

CIRCA

News *from* the University of Chicago Divinity School

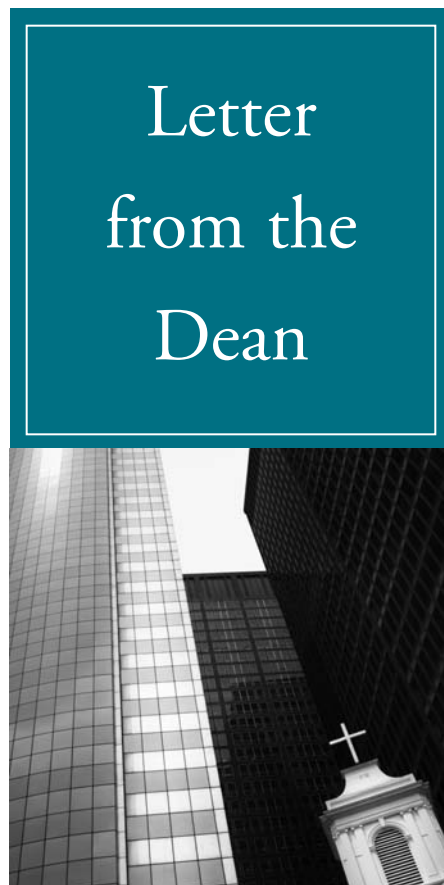
THIS PAST FEBRUARY THE DIVINITY SCHOOL CELEBRATED THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY of the Martin Marty Center and the eightieth birthday of Martin Marty with a conference on the theme “Religion and the City: Our Urban Humanity and the World Beyond.” The materials from the conference will be available online at the Marty Center website and readers of *Circa* and others can get a good sense there of the flavor of this wonderful event.

Readers should also have already received their copy of a special issue of *Criterion* published for this event, entitled “Celebrating Sightings”—a special issue putting into print almost ten years of the best, most salient columns from the Marty Center’s weekly online publication. A tenth anniversary such as this invites both review and reconsideration. What makes the Marty Center unusual, perhaps even unique, in an academic world in which centers proliferate?

We might begin to answer the question by examining a distinguishing mark of its name—the fact that it is only “the Marty Center,” with no adjoining and specifying prepositional phrase (e.g., “of religion and politics”). The Marty Center does not affiliate itself with a specific topic in religion. It is, instead, a center for the advanced study of religion (a carryover phrase from its predecessor status as an “institute”). This signifies commitment to an agenda that is as broad and as variegated as its membership—the faculty and students of the Divinity School—choose to make it.

The Center thus might study many things. This provenance suggests that religion is sufficiently variegated in its realities, and yet sufficiently integral, to warrant the broadest palette. The Latin poet Horace articulated the aim of epic poetry to be *Mores hominum multorum vidit*—to see all the ways of humanity—and nothing less than such an epic goal applies to the Marty Center’s interest in religion.

If nothing religious is foreign to the interest of the Marty Center, it is also the case that the Center hews to the conviction that everything religious can only be well understood when situated with reference to its place in public life. This conviction reflects two complementary claims. One is that religion can only be credibly understood when understanding is guided by recourse to argument and evidence. No special pleas,



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or recurses to claims of special status, are acceptable. The second is that religion will, when understood in this way, reflect its potential for good and for ill in the world.

So far so good. But there is one further salient dimension of the Marty Center’s work; its effort to foster the richest public engagement of religion by nothing less than an inversion of the usual paradigm of scholarly research. Rather than identifying audiences beyond the scholarly guilt at the conclusion of the project (“dissemination”), the Marty Center projects explicitly engage such audiences at the outset and aim to sustain that engagement through all aspects of the project. This reflects the conviction that communities of religious believers often have much to contribute directly to scholarly work. The richest engagement of religion—and not incidentally the truest and most consequential—brings into relief not only the canons of evidence and argument, but any and all interested parties.

In the past ten years, the Marty Center has been busy: over one thousand *Sightings* columns, some thirty scholarly conferences, programs on pedagogy and on the interface of ministerial and academic education, twenty Web Forums, and over one hundred junior fellows working toward their dissertations. With this latest conference, the Marty Center has also taken a major step in making its work more accessible to the public at large: the conference was video-taped, and streaming media of those files is being made available as a permanent addition to the Marty Center’s website. We look forward to adding more streaming media of conferences, lectures, and other major events.

The occasion of this anniversary is one on which the School justifiably takes pride in these accomplishments. But it is also an occasion to remember that our work is always ever just beginning. If we continue to honor this charter, the future will be as productive as the past. □

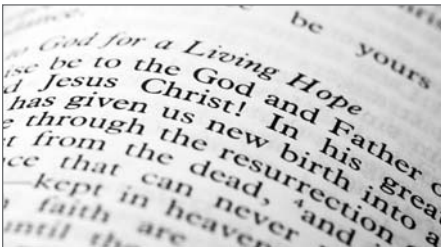
Richard A. Rosengarten, *Dean*

Emilie M. Townes Named Alumnus of the Year

The Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union has named Emilie M. Townes the Divinity School’s Alumna of the Year for 2008. Townes is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of African American Religion and Theology at Yale Divinity School. In July 2008, Townes will become the first African American and first woman to serve as the associate dean of academic affairs of Yale Divinity School. Also in 2008, she will become the first African American woman to serve as president of the American Academy of Religion.

After earning her B.A. from the University of Chicago and her M.A. from the Divinity School, Townes earned her Doctor of Ministry degree in 1982, also from the Divinity School, and her Ph.D. from the Joint Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary/Northwestern University Program in Religious and Theological Studies in 1989. She is ordained in the American Baptist Church.

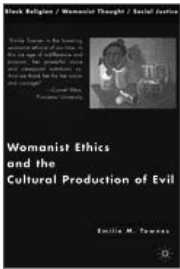
Townes has taught at Union Theological Seminary, Saint Paul School of Theology, DePaul University, McCormick Theological Seminary and others. She served on the Advisory Committee of the Women’s Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School and acted as the director of the Wabash Center Workshop on Teaching and Learning for African American Faculty.



Townes’s work focuses on Christian ethics, womanist ethics, critical social theory, cultural theory and studies, as well as on postmodernism and social postmodernism. Her specific interests include health and health care; the cultural production of evil; analyzing the linkages among race, gender, class, and other forms of oppression; and developing a network between African American and Afro-Brazilian religious and secular leaders and community-based organizations.

Townes’s books include *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care*, *In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness*, and *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope*. In addition, she is the editor of two volumes: *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering* and *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*.

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.



Townes will deliver her Alumna of the Year address, “The Dancing Mind,” at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 17, in Swift Lecture Hall. A reception will follow.

Anne Carr, Theologian, 1934–2008

Professor Carr was a scholar of modern theology who specialized in Catholic thought and feminist theology, and her work included the history of Christian thought, contemporary philosophical theology, the philosophy of religion and Roman Catholic studies. Her research examined subjects from the theology of Karl Rahner to the spirituality of Thomas Merton to theological anthropology—but she is perhaps best known for her groundbreaking 1988 book *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women’s Experience*.

She authored two other books: *The Theological Method of Karl Rahner* and *A Search for Wisdom and Spirit: Thomas Merton’s Theology of Self*. She coedited six additional books, and published numerous articles in scholarly journals such as *Horizons*, for which she was associate editor, and *The Journal of Religion*, which she coedited.

A Roman Catholic nun and member of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) for almost a half-century, Carr was also known as a pioneer for women’s rights within the Church. In 1975, she spoke

at the Catholic Women’s Ordination Conference, delivering an ethical and historical case for the ordination of women priests in the Roman Catholic Church. In 1984, Carr was among a group of twenty-four U.S. nuns who signed an advertisement, published in *The New York Times*, which stated that Roman Catholics had a “diversity of opinions regarding abortion.”

In 1997, she received the John Courtney Murray Award for Excellence in Theology from the Catholic Theological Society of America.



She is survived by sisters Jeanne Horan, of Indian Head Park, Illinois, and Mary Patricia Zeiler, of LaGrange Park, Illinois.

Memorials may be given to the Sisters of Charity, BVM Retirement Fund, 1100 Carmel Drive, Dubuque, Iowa 52003.

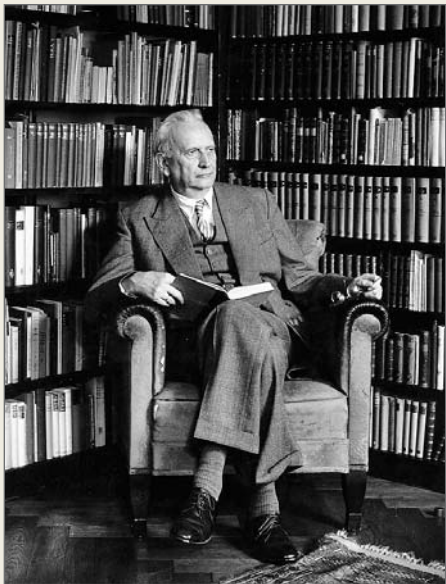
Spring News and Notes

Border Crossing Administrator Joins Staff

Daniel Sack is the administrator of the Divinity School's new Border Crossing Project, an initiative to generate discussions of vocation between students preparing for ministry and students preparing to be theological educators. Sack has experience in both theological education and in collaboration. For the last six years he has worked with the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, organizing several collaborative projects for the consortium's fourteen liberal arts colleges. Before that he was associate director of the Material History of American Religion Project, an initiative of eight historians interested in the material practices of American religious life. Sack has also taught at Hope College



and Columbia Theological Seminary, and was assistant chaplain at Austin College. He is a historian of American religion and author of *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture* (Palgrave, 2000). He is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and a graduate of Northwestern University, McCormick Theological Seminary, and Princeton University. The Border Crossing Project is supported by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. Sack will be with us for the three-year duration of the grant.



Jean-Luc Marion Awarded 2007 Karl Jaspers Prize

Jean-Luc Marion, professor of the philosophy of religion and theology, has been selected to receive the 2007 Karl Jaspers Prize for extraordinary scholarly accomplishment of international stature. The Prize is awarded every three years by the city of Heidelberg and Ruprecht Karl University. First awarded in 1983 to Emmanuel Levinas, the prize commemorated the hundred-year anniversary of the birth



of German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969). Other recipients of the prize include Jurgen Habermas, who received the prize in 1995, and Paul Ricoeur, who received it in 1989.

David Tracy Receives 2008 Jerome Award

The Catholic Library Association's Academic Library Services Section has selected **David Tracy**, Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Catholic Studies and Professor of Theology and the Philosophy of Religion in the Divinity School, as the 2008 recipient of the Jerome Award. The Jerome Award, which was first presented in 1992, recognizes an outstanding contribution and commitment to excellence in scholarship which embody the ideals of the Catholic Library Association.



Some previous Jerome Award recipients were Jesuits Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Avery Cardinal Dulles, Richard A. McCormick, and Walter J. Burghardt.

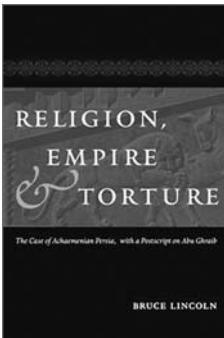
The award will be presented on Tuesday, March 25 at the CLA meeting's opening dinner, held this year in Indianapolis, Indiana.



Bruce Lincoln Receives 2007 Frank Moore Cross Award

The Frank Moore Cross Award, presented to the editor or author of the most substantial volume related to ancient Near Eastern and eastern Mediterranean epigraphy, text and/or tradition, was given this year to Bruce Lincoln for *Religion, Empire, and Torture: the Case of Achaemenian Persia with a Postscript on Abu Ghraib*.

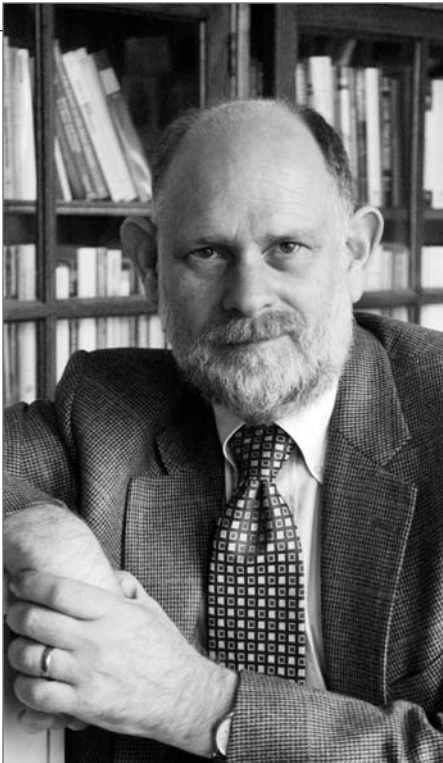
The Caroline E. Haskell Professor of History of Religions in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, Lincoln also has affiliations with the Departments of Classics



and Anthropology, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Committee on the Ancient Mediterranean World. He has published eight other books, including *Holy Terrors: Thinking*

About Religion After September 11 and *Death, War, and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice*.

Emphasizing critical approaches to the study of religion, he has longstanding interest in discourse, practice, power, conflict, and the violent reconstruction of social borders. *Religion, Empire, and Torture* is based upon the author's reading of official texts from the Persian Empire relating to imperial theology. At the end of his study he brings us back to the present with his analysis of the photographs from Abu Ghraib in the context of the Achaemenian case studies presented in the first part of the book.



Faculty News and Notes

Margaret Mitchell Named Speaker's Lecturer

Margaret Mitchell, Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature in the Divinity School, has been named Speaker's Lecturer in Biblical Studies at the University of Oxford.



She is invited to give six lectures in Oxford during the 2007–2008 academic year, entitled “The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics.” The lectures will examine each letter the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians as “the birth of Pauline hermeneutics.” Past recipients of the Speaker's Lecturer position include Adela Yarbro Collins, Andrew Chester, and Leander Keck.



Student News



Good Caffeine and Good Buzz

Last summer the *Chicago Tribune* reviewed coffee houses around the city, including Grounds of Being, run by the Divinity Students Association (DSA). Here we have reprinted part of the *Tribune's* story, “These spots get A+ for good caffeine, good buzz,” written by Monica Eng. The article ran on August 21, 2007.

For most of us worker bees, coffeehouses have become a mere stop on the flight back to our cubicles. For students, a coffeehouse can serve as a relaxing “third place,” made for hours of studying, reading, lounging, eating, chatting, flirting, net surfing and simply breathing in the aroma of really good coffee. We poked around area campuses, asking students, faculty and staff to point the way to the best java hut around. Here are three favorites.

The University of Chicago Divinity School Coffee Shop (a.k.a. Grounds of Being) located in the basement of the gothic Swift



Hall, at the end of a long corridor, the student-run cafe feels like a hidden treasure. The cafe's main room houses the coffee counter, four tables, a cold case and a large hot case holding boxes of food for purchase from about 10 Chicago restaurants (including Edwardo's and Soul Vegetarian East). You'll find Korean, Thai, vegetarian soul food, stuffed pizza, South Asian, Middle Eastern and deli sandwiches, everything priced at about \$5.25 or less. We tried the Thai curry and rice, a falafel sandwich, bibimbap and a vegan-soul food combo. And we liked them all. Yum.



But the amazing array of affordable food is just the beginning. The friendly student baristas serve up some of the best and cheapest organic fair trade coffee in town — a small cup costs an eye-popping 75 cents. Regular coffee is 60 cents; a double espresso is a mere \$1.

“We are kind of well known among the international professor and grad student crowd for the quality of our espresso,” said manager Tiffani Jones. “And we try to keep things affordable for the students.”

Other attractions include the cool \$10 T-shirts (they say “Where God drinks coffee”), the box of free stuff (you can leave items — scarves and books, for example — or take them), the rotating art gallery in the second dining room (with a dozen tables) and, coolest of all, the tip jar voting system. Each day presents a new battle. On our visit, one tip jar was labeled John Cusack, another Jack Black. Whoever collects more tips wins. Last year's tip jar tournament was the “Battle of the Gods.” Just to give you an idea of the kind of folks who sip here: The winner was Athena, with the Dao and a Harry Potter character coming in close behind. “Yeah, we had a battle between Slytherin and Gryffindor,” Jones said. (Gryffindor won.) For impecunious, coffee-lovin' foodie nerds, this is cafe heaven. ☐

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 (and archived) news. Please see p.9 for detailed information on upcoming conferences.

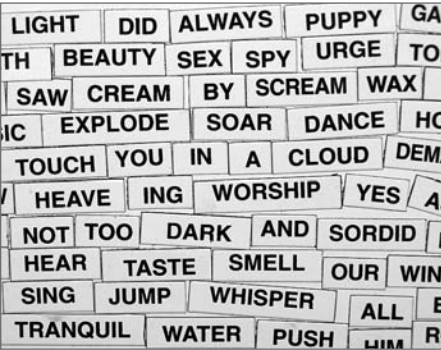
SPRING QUARTER EVENTS INCLUDE

Alumna of the Year 2008 Lecture and Reception

Thursday, April 17

4:00 p.m., Swift Lecture Hall

A public lecture by **Emilie M. Townes**, D. Min. 1982, the Divinity School’s Alumna of the Year for 2008. A reception will follow. Read more here: <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/alumni/awards/townes.shtml>



Wednesday Community Luncheons

Every Wednesday when school is in session
12:00 noon – 1:30 p.m., Swift Common Room

Lunches this spring will include a Dean’s Forum with Professor Jean-Luc Marion; Professors Dipesh Chakrabarty from SALC and Paul Copp from EALC; Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, and an “open mic” in honor of National Poetry Month (April).

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

Lunch itself is prepared and served by our creative and energetic student staff. Those interested in attending should reserve a lunch in advance by emailing divinitylunch@gmail.com or by calling 773-702-8230.

Inaugural Lecture by William Schweiker

Thursday, April 24

4:00 p.m., Swift Lecture Hall

William Schweiker, Director of the Martin Marty Center and Edward L. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor of Theological Ethics in the Divinity School will deliver his inaugural lecture as the Ryerson Professor of Theological Ethics on “Humanizing Religion.”

Professor Schweiker’s scholarship and teaching engage theological and ethical questions attentive to global dynamics, comparative religious ethics, the history of ethics, and hermeneutical philosophy.



Sino-Christian Theology as a Theological Movement and its Development

From the Mainland Chinese Academia
Perspective and the Overseas
Academia and Church
Perspective

Tuesday, April 15

4:00 p.m., Swift Lecture Hall

He Guang-hu, Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Renmin University of China and **Milton Wan**, Distinguished Professor of the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies and research fellow of Emmanuel College of the University of Toronto, presenting; **Dwight Hopkins**, Professor of Theology at the Divinity School, responding.

Christianity and Christians in Beijing

A Survey of Contemporary
Sociology of Religion in China

Wednesday, April 16

4:00 p.m., Swift Lecture Hall

A public lecture by **Gao Shining**, Professor at the Institute of World Religions and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

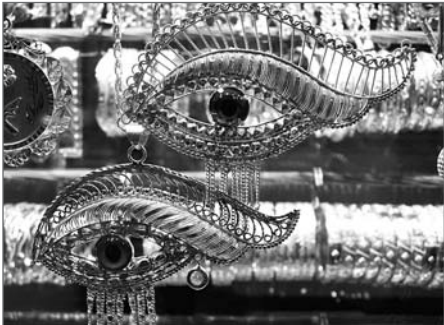
To Be or Not to Be

Sufi Responses to Existence and
Non-Existence in a Poetic Dialogue of
Ghazals From Fifteenth Century Herat
to Seventeenth Century Istanbul

Tuesday, April 22

4:30 p.m., Swift Lecture Hall

A public lecture by **Walter Zev Feldman**, Associate Professor at Bar-Ilan University in Tel-Aviv and a fellow of the Center for Jewish Music Research at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.



To Revere, Revise, and Renew

Sā’eb of Tabriz Reads the Ghazals
of Rumi

Tuesday, May 6

4:30 p.m., Swift Lecture Hall

A public lecture by **Paul Losensky**, Associate Professor of Central Eurasian Studies and Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Indiana in Bloomington.

An Interview with Willemien Otten

Willemien Otten has been appointed Professor of the Theology and History of Christianity. She previously chaired the Theology Department at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Here she discusses her work and the differences between the American and the European systems of graduate-level study of religion.



CIRCA: Your research has focused on Johannes Scottus Eriugena and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Would you say that medieval thought on nature has relevance now? And what can medieval thought in general contribute to our understanding of the world today?

WO: My research has indeed focused on Eriugena's concept of nature and in addition I have also concentrated on twelfth-century notions of nature, but I am relatively new to Emerson. In Eriugena and some twelfth-century authors, I see a kind of anthropology underlying their interest in nature and I would like to explore that same connection in Emerson. So it is not just the medieval view of nature as such that is of interest, although that view resonates in interesting ways with contemporary interests in theology and science, but especially the dynamic interplay between cosmology and anthropology that intrigues me. This is a feature that is often bypassed in more conventional articulations of creation. What worries me in terms of the broader relevance of medieval scholarship

on an author like Eriugena is that it tends to "lock him up" in his historical period. While we may be theologically conversant with Augustine, Luther and Calvin, and perhaps with Aquinas as well, we generally

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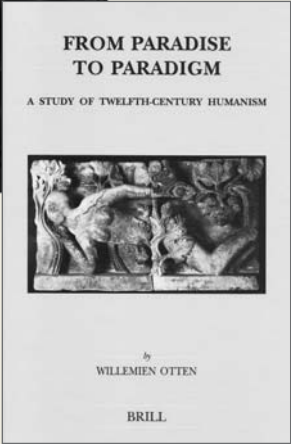
fail to connect to Eriugena, or to Anselm and Abelard, to name some of my other heroes. An additional reason for pursuing the connection with Emerson, therefore, is to reach out to a wider scholarly audience and give Eriugena a voice in conversation, without making him 'unmedieval' but also without forcing his readers to become experts in medieval Neoplatonism.

My current project on Eriugena and Emerson is part of a funded project at the Universities of Amsterdam and Utrecht on *The Pastness of the Religious Past*, in which our research team wants to develop a new, post-confessional approach to the history of Christianity. One of the attractions of the medieval period is that perceived as an integrated whole it offers fertile ground for thinking through new theories of cultural interpretation, as Brian Stock has done with notions of orality and literacy. Trying to break through a fixed, canonical sense of Christian pastness, our research group takes its cue from Augustine's view that the past is really the present of the past, seeing time as defined more by movement, epiphany, ritual and rhythm than by chronology, linearity and stasis. It is my intent to analyze nature—which as a category in Christian history is often criticized as timeless and immutable and contrasted with creation—from the perspective of temporality. We plan on hosting an international conference in Amsterdam *On Religion and Pastness* next winter to discuss our first results.

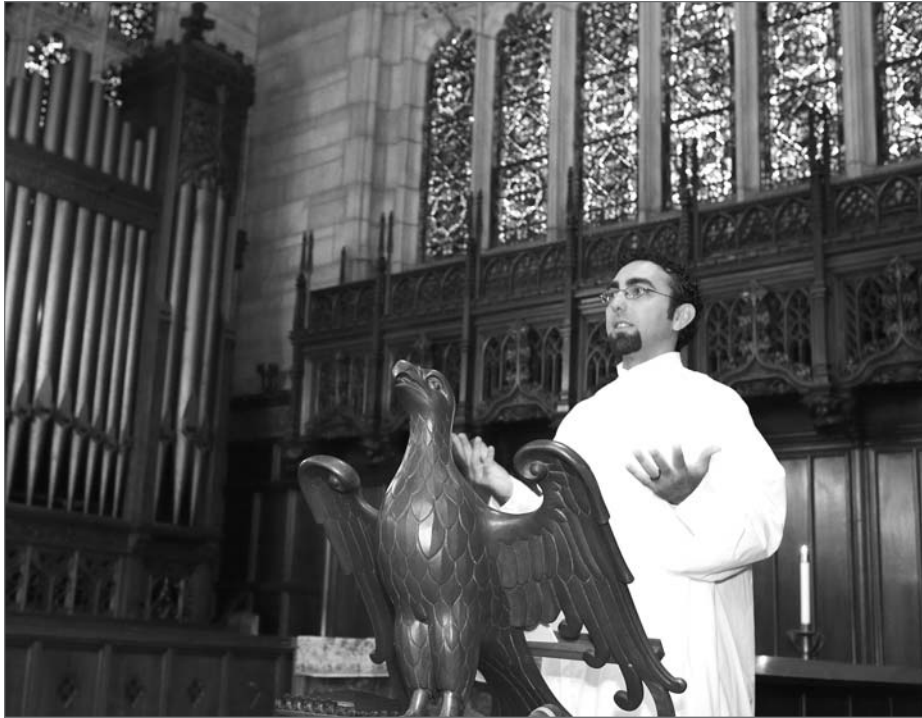
CIRCA: You've held previous appointments at Loyola University Chicago and Boston College in the United States and Utrecht University in the Netherlands. What are you looking forward to in your appointment at the University of Chicago?

WO: My immediate and heartfelt reaction would be: time for research and teaching. In Utrecht I was chair of the theology department for the last four years and prior to that I ran the department's teaching programs just at the time when Europe

was switching to the Bachelor-Master model of education, with the Dutch government deciding to be the first to make this massive transition. Essentially, during my tenure at Utrecht from 1997 to 2007 I have been fairly busy with administration, even though my point in doing so was to put the focus back on research and teaching, and I tried to keep that my personal focus as well. Given the very complex circumstances of Dutch theology (secularism, rise and concomitant fear of Islam, increasingly fragmented and conservative ecclesiastical landscape) and the severe financial crunches in Dutch higher education, I foresee unfortunately that it will take at least another twenty-five years before we



Ministry Program Update



The “Conversational” Arts

For many years now the core classes during the second year of our Master of Divinity program have been labeled the “Arts of Ministry.” Providing ministry students with ten weeks of training in each of these “arts”—preaching, worship, and pastoral care—the sequence has often been the locus of considerable anxiety all around.

Students who are by now well-acclimated to the lectures, close reading, and end-of-term papers required by most of their Chicago coursework find themselves pushed and stretched to integrate theory and practice, analysis and performance as they move from writing *about* a practice to representing it in their own identities and actions. Those who have taught in the sequence are daunted by the classes’ scope—how to uncover the rich history of these practices and the theologies that emerge from them, demonstrate the fundamentals of the art, and give students some experience of the craft, how to build foundations for lifelong apprenticeships, all in ten weeks?

Theological schools and the denominations and congregations they serve have long been engaged in a similar exploration of this critical nexus of theory and experience as they seek to train religious leaders who can harness academic training to better meet the challenges of parish and public ministry. Innovations in classrooms and curricula abound as the church and the academy try to anticipate what these new leaders will need to do their work in an ever-changing cultural context. Here at the Divinity School, a generous grant from the Lilly Foundation is helping us to examine and employ our rich resources for the integration of thought and practice—our own students, in both the M.Div. and Ph.D. programs, who come to this place committed both to the life of



service and the life of the mind, and a talented group of “teaching pastors” with whom our students have interacted in field education assignments and other projects over the years.

The “Border Crossings” project funds consultations and conferences, sponsors teams of student “theologians-in-residence” to work with congregations, and supports the creation of teaching teams that bring the vital conversation between the academy and the church into the Arts of Ministry classrooms. In this latter effort, Divinity School

faculty are joined in the classroom by a current Ph.D. student and a practicing minister. The team plans the course syllabus together, shares responsibilities for creating the reading list and shaping the class assignments, and rotates leadership of lectures and class discussions. Students have opportunity for feedback and evaluation by each of the team members. Classes are designed with plenty of opportunity for the engaged and energetic discussion in which theory questions practice, and practice shapes theory.

While we are still in our first year of a three-year prospectus, early responses to the team-led Arts classes are promising all around. The autumn preaching class, facilitated by Cynthia Lindner, Director of Ministry Studies and Clinical Faculty for Preaching and Pastoral Care, David Gregg, Ph.D. student in Religion and Literature, and Ayanna Johnson, pastor of Family of Hope Christian Church in Blue Island, encompassed such topics as the history and theologies of preaching, the role of the preacher and the experience of the hearers, preaching’s function as performance and embodiment, and the spiritual discipline of the pastor. Each student was able to preach four times in ten weeks, with generous feedback from each of the facilitators and student peers. Reflecting on their experience in the course, students remarked on how much more nuanced and rich their conception of preaching had become, and how much their own skill set had been enlarged. The teaching team, too, were reenergized with a new appreciation of the complexity of the preaching art. Gregg commented that the experience enriched his own practice, making him a better preacher as well, insight that was echoed by Rev. Johnson. Asked to reflect on her experience, Johnson wrote, “Team teaching was a great experience. I felt able to share my views and help in preaching without feeling pigeonholed in my role as “current pastor.” And it was good to hear other points of view on what sermons should be and do. We did not use the same metrics to assess sermons we heard in class, but somehow we frequently agreed on what was “good preaching” and what needed work . . . Every week I heard (the students’) preaching gave me new energy to meet the challenge of preaching at my own church. Their effort and diligence pushed me to remember that I, too, had been trained well for preaching and could give more to my own sermons by revisiting old lessons and exploring new scholarship. The students have made me a better preacher, and a renewed student of preaching. And their final sermons were a testament to the fact that they were better preachers as well.”

As we continue to recruit “teaching teams” for future classes in preaching, worship, and pastoral care, we are actively increasing our community of teaching pastors. If you know someone whose thoughtful practice would engage our students and enliven our classrooms, contact Cynthia Lindner at clindner@uchicago.edu. □

“...the twelfth century, I sometimes think of this era as a kind of medieval post-modernism, unleashing a richness of poetic ideas but lacking the modernist ability and interest to hold them together in a coherent frame.”



can create the more integrated set-up that one finds here in the Divinity School, simply focused on excellence in the study of religion. In that sense, the fact that I can be a part of such a system now is already beyond what I thought possible in terms of personal expectations. I am especially looking forward to the enticing prospect of coordinating and combining my research and teaching interests. My seminar on Eriugena this spring and the one I plan for next year on the *Book of Nature* are some examples of how I hope my research and teaching can influence each other in ways that are beneficial to both. The fact that interdisciplinarity is encouraged suits me very well, while the tremendous range of interests represented by students and colleagues makes the Divinity School a most exciting place for conversation.

CIRCA: Can you compare the European and American systems of education when it comes to the graduate-level study of religions—especially given that the European system is undergoing a lot of change?

WO: In the above I have already mentioned the changes in European education relating to the BA–MA system, which should allow for more international exchange of students and faculty but so far have not really done so. Let me summarize the Dutch situation as follows. In the Netherlands, academic religious education is increasingly retreating to an organizational model based on confessional loyalties. What cannot be hosted

under any of those rubrics is given the umbrella-name of religious studies, as a fairly new field inside the humanities in which universities so far have not been very interested. Given that before our Dutch state universities had an integrated tradition in place of religious and theological studies as a respected part of their curriculum, this fragmentation is academically and institutionally a regression and a setback for the field. I especially deplore the isolationist tendency that speaks from it, which seems largely driven by religious insecurity stemming from both secularism and the rise of Islam. A concentrated effort to promote the

study of religion as a valuable academic field would be very beneficial for Dutch society, whose recent political tensions and social unrest have in part been religious in nature, but the drive to organize this on the university level is currently lacking. This is not because of any ill will, I should add, but rather because the field is so tiny, the constituencies so divided, and the administrative complexities so disproportionately great. As the biggest difference with the United States, then, I see the lack of independence in faculty hires and curricular set-up at many institutions teaching religion. This is especially ironic since all the institutions involved (including ecclesiastical ones) are fully government funded, making academic freedom a very relevant issue. So far Utrecht has managed to keep theology and religious studies together, thus resisting fragmentation of students and resources, but the academic and ecclesiastical pressures to conform to a more compartmentalized approach are enormous, while added financial pressures further narrow the focus. At the same time, it seems the Netherlands is at the forefront of a remarkable surge of non-institutional religiosity, which is sweeping through much of Europe at the moment, and I am intellectually curious to see what the effect of this trend will be on our current organizational model for the academic study of religion.

CIRCA: Your work looks at how theologians’ and philosophers’ views on the interactions between nature, self and God changed in the

medieval period. Can you explain these changes in brief?

WO: While medieval culture was in some ways uniquely founded on Christianity, it inherited and incorporated a lot of ancient cultural patterns that are hence endemic to it. In that sense the period may have been less uniformly Christian than we are inclined to think coming from a biblical-soteriological model of revelation. I have been especially interested in the period between Augustine and Thomas, which is a theological no man’s land of sorts, as it is unclaimed by any tradition, and I see my own work primarily as an attempt to retrieve the kind of thinking that took place there. Eriugena’s thought on nature is an important example, Anselm’s interesting blend of reason and affection another. It was a feature of such a premodern knowledge system that the discourse *about* God was at the same time a discourse *with* God, as there was no formal separation between theology and philosophy. In terms of medieval nature, this led to very interesting comparisons between Genesis and Plato’s *Timaeus* in the twelfth century, promoting a view of nature in which organic growth and development were seen as an extension of divine creation. The twelfth century’s move away from miraculous and interventionist models of the divine reverts back in interesting ways on how scripture was read and salvation interpreted, namely as an extension and validation of the period’s cultural interests. The intellectual span of ideas in this pre-scholastic period was enormous, with the parallelism of nature and scripture which was my earlier focus as paradigmatic for the open ambience in which the conversation between God, self and nature was conducted. As this tradition both flourished and reached its end in the twelfth century, I sometimes think of this era as a kind of medieval postmodernism, unleashing a richness of poetic ideas but lacking the modernist ability and interest to hold them together in a coherent frame. This fragile and elusive quest for a coherent hermeneutical frame is what I see as one of the connections with our present culture, for example, as we struggle to integrate science and religion.

On a deeper historical level, I feel that the medieval period should affect our cultural and theological understanding of the west more than it currently does, with medieval texts hardly ever recognized as part of a canonical list, much less so when perceived as explicitly Christian. How to change this is one of the underlying ambitions driving my work: is it by changing our sense of Christianity’s past, as in my current project, is it by undertaking explicit, comparative connections with non-Christian cultures, something which I would also like to do, as I have pondered a project on monastic ethics with a friend who teaches Buddhism? The fun of scholarly life is that there are always more ways that lead to Rome and I hope that during my stay at the Divinity School I have time to travel down at least a few. □

Marty Center News and Events

Upcoming 2008 Events

This quarter the Martin Marty Center is pleased to present the very first Senior Fellow Symposium as well as two conferences, including one honoring recently retired David Tracy.



Martin Marty Center Senior Fellow Research Symposium

**Thursday, April 10, 2008
4:00 p.m., Swift Common Room**

This year the MMC is instituting a new event, the Senior Fellow Symposium. This event will 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 also members of the University and interested persons.

The Martin Marty Center Senior Fellow for 2007–2008, Mary Gerhart, will present her work, under the title “The Divine Conjectures: A Scientist and a Theologian Search for Meaning and Purpose in the Universe.”

Mary Gerhart is Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at Hobart William Smith Colleges, working on a book with the working title ‘The Divine Conjectures,’ based on what is known of the workings of conjecture and hypothesis in science and religion.

Reception to follow.



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*

From Dust to Steel: Human Being as Creature and Creator

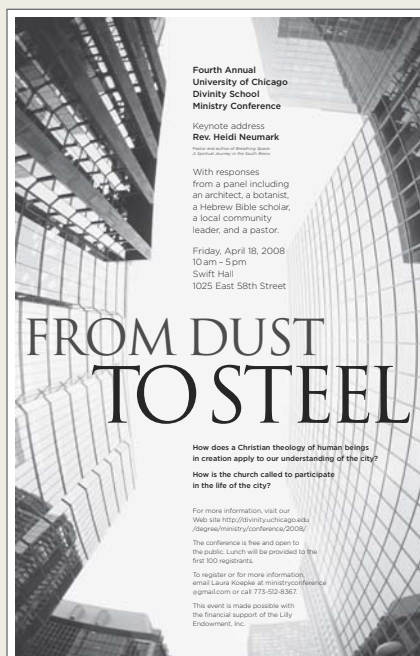
The Fourth Annual Divinity School Ministry Conference

**Thursday, April 18, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Swift Hall**

This conference will employ Christian theologies of creation to explore the place of human beings within creation. It will focus on the role of the human being as both creature and creator. This conference asks two broad questions: how does a Christian theology of human beings as creature and creator apply to our understanding of the city, and in light of this understanding, how is the church called to participate in the life of the city?

The keynote speaker will be Rev. Heidi Neumark, pastor and author of *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx*.

Please see <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/degree/ministry/conference/2008/> for more information and to access the conference blog.



Augustine: Theological and Philosophical Conversations

A Conference Honoring David Tracy

Sunday, May 4 – Tuesday, May, 8, 2008

This conference will celebrate the theological scholarship of David Tracy, Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Catholic Studies and Professor of Theology and the Philosophy of Religion in the Divinity School, and discuss central issues in his current research. In consultation with Prof. Tracy, the Divinity School has organized the conference to explore the significance of Augustine of Hippo for interpreting our contemporary theological, philosophical, and cultural circumstances.

The conference structure will be chronological, with sessions proceeding from late antiquity through the medieval and early modern periods to the present. But, throughout, it aims to establish a series of conversations between the Augustinian tradition, broadly conceived, and contemporary scholarship in theology, philosophy, and cultural history.

See <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/conferences/tracy/> for more information, including speakers and schedule.

Martin Marty Center’s *Sightings*

Now nearing the completion of its first decade, *Sightings*, the biweekly online publication of the Marty Center, continues to address itself to the task of exploring the intersections between religion and public life.

“Sightings” of religion in the media are anything but few and far between these days; so at *Sightings* the goal is not simply to point out such appearances, but to turn nuanced attention both to angles that might have been missed elsewhere, and to their implications for the citizens of a pluralistic society.

Surely all of us have been dismayed at one time or another by the haphazard treatment of religious issues in many media outlets; *Sightings* thus seeks out expert authors who can provide its seven-thousand-plus readers with worthwhile analysis. Essays that address issues already extensively covered elsewhere — like recent pieces on events in Jena and Burma — do so from perspectives that may not be found elsewhere, and they evidence a commitment to methodological rigor upon which readers have come to rely. *Sightings* continues to serve as a news source for its



subscribers, and as a teaching and preaching tool, such that it reaches a wide audience beyond its ever-growing subscriber base. Weekly emails from readers attest to its function as a source of critical commentary for an engaged audience — and readers also nudge *Sightings* in new directions, so that greater attention to international affairs will be a priority in the coming months. The scholars who contribute essays, from an array of perspectives and analytical lenses, ensure that *Sightings* continues to shed light on events and trends that are too often overlooked and too easily misconstrued.

But *Sightings* does not limit itself to essays on religion in the news. As the essay from Elizabeth Blasius on the adaptive reuse of ecclesial architecture shows, religion emerges into the public sphere in the most ordinary — but still noteworthy — ways. Blasius’ essay, “From Catechism to Condos,” shows *Sightings* at its best: The author is a young scholar who has been grateful for constructive audience feedback; and her insightful essay encourages us all to think about how, removed from explicit ideology or conflict, the forces of faith shape the world we live in, every day.

Read *Sightings* online at <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/sightings/index.shtml>.

Sightings: From Catechism to Condos



St. Boniface Church well; cats and pigeons know it intimately. The giant shipwreck of a building silently overlooks its rapidly changing West Town neighborhood, both relic and fixture among increasingly desirable real estate. Enormous rose windows are bandaged by plywood; doorways are stuffed with concrete blocks; bricks shift and spall from top to bottom. The building is mummified, shrouded by chain link fence, bejeweled with red and white signs warning “Private Property — No Trespassing.” The bell towers and rooflines teem with life; flocks of birds and tufts of weeds feed off the structure like a giant coral reef.

This bold-shouldered Romanesque skeleton, designed in 1896 and dedicated in 1904, was once a place where thousands of turn-of-the-century German-Americans (in 1900, one in four Chicagoans was a German immigrant) came to worship. But the late 1950s saw a radical change in West Town: The Kennedy Expressway sliced its way through the city to link Chicago’s Loop to O’Hare International Airport. Thousands of buildings were razed to make way for mass automobile transit. Many Chicagoans, displaced or not, saw the

In a contest sponsored by The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the public will determine via online voting (which ended October 10th) how one million dollars is to be distributed among twenty-five historic Chicagoland sites.

The demarcations between “sacred” and “secular” sites are not always clear — Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral clearly fits in the former category and the Independence Park clubhouse in the latter; Bohemian National Cemetery may be harder to classify.

But the contest raises important issues concerning the preservation of sacred spaces, which can hardly be ignored in any urban environment.

Those that frequent Chicago Avenue just west of the Dan Ryan Expressway know

“The bell towers and rooflines teem with life; flocks of birds and tufts of weeds feed off the structure like a giant coral reef.”

The Religion and Culture Web Forum

The Religion and Culture Web Forum seeks out corners of the intersection of “religion” and “culture” which have not been examined by mainstream media, presents new ways to look at familiar topics, and brings the most current scholarship in religion to a wide audience.

This year is no different: September featured an essay by Lew Daly on Catholic contributions to the New Deal and the revival of “common good” language in politics. The October issue, authored by Divinity School alumnus Timothy S. Lee, examined the fantastic growth and troubled recent history of South Korean Evangelicalism. In November,



another alumna, Elizabeth McKeown, offered a consideration of what the study of religion can offer to those involved in the study and curation of museums. December’s essay, by James K. A. Smith of Calvin College, proved quite popular, bringing Augustinian thought to bear on American foreign policy.

January and February 2008 featured essays by current Ph.D. students at the Divinity School: Sandra Sullivan Dunbar challenging the “two-track” understanding of the obligations of Christian love, and M. Cooper Harris on preachers and preacherly style in the writing of Zora Neale Hurston. In March, Jerome Copulsky of Goucher College pondered Spinoza’s influence on the political theology of Moses Hess and its relationship to modern Judaism.

Each essay is complemented by responses from fellow academics and professionals in related fields. Recent commentators include Joseph Bottum, Kelly Chong, Eric Gregory, Eugene McCarraher, Carolyn Jones Medine, and Peter Meilaender. Visit the discussion board to join the conversation!

Later this year, the Web Forum will bring you essays on religion and film, religion outside the American context, and papers by current affiliates of the Marty Center. To be notified of new content monthly, subscribe to our mailing list at: <https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/rcwf>. The Web Forum welcomes submissions from affiliates (present and past) of the Divinity School. Inquiries should be directed to the forum’s managing editor, Debra Erickson, at dje@uchicago.edu.

construction of multiple highways in the area as an opportunity to move their young families into formerly inaccessible suburban communities. Decreased attendance made St. Boniface’s massive original structure unnecessary, and as with many parishes, upkeep became difficult for the aging congregants. St. Boniface became an architectural albatross, its bricks and mortar outliving its intended use.

Massive protest ensued when the Chicago Archdiocese closed St. Boniface in 1990, by community members whose major life events had occurred there. For structures such as warehouses, storefronts, power plants and schools, the issue of adaptive reuse — adapting a building for new uses while retaining its architectural integrity — is simple. Adaptive reuse, for which Chicago has set many significant precedents, provides a more sustainable, energy-efficient option than demolition. It allows for another chapter in a building’s history, exposes those who inhabit the space to important architecture, and often contributes to neighborhood revitalization. An old building simply needs to find a new “user,” and the work can begin.

But for a building that houses a particular type of emotional memory, development into a project that seems not to match the integrity of the original purpose can be just as difficult as demolition. In the case of an adaptive reuse project meant to generate income, the market must be comfortable enough with the new use to patronize the services that are housed within the structure.

For many, the transformation from a sacred space to a commercial venture is inappropriate. Community members whose Catholic rites of passage took place within St. Boniface may not be receptive to the space being transformed, conservatively, into condominiums. One imagines that they would be even less receptive to a restaurant or a nightclub (like Chicago’s Excalibur, in what once was the Chicago Historical Society). So St. Boniface, like thousands of religious spaces from behemoth Neo-Gothic cathedrals to one-room storefront churches, now stands dormant and decaying.

But what does it mean to preserve the



“...the public, then, must face the challenge of reconsidering what space means in an emotional sense.”

integrity of a sacred space? Can a religious structure be reused for non-religious purposes, and still retain its emotional cohesion? As the emphasis on environmentally sound neighborhood revitalization continues, religious structures like St. Boniface will have to be adapted to changing times; the public, then, must face the challenge of reconsidering what space means in an emotional sense. The adaptive reuse of a sacred space doesn’t have to be disrespectful; with appropriate financial backing, spaces like St. Boniface can be transformed lovingly into useful modern structures, which both celebrate the buildings’ original uses and restore their significance. With thoughtful attention, architectural and spiritual integrity can be preserved simultaneously. A building’s intended use may deteriorate long before its stained glass and bell towers, but it should still have a chance to prove itself an asset beyond worship. □

Elizabeth Blasius studies historic preservation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is an archivist at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Religion and the City



Pictured from left: Martin Marty with past and present Marty Center Directors Wendy Doniger, W. Clark Gilpin, and William Schweiker

On February 5 and 6, 2008, the Divinity School hosted a conference titled “Religion and the City: Our Urban Humanity and the World Beyond” in honor of the tenth anniversary of the Martin Marty Center. Held in downtown Chicago at the University’s Gleacher Center, the conference brought together scholars and other experts interested in reflecting on the development and growth of religions in the context of cities.

Since its inception ten years ago, the Marty Center has focused on the role of religion in public life and has sponsored thirty scholarly conferences on many topics concerned with the public face of religion. February’s conference was the center’s first to focus specifically on the city.

Ray Suarez, senior correspondent of the “The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer,” gave the opening plenary address via a taped speech titled “From Mega to the Storefront: Church

and Community in the 21st Century.” Suarez had planned to attend, but the rescheduling of the “Super Tuesday” primary on February 5 made it impossible for him to leave Washington. Suarez, the author of *The Holy Vote: The Politics of Faith in America*, has a strong interest in religion and took numerous courses at the Divinity School during his year on campus as a participant in the Benton Fellows in Journalism Program.

Three breakout sessions followed Suarez’s talk, each looking at the dynamic interrelationships of religions and cities through a different lens. The conference also included

musical interludes, a panel discussion, and a second plenary address.

Martin Marty, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, whose eightieth birthday coincided with the tenth anniversary celebration of Marty Center, joined an array of the conference’s speakers at a concluding discussion, titled “Humane and Cosmopolitan Religions in the 21st Century.”

For more information, the program, and video content, please see <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/conferences/city/>.



As part of a new initiative to make more campus events accessible to a wider public, the conference was videorecorded for archiving on the University’s website.

Please visit the conference’s website at <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/conferences/city/> to view.

Pictured from left: Richard A. Rosengarten, Martha Nussbaum, Robert S. Nelson, Martin Marty, and William Schweiker



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.