same with resources for engaging the issues of the conference further.

<http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/conferences/ministry/ministry2009.shtml>

### Wednesday Community Luncheons

Every Wednesday when school is in session  
Noon–1:30 p.m., Swift Common Room

Lunches in Winter and Spring quarters will include Dean’s Fora with Professors Martin Riesebrodt and Curtis J. Evans; Dr. Carole Ober on her work studying the genetics of the Hutterites, Melvin Butler on music and Pentacostalism in Haiti, and many more.

Please see <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/news/wednesdays.shtml> for upcoming dates and speaker information.

### “On A Secular Age”—A Public Lecture by Charles Taylor

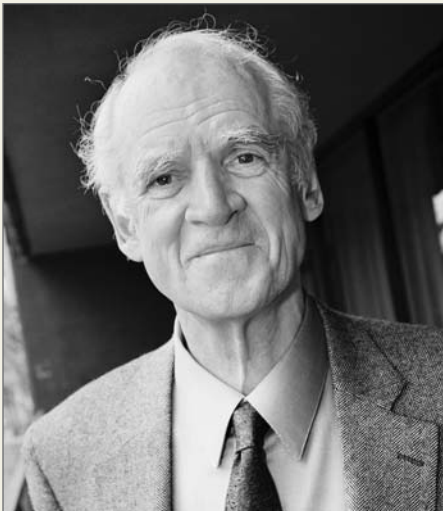
**Friday, February 13, 2009** 4:30 – 6:00 p.m., Third Floor Lecture Hall

Author and philosopher Charles Taylor, Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Philosophy at McGill University, will give a lecture titled “On a Secular Age.”

Taylor has taught in numerous institutions, including Stanford, Yale, and Oxford University; his research focuses, in particular, on modernity, pluralism, multiculturalism, the question of identity, and secularism. He is the author of over twenty books, including *Hegel* (1975), *The Malaise of Modernity* (1991), and *A Secular Age* (2007). In 2007 he was awarded the Templeton Prize for progress toward research or discoveries about spiritual realities.

CHAIR: **Kristine A. Culp**, Dean of Disciples Divinity House and Associate Professor of Theology

RESPONDENTS: **Paul Mendes-Flohr**, Professor of Modern Jewish Thought and **William Schweiker**, Director of the Martin Marty Center and Edward L. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor of Theological Ethics





# Ministry Program Update

## Collaborations and Conferences Yield Conversation

Throughout the past year, conferences sponsored by the Divinity School’s Border Crossing project have attracted wide audiences and funded energetic conversations across disciplines and professions. Clergy, chaplains and counselors; university and seminary professors; seminarians and Divinity School students from a variety of areas of study have gathered around the podium

in the lecture hall and around tables in the common room to share views from their unique perspectives on topics of common interest, such as “Advocacy in the Pulpit and the Classroom,” “Music in the American Religious Experience,” “Creator and Creation in the City,” and “Authority and Intimacy: The formation of whole persons for the church and the academy.”

Funded by the Lilly Endowment, the Border Crossing project offers a variety of venues for Chicago’s M.Div. and Ph.D. students to engage one another as they prepare for ministry and teaching — bringing back into conversation interests and vocational

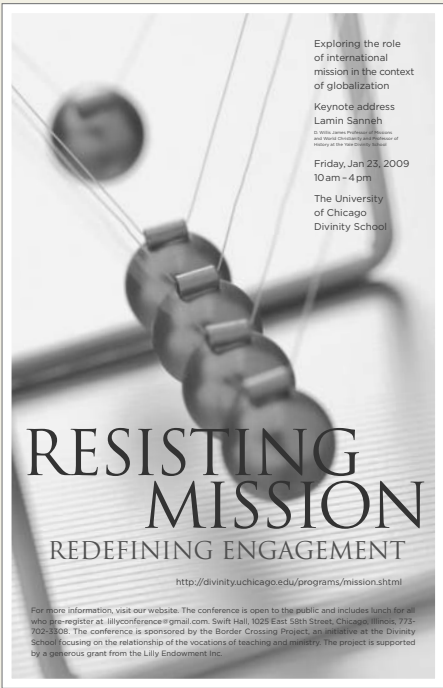
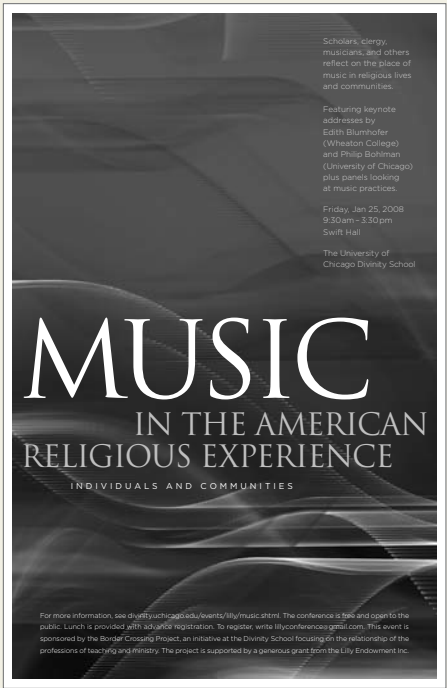
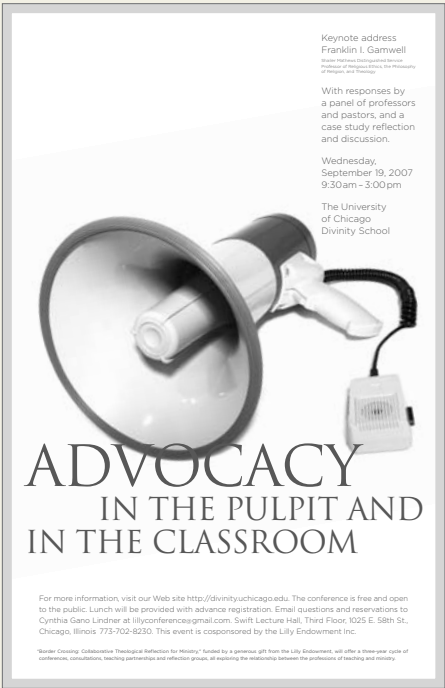
paths that have become increasingly isolated from one another in the specialized climate of contemporary higher education.

The project anticipates that the understandings and practices of professors and ministers alike will be enhanced, strengthened, and clarified by conversation and collaboration with one another; indeed, this outcome is already manifest in the lively and probative conversations that ensue as the conference planning process gets underway for each event. Border Crossing conferences are planned by small teams of students, faculty and ministry practitioners who are convened for the discrete purpose of working together

The occasion of conference planning offered participants new insights about the way they conceived and conducted their own practice, and new appreciation of the possibilities and constraints of other vocations—recognitions that were reiterated some months later by speakers and audience members alike during the fall conference itself.

Likewise, the upcoming Winter 2009 Border Crossing conference, “Resisting Mission: Redefining Engagement” was born out of a series of conversations between divinity school staff members, a local Lutheran pastor with many years of missions experience in Africa, two M.Div./Ph.D. students with significant missions experience of their own, and a third student whose scholarly interests include missions movements in Asia. The gathered group represented significant experience and deep scholarly interest in missions movements as well as real concern for their impact on both church and culture. Their collaboration culminates in the January 23rd event, which will bring together global voices

“...opportunities for constructive collaboration and conversation will abound.”



“Conferences are planned by small teams of students, faculty and ministry practitioners who are convened for the discrete purpose of working together to create a conference experience that invites conversation across disciplines.”

to create a conference experience that invites conversation across disciplines. For example, the planning team for the Autumn 2008 conference included a Divinity School faculty member in the History of Religions, a campus pastor, two M.Div. graduates—both in Ph.D. programs—one of whom is an assistant pastor at a large urban congregation, and a third Ph.D. student who came through our M.A. program. When the group gathered initially, they introduced themselves by describing their own vocations, and settled together on a topic equally challenging to the groups represented around the table—the dynamics of professorial and ministerial authority in a culture of faux intimacy.

and advocates for mission for a re-evaluation of this critical religious practice. After a keynote by scholar of global Christianity Lamin Sanneh, scholars and practitioners of mission will reflect on mission’s constructive practice and resistance. Seminary students, anthropologists of religion, theologians, and clergy will all be challenged by the discussion; opportunities for constructive collaboration and conversation will abound. □

For more information on Border Crossing conferences and links to conference podcasts, visit our webpage at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu>.

# An Interview with Curtis J. Evans

Curtis J. Evans is Assistant Professor of the History of Christianity. He began his appointment in Autumn of 2007. In this interview Evans discusses his recent and upcoming projects and reflects on teaching in Swift Hall. A Dean's Forum will be held on Prof. Evans's book on May 13, 2009. Check our website for details.



**CIRCA:** Can you provide a summary of your recent book?

**CE:** My book, *The Burden of Black Religion*, is a critical analysis of the history of interpretations and cultural images of African American religion. Although I begin the book with debates about Christianizing slaves and what effect Christianity might have on slaves, the book's real beginning (and end) is the 1940s. I worked backward as a way of trying to answer a specific question: why were social scientists, particularly African American sociologists, in the 1940s attempting to undermine what they regarded as a persisting notion that black Americans were naturally religious? When I was researching this material, I began asking questions that any historian would: what did it mean to say that blacks were "naturally religious" [read the book to find the answer!]? Why was this topic a salient

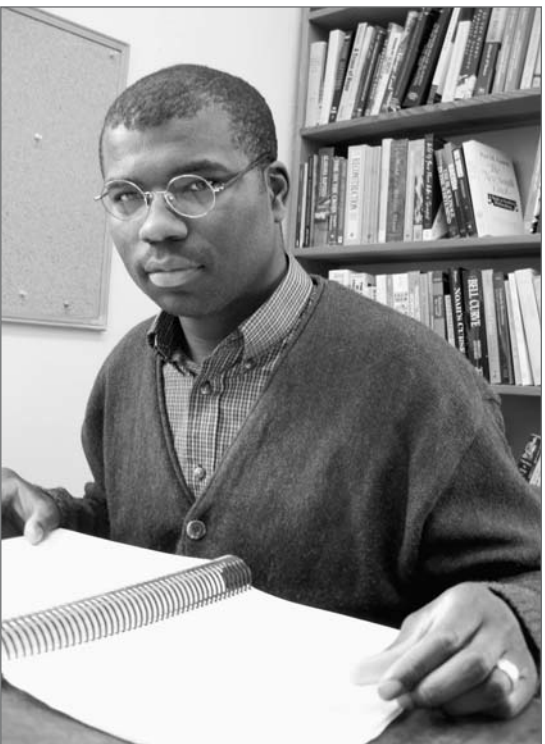
issue? What were the political and social implications of these debates?

I realize, as my early advisor David D. Hall noted, discovering the "origins" of ideas or historical antecedents of particular debates can be a much disputed and never ending process, so it may seem odd that I begin my book with Anglican missionaries in the 1740s trying to assess how Christianity would affect black slaves. What could this possibly have to do with the 1940s? I believe that I had isolated the first crucial debate about the meaning and function of religion to slaves in the American colonies that would have long-term significances about the place of blacks in the nation. Concentrated attention on slave capacities raised a host of complex questions about blacks in America and religion acquired a particular significance as slaves began converting to Christianity. Also, I tried to achieve a breadth of analysis that would not arbitrarily exclude any genre or significant arena of inquiry that related to black religion. In other words, I wanted to aim for an almost comprehensive historical reflection on how whites and blacks imagined and interpreted black religion from the years of slavery to the 1940s. I was interested in what had come before and how history was impinging on that moment of transition in the 1940s.

What I concluded was that religion was the signal quality or feature of black life that was fastened on by interpreters as a means of assessing and speaking about the place of blacks in American culture. Although slavery, segregation, and the harshness of racial oppression for blacks in the United States go a long way in explaining the way that black churches have functioned as social institutions and as spaces of identity and meaning, I also suggest in my book that "black religion" for interpreters was about more than actual churches. It was also about the "uses" of one group's religious and social experience as a way of mediating another group's (or individual's) spiritual experience. In a rather cruel irony, the religious experiences of black Americans, borne of years of suffering and oppression, were often invoked by whites as a softening element that would supply a missing dimension to an otherwise arid and spiritually desiccated culture. Not only that, but this conception of black "religion" required as its opposite capacious intellect, which had the effect of reinforcing a cultural image of blacks as contentedly super-religious and lacking in intelligence.

**CIRCA:** Do you have any new projects you can share with readers?

**CE:** I am looking at the origins of "Race Relations" Sundays, which were held annually on the second Sunday of February, beginning in 1923. RRS were founded under the auspices of the Federal Council of Churches



and part of the rationale was to demonstrate the sufficiency of Christianity in solving the race problem in the United States. I am in the early stages of this project, having done quite extensive research in the rich archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society. I will need to supplement this with research in the records of local churches and conducting interviews with persons who were involved in the National Council of Churches in the

*Continued on page 12*

“... religion was the signal quality or feature of black life that was fastened on by interpreters as a means of assessing and speaking about the place of blacks in American culture.”



# Student Life Report — Islamic Studies Club



Coursework in modern Islam and politics and in Qur'an, Sufi poetry, and related literary expressions have become a growing part of the regular curriculum.

(AMSS) conference, "Crossing Boundaries: Mobilizing Faith, Diversity and Dialogue," hosted by the Harvard Divinity School. Sirry's work won the award for the best graduate student paper. Omer Mozaffar, a student in the Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations department, was the discussant for Sirry's presentation.

The final meeting of the quarter was an informal conversation between Ph.D. students and Professor Sells regarding exam preparation and reading lists: a well-received chance to discuss study strategies, requirements, and exchange reading lists in a casual context.

The fall quarter of the 2008–2009 academic year witnessed an exciting new development in the Divinity School's Islamic Studies area: the creation of the student-run, DSA-funded Islamic Studies Club.

With its decisions to hire Malika Zeghal as Associate Professor in the Anthropology and Sociology of Religion and Michael Sells as John Henry Barrows Professor, the Divinity School was able, for the first time in its history, to establish an area of study devoted to Islam. Coursework in modern Islam and politics (Zeghal) and in Qur'an, Sufi poetry, and related literary expressions (Sells) have become part of the regular curriculum and the cohort of Divinity Ph.D. students, and students from other programs wishing to study Islam, is growing annually. The Divinity School's longstanding connections with colleagues, especially in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations but also in such departments as History and Anthropology, has only been augmented by this development, and enables students to pursue both textual and ethnographic research in the tradition.

The Islamic Studies Club was started by a group of students at the initiative of Ph.D. student Hilmi Okur. Professors Zeghal and Sells have worked to suggest activities and organize events, and have kindly tolerated stashing the club's snack foods in their respective offices on many occasions. Most of the students involved are in the Islamic Studies area; however, there are also students from the Anthropology and Sociology of Religion area, History of Judaism, and the department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

During the past Fall Quarter the club met several times for informal readings, presentations, and conversations. A few of these meetings were focused on reading passages of the Qur'an together, translating, and discussing any issues of theology, translation, popular practice or belief, or interpretation that may arise therein. Most of



the Ph.D. students who attend the meetings on a regular basis are in the second and third years of the doctoral program—and preparing for exams—so the scriptural reading sessions have helped in preparation for Professor Sells' Qur'an exam, providing background or insight into other approaches to the text that may not be covered in classes. Texts are read in Arabic but discussed in English, so students of all levels of language ability are welcome and do attend.

The Club has organized one paper presentation so far: Mun'im Sirry, a second-year Ph.D. student in the Islamic Studies area presented "Compete with One Another in Good Works": Exegesis on Qur'anic Verse 5:48 and Contemporary Muslim Discourses on Religious Pluralism." This paper had recently been presented at the Association of Muslim Social Scientists of North America



The club plans to continue Qur'an meetings and paper presentations next quarter, as well as to introduce new types of events, including discussions of works in progress or even conversations over tea and snacks in students' homes. In addition a *musha'ira* is in the works—a dinner and performance focused on poetry and music from the Islamic world in all languages.

Questions about the Islamic Studies Club can be directed to Lauren Osborne (osborneL@uchicago.edu). □

— Lauren Osborne,  
*Ph.D. student, Islamic Studies*

## The Divinity Students Association

(DSA) is an organization run by and for University of Chicago Divinity School students. The organization attempts to contribute to many spheres of life in the Divinity School: academic, professional, and social.

This article continues our series about Divinity School student life.

To learn more about the DSA and its many activities, please visit <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/students/students-assoc.shtml>

# Marty Center News and Events



The Martin Marty Center builds on a long-standing conviction of the Divinity School that the best and most innovative scholarship in religion emerges from sustained dialogue with the world outside the academy. In all of its projects, the Center aims to serve as a robust circulatory system that strengthens, deepens, and extends scholarly inquiry by moving it through the deliberating bodies of the students, faculty, and public. — William Schweiker, *Director of the Marty Center*

## Upcoming 2009 Conferences

### Culturing Theologies, Theologizing Cultures: Overtures toward Interdisciplinary Theories and Theologies of Culture

Wednesday and Thursday,  
April 22–23, 2009 — Swift Hall

#### The 2009 D.R. Sharpe Lectures

*Additional cosponsors include the William Henry Hoover Lectures at the Disciples Divinity House, the Divinity Students Association, and the Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory*

Christian theology, especially theologies of culture, currently confronts an interdisciplinary and intercultural reconfiguration. Many contemporary theologians acknowledge the need to take into consideration the various ways in which culture has implicitly, if not always explicitly, engaged with theology. Furthermore, recent trends in theology demonstrate a growing appreciation for interdisciplinary approaches that readily embrace the methodologies of other increasingly specialized fields, such as critical and cultural studies in the humanities and the social sciences.

Moreover, increased attention on and participation by previously underappreciated perspectives from the once “Third” and “Fourth” worlds of colonized and indigenous peoples respectively have both challenged and contributed corrections to various disciplinary methodologies, including those in theology. These recent trends suggest a decisive move for a comparative, interdisciplinary approach to the perennial reflection upon ideas of the religious in, through, and before cultures.

Please see <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/conferences/culture/> for more information, including the conference program.



### Deconstructing Dialogue: New Perspectives on Religious Encounters: Ancient, Medieval and Modern

January 22–23, 2010 — Swift Hall

Religious dialogue is seen as a crucial feature of the modern religious experience. Closely related to liberalism, ecumenism, ideals of tolerance and mutual understanding, it seems to be a product of the Enlightenment. Or is it?

This conference will initiate a critical, multidisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of religious dialogue, and will problematize the Enlightenment origins and meanings of “dialogue.” Starting with questions of origins and development—what is dialogue, how has it been defined and conceived, by whom and in what context—the conference will examine the genealogy of modern ideas and practices of religious dialogue in comparison to pre-modern traditions to provide a broader framework for studying how ideas are discussed and debated across time and geographical or cultural divisions. We will explore such themes as the definitions of dialogue vs. its lived practice; geographies of dialogue, that is, sacred spaces and counter-spaces, where

does dialogue take place and why; political motivations—when does dialogue occur and for what purpose; methods and vehicles of dialogue and strategies of representation; inter-religious vs. inner-religious dialogue, or even the internal dialogue of religious converts; dialogue in fiction and fact, including the literary genre of dialogue; and the ethnography of interfaith communication, its politics and aesthetics.





# Senior Research Fellow Symposia

The Senior Fellow Symposia allow a Senior Fellow to present her or his work in a public forum to members of the seminar, the entire Divinity School community and members of the University and interested persons.

On February 26, Vincent Rougeau will present “Religious Citizens, Pluralist Democracy, and Legal Cosmopolitanism.” On April 16, Sarah MacFarland Taylor will present—title TBA—and Clemens Six presented “India within ‘Multiple Modernities’: What Role for Whose Religion?” this past November. All symposia are Thursdays from 4:00–6:00 p.m. in the Common Room.

Here we have excerpted their answers to the question “What do you hope to accomplish this year as a Martin Marty Center Senior Fellow, and how does the MMC look as a place to do your work?”

For the complete answers—and more information on the MMC Fellowship programs—please visit us online at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter>.

## Clemens Six

Clemens Six’s project is titled “Multiple Modernities: What Role For Whose Religion?” Six is an Assistant Professor at the University of Bern, Switzerland, and a recent Ph.D. in South Asian Economic and Social History from the University of Vienna. He recently authored *Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan. Politik und Religion im modernen Indien*.



**Six:** Global (or world) history is a comparatively young historiographical discipline concentrating on the interrelated and interconnected histories of various regions, civilizations

and continents by concentrating on different modes of interaction such as exchange and transfer of rather concrete objects like goods through trade as well as abstracts such as ideas. In order to analyze issues of regional or even global scope, global history has so far developed various theoretical approaches. One major attempt of global history in its theoretical work is to overcome Eurocentric interpretations of history and thereby create a more profound, somewhat “more realistic”

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idea about the past. My specific project starts with the idea of “multiple modernities”—a recently discussed interpretation of global modernity as in fact a variety of significantly differing modernities. What seems to distinguish these modernities from each other is among other factors religion. With the example of India and its conflicting history with (colonial and post-colonial) modernity I examine the suitability of the multiple modernities approach in relation to selected Indian concepts of modernity. The reason why this seems an urgent issue in historiography is that in order to seriously go beyond Eurocentrism it is necessary to bring non-Western theories (of history and modernity) into global history.

## Vincent Rougeau

Vincent Rougeau is Associate Professor and Director of the Center on Law and Government at Notre Dame Law School; he recently completed a book with Oxford University Press entitled *Christians in the American Empire: Faith and Citizenship in the New World Order*.

**Rougeau:** I hope to use my time at the Marty Center to begin work on a book that explores the role of religious believers as citizens in pluralist democracies. Specifically, I want to consider the growing body of work in cosmopolitan political philosophy and the emerging idea of liberal multiculturalism as a means of proposing a different way for American Christians in particular to think about their roles as citizens and their relationship to the nation-state. If core values of liberal democracy—like the equality of esteem for all human beings—are truly universal, claims that the American constitution and the rights it confers are unique or “exceptional” become increasingly incoherent. The universalist claims of cosmopolitanism resonate strongly with many similar claims in Christianity,



and I hope to argue that a more cosmopolitan understanding of democratic citizenship and democratic values is much more consistent with Christianity than a nationalistic position that elevates the rights of citizens over non-citizens, while still claiming that core democratic rights are inalienable to human beings generally. One obvious legal issue raised by this work is the legal status of undocumented migrants. Some other legal and policy issues I would like to consider are the regulation of global economic activity, the protection of the global environment, and the status of religious communities as recognizable groups within multicultural democracies.

## Sarah McFarland Taylor

Sarah McFarland Taylor’s projects are tentatively titled “Eternally Green: American Religion and the Ecology of Death” and “Religious Responses to Global Climate Change.” Taylor is currently Associate Professor at Northwestern University’s Department of Religion, where she also teaches in the American Studies program and the Environmental Policy and Culture program. She published *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology* with Harvard University Press in 2007 and has two book projects currently underway.



**Taylor:** I am interested in why Americans of various religious backgrounds are increasingly making very specific “ecologically minded” directives about how their bodies are to be handled and disposed of upon their death. Furthermore, what might insight into this movement tell us more broadly about American sensibilities toward nature and how these sensibilities change over time? The bulk of my work during the fellowship year centers on this project.

I am also conducting some interviews in the Chicago area for a portion of a larger project on “Religious Responses to Global Climate Change.” I am looking at the emergence (within diverse religious and ethnic communities) of prayers, meditations, and rituals specifically directed toward climate crisis. I am curious about how the specter of global climate change is shaping spirituality and religious practice and what religious “innovations” in this area might reveal about contemporary understandings of environmental problems and the interactions between religious communities and the culture of American environmentalism. I am especially interested in investigating how newly created “prayerwork” and ritual performance in response to global climate change do or do not (as the case may be) get coupled with direct political action. □

# Martin Marty Center's *Sightings*



With a new interface that makes subscribing simpler and quicker, the number of *Sightings* readers continues to grow, and so does the pool of commentators who, along with Martin Marty, contribute their observations and insights on religion in the public sphere.

This year, the Marty Center's Junior Dissertation Fellows will each contribute a column to *Sightings*. These scholars, in the advanced stages of their doctoral work, are uniquely situated to comment on the intersections between

religion and public life, and we look forward to what are sure to be insightful and thought-provoking contributions. The piece reprinted, "E Pluribus Obama," comes from Junior Fellow M. Cooper Harriss, a

Ph.D. candidate in Religion and Literature at the Divinity School.

Though *Sightings* hopes to illustrate, through the wide range of topics covered, that "religion and public life" extends far beyond the realm of politics, and that otherwise-overlooked topics can engender fruitful explorations of religion in public life—recent columns have dealt with religion's place in popular culture (from movies to music to sports stars); science and religion; the appointment of a "pope of Voodoo" and the death of key figures in Mormonism and Islam; internet end-times indicators; and new developments in Jewish dietary practices—*Sightings* could not reasonably fail to address the election.

When *Sightings* does address a widely covered topic, it aims to do so by focusing on details or angles that have not been addressed elsewhere. Harriss's essay exemplifies this mission: Commentary on the election—even, more specifically, commentary on religion in the election—may have been everywhere in these past several months, but Harriss brings to bear his expertise in both American religious history and literary criticism, producing a thoughtful piece that explores the "religion and politics" issue from a different angle. Please enjoy "E Pluribus Obama." ▢

— Kristen Tobey, *Editor*

For information on subscribing or contributing, visit <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/sightings/>.

## Religion and Culture Web Forum

The Martin Marty Center's Religion and Culture Web Forum returned from its summer hiatus with an exploration of "Secularism, Religious Renaissance, and Social Conflict in Asia" by University of California, San Diego's Richard Madsen, an essay that pushed the possibilities of applying the Western framework of "secularism" as a political, social, and cultural phenomenon to Asian countries.

In October University of Chicago anthropologist Danilyn Rutherford offered a reading of the "active belief" upon which anthropological work is predicated, drawing on her fieldwork among Biak exiles from New Guinea, her readings of Locke and Hume, and her analysis of the notion of secular belief expressed on National Public Radio in her essay, "The Enchantments of Secular Belief."

The Divinity School's own Jean-Luc Marion probed the concept of sacrifice via philosophical discourse in November. His

piece, "Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Sacrifice," relies upon the idea of gift-giving and the relationships involved in such an exchange, which Marion applies to the Biblical account of Abraham's incomplete but still effective sacrifice of Isaac.



December's Web Forum featured part of biochemist and molecular biologist Stephen Meredith's ongoing exploration of theology in literature. His essay "The Reification of Evil and The Failure of Theodicy: The Devil in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*" not only asks theological questions about the content of the work of literature, but also about the function such a text might play in the distinctly human struggle to make rational sense of our suffering.

Each month's essay is complemented by responses from scholars whose own approach intersects in interesting and useful ways with those of the piece. Recent commentators include Slavoj Žižek, Malika Zeghal, Susan McReynolds Oddo, and Prasenjit Duara.

In 2009, The Religion and Culture Web Forum will feature explorations of the political function of humor, the history of black Pentecostalism, and the role of new media within Lubavitcher Judaism. ▢

— Spencer Dew, *Editor*



To be notified of new content monthly, subscribe to our mailing list at <https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/rcwf>. As always, the Religion and Culture Web Forum welcomes submissions of working projects probing the intersection of "religion" and "culture." All inquiries and submissions should be directed to the Forum's editor, Spencer Dew, at [sl Dew@uchicago.edu](mailto:sl Dew@uchicago.edu).



# Sightings: E Pluribus Obama

In the November 6th *New York Times*, photographer Matt Mendelsohn describes a restlessness that overcame him on election night, leading him to drive across the Potomac to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, “expecting to find a crowd and some news.”



Instead he found roughly twenty-five people huddled around a transistor radio, a crowd so relatively small and quiet that they were unmolested by camera crews who, like Mendelsohn, expected numbers and bombast more in keeping with the throng in Grant Park, Chicago, not quite forty-score miles away.

Mendelsohn's instincts upon the election of our first president of color resound for evident reasons (Lincoln as “Great Emancipator” and the Memorial's steps as the location of Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” speech). They also respond to signals manufactured by Obama's campaign, ranging

“Should we even aspire for a sense of ‘one’ over the pluralistic diversity of ‘the many,’ given the very real hegemonic potential that such a homogenous orientation raises?”

from the announcement of his candidacy at the site of Lincoln's “House Divided” speech, to his invocation of the man and his words last Tuesday night. But to ascribe this rhetoric simply to matters of race overlooks a broader religious move that the President-elect and his handlers appear to understand, and which surely has contributed to their success.

Abraham Lincoln is the patron saint of the American civil religion, a category that Robert Bellah codified in 1967 as “a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or...as revealed



through the experience of the American people.” That Bellah's definition coincided with discernible fractures in a singular American mythology is significant. Commentators including our own Martin Marty have noted that the past four decades have witnessed a shift from “the one” to “the many” in national discourse. Marty's formulation in the third volume of *Modern American Religion* marks a movement from “centripetal” to “centrifugal,” from a strong, centrally unified national identity to one thrust away from a center, multivalent. Within this context, “Americanness” has become a competitive hermeneutic, recently evident in the debates surrounding the nature of patriotism and the responsibilities of liberty and citizenship.

Similarly, Abraham Lincoln finds himself created, like Albert Schweitzer said of Jesus, by “each individual...in accordance with his own character.” Consequently, how should we read the Obama candidacy and these

earliest phases of his presidency? Is “change” skin deep or does it extend further? Might we also read a return to a centripetal orientation of American national identity, a new validation of a civil religion lost for nearly two generations? Should we even aspire for a sense of “one” over the pluralistic diversity of “the many,” given the very real hegemonic potential that such a homogenous orientation raises? These are questions to bear in mind, and questions to which we shall, no doubt, return.

But in the hopeful interim, we might remember Ralph Ellison, another antecedent of the president-elect. In a recent article for *The New Republic*, David Samuels remarks on the evident influence Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) exerts on Obama's autobiography *Dreams from My Father* (1995) and, thereby, “as a major influence on his personal evolution.” I would argue that another portion of Ellison's work resonates with Obama's



candidacy—especially with his centripetal understanding of American civil religion: the second novel that Ellison wrote from 1952 until his death in 1994 and never completed, though excerpts were published as *Juneteenth* in 1999. In *Juneteenth* we find Adam Sunraider, a race-baiting white New England senator, engaged in deathbed conversations with Reverend Hickman, an African American preacher. The reader learns that Sunraider was once known as “Bliss,” a child of ambiguous racial origins who, though he could pass for white, was adopted by Hickman, raised and loved by his congregants, and trained in the homiletical arts of the black church. Indeed, Sunraider's hateful “white” eloquence was fostered by Bliss's “black” rhetorical apprenticeship—evincing Ellison's profound understanding of the irony of American history.

At a pivotal moment in the novel's disjointed chronology, Hickman stands at the Lincoln Memorial, considering “some cord

*Continued on page 15*

M. Cooper Harriss, a junior fellow in the Martin Marty Center, is a Ph.D. candidate in Religion and Literature at the Divinity School.



**T**he Dean, the faculty, and the students in the Divinity School extend their sincere thanks to all who support the work of the School. The following alumni, friends, and organizations generously contributed cash gifts during the 2007–2008 fiscal year (July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008). Please note that the publication of this year's giving list, normally in the autumn issue of *Circa*, was delayed due to the transition to a new university-wide alumni and development database.

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Wilson W. Steinbrecher

*In memory of Donald Wenstrom*  
Emily E. Siler

*In memory of Kenneth Reed Wood*  
Kenneth F. Ripple

Matching Gifts

The following companies and foundations generously matched gifts made to the Divinity School during the 2007–2008 academic year.

Abbott Laboratories Fund  
Accenture Foundation  
The Field Foundation of Illinois, Inc.  
Freddie Mac Foundation  
IBM Corporation  
Lincoln Financial Group Foundation  
Moody's Foundation  
UBS Matching Gift Fund  
USG Foundation, Inc.  
Wellington Management Company

Gifts in Honor of Individuals

The Divinity School offers special thanks for gifts that honored individuals during the 2007–2008 year.

*In honor of Martin Marty's 80th birthday*  
Donald Paul Burgo  
Jung Ki Chung  
Allan Cox  
Emily Huggins Fine  
Julian J. Frazin and  
Rhona S. Frazin  
Patricia E. Kauffman

\* Deceased

# Gifts to the Divinity School



Warren R. Copeland  
Brian Henry Covell  
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Gerald W. Gillette  
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Robert Emil Koenig  
Paul Kollman  
Maurine E. Kornfeld  
Philip Daniel Krey  
Charles V. La Fontaine

## The Chicago Initiative

The Chicago Initiative, a university-wide capital campaign, concluded on June 30, 2008 with an overall total for the University of \$2.3 billion. The Divinity School's campaign result was a total of \$13,155,742 — 82% of the original goal of \$16 million.



Among the significant consequences of the campaign for the Divinity School were the addition of \$6.6 million to the general endowment and the creation of the following new endowments:

- Chave Dissertation Endowment
- John and Jessica Gaus Endowment
- Langdon Gilkey Scholarship
- Dorothy Grant Maclear Professorship
- James Fulton Maclear Scholarship
- Marty Center Dissertation Seminar Endowment
- Benjamin Mays Scholarship
- Nathan and Charlotte Scott Dissertation Endowment
- Victoria Waters Fellowship Endowment

In addition, within the timeframe of the campaign (1999–2008), there were significant additions to several existing endowments:

- Jerald Brauer Fund
- Martin Marty Center Endowment
- Rolland Schloerb Ministry Fellowship

Many of our most steadfast donors took advantage of the campaign to make “stretch” gifts well exceeding their regular annual contributions. We deeply appreciate these gifts that demonstrate our supporters’ belief in the current work of the School, as well as a commitment to its long-term wellbeing.



Julia Anne Lamm  
E. Thomas Lawson  
Blaise Levai  
Laura S. Lieber and  
Norman Weiner  
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Jeffrey H. Lindgren  
Ausrele J. Liulevicius  
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Daniel J. Zehnal

\* Deceased



Curtis Interview Continued from page 6

1950s and 1960s. I suppose that I am especially interested in RRS because they were primarily about churches wrestling with what was rightly perceived as a blot on their Christian witness. It is both tragic and inspiring when one gets a glimpse of what was going on behind the scenes as the RRS leaders return again and again to their foundational Christian precepts on Christian brotherhood and unity in the face of massive divisions on the ground because of the seemingly intractable problem of race.

**CIRCA:** Tell us about what you are teaching at the Divinity School.

**CE:** I am teaching two courses for this (Autumn 2008) semester, Christianity and Slavery in America and Religion in Modern America from the Civil War to the 1920s. It

is not always pleasant to discuss issues such as racist images of blacks or religious defenses of slavery, but I cannot imagine a better place than the classroom with highly motivated, bright, and conscientious students. The questions that they ask and the unique perspectives that they bring are some of the reasons that teaching is such a deeply rewarding experience. As we wrestle with how historians explain causation or the concrete details of attempts to Christianize slaves, I appreciate that our students recognize the nuances and complexities of history and rightly eschew one-dimensional simplistic analyses of the role of religion in modern society and history.

**CIRCA:** Please offer a reflection on the transition from teaching at Florida State University to teaching at the University of Chicago.

**CE:** The comparison is hard to make because I have not taught here long enough and I taught undergraduates and graduate students at FSU, but I am only working with graduate students this semester. So much has happened since FSU: a year’s research leave, my first book, my father’s death in February, and living in a much colder climate. Teaching has been one of the few sources of continuity between my time at FSU and my time here. It has eased my transition. □

“...we wrestle with how historians explain causation or the concrete details of attempts to Christianize slaves...”

Obama Continued from page 11

of kinship stronger and deeper than blood, hate or heartbreak.” His admiration for Lincoln conflates with Bliss’s betrayal. Yet, ironically, it is the racist Sunraider, speaking on the Senate floor, who invokes the one and the many: “[H]istory has put to us three fatal questions, has written them across our sky in accents of accusation...How can the many be as one? How can the future deny the Past? And How can the light deny the dark?” Now that the remarkable feat that many believed they would not live to see is accomplished, these questions, which invoke the mystery of American faith, should occupy our concern, and the new president’s. May

we rejoice in this remarkable moment, yet not blind ourselves in tragic self-satisfaction to the challenges and complexities of what lies ahead. □

References:

Read Matt Mendlesohn in *The New York Times*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/06/opinion/o6mendelsohn.html>

Read David Samuels, on Obama and *Invisible Man*, in *The New Republic*: <http://www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=5c263eid-d75d-4af9-aid7-5cb761500092>

Read Robert Bellah on American civil religion: [http://www.robertbellah.com/articles\\_5.htm](http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm)



# Scenes from the Divinity School

On November 11th photographer Steve Kagan captured a range of activities in Swift Hall, including a meeting of Professor Jeffrey Stackert’s Introduction to Hebrew Bible class, students making use of the new study lounge on the fourth floor, the busy DSA coffeeshop—where God drinks coffee—an afternoon meeting of the Islamic Studies Club (for more information on that, see page 7), and Dean of Students Terri Owens in one of her many meetings with students.



Circa Images © Cover: Sylumagraphics. Pg 2: Marion, Steve Kagan; Académie française, Vin Brun. Pg 3: Yadin, Zelniker, and LaBarre, Steve Kagan. Pg 4: Calendar, Dusk; Church, DC Hancock; Taylor, courtesy of McGill University. Pg 6: Hands, Norman Mauskopf; Evans, Steve Kagan. Pg 7: Scenes from the Islamic Studies Club, Steve Kagan. Pg 8: Streetscene, Anita Romero; Lettering, Mario Savoia. Pg 9: Rougeau, Steve Kagan. Pg 10: City Church, Studali; Painting, Rembrandt. Pg 11: Obama, Shutterstock. Pg 12: Students, Steve Kagan. Pg 14: Book, Steve Kagan; Archway, Jennifer Quijano Sax. Pg 15: Obama, Shutterstock. Pg 16: Scenes from the Divinity School, Steve Kagan.



**For calendar updates**, please consult the Divinity School’s website at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/news/>. Access the most up-to-date events information, sign up for our electronic events calendar —“At the Divinity School”—and get current, and archived, news.