The phrase "intelligent design" forcefully entered the nation's vocabulary last autumn, focused particularly by the Fitzmiller case in Dover, Pennsylvania. Formulated in the mid-1990s by the Discovery Institute in Seattle, Washington, "intelligent design" denotes the claim that the study of biological evolution cannot but imply a design and, behind it, a Designer. Proponents of the claim argue that teachers of evolution are far more often than not "neo-Darwinists" who explicitly exclude such an implication, and that it is therefore necessary to assure its insertion by law into biology curricula across the country. Biologists and others demur. Hence the Fitzmiller case.

This particular case, one example of the many instances in which our courts talk about religion, usefully underscores the range of work undertaken in the Divinity School. I suggest that we can describe this in terms of functions that parts of the School's faculty and curriculum perform. The first function is informational. We can offer historical perspective. The student of American religion looks at Fitzmiller and knows immediately that we have been here before, perhaps most strikingly in the 1981 case adjudicated in Little Rock, Arkansas: McClean et al. v. the Arkansas School Board. In this earlier case, advocates of "creation science" argued that the biblical account of the origins of the world should be taught in conjunction with "evolution science" in the biology curricula of Arkansas' public schools.

While the Discovery Institute works diligently to distinguish its program from that of the advocates of creation science, the aims of intelligent design in fact parallel creation science—the introduction of divine causation into biology classrooms—and in both cases the courts dismissed the aim as a violation of the First Amendment's establishment clause. Judge John Jones III's written decision of the First Amendment's establishment clause. Judge John Jones III's written decision in Fitzmiller clearly posits such a connection (in the press, perhaps due to the focus on the drama of the specific story, this received little attention). This is a phenomenon of American religion, with a history extending at least to the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925.

The second function is theological and philosophical. The phrase "intelligent design" aligns itself with one of the oldest and most popular arguments in the Christian tradition for the existence of God...
Faculty News and Notes

Elshtain Delivers Gifford Lectures

Jean Bethke Elshtain, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the Divinity School, was recently chosen for one of the most prestigious theological honors in the world, delivering the 2005–06 Gifford Lectures in Scotland.

With her selection, Elshtain joins the illustrious ranks of past Gifford lecturers, which include such prominent figures as William James, John Dewey, and Hannah Arendt, as well as Divinity School colleagues David Tracy, Martha Nussbaum, and Paul Ricoeur.

This also marks a notable milestone for the Divinity School, as Elshtain makes the fourth faculty member to be chosen for this honor—more than any other college or university. A major political philosopher and social thinker whose work deals with the morality of American political convictions, Elshtain’s lectures focus on the topic of sovereignty, addressing the philosophical, theological, and historical concepts of sovereign God, sovereign state, and sovereign self with regard to their fates in the contemporary world.

Hopkins Forms International Association

Dwight N. Hopkins, Professor of Theology in the Divinity School, has established the International Association on Black Religions and Spiritualities (IABRS). The Association’s steering committee, comprising twenty-two delegates from eleven countries, aims to build an international network of black peoples whose primary concerns revolve around issues of justice and human dignity for darker-skin communities and countries worldwide. With membership drawn from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, England, and the United States, the IABRS strives to inspire hope that a better world is possible—a world where cooperation, peaceful relations, and joint action programs rule. It thus focuses on a spirituality of justice, compassion, education, and advocacy.

To model new, collective human interactions, the IABRS combines half female and half male participation at all levels of the international network, while including young people in its activities in order to pass on the wisdom of the older generations. IABRS enjoys the presence of practitioners and academics, and works in solidarity with other marginalized movements to impact policies that will be helpful for poor people.

Mitchell Receives National Leadership Grant

The Goodspeed New Testament Manuscript Collection at the University of Chicago Library has received a National Leadership Grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services to support the digitizing of pieces from its collection.

The project will produce a digital collection of sixty-five Greek, Syriac, Ethiopian, Armenian, Arabic, and Latin manuscripts dating from the seventh to the nineteenth centuries. Created in many of the key production centers of Asia Minor, the Balkans, Armenia, and North Africa, these resources are seriously understudied because access is currently limited to individual, on-site consultation.

The project to make the collection available electronically began with a course on the Gospel of Mark taught by Margaret Mitchell, Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature in the Divinity School, in Spring 2004. For this course, MS 965 of the Rockefeller McCormick New Testament and MS 972 of the Archaic Mark from the Goodspeed Collection were digitized as high-quality images and accessed by students online. Since then, Professor Mitchell has championed the project in her teaching and scholarship and remained a key member of the group.

The digital collection project will allow, free to the public, comparative and cross-cultural textual and iconographic research through open source interfaces for searching, browsing, page turning, and zooming in and out of high-resolution images.

Mitchell Receives National Leadership Grant

Roger Haight Named Alumnus of the Year

The Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union has named Roger Haight, S.J., the Divinity School’s Alumnus of the Year for 2006. Haight is a member of the Jesuit Order, a member of the American Theological Society and a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Haight came to the Divinity School in 1967, after doing the equivalent of an M.Div. at Woodstock College in Maryland. He earned an M.A. in 1969 and a Ph.D. in 1973, with a thesis on Roman Catholic Modernism directed by David Tracy.

Since graduation, Haight has taught in several Jesuit faculties of theology in Manila, Chicago, Toronto, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. He participated in the gradual transformation of these schools from closed seminars for Jesuits to open urban centers for education in theology and training for ministry. A consistent theme in all of the schools in which he has taught has been an application of a high degree of academic integrity to the formation of the minister in today’s church. He is currently a visiting professor in historical and systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Haight’s books have dealt with basic Christian doctrines about sin and grace, Jesus Christ, and the church. He has also engaged the foundations of theology and offered a systematic interpretation of liberation theology.

Haight’s work in Christology, Jesus Symbol of God, won first prize for an outstanding work in Christian theology in 2000 from the Catholic Press Association, and a notification that it does not meet the standards of Roman Catholic theology from the Vatican’s Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in 2005.

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Haight is currently at work on the third volume of Christian Community in History, subtitled Ecclesial Existence. The first two volumes traced the history of ecclesiology; the second volume also identified and implicitly compared seven distinct ecclesiologies that have developed since the Reformation. The last volume will propose a transdenominational description of a Christian ecclesial anthropology modeled on the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The work is intended to relativize tribal ecclesiology and take seriously what Christians share in common, ecclesiastically.

Haight delivered his Alumnus of the Year address, “How My Mind Was Ruined, or Saved: Later Reflections of a Nice Catholic Boy Who Came to the Divinity School in 1967,” at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 27, in Swift Lecture Hall. A reception followed.

Molly Bartlett Joins the Community Renewal Society

Molly Bartlett, the Divinity School’s Associate Dean for External Relations, has left the Divinity School after seven years of exemplary service to accept an appointment as the Director of Development at the Community Renewal Society in Chicago.

Founded in 1882 by laypersons and clergy of the Congregational Church (predecessor of the United Church of Christ), the Community Renewal Society is a faith-based social justice organization serving metropolitan Chicago. The Community Renewal Society seeks to renew communities by bringing individuals and organizations together across racial, class, denominational, and faith lines.

As only the third full-time development officer in its history, Bartlett oversaw the first two-thirds of the School’s most ambitious fund-raising campaign, during which just over $10,000,000 was raised, including major gifts to student financial support, especially for the Chicago Forum in the Martin Marty Center. In addition, she created the Conversations in Divinity quarterly lecture series at the Chicago Cultural Center, and revamped both the membership and the protocol for the School’s Visiting Committee.

“It has been a special pleasure to work with Molly,” said Dean Rosengarten, “and we both lament her departure and wish her every success at the Community Renewal Society. The School has benefited from her tact, her efficiency, and her class, and is truly enhanced for the work she did here.”
Shake Day isn’t the quads’ only mid-week bargain. For a three-course meal and food for thought, try lunch at the Divinity School. Beany Malone would have relished the harvest-and-Halloween menu dished up by the Divinity School Wednesday Lunch cooking crew in late October: pear and goat cheese salad, stuffed squash with hazelnuts and cranberries, and miniature cupcakes topped with bright-orange icing and Halloween candies.

Beany (née Catherine), the youngest of the four motherless Malones of Denver, is the heroine of Lenora Mattingly Weber’s series for teenage girls, and she spends much of the series (the first book appeared in 1943, the last in 1969) worrying about what to cook for dinner and if her family will like it. Beany is also argued Maureen Corrigan, longtime book critic for NPR’s Fresh Air and author of the new literary memoir Leave Me Alone, I’m Reading—a secular martyr, placed with the nuns’ seal of approval on Corrigan’s grammar-school reading list. Which is why Beany turned up in a discussion titled “What Catholic Martyr Stories Taught Me about Getting to Heaven—and Getting Even.”

Corrigan’s talk was one of 23 programs scheduled this year in the weekly offering of food and conversation officially known as the Wednesday Community Luncheon. Following on the heels of ecumenical services in Bond Chapel, the Swift Common Room lunches have been going strong for decades.

Back to Beany as martyr

Corrigan, who also teaches literature at Georgetown University, argued that the “Irish Catholic stoicism” in Beany’s life trajectory—including the moment when the handsome young man from whom she expects a marriage proposal announces his decision to become a priest—is fueled by “the tension between self-fulfillment and offering it up at the altar of self-sacrifice.

The Beany books figure in Leave Me Alone, I’m Reading, a project for which Corrigan “decided to give myself permission to just talk about books that had stayed with me.” And, yes, she said during the Q&A, the books’ messages stayed with her, to “mixed” effect: “They toughened me to endure stuff that I would have otherwise more wisely gotten out of much sooner.”

—Mary Ruth Yoe
An Interview with Teresa Hord Owens

Teresa Hord Owens began her tenure as Dean of Students in the Divinity School in the summer of 2005. A 2003 M.Div. graduate, Owens brings over twenty years of experience in information technology and administration to her position. She is also an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**CIRCA: How would you characterize your overall vision for the position of Dean of Students?**

**THO:** The position of Dean of Students should be. I think, one of dual advocacy: as Dean of Students, I advocate for students within the Divinity School and in the context of the University, and I advocate for the stated goals, programs, and policies of the Divinity School and the University with students. On the one hand, the Dean of Students must have the confidence of the administration and faculty that academic and administrative policies will be clearly and fairly communicated and applied. Students must also have confidence that the Dean of Students will not only be fair and consistent, but will wisely use discretion to ensure that the best interests of students are appropriately served. It is important to me to have the confidence and respect of both faculty and students so that I can honor both advocacy roles. When policy must prevail against a student’s wishes, it is that confidence that will engender continued respect. When allowable exceptions are made, it is once again confidence in my commitment to both the institution and its students that will shape response to any decisions made. That confidence is built by a commitment to ongoing communication with students and faculty, both individually and collectively.

Administration and communication are two key functions of the Dean of Students’ office. Prior to my theological education, and until accepting this appointment, I spent twenty-three years in the field of information technology. Our student body is extremely technically savvy, and we want to do what we can to leverage technology in order to facilitate spiritual growth and formation for ministry, a small group ministry designed to help people feel included among our faculty.

**CIRCA:** What are your impressions of the Divinity School from the vantage point of returning after having been a student here, and after some time away?

**THO:** The Divinity School remains, by and large, the same institution I attended. While a few professors have retired, there are many who remember me as a student, and this has helped my transition. I am impressed by the younger faculty members that have been appointed recently, both in terms of their scholarship and their commitment to teaching and advising. From a student’s perspective, faculty can sometimes seem closed to new ideas, or isolated by their own scholarship. However, I have observed that, by and large, our faculty is committed to ensuring that the structure and content of the curriculum remain effective and relevant, and that the standards of scholarship for which the Divinity School is known and respected are maintained. Most importantly, they are willing to entertain change, and continue to question old assumptions and processes. There are increasing numbers of people from many professions who contact us to inquire about pursuing studies in religion out of a strong personal interest. We will have to continue to discern our role as religion continues to be at the center of the public square, extending far beyond the walls of the academy and church. Events such as the weekly Wednesday Community Lunch are now regularly attended by individuals from across the University community, repositioning Swift Hall as a hub of conversation across many disciplines.

As an M.Div. alumna, I now sit in support of students as they preach and lead the liturgy in Bond Chapel, remembering my own student sermons in that pulpit. As a former corporate executive who has been interviewed and also conducted interviews on many occasions, I enjoy counseling Ph.D. students who are about to enter the job market. The ability to present effectively one’s expertise and experience is one that is required in any discipline. I was an older student, and had worked for many years before coming to the Divinity School. Many of our students are just beginning the transition from student to professional, and I find that my experience serves them well as we discuss educational goals and career plans.

**CIRCA:** Could you talk a bit about your extensive work in the church?

**THO:** I am an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and my husband serves as minister of music and arts at the Salem Baptist Church of Chicago. In addition to preaching both at Salem and elsewhere around Chicago and the country, I serve as Director of Salem’s Circle of Hope ministry, a small group ministry designed to facilitate spiritual growth and formation for adults. Salem has nearly 20,000 members. Our “Circles of Hope” consist of five to ten members who meet either weekly or monthly. The Circles discuss lessons based on previous sermon topics, and make time for socializing as well. These Circles help people feel intimately connected, despite the large church membership. I am responsible for curriculum for the Circle meetings, as well as leadership development for the Circle leaders. This position combines pastoral care and my experience in leadership development in the secular realm, and allows me to develop relevant curricula within the church. I also teach in a 14-week curriculum for Salem’s new members, 60 percent of whom are new converts to Christianity. The new members’ course exposes them to the foundational Christian faith, encourages them to ask questions as they grapple with living out their faith, and allows them to form relationships with others in the church. I am also the coordinator of the drama ministry. My husband and I have collaborated on several musical productions. The Dean of Students is known and respected are maintained. Most importantly, they are willing to entertain change, and continue to question old assumptions and processes. There are increasing numbers of people from many professions who contact us to inquire about pursuing studies in religion out of a strong personal interest. We will have to continue to discern our role as religion continues to be at the center of the public square, extending far beyond the walls of the academy and church. Events such as the weekly Wednesday Community Lunch are now regularly attended by individuals from across the University community, repositioning Swift Hall as a hub of conversation across many disciplines. As an M.Div. alumna, I now sit in support of students as they preach and lead the liturgy in Bond Chapel, remembering my own student sermons in that pulpit. As a former corporate executive who has been interviewed and also conducted interviews on many occasions, I enjoy counseling Ph.D. students who are about to enter the job market. The ability to present effectively one’s expertise and experience is one that is required in any discipline. I was an older student, and had worked for many years before coming to the Divinity School. Many of our students are just beginning the transition from student to professional, and I find that my experience serves them well as we discuss educational goals and career plans.

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Some people want to become pastors because they love God, or at least theology. Others want to become pastors because they want to make a difference in the world. Some want to become pastors for both reasons. On my more well-adjusted days, I think I belong in the latter category. And it was on one of those days I picked up an application form for Seminary Summer, a program for Interfaith Worker Justice, a workers-rights organization based in Chicago. M.Div. students serve two internships during their three-year program, one in a congregation, and the other in a setting of their choice. This reflection from second-year M.Div. John Flack, an ELCA Lutheran with many pastors in his family tree, demonstrates how internships can provide a significant—and useful—stretching of students’ awareness and understanding.

—Cynthia Lindner, Director of Ministry Studies

In most churches, people greet you with handshakes and smiles, whether or not they are really happy to see you. In the union office, you need to prove yourself or get lost. In the church, the staff takes a lot of time to make sure the new guy is comfortable, and they try gradually to acclimate him to the rhythm of the place. The union believes in the sink or swim method. My first day began at 7:00 a.m., walking the floors of the Hilton Towers on Michigan Avenue with Francine Jones, a housekeeper from the Hyatt pulled to organize workers in the Hilton. We had to convince workers to go to a rally supporting a strike at the Congress Hotel—or rather, Francine was going to convince people and I was going to introduce myself. That’s harder than it sounds.

There is, however, a method to the sink-or-swim madness. In the church, if you’re a new pastor or a new youth director, there is an automatic deference associated with the office. But as a summer intern, you’re nothing but an interesting outsider to workers who spend over forty hours a week trying to bring home their checks. And the best way to become an insider? Just being around, talking and fighting with the workers.

Those are the best skills for an organizer. Being around and talking shows that you are interested in the workers’ lives; fighting with them shows you care. In the academy we’re trained to dispute or argue, but not to fight. It also seems that M.Div.’s have a special responsibility to be nice and pleasant. We’re naturally good at relating and feeling, but perhaps not so good with confrontation. So when my supervisor told me I had to fight with the workers to show them I cared about them, it came as a shock, especially when he told me it was pastoral. “If you fight with them, they know the issue is important, and that it’s important that they’re involved,” he said. “If you don’t want to convince them, then it probably isn’t that important anyway—so why should they waste more time away from their families?”

Continued on back page

Ministry Program Update

Awareness for Ministry…through Internship

The M.Div. program at Chicago is well-known for its intellectual rigor, as the Divinity School is one of few schools in the country where M.A., Ph.D., and M.Div. students share faculty and classes. The program is also gaining increasing recognition for the depth and breadth of practical experience available in churches, hospitals, campus ministries and non-profit agencies throughout Chicago. M.Div. students serve two internships during their three-year program, one in a congregation, and the other in a setting of their choice. This reflection from second-year M.Div. John Flack, an ELCA Lutheran with many pastors in his family tree, demonstrates how internships can provide a significant—and useful—stretching of students’ awareness and understanding.

In most churches, people greet you with handshakes and smiles, whether or not they are really happy to see you. In the union office, you need to prove yourself or get lost.
The Martin Marty Center builds on a long-standing conviction of the Divinity School that the best and most innovative scholarship in religion emerges from sustained dialogue with the world outside the academy. In all of its projects, the Center aims to serve as a robust circulatory system that strengthens, deepens, and extends scholarly inquiry by moving it through the deliberating bodies of the students, faculty, and public. — Wendy Doniger, Director of the Marty Center

Marty Center News and Events

Marty Center Conferences

Theology Conference: Nature as Content and Condition of Theology

October 26 – 28, 2006

A two-year, cross-disciplinary project on the status of “nature,” inaugurated in October 2005 with a closed-door working group, will culminate with a public conference entitled “Without Nature? A New Condition for Theology.”

The program gathers leading natural and social scientists in concert with ethicists and theologians, wedding the concerns of environmental ethics and bioethics, as well as their social production in geography and anthropology. Together they stimulate second-order and cross-disciplinary reflection on the meaning of contemporary alterations to “nature.” At stake is the sustainability and ecology of western Christian religious discourse itself, given its historic reliance upon, and the present destabilization of, concepts of “nature” and/or “human nature.”

For more details about this conference and a complete list of participants, please visit http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/conferences/nature/index.shtml.

Wach, Eliade and the History of Religions

November 3 – 4, 2006

The 100th anniversary of the birth of Mircea Eliade will be in 2007, and 2005 was the 50th anniversary of the death of Joachim Wach. To evaluate the legacy of Eliade and Wach to the discipline of the history of religions, we have chosen the intermediary year, 2006, to hold a two-day conference to reflect upon their academic contributions and political lives in their social and historical contexts, and also the relationship between the works and the lives. The Martin Marty Center is the host and sponsor of the conference, with Wendy Doniger, Matthew Kapstein, and Christian Wedemeyer acting as organizers. There will be two keynote lectures, open to the public, one at 4:00 p.m. each day, as well as four seminars (of two papers each): two devoted to Eliade, one to Wach, and one to Wach and Eliade. The papers of the conference will later be published as a book.

Carlo Ginzburg, of the University of California at Los Angeles, will deliver the keynote on Eliade, and Hans Gerhard Kippenberg, of the Universität Bremen and the Max-Weber-Kolleg für kultur- und sozialwissenschaftliche Studien at Universität Erfurt, will deliver the keynote on Wach.

For more details, visit http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/conferences/wach_eliade/index.shtml
Martin Marty Center’s *Sightings*

Recent months have seen much activity for *Sightings*, the biweekly electronic publication of the Martin Marty Center. Maintaining *Sightings’* mission, the past year’s columns have included treatment of a wide variety of topics and approaches to religion’s role, for good and for ill, in public life.

Numerous articles dealt with aspects of the perennial *Sightings* topic of religion and politics, including such issues as religion in political rhetoric, religion in public schools, and the display of the Ten Commandments in courthouses. But *Sightings* also gathered a remarkable variety of columns analyzing the relations between religion and the broader culture, including the myth of the Nazi as portrayed in movies and deployed in chauvinistic, the pagan dimensions of baseball, religious aspects of experimental cinema, and the use of religious symbolism in literature and real life.

In addition, *Sightings* put together a series of articles on the “hot topic” of the debate pitting “intelligent design” against evolution. These columns, from clergy and academics, formed the basis of a collaboration with the Religion and Culture Web Forum, the September/October installment of which featured “Intelligent Design and Evolution in Conflict,” and included a formal response by University of Chicago professor of medicine Farr Curlin.

For more information about *Sightings*, or to subscribe, please visit [http://marty_center.uchicago.edu/sightings/index.shtml](http://marty_center.uchicago.edu/sightings/index.shtml).

*Sightings* has thus been eager to seek out columns taking new approaches to religion, or to bring attention to religion functioning in places where it might otherwise be overlooked. And of course, Martin Marty’s regular Monday columns continue to offer subscribers the fruits of his vast readings and intelligence, as he monitors the secular press and the religious, offering insights into everything from church life to the religious beliefs of doctors to civil religion. Among those columns that inspired a great deal of response—both approving and critical—was one by James K. A. Smith, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His article, “Our History of Violence,” offered an analysis of David Cronenberg’s most recent, and much acclaimed, movie *A History of Violence*, arguing that the deeper meaning of this remarkable film can only be discerned if one looks past its obvious Christian symbolism. This column, reports *Sightings* editor Jeremy Biles, “exemplifies several dimensions of the work of *Sightings*. Not only does it informatively comment on religion in culture, but it does so in a way that discerns and discusses an aspect of religion in public life that might otherwise be too easily overlooked.”

Circa is pleased to reprint Smith’s column at right. It will provide new readers with an idea of what *Sightings* offers, and we also hope that it will inspire some readers to submit columns for possible publication in *Sightings*.

Religion and Culture Web Forum

The Religion and Culture Web Forum, the Marty Center’s online forum for thought-provoking discussion on the relationship of scholarship in religion to culture and public life, continues to grow its subscription base and feature new contributors. Recent fora have taken a topical turn, and may be read and discussed online at [http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/index.shtml](http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/index.shtml).

**November/December**

In 2001, Jeff Pool (Berea College) interviewed the late Langdon Gilkey, Shailer Mathews Professor Emeritus at the Divinity School, left, on the relationship of theology to history, particularly in light of the events of September 11, 2001.

**January**

Franklin Gamwell, current Shailer Mathews Professor, contributed an essay on the religious implications of growing economic inequality in the United States.

**February**

Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions and Director of the Marty Center, discussed the theoretical roots of Hindu religious pluralism, in light of contemporary expressions of intolerance within Hindu communities.

**Upcoming web fora** will feature essays by Joseph Prabhu (California State University-Los Angeles), Visiting Professor and Senior Fellow at the Marty Center, and Malika Zeghal, Associate Professor of the Anthropology and Sociology of Religion.

The Web Forum welcomes submissions from affiliates (present and past) of the Divinity School. Essays should not exceed ten to fifteen double-spaced pages and should be accessible to non-specialists, on topics which illuminate the relationship of religion to an aspect of culture. Inquiries should be directed to the forum’s managing editor, Debra Erickson, at dje@uchicago.edu.
avid Cronenberg's most recent film, *A History of Violence*, interrogates violence on a number of levels and includes various modes of disturbance—from sadomasochistic eroticism to violence against children, along with key scenes involving bodily fluids and injured flesh. Cronenberg is clearly out to de-aestheticize the violence that is a staple of Hollywood and, increasingly, our cultural practices.

He is trying to wake us up to what we might call, loosely paraphrasing Hannah Arendt, the banality of violence. But the final sequence of the film is highly ambiguous, spurring viewers to ask what Cronenberg is after (and here I’ll issue a spoiler alert). The closing scenes, set in the city of brotherly love, invite, even demand, a Cain-and-Abel encounter between brothers. The scene that follows, however, invites the latter interpretation. In other words, we should read Cronenberg’s film not as a Christian tragedy, but as a pagan drama revealing how we are implicated in our own histories of violence.


Jill Raitt, Ph.D. ’70, Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at the University of Missouri, chairs the Divinity School Annual Fund.

This year Jill Raitt made a “planned gift” to benefit the School. Professor Raitt chose to make her gift in the form of an annuity.

The capital in the fund increases so that when I die, the Div School will get even more than I had in the account two years ago. That’s a lovely thought! It’s a bit like giving away your cake but eating bites of it at regular intervals. So it’s a great deal for the Divinity School and for me.

Here she answers the question, “Why sign over a part of a perfectly good investment portfolio to the Divinity School of the University of Chicago?”

In Professor Raitt’s words: “Because it is an annuity! That means I get income from it, but not all the income that it generates. The capital in the fund increases so that when I die, the Div School will get even more than I had in the account two years ago. That’s a lovely thought! It’s a bit like giving away your cake but eating bites of it at regular intervals. So it’s a great deal for the Divinity School and for me.”

The University’s motto is crescat scientia, vita excolatur (commonly translated as “let knowledge grow from more to more, and so be human life enriched.”) Our particular scientia is the study of religion, our excolatur the elucidation of religious thought and practice in history and in the contemporary world. We work from the conviction that the growth of such knowledge has intrinsic worth on its own merits, and is not incidentally the essential resource for enhanced clarity about our humanity, and the meaning we attach to it.

Richard A. Rosengarten, Dean
A group of students sat around a room listening to two experts discuss Roman society and Mel Gibson. They all had gone to see The Passion of the Christ, and the two experts, Prof. Margaret Mitchell of the Divinity School and Prof. Benjamin Sommer of Northwestern University, talked about the historical, cultural, and linguistic accuracy of the cinematic portrayal. Did they like the movie? Some yes, and some no. But they were all excited that the History of Christianity Club organized the outing to see the movie and hear two authorities discuss its merits and flaws.

The History of Christianity Club is just one of the many student-run organizations that the Divinity Students Association (DSA) sponsors. The goal of DSA is to provide an experience beyond the go-to-class-read-books-write-papers formula of graduate experience. Students should have the resources available to take the initiative to further pursue ideas from the classroom, engage outside faculty, and explore topics outside the scope of current class offerings. In addition to providing travel and research grants, funding Wednesday Lunch, and hosting social events, DSA funds two basic kinds of academic clubs: area clubs and student-founded clubs.

Each area of academic concentration has its own club. While these clubs are organized around the system of Ph.D. concentrations, like all DSA clubs, they encourage all students regardless of degree program to attend meetings and events. These can be one-time events like The Passion of the Christ discussion or more regular like the Religion and Literature Club’s lunches where all are invited to listen to and discuss the paper of a faculty member or student. Some even offer annual events like the Ethics Club’s conference featuring faculty and graduate students from across the country.

Of course, not every student interest fits easily within a specific academic area. For those interdisciplinary interests, DSA sponsors student-founded clubs. Like area clubs, they welcome all students and faculty to events, but sometimes they also try to challenge both students and faculty to add new dimensions to their academic thought. For instance, the Feminist Theories and the Study of Religion Club hosted a series of panel discussions featuring Divinity School professors who spoke about the use of feminist methodologies in the classroom.

Because DSA wants students to have access to resources for organizing events that interest them, all clubs are run exclusively by students. The purpose of these clubs is to provide a venue for students to explore academic ideas beyond the classroom. One scene at a quarterly Religion and Literature Club potluck demonstrates other values to these organizations: students and faculty casually sit or stand, all discussing their reactions to the evening’s brief program and their current interests. In DSA clubs, students find a forum to present their work and receive peer feedback, interact with others at different academic phases including the preparing for the job market, and most of all discover the social and cultural relevance of their studies.

―Sarah Imhoff, DSA President, 2005–2006

The Divinity Students Association (DSA) is an organization run by and for University of Chicago Divinity School students. The organization attempts to contribute to many spheres of life in the Divinity School: academic, professional, and social. With this issue, we inaugurate a series of articles about Divinity School student life.

To learn more about the DSA and its many activities, please visit http://divinity.uchicago.edu/student/dsa/index.shtml

Student Wins Excellence in Sermons Award

Ana Porter, a Unitarian Universalist ministerial student enrolled at the University of Chicago Divinity School, was selected as the 2006 Richard Borden Excellence in Sermons Award first-place runner-up for her sermon, “Getting Real About Food.”

More information about this award, as well as the full text of Ana’s sermon, can be found at the Unitarian Universalist Association site at http://www.uua.org/awards/borden/

Ana is also an accomplished singer/songwriter, and will be performing at our Musical Offering Wednesday Lunch on November 29, 2006.
Fighting, for the union, doesn’t mean fists—
cuffs or black eyes. It means walking the shop
floor, exhorting, scolding, wheedling, shaming,
honoring, joking, affirming, arguing, and most
of all, convincing. This kind of fighting can
only happen when there’s a relationship, and
when the sacrifice of doing something for the
union means something.

The organizers’ work

This fighting, it turns out, can only happen
with people you love or hate. The best organizers and office
staff at the union were those who loved the
people they worked for—the organizers who
didn’t love the people didn’t last long. They
burned out and left. Some who stayed on, it
is true, loved the issues and the battles more
than the people, but most of the organizers
loved their work and their workers.

And the organizers worked hard—60, 70
hours a week. Some had kids, others had
divorces, and a few had a couple of each. But
there was an intensity in the office and a
tremendous spirit of doing that most church
district offices lack.

“My job was to organize
a prayer breakfast for clergy... It was also my job to convince
the pastors that hotel workers’
issues were the most important
issues in the city, more
important than many issues
in the parishes.”

The work of the organizers is a fight to
give workers power and a voice in their work-
place. I had heard many times of the worker’s
rights movement giving people dignity, and
during the ten weeks I spent with UNITE
HERE, I learned what that meant: a job well
done is a job well done, but a job that feeds
a family and earns respect is a good job. And
that’s what the union fights for.

Taking sides

If the unions fight from love, they also
fight from anger. The union regularly
used Hilton’s CEO salary of $30 million
to motivate workers making $11.00 an hour.
It also demonized the administration of the
hotels (just as, to be fair, the administration
demonized the union). And the union makes
a lot of hay by pitting the workers against
their employers. But when your employer
asks you to clock out for your lunch break, go
back to the floor to work, and clock in only
after another half hour of work, it becomes
easier to choose a side. It becomes even easier
when your check shows no overtime pay for
overtime work—over and over again.

When the interns come in, they are already
on the side of the workers. But working gives
one a stake, and eventually, one has to fully
accept the union or move on. The nature of
the work and the cause become all encompass-
ing. The union, in other words, is a church.

Church and union working together

The union has no compunction about
using other churches to further its
ends. My job was to organize a prayer
breakfast for clergy as a first step toward begin-
ing a clergy committee in Chicago com-
mitted to organizing the churches around
the hotel workers. It was also my job to con-
vince the pastors that hotel workers’ issues
were the most important issues in the city,
more important than many issues in the
parishes. I remember my supervisors trying to
convince me that getting pastors to a prayer
breakfast for the union was more important
than a funeral in the parish. Exchanges like
this did, unfortunately, sometimes make me
think that the union, rather than seeking a
true partnership with the churches, instead
needed endorsement in newspapers and parish
communities. The union said that for the
benefit of the workers, the union comes first;
any questions of what the union could do
for the churches were left unanswered, except
for remarks like, “This is the kind of the
work the church should be doing and isn’t.”
It was a fair remark. But the church has
many things to do, and one of them is to work
with unions and management—not
for or against them—because it loves the
people who come through the doors to hear
the word of God. Some of those people
dress in suits, and some in hotel uniforms.
Yet our mainstream churches would do well
to learn to fight like the unions do if it really
loves its people. After all, if a message isn’t
worth fighting for, is it worth hearing?

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

The Second Annual Divinity School
Ministry Conference

The Temple in the
Marketplace: Challenges of
Faith in this Economy

Friday, May 12, 2006 – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, please visit
http://divinity.uchicago.edu/news/
spring_2006/temple/conference.shtml