

# CRITERION

A Publication of the University of Chicago Divinity School



Dear Alumni and Friends —

Opening this issue are tributes to Jean Bethke Elshtain (1941-2013) delivered at a University memorial service in Rockefeller Chapel on October 17, 2013. Jean Bethke Elshtain was the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and was jointly appointed in the Department of Political Science and the Committee on International Relations. She held this appointment, and continued teaching and mentoring students, up until her death. Here she is remembered by colleagues and friends.

The text of the 2013 Alumnus of the Year lecture is our second piece. Reverend Michael Kinnamon delivered “A Report from the Front Lines of a Renewal Movement under Siege” on May 2, 2013, in Swift Hall. In this piece, Reverend Kinnamon reflects on the ecumenical movement, and his place within it. “I long for a church better than the one I see around us,” he says, “and ecumenism is a way of possible renewal.”

We close the issue with a sermon offered during our Annual Ministry Conference, held on April 19th, 2013, in Swift Hall by Reverend Larry Greenfield. Reverend Greenfield reflects, in “Two Hallelujahs” on the theme of the conference—“Fair as the Moon, Terrible as an Army: Sexual Beings in Religious Community.”

My thanks to Robin Winge, our long-time publications designer, for her many years of service—and friendship—to the Divinity School, as she moves forward to new ventures. Thanks also to Ken Janssen, designer, and Kristel Clayville, editorial assistant, for their work on this issue.

I hope you enjoy this issue,

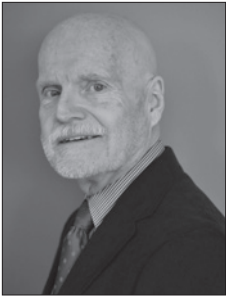
**Terren Ilana Wein**, *Editor*

# CRITERION

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# Honoring Jean Bethke Elshtain 1941-2013

## Words of Welcome

MARGARET M. MITCHELL

Welcome colleagues, friends, students, admirers and family of Jean Bethke Elshtain to this memorial and recognition of her life and work here at the University of Chicago and in the world. We are honored especially today by the presence here of so many members of Jean's family: her husband, Errol, children, Sheri, Heidi, Jenny and Eric and their spouses Marty, Steve and Irene; and her grandchildren, JoAnn Paulette Welch, Robert Paul Bethke and Christopher Matthew Welch. And with us in spirit is Jean's granddaughter, Christie.

When we gathered in Fort Collins, Colorado, for the funeral mass on August 19, and to lay Jean to rest just steps from her parents in Grandview Cemetery, beautiful, unforgettable eulogies were spoken by members of Jean's family in the Blessed John XXIII Chapel at her beloved alma mater, Colorado State University. Sherri remembered her mother's wonderful trips with her to New York City to attend Broadway plays and stay at the Algonquin where they saw the famous cat, Matilda; Jenny remembered Jean's love of books (and strong coffee) and movies on Christmas Day and said of her mother "she was someone who absorbed info from all media." Eric recalled the power and dignity and resonance of his mother's voice, alongside her extraordinary ability to keep the schedules of

ten people running straight while so very active in her own career as a professor and public intellectual. Bobby spoke of his grandmother's "unfathomable devotion" and of late night sharing of stories of her drinking vodka in the USSR and explaining to him why it was that she didn't dilate on such stories at the dinner table, since not everyone might have the chance she had to travel the world, and she did not want to trumpet her own opportunities. Jenny said that she often had to learn about her mother's accomplishments from others because she didn't speak of them at home.

Eric began his eulogy with the statement: "When my daughter Christie would ask me questions like 'Papa, why did the Romans crucify Christ?' or 'Do you know Gaddafi is a dictator?' she had quite clearly been spending some time with her grandma." He went on to mention a letter from John Carlson (one of the speakers today, and a former student of Jean's) who thanked Eric and the rest of the Elshtains "for sharing JBE with us." Jenny spoke for all the family on that day when she said that she would leave Jean's academic and intellectual legacy to the scholars.

Today is that occasion—the moment for remembrance and celebration of Jean Bethke Elshtain's deep impact on the fields of scholarship and public life, and on her colleagues, friends and students. Those who speak to and for us today—Professors William Schweiker, Franklin Gamwell, Stephen Meredith, John Carlson and Susan Schreiner—are those whom Jean herself told her daughter Heidi she would wish to offer words about her: we are gratified and honored that each accepted this loving

Even now I can hear her laughter in the still moments of these memories.

invitation without hesitation. The musical program has been selected through the loving care and assistance of Errol, who—on this occasion at least—has ceded to Jean the primacy of the Beatles over Bob Dylan.

Together let's honor the memory of our dear colleague, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics and author, teacher, public intellectual, advisor, mentor, colleague and friend.

## Word and Image:

### A Eulogy For Jean Bethke Elshtain

WILLIAM SCHWEIKER

It might be a postcard delivered to my faculty mailbox from some place, somewhere here or yon. It might be an email in my in-box sent at sometime, now or then. Often they were short: a quick response to one of my scholarly or faculty inquiries. Sometimes they were long and detailed accounts of her condition—fair, bad, or worsening—or the school or a student or a colleague needed for some project. She always wrote about her loved ones and also asked about my doings and how I was faring. Compassionate and direct, self-effacing and so funny were the notes, the emails, and the postcards. Then the signature typed or signed with a flash in black ink as if she wielded a pen as a sword: "Thanks, Bill, for your friendship. It means a lot. Yours, J."

Jean Elshtain was a woman of words. They flowed forth like water over a dam, always rushing, always powerful, an endless report and account of her life and our times. And now, with the sadness of her passing, it is hard for me and I suspect each of us gathered here today not to read her books like those emails, like one of those postcards, addressed to each of us. "Thanks for your friendship. It means a lot to me. Yours, J."

Jean's words came with certainty and moral rigor dedicated to a profound love and defense of the everyday things in our lives: our friendships, our relations, our bodies, our losses, our hopes deferred, and our confusions about the things of life, our responsibilities given what measure of power we wield. She wielded the pen to help herself and others out of the morass of confusion that

besets our social and political lives. But she also plied that sword in the defense of the victims, like her, of disease, those judged unacceptable or unwanted in our culture of consumption, and those people who suffer under the



brutalities of political regimes or cultural ideologies and philosophies motivated by ideals of perfection that actually endanger the everydayness and imperfections of human life.

The Lord God knows that Jean and I had our disagreements, small and large, on religious and political matters. But that fact never stopped the rush of words, it never threw into question a shared commitment to what defends and promotes human life, and disagreements never prevented a meal together, a cup of coffee in her office, or the laughter we shared so often. Her eyes would giggle and a contagion of laughter spread across her face. Even now I can hear her laughter in the still moments of these memories.

Jean was a woman of words, of sounds. She was also a woman of images: movies, TV shows, paintings, and



Too often friendship is not allowed among those who are different, unlike.

pictures. Often I would toddle down to her office for an Ethics Area meeting or the review of a student or after a faculty meeting to talk, or over the last months as her health worsened just to see how she was doing and to know that with a smile she was fine, if struggling. A table piled high with books and in the corner her writing desk—or at least the computer. Above the computer was a print of Joan of Arc and as the eye roamed its way around the office there was a picture and tribute to Vaclav Havel and then a banner over the office door and also honors to her framed and hung on walls or stuck on shelves packed with books.

For me one of the most important images donning her office was actually on the outside of the door. Black and white, not very large, a small boy seated has his arm around a mammoth elephant also seated and with its front legs suspended in the air. I often puzzled over that image; maybe you did as well. Was the little boy the human condition and the elephant the Leviathan of political power that we must embrace even though it can—and maybe will—crush us? What if the elephant was an image of divine power and sovereignty that we, in our smallness, must come through grace to embrace—maybe even love? Was it just a boy and just an elephant, two mortal creatures who for inexplicable reasons and through seeming impossibilities had been thrown together in this life into the bonds of friendship? Too often fear is the driver of state power. Too often divine sovereignty has been imagined to eclipse things human. Too often friendship is not allowed among those who are different, unlike. Maybe the elephant is us with our deep and abiding and painful need for love that we seem unable to embrace because we are suspended in air and time. Jean was a woman of images who even now I can recollect—we can remember—in the mind’s eye.

Jean Elshtain was a woman of words and images used to protect and promote what she thought most dear, most vulnerable, and most important in our lives together. She is sorely missed by her family, nuclear and extended, friends from many walks of life and throughout her life, and colleagues near and far, and the famous—a Pope, Cardinals, renowned thinkers, a President, and the not-so-famous. We know of her bout with polio, her hope to be a war correspondent, the academic strides and successes,

and the many stands she took on the events of our day, some of which were applauded while many others cut against the popular grain, left and right. She was dubbed a “public intellectual” by the media and the academy. Armed with an incisive mind and keen wit for the oddity of human doings and, at times, a “take no prisoners” attitude, Jean inhabited seamlessly the academy and the public, political world. In some respects, her life and her work were a prism through which the events, debates, and longings of our common life were refracted and pondered upon. The briefest of conversation with her swept over and through a host of topics, people, and books, always books.

Like all of us here today, I deeply admired Jean’s mind and moral courage. Strong in her convictions, this strength never expressed itself in undue rancor or the dismissal of other people and views even if she always demanded that those views be assessed morally, politically, and religiously to the fullest extent possible. She was a woman of words; she was a woman of images. But let us in the solitude of this moment also acknowledge that Jean was a woman of the Word, the living God, and also a woman dedicated to the Image of God, an image too easily profaned, blurred, and betrayed in political life. She worried about political power and personal autonomy unmoored from the realities of life and devolving into the play and fashions of power. Human life severed from a divine reality reflects nothing, images nothing, but the pitiful swelling of human pretense. And the pretense of our vaulted and sovereign self-image, let us be honest enough to admit, is at base nothing. Sometimes in the name of the divine image one must protest against the self-image of an age and the hubris that drives our projects to perfect and redeem and complete the world. What profits us if we gain the whole world and yet lose our souls? Jean had the courage to employ the Word through a torrent of words in order to address political questions in the conviction that our real job is to protect and promote the divine image amid the trials and possibilities of our common life.

I consider it one of the true honors of my career to have been her colleague at the University of Chicago. Yet infinitely more important is my deep joy to have had Jean as my friend. Thanks, Jean, for your friendship. I miss you.

Yours, B.

Her thought was regularly unexpected and, in part for that reason, arresting.

## In Memory of Jean Bethke Elshtain

FRANKLIN I. GAMWELL

Although I was previously aware of Jean Bethke Elshtain and her work, not until a lunch in the early 1990s, when a small group sought to persuade her that Chicago was in her future, did I recognize her special presence among us. She was compelling, and I was instructed, as she easily and effectively spoke about politics and God—and thus the study of politics as an ethical inquiry, one lucid about the corruptions of power and the limits of governmental possibilities but attentive also to moral presuppositions and achievements. It was apparent then that she would write a book on Augustine.

Soon, it also became apparent that she should come to this university. If an academic association has a distinct vocation—something like the critical pursuit of truth in response to whatever questions its members take to be important—one tradition at Chicago defines importance in terms of making a difference, at least in the longer run, to the human adventure. Jean Elshtain excelled in that tradition. She embraced the accounting of Hannah Arendt, whom Jean taught and treasured: in the human condition, the *vita contemplativa* is subservient to the *vita activa*. Indeed, on my reading, nothing so marked Jean’s teaching and writing and speaking as her steady conviction that ideas, including thought about abiding moral and theological questions, can make a difference to the wider human community and its current personal and public problems—and for this reason she was an exceptional and consequential citizen of the public realm even while thoroughly an academic. She kept the best of company with Reinhold Niebuhr, another Augustinian realist, whose work Jean also loved and taught.

“The highest reaches of . . . individuality,” Niebuhr once wrote, “are dependent upon the social substance out of which they arise and they . . . find their end and fulfillment in the community” (1944, 48). For Jean, human life is given to us in the plural, and she rejoiced in the communities given to her—family, colleagues, wider academy, nation, the Western intellectual tradition she made it her business truly to inherit and enhance, and, perhaps above all, her

students. These communities were the complex source and end of her continually zestful round of activities. But in between, Niebuhr wrote, lies individuality—and here, one can imagine, he had Jean Elshtain in mind. No attempt to review her eminent contributions to issues both of principle and immediate public concern is required in this setting. It is worth underscoring, however, her uncanny capacity to see and to articulate, sometimes with bite, what others missed—from the neglect of those vulnerable in our society, especially vulnerable children, to political alternatives and arguments absent in the current discussion. Her thought was regularly unexpected and, in part for that reason, arresting.

Jean cherished conversation, and her focus on the subject at hand was exemplary. Hannah Arendt, meeting with a group of students many years ago, was challenged by one of those present, who developed a complicated question about a central distinction her work had advanced. The fog of my memory has obscured what distinction was in question and the specifics of Miss Arendt’s reply. But she listened carefully and patiently, and I well recall how her answer began: “Now look,” she said—whereupon she proceeded with a pointed and transparent statement that settled the matter. As with Arendt, again, so with Jean. Decisive in making her point, even while open and attentive to criticism, Jean practiced her belief that academic and political exchange is impoverished when we fail to purge it of self. If truth or justice is to win out, it must take over the discussion and debate. Still, without yielding that practice, there was ever a gentle humanity in her way of discourse. So far as my experience attests, she had an uncommon sensibility for how to pursue the point without injury—indeed, to do so with humane care for her conversation partners. Even when her arguments put one in one’s proper place—and that, too, I have experienced—she could at the same time affirm and empower one’s own independent thought, one’s individuality.

There may now be little cause to speak of Jean’s elemental commitment to the democratic way, the form of political community for which the individuality of each defines the ideal. She was, indeed, deeply critical of individualism, political ideology that saps the discussion and debate of civil society, and was always chastened by her clarity about



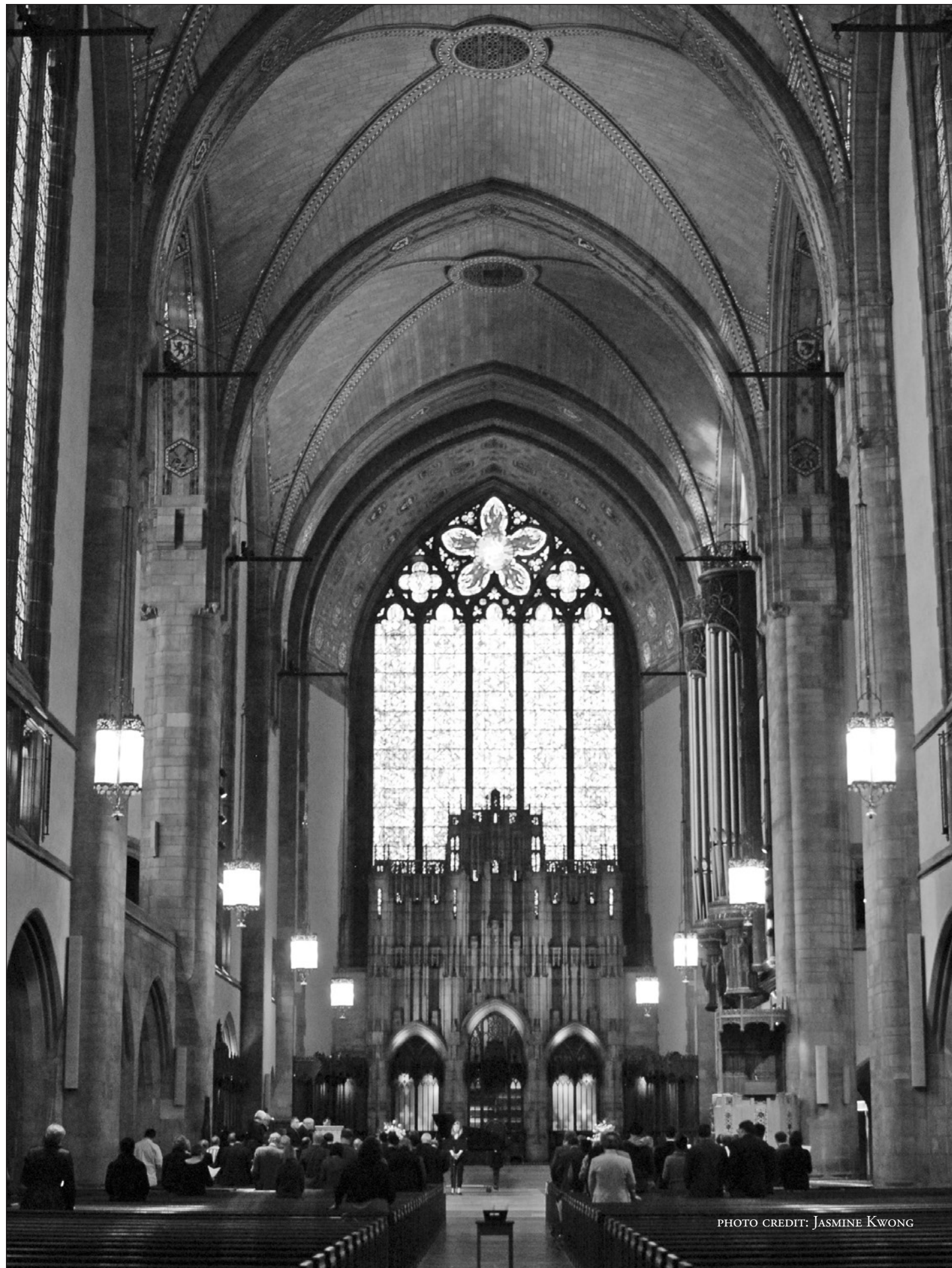


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...citizens of the heavenly city, from whom Jean has received the warmest welcome, will not allow her to retire.

human fault. Still, if we are, in her words, “tempted by power, corrupted by greed, seduced by violence, and weakened by cowardice,” we are also, she said, “capable of great deeds of courage and selflessness” (1995, 117)—and she was ever hopeful for a common life in which our nature as “intrinsically social” (2008, 230) and thus a common good that serves and is served by “our distinctions, as . . . [persons] of particular gifts” (1995, xiv) are more fully honored. This democratic directive is the more vital in our time for her defense and practice of it.

And that abiding engagement is worth the mention as one context for explicit note of Jean’s religious convictions. Although democracy is and, perhaps, always will be on trial, it is nonetheless vindicated, on her account, because authorized by the divine reality. If she was an Augustinian realist, she also agreed with Jefferson and Lincoln: government of the people is rightly by and for the people because the laws of nature are the laws of nature’s God, for whom “every person is unique and irreplaceable” (1995, 126). And her religious voice was the more needed because that conviction is, in anything like the articulation she gave to it, the more wanting in our public life.

How I admired her—and I doubt that we will see again at the Divinity School someone with her singular combination of talents. But I am confident in this: citizens of the heavenly city, from whom Jean has received the warmest welcome, will not allow her to retire. They will beg that her love of ideas and incisive mind be ever on the move—so they may enjoy the continuing conversation with her now denied to us. But we who are left in this earthly city are blessed to have in her legacy standards of political thought and humanity and public presence we need not lose and to which we may aspire—and for this, as for the privilege of spending our days with her, we are moved to repeat: “thanks, and again thanks, and ever thanks.”

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#### Thoughts about the Death of Jean Elshtain

STEPHEN C. MEREDITH

I had the privilege of teaching several courses with Jean Elshtain, and whatever little I brought to the joint venture, I am certain that I gained far more from her knowledge than she did from mine. She began to fill in several serious lacunae in my learning on many topics, notably political philosophy, but also about theology, modern history, and, yes, especially about film. Whenever we taught courses together, she would be certain that we incorporated one or more movies into the course, and this always turned out to be a great addition. This was only one small aspect of Jean’s originality that she brought to teaching as she brought to everything else. I usually came to class neurotically over-prepared, with reams of notes; she would come with one or two sparsely typed pages, and yet every word on them was incisive and startlingly insightful. She was, among so many other things, a brilliant teacher.

When I heard she had died, my second response—I will come back to the first response—was so much of a cliché that I was very irritated with myself. It was disbelief, denial. I kept telling myself, “Damn it, don’t do ‘The five Stages of Grief’ thing—they’re so *obvious*.” But there it was: every time I thought about something in the broad fields of religion, politics, or philosophy, I kept saying to myself, “I would really like to discuss this with Jean.” This was true even at Jean’s funeral. In an odd and completely irrational way, I was looking forward to going to the funeral because I hadn’t seen Jean for a while, and there were quite a few things that I really needed to discuss with her—even though it was her funeral. Denial also had everything to do with why I have found it so difficult to come up with anything to say about her today; the problem certainly is not any lack of material. In spite of the obvious fact that it’s true, I am avoiding facing the fact that she is gone.

To come back to my first reaction. She had confided in me some of the details of her illnesses, and I knew how things stood with her. But in spite of her illnesses, she wanted so badly to be engaged in public discourse as I heard when I was informed of her death, that she accepted



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an invitation to give a public lecture and a CBC radio interview in Vancouver, Canada. There was no possibility of her flying, which left only one other travel option, which was to take the long train ride from Nashville to Vancouver. While such a journey has its appeals, it is certainly arduous—not to mention the arduous events that would await her once she arrived. Remarkably enough, she made it through the train ride to Canada, and gave the radio interview; the public interview just was not possible. It was after this that catastrophe struck: on the train ride back, she had a cardiac arrest outside of Minot, North Dakota. If there is such a thing as a good place to have a cardiac arrest on a train, this might be it: there's a huge air force base in Minot, and one of the silver linings of having a large military force is that they have developed critical care medicine into a fine art, to the benefit of the rest of us. So she was brought there and managed to be resuscitated, and eventually was able to get back to a care facility in Nashville, where she died a few months later.

Anyway, I heard about all of this only a piece at a time, long after it happened. When I first heard that she had died, I heard only that she had been on a train coming back from Vancouver, and had suffered a cardiac arrest in Minot, North Dakota. And I said what probably was on many people's minds when they heard this story, "Oh, for crying out loud. That is just SOOOO Jean!"

And, of course, it was. There was something endearingly insane about it all. How many people with serious illnesses would have gotten on a train to travel nearly 3000 miles for a speaking engagement—even a rather prestigious one? How many people would do this, even *without* serious illnesses? And then there is the strain it would put on her body, which was already strained by serious medical problems. But she just couldn't resist. She just *had* to do the gig.

But, of course, this is exactly the point, isn't it. What else would we have had her do? It was just in Jean's nature to engage the public in pressing moral issues, right until the very end. I want, now, to borrow heavily from a beautifully written article by Gilbert Meilaender, "Thinking about Aging", which appeared in *First Things* in 2011. Much of the essay revolves around a poem "Song on Reaching Seventy", by the American poet, John Hall Wheelock, to which I will return.

One of the courses Jean and I co-taught was on the very modest topic of human nature—particularly on how biotechnology affects our understanding of this term. In his article, Meilaender wrote that although biology can tell us a lot about aging, and how we age, and, ultimately, how we die—by which I mean the mechanisms by which we age and die—it definitely has its limits. As Jean said during our course, biology describes us accurately, but not adequately. As a biologist, I am more than willing to agree with this statement ... though sometimes, privately, I wonder about the "accurately" part. Thus, as Meilaender wrote, when we come to the ideas of the *natural* and *human nature*, we still need some concept that goes *beyond* biology—some concept which, as Alisdair MacIntyre wrote, goes beyond human nature in its untutored condition. Meilaender also quoted the nineteenth-century philosopher, Henry Sidgwick, who wrote that "we must give a special precision to the meaning of 'natural'; since in a sense . . . any impulse is natural, but it is manifestly idle to bid us to follow Nature in this sense." Theft and murder may be "natural" in the purely biological sense, but I would argue that this is not what most of us intend when we use the word "natural" or try to speak about "human nature".

Biology has its own set of swear-words. Surely, one nine-letter word is at the top of the list: and that is "teleology". In other words, biology has a sense of *how* we are going, but little or no sense of *where* we are going, or *why*. Scientists usually exclude any discussion of *telos*, as a methodological procedure; and once having done so, they begin to believe not only that *telos* is beyond science, but even, all evidence to the contrary, that it is beyond nature. For this latter statement, there is no justification. In spite of what scientists may exclude from their descriptions of nature, as a methodological exclusion, a sense of *telos* is deeply embedded in us all. And so, when we think about the end of life – in both senses—we *do* need to ask ourselves: what is our *goal* in prolonging life? Is the prolongation of life, pure and simple, a worthy goal? And in any case, what, really, do we mean by the "prolongation of life"? Surely, it is not like the immortality of Tithonus, or Swift's Struldbrugs, who age forever, have an indefinite senescence without vitality. Against this endless senescence one

Her life was a living testament to the fight against evil.

can quote Qoheleth, who told us that there is a time to be born, and a time to die.

The usual medical cliché that one hears at this point in the discussion is that the ideal is "compressed morbidity", in other words, to prolong health, and not necessarily to increase life span. According to the ideal of "compressed morbidity", our goal would be to live most of our lives free of disease and disability—until, at the end, we just "fall off a cliff".

But, as Meilaender wrote in his article, "We might idealize [this goal] less ... if we thought about it more." Who would want to die, under those circumstances? Even now we are distressed when someone dies at the peak of his powers. But then, everyone would die that way. And what would we then die *of*? Wouldn't our organs have to deteriorate, in any event? And what of our brains?

The ideal of "compressed medicine" begins to look ever more like normal geriatric medicine—which is a good thing. But we also need something more. Within the bounds of biology and medicine, this is what can be pursued. We are far less confident—and among *some* biologists, even scornful—about addressing the all-important question: "What is a human life *for*?"—what is our end, our goal, our *telos*? When Qoheleth said, "A living dog is better than a dead lion", surely this articulates something that is natural to us: the thirst for *more* life. But it is more than that, more than the simple thirst for more life: for only a living creature can also hope for "more than life".

And here, I will quote Meilaender extensively, because it could not have been put better than he has done:

"A virtuous commitment to the indefinite prolongation of life cannot be founded merely on the narcissistic desire to survive. But perhaps—put more hopefully—it can take root in the virtue of love. Indeed, this is, I believe, the strongest argument for attempts to retard aging and prolong life indefinitely.... Even if there are deep problems with that desire, something more is at work here than mere narcissism."

One of the topics that always managed to get included in our courses was the problem of evil. In part, this was because it is my own obsession, which, I must add, is not altogether healthy. But there were other reasons. The problem of evil is also a topic that fitted well into our

courses, which also included a large dose of Augustine, on which Jean wrote so persuasively in her wonderful book, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*. (By the way, she usually referred to that book, far too modestly, as her "little book on Augustine".) The topic of evil fitted well into the course on Human Nature, and rather obviously fit into one course we did that was especially fun, albeit in a gruesome way, "Murder Most Foul".

But beyond the aptness of the topic, thematically, it also fitted extremely well into Jean's life project—that project that begins to get at the question of "What is a human life *for*?" Like so many others, I was in awe of Jean's intellect, but the truth is that around here, there are a lot of smart people, and while her brilliant intellect is certainly part of her legacy, what I admired even more in her was her passion, her energy, and above all, her *moral courage*. Her life was a living testament to the fight against evil. It might have started when as a young girl, she fought against the scourge that, thankfully, is all but gone in the world, and should be made to be gone, completely, throughout the world: polio. I am old enough to remember, though vaguely, when the success of the vaccine was first announced on April 12, 1955. Unfortunately, this was too late to save Jean from the disease. She once described how, when she was in the hospital with this terrible disease, not knowing whether she would live, and if she lived, whether she would ever walk again, she would spend her time holding and reading her Bible. She was also a woman, or then, a girl, of deep faith. Surviving a terrible disease, or any other ordeal may require that combination of will and determinism, which gives some people the power to overcome the adversity of their circumstances. In her recovery, during her arduous and painful rehabilitation, during the terrible process of teaching the atrophied muscles in her legs to walk again, she also had at her back the drive of her mother, who must have been a woman of enormous determination. It would seem that she passed this trait on to Jean.

Thomas Aquinas divided evil into *poena* (which can be translated as either pain or punishment) and *culpa* (which is fault or guilt). Brian Davies calls these "evil suffered" and "evil done", respectively. If her early life had a lot to do with "evil suffered", much of the rest of her life was a

...how very like Jean it was to have done what Jean, in fact, did.

response to moral fault, “evil done”. Most of us are outraged by moral evils, but for Jean, it went beyond this: she had to go *herself* and fight the war on terror. In doing so, as had happened on other occasions before this, she was not looking for opponents, but she sometimes stood up for unpopular positions, and the opponents found her. I was often amazed at the civility of her tone, however angry she might have been, when she answered some of these opponents, who were not nearly so civil. This was only the last and in some ways her most public engagement in moral questions. At the same time, she was aware, as she wrote in her book on Augustine, that politics has its limits. These limits are the limits of what Augustine called *tranquilitas ordinis*: worldly, as opposed to eternal and true tranquility, which is not of this world. But these limits, Jean observed, were precisely the ones over which, paradoxically, it was sometimes necessary to fight.

I end with the point at which I began: how very like Jean it was to have done what Jean, in fact, did. In the title of Wheelock’s poem, “Song on Reaching Seventy”, the critical word is “reaching”. Jean just barely reached into her seventies, and I, like many others, wanted more for her. It is a triumph to reach seventy, especially with such passion and moral energy as Jean showed. And yet, it was not enough. I still make this complaint. Yes, it was “so very Jean” to have made that last trip; and yet it *should* not have been any other way.

I will close by reading two brief excerpts from Wheelock’s poem:

*Song on Reaching Seventy*

Shall not a man sing as the night comes on?  
He would be braver than that bird  
Which shrieks for terror and is gone  
Into the gathering dark, and he has heard  
Often, at evening’s hush,  
Upon some towering sunset bough  
A belated thrush  
Lift up his heart against the menacing night,  
Till silence covered all. Oh, now  
Before the coming of a greater night  
How bitterly sweet and dear  
All things have grown!

Great night, hold back  
A little longer yet your mountainous black  
Waters of darkness from this shore,  
This island garden, this paradisaal spot,  
The haunt of love and pain,  
Which we must leave, whether we would or not,  
And where we shall not come again.  
More time — oh, but a little more,  
Till stretched to the limits of being, the taut heart break  
Bursting the bonds of breath,  
Shattering the wall  
Between us and our world, and we awake  
Out of the dream of self into the truth of all,  
The price for which is death.<sup>1</sup>

Jean, we all miss you terribly.

“Being Jean Elshtain”

JOHN D. CARLSON

Jean Bethke Elshtain was my graduate advisor at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Before that, she had been my undergraduate professor at Vanderbilt University. So, I knew her for about twenty-five years—more than half of my life. She filled many roles for me, as she did for other students: supportive mentor, intellectual role model, exemplary Augustinian and, kind heart, and wise confidante. After I received my PhD, she later became an exceptional colleague and trusted friend. Words can’t describe the many holes left gaping when she died. If they could, such words could fill volumes yet probably still wouldn’t be very interesting to read. Instead, then, I offer a few remarks on the passing of a great woman beloved by many.

These reflections were first delivered from the pulpit in Rockefeller Memorial Chapel from which so many luminaries, including Jean Elshtain, have held forth over the last century. The chapel’s mighty limestone walls still harbor the echoes of these potent voices, Jean’s among them. Within them, one can still hear the forceful timbre of her beckoning. To hear or recall a voice is to apprehend and feel one’s presence. This is why, every year during

I had just seen the aforementioned movie and realized I was now having a “Being Jean Elshtain” dream.

Holy Week, there is a service in this sanctuary to meditate upon the Seven Last Words of Christ—to hear again the voice from Calvary, to feel the spirit made present through the echoes. Jean was an inveterate commentator at these services, during which, she urged us to remember the needs of the body, our fears and frailties. She spoke to the importance of companionship and familial relationships and of the sense of responsibility infused by the divine. She waxed eloquently upon the certainty of suffering, the promise of relief, the possibility of redemption, and, most crucially, the indispensability of forgiveness. When reflecting with religious believers, her beautiful and prayerful meditations pressed deeply upon us. Of course, these same ideas were also the stuff of her ethical and political messages, as when she spoke, again from the same pulpit, at a civic forum on the presidential impeachment crisis of 1998. These two very different events—one religious, one civic—point to the ways in which Jean’s abundant mind could slake the thirsts of our public and private yearnings—even as she slipped effortlessly across the presumed distinction between them.

It was the late 90s and early 2000s, when I was Professor Elshtain’s student: the era of dot.com, *Bush v. Gore*, and Y2K. On the big screen, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Gangs of New York*, and *Being John Malkovich* were playing. Jean loved movies and ingeniously incorporated them into her writing and teaching. She never got over it when *Saving Private Ryan* got beat out for best picture. She marveled at any film with Daniel Day Lewis or Leonardo di Caprio; of course both starred in *Gangs of New York*. (The last time I saw Jean, it was right before heading off to see Day-Lewis in *Lincoln*—the consummate portrayal of how politics and ethics interlace. She was so excited.) Finally, *Being John Malkovich*, that was a quirky, implausible film about a guy who falls through a trapdoor and lands inside actor John Malkovich’s mind. The audience looks out through his eyes while Malkovich goes about prosaic tasks like pulling food from the refrigerator or phoning in a catalog order for periwinkle hand towels. I mention all this to provide the context of this formative time for many of us who studying with her. For it included, too, those dark September days of 2001, the ensuing national debates and conversations at home and the long, long wars that followed overseas. It was a crucial time for this country, and the world. And

Jean was in the thick of it all.

What is remarkable is how devoted, supportive and generous she was with her students given her busy schedule and public profile. As a teacher, she never wielded her intelligence heavy-handedly like a club—more like a staff with which she gently nudged or guided us. That was enough. She took great pride in her students. After a few of her former students took her to dinner on her seventieth birthday, she commented how fulfilling it was to see us all “grown up”—and how glad she was that we hadn’t all become little Elshtain clones and epigones. Yet Jean also extended her generosity more widely than many of us had known. It was striking to read all the tributes after her death written not just by her friends but by people who had met her only once or twice if at all—all of whom wished they knew her better. So, for many of us—students, colleagues, and friends at the University of Chicago—it’s a blessing that we enjoyed so many years with Jean.

In my case, I recall one especially memorable period during my graduate years when I was blessed to spend a lot of time with her. I was taking my last class with her; reading her books as I prepared for exams. I was her teaching assistant in the college and also her research assistant, taking trips to Jane Addams’ home town in western Illinois. To top it off, Jean brought me on to the team that was starting up the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. To work with her in so many capacities just meant more brilliance to behold, more insights to glean.

Nevertheless, as wonderful as this all was, that was still a lot of Jean Elshtain in my life. One night in particular during this period, I woke up with a start, feeling a sense of great relief to be awake. I had been having this dream that I was, well, I don’t know how else to say it: I inside Jean Elshtain’s mind. I had just seen the aforementioned movie and realized I was now having a “Being Jean Elshtain” dream. But unlike in the movie, this was no lazy romp through a Pottery Barn catalog. No, things were moving very fast inside there. Jean read fast. She could speak at a good clip. She typed and wrote quickly. And she probably thought at lighting pace, too. So being inside her mind, for me at least, was not a comfortable experience. I was quite happy to wake up and by myself again. But what I learned right then and there was that I was no Jean

“I am something of a restless soul and being on the move is one way to deal with that.”

Bethke Elshtain. That’s not a bad lesson for a graduate student of hers to learn. And more importantly, there will not be another Jean Elshtain. So let me ponder briefly what *being Jean Elshtain* meant—not only for her—but what that still means to us even after her passing.

Jean was a scholar-citizen par excellence who used her tremendous intellect for the moral nourishment of civic life. She was unique in the way she negotiated the public and the private—intellectually, but also personally as well—the ways that she allowed these two realms to mutually informed and enrich one another. While the domain of political engagement traditionally has been dominated by men, we are indebted to Jean for helping to wrest it from its male clutch. She thrived in the huge swaths of civic space she carved out for herself. So too have many women who have followed behind her. A uniquely gifted public intellectual, Jean flourished in a way that appeared so natural; that is, she made plain how artificially constructed were the traditional public-private boundaries and gender lines that she herself breached and brokered, and ultimately broadened and reconfigured. (I should note that I never thought I’d find myself invoking the language of deconstruction to describe Jean Elshtain’s work—let alone at her memorial service.)

Jean loved the public engagement: the spirited debates and controversies, however much they occasionally pained her; the meetings with heads of state; the weekly trips and speaking engagements; the endowed lectures; the many academic and civic advisory boards on which she served; the twenty-some books and gazillion articles she published; and of course her busy teaching schedule—all of which she kept up while shuttling between her office in Chicago and home in Nashville. This hectic and exceedingly full life is what *being Jean Elshtain* came to mean. But this public presence entailed significant sacrifices in the private roles she cherished—as wife, mother, and grandmother. Those who knew her know how committed she was to her family. In private conversation, often, her family—and your family—were more important to her than whatever great idea she was chewing on at the time. Whatever greatness the life of the mind tenders, Jean knew well that our happiness as moral creatures begins—and ends—at home, with our loved ones. Accordingly, her significant presence

and engagement in civic life required public-private conflictions that, I wager, few men experience or understand in the same way she did. Her scholarly insights about “public man” and “private woman” helped us to appreciate her life more deeply.

We also owe a great debt to Jean’s family for sharing her with us. Of course, when I recently expressed my thanks to her son, he replied—with a bite of Elshtain wit—“Share her? What choice did we have?” True enough. Jean was of strong will and conviction, and she sometimes resisted familial pleadings to slow down. I suspect many of her friends and colleagues asked her at some time or another, “Jean, why don’t you rest a little?” Apparently, she even entertained such thoughts herself—in a Christmas letter, which I came across recently. She writes:

I must say, there are times when I would like to chuck all the work and just journey to some place by a sea shore, as I love the lapping of the ocean and the sounds it makes at night as one lulls into sleep. I imagine myself sitting in a rocking chair with a blanket on my lap—perhaps something handmade by Aunt Martha—with a rip-roaringly good mystery novel in hand. I would read, occasionally drink tea, occasionally snooze, and just enjoy the beauty of God’s good earth. Perhaps one day. But, for now, it is family and work.

I must say, I was a bit saddened to read these lines, to think of these pleasant, unrealized possibilities. But then I read on, as she batted away my concerns with dispatch: “I should add, by the way,” she continues, “that after about a week in my dream scenario I would probably get the ‘itch’ to get on an airplane and fly somewhere to teach or to lecture. I am something of a restless soul and being on the move is one way to deal with that. It may not be the best way, but I have not yet found one that is better.” Jean was no more at home in her dream than I had been in mine.

Being Jean Elshtain was not always easy. And in her later years, when her failing health and advancing pain held her back or slowed her down, she commented that she missed being out there. At those times, she grappled with how to be when *being Jean Elshtain* was becoming

“Be urgent, in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort,  
be unfailing in patience and in teaching.”

untenable. I sometimes wonder if *not* being Jean Elshtain would have been very good for her or for anyone else for that matter. Until the end, she lived an extraordinary—and extraordinarily demanding—life. She accomplished more in seventy two years than most people could accomplish in three lifetimes. Those who knew her, learned from her, and loved her would do well, then, to find creative ways to honor and continue her legacy—and express in our own lives our indebtedness for her keen mind, generous support, exemplary service, full life, and abundant labors. For through it all, Jean retained a Lutheran sense of vocation—as scholar and citizen, mother and grandmother—that carried through her conversion to Catholicism.

And now her pilgrimage has ended. She has been relieved of her physical pains and ailments, the travails of her earthly civic roles lifted, her full citizenship conferred. Now she reposes—in the good company of her friend Augustine, upon whom she meditated so much—and in the tranquility and fellowship of the heavenly city for which they both longed.

You can finally rest now, Jean. Just rest.

## Memorial Eulogy for Jean Elshtain

SUSAN E. SCHREINER

*“Be urgent in season and out of season.”*

This verse by which the Pauline author encouraged his fellow Christians reads in full: “Be urgent, in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings. . . . As for you, be steady, endure suffering, fulfill your ministry.”

These words from 2 Timothy 4:2 beautifully reflect the life and work of Jean Bethke Elshtain. All of the tributes that have filled the newspapers and journals describe Jean with words such as “gracious,” “generous,” “kind,” “humble, and even “self-effacing.” For those of us who were fortunate enough to know her personally, these descriptions ring absolutely true and will always remain vividly in our

memories. We also know that she endured suffering with courage and faith. Jean often said, “We must play the hand we are dealt.” On occasion I grumbled that this would be easier if the dealer was not always dealing from the bottom of the deck. But she gently corrected me and directed me back to a beneficial realism. Jean embodied that ancient insight of Aeschylus about the wisdom that suffering brings, an insight that continued to inform the Western Christian tradition:

“Zeus, who into wisdom’s way  
Guideth mortals, establishing  
this decree: “By suffering truth.”  
Woe’s aching memories before the mind  
ooze in sleep drop by drop.  
So to men, wisdom comes, without their will.”

However, when we read the reviews and tributes that have poured in after Jean’s death, other words recur that hint at another aspect of her life, a more uncomfortable one perhaps; words like “controversial,” “hard-nosed,” “uncompromising,” “a woman who stood her ground,” “tough-minded,” and my personal favorite, “against the grain.” And these words are written by her *admirers* and not by one of her opponents whom Jean once appropriately labeled an “ideological stalker.” How did this determined, controversial tough-mindedness co-exist within this generous, kind, humble, and self-effacing person? We all know what these terms mean. They are code for the dreaded “c” word; Jean was “conservative.” One of my most vivid memories is of a student who stopped by my office and mentioned that there was some talk going on among the students about the fact that I was always seen sitting next to Professor Elshtain. Confused, I stared and said, “What are you talking about?” He replied, “Well, you know, you are a liberal and Professor Elshtain is *conservative!*” Stunned, I could only say, “So what?” But I thought to myself, “Is this what it has come to?”

Was she really so conservative? In reality, Jean transcended all such labels. Still, I would argue that she embodied the original and true meaning of liberalism. In fact, she was the most liberal person I ever knew because she loved the free exchange of *all* ideas. She knew how to



She was out of season—she exhorted, corrected, and taught—with steadiness, patience and endurance.

argue her case because she knew how to listen with respect to all points of view. Jean never minded disagreements but there was one thing she really hated: sloppy thinking, the re-utterance of ideologies that made one feel comfortable and oh-so-certain. What she demanded of students, colleagues, and friends was that they *think*. Make your case, argue with reason, and always with civility. She yearned for both an engaged public and, as this conference is aptly called, an engaged mind.

I was honored to call her my friend. I admired her greatly. Over the years Jean and I found that we needed each other. In our conversations, we talked about many things. We have heard about her love of movies. Jean just would not stop telling me how sorry she was to have missed a lecture I once gave on Clint Eastwood. We spoke about those sorrows we had endured and that had taught us so much. In terms of our work we shared a love of the West and the ideas of the Western tradition, even if those ideas were in texts written by “dead white men.” We both *loved* Augustine. However, Jean and I did often wonder why we were both considered old-fashioned, not on the cutting edge. Finally I told her, “Jean, “I’m not dying in this ditch.” Eventually she would utter one of her most common phrases, “Now look, let’s be honest.” So, now, in her memory, let us be honest. Many of us have lost the ability to listen. We surround ourselves with those who think like we do. Jean understood the danger of being too intellectually comfortable. She knew that we could not think rigorously unless we listened rigorously to one another. Jean recognized our tendency to live within a house of mirrors where we end up hearing only our own echoes. Our “itching ears” find it comfortable in there. She called us to come outside and to question ourselves, and to *think*.

Did we do her justice? Did we listen to her with the respect and civility she offered to all of us? Sometimes we did. Often we did not. In an interview that appeared in the *University of Chicago Magazine*, Jean spoke from experience when she said, “Especially in the academy, it is hard not to get hooted out of the room.”

From the standpoint of many academic faculties Jean was “out of season.” That was the heart of her contribution and her courage. Just as she defied those doctors who told

her she would never walk again, Jean refused many of the accepted safe answers; she pushed on, made her case, and argued with intellectual courage. She refused to succumb to the commonplaces and idols of her day. She was out of season—she exhorted, corrected, and taught—with steadiness, patience and endurance. She questioned us, she challenged us, and she made us think. But we benefited from her only if we, too, had the intellectual courage to step out of our house of mirrors and actually listen to all perspectives and arguments. She was often intellectually out of season—and in a very real sense that was her calling, her vocation, her ministry.

Sometimes we failed her. Our “itching ears” sought out those who were to our own liking. In so doing we failed to see the gift we had been given and who stood in our midst. Jean was not a gift *despite* being controversial but precisely *because* she was controversial. Jean exemplified the words of T.S. Eliot: “There is only the trying/the rest is not our business. “ Jean tried. However, now the rest *is* our business. The good news is that she left us her mind, challenges, and warnings. Her voice can still be heard in the twenty books and innumerable articles that can still question, teach, exhort, rebuke and convince us. She can still, in her gracious, humble and tough-minded way, teach us to listen, reflect, reason, and think. In season and out of season, Jean was a gift who will never leave us.

... and at the conclusion I simply said, ‘that’s the best I can do.’

## Closing Words

MARGARET M. MITCHELL AND JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

Professor Elshtain’s final public speaking engagement was the Milton K. Wong lecture on June 14, 2013 at the Canadian Broadcast Corporation in Vancouver, British Columbia, entitled, “Democracy on Trial Revisited.” The family has kindly invited us to hear this clip they have chosen from that interview to hear her unmistakable voice yet again. Our closing words this day belong to Jean Bethke Elshtain:

*Now, I noted in those earlier lectures that many human ills cannot be cured. “All human lives”—I’m quoting from my book—“All human lives are lived on the edge of quiet desperation. We must all be rescued from time to time from fear and sorrow. But I read the palpable despair and violence as dark signs of the times, as warnings that democracy,” as you heard earlier, “may not be up to the task of satisfying” the many dreams and aspirations and fairness that it seems to promise.*

*And surprisingly I was taxed by some critics as being far too gloomy, on the one hand, and there were others who accused me of being a running dog for capitalism, or someone who was just a goody-goody—but those folks never seemed to reconcile their contrasting views.*

*When asked by a reporter for the CBC, “what does it mean to you to be an American,” I had responded on air: “it means that one can share a dream of democracy, it means one can make one’s voice heard, it means both individual accomplishment as well as a sense of responsibility. It means sharing the possibility of a brotherhood and sisterhood, that is perhaps fractious as all brotherhoods and sisterhoods are, and yet united in a spirit. It is more a spirit of good rather than ill will. It means that one is marked by history, but not totally overburdened with it and defined by it. It means one can expect some basic sense of fair play will be called upon, and at the conclusion I simply said, ‘that’s the best I can do.’” ❖*

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## Endnotes

- 1 Wheelock, John Hall, “Song on Reaching Seventy,” in *This Blessed Earth: New and Selected Poems, 1927-1977* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1978), pp. 56-57.

MICHAEL KINNAMON

## A Report from the Front Lines of a Renewal Movement Under Siege

I am not sure that there is a typical career path for graduates of the Divinity School; but, if there is, I haven't taken it. As I was finishing my dissertation in the spring of 1980, I had interviews for teaching positions at Phillips Theological Seminary—which was at that time located in Enid, Oklahoma—and Eureka College in Eureka, Illinois, as well as an invitation to join the staff of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission in Geneva, Switzerland.

Both Phillips and Eureka are fine schools, but after visiting the towns of Enid and Eureka, I came to the conclusion that Geneva was in my immediate future.

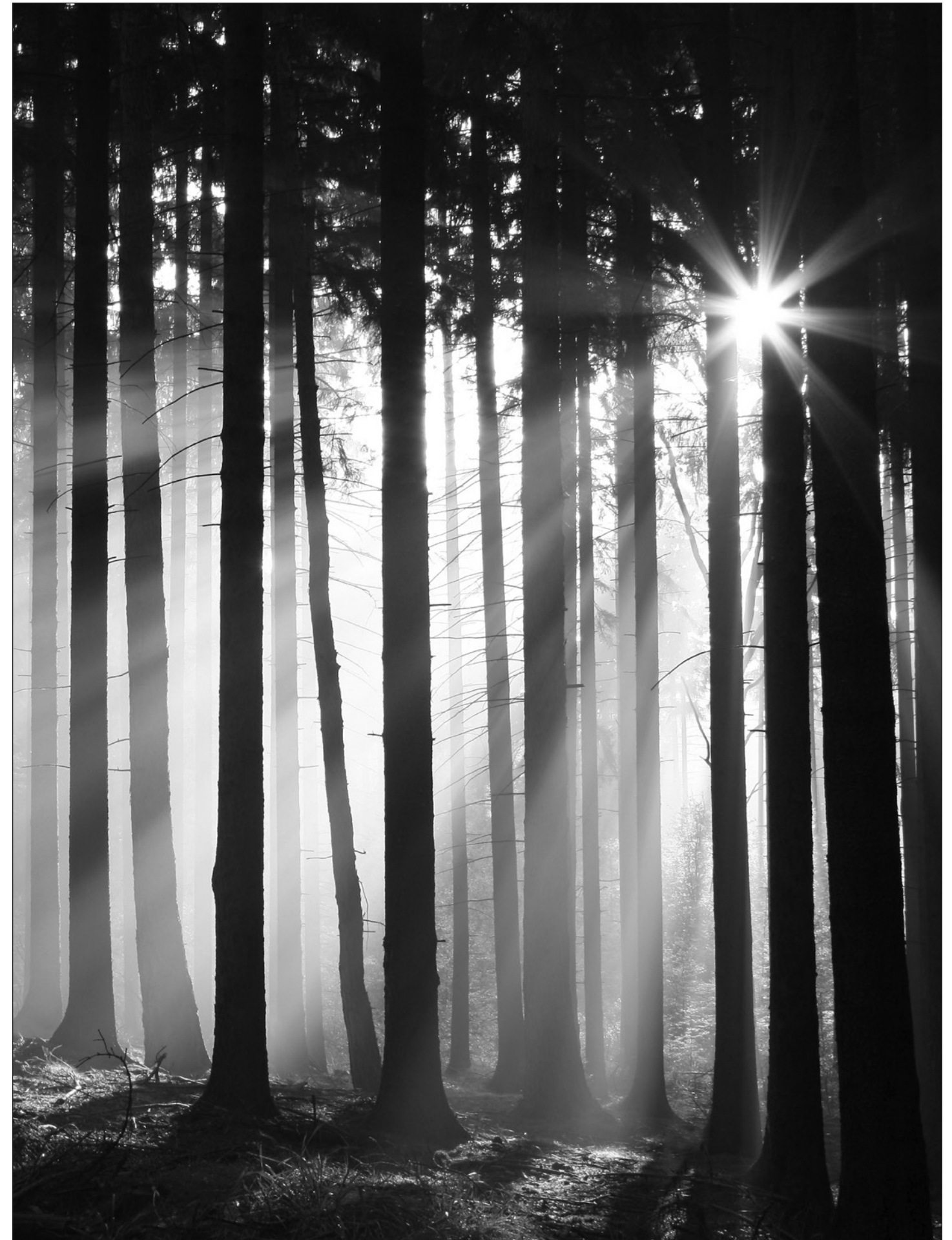
Faith and Order, if you are not familiar with it, is the stream of the ecumenical movement that engages in multi-lateral theological dialogue on such traditional areas of church division as sacraments, ministry, church authority, and confession of the apostolic faith. So there were raised eyebrows when I told colleagues in Geneva and on the commission that my PhD was in the field of Religion and Literature. I remember one European theologian who responded, "How very American"!

This was reinforced at a meeting of the WCC Central Committee during my first week on the staff. The discussion had to do with a draft of the eucharist section of the document, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, and specifically, with the meaning of the word *sarx*. I was sitting with another brand-new staff member, Hans-Georg Link, a theologian from Germany. I recall feeling ahead of the

game because it was obvious to me what research was needed from the staff, while Hans-Georg seemed unsure of the dynamics of the meeting. So I headed to the library and started looking up *sarx* and *soma*, probably in Kittel, only to discover that a contributor to the general entry was...Hans-Georg Link!

This often proved to be the case. The European colleagues, especially those with degrees in historical theology, were, generally speaking, better prepared as research scholars, but the Americans were better able to keep multiple balls in the air. And this was particularly true for one with a degree in Religion and Literature, a degree that prepared me to think synthetically, to see connections in disparate positions. Religion and Literature has also been good background for ecumenical work because it has enabled me to live comfortably with ambiguity. A poem by Yeats or a novel by Melville resists univocal interpretation.

This event, then, gives me the opportunity to say thank





There was a time when the academy and the movement for church unity were much intertwined.

you for the education I received in Swift Hall, no matter how inappropriate it may have seemed to some on the path I have taken. And I want, especially, to express my deep appreciation to my dissertation advisor, a man I am now pleased to call a good friend, Professor Tony Yu. The cultural, intellectual breadth of his scholarship has been a great source of inspiration to me and many others. To put it another way, my sense of the world was greatly expanded in his courses, including one on the famous Chinese novel, *The Journey to the West* (Tony's translation of it is a classic)—and there could have been no better preparation for a ministry dealing with the *oikoumene*.

One more word about my education. Since leaving the Divinity School, I have found Professor Marty to be an invaluable source of insight on things ecumenical. (For the third volume of the *History of the Ecumenical Movement*, published in 2004, I wrote the chapter that provides an overview of the movement since 1968. Marty wrote the preceding chapter that provides an overview of the world in that period! It is a measure of how much wider his scope is than mine, but I regard it as an honor to be associated in this way.) I did not, however, take a course with Marty while I was a student here, and, in fact, managed to pass through these halls without any exposure to the history and theology of modern ecumenism. And I suspect that, in this regard, I am not alone.

There was a time when the academy and the movement for church unity were much intertwined. To take a well-known example, the committee drafting the background paper on the theme for the 1954 WCC assembly, held just up the road in Evanston, included John Baillie, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Robert Calhoun, Owen Chadwick, Paul Devanandan, C. H. Dodd, T. S. Eliot, Georges Florovsky, Josef Hromadka, Lesslie Newbigin, Reinhold Niebuhr, D. T. Niles—and that's just the first half of the alphabet! (Their work, by the way, was not endorsed by the assembly.)

By the late 1960s, however, this sort of academic presence would have been unthinkable. Or, to say it more accurately, theological scholarship was increasingly confined to one corner of conciliar life, namely Faith and Order—which contributed to a split in the movement that I will discuss shortly. When I joined the staff in 1980, the

Faith and Order Commission still included such scholars as Raymond Brown, James Cone, Walter Kasper, Kosuke Koyama, Nicolas Lossky, José Miguez Bonino, Jürgen Moltmann, Mercy Oduyoye, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Letty Russell, Jean Tillard, Geoffrey Wainwright, and John Zizioulas, in addition to such church leaders as Mary Tanner and Desmond Tutu. But here, too, there has been a withdrawal in recent years of major academic talent from the formal structures of ecumenical dialogue.

Many factors no doubt contribute to the breaking of this connection. An appropriate demand for greater inclusivity has meant less room for established scholars from the academy. There are complaints—legitimate, in my judgment—that the ecumenical agenda has tipped too much in the direction of activism without sufficient theological grounding. (To take my favorite bad example, the statement of the National Council of Churches on the first Gulf War contained only one biblical reference: “What then are we to say about these things? [Romans 8:31].”) Perhaps as a result, ecumenical social pronouncements often seem unrealistic, even utopian. And there is a well-founded perception in the academy, in the words of Krister Stendahl, “that the WCC is not interested in open analysis and criticism, but only enlists academicians who can supply arguments in support of preconceived positions...a modern edition of ‘court theologians.’” (I personally, have been guilty of using biblical texts and historical materials to buttress ecumenical claims I am predisposed to affirm, without adequate scholarly exploration of whether or not they actually support such claims. I do not repent of being so passionate about ideas that I want to see them enacted; but I do repent of occasional academic rummaging that only serves to widen the gap between academy and movement.)

This afternoon, however, I am less concerned with analyzing this rupture than with lamenting it. It is part of my report from the front lines of a renewal movement under siege.

I would not be right to offer such a report without stressing that ecumenism occupies a prominent place in the history of the church in the twentieth century. “The ecumenical movement,” writes the British theologian,

To say it another way, churches have been renewed through mutual sharing of the gifts each has received thanks to their distinctive experiences of God's presence and power.

Paul Avis, has not simply replaced suspicion, incomprehension and rivalry with understanding, trust and friendship—though in itself that is no mean achievement. In the form of theological dialogue, ecumenism has also significantly scaled down the extent of church-dividing issues between Christian traditions...[and] has established that there is “a certain, albeit imperfect, communion” between churches that are not yet in full communion.

In the form of councils of churches, the movement has been the setting within which previously-competing denominations pray for and with one another; bear common witness to Jesus Christ, instead of only recruiting for their “brand” of Christianity; join in concerted action against racism, war, and economic oppression; and engage in shared service on behalf of those in need.

Even where closer structured relationship has proved difficult, churches have at times been changed through encounter with Christians in other confessions and cultures. To say it another way, churches have been renewed through mutual sharing of the gifts each has received thanks to their distinctive experiences of God's presence and power. My own denomination, the Disciples of Christ, is an example of how worship has been enriched and understandings of mission have been expanded as a result of relations with other churches through various dialogues, including the Consultation on Church Union. Speaking personally, I have continued to be involved in the movement because, like many other Christians, I long for a church better than the one I see around us—and ecumenism is a way of possible renewal.

It seems increasingly unlikely, however, that this ecumenical impulse, at least in its past forms, will figure prominently in the history of the church in this century. *New York Times* columnist, Ross Douthat, speaks for many outside observers when he writes that the ecumenical movement has borne real theological fruit, “but what began as a daring experiment has decayed into bureaucratized complacency—a dull round of interdenominational statements...only tenuously connected to the gospel.”

There is truth in this indictment, but let's nuance it. Any report from the front lines must take note of the extensive split between two sets of ecumenical priorities—to

the point that it is difficult to speak of one ecumenical movement. This split becomes very visible each spring in the different constituencies that attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days and the National Workshop on Christian Unity. In my experience, most Advocacy Days participants argue that the fundamental divide in human community is between rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed; and the basic division in the church has to do with how Christians respond to and participate in these divisions of the world. They use language like “unity in solidarity” and focus, not on agreed statements of faith or common structures, but on a shared willingness to act together in response to human need.

By contrast, those who attend the National Workshop generally contend that the church would serve the human community best if it were to live more fully as the church God wills—confessing Christ together, sharing the eucharistic meal, recognizing the baptisms and ordinations performed in other parts of the body, having a structure that allows, when needed, for common decision making. Addressing these areas of division is, therefore, the highest ecumenical priority and the basis for authentic Christian witness and mission.

Both groups would say they are central to ecumenism in the United States, and, in my experience, there is almost no overlap between them. Indeed, many Advocacy Days participants, if I'm not mistaken, see Faith and Order-style dialogue as, at best, irrelevant, at worst, detrimental to their efforts, since they have little interest in unity with those who don't share their social-political commitments. For their part, many National Workshop participants have a negative attitude toward political advocacy, viewing it as inherently divisive.

This split is evident in all sorts of settings. I have been privileged to teach two different years in Indian seminaries where a high percentage of the students are from a Dalit background. When it comes to unity, their deepest bonds are generally with other Dalits, not with non-Dalit Christians who may not share in the struggle against caste oppression. They usually affirm the idea of unity-in-diversity, but not that diversity!

Much of my own writing and editing over the past

Even in such moments, however, it is essential to recognize that the “them” we oppose are, in some fundamental way, “us.”

quarter century has been an attempt to counter this split, to show that the ecumenical vision becomes most profound and the movement most vital when unity and justice are held in creative tension. This is only possible, as I see it, if Christians affirm 1) that the church’s unity is a gift of God and not, therefore, constituted by human agreement, and 2) that this gift, which Christians are called to make visible, is also part of the church’s eschatological horizon. Because unity is a gift, not a product of our agreement, we can eschew any “cheap unity” that would avoid contentious issues for fear of disruption. It frees us to disagree passionately without breaking fellowship. And because unity is an eschatological calling, Christians should also be prepared to challenge present, partial unities in order to manifest that deeper, wider communion of God’s promise. These are points I have argued at some length in various publications.

All of this was severely tested when, in 1991, I was nominated by the denominational search committee for the position of General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a nomination that did not meet with universal acclaim (!), and was ultimately defeated, due primarily to my support for the gay and lesbian community. How can you call yourself ecumenical, I was asked more than once (and not just by right-wingers), when your public positions cause such division?

What became clear to me in those stress-filled months is that there are times when Christians must take sides against others who claim the name of Christ. Even in such moments, however, it is essential to recognize that the “them” we oppose are, in some fundamental way, “us.” I began to insist, in public presentations, that the church cannot fear controversy or confrontation, because such fear is paralyzing for a commitment to justice; but Christians must also hate division because the story of our faith tells us that we have been linked in communion with persons we might otherwise shun (including those who shun others). Nothing else can testify so powerfully that our trust is in God, not in communities of our devising.

All of these issues neatly converged in the newsletter of an obviously agitated Disciples pastor in Nebraska. “While it now appears,” he wrote, “that Kinnamon himself is not a homosexual, he is an ecumenist.” Well, yes I am. And,

thus, if asked whether my deepest source of communal identity is in groups of like-minded LGBT advocates or in the church with its Nebraska pastors, I will answer, through gritted teeth, “in the church,” because it is there that my own pretensions to self-righteousness are challenged and the full import of divine reconciliation is felt. I must not refrain from bearing witness to the gospel as I understand it; but central to that gospel is the new community of Christ in which I am linked with persons I may not like or be like.

By the way, I took it as an acknowledgement of my persistence in making such arguments when George Lindbeck, in a 2005 article in *The Christian Century*, labeled the effort to hold unity and justice in tension as “MK ecumenism.” As far as Professor Lindbeck was concerned, however, I was persistent but not persuasive. Faith and Order, in his view, must take precedence over Life and Work in somewhat the same way that faith takes precedence over works in Reformation teaching. Kinnamon’s effort, he wrote, is noble but ultimately doomed because whenever unity and justice are seen as equal, intertwined goals politics ends up dominating theology and the ecumenical movement becomes simply another arena for pursuing political agendas. I will testify, on the basis of considerable experience, that this is indeed a danger—but one that must be faced by ecumenically-oriented Christians.

This split in the movement is part of my report on weakness in contemporary ecumenism; but the malaise, I have come to see, is more deep-seated. It manifests itself today in a loss of commitment among leaders of our churches to the possibility, to the very idea, of Christian unity. I recently heard the head of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Kurt Koch, say that what pains him most is that so many Christians are no longer pained by divisions that, in the words of Vatican II, contradict the will of Christ, scandalize the world, and damage that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel. In my experience, the great vision of eucharistic fellowship is reduced in the minds of many church leaders to policies of good neighborliness and occasional cooperation that can easily be demoted on the

...the ecumenical movement... was a product of modernity, reflective of the same dreams for human unity that gave rise to the United Nations.

list of ecclesiastical priorities. Even full communion agreements, such as that between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church, which I certainly applaud, are often implemented minimally rather than maximally, becoming examples of what Albert Outler scornfully called “ecumenism within the status quo.”

What has brought us to this state of affairs? One factor is, ironically, the movement’s success in effecting a real, of limited, improvement in interchurch relations, which has lessened the urgency for further advance. We may not be able to share the eucharist or affirm one another’s ministries or make much concerted impact on public debates about war or poverty or climate change, but at least we get along. Isn’t that enough?!

This sentiment is especially prevalent within mainline churches, once the pillars of ecumenical organizations and dialogues. I don’t need to recount how these churches, including my own, have suffered a decline of resources and influence, and are now faced with internal divisions over issues like homosexuality. And I suppose it shouldn’t be surprising that these churches now seem content with occasional cooperation, are less willing to risk new ecumenical ventures, and that we are witnessing a renewed focus on denominational identity. But it is still disturbing to see these churches, after a century of ecumenical life, engaging in a competitive, even predatory, scramble for new members. Generally speaking, ecumenism remains something that they do, when expedient, not something they are as scripturally-grounded communions.

(Since I have been hard on church leaders, I feel compelled to note, parenthetically, that this is a very difficult time to be one, especially in churches once called mainline. I recognize the multiple, intense pressures faced by those in denominational leadership, but am still disappointed in the withdrawal of investment in efforts to make visible our unity in Christ. Not only is church unity a truth of the gospel, it is potentially renewing for these very churches.)

There is no doubt that all of this has soured many would-be ecumenists. I have repeatedly watched seminary students get excited by the products of ecumenical dialogue, of which there is no shortage, only to grow cynical when they grasp the profound lack of reception, lack of

change, in our churches. Karl Rahner once spoke about “the neurotic fear that we might be in agreement”—so that whenever they get close to it, churches raise the ante. This is not lost on new observers. And when expectation outstrips actual accomplishment, energy for the whole effort will be lost.

Another factor in the decline of interest in ecumenism may be the, otherwise laudable, improvement in and emphasis on interfaith relations. Many of my students, again to take them as example, now regard Christian unity as passé, seeing interfaith dialogue as a more relevant alternative. Some acknowledge that the unity of Christians may have seemed important to our ancestors living in a predominantly Christian society, but the growing religious diversity of our culture has made even eucharistic fellowship seem like a narrow, relatively inconsequential, aspiration. For others, it is simply easier and far more enjoyable to relate to liberal Jews and irenic Muslims than to obstreperous conservatives who also claim the name Christian.

However, a more profound reason for the loss of commitment to the goal of unity (no surprise to anyone here) has to do with the post-modern emphasis on particularity. What was once seen as scandalous division is now often regarded as enriching diversity. Of course, diversity isn’t diverse apart from its placement in larger wholes, (unity and diversity are symbiotic concepts), but this cultural shift has still cast suspicion on the very goal of ecumenism.

Historians point out that the ecumenical movement, for all of its early Orthodox involvement, was a product of modernity, reflective of the same dreams for human unity that gave rise to the United Nations. In its heyday of the 1960s, the movement championed an understanding of unity in which particularity is subordinate to wholeness and there is an appreciation for common structures and theological consensus that transcends local context. Such models now feel, at least to many, like corporate merger, even like forms of hegemony designed to preserve the power of those who already have it. Ecumenical leaders—most especially the German theologian, Konrad Raiser—have attempted to articulate a post-modern basis for ecumenism. Raiser argues, as I have, that “fellowship does not come into being as a result of individuals joining



## Can new evangelical and Pentecostal partners give fresh energy to the movement?

together on the basis of common commitment, belief, or inclination. The abiding difference of the other is rather a condition for the possibility of relationship and fellowship.” But much more work needs to be done on an understanding of Christian unity suited for the twenty-first century.

All of this, of course, has taken a great toll on ecumenical bodies, including the National Council of Churches. You may have read that the Council, faced with grave financial challenges, is in the midst of dramatic reconfiguring. I am not the one to comment on what is now emerging, but I can illustrate the financial condition by picking on a church family that I actually like a lot—the Orthodox. One quarter of the thirty-six NCC members are Orthodox churches, either Eastern or Oriental. When I became General Secretary at the beginning of 2008, the previous year’s combined contribution from all nine Orthodox members would have kept us open for one hour on January 2. Nearly half of the members’ communions had contributed nothing at all. I am pleased to report that this percentage improved during my time at the NCC; but, meanwhile, the Presbyterian Church (USA) reduced its undesignated giving by fifty percent in one year, more than offsetting any gains from small churches.

All of this further undercuts fundraising, because it is tough to get individuals or foundations excited about supporting the NCC financially when the overall giving of its members has fallen by two-thirds in the last decade. An understandable concern for survival (I certainly felt it) begins to take precedence over innovative thinking. And financial difficulties lead inevitably to restructuring, which generally means that fewer staff are asked to do the same amount of work.

Focusing on finances, however, is like treating orthopedic symptoms when the real problems are cardiac. The overriding issue for councils of churches, in my experience, is the failure of churches (i.e., church leaders and representatives) to grasp that the essence of any council is the relationship of the member churches to one another, not their relationship to some structure or office. Starting with the WCC’s attempt at self-definition (the Toronto Statement of 1950), conciliar leaders have insisted that a council is not

an organization churches join, but a mutual commitment they make in order to form a fellowship centered on a vision of fuller unity. Whenever churches regard a council of churches as “that organization” rather than “our fellowship,” then conciliar life has been radically misunderstood—and the accountability, including financial, that ought to go with conciliar membership is minimized. Actually, the picture is even more troubling. When councils lose their vision of being provisional communities on the way toward deeper communion, they become service organizations aimed at self-perpetuation. And to the extent this happens, their very existence institutionalizes present divisions.

I will mention only one other indication of this fundamental misunderstanding (one that affects every council of which I am aware). Outsiders often assume that meetings of the NCC, with members ranging from Quakers to Greek Orthodox, are filled with theological fireworks—but that is not the case. Rather, the NCC is marked by what Jan Love (a significant leader in the WCC) calls a “polite parallelism” that avoids contentious matters, precluding the possibility of learning from one another or seeking God’s guidance together. If a church cannot ask its partners in the community of the council, “What is your theological basis for ordaining persons who are gay or lesbian?” or “Why have you refrained from joining other churches in public witness for gun control?”, where can such questions be raised? Churches that think only in terms of cooperation will avoid hard questions for the sake of a shallow harmony. Churches that think in terms of mutual commitment will welcome them for the sake of mutual growth and deeper discernment of God’s will.

As some of you know or may have read, I decided not to accept the offer of a second term as General Secretary for health reasons. It was also becoming clear to me, however, that I am not the leader needed for this time of upheaval. For one thing, I was increasingly at cross purposes with church leaders. In my judgment, the problem with the Council’s budget is not on the expense side of the ledger, but on the revenue side, with churches treating conciliar membership as an add-on to their “real” life and mission and, therefore, failing to fund their conciliar commitments. Beyond that, I am too invested in the

## Local ecumenical work tends to be more a matter of cooperation than renewal through full sharing of life.

current movement, perhaps too appreciative of the gains that have been made, to grasp fully the new things God is doing in our midst.

I am also very aware of the tensions inherent in any single prescription for renewal. Can the revolution in communications technology bring new vitality to ecumenism? Yes, surely. But the key discipline of the ecumenical movement has been face-to-face dialogue and relationship building, and I cannot help but lament anything that undermines it. Can new evangelical and Pentecostal partners give fresh energy to the movement? Yes, surely. But, as you’ve heard, I believe that unity is inseparable from social justice, and I know that expanding the table often reduces the range of justice commitments the churches can make together. Can the leadership of young adults foster new ways of thinking and acting ecumenically? Yes, surely. But I am convinced that an orientation to the future must not forget the achievements of the past, lest we spend time reinventing rather than building on what has already been accomplished. Can the growing focus on interfaith relations expand the search for human wholeness that is central to the ecumenical vision? Yes, surely. But the ecumenical movement has been grounded in the conviction that in Christ we have seen God’s most decisive work of reconciling love—that the church, the community of Christ’s followers, is called to be an embodied sign of such reconciliation—and I pray we will never back away from this witness.

It would be a mistake if this report from the front lines left only a negative impression. My own future work, insofar as it deals with ecumenism, is likely to be concentrated in two areas where I see signs of hope.

First, I intend to spend more time encouraging local expressions of unity, especially ones that involve lay leadership. Histories of the movement often focus on such episcopal leaders as Nathan Söderblom and William Temple; but its lifeblood flowed from the mission fields, the World Sunday School Association, the YMCA and YWCA, the various Bible societies, and the Student Christian Movement—all of which were lay driven.

What began, however, as a lay effort to renew the church was eventually domesticated, brought under control

by the churches it was intended to reform. “My own personal ecumenical experience,” writes Ernst Lange in his marvelous little book, entitled *And Yet It Moves*, “was acquired...within the laity and renewal movements, which originally invented the ecumenical movement in the nineteenth century but were then swallowed up and alienated by it as the church institutions took over.” Are the Disciples an ecumenically-oriented denomination? Why, yes, we have an office in Indianapolis just for that purpose.

I give thanks for the work of professional ecumenists; after all, I have been one. But if the movement is to move, it must do so locally and among the laity—a development that may actually be enhanced by the weakening of denominational structures. Local ecumenical work tends to be more a matter of cooperation than renewal through full sharing of life. Still, there is, in my experience, real energy there for common worship and mission. Sharing stories of what is going on in different settings may encourage others to go and do likewise.

Second, I will try to fan the flame in churches that are just beginning to experience the warmth and light of sustained contact with others. In this regard, I want to end by telling you about my favorite church in the NCC: the Mar Thoma.

The Mar Thoma Church, for those who are not familiar with it, has its roots in the stories of the Apostle Thomas and his arrival on the southwest coast of India in 52 A.D. A portion of this ancient Orthodox community was deeply affected, however, by British missionaries, and it is this “reformed Orthodox” tradition, in full communion with the Church of England, that is known today as the Mar Thoma Church. This bridge church heritage has meant that the Mar Thoma in India have been inclined toward ecumenical engagement; and the church has produced such leaders for the global movement as M. M. Thomas, the first layman to serve as Moderator of the WCC’s Central Committee.

In this country, I was initially opposed to Mar Thoma membership in the NCC because I thought they should be part of the Episcopal Church. The Council doesn’t need to encourage fragmentation by immigration. The hold of the Malayalam language and Indian culture proved too strong,

It may be that less optimism and more hope allows us to let go  
of favored projects and structures ....

however, and there are today between fifty and sixty congregations, half of them in the northeast.

During the first two generations of immigrants, the priests were all Indian-born and the church was, by its own admission, quite insular; but in recent years, a new spirit is emerging. For example, in the spring of 2010, not long after the earthquake in Haiti, I was invited to speak at the Annual Assembly of the North American diocese. When I finished, Bishop Theodosius announced that the Mar Thoma congregations had taken a special offering to be used by their conciliar partners. “The Mar Thoma Church has no presence in Haiti,” said the Bishop, “but because we are part of the National Council, we are there”—and handed me a check for \$131,000.

Not long after, a delegation of representatives from various NCC churches visited the Mar Thoma at their headquarters near New York City. This was part of the NCC’s program of “church to church visits,” designed to reinforce the point that the Council is the relationship of the churches to one another. In most instances, the visited church would have ten to fifteen persons present, including the Head of Communion. Bishop Theodosius made sure that more than sixty were present for the Mar Thoma visit, including a high percentage of their priests, as well as key laypersons—women and men, young adults and elder leaders.

We began by asking, “Are you an Indian church with a branch in the United States or an American church with roots in India?” and watched the room divide generationally! Finally, Bishop Theodosius intervened. “It seems to me,” he said, “that we have much to learn from our ecumenical friends who have been through this ahead of us. We need your prayers and guidance.” Following every visit, I would send a letter summarizing the conversation to the Head of Communion. In this case, Bishop Theodosius sent my letter to every congregation, urging that it be read at a suitable public occasion as a gift from the church’s conciliar partners, and as an encouragement for them to be ecumenically engaged in their local setting.

I think you can see why this was my favorite NCC church; but, in a sense, this experience is not unusual. After thirty years of such work, I have come to realize that ecumenism flourishes in the period, the space, when a

church emerges from exclusivity and isolation into encounter with other perspectives, when a church still holds fast to its theological core but also sees that its reading of the gospel can be enriched through dialogue and collaboration. That’s why the Roman Catholic Church gave energy to the whole movement in the years after Vatican II, why my students most interested in ecumenism tend to be disaffected evangelicals, and why my other favorite church of recent years has been Christian Science. Professor Marty once suggested that the problem facing the contemporary church is that many of those who are committed aren’t civil, and many of those who are civil aren’t committed. In my experience, ecumenism flourishes in that space when the committed are becoming civil.

There is no doubt it would have been easier to be on the front lines of this movement fifty years ago! In my better moments, however, I am happy to have been part of this ministry in such a time as this. A movement unable to revel in institutional success may learn to trust more in God’s guidance, discerned through theological reflection and prayer, than in our skill at managing organizations or drafting texts. It may be that less optimism and more hope allows us to let go of favored projects and structures, while holding fast to God’s promises.

The seminal WCC Conference on Church and Society, held in Geneva in 1966, began its “Message” by saying, “As Christians, we are committed to working for the transformation of the world.” Compare this to the theme of the WCC’s assembly in 2006, “God, in your grace, transform the world.” Those who are optimistic speak of what they can accomplish. Those who live in hope give thanks for what God may accomplish, regardless of how difficult the present may seem. And such humility may itself contribute to the renewal of the church. ✚

LARRY GREENFIELD

# The Two Hallelujahs

Song of Songs 6: 1-10

*Hallelujah* by Leonard Cohen

Two hallelujahs.  
Two hallelujahs bearing witness to us this morning.  
Two prayers of praise inviting us:  
to feel and to probe,  
to experience and to enter and be entered into,  
to touch and to explore,  
to taste and savor,  
to penetrate and be penetrated, and  
to give mind and memory to,  
so that we might discover—or leave in mystery—some  
good news about:  
our selves,  
our selves together,  
our selves uniting and separating,  
our selves sated and left wanting,  
our selves satisfied and still needing more,  
all—possibly—in the presence,  
and maybe even with the participation, of  
the sacred,  
the divine,  
the holy.  
Two hallelujahs.

One of the hallelujahs, small as it relatively is, almost hidden in the manifold texts of our scriptures—or, if not hidden, kept closeted by the guardians of our sacred writings—yet exuberant and not to be denied in its affirmations about what it means to be human in the fullest sense, and what it means to be creatures in the image and likeness, in the abiding presence (even absence) of the perpetual creator. (Or is it “creators?”—if that, which divinely creates us and all that is, is itself sexual?)

But even there the *Song of Songs* corrects and redirects us from the predispositions and confinements of our sciences and and surely of our sacred societies: that our sex and sexuality is only, or primarily, for creation and

procreation. Life itself, these poems shows us, is also about pleasure—yes, sexual pleasure—the pleasure that is to be awakened and developed within us, and even more the pleasure that is in store when we are attracted to the beauty in another.

The *Song of Songs* invokes in us and evokes from us, then, a prayer of thanksgiving—of hallelujah!—for liberation: the liberation from those restrictions and restraints that have been developed over the centuries and millennia to control, and so often to suppress, what is undeniably within us.

But not just liberation.

Our cries of “hallelujah!”—our prayers of praise and thanksgiving—are also for the ways the *Song of Songs* contributes to our vocabulary, to our language, to that which allows us to express and thus, we come to see, to enhance the gift of our sexuality within and between us. This *Song*—or, better, this collection of songs—provides us prompts to put into words what we are experiencing in all our senses as sexual beings—words, and batches of words, and explosions of words that convey what we see and taste and smell and hear and feel when we are sexually alive, sexually aroused, and, yes, sexually meditative and reflective.

Similes and metaphors, drawn from the best of abundant life, abound in this hymnal of love songs, with references to the taste of good wine, the fragrance of flowers, the vibrancy of color, the energy and power and grace of animals.

And vividness is never spared, not just when the lovers are awake but even when they sleep and dream:

*I slept, but my heart was awake.  
Listen! My beloved is knocking.  
‘Open to me, my sister, my love,  
my dove, my perfect one;  
for my head is wet with dew,  
my locks with the drops of the night.’*





Hallelujah! We probably ought not to simply say it but we should instead sing its melodic themes in harmonious, triumphant, and major chords.

*I had put off my garment;  
How could I put it on again?  
I had bathed my feet;  
how could I soil them?  
My beloved thrust his hand into the opening,  
And my inmost being yearned for him,  
I arose to open to my beloved,  
And my hands dripped with myrrh,  
My fingers with liquid myrrh,  
But my beloved had turned and was gone. (5:2-6a)*

And who was the beloved? Aha! The one who was:

*As fair as the moon, bright as the sun,  
As awesome and spectacular and terrifying  
As a whole army in full dress and carrying flowing  
banners. (6:10b)*

For such words offered to us to express and enrich our sexuality by the *Song of Songs*, we sing and say again, “Hallelujah!”

And while not a guidebook, not a textbook, not a rulebook, the *Song of Songs* also portrays what good and, yes, what great sex is, beyond its pleasure, the pleasure enhanced by words, spoken and unspoken.

That is—irrespective of gender or orientation, irrespective of economic or social class, irrespective of physical condition—this book of poems teaches us that good and great sex also essentially includes mutuality, consent, commitment, intimacy, vulnerability, love, and, yes, justice—justice in the sense of the right relations that mutual love can bring to bloom interpersonally and in the wider spheres of human life.

And, by implication then, this collection of poems, reveals to us what bad or sinful sex involves: double standards, coercion, abuse, carelessness, disregard of the other, self-centeredness, injustice—relations out-of-whack, relations out of good and creative order, relations that distort and abuse power.

Hallelujah for what we learn from this hymnbook!

And one more thing this *Song of Songs* gives us: the affirmation that sex has both its intensely private and its public character—that it must, necessarily, express itself in

secret and that it must also be allowed to be seen publicly, as a witness, as a disclosure, as a revelation of what is essentially true about our divinely-given creaturliness and our divinely given humanity. In both its private and public modes, then, sex is *sacramental* in that it captures what is true and authentic about all that is in the intensity and density of sex’s particularity.

Hallelujah! We probably ought not to simply say it but we should instead sing its melodic themes in harmonious, triumphant, and major chords.

But there is a second “*Hallelujah*” that’s been given to us this morning. A second and a different “*Hallelujah*.” Not ancient but contemporary, at least relatively so.

Oh yes, there are some elements of this second “*Hallelujah*” that are in keeping with the *Song of Songs*—of a time, for example, when one lover let the other know “*what was really going on below*” and when one lover moved in the other, “*And the holy dove was moving too, And every breath we drew was Hallelujah.*”

Vivid stuff, like the *Song of Songs*.

But in this second song, those wondrous feelings and those vivid words are only memories, not expressions of current sexual experience.

Now it’s a different story. Not the holy dove but a question of whether there is a god at all, let alone a god of love, since the lover tells us that all he (or she) ever learned from love “*was how to shoot somebody who outdrew you.*”

*It’s not a cry that you hear at night*

*It’s not somebody who’s seen the light*

*No...*

*It’s a cold and it’s a broken Hallelujah.*

*Baby I’ve been here before*

*I’ve seen this room and I’ve walked the floor*

*You know I used to live alone before I knew you.*

*And I’ve seen your flag on the marble arch*

*And love is not a victory march*

*It’s a cold and it’s a broken Hallelujah.*

How strikingly *different*, in its vividness, from the *Song of Songs*.

So which one will we choose? Which one will we embrace this day? Which one will we make our own this hour?

We still need to appreciate what it's like to first fall in love, to anticipate what might yet be for falling in love again.

Reflexively, my guess is, we opt immediately for the ancient text, not just because it's scripture—and seemingly redemptive scripture at that, given all the other sexually-negative teachings in so much of the so-called holy books. But we also reflexively choose it because we think we ought to, because we're called to be religious leaders, and we think it's our calling to point to this ancient text as a way of redeeming the lives, the sexual lives, of those we are called to serve.

We reflexively embrace the *Song of Songs*.

But how true is that ancient text to our own experience?

How true was it to total lives of those young lovers as they moved through the rest of their lives, from enchantment and exploration, to engagement and marriage, to family life with children, to becoming accustomed to the all-too-familiar, to being tempted by something or someone new, to growing older and feebler, to losing the sense of sight and smell and, yes, of sex, to moving toward death?

And how true and relevant is it to what we experience in our intimate relations throughout most of the stages of our lives—strained and tested, faithful and straying, sentimental and hardened?

Don't get me wrong. We still need to say and sing "hallelujah" when we read and hear the words and rhythms of the *Song of Songs*. We still need it to appreciate what it's like to first fall in love, to anticipate what might yet be for falling in love again. We still need it to find the right words for sexual love wherever we are in life's journey. We still need it as a guide to what constitute good and even great sex, good and great love.

But the *Song of Songs*, many of us learn, represents the exceptional. Yes, it tells us something about who we are essentially and who God is essentially, but it doesn't help much with our fallenness or even our redemption from that fallenness. I personally even question whether it sufficiently portrays, by implication, the sacred, the divine, the holy.

To be sure, it corrects an understanding of the creation, of humanity, and of God that has redemption achieved by a rigid adherence to an arbitrary set of rules. But it replaces that understanding with another set of unachievable ideals—ideals that we can only approach at our best moments but cannot sustain, and ideals that aren't all that

faithful to what we know of the divine in the totality of the narratives of our scriptures.

As my friend and colleague, David Gregg, suggested to me: "The *Song of Songs*, it turns out, is not so good or not so helpful for sinners; just for saints."

Cohen's "Hallelujah" comes closer—closer to the reality we experience in most of our lives and in the experience of those we serve. Cohen even comes closer to the god of our holy texts, when we allow those scriptures to be disclosive of what the divine is, what the divine experiences, what the divine does: a god who knows disappointment, a god who experiences separation, a god who feels coldness, and god who knows brokenness, and yet a god who, despite all that, persists in singing "hallelujah" about the creation and humanity within that creation.

Faith and leadership in faith communities has to do with an openness to hear and learn and play a secret chord that, as a fallen David found, pleases the Lord. Even when baffled by that chord, as a fallen David learned, it strikes what is authentic about life—not all in a major key, but one that goes like this: "the fourth, the fifth, the minor fall, the major lift."

Then we might be able to sing:

I did my best, it wasn't much

I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch

I've told the truth, I didn't come to fool you

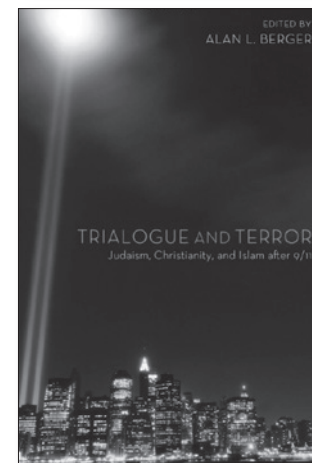
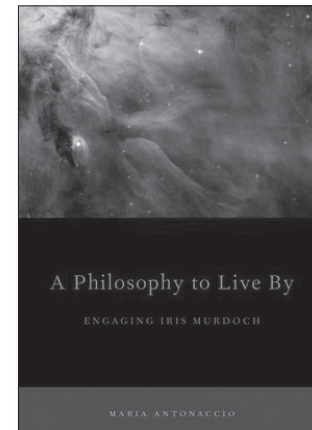
And even though it all went wrong

I'll stand before the Lord of Song

With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. ❖

# Alumni News



**Maria Antonaccio**, AM 1985, PHD 1996, has been appointed Presidential Professor of Religion at Bucknell University. Her most recent book, *A Philosophy to Live By: Engaging Iris Murdoch* (Oxford University Press), was published in 2012.

**Daniel Bannoura**, AM 2013, is now at the Bethlehem Study Center in Beit Sahour, The West Bank, Israel.

**Alan L. Berger**, AM 1970, Raddock Family Eminent Scholar Chair for Holocaust Studies at Florida Atlanta University, is the editor of *Trialogue and Terror: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam after 9/11* (Cascade Books, 2012). The volume addresses the promise and peril of post-9/11 interfaith dialogue. In fifteen essays, distinguished scholars of different faiths and divergent world views guide readers toward an informed understanding of the role of religion and the basic teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks on the United States.

**Ryan Brizendine**, AM 2013, will be continuing his studies at Yale University.

**Sam Brody**, PhD 2013, will be Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Judaic Studies at the University of Cincinnati.

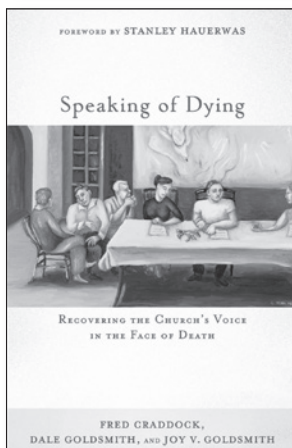
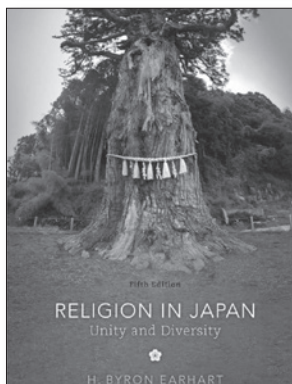
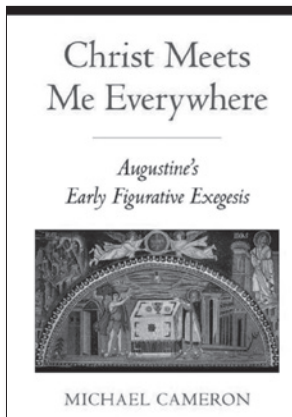
**Michael Cameron**, PhD 1996, has published *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, Oxford University Press, 2012). The book is the subject of a joint session of the AAR's Augustine and Augustinianisms Group and the SBL's History of Interpretation Section at the 2013 annual meeting in Baltimore. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Portland in Oregon.

**Jacqueline Clark**, MDiv 2012, is now Assistant Rector at St. Elizabeth's Church in Sudbury, Massachusetts.

**McKinna Daugherty**, MDiv 2013, is now Minister in Residence at Central Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky.

**H. Byron Earhart**, PhD 1965, has just published the fifth edition of *Religion in Japan: Unity and Diversity* (Cengage Learning, 2013). This standard text explores religion in Japan as a complex tapestry of different religious strands, reflecting both the unity and diversity of Japanese culture, a theme Earhart pioneered in the first edition (1969) of this classic book. Tracing the development of religious traditions from the prehistoric era through modern times, Earhart explores the vital influence of Shinto, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and folk religion. This new edition updates the description and interpretation of the entire history of religion in Japan in light of the latest developments in the field.





**Jon Ebel**, AM 1999, PhD 2004, was awarded tenure at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign and is now Associate Professor of American Religion. He was also awarded the Helen Corley Petit prize for the best tenure dossier in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Topher Elderkin**, MDiv 2013, is also a Chaplain Resident with Presence Health Systems and working at Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center, all in Chicago.

**Yvonne Gilmore**, MDiv 2006, has been named Associate Dean of Disciples Divinity House at The University of Chicago.

**Thandiwe Gobledale**, MDiv 2013, was ordained a minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on August 25, 2013, at First Christian Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. She is now Clinical Pastoral Education Resident Chaplain at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois.

**Dale Goldsmith**, AM 1964, PhD 1973, recently published *Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church's Voice in the Face of Death* (Brazos Press, 2012), with coauthors Fred Craddock and Joy V. Goldsmith. The book critiques the failure of Christians to communicate healthily about dying and reminds the church of scriptural, Christological, and pastoral resources to strengthen its ministry to the dying.

**Celeste Groff**, MDiv 2013, is now interim director of spiritual care for the Gilead Ministry of Hyde Park Union Church at Jackson Park Hospital.

**Kelly Hayes**, AM 1996, PhD 2004, joined the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro as a visiting professor for fall 2012, in conjunction with a Fulbright grant for U.S. scholars. As part of her Fulbright project, she is researching the Valley of the Dawn, a new Brazilian religion founded in 1968. She is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis.

**C. David Hein**, AM 1977, has published three articles that deal with religion and ethics during the Second World War: “In War for Peace: General George C. Marshall’s Core Convictions and Ethical Leadership,” *Touchstone* 26, no. 2 (March 2013): 41–48; “Counterpoint to Combat: The Education of Airborne Commander James M. Gavin,” *Army* 63, no. 7 (July 2013): 49–52; and “Vulnerable: HMS *Prince of Wales* in 1941,” *Journal of Military History* 77, no. 3 (July 2013): 955–89.

**Susan Hill**, AM 1986, PhD 1993, has been named Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, at the University of Northern Iowa, where she is also Professor of Religion.

**John O. Hodges**, PhD 1980, has recently published *Delta Fragments: The Recollections of a Sharecropper's Son* (The University of Tennessee Press, June 2013). The book which is part autobiography and part critical essay examines Hodges’ early life growing up in the Mississippi Delta town of Greenwood, where he was the son of black sharecroppers and attended segregated schools. He is now Associate Professor Emeritus in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

**John Howell**, PhD 2013, is now Coordinator for Recruiting and Admissions at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

**Jennifer G. Jesse**, PhD 1997, has published *William Blake's Religious Vision: There's a Methodism in his Madness* (Lexington Books, 2013). She currently serves as chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Truman State University.

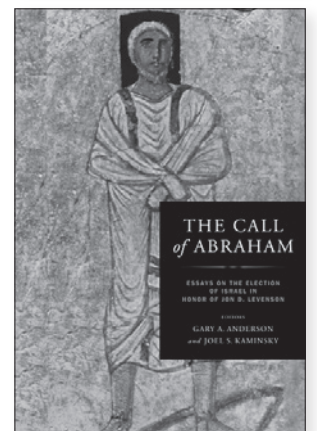
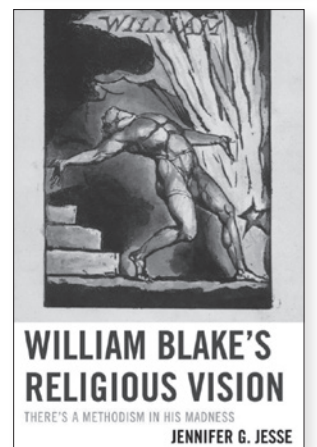
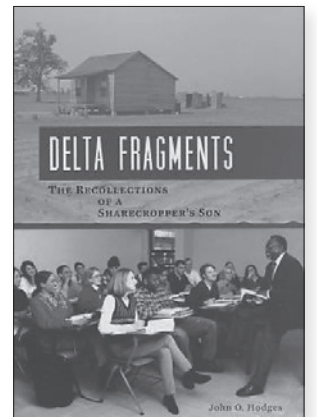
**Sandhya Jha**, MDiv 2005, is now Director of the Oakland Peace Center and Director of Interfaith Programs for the East Bay Housing Organization in Oakland, California.

**Joel Kaminsky**, AM 1984, PhD 1993, recently co-edited (with Gary Anderson) an anthology in honor of Jon D. Levenson’s 65th birthday. Professor Levenson, currently the Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies at Harvard, taught Hebrew Bible at the University of Chicago Divinity School for much of the 1980’s. The book is entitled *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). This volume contains contributions from a number of Divinity School graduates including Kevin Madigan (Harvard Divinity School), Mark Reasoner (Marian University), Brooks Schramm (Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg), and Joel Kaminsky (Smith College).

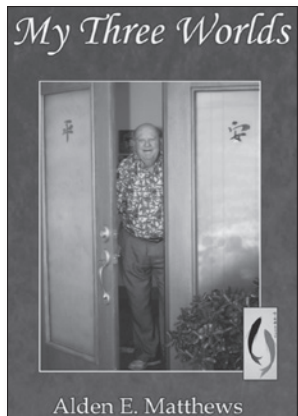
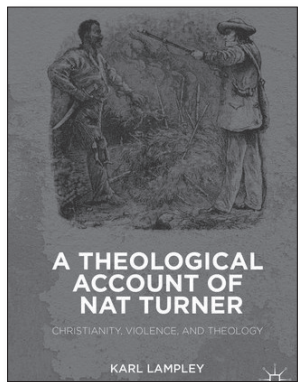
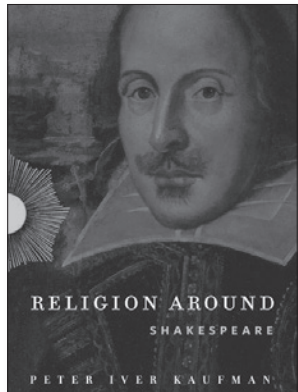
**Peter Iver Kaufman**, AM 1973, PhD 1975, published two new books in 2013: The edited volume *Leadership and Elizabethan Culture*, and the monograph *Religion Around Shakespeare*. Professor Kaufman was also voted “Faculty Member of the Year” by the student government at the University of Richmond as well as “University Distinguished Educator” by a committee of his colleagues and alumni.

**James A. Kelhoffer**, AM 1996, PhD 1999, has moved from Saint Louis University (Missouri) to the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University (Sweden), where he was appointed Professor of New Testament Exegesis. He has published a monograph on persecution and identity formation utilizing Bourdieusian theory: *Persecution, Persuasion and Power: Readiness to Withstand Hardship as a Corroboration of Legitimacy in the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). He also edited, with fellow alumni **Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll** (PhD 2005) and **Paul A. Holloway** (PhD 1998), *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), a volume honoring former Divinity School professor **Adela Yarbro Collins**. He also edited, with Jörg Frey and Franz Tóth, *Die Johannesapokalypse: Kontexte—Konzepte—Rezeption* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012). Kelhoffer has served, with Divinity School professor **Hans-Josef Klauck** inter alii, as an associate editor (Mitherausgeber) for the monograph series *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* (Verlag Mohr Siebeck) since 2011.

**Robert H. Keller**, BD 1961, MA 1962, PhD 1967, Professor Emeritus at Western Washington University, attended the Seventh Annual Vine Deloria Indigenous Studies Symposium at the Lummi Campus of Northwest Indian College in July, 2012. There he gave a presentation recounting his forty-year friendship with the American Indian author, theologian, historian, and activist Vine Deloria, Jr. Keller also recently completed a two-year lecture program for Humanities Washington on the topic “Reconciling the Past: Japanese-American Removal in World War II.”







**Jennifer Kottler**, MDiv 2003, has founded SEED (Spiritual Energy Engagement and Direction) to provide professional life and leadership coaching services to individuals, organizations, and faith communities who are seeking to transform the way they are working.

**Karl Lampley**, PhD 2012, has just published *A Theological Account of Nat Turner: Christianity, Violence, and Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). He is currently working as an adjunct faculty lecturer at Santa Clara University in California and serving in ministry at Downs Memorial United Methodist Church in Oakland, California while seeking ordination in the United Methodist Church.

**James W. Lewis**, PhD 1987, who served as Dean of Students at the Divinity School from 1980–1991, retired as Executive Director of the Louisville Institute at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in the summer of 2012. Lewis was the Institute’s first Executive Director and served for twenty years, developing a national center for the support of research and leadership education on North American religion. During that time, the work of the institute supported through grants at least 141 dissertations, 182 books, and 315 books.

**Dr. Mark Mattes**, PhD 1995, edited *Twentieth-Century Lutheran Theologians*, which has now been published by Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

**Alden E. Matthews**, BD 1946, published his autobiography, *My Three Worlds*, exploring themes of Christian missions in the twentieth century in Japan and China.

**Tessa McBrayer**, MDiv 2013, is now Chaplain Resident with Presence Health Systems and working at St. Joseph Hospital in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago.

**Dan McKanan**, PhD 1998, has published *Prophetic Encounters: Religion and the American Radical Tradition*, with Beacon press. In it, McKanan challenges simple distinctions between “religious” and “secular” activism, showing that religious beliefs and practices have been integral to every American movement promoting liberty, equality, and solidarity. He is Ralph Waldo Emerson Unitarian Universalist Association Senior Lecturer at Harvard Divinity School.

**Richard B. Miller**, PhD 1985, is professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University and Director of the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions. He was named Provost Professor and awarded the 2011 Tracy Sonneborn prize. His book *Terror, Religion, and Liberal Thought* (Columbia, 2010) was selected as a 2011 *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title.

**Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore**, AM 1980, PhD 1986, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Pastoral Theology at Vanderbilt University, has completed two publications with support of a sabbatical grant for researchers from the Louisville institute. The titles are *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Eerdmans, 2012) and *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Wiley/Blackwell, 2012). She also recently completed her tenure as president of The International Academy of Practical Theology, where she served from 2009–2011.

**Dina Mostafa**, AM 2013, does legal research with Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) in Cairo, Egypt. PILPG is a global pro bono law firm that provides legal assistance to states and governments with the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements, the drafting of post-conflict constitutions, and the creation and operation of war crimes tribunals. In Egypt, it is primarily focused on providing consultation with regards to constitutional and legislative drafting. Thus, she is helping to draft her country’s new constitution.

**Joshua Oxley**, MDiv 2013, is the new Program Administrator for the International Studies program in the College at the University of Chicago.

**Aristotle Papanikolaou**, PhD 1998, was appointed the Archbishop Demetrios Chair of Orthodox Theology and Culture at Fordham University.

**Don Pittman**, PhD 1987, retired from Phillips Theological Seminary as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean and as the William Tabbernee Professor of the History of Religions.

**Robert Randall**, AM 1969, PhD 1973, has published a new e-book entitled *The Thinking Ministry of Jesus: Casting Out Logs for Renewing Church Life*. His new website is <http://churchpsychology.org/blog/>.

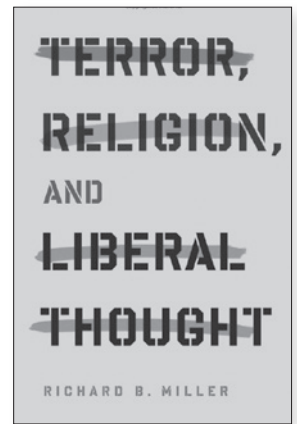
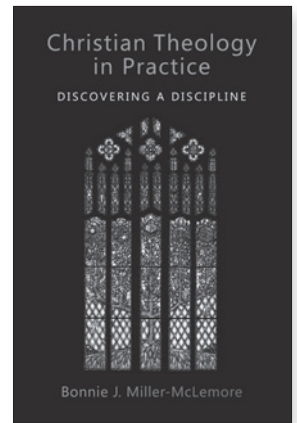
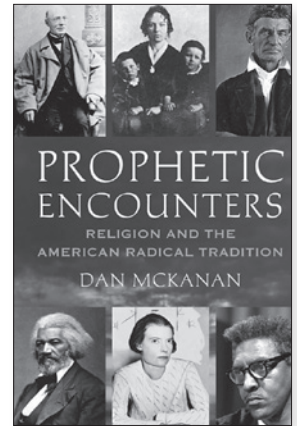
**Susan A. Ross**, AM 1976, PhD 1982, Professor and Chair of the Department of Theology at Loyola University Chicago, assumed the presidency of the Catholic Theological Society of America in June, 2012. Additionally, her book *Anthropology: Seeking Light and Beauty* was published by Liturgical press in May 2012. Ross also serves on the Board of Trustees of Manhattanville College, where she did her undergraduate degree.

**William Vasilio Sotirovich**, AM 1957, recently had his book *Grotius Universe: Divine Law and A Quest for Harmony* enter a second edition in 2013. The second edition marks the birth of the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583) and his contributions to international law. The book emphasizes the interrelationship between theology and jurisprudence in Grotius’ works, while also including discussions of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights.

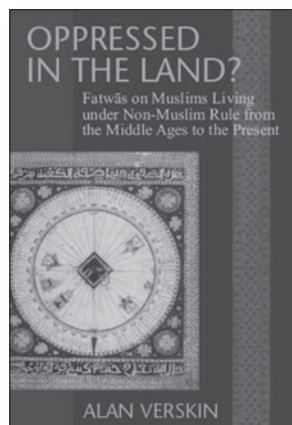
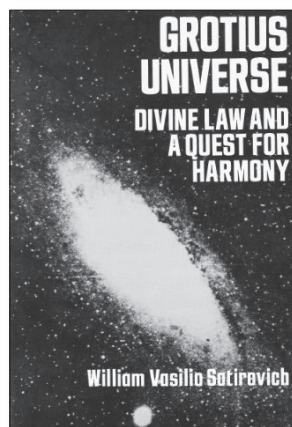
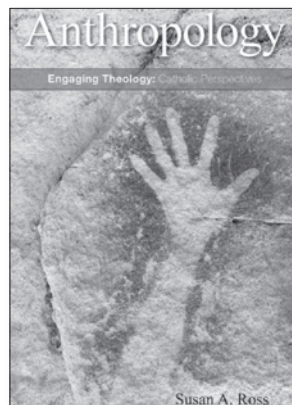
**Wesley Sun**, MDiv 2008, is now Director of Field Education and Community Engagement at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

**Michael Turner**, PhD 2013, will be a part-time instructor at Georgia Gwinnett College in Lawrenceville, Georgia.

**Alexis Vaughan**, MDiv 2012, was ordained on September 14, 2014, and is now the Associate Minister for Christian Education at Westmoreland Congregational UCC in Bethesda, Maryland.







**Alan Verskin**, AM 2004, published *Oppressed in the Land? Fatwas on Muslims Living under Non-Muslim Rule from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2013). The book showcases diverse reflections by major Muslim thinkers on the political, social, and theological ramifications of living in countries with non-Muslim governments. Verskin is Assistant Professor of Islamic and Mediterranean Studies at the University of Rhode Island.

**Richard Wiebe**, AM 1976, was appointed Associate Professor of Philosophy at Fresno Pacific University in 2010. He has recently published: "The Metaphysics of Forest Fires: An Annotated Review of the Literature," in *Pacific Journal*, vol. 2, 2011. Professor Wiebe gave several public lectures as a researcher in Navajo philosophy at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff, and he routinely gives lectures on important American environmental philosophers to the Sierra Club.

**Christian Williams**, MDiv 2013, is working on a PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.

## Losses

**Donald G. Nelson**, BD 1962, has died of lymphoma. He died in 2004 at the age of sixty-seven.

He chose the Divinity School after two years at Wheaton College. After graduating he served at Glendale Baptist Church in Madison and First Baptist Church of Beaver Dam, both in Wisconsin. He also served as a prison chaplain at the Waupan Correctional Institute, and as the Executive Director of Volunteers in Probation, a Madison-based nonprofit that offered friendships to recently probated criminals. During several years when he worked a secular job, he somehow always found time to do pulpit supply or interims at sundry small churches. He finished his career at the UCC Church of Belleville and Paoli, where he served for eighteen years.

Reverend Nelson was survived by his former spouse, Vicky Eby, his children Eric Nelson and Brian Nelson, and his brother Robert Nelson (also an alum). He was buried in Belleville, Wisconsin. His greatest wish was to have grandchildren. His wish has now been fulfilled with four of them: Aimee and Karina Nelson (Eric) and Ian and Isaac Nelson (Brian).

# Alumni News Information

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Name / Preferred Form of Address (Ms., Dr., Rev., etc.)

Divinity School degree/s and year/s received

Address (only if new)

E-mail address

School (and Department) or Organization

Professional Title

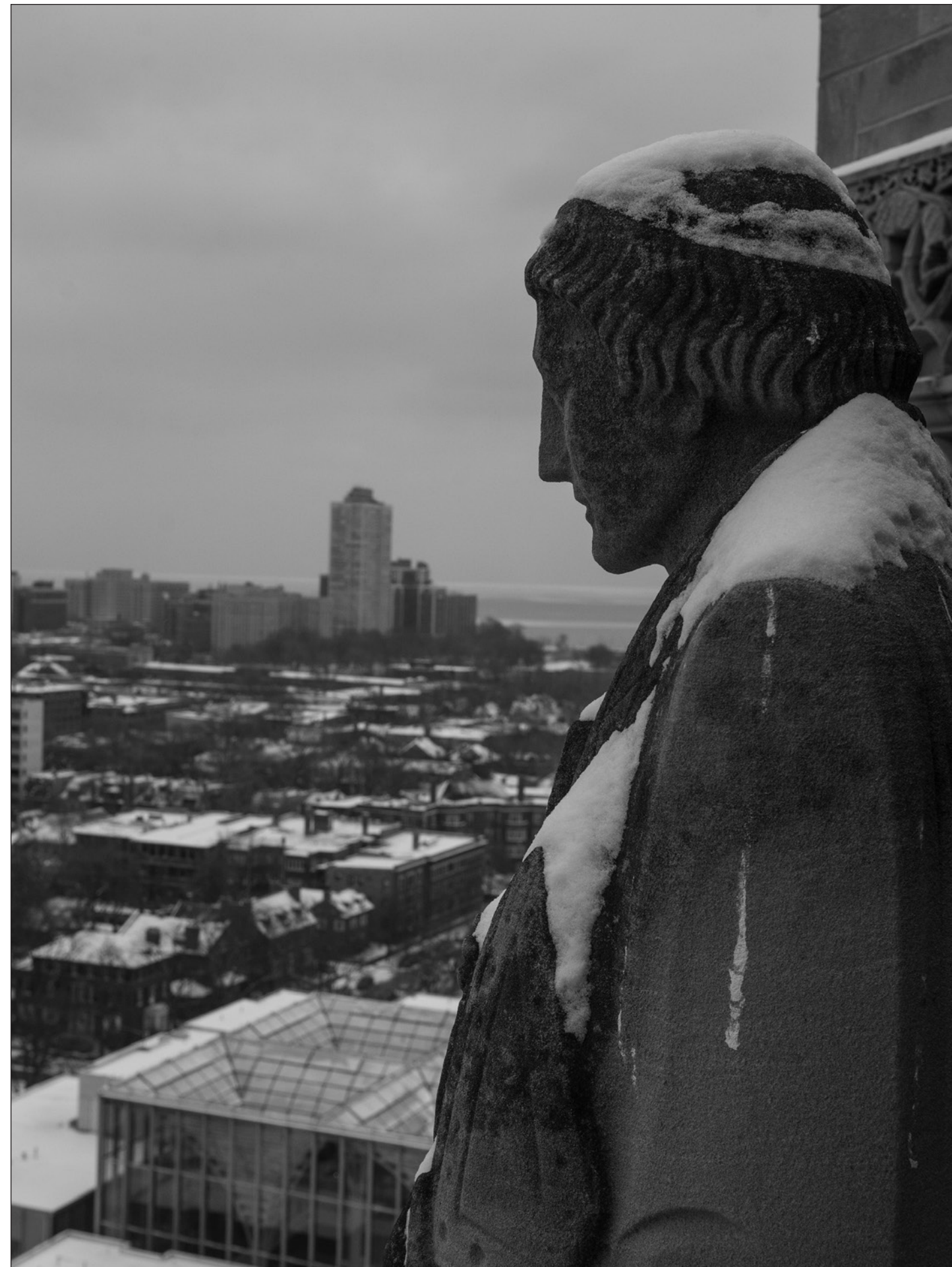
Recent professional news you would like noted in the next issue of *Criterion*, e.g., new position, promotion, book, grant. (Please include bibliographic information on publications.)

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